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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

ITF Working Party on Labour standards for cruise ships agrees outline of collective agreement

The members of the above Working Party met in Oslo on 1 and 2 March under the Chairmanship of S Wall, United States. Other countries and organisations represented were Greece, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom and the Caribbean Maritime and Aviation Council. A Selander, ITF Assistant General Secretary, represented the ITF Secretariat.

A number of recommendations were agreed by the Working Party including the employment of a greater proportion of local seafarers in areas such as the Caribbean basin, a built-in minimum earnings guarantee, optional consolidated pay scales for both officers and ratings with limitation of overtime hours, new arrangements with regard to welfare fund contributions and guidelines concerning manning standards.

Flight Deck Technical Committee prepares for meeting of ICAO Working Group on flight engineer licensing requirements

A one-day meeting of the ITF Flight Deck Technical Committee held in London on 12 March was attended by representatives of unions in France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United States. It had been convened to prepare the ITF position for the meeting later in the month of a working group set up by the ICAO Personnel Training Licensing Panel to consider the flight engineer licensing requirements contained in Annex 1. The papers submitted by the various members of the ICAO working group were discussed by the Committee and its position in respect of each decided. Committee Chairman Roger Bricknell (MNAOA, Great Britain), who has been nominated to represent the ITF, will attend the ICAO meeting to press the ITF case supporting the retention of the flight engineer licence and the updating of some of the current F/E provisions. He will also oppose the system operator pilot concept, which is totally unacceptable to the ITF. This is essentially the same position as contained in our detailed submission to ICAO of May 1980, which is again being drawn to the organisation's attention.

TRANSPORT

EUROPE

EEC report finds 'substantial and alarming differences' in air traffic control standards in Europe

A draft report on air transport prepared by the EEC Transport Committee at the request of the European Parliament has found 'substantial and alarming differences' in standards of air traffic control in certain areas of EEC nations and in the applicant countries of Spain and Portugal. While the report praises the Eurocontrol centre at Maastricht in the Netherlands, which coordinates flights in northern Europe, as being the most advanced in the world, it was concerned by a number of black spots south of a line connecting Madrid to Athens. The Greek air traffic control system was judged to be in need of complete modernisation and Italy was discovered to have inadequate radar cover round the Adriatic, south of Naples and in Sicily, although the report did add that the Italian government was making efforts to overcome these difficulties. If Spain and Portugal joined the Community, their atc equipment would need radical updating, if necessary with assistance from the rest of the Community, the report concluded. In summary, it was regrettable that individual countries still persisted with their own separate atc systems when a Europe-wide system would be cheaper, safer and more efficient.

GREAT BRITAIN

Union 'very disappointed' at certification of Airbus A 310 for two-pilot only operation

The Civil Aviation Authority has cleared the Airbus A 310 for two pilot only operation despite strong opposition from the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association (MNAOA) which has warned the authority of the potential hazards of not carrying a flight engineer on the flight deck of this new technology aircraft.

In support of its case for three-man operation, the MNAOA had warned of the danger of over-reliance on electronics, pointing to the five second blackouts of primary flight displays that had occurred on the A 310s already in service in Europe. The union was also concerned that British Caledonian, which plans to start services with the A 310 shortly, would be flying an aircraft carrying only two pilots on routes to West Africa - an area beset by communications problems, suspect navigation and approach aids, poor ground handling facilities and other technical difficulties. The union's very real fear was that reducing the cockpit crew on such routes could in certain circumstances render a major accident or incident a distinct possibility.

Roger Bricknell, MNAOA Council Chairman and Chairman of the ITF Flight Deck Technical Committee, said that he was 'very disappointed' by the CAA decision, which came shortly after the association's national air committee had reaffirmed its three-strong crew policy.

MALAYSIA

Port Klang dockers' unions oppose plans for privatisation of harbour services

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress is currently holding consultations with the three ITF-affiliated Port Klang dockers' unions⁺ with a view to evolving a joint strategy for countering government plans to privatise the major services offered by the port. MTUC-Secretary General V David points out that the waterfront workers had made a substantial contribution over many years to the improvement of the services offered by Port Klang which is a modern, efficient and profitable port and that privatisation would be a retrograde step involving a worsening of the conditions of service of the dock labour force without a guarantee of any real competitive advantage.

The MTUC will shortly be submitting a memorandum to the Malaysian Prime Minister outlining its arguments against privatisation and calling on the government to rethink its plans for the port.

SWITZERLAND

Overweight lorries face automatic weight checks

Europe's first automatic weigh machine capable of weighing lorries in motion was installed on the south-north section of the N 2 motorway near Erstfeld late last year. All lorries over 3½ tonnes are directed by means of automatic light signals to the next exit from the motorway where they pass over a so-called 'dynamic' weigh machine consisting of small plates set in the road surface and a computer records the lorry's weight. If the vehicle is under the permissible limit of 28 tonnes it is then allowed straight back on to the motorway, while overweight vehicles are directed by means of further automatic light signals to a second weigh machine where the vehicle's weight is rechecked by the motorway police and the appropriate penalty imposed. It is hoped that the new machines will help reduce wear-and-tear on motorways from overladen vehicles and if it proves a success a second machine will be installed on the carriageway in the opposite direction.

⁺ the Klang Port Authority Harbour Workers' Union, the Klang Port Authority Staff Union and the Senior Officers' Association.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

DENMARK

Coastal shipowners blacked by ships' catering staff union

The ITF-affiliated Danish Ships' Catering Personnel Association is currently blacking the vessels of eighteen coastal shipowners in an effort to persuade the owners to enter into collective agreements on behalf of their ships' catering personnel. A union drive to sign more agreements for the coastal trade has met with such opposition from the owners that our affiliate feels a blockade is the only avenue left open to it to secure decent pay and conditions for its members.

Maritime unions in Scandinavia have been approached via the Nordic Transport Workers' Federation with a request for assistance and have pledged their support for their Danish colleagues.

FINLAND

Central pay talks concluded

A general strike called for 6 March was averted when the Finnish Trade Union Confederation (SAK), representing some one million Finnish workers, agreed to accept the proposals for a mediated settlement of the central pay negotiations, which had earlier run into serious difficulties. With SAK's acceptance, a new two-year agreement enters into effect, providing for pay increases of 3.2% this year and 3.6% from 1 March 1985 plus a cost-of-living clause. Working time in the private sector will be reduced by 32 hours per annum and in the public sector by 16 hours for all those currently working a 40-hour week (or more) with effect from 1986. A sum of money has also been set aside this year for the benefit of low-paid workers.

FRANCE

Public sector pay strike

Over four and a half million public service workers throughout France came out on strike on 8 March in a mass protest at the breakdown of the 1984 pay negotiations and the government's failure to offer proper compensation for the loss in purchasing power last year. Public transport was badly affected by the strike, which was joined by thousands of civil aviation, rail and urban transport workers, many of them organised in ITF-affiliated unions.

Public sector pay talks broke down at the end of February when almost all trade union federations turned down a government offer of a 500 francs bonus to make up for a fall in real wages, plus a one per cent adjustment in salaries and allowances from 1 April as a first cost-of-living adjustment for 1984. The unions are now demanding that compensation for 1983 be agreed before the 1984 talks are resumed.

Seamen call off campaign for right to retire at 50 after promise of further talks

French seamen - including members of ITF affiliates - decided not to step up their two-month-old campaign for the right to retire at 50 without loss of benefits when the shipowners agreed to enter into further talks with their union representatives. The action began in mid-December with a 24-hour strike and was escalated in mid-January, taking the form of 48-hour sailing delays.

The unions claim that the exigencies of the seafaring life with its toll on health and family life make it imperative that seamen should at least have the opportunity to retire early if they so wish. At a time of high unemployment, seafarers taking early retirement would also free jobs for youngsters wishing to enter the industry.

The retirement age of seafarers in France is currently 55 years.

GERMANY

2.8% pay increase for seafarers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) and the German Shipowners' Association have both accepted the mediator's proposal of a 2.8% increase in base pay and allowances in the 1984 pay round⁺. The agreement enters into force on 1 April and runs for one year.

⁺ see ITF Newsletter No. 2, 1984, page 18 for earlier details

GREECE

Court upholds right of Olympic Airways cabin attendants to refuse to exceed agreed duty hours

A Greek court hearing the case against the seven Olympic Airways cabin attendants who refused to take a flight from Athens to Heraklion on 3 August last⁺ because in so doing they would have exceeded their maximum flight duty hours has ruled that the seven were justified in their refusal and had acted in full accord with their rights and agreement. However, on the day before the court hearing was due to take place, Olympic went ahead and dismissed the four flight attendants who had been recommended for dismissal by a disciplinary committee, despite assurances it had earlier given the ITF that the dismissals would not be made effective⁺⁺. The ITF-affiliated Greek Hostesses' and Stewards' Union (EISF) now intends to seek recourse to the courts to win the full reinstatement of all seven of its members (the three remaining flight attendants, although not dismissed have suffered penalties for their action).

⁺ see ITF Newsletter No. 11, 1983, page 100

⁺⁺ see ITF Newsletter No. 1, 1984, page 6

20% pay rise for passenger vessel crews

The ITF-affiliated Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) has concluded a new collective agreement with the Union of Greek Shipowners giving crews of passenger vessels pay increases of 20% on basic monthly rates, plus an additional 1,500 drachmas for the lowest-paid.

Pay negotiations on behalf of PNO-organised crews on cargo and tanker vessels are still continuing, with our affiliate seeking longer paid leave and improved fringe benefits in addition to substantial increases in pay.

INDIA

Dockers strike over pay demands

Over 300,000 dockers at ten major ports in India - including members of the Transport and Dock Workers' Union and the Calcutta Port Shramik Union (both ITF-affiliated) - began an indefinite strike from midnight on 15 March following the failure of negotiations on the renewal of their collective contract. The government has offered a 17% increase in pay against union demands for a minimum rise of 40%. At the time of writing, four days into the strike, 175 ships were immobilized, and many other vessels were being diverted.

The ITF has sent a cable of sympathy and support for the strikers, who are seeking pay parity with workers in other nationalised industries, notably coal and steel. Pledges of support have also been received from other Indian unions, including the railway unions.

see ITF Newsletter No. 1, 1984, page 7 for earlier details

JAPAN

Footplate staff union rejects attempt to impose longer working week

The Japan National Railway Workers' Union (KOKURO) has recently contacted the Secretariat requesting ITF support for its efforts to prevent Japan National Railways from imposing a longer working week on its footplate staff. As part of a thorough-going revision of the general conditions of service of drivers, the JNR is seeking the right to draw up rosters for its drivers on the basis of up to 48 hours a week, the maximum working week laid down by statute in Japan. This runs counter to the current agreement between the two social partners which sets a normal working week of 40 hours. The management claims that increased flexibility in rostering will improve productivity, while our affiliate feels that it is wrong to expect drivers to work substantially longer hours as part of normal rostered duty rather than voluntary overtime. It also fears that an extension of working hours will lead to redundancies among footplate staff.

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NETHERLANDS

Tugboat crews lift strike threat

The threat of a strike by tugboat crews at Rotterdam's Europoort was lifted last month after the employers agreed to meet the two key demands of the ITF-affiliated Dutch Transport Workers' Union (FNV) for a reduction in weekly working hours and an increase of five men in the 243-man labour force.

NORWAY

New rates for deck officers in coastal trade

New rates of pay for navigating officers in the coastal trade came into effect on 1 January 1984. These provide a starting rate for masters of between 8,115 and 10,103 kr per month, according to vessel tonnage, rising to between 8,565 and 10,580 kr after five years. The revised rates for chief mates are 7,780 - 8,365 kr (starting rate) and 8,180 - 8,765 kr (after 2 years); 1st mate: 7,515 kr on ships under 2,000 grt and 7,780 kr on ships over 2,000 grt (starting rate) rising to 7,915 and 8,180 respectively after 2 years; 2nd mate: uniform starting rate of 7,360 rising to 7,760 kr after 2 years. Masters are paid a seniority bonus after 5 years service and deck officers a similar bonus after 2 years service.

The officers are represented by the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Navigating Officers' Association.

PAKISTAN

Pilots strike over dismissal of five colleagues

Pilots of Pakistan International Airlines staged a four-day strike late last month in protest at the dismissal of five of their colleagues - all former office bearers of the Pakistan Air Line Pilots' Association which was banned by the government two years ago together with other unions representing PIA employees. A group of PIA pilots has urged the President of Pakistan to intervene and reinstate the dismissed pilots, who had excellent service records and were given no opportunity to defend themselves against charges of 'prejudicial conduct'. Various trade union organisations in Pakistan have backed the call for reinstatement of the dismissed pilots and have also called for the government to revoke martial law regulation no. 52 and allow the various PIA unions to resume their normal functions.

The ITF will shortly be submitting a further complaint to the ILO against the government of Pakistan as part of our continuing efforts to get the ban on trade union activity by employees of the PIA Corporation lifted.

+ see ITF Newsletter No. 5, 1982, page 52 and No. 1, 1983, page 3 for further information on the ban on trade union activity within Pakistan International Airlines and ILO investigation of the complaint lodged against the government of Pakistan.

SPAIN

Transport workers launch strike wave

As forecast in our last Newsletter[†], Spanish transport workers' unions have been taking nationwide industrial action in support of their pay claims over the past couple of weeks.

Employees of the national railway company RENFE have staged several stoppages after rejecting the management's offer of a 3.6% salary increase. The unions - which include the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Federation of UGT - are asking for rises in line with inflation and are also seeking the creation of 5,000 new jobs. Two further 24-hours strikes are scheduled for later in the month unless further progress is made on worker demands.

The wave of strikes has also extended to the national airline Iberia, which had been claiming that it could not afford any pay increases this year. The ITF-affiliated UGT air transport workers' section was among unions mounting a two-day strike of ground and flying staff on 22 and 23 February to show their determination to press demands for realistic pay improvements in 1984, and there were also peak-hour stoppages by ground staff on 29 February and 1 March. Further ground staff strike plans were abandoned when the airline made a 3.8% pay offer for 1984 a few days later and this was accepted.

Elsewhere, staff of the underground railway in Madrid came out on two 24-hour strikes in support of a 10 per cent pay claim. During the second of these - on 2 March - the army was brought in to maintain a minimum service on the Metro with the assistance of special railway staff subject to mobilization orders. The latest position is that the joint union committee - on which the ITF-affiliated UGT is represented - has given warning of a 4-day strike from 13 March if the pay claim is not met by then. It is further demanding the withdrawal of sanctions and dismissal notices issued against those who refused to cooperate in ensuring a minimum service during the first strike on 27 February.

Road transport workers in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa are too currently on strike seeking a 12 per cent salary increase. The UGT is again involved, as is the ITF-affiliated ELA-STV Transport Workers' Federation.

Also affected by the strike wave has been the Transmediterránea shipping company, with UGT and other union-organized crews on cargo and passenger vessels walking out on 29 February to back demands for a new pay agreement protecting real wages. The unions are also seeking the right of co-determination in the running of the company. More strikes have been set for five days in March and a further five dates in April if these objectives are not realised.

[†] see page 20

NEWS IN BRIEF

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has agreed the draft text of an international convention outlawing the use of torture. The convention will make torture a crime under international law and it will also include cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment within its scope. The draft text will go next to the General Assembly's autumn session for formal approval.

The London Dumping Convention - an agency of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) - has extended its two-year advisory ban on the sea dumping of nuclear waste by a further six months to allow more time for a full scientific investigation of the risks involved. (See also ITF Newsletter No. 3, 1983, page 30).

The ITF-affiliated Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants' Association has signed a two-year pay agreement with Pacific Western Airlines giving its members pay increases of 3% in each contract year.

The European Trade Union Confederation has readmitted the Greek trade union centre GSEE to membership after an absence of three years.

Airport workers in Peru staged a 24-hour strike at the end of February to draw attention to their demands for higher pay.

The US Federal Aviation Administration is to conduct a three-week investigation into aviation safety following allegations from aviation unions that cuts in the number of safety inspectors following deregulation have led to reduced standards. The Transport Secretary has already reacted to the union criticisms by bringing the number of inspectors back up to 1981 levels.

United States: moves to introduce retirement at age 60⁺ for flight engineers have been frustrated, at least temporarily. The Federal Aviation Administration rejected a petition on the issue, but this ruling has now been overturned by the transport department, delaying for some months a final decision in the matter.

⁺ see ITF Newsletter No. 6-8, 1983, page 67 for earlier details

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Standing Committee on Maritime Mobile Offshore
Units - Hong Kong 5-6 April 1984

Asian Seafarers' Regional Committee - Taipei 10-12 April 1984

European Seafarers - Antwerp 8-9 May 1984

Cabin Crew Technical Committee - Lisbon 9-11 May 1984

Fair Practices Committee - London 21-22 June 1984

Frontier Blockades on the Roads of Europe

On 24 February 1984, what has been described as "the biggest traffic jam in the world" was resolved after nine days of blockades by heavy lorries at key traffic points throughout France. The action, begun on 16 February by members of the French haulage associations FNTR and UNOSTRA protesting against slow and obstructive customs procedures at the Italian frontier, had originally been provoked by a marked worsening of the already grim situation when French and Italian customs officials at the Montblanc Tunnel decided to take industrial action in support of pay claims. Even if some lorry drivers belonging to bona fide trade unions had sympathy with the blockade action in the early stages, this quickly evaporated as the employers added demands that had little or nothing to do with the original confrontation. In particular, a demand for tax concessions on diesel fuel and lower taxes on insurance were hardly of interest to employed drivers, whilst calls for the liberalisation of driving hours legislation were clearly against the trend of social progress which our trade unions had fought so long to establish.

This action was condemned by the transport unions in the CFTD national centre who said that the employers and owner-drivers were holding the public to ransom and that, with their record of anti-unionism and worker exploitation, they certainly had no right to speak for the drivers or for other transport employees. Any solution benefiting the employers at the expense of the employees would be rejected by these trade unions, who insisted on being involved in the negotiations with the government.

Unions in the national centre FO, whilst recognizing the frustration and anger which drivers had felt for many years as a result of interminable customs delays, warned against the upheaval's being exploited to challenge existing social benefits.

As the blockades neared the end of their first week, the FNCR - a drivers' association which is closer to the employers than would be usual for a trade union - praised the employers for their conciliatory efforts and their "wise instructions" to drivers in the Chamonix valley where the trouble began. These "wise instructions" came too late to have any effect. The action was spreading, the chaos affecting Austria and West Germany, with thousands of heavy lorries blocking the roads and being themselves trapped. In West Germany, the ITF-affiliated ÖTV (Transport and Public Service Workers' Union), horrified at the heedlessness of various forwarding agents, called on the Association of German Hauliers (BDF) to stop agents sending even more lorries towards the blocked Brenner Pass between Austria and Italy, fully aware that the drivers faced days of waiting with their vehicles in freezing weather.

There, as in the French traffic jams, tempers were becoming frayed. On 23 February, the head of the French FO warned that "things have gone too far, and they could become dangerous in every way". The ITF General Secretary, Harold Lewis, sent urgent appeals to all

European road transport affiliates asking them to do what they could to assist foreign drivers stranded by the action. In particular, they were asked to set up contacts between the drivers, their unions and their consular representatives. As usual, the ITF affiliates responded energetically, some having already started relief action on their own initiative.

In the chaos, it was not always possible to check union membership details and help was given generously to whoever could be reached. Special efforts were made by the Austrian affiliate HTV who supplied drivers with hot drinks, food parcels and transport to hostels where they stayed free of charge. The West German ÖTV included in its relief work a donation of DM 10,000 for the Red Cross, and further details of assistance rendered by ITF affiliates continue to arrive at the Secretariat.

The blockade of the Brenner Pass was the last to disappear. It ended on 29 February, having involved drivers from seven different countries.