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TRANSPORT

AUSTRIA

Austrian government launches ten-year programme to attract transit traffic from the road to the rails

At a press conference in Vienna last month the Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr Sinowatz and the Ministers of Transport and the Environment revealed government plans for transferring most of Austria's transit traffic from the roads to the rails over the next ten years. The move has been prompted by the rapid growth in transit traffic passing through Austria in recent years and its concentration on relatively few densely-trafficked cross-country routes. In 1983 alone, over one million heavy goods vehicles carrying over 18 million tonnes of freight crossed Austria en route for destinations in eastern Europe.

The government is aiming to attract a total of 9.7 million tonnes of freight (55% of the total transit traffic) to the rails by the end of the first five-year phase of the programme during which special rail 'transit corridors' will be created and then expanded. By 1994, when the programme ends, it is hoped that most transit traffic will have transferred to the new 'rail roads'. A 20 billion schilling budget has been allocated to the project enabling large-scale investment in new rolling stock and major tunnel improvement works to go ahead. "Piggy-back" waggons on which units and trailers can be readily transported will also be purchased.

GERMANY

OeTV argues case for retention of third officer on ships under 6,000 grt

The West German government has formally approved new manning regulations permitting ships of between 1,600 and 6,000 grt engaged in worldwide trading to sail with only two navigating officers. In so doing, the parliament has bowed to pressure from German shipowners seeking to reduce their operating costs, while ignoring the compelling arguments advanced by the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) in favour of the retention of the third navigating officer on these vessels.

The OeTV points out that the new regulations are difficult to reconcile with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention - ratified by the federal government - which lays down that as the ship's master has overall responsibility for the safety of his vessel he shall not be required to stand watches - a stipulation also contained in the OeTV basic agreement applicable to ships' masters. When carrying three officers, vessels operate a 3-watch system, with each of the 3 officers performing two four-hour watches a day (8 hours being the maximum allowed under the Seamen's Law), equivalent to a working week of 56 hours. With only two officers, to comply with the STCW Convention, ships would have to go over to a two-watch system, with both officers working two watches of six hours each (thereby exceeding the maximum daily watchkeeping hours permitted by law in Germany), or a 84-hour week.

The OeTV argues that such an enormous increase in weekly working time would inevitably have a serious effect on officers' health and could well impair efficiency. In view of the fact that over nine hundred qualified navigating officers are currently seeking work it sees the loss of jobs as a result of the new regulations as being even more undesirable.

While it is prepared to concede that the reduced manning levels on these ships would give German owners an undoubted competitive advantage, the OeTV believes that this would only be short-term as other western countries would surely soon seek to dispense with the third officer from this section of their fleets, with similar disastrous effects. What the government has achieved in agreeing to these changes, the OeTV concludes, is to ensure that the German merchant fleet is manned by fewer officers working very much longer hours, with all the implications for the safety of life at sea.

UNITED STATES

Rail safety bill to go before House of Representatives

US rail unions have won House Committee approval for proposals aimed at improving the industry's safety record and a bill incorporating these will now go before the House of Representatives. The unions are convinced that legislation is urgently needed to halt the alarming rise in the number of deaths and injuries to railway workers in recent years.

Among those suggestions receiving Committee endorsement was a proposal made by the Railway Labor Executives' Association, and argued strongly during sub-committee hearings on the bill, that railroad employees and their unions should have the right to sue the Federal Railroad Administration - an arm of the Transportation Department - for failure to enforce federal safety laws. The bill would require workers and their organisations to give 60 days' notice of their intention to initiate legal proceedings against the safety agency and to submit a list of the precise safety violations that were being alleged. Under the bill, also in response to union pressure, punitive damages would be payable in cases where employees complaining of safety violations or refusing to work under unsafe conditions were subjected to management harassment.

TRADE UNIONS

UNITED STATES

Bankruptcy law revision strengthens union rights

Following the unhappy experience of Continental Airlines workers, who lost the vital protection offered by their hard-won union contracts when the company filed for reorganisation under chapter 11 of the bankruptcy laws, US unions have mounted a vigorous campaign seeking new legislation that would prevent other employers from subverting bankruptcy proceedings to enable them to revoke labour contracts. These efforts have now come to fruition with the signing into law of a bill requiring employers to enter into good faith bargaining with their unions over such contract changes as might be necessary to allow a bankrupt firm to stay in business. Companies unable to secure voluntary agreement from their union(s) for their proposals will have to appear before a bankruptcy court and persuade it of the necessity of contract modifications.

While Continental's hard-pressed employees will not benefit from the new legislation (it does not have retrospective effect) this welcome change in the law removes a serious threat with grave implications for the collective bargaining system.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

DENMARK

Boycott of coastal shipowners registers further successes

The ITF-affiliated Danish Ships' Catering Personnel Association is still notching up successes in its boycott of coastal shipowners*. Helped by the active support of other Danish unions, agreements now remain to be concluded with only seven companies (out of an original total of eighteen), which between them own 31 vessels, mostly of between 300 and 500 tons. Last month, the ITF-affiliated maritime unions were asked to lend all possible assistance to the union in its efforts to improve conditions in the Danish coastal fleet.

* see also ITF Newsletter No 3, 1984, page 30
No 4, 1984, page 40
No 5, 1984, page 59
No 6/7, 1984, page 73

GERMANY

Mediated settlement for Lufthansa employees

The lengthy negotiations conducted by the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) on behalf of Lufthansa employees have been satisfactorily concluded with a mediated settlement giving a pay increase of 3.3% from 1 July 1984, followed by a further 2% on 1 April 1985, effective for twelve months. A lump sum payment of 550 DM will be paid in lieu of retroactivity for the months of February - June.

The working week of Lufthansa's ground staff will be cut to 38½ hours on 1 April next year and negotiations on a possible reduction in the working hours of flying staff will commence in 1986.

GREAT BRITAIN

First-ever collective agreement signed for offshore divers

The ITF-affiliated National Union of Seamen has signed its first ever pay and conditions agreement for North Sea divers. Signatories to the agreement are six* major diving contractors, employing 1,800 men who have agreed to pay a top daily rate from 1 August 1984 of £125 for air and gas divers, together with a saturation diving bonus of £9 an hour (an increase of £2.50 on the present top rate). Previously, the contractors had struck separate deals with the divers they hired and this meant that experienced men were often being paid as little as £45 a day for one of the most hazardous jobs in the entire offshore sector.

* a seventh company has since ratified the agreement

Two-year pay agreement for Liverpool dockers

Registered dockers at the port of Liverpool have accepted the second two-year agreement negotiated on their behalf by the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union. Under the deal, pay rises by £8 per week this year and bonus rates by 7.5%, while sick and holiday pay have been increased in return for the dockers' consent to changes in working practices designed to improve productivity at the container and timber terminals. Working arrangements for handling new vessel types have also been agreed. Each docker will receive a lump-sum payment of £137 in lieu of backdating to the settlement date of 1 May. In the second year of the agreement base pay will be increased by a further unconditional £9 per week.

New pay deal for North Sea safety boat crews

The ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union has won pay increases of 6-8% for deckhands, boatmen, cooks and 2nd engineers on North Sea platform safety and standby vessels operating out of Aberdeen and owned by North Star Fishing Company Ltd. Skippers, mates and chief engineers receive slightly higher percentage increases and there are additional payments for special skills such as handling of fast inflatable rescue craft.

The pay of safety boat crews has traditionally been less than that of other groups in the North Sea and the local T and G official has been concerned that these men should receive remuneration commensurate with their safety responsibilities and have training to equip them to carry out their safety duties efficiently.

INDIA

10% staged increase for petty officers

Under an agreement signed last month by the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI), the pay of petty officers on vessels belonging to member companies of the Indian National Shipowners' Association will be increased by five per cent on both 1 April 1984 and 1985. Allowances have also been improved and a lighterage allowance (equivalent to 12.5% of basic pay) has been introduced for NUSI members serving on vessels engaged in lighterage operations. In addition, the shipowners have agreed to increase their contributions to the union's welfare fund.

UNITED STATES

ALPA fines 89 New Continental pilots for strike-breaking

Earlier this month, the five-member Appeal Board of the ITF-affiliated Air Line Pilots' Association imposed fines of \$10,000 each on 89 New Continental pilots for strike-breaking offences in connection with ALPA's continuing strike against the company. Charges against a further two pilots were dismissed and one other pilot was fined \$5,000. The disciplined pilots will also forfeit any strike benefits they may have received or be due to receive. Each pilot was given the opportunity to appear before the Appeal Board to state his case; none elected to do so.

The fines were imposed for violating provisions of the ALPA constitution and by-laws relating to: the performance of work for an airline during a strike against that airline, behaviour such as to interfere with collective bargaining between the Association and the employer, and action contrary to the best interests of the Association or its members.

A recent decision of the US Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, in a case involving the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, made it clear that the imposition of fines by a union against members who cross picket lines is a valid, enforceable action. The court stated that strike-breakers "may not betray their colleagues and expect to get away without paying a price for weakening the collective bargaining environment".

Later in August the Appeal Board is to hear charges against a number of other New Continental pilots.

Meanwhile, in response to a request from ALPA for international solidarity, the ITF has contacted its aviation affiliates urging all possible support for ALPA-organised pilots in their continuing strike against New Continental.

IAM strike against El Al in New York and Miami

Over two hundred members of the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) employed by the Israeli airline El Al in New York and Miami have been on strike since 16 March after protracted negotiations on the renewal of their collective agreement collapsed under the airline's insistence that the union accept a long list of concessions on pay and conditions. The airline management adopted a 'take-it or leave-it' attitude throughout, refusing to bargain seriously with our affiliate and repeatedly walking out of meetings. The already tense situation was further aggravated when the company flew in Israeli staff with joint US/Israeli citizenship to act as strikebreakers; pressure from the IAM and the US labour movement eventually forced the airline to send these scabs back to Israel.

The latest efforts to settle the strike at talks on 19 July failed when El Al informed the IAM that certain of the strikers had forfeited their right to re-instatement once the dispute was over, causing the IAM to break off the talks. This led the AFL-CIO to impose an immediate national boycott of the anti-union carrier. ITF aviation affiliates have been asked to offer international solidarity by refusing to handle El Al flights and there has been a swift response to a request that ITF unions should send protest messages to the Israeli government expressing opposition to the airline's strike-breaking tactics and its refusal to negotiate. Support has also come from the Israeli national centre Histadrut, which has intervened with El Al on a number of occasions urging a speedy resolution of the dispute based on respect for the principle of good faith bargaining, and IAM-organised employees of other airlines operating in the United States have joined in demonstrations in a gesture of solidarity with their fellow trade unionists at El Al.

US Circuit Court of Appeals upholds \$52.5 million compensation award to former Northwest Orient Airlines stewardesses

The US Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington has upheld an award of \$52.5 million made by a federal judge in November 1982 to over three thousand stewardesses employed by the domestic airline Northwest Airlines between the years of 1967 and 1976 and the plaintiffs in a sex discrimination case that has been before the courts for well over a decade.

The initial district court decision in 1973 was in favour of the stewardesses, who had alleged discrimination in the areas of pay, hotel accommodation (male employees were assigned single rooms on stopovers, while female attendants were required to share double rooms) and laundry allowances (not available to the company's female employees). Repeated appeals by the airline over the years

delayed the final fixing of the exact sums due until 1982.

It is quite possible that Northwest will mount a further legal challenge contesting the award - the largest yet under federal equal pay legislation - after losing this latest appeal.

+ Full details were given in the Newsletter at the time (see ITF Newsletter No. 12, 1982, page 133)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has asked us to inform Newsletter readers that its Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights is available in book form for the first time this year. The survey also includes full details of complaints submitted to the ILO by the ICFTU, its affiliates and the International Trade Secretariats, as well as the Statement on Trade Union Rights adopted by the ICFTU World Congress held in Oslo in June 1983. It is available in English, French, German and Spanish from the ICFTU Press, Publications and Communications Department at the following address:

Rue Montagne aux Herbes Potagères 37-41
1000 Brussels
Belgium

NEWS IN BRIEF

Argentina: a strike and go-slow by dockers in Buenos Aires was called off on 23 July following the granting of a 42.6% pay increase.

British Caledonian cabin staff have accepted a 7.5% pay rise backdated to 1 February of this year.

Netherlands: with effect from 1 October, railwaymen who have served for over forty years with the Dutch National Railways (NS) will be entitled to take early retirement if they so wish.

Docker members of the ITF-affiliated St Lucia Seamen's and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union called off a five-day strike on 22 July after reaching agreement with the Port Castries employers on the size of gangs to be used for handling ro-ro containers.

Spain: a five-week strike by Iberia pilots ended on 23 July in binding arbitration. Under the settlement, the pilots are to receive a 3.5% pay increase this year, and Iberia will not be allowed to implement cost-saving plans to make 60 pilots redundant. Union demands for an increase in pilot strength in 1984 have been rejected. The pilots' union has said that it will appeal against the arbitration award on the grounds that it was not arrived at impartially.

Spain: employees of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits cancelled a second six-day strike due to start on 11 August after reaching agreement with the company on an eight per cent pay rise and strict implementation of the government decree on hours of public service workers. The wagons lits staff had already taken action on the RENFE network from 30 July to 4 August in support of their demands.

United States: the ITF-affiliated Air Line Pilots' Association has signed its first collective agreement with the regional carrier Comair. Major improvements negotiated for the company's 150 airline pilots include the introduction of a profit-sharing and share purchase scheme, as well as a reduction in flying hours.

A new three-year agreement signed by the ITF-affiliated US International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots on behalf of officers on dry cargo vessels provides for regular six monthly cost-of-living reviews from 1 January 1985.

The government of Vietnam has deposited an instrument of acceptance of the IMO Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The International Maritime Organization now has one hundred and twenty-six full members and one associate member.

OBITUARIES

We have been informed by the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers of the death of Tom S Bavin, its former President. Bavin was elected the first General Secretary of the IFPAAW at its founding Conference in December 1959 and continued to serve in that capacity until December 1976, when he was elected to the presidency of the International Federation. On his retirement from active union life at the 5th World Congress in December 1982, he was created Honorary President for life in recognition of the many years of distinguished service he had rendered the international labour movement.

Leif Risö, editor of "Sjömannen", the magazine of the Swedish Seamen's Union, has died, aged 55.

PERSONALIA

Norman Docker retired last month as General Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia under the industry's early retirement provisions. With just over thirty-three years' service, Docker was the longest-serving official in the history of the WWF, and in a distinguished union career was appointed to a number of its key positions, including that of Industrial and Research Officer (in the 50s and 60s), Assistant General Secretary (from 1968) and General Secretary following the recent retirement of Charlie Fitzgibbon. During this time, the Australian waterfront underwent many changes and it was Docker who with his carefully prepared and researched submissions to the various government inquiries of the time helped put an end to the much-hated casual labour system and assisted in the creation of the modern dock industry in which the workers enjoy job security, a guaranteed minimum wage and conditions of employment that are superior to those offered by most other industries. He also did much to make the WWF an industry union, recruiting tradesmen, shipping clerks and shipwrights to its ranks, although it took his not inconsiderable skills as an advocate to fend off legal challenges from those factions that sought to resist the growth of an industry union on the docks. A highly respected figure, he has represented the WWF for a number of years on the waterfront industry's consultative council and has also served in various capacities on bodies looking after workers' interests, including latterly as Chairman and General Manager of the WWF's own Credit Union.

Docker is succeeded by T I (Tas) Bull, formerly WWF Assistant General Secretary, who will serve as Acting General Secretary until the union's Congress in July 1985. Tas Bull is well known to maritime trade unionists in the ITF, having served on the Fair Practices Committee for the past ten years. More recently, he was elected Vice-Chairman of the ITF Dockers' Section at our Madrid Congress in October 1983. Bull is replaced as Acting Assistant General Secretary by Leo Lenane, the union's Federal Organiser since 1973.

We offer warm congratulations to Marcel Schlechter on his appointment last month as Minister of Transport, Energy and Public Works in the new Luxembourg government. Brother Schlechter has been chairman since 1971 of the coach, taxi and road haulage drivers' section of the Luxembourg Federation of Railway and Transport Workers (FNCTTFEL) and was responsible for concluding the first collective agreements ever negotiated for lorry and taxi drivers in the grand duchy. He also serves as his country's deputy on the Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Seafarers' Section Conference - Geneva (preparatory to ILO
Joint Maritime Commission) 17-18 September 1984

Ground Staff Technical Committee - Amsterdam 2 October 1984

ATLAS/KSSU Committee - Amsterdam 3-4 October 1984

Management Committee - Innsbruck 16 October 1984

Executive Board - Innsbruck 16-17 October 1984

Railwaymen's Section Committee - London 8-9 November 1984

Road Transport Workers' Section Committee - London 15-16 November 1984

Urban Transport Committee - Luxembourg 4-5 December 1984

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER INFORMATION
ON ANY ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON
REQUEST FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF