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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

ITF Marine Pilotage Committee holds first meeting

The ITF Marine Pilotage Committee held its inaugural meeting in Copenhagen on 20 and 21 August presided over by K Mols Sørensen, Chairman of the Seafarers' Section. ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander represented the Secretariat. The meeting considered the implementation of the resolution on pilotage in the Baltic which had been adopted by the Seafarers' Section Conference held in conjunction with the 34th ITF Congress in Madrid last October and recommended that certain categories of vessels should be required to carry a qualified pilot when navigating in Baltic waters, viz. (a) vessels registered in states which had not ratified the STCW, SOLAS and MARPOL Conventions and (b) vessels carrying noxious or dangerous cargoes, when navigating in certain specified areas of particular navigational difficulty.

AFRICA

ITF road transport affiliates hold first African regional conference

The first-ever regional conference organised for the ITF's African road transport workers' affiliates took place in Harare, capital of Zimbabwe, during the first full week of September. It was well attended, with delegations from countries in the west, east and south of the continent. Representing the ITF were General Secretary Harold Lewis, Road Transport Workers' Section Secretary Graham Brothers and Ben Udogwu, African Regional Representative; the proceedings were opened by the Honourable N T Mawema, Deputy Minister of Transport in the Zimbabwean government.

The conference participants exchanged information on the situation in their various countries in respect of trade union organisation, union rights and industrial relations and also on the limits imposed on driving and working hours and the length of rest periods as they applied to their national circumstances. Also discussed by the meeting were questions such as the health and safety of African road transport workers and professional training in road transport.

Delegates embodied their views in a wide-ranging resolution adopted at the conclusion of the conference calling for greater care in planning the expansion and modernisation of transport networks to facilitate economic and social progress and rural development; for enforcement of laws designed to protect workers in the industry and trade union rights; for concerted efforts to implement training schemes; and for governments to ratify ILO Convention No. 153 on hours of work and rest periods in road transport.

The conference also set up an ITF African Road Transport Workers' Committee, with one representative from each country. The newly-elected committee subsequently met and adopted a three-point working programme, centring on the establishment and implementation of training schemes; measures to be taken to achieve the implementation of ILO Convention No. 153; and measures to be taken to establish health and safety committees at the level of the undertaking.

African Regional Advisory Committee elects its officials

The inaugural meeting of the ITF African Regional Advisory Committee was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, immediately following the Road Transport Workers' Conference and was attended by one representative each from the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, together with Anderson Mhungu (Executive Board member), General Secretary Harold Lewis, African Representative Ben Udogwu, and Graham Brothers, Secretary to the Inland Transport Sections.

The Committee was set up at the 1983 ITF African Regional Conference to review and advise on the ITF's African activities and to exchange information and ideas among the members so as to keep them abreast of general developments on the political and trades union fronts. Much of this first meeting was thus devoted to a close examination of a report on recent activities and a number of proposals were made on the scope and form of future activities, particularly the educational projects. The meeting also considered detailed reports from the members on their national situations.

The meeting unanimously elected Julius Malii (Kenya) as Advisory Committee Chairman and O Zudonu (Nigeria) and A W Hassan (Sierra Leone) as its two Vice-Chairmen.

CARIBBEAN

Cruise ship seminar discusses employment prospects of Caribbean seafarers

A seminar on cruise ships, organised jointly by the ITF and the Caribbean Maritime and Aviation Council, was held in Antigua towards the beginning of September, attended by representatives of seafarers' and dockers' unions in Antigua, Barbados, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Panama, St Kitts, St Lucia, St Vincent, Trinidad and the United States. ITF affiliates in Great Britain, Greece, Italy and Norway generously provided lecturers for the seminar and ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander acted as its coordinator and briefed the participants on the new ITF collective agreement for cruise ships under flags of convenience.

Much of the time of the seminar was taken up by an examination of ways in which employment opportunities for Caribbean seafarers might be expanded. The ITF and CMAC were urged to seek negotiations with operators of flag of convenience cruise tonnage in the Caribbean basin with a view to obtaining recognition of the new agreement and to press for greater use to be made of local labour when crewing these ships. It was acknowledged that the employment prospects of the region's seafarers would be greatly enhanced by the introduction of appropriate training schemes and the Council was asked to press at the forthcoming session of the ILO Joint Maritime Commission for the establishment of vocational and safety training programmes for seafarers in the Caribbean area.

The seminar participants were of the view that membership of the Council should be expanded and recommended that contacts should be made with maritime unions in the French-speaking areas of the Caribbean as well as with unions in Barbados, Aruba, Bahamas and Jamaica. They further recommended that the support of docker affiliates in Canada, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela be sought for the ITF's continuing campaign on behalf of the region's seafarers on f-o-c cruise ships and that the CMAC Congress should take action in the matter of the appointment of an ITF inspector for the Caribbean area.

Finally, CMAC was asked at its Congress on the following day to adopt a resolution calling on Caribbean governments to ratify ILO instruments concerning seafarers and to speed up their ratification procedures.

TRANSPORT

JAPAN

Unions set to launch campaign of opposition to reorganisation and privatisation of Japan National Railways

The railway unions in Japan are set to launch a campaign of opposition to government plans for the reorganisation and privatisation of the Japan National Railways (JNR), which organised labour rightly sees as a serious threat to jobs and as marking the end of the provision of a national rail service. Workers in other countries are to be approached and asked for their support.

Under the so-called 'reconstruction plan' imposed by the government on the JNR the present national rail corporation is to be divided up into a number of regional sectors prior to privatisation in 1987, with a special committee from which the unions are to be specifically excluded being established to draw up plans for achieving this objective.

Already a number of cost-saving measures intended to make the JNR more attractive to potential purchasers have either been embarked on or are due to be implemented shortly. These include the axeing of unprofitable passenger services in rural areas (roughly thirteen per cent of the total network is listed for closure) and the contraction of freight operations (these were reduced by one third earlier this year).

Over seventy thousand railwaymen's jobs have disappeared since 1980 and recruitment has been halted. The railway management is now saying that a further 100,000 jobs will have to go soon, and that it has plans to lay off another 25,000 workers. Contract labour has already been introduced and mechanisation and rationalisation are increasingly the order of the day - all adding to the squeeze on jobs. Union efforts to find an acceptable solution to the manpower problem are being frustrated by management which, perhaps under pressure from the government, is refusing to negotiate in good faith.

To publicize the campaign, the unions are preparing a pamphlet setting out in detail what is happening to the JNR and the consequences for Japanese railway workers. A Solidarity Conference, organised by our two Japanese railwaymen's affiliates KOKURO and DORO, is to take place in Tokyo next March to be followed by representations to the Japanese government.

UNITED STATES

Unions submit improved bid for Conrail

The Railway Labor Executives' Association has submitted an improved bid for Conrail on behalf of the company's employees, twelve months after its initial offer to buy the company last year*. Twelve other bids for the railroad had been received by the deadline for the receipt of offers.

The union has doubled its cash offer for the railway from \$500 million to \$1 billion and has agreed that employee ownership of stock should be reduced from the originally proposed 70% to a maximum of 40%. Government concern that labour's initial offer would place too great a debt burden on Conrail has been met by an agreement from the RLEA that it would be willing to use preferred stock rather than debt as bridge financing for the deal.

The company's employees have agreed to extend wage restraint to 1987 and to waive tax benefits as part of their offer. In return, the RLEA is asking for three employee seats on Conrail's Board of Directors.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 9/10 of 1983, page 81

TRADE UNIONS

SOUTH AFRICA

FOSATU stages dazzling worker festival

Over eight thousand African workers and their families took part in the second and much enlarged Education Workshop organised by the independent unions' own national centre - the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) - in the spacious surroundings of Johannesburg's Milner Park Main Arena in mid-July. Many of those who attended came from a considerable distance (FOSATU laid on special buses to bring the workers from their factories and other workplaces; ten buses came all the way from Durban, 14 hours' travel in all).

Packed in to the stands, the enthusiastic audience were treated to a dazzling and colourful spectacle of first-rate entertainment provided by worker bands, worker theatre groups, worker choirs and exotic worker singing and dancing groups, all testifying to the wealth of untapped talent that the black working class movement has within its ranks. The 40s jazz sound was revived by the African Jazz Pioneers, who were joined on stage by the singing and dancing group Abafana Bomoya, whose act has its roots in the worker culture created in the hostels. A talented performer from Natal, Alfred Qabula, who has already written and performed a Praise Poem to FOSATU, this time put on his own one-man play, which was much enjoyed by all. Another popular attraction was the singing group of Durban bus drivers (from our new affiliate, the South African Transport and General Workers' Union) who performed to the accompaniment of a guitar played by one of their number. Nor were the children forgotten - Mickey, the worker clown, held them spellbound with his act.

FOSATU-affiliated unions involved in the Federation's Unity Drive had stands and displays in the aptly named Unity Hall - including some of our own affiliates who were quick to grasp this opportunity to put over the union message to a wider audience. Videos and films were also shown as part of an event that was meant to entertain as well as to inform and which succeeded so admirably in both its objectives. The workers took away many happy memories of an eventful day and should need no persuading to come along to next year's festival. We could indeed be witnessing the start of a tradition that will rank alongside the more established worker festivals that are an integral part of the life and culture of so many countries.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRALIA

Union proposals for safer hold access frustrated by maritime employers

For some years now the ITF-affiliated Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia has been conducting a vigorous campaign for safer hold ladders. All the more regrettable therefore that when the importance of sloping hold ladders seems generally to have been recognised the union's attempts to ensure that new vessels added to the Australian merchant fleet have even safer hold access have been frustrated by the maritime employers.

At a recent meeting of the tripartite working group on the revision of the safety provisions of the loading and unloading regulations, the Association of Employers of Waterside Labour and the Chamber of Shipping rejected a proposal put forward by the WWF, with other union support, to the effect that all newbuildings should be fitted with two sloping/modified ladders, one at either end of the hold, rather than only one such ladder as at present. Following the employers' rejection of these proposals the Department of Transport informed the union that it was unable to act on its suggestions.

This has led the WWF to withdraw its cooperation on the use of portable ladders to gain hold access in cases where the existing hold ladder is obstructed. Federation members have been instructed that they should not use portable ladders simply because sloping ladders are obstructed, unless there is some other extraordinary circumstance leading to the sloping ladder being unavailable. The union says it is clear that its limited and reluctant cooperation on the use of portable ladders in the past has been misinterpreted as a willingness to accept a standard that is significantly lower than it has been working towards for the past eleven years.

CANADA

Higher pay for British Columbia longshoremen

New dockers' pay rates have been agreed between the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the British Columbia Employers' Association following the re-opening of contract talks. Hourly shift pay will be increased by 50 cents backdated to 1 January 1984 and by 15 cents from 1 July 1984, with a further 80 cents on 1 January 1985. The employers have also undertaken to increase their superannuation fund contributions from the beginning of next year. The contract itself which was due to expire at the end of 1984 has been extended for a further twelve months.

GERMANY

3% pay increase for inland boatmen

The pay and allowances of inland boatmen have risen by 3% under an agreement signed by the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV), which is backdated to the beginning of May. Increased time off will be granted for work on Saturdays and remuneration for Sunday working has also been improved, while boatmen with an annual leave entitlement of less than 30 days will receive an extra day's leave in each of the next two years.

GREAT BRITAIN

Second national dock strike ends

Dockers throughout Britain commenced a national strike on 24 August in protest at the use of unregistered labour to berth a bulk carrier at the British Steel Corporation's Hunterston Terminal on the Clyde. This marked the second time in as many months that British dockers had been called out on strike by the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union in broadly similar circumstances.

The strike was finally called off on 18 September following a meeting in London of dock union delegates at which the agreement concluded in Scotland over future berthing arrangements and working practices at the Clyde terminal was formally endorsed. Alleged breaches of the dock labour scheme at a number of ports during the strike are to be dealt with separately under the machinery set up for overseeing the working of the scheme.

Once again, the TGWU has expressed its thanks to ITF affiliates who extended solidarity on the occasion of this latest strike.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 6/7, 1984, page 68 for full details of earlier strike

NETHERLANDS

Conventional cargo sector dispute brought to successful conclusion

In late August, dockers in the general cargo section of the port of Rotterdam began a series of lightning stoppages against individual employers in a dispute over threatened jobs, subsequently escalating their action into two sector-wide strikes on 5 and 14 - 15 September. The men are members of the ITF-affiliated Dutch Transport Workers' Union (FNV) which was insisting that member companies of the Rotterdam Port Employers' Association should between them take on about 130 dockers employed by the financially-troubled company Rotterdam Terminal who were about to lose their jobs. (20 other employees of Rotterdam Terminal had already been offered jobs elsewhere within Incotrans, the parent company.) This the employers' association refused to do despite an agreement reached with the FNV in 1983 under which dockers surplus to the requirements of any one employer might be transferred to other employers provided there was no overall surplus of labour in the general cargo sector. The port employers justified their refusal by claiming that they were under no moral or legal obligation to find work for dockers facing redundancy following the bankruptcy or closure of a stevedoring company.

The union's firm stance was vindicated a week later when, following renewed negotiations, the association made a firm offer of alternative employment within the port to each of the dockers at the centre of the dispute.

NORWAY

Arbitration board announces recommendations on state sector pay

The arbitration board set up following the state sector pay strike earlier this year* has now reported and has recommended pay increases worth a total of 6.25% for 1984, thus ensuring that most state employees achieve a modest pay progression this year. Union demands for modifications to pay scales from which some 20,000 workers will benefit have been conceded by the board which also proposed a revised

method of calculating minimum pension rates. The new agreement is backdated to 30 May and expires on 30 April 1986. Major beneficiaries are railway employees, municipal transport workers and some airport staff.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 6/7 of June/July 1984, page 69

Higher pay for ratings on cargo vessels

A new collective agreement has been negotiated by the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seamen's Union on behalf of ratings on cargo vessels. Pay is being increased by 65 kr per month backdated to 1 April 1984 for most categories (ratings with between 8 and 10 years' service will receive an extra 75 kr, while special increases have been agreed for ordinary seamen, greasers and deckhands). A further increase of 275 kr per month will take effect from the beginning of next month.

SINGAPORE

Pay increases for officers with Straits Shipping

The ITF-affiliated Singapore Maritime Officers' Union has successfully concluded a revised collective agreement with Straits Shipping on behalf of its members in the local, home and foreign trades. Basic rates have been increased by between 4 and 5 per cent and insurance cover against accident and permanent disability has been substantially improved.

SOUTH AFRICA

Durban stevedoring company ordered to pay employees the minimum rate

The ITF-affiliated South African General Workers' Union won an important victory last month when the Ministry of Manpower refused to grant the Durban stevedoring company Keeley Forwarding an exemption from a wage order setting a legal minimum wage of R 18.65 per day. The company, which only recently recognised the union, had been paying most of its employees only R 10.20 per day, and had argued that it was unable to pay more as it was locked into contracts quoted for on the basis of the old rates and these could not be renegotiated before June 1985. The company had also refused to pay the new rates while its application for an exemption was being processed and was instructed to pay back pay to its employees for the eleven-week period involved.

UNITED STATES

ALPA appeals against bankruptcy judge's ruling on Continental and calls for an independent federal investigation of safety at struck carrier

The ITF-affiliated US Air Line Pilots' Association filed an appeal last month against the findings of the bankruptcy judge who issued an order in June confirming Continental's rejection of its labour contract with the union. ALPA President Henry Duffy says he is prepared to press the case to the Supreme Court if necessary.

In giving its reasons for its decision, the court said it was convinced that Continental had negotiated in good faith before breaking off the contract, which the judge believed was 'burdensome' to Continental. In the judge's view, the

negotiations with the pilots' union had been unlikely to lead to a prompt and satisfactory solution of the company's difficulties. The judge had also accused ALPA of wanting to 'shut down' Continental.

Repudiating these charges, the union president said his sole aim throughout the long dispute with Continental had been to secure a fair contract that would protect the jobs of Continental's pilots. He regretted that strike action was the only language that the board of the New Continental seemed able to understand.

In July, the pilots' union charged the Federal Aviation Administration with ignoring safety problems at Continental and called for an independent federal investigation.*

* for fuller information on Continental's recent safety record see ITF Newsletters Nos. 5 and 6/7

Settlement at Frontier Airlines averts strike

The recently-affiliated US Association of Flight Attendants has signed an improved 32-month contract on behalf of its 800 members with Frontier Airlines, thus averting a threatened strike. The new contract provides for a starting salary for cabin attendants of \$ 930 per month, together with an early retirement plan for staff with 13 years' service. Agreement has also been reached in principle on the introduction of a profit-sharing scheme and that cabin staff hired as temporaries should be given permanent status.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Strikes by Aerolineas Argentinas cabin and cockpit personnel and also of its administrative and technical staff in support of wage claims have disrupted the company's domestic and international services in recent days.

Australia: Qantas flight engineers mounted a 12-hour strike on 7 September in protest at the carrier's decision to operate its new Boeing 767s with a two pilot only crew.

Pilots employed by Biman Bangladesh Airlines began a strike on 20 September following the breakdown of negotiations on a new collective agreement.

Employees of the foreign airlines Alitalia, Flying Tigers, KLM and SAS in the German Federal Republic have been awarded pay increases of 3.4% from 1 July 1984 under an agreement concluded by the ITF-affiliated Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV). Holiday pay has also been increased to 820 DM and a lump-sum payment of 360 DM made in lieu of retroactivity to the settlement date of 1 March.

PERSONALIA

All his many friends in the ITF extend warmest congratulations to Frank Cousins, twice President of the ITF, who celebrated his 80th birthday on 8 September. Cousins headed the British Transport and General Workers' Union as its General Secretary from 1956 to 1969, taking leave of absence to serve as Minister of Technology in the Labour government during the mid-sixties. He was ITF President from 1958 to 1960 and again from 1962 to 1965, when he was awarded the ITF Gold Badge in token of his outstanding services to our International. We would like to take this opportunity of wishing an old and much-admired colleague many years of continued good health.

To mark the occasion, the Transport and General Workers' Union has inaugurated the Frank Cousins Peace Award. The first recipient, chosen by Brother Cousins, is Joan Ruddock, chairman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain.

Len Murray, General Secretary since 1973 of the British Trades Union Congress, retired earlier this month and has been succeeded by Norman Willis, previously TUC Assistant General Secretary. Before joining the TUC, Willis was National Secretary for Research and Education of the British Transport and General Workers' Union.

Liselotte Raupp-Gunkel, a long-serving and prominent member of the executive of the German Railwaymen's Union (GdED), has just retired. Frau Raupp led the GdED delegation to the 1975 ITF Women's Conference of which she was the Vice-Chairman, and has attended several ITF Congresses. She sits also on the ICFTU Women's Committee. To mark her many years of devoted service to the trade union movement in her native Germany, she was recently awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz (the medal for conspicuous services to the German Federal Republic). We wish Frau Raupp-Gunkel a long and happy retirement.

S B Smith, chief treasurer of the Danish Railwaymen's Union, retired at the end of last month.

Robert Strobl has been appointed Second Vice-President of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union. He succeeds Erwin Kaiser who retired last month.

Shannon Wall, President of the National Maritime Union of America, has been named head of the newly-formed International Association of Professional Divers.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Ground Staff Technical Committee - Amsterdam 2 October 1984
ATLAS/KSSU Committee - Amsterdam 3-4 October 1984
Executive Board - Innsbruck 16-17 October 1984
African Civil Aviation Conference - Nairobi 22-25 October 1984
Engineer Officers - Cascais (near Lisbon) 25-26 October 1984
Railwaymen's Section Committee - London 8-9 November 1984
Road Transport Workers' Section Committee - London 15-16 November 1984
Inland Navigation Section Committee - Strasbourg 22-23 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

Continuing deadlock at UNCTAD on open register issue

The United Nations Plenipotentiary Conference on Conditions for Registration of Ships was held in Geneva from 16 July to 3 August 1984. It was attended by representatives of ITF affiliates in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Great Britain, India, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The ITF delegation consisted of Ake Selander, Assistant General Secretary, Brian Laughton, Secretary to the ITF Special Seafarers' Department, and Richard Daschbach, Assistant to the President of the Seafarers' International Union (USA). Little progress was made and a resumed session of the Conference has been scheduled for 28 January to 15 February 1985. The ITF delegation was able to make two statements in which it stressed the fact that the seafarer affiliates of the ITF, with the solidarity and support of their fellow ITF affiliates in port and other industries, were seeking by all means available to them to bring an end to the f-o-c system which made a mockery of the sovereignty of the flag. The ITF maintained that it was not against providing assistance to labour-supplying countries affected by the International Agreement on Conditions for Registration of Ships but wanted assistance to be coupled with strict controls on recruitment and training. The ITF deplored the uncompromising attitude adopted by most of the developed countries which had rejected or tried to weaken proposals that could have established a genuine link between ships and their flags. They were urged to undertake proper consultations with both sides of the shipping industry and the parliaments or national legislatures in their respective countries. The ITF also suggested that there should be tripartite consultations within the OECD as well.