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NEWS

KENYAN LABOUR MINISTER GREETES ITF EXECUTIVE

The first meeting of the ITF Executive Board to take place in Africa was opened in Nairobi on March 18 by the Kenyan Labour Minister the Hon. Peter Oloo Aringo. The minister, in his speech, referred to the ITF as the "most powerful international trade union organisation in the world". Holding the meeting in Africa was, he said, a sign of the ITF's determination to support the aims and aspirations of African transport workers. Although independence had been won in most African countries, he pointed out, the fight for economic self determination still remained, and the ITF and its affiliates had an important role to play in it.

During its two day discussions, the Executive Board concentrated on preparations for the forthcoming 35th ITF Congress in Luxembourg. It approved a discussion paper "Changes Facing Transport Workers" which will be submitted to the Congress, and agreed to recommend to the Congress an increase in ITF affiliation fees and an extension in the period between Congresses from 3 to 4 years. Applications for affiliation were approved from unions in Denmark, Cyprus, Australia and the Ivory Coast.

The meeting was held at the invitation of the ITF's three Kenyan affiliates: Railways and Harbours Union; Transport and Allied Workers Union; and Dock Workers Union and organised by the ITF's Regional Representative Ben Udogwu who is based in Nairobi. At its closing session the meeting was informed by ITF President Fritz Prechtel that he would not be a candidate for reelection to the post of President at the forthcoming Congress. The Executive Board members paid tribute to Bro Prechtel's outstanding contribution to the work of the ITF and agreed that a more formal expression of appreciation should be made in Luxembourg.

SEAFARERS' CONFERENCE CONDEMNS UN SHIPS TREATY

Strong opposition to the recently concluded UN Convention on Ship Registration was expressed by the ITF Seafarers Conference which met in Venice from 24-26 March. The Conference, which brought together representatives of seafarers' trade unions in 26 countries, pointed out that the final text of the convention gives international respectability to the operation of so called "open registries". The Conference called on all ITF affiliates to oppose the ratification of the agreement by their governments, in the hope that it will not achieve sufficient ratifications to come into force.

The Conference, which was chaired by K Mols Sørensen (Denmark) discussed a wide range of current issues of importance to seafarers and their unions. A new ITF collective agreement for Maritime Mobile Offshore Units which had been drafted by a Committee meeting on March 23 was approved by it, together with a safety programme for the same sector. Recommendations made by the ITF's Asian Seafarers' Regional Committee about the employment of non-domiciled seafarers were discussed at length and it was agreed that crewing arrangements should be discussed between Asian unions and

those in countries such as Greece still using non domiciled seafarers . The Conference reaffirmed its policy of retaining a properly qualified radio officer on all ships over 1600 grt for the present time and agreed to hold an ITF seminar on maritime radiocommunication to discuss future developments. Delegates also considered the twin dangers posed to passenger and cargo ships by hijacking and piracy. The International Maritime Organisation is currently working on an international instrument on ship hijacking which, the conference was told, will be ready for consideration in September this year. The Conference took a strong line on the protection of stowaways in the light of several recent reports of stowaways being thrown overboard or cast adrift in the middle of the ocean, reaffirmed support for ratification of the 1957 Brussels Convention on Stowaways, and agreed to draw up ITF guidelines on their treatment.

Inland Transport

JAPAN: ACTION DAY AGAINST RAILWAY PRIVATISATION

Wednesday May 14 1986 has been declared a worldwide day of action against the Japanese government's plans to privatise Japan National Railways (JNR) and sack 124,000 workers. On that day ITF Railwaymen's affiliates will be demonstrating and sending delegations to Japanese embassies to show their support for their Japanese colleagues.

Using the excuse of a deficit forced on it by government-sponsored investment in the past, the Japanese government is proposing to break JNR up into 6 private companies that will have to operate solely on the basis of profits - cutting services and employment and raising prices. The day the system is destroyed - 31 March 1987 if the legislation is passed - all 307,000 JNR employees will be out of a job. The government plans no consultations with the unions about this process - all present collective agreements will simply cease on that date.

The Minister of Transport will then decide which fortunate 183,000 JNR employees will get jobs in the new companies. Lists of "recommended" employees are being drawn up already - taking account of workers with "disruptive" backgrounds - allowing the government to get rid of all employees who have participated in any industrial action.

The ITF is continuing to give the maximum possible international support to its affiliates KOKURO and DORO in their fight to defend jobs and to stop victimisation of trade union members.

SWITZERLAND: RAIL 2000

The Swiss people will vote later this year in a referendum on a daring plan to extend and develop the national railway system. The plan - called "Rail 2000" - is being enthusiastically backed by the Swiss railway workers' union SEV as a "fundamental change in transport policy".

Under the proposed scheme more than SFr 56 million will be invested in the state railway system - half paying for the improvement of existing facilities and upgrading of services and the other half for construction of new, high speed lines. At least 1,200 new jobs in the industry would be created - and prices to the rail traveller could well be reduced substantially as well.

The most radical aspect of the proposals is the new timetabling system suggested - computerised analysis has provided a scheme by which all trains would intersect at main towns on the hour - guaranteeing a minimal wait for any passenger changing trains. Faster trains will be introduced on new lines in many areas to ensure this system works.

The system also proposes a full integration of local services, fast trains and international trains - providing for maximum ease of transfer with minimum delay. It is also designed to link up with similar plans in other European countries should they choose to follow Switzerland's lead.

Civil Aviation

INTERNATIONAL: PILOTS BACK BOYCOTT ACTION ON TERRORISM

Possible boycott action against states which sponsor acts of terrorism or which harbour terrorists and against airports with inadequate security were among the measures authorised by the Annual Conference of IFALPA (the International Federation of Airline Pilots) which took place in London in April. Many of IFALPA's members are also affiliated to the ITF. Following the IFALPA decision, the ITF issued a statement indicating that its flight deck, cabin crew and ground staff affiliates would cooperate fully with IFALPA to exert the maximum pressure on airline flights to and from countries whose involvement in terrorism can be clearly identified, including action in foreign airports against their national carriers. "All workers in civil aviation both on board aircraft and on the ground are placed at risk by terrorist acts" the ITF statement stressed, "immediate and effective action must be taken by all concerned to bring terrorist attacks to an end."

Amongst other statements adopted by the IFALPA meeting were a strong stand against the carriage of armed guards, firearms or other dangerous weapons on board civil aircraft, and concern about the effects of deregulation on safety standards in civil aviation. On this last point the Federation stressed the importance of closer working relationships between pilots' associations and other unions, and the need to give clear priority to protection of existing working conditions. The ITF was represented at the Conference by Research Officer David Cockroft.

Seafarers

BRAZIL: SEAFARERS' STRIKE BRINGS MAJOR GAINS

The settlement which ended the two-day strike last month of Brazilian seafarers employed by private shipping companies was hailed by the unions as a total victory after the owners conceded all their major claims. Significant gains were won, notably on leave (with 10 additional days for foreign-going seafarers and 5 days for seafarers in the coastal trade) and overtime, for which a 50% premium will apply Mondays to Fridays and 100% on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. The owners also agreed to pay for air transport for seafarers living over 400 km from the port of embarkation. Union members will now be given preference when hiring and an undertaking has been obtained that seafarers will not be victimised for taking part in the strike. Additionally, salaries have been increased by 114% backdated to 1 February, based on rises in the consumer price index.

At the commencement of the strike, the ITF sent messages of support for its affiliate, the Brazilian Seafarers' Federation, to the President José Sarney and the Brazilian Ministers of Transport and Labour, urging that they intervene to promote a settlement of the dispute. A number of ITF seafarer affiliates also sent similar messages to the Brazilian authorities.

F R GERMANY: SEAFARERS' STRIKE BRINGS SWIFT VICTORY

A short but effective strike by German seafarers has ended in a clear victory for the ITF-affiliated OeTV. The walk-out - which began on April 13 and lasted six days - was the first strike in over 80 years by German seafarers.

The union's central demand was for a substantial increase in annual leave for seafarers from 112 days a year to 142 days a year. This increase, said the union, would help to create additional jobs in the industry. The German flag-fleet - in common with many European fleets - has drastically declined over the last twenty years. More than half its tonnage and 60% of its employment have been lost over this period.

The strike began after the OeTV rejected an offer from a state appointed mediator of 4 extra days' leave and a 3 per cent pay rise. Within hours of the strike call being issued, OeTV members on German flag ships in port took strike action - two days later nearly 40 ships were idle in ports in Europe, Asia and Australia. In response to a request from the OeTV the ITF notified all maritime affiliates of the need to give assistance to those on strike. At the same time, OeTV officials were sent to the main ports involved to support their members. The strike was settled when the shipowners agreed to an increase in annual leave of 15 and 18 days and a basic DM 100 pay increase to all seafarers.

FRANCE: ITF INTERVENES FOR SURVIVORS OF "AMINA" SINKING

The Maltese-flag ship Amina sank off Brest, France on March 25 - with the loss of four lives. When the five surviving crew members were released from hospital, they found to their dismay that the shipping company was refusing to pay them wages owed since January or to compensate them for the loss of belongings on the sunken ship. All they were offered were airfares home to Ghana. To make matters worse, the company - Amina Shipping Ltd of Valletta, Malta - refused to make any arrangements for the three dead bodies sitting in the Brest mortuary (one seafarer was never found).

The ITF was contacted - and following pressure on the Maltese authorities, a meeting between the five men and the shipping company was held in the Ghanaian embassy in Paris. The company has now paid the outstanding wages and has repatriated the seafarers and the bodies of their dead companions. Compensation for lost belongings has yet to be settled - but a claim is being vigorously pursued with the company.

GREECE: SEAFARERS' GENERAL SECRETARY ATTACKED IN HIS OFFICE FOLLOWING STRIKE

The 24-hour warning strike called by the Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) in Greek ports on 21 March was an outstanding success. Action in foreign ports began at the same time but had little time to bite before the PNO executive met and decided to call off the strike as the threat to the special tax regime for seafarers' earnings, the key issue at stake, had been lifted. However, a crowd of dissident seafarers demonstrating outside the union headquarters was clearly not prepared to accept the executive's decision. General Secretary Michalis Zenzefyllis was attacked in his office and sustained serious injuries, including a fractured vertebra. The ITF deplored this unprovoked attack on a respected union official by a faction bent on destroying the unity of the Greek seafarers' organisation.

GREAT BRITAIN: DECLINE IN FLEET CONTINUES

The steady decline in the number of ships in the UK register increased alarmingly last month. Following BP's decision to flag out more than 30 ships (Newsletter February/March) the ten vessel Furness Withy fleet is also considering transfer to a flag of convenience. Other flagging out decisions announced in April include Canadian Pacific (five vessels), Jepsens (seven vessels) and Souter (three vessels).

The British shipowners' organisation (the General Council of British Shipping), faced with the steady elimination of its membership, has now taken the unprecedented step of allowing UK operators of foreign flag ships to remain as members. A special committee of the GCBS will be formed to represent the interests of the FOC shipowners - and the GCBS, as the official voice of British shipowners, will now lobby and speak for the FOCs as well.

General

ITF MOURNS DEATH OF SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER OLOF PALME

The ITF has joined trade unionists worldwide in expressing deep horror at the appalling murder on 28 February of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. It was a great tragedy, ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis said in a message to the Swedish government, that the world should have been deprived in such a brutal fashion of a true internationalist and fighter for peace and social justice. Palme was guest of honour at the ITF's 1974 Stockholm Congress and addressed its opening session.

UNIONS URGE PRIORITY FOR EMPLOYMENT

Coordinated measures by governments to cut unemployment must be a top priority. This is the conclusion of a statement by TUAC (the Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD) to be presented to the summit of Heads of Government of the seven major industrialised countries due to be held in Tokyo at the beginning of May.

Pointing out that 500,000 more people will be unemployed in the OECD countries by mid 1987 taking the total to 31 million, the trade union statement points out that falling oil prices, though welcome, will not automatically lead to higher economic growth. Investment and tax policies must be adjusted so that the benefits of lower oil prices feed through immediately into job creation.

The TUAC statement calls for government action in eight main areas:

- 1 Coordinated policies to boost demand, purchasing power and living standards;
- 2 A coordinated medium term monetary policy which brings down interest rates and establishes greater exchange rate stability;
- 3 A major public investment policy initiative together with international cooperation on research and development of socially useful new technologies.
- 4 Continued long term energy conservation policies which must not be affected by oil price fluctuation;
- 5 Better social protection, education and training policies to help workers cope with effects of technological change;
- 6 A coordinated policy of reducing working time accompanied by measures to ensure that it is translated into job creation.
- 7 A major initiative to reduce the poverty and debt problems of the developing countries.
- 8 A new international multilateral trading framework based on observance of fair labour standards, and regulation of multinational companies.

At a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone on 22 April these policies were presented by a TUAC delegation led by its President David Basnett and its General Secretary John Evans.

GHANA: UNIONS OPPOSE BUDGET

Trade Unionists in Ghana are sporting red wrist bands and shoulder straps to demonstrate their opposition to the latest budget. Finance Minister Dr Kwesi Botchway's 1986 budget, while increasing prices paid by the state to farmers for cocoa and coffee, has ordered that travel allowances for all workers be ended. The Trade Union Congress is totally opposed to this move - stating that they see it as a direct contravention of workers' rights to collective bargaining. The TUC executive board will meet later this month to discuss possible further protest actions around May Day - meanwhile the unions have hoisted red flags at all regional offices and union members are wearing red to show their opposition to the arbitrary removal of the allowance.

IRELAND: NEW LABOUR LAWS PLANNED

The Irish government has proposed a major shift in labour relations law away from existing system of immunities and towards a framework of positive rights and legal obligations. The current law, based on the British tradition, assumes that industrial disputes are unlawful but grants trade unions special immunity from legal action.

In the past unions in the UK and in Ireland have defended this situation on the principle that it keeps the law out of industrial relations, but recent events in the UK - where the Thatcher government has removed immunity from secondary action and solidarity strikes - have shown the unions just how fragile their position really is. The new plans propose the creation of a positive right to strike on condition that a secret ballot is first held. Workers would also be granted the right to picket peacefully at their place of work - but would only be permitted to picket another company if they have reason to believe that the second company is trying to frustrate the main dispute. The right to boycotting, or "blacking", goods would also be allowed - so long as the action is aimed at preventing the flow of goods or services to or from the company at the centre of the dispute.

The proposals so far are only in the form of a discussion paper. The shape of the final law is as yet uncertain. However, Irish employers' organisations are already campaigning hard against any changes in the present laws.

SOUTH AFRICA: UNIONS SEEK TO ISOLATE APARTHEID REGIME

Trade unions around the world staged a week of protest from 17 to 21 March aimed at the South African apartheid régime. In a bid to isolate the government of the Republic, trade unionists pressed during the Week for South African Airways (SAA) to be denied landing and overflying rights and

urged airlines still flying to South Africa to follow the lead of the Scandinavian carrier SAS and cease these operations. SAA offices in a number of countries were picketed and passengers flying to South Africa were handed leaflets explaining the union case.

Many unions sent protest cables to President Botha and staged demonstrations outside South African diplomatic missions. Other sections of the movement held rallies and marches and supported boycotts of South African products. Companies with investments in the "bantustans" were also approached and strongly urged to pull out while employees in companies with substantial investments in the Republic were made aware of the role of their companies in propping up the Pretoria régime. In a show of support for black workers in the Republic, unions also sent messages of solidarity to the independent black union movement in the Republic.

In the United States, the AFL-CIO has called for a general consumer boycott of Shell, the oil company which is a major supporter of the South African government.

TUNISIA: GOVERNMENT ATTACKS ON UNIONS RESUME

The Tunisian government's campaign against the independent trade union movement continued this month with the jailing for two years of Habib Achour, former leader of the UGTT. Achour, founder and long time leader of the 350,000 member union organisation, was charged with financial mismanagement of union insurance funds. The government has since taken control of the funds away from the union - and placed them in the hands of a state owned company. Union offices have also been ransacked by "revolutionary committees", the union daily newspaper closed down and a number of union activists harassed and jailed. Achour was ill for most of the trial - and was unable to attend the court. The trial continued without him, despite protests and demonstrations by defence lawyers and supporters.

Regions

ASIA/PACIFIC: INLAND TRANSPORT WORKERS' MEETING CALLS FOR INCREASED INTER-UNION COOPERATION

The ITF's Asia/Pacific Inland Transport Committee held its second meeting in Kuala Lumpur from 17 to 20 March 1986, attended by twenty leading officials from rail, road, dock and inland waterway unions in eleven countries in the region. The three discussion topics were: trade union organisation, industrial relations, and inter-union cooperation. ITF Regional Secretary Mo Hoda chaired the meeting and speakers at the opening session were V David, General Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union of Malaysia, Juamaluddin Zim, Chairman of the ITF Malaysian Council of Trade Unions and Zainal Rampak, President of the Malaysian UTC.

The meeting established that the region's road and river transport workers in particular were mostly unorganised due to a predominance of small employers and owner-drivers. Even in those industries with a high level of

organisation the trend towards privatisation has led to fragmentation, undermining the effectiveness of the trade unions. Technological change and the growing number of multinational companies operating in the region were adding to the pressures on workers, as was the fragmentation of the labour movement in many countries and government action to class transport as an essential service and so eliminate the right to strike.

The participants urged the strengthening of the ITF's regional education programme and recommended that the ITF's national educational officers be encouraged to exchange information with a view to promoting better cooperation between unions in the region.

The participants also called for a concerted union attack on attempts by governments to undermine the trade union movement and called on all Asia/Pacific governments to ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on trade union rights.

The meeting elected Umraomal Purohit (President of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation) as Chairman of the ITF Asia/Pacific Inland Transport Committee for 1986/7 and Jamaluddin Zim (Malaysia) as Vice-Chairman.

LATIN AMERICA: ITF REGIONAL CONFERENCE MEETS

The 5th ITF Latin American regional conference took place in Buenos Aires from 25 to 28 February. It was attended by 198 delegates representing 44 affiliates in most of the countries of the continent. Also attending were a number of observers from non-affiliated transport workers' unions with which the ITF enjoys friendly relations.

The conference's opening ceremony was attended by a number of Argentinian government ministers, including the Secretary of State for Labour Dr Roberto Bigatti, who read a message to the conference from President Alfonsín. ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis addressed the Conference, and Juan Fonseca, representing the Regional Office in Lima, presented a report on the activities in the region in the last three years.

The meeting, presided over by Ricardo Perez, the ITF's Argentinian Board member, discussed trade union freedoms and collective bargaining, trade union organisation, practical solidarity and trade union education. It also examined hours of work, remuneration and unemployment and the political, economic and social situation in the region, with special reference to Latin American unity and the external debt.

At the close, delegates adopted the "Declaration of Buenos Aires" reaffirming the determination of ITF affiliates to strive for political and trade union rights throughout the continent. A number of resolutions were adopted by the conference on topics such as trade union unity; the introduction of the eight-hour working day; and a national minimum wage; payment of adequate pensions to retired workers; and the intensification of trade union educational activities.

Union News

Three separate ITF affiliates in France, the FO Transport, Railwaymen's and Maritime unions have formed a united 'Union Interfederale des Transports'.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Finnish private sector workers came out on strike last month after protracted negotiations with the employers had failed to produce a new two-year agreement. The effect of the disruption of national life was such that the employers agreed to come back to the negotiating table and an agreement was signed only 58 hours after the action began. This provides for pay increases of 2.4% in 1986 and 2.6% in 1987, with additional adjustments for the lowest-paid. The unions claim for shorter working hours has been in part with an agreement to progress to an average 38 hour week by 1990.

The German airline Lufthansa has hired its first women trainee pilots.

Recent Pay Settlements

Germany - Hapag Lloyd Flug, 3% from 1 June 1986, and 2% from 1 June 1987, plus the introduction of a 38.5 hour week in June 1987; Great Britain - British Airways ground services staff, 16% over two years, British Rail workers, 5%.

Obituaries

Harold Crotty, President emeritus of the US Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, died on 12 February, aged 74. Crotty was BMWE president for twenty years, retiring in 1978. He was also a former chairman of the Executive of the Congress of Railway Unions and board member of the Railway Labour Executives' Association, the joint union negotiating body. He had also been represented on the Committee of the ITF Railwaymen's Section.

Albert Terriego, International Vice-President and Director of the railroad division of the Transport Workers' Union of America for the past eleven years, died on 12 January, aged 61. Terriego was a member of the Committee of the ITF Railwaymen's Section.

José Vargas G, General Secretary of the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (IFPAAW) died on 17 March while in Santiago, Chile on a trade union mission. ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has conveyed to the IFPAAW the ITF's deepest sorrow at the death of a much-respected international union leader.

Personalia

We extend warmest congratulations to former ITF President Roger Dekeyzer who is 80 this year. He will be celebrating his birthday at his daughter's home in Antwerp. Dekeyzer, who led the ITF in the early 1960s, also founded the Fishermen's Section and later played a leading role in the Dockers' Section. His many good friends in the ITF will be pleased to know that Roger plans to attend Congress this year in Luxembourg.

Pierre Bruls has been elected President of the Dutch Dienstenbond FNV. The union's new Vice-President is Ben Van Zweden.

Alphonse Caruana has resigned as Secretary to the Port and Transport Workers' Section of the Maltese General Workers' Union (GWU) following his appointment as General Manager of the state-owned Mediterranean Oil Fields Services Limited (Medserv). Caruana has represented Malta on the Dockers', Seafarers' and Civil Aviation Section Committees for many years, and as a member of the Fair Practices Committee has made a significant contribution to the ITF Campaign against flags of convenience. In recognition of his many years of service, he has been made honorary life member of the executive of the GWU transport workers' section, which is also retaining him as an adviser. He is succeeded as Section Secretary by Tony Zarb.

Svend Fønskov retires this month from the chairmanship of Metal Søfart, the seafarers' section of the Danish Metal Workers' Union. Fønskov was also President of the Ships' Firemen's Union for fifteen years until its merger in 1981 with the Metal Workers. He has been an ITF Ship Inspector in Denmark since 1976 and has also served as a deputy member of the Seafarers' Section Committee. His successor as Metal Søfart Chairman is Poul Kolding, previously the section's vice-chairman.

Johann Schmölz, General Secretary of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union, has been elected to the national parliament.

Christer Themmer was elected President of the Nordic Engineer Officers' Federation in succession to Frode Gross (Norway) at the Federation's Congress in March.

Forthcoming Meetings

Railwaymen's Section New Technology Working Group -
Paris 22-23 April 1986

Asia/Pacific Civil Aviation Conference - Tokyo 19-23 May 1986

Road Transport Steering Committee - London 21-22 May 1986

Inland Navigation Section - London 2 June 1986

Fair Practices Committee - London 3-4 June 1986

Dockers' Section Conference - London 5-6 June 1986

Cabin Crew Technical Committee - Madrid 10-11 June 1986

35th ITF Congress - Luxembourg 31 July - 8 August 1986