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ROTTERDAM PORT CRISIS:

DUTCH DOCKERS FIGHT FOR JOBS

Dockers in the general cargo section of Rotterdam, the world's largest port, launched a 24 hour all-out strike from 12.30 p.m. on Monday January 19.

The strike, which will be followed by others, is in response to an announcement by the employers' organisation SVZ that 350 dockers and support workers in six stevedoring firms are to be sacked in blatant violation of a 1985 agreement which laid down detailed procedures for reducing jobs in the sector in the period up to 1991.

The firms involved are : *Quick Despatch (Nedlloyd)*; *Seaport Terminals (Furness)*; *Multi Terminals Waalhavens (Pakhoed)*; *Multi Terminals Rotterdam (Internationo Muller)*; *Klapwijk and SHB*.

Commenting on the strike, Kees Marges, Dockers' Section Secretary of the union involved, Vervoersbond FNV said "dismissing 350 workers in the general cargo section means blowing up the 'Van der Louw Agreement' "which laid down procedures for gradual reduction in the number of jobs and which was drawn up on the assumption of a *fall* in cargo volume (tonnage actually increased in 1986).

The employers are demanding cost savings of Dfl 30million as part of a financial rescue package which includes the merging of three stevedore companies into a new 'Triton' consortium. Dfl 15 million is expected from the 350 redundancies and a further Dfl 15 million through wage cuts, a four year wage freeze, and the introduction of multifunctional jobs and flexible working time.

Similar disputes seem likely to hit the grain handling section of the port where 120 jobs are at risk and the container section already hit by the US Lines financial crisis where 250 jobs are threatened unless the union agrees to a pay freeze and 'flexible working'.

In a bid to split the dockers, the employers' organisation has insisted on negotiations in all three sections of the port taking place at the same time. In the past, the negotiations for general cargo workers have traditionally set the pace for the rest of the Rotterdam workforce. The Vervoersbond has refused to enter into any negotiations until the dismissal threat to the 350 dockers has been lifted.

Appealing to the ITF for solidarity, Kees Marges called the dispute "one of the most important conflicts of recent years. If we lose this struggle it will have an impact on other industries in the Netherlands and also for the ports of Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany". For this reason he has invited Belgian and German dockers' leaders as well as the ITF, to Rotterdam to discuss the coordination of action in support of the Dutch dockers' struggle.

JANUARY, 1987

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Cruzado crisis hits Brazilian workers

The Cruzado plan of economic restraint forced upon the government of Brazil by its indebtedness to the International Monetary Fund and the world's bankers has already had serious repercussions on the living standards of Brazil's hard-pressed workers.

Under the plan prices have been increased - in some cases by up to 100 per cent - while official inflation calculations have been altered to prevent workers receiving compensatory pay increases.

The two main national centres called a general strike on 12 December in protest which was well followed, with union sources putting the figure of those who participated at about 25 million.

The strike was merely the starting shot in a union campaign for greater consultation about economic policy. Negotiations are to take place this month between the government and labour leaders on establishing a 'social pact' on wages and prices.

FREE ESAU RANKHOLO!



As we enter a new year Esau Rankholo, General Secretary of the Transport and Allied Workers' Union (TAWU), is still being held - a prisoner of apartheid - in a South African gaol. ITF affiliates are asked to keep up the pressure on South African diplomatic representatives making sure that they know we will not forget him. Esau, pictured left at last August's ITF world Congress in Luxembourg, is well known to transport workers' union leaders, and his continued detention is a disgraceful illustration of the anti-union stance of the South African apartheid regime.

SA union federation dissolves

One of South Africa's smallest trade union federations, the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), was effectively wound up last month.

TUCSA has been losing members steadily over the past few years. In 1983 membership stood at nearly 500,000 but by last year this had shrunk to only 120,000 as half of its member unions disaffiliated.

The dwindling membership and the lack of any real will to build new policies geared to the changed trade union situation in the Republic rendered TUCSA increasingly irrelevant and meant that the federation was no longer in a position to put together a purposeful programme.

A key factor in the demise of TUCSA has been its inability to come to grips

with the fundamental changes that have been brought about by the emergence of the independent trade unions which have been the most notable feature of the trade union scene in recent years.

By holding itself aloof from the new largely black independent unions, who have now formed their own confederations, TUCSA slowly pushed itself into a quiet backwater, with inevitable consequences.

Turkish DISK trials verdict

The five year long trials in Turkey of the DISK trade unionists ended last month with a series of jail sentences of between one and fifteen years and a government decision to ban the trade union federation.

The trials by military tribunal of the 264 trade unionists, including the left-wing Federation's President Abdullah Basturk on charges of conspiracy to "establish the domination of one class over another" have been condemned by the ICFTU and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) as blatant political interference with trade union rights.

The sentences, based upon scant evidence and few concrete facts, fell far short of the death sentence the prosecution had initially called for. Many of the imprisoned trade unionists, having already been in jail for a number of years, will be able to walk free — but a number are still expected to serve prison sentences.

The ICFTU, in a statement denouncing the verdicts, said that "This judgement is unjust and infringes trade union rights and international conventions. The tribunal was incapable of proving a single act of violence on the part of DISK."

Tunisian trade unionists battle for independence

In the long running fight for independent trade union rights in Tunisia the legitimate trade union movement has once again demonstrated its staying power.

In the middle of December, Habib Achour, the seventy three year old General Secretary of the ICFTU-affiliated Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), whose imprisonment for a year on trumped up charges has already been condemned internationally, was sentenced to another four years' imprisonment on yet another flimsy, politically motivated charge.

The court actions against Achour are part of a broader strategy to destroy the independence of the UGTT. Legitimate union officials have been removed from office, union properties occupied by government backed thugs and the government has been attempting to force the larger UGTT to "fuse" with the government backed Union Nationale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UNTT).

Recent reports from Tunis, however, indicate that the ordinary union membership of the UGTT may be fighting back against the government's attempts to rob them of their independent trade union.

The "fusion" of the two unions, formerly announced five months ago, consisted of the replacement of the legitimate UGTT executive committee with a "unity" body consisting almost entirely of UNTT leaders. This was to be followed, early this year, by a founding convention of the new, forcibly united, federation.

But the unions and activists of the old UGTT appear to have regained the upper hand through the fact that the grass roots of the unions still support the legitimate leadership of the UGTT. On December 19, a new executive board was announced, with the presence of six of the old UGTT leaders. Six UNTT people are still on the body, but, significantly, Ismail Lajeri, a member of the ruling party's central committee has quit as general secretary and left the board.

The "unity" convention now appears to have been postponed, and it remains to be seen whether this new development will result in the reestablishment of the legitimate, independent UGTT.

INLAND TRANSPORT

AFRICAN ROAD TRANSPORT CONFERENCE

Thirty one delegates from 14 African countries who attended the second ITF African Road Transport Workers' Conference in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 8 to 12 December, 1986 called for concerted action against the Apartheid regime in South Africa and for international support for the transport infrastructure of the Front Line States.

Conclusions were adopted by the conference on: drivers' health and safety; professional training; and co-operation between bordering states on road transport. Delegates also called on all African governments to ratify ILO Convention 153 on working hours for drivers, for better controls on transport of

dangerous goods, and for greater concerted action to eliminate dangerous transport routes.

The conference was hosted by two Sierra Leone ITF affiliates, the Motor Drivers' and General Workers' Union and the Transport, Agricultural and General Workers' Union.

It was formally opened by the President of Sierra Leone, Major General Dr. J. S. Momoh. He expressed his "delight" at being asked to open the meeting, and discussed the importance of road transport in African development. The ease with which road transport can be adapted to modern methods of production and distribution meant that it

will "continue to play an increasingly crucial role" in development, he said.

"In this context, road transport has been understandably compared to the circulation of blood in living bodies, tirelessly irrigating every compartment of economic life," he said.

The President said that his government "has followed with great interest and admiration the courageous step taken by the International Transport Workers' Federation in spear-heading economic sanctions against South Africa."

Referring to the unanimous declaration of last year's 35th ITF Congress on Apartheid, the President said "I wish to

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...PRESIDENT ENDORSES UNION RIGHTS

Continued from page 3

assure you that my Government is not only opposed to apartheid but is ready to bear any burden and make any sacrifice towards the liquidation of this monstrous system of Government."

Trade Union Rights

Professor V. J. V. Mambu, Minister of Works and Labour, stressed his government's commitment to free trade unionism. Describing freedom of association as "one of the ideals we cherish in this country" the Minister recalled that Sierra Leone had ratified ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and made clear his government's understanding that freedom of association means the right of unions to affiliate with international trade union organisations. The freedoms of expression and association, he said, have long been recognised as "essential to sustained progress".

In marked contrast to the recent position of some other African governments, the Sierra Leone Labour minister concluded by committing his government to ensuring that "in the realisation of this close link between freedom of association, social and economic progress and the enhancement of human dignity, the affiliation of our trade unions to international trade union organisations such as the International Transport Workers' Federation is not hindered."

In the working sessions of the conference, the delegates carried out a detailed review of developments concerning working conditions, health and safety and professional training since the first ITF African Road Transport Workers' Conference held in September 1984. The conference also discussed the problems of crossing borders, urban transport and assistance to drivers abroad.

International road transport is playing an increasing role in African development, and delegates agreed to take the initiative in increasing international trade union co-operation and support for drivers abroad. One practical decision taken was to issue an 'ITF card' which would help identify bona-fide union members working in international transport.

Conference sessions were chaired by Ibrahim Langley, President of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, Johnny Grönberg, Chairman of the ITF Road



Pictured from left to right, ITF Asst. Gen. Secretary Graham Brothers, ITF African Representative Ben Udogwu, H.E. Prof. Mambu, Sierra Leone Minister of Works and Labour, HE the 2nd Vice President, HE Sierra Leone President Dr. J.S. Momoh, HE the 1st Vice President, K.B. Killa, Secretary General of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress and I. Langley, President of the SLLC.

Transport Workers' Section, A. Kamara, from the Sierra Leone Motor Drivers' and General Workers' Union, G. Mbourou-Kounda, National Transport Federation (Gabon), Jane Barrett, Transport and General Workers' Union (South Africa), and J. N. Malii, Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Kenya). The conference was also addressed by Ben Sharman, from

the US International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), who assisted in the organisation.

At a formal ceremony after the close of the conference, ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers presented the President of Sierra Leone with an ITF emblem in memory of the holding of the Conference in his country.

Greyhound company sells bus lines

Greyhound Corporation in the USA are selling their famous national bus system because it doesn't make enough money for them and union members have refused to accept proposed pay cuts designed to increase profits.

Greyhound Lines in the USA (their Canadian section is not included in the sale) have been facing stiff competition from deregulated, low cost domestic airlines in the last eight years. The Greyhound Corporation, developed originally from the bus line, is now a diversified conglomerate of property and financial interests.

The problem with the bus lines was not that they were losing money, but that they weren't making enough. Last year the company earned US\$15 million in clear profit on the bus lines, but the corporation wanted to increase these profits by a further fifty per cent.

In order to do this they approached the Amalgamated Council of Greyhound Local Unions and reached an agreement to cut the lines 6,300 workers' wages by nine per cent and reduce their benefits by five per cent.

The company said that if they didn't receive these concessions from the workforce, they would put the bus lines up for sale. The unions agreed to recommend the cuts to the workforce, but in a ballot of staff last month, they were rejected.

Now the corporation has announced an agreement to sell Greyhound Bus Lines (USA) for US\$350 million to a group of Texan bus company executives who work with BusLease Inc. — a company which owns and leases intercity buses. The sale is expected to be finalised by mid-March.

French rail strike weakens government

The government, the employer and even the national leaderships of some of the unions involved were taken by surprise by the determination of France's railwaymen who brought the nation's rail network to a virtual standstill for more than three weeks during the busy Christmas/New Year holiday.

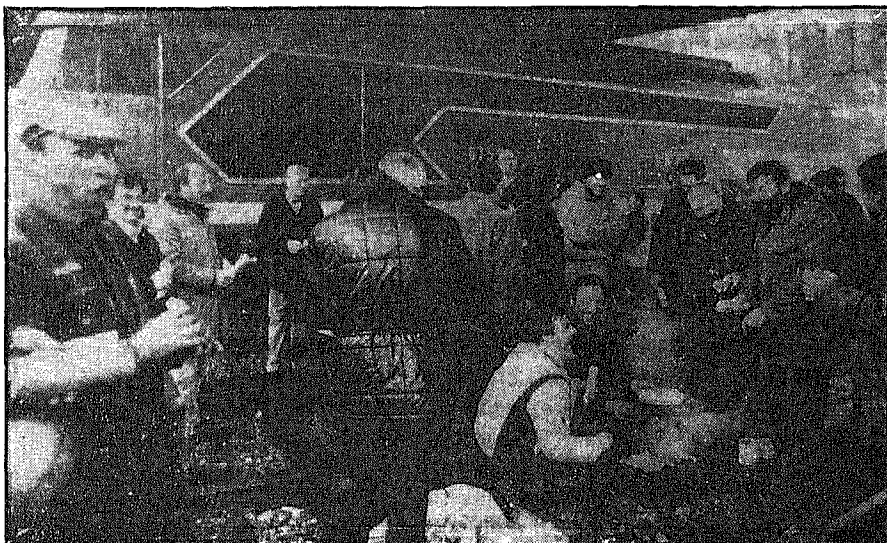
The strike, which began amongst ticket reservation staff and drivers on the North Paris suburban services spread rapidly as railwaymen, whose wages have been frozen since July 1985, took the opportunity to air a number of grievances against the SNCF management. Although supported by the ITF affiliated unions CFTD and FO, many non-union employees also took part in it. As Christmas approached the movement spread also to the employees of the Paris metro company RATP. Striking drivers set up picket lines across the tracks in most of Paris' main line stations, effectively blocking all rail services.

Amongst the key problems were plans to restructure the pay of railway workers so as to give managers power to decide who gets promotions and pay increases. Train crews also protested strongly against working conditions which at present can involve only one rest day over a period of 12 days duty, and about the living conditions in the hostels where long distance drivers are obliged to stay during duty tours.

The strike movement, which coincided with other actions from seafarers and dockworkers, reached a climax over the first weekend in 1987, the so called "Grand Retour". Millions of Frenchmen as well as foreign tourists returning from ski holidays converged on Paris using whatever forms of transport available, causing gigantic traffic holdups throughout the French motorway system. Despite claims by the government that the strike was not fully effective, only a handful of long distance trains operated.

In the face of this action the Chirac government agreed to appoint an independent mediator Francois Lavondes who rapidly persuaded the railway management to shelve their pay restructuring plans and to offer an extra two rest days and one extra free Sunday per year to drivers, as well as improvements in the finishing and starting times of duty periods.

The mediator also recommended an increase in the wage and salary bill by



Striking railway workers block the tracks at Paris' gare du nord

just over 3% in 1987, a figure, which though not particularly generous, is significantly higher than the government's target for the public sector.

On January 6 the strike received support from other public sector workers including those in the electricity supply industry. Public service strikes caused serious disruption including large scale power cuts for several days. As the Communist led CGT union began to use

the strike as a direct political challenge to the Chirac government, the rank and file railway workers decided that the concessions made were worthwhile and began to return to work.

The railway strike, coming shortly after a major climbdown on education policy in the face of determined opposition from students, has caused a nose-dive in the popularity of the Chirac government.

Reagan plans Amtrak sell-off

Savage cuts in urban transport and the privatisation of part of the US passenger railway system are threatened by Ronald Reagan's draft 1987 budget.

The draft budget, which has to be passed by the Democrat-controlled Congress, proposes to slash federal grant aid for urban mass transit by more than fifty per cent from US\$3.4bn to US\$1.6bn.

The Administration also wants to sell off the Amtrak passenger service serving the popular Northeast Line — either to private buyers or through a public share flotation.

The Northeast Corridor carries more passengers daily than the airlines in the same region. There are 10.5 million passengers carried annually on lines in the eight northeastern states, more than half of Amtrak's yearly total of 20.5 million passengers.

Amtrak — the National Railroad Passenger Corporation — was formed in 1970 when US private railways were closing their unprofitable passenger services.

Union solidarity brings swift victory

A month long strike late last year by 1,500 busmen and depot workers in Helsinki and district was brought to a successful conclusion when the Finnish Transport Workers' Union (AKT) swung 5,000 members in 147 haulage companies throughout Finland behind their busmen members on 16 November.

This large scale sympathy action enabled the strike to be called off the next day with the busmen having made major gains. Improvements won as a result of the strike include pay comparability with other municipal workers as well as the introduction of special payments for Saturday working. A notable feature is that the AKT has succeeded in negotiating a single agreement covering all bus workers in the metropolitan area.

Urban transit boost for Bremen

A new initiative in boosting urban transport has been launched by the government of the northern German city of Bremen with the introduction of an attractively priced new monthly travel pass known as the Bremen card. The card, which gives half price travel on all the city's buses and trams, represents extremely good value, costing between 35 and 40 DM for travel within the city limits or 50 DM in the greater Bremen area.

The city hopes in this way to stem the flow of passengers away from public transport and to attract more car users at the most congested times of day. If the new low fares prove popular, as is likely, damage to the environment from car exhausts will be lessened and the extra revenue generated with the upturn in passenger numbers will create more bus jobs.

The card itself is one of the foremost attractions of the new cheap fare scheme. It is plastic, looks like a cheque card and comes with a choice of motifs on the front. You can choose between an all black card for 'joy riders' and a football supporters' card named after the local team as well as more

conventional themes such as a Bremen silhouette. Firms with premises in the city may also have their own card design. The designs will be changed from time to time to add variety.

The new card was introduced to an enthusiastic public in a street festival featuring a campaign bus covered in slogans and the distribution to children of balloons advertising the cheaper services. The stand set up in a city square was besieged by Bremen people, all eager to buy one of the new tickets.

Other measures favouring public over private transport which the authority is now actively looking at include giving buses and trams priority at traffic lights; and more bus lanes. It also intends to examine other important aspects such as frequency of services, punctuality and passenger comfort and will actively oppose further building of street level and multi-storey car parks in the centre of town.

The bold new experiment is already paying dividends - 65,000 cards were sold in October and by November this had gone up to 72,000 - this represents a hundred per cent jump from the figures for previous months at the older, higher prices.

Make use of waterways, says union

"Make more use of inland waterways". This was the theme of a campaign launched by the German Transport workers' union (ÖTV) in November 1986. Introducing the campaign, ÖTV and ITF Executive Board member Eike Eulen stressed the energy saving and environmental benefits of waterway transport.

Neglect by successive German governments had, Eulen indicated, caused a sharp decline in the waterways' share of the long distance transport market from 33.6 per cent in 1960 to only 22.5 per cent in 1985. Over the same period road haulage - one of its main competitors - saw its market share rise from 19.7 per cent to 42.7 per cent.

In the past twenty five years over 21,000 inland navigation jobs have been lost in the Federal Republic and today less than 11,000 people work in the industry, mainly on the Rhine. Factors contributing to this massive job loss included the introduction of radar which makes navigation at night possible, faster cargo handling and fewer, bigger vessels.

As a result of these trends, Eulen pointed out, productivity of inland navigation workers rose by a factor of three between 1960 and 1985.

Eulen insisted that what was urgently needed was a rational transport policy which made increased use of the waterways for long distance transport of goods and which concentrated on improving the existing waterways rather than starting costly new construction projects.

He said the ÖTV differed radically from the EC Commission in that it was demanding ordered conditions of competition for the industry, which needed more rather than less state regulation as was being argued in certain circles.

The ÖTV is also seeking the elimination of over capacity, particularly on the Rhine, through the introduction of a boat scrapping programme and the temporary lay up of vessels during periods of over-capacity. These measures must, however, be coordinated at the EC level it stresses.

Other problems highlighted in the union's programme include increased competition from COMECON countries'



vessels, and the highly fragmented nature of the industry (87% of companies have 4 or less employees). It is arguing for an extension of German "codetermination" and other social laws to smaller companies as well as to cooperatives.

At the level of the European Community the union is calling for a coordinated approach to matching supply and demand through a system of quotas, and more attention to reducing working time and improving training. It also wants an EC Directive governing the reduction of manning levels, based on a joint proposal already made by the union and the German employers to the Central Rhine Commission (ZKR), as well as a tightening of enforcement standards for current regulations.

FISHERIES

Icelandic fishing industry hit by strike

The Icelandic fishing industry was hard hit by a strike of fishermen who came out at the beginning of the year in support of demands for a 12 per cent pay increase. The strike was particularly effective as most trawlers did not put out from port after the Christmas break.

Unions in Britain and West Germany have been asked not to handle catches from the few trawlers still at sea.

According to the Union, the trawler owners had not negotiated a rise in the fishermen's share of the catch for over two years and all pay claims have been

simply referred to arbitration. The strike was called off on Jan 15 after a tentative pay agreement was reached.

Six days later Icelandic seafarers joined the strike after the failure of pay negotiations under a government mediator.

European five year fish plan takes shape

A major five year development programme for the European Community fishing fleet was agreed in Brussels in December. The programme

came into effect at the beginning of 1987 and forms the first stage of a ten year programme of support for the fishing industry.

The majority of the money has been earmarked for the renewal of fishing vessels over 33 metres long with the aim of encouraging bigger boats capable of fishing outside EC waters.

Considerable sums have also been set aside for general fleet modernisation and fish farming. Funds will be made available for port development projects and for updating freezing facilities.

**Discussions on the vexed question of fish quotas for 1987 were also concluded last month.*

Cuts were agreed in total allowable catches (TAC) for certain species - these were concentrated on the North Sea stocks of cod, haddock, whiting and plaice - on the basis of advice from scientific experts on those stocks most in danger of overfishing.

The experts also encouraged the Commission to increase the total allowable catch of western mackerel beyond its original proposals. Measures were taken to protect vulnerable young cod stocks in the German Bight by limiting fishing in the first and last quarters of 1987 to vessels using a minimum net size of 100 mm - a watered down version of the original proposal to stop fishing in this area.

The quota increases were particularly important for the two newest Community members - Portugal and Spain - for whom fishing is a major industry.

Canadian government threat to fishermen's incomes

Canadian Fishermen are rallying to fight a proposal that could seriously cut their annual incomes.

The threat comes from a report to the Federal government which recommends the elimination of unemployment benefits for Fishermen and their replacement by a non-government funded scheme.

The Canadian Unemployment Insurance Scheme, known to millions of Canadian workers as "The Pogey", was enacted in 1940 after years of campaigning by the Canadian Labour movement. It is designed to provide a steady income support for workers in a country with many seasonal workers.

Workers and employers pay regular insurance benefits to the commission when they are working. If a worker pays 20 weeks of contributions in a year, he or she is eligible for unemployment benefits payable at 60 per cent of gross earnings for a year.

This system is particularly geared to providing an averaged income for the many Canadian seasonal workers in agriculture, fishing and construction. In Fisheries work, the severe winter climate, government stock controls, quotas and fishing seasons mean that most small Fishermen rely upon the 'pogey' to survive throughout the year.

The Conservative government of Brian Mulroney commissioned a retired Liberal

politician Claude Forget, to head a commission to consider the scheme and its application to seasonal workers.

The Forget Commission's recommendations, published while the trade unions were still presenting their views to it, suggest that the government should pull out of the scheme entirely, leaving employers and workers with the joint responsibility for setting up seasonal unemployment benefits.

Even in the larger industries it is doubtful that all employers would set up any scheme, but in Fisheries the threat is even more dire. In the Atlantic provinces of Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland most fishermen work in small groups or on their own, without large employers to administer any new scheme. Fishermen would face the prospect of being forced onto Provincial welfare schemes in the off-seasons. These schemes vary from province to province, are not earnings-related and in many cases pay almost nothing.

The Eastern Fishermen's Federation, a group that unites 26 organisations in Atlantic Canada, is now collecting money to fight the proposed changes. A petition to the Federal government is planned, and other Canadian labour groups, including the Canadian Labour Congress, are considering further action to prevent the change.

Happy Birthday Faroese

We extend warm congratulations to the Faroese Fishermen's Union which marked its 75th anniversary just after Christmas.

CIVIL AVIATION

CABIN CREW STRIKE FOR EQUAL PAY

Limited strikes by Polynesian-based UTA cabin crews continue this month with a five day strike in Tahiti on the 13th.

The dispute between the ITF-affiliated SNPNC and the French carrier centres on a demand for equal pay and working conditions for the Polynesian-based cabin

crew with their Paris-based counterparts. Because they do exactly the same job, the union says it is clearly discriminatory to pay one section of the workforce lower wages.

So far, in 1986, the union has organised a series of limited stoppages. This will continue, and possibly escalate

to include other UTA staff if the dispute is not settled.

Civil aviation unions in the Pacific region, including the USA, in response to ITF communications about the dispute, have offered their support to the UTA cabin crews.

ICAO agrees to keep FOO licence

Following intensive lobbying by the ITF's representative in Montreal Stu Johns at the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO's Air Navigation Commission has agreed to maintain an international requirement for the

licensing of Flight Operations Officers (airline despatchers).

The ANC which met in October 1986 overturned a recommendation from ICAO's Licensing Standards Panel (PELT) that the requirement for an FOO

licence should be deleted from Annex 1 of the ICAO Convention. The ITF's successful intervention focused on the need to maintain high levels of competence for flight operations officers and suggested that the international organisation's FOO manual should be updated. This proposal was also accepted, and a meeting between the ITF and ICAO was scheduled for mid January to begin work on a revised edition.

British Airways unions seek stake in sell-off

The UK government has at last unveiled its timetable for the privatisation of British Airways (BA).

The sale of the international airline, which is part of the Conservative's government's overall ideological commitment to auction off state assets, will take place through a limited share flotation.

Unlike other UK privatisations, the BA share flotation will not be aimed primarily at the general public. Half of the 720 million shares will be sold directly to large financial interests in the UK, and another 20 per cent will be placed with foreign investors. Ten per cent of the shares are reserved for employees and a scant 20 per cent will be offered on the open market.

The share price will be announced on January 27, and the share offer will close on February 6, with the allocation being announced five days later.

The trade unions in British Airways have consistently fought against the government's privatisation plans, but having seen British Telecom and British Gas already sold off in the face of strong opposition (a TUC commissioned opinion poll showed that a large majority of the population were opposed to the government's privatisation policies), the

BA unions have decided upon a novel approach.

The unions have decided collectively to buy into the airline so that the 30,000 workers at BA (virtually all of whom are unionised) will have a say in the running of the new company.

BA employees are being asked by the National Joint Council of BA unions, which includes the ITF affiliates TGWU and ASTMS, to sign over their preferential shares to the council where they will be administered by a special union Trust Fund.

Airline safety improves

Airline safety improved last year over the disastrous 1985 figures.

In what was described by the Associated Press news agency as a "relatively safe year" nearly 500 people were killed in commercial airline accidents worldwide in 1986. The figure for 1985 was 1,622 lives.

The drop to 500 represents a better than average figure in the post-US deregulation aviation world. In the five years up to 1985, the ICAO calculated an average of 600 fatalities per year.

Shareholders OK Lorenzo's bid

The bargain basement sale (at about US\$ 110 million barely the market value of the airline's stock) of People Express to Texas Air went ahead last month as shareholders narrowly approved Frank Lorenzo's proposed buyout of the ailing company.

Completion of the deal makes union-busting Texas Air the largest airline holding company in the United States. People Express Airlines has already merged into Texas' Continental Airlines unit and will lose its separate identity in February.

Meanwhile, the east coast airline USAir has tentatively agreed to purchase west coast regional Pacific Southwest Airlines for \$400 million. The merger does not yet have government approval, but no opposition is expected as the two airlines do not compete directly. US Air, which operates extensive flights through its Pittsburgh hub, is one of the few major US airlines not to have been the subject of a merger.

TRAVEL BUREAUX

Pickford's tries to bust union

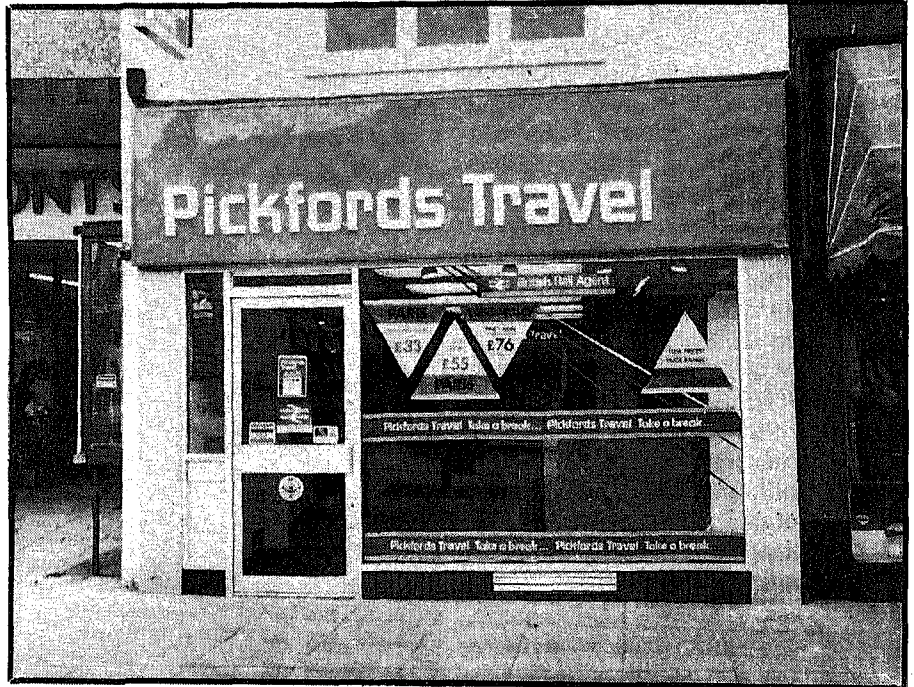
Britain's largest travel agent has joined the ranks of the "union busters".

Last year, Pickfords Travel withdrew recognition from the ITF affiliated Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) in the middle of wage negotiations and moved swiftly to establish yellow unionism with an internal "sweetheart" staff association.

The TSSA first gained union recognition at the travel agency in 1942. Last year they presented a wage claim to the management calling for a substantial pay increase as well as a new definition of working hours. Pickfords replied with a counter proposal of just a two per cent increase.

Five days before the union was to consider the offer, at an executive meeting, the company unilaterally imposed the 2% rise. In a letter to the union the management gave one month's notice of withdrawal of recognition.

Now the company has taken steps to establish an internal staff association. A ballot was held of staff members, which the company claims to have shown a majority in support of the staff association. But the TSSA has



Pickfords Travel: trying to set up a "sweetheart" staff association.

questioned the validity of the vote.

TSSA Assistant General Secretary Norman Hitchin, writing in the January

issue of the TSSA journal, said that "I voted a number of times, not in an attempt to influence the result but merely to demonstrate how leaky the procedures were! And I am not employed by Pickfords."

The TSSA believe that Pickfords carefully planned the whole process with the intention of busting the union and establishing a compliant staff association in its place. Hitchin accuses the company of deceit in its dealings with the TSSA.

TSSA leaders have protested at the moves, and have arranged a meeting with representatives of its parent company NFC later this month.

Should that meeting fail to produce results, Hitchin warns that the TSSA may initiate a consumer boycott of the travel agency.

"There are about ten million trade unionists affiliated to the TUC and together with families we could well be talking of a market of 30,000,000 prospective customers. TSSA also hold a vice-chair on the International Transport Workers' Federation Travel Bureau section with world wide contacts," he adds.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

28-29 January	Seafarers' Manning Cttee.	Rotterdam
26-27 February	Road Transport Steering Cttee	London
10 March	Management Cttee.	London
10-11 March	Executive Board	London
21-23 April	Latin American Dockers' Conf	Tampico, Mexico
11-15 May	Latin American Inland Navigation Conference	Santa Fé, Argentina
18-19 May	Seafarer members of ILO Joint Maritime Commission	Geneva
8 June	Dockers' Meeting	London

ASIA/PACIFIC

Inside the ITF education programme: a five year scheme for union strength

"Training the trainers" is the central theme of the ITF's five year education programme in Asia and the Pacific. The programme works like a pyramid. A team of ITF education officers runs training courses for affiliated and non-affiliated transport unions in 13 countries designed to give activists the skills to themselves train others.

By focusing on the grass roots and seeking to develop self-reliance, the education officers are able to begin a

campaigns, the establishment of branch educational committees and joint activities with other trade unions.

Many course sessions explicitly train participants in how to pass on what they have learnt to other rank and file members.

The following is a brief roundup of recent activities within the programme:

The Bangladesh education officer (EO), Protap Uddin Ahmad, has held a number

resulting improvements in communications skills have recently led to greater inter-union co-operation and improved communications with shipping companies. Practical follow up schemes include plans to produce special audio cassettes for on-board trade union education, training of more educators to work at the grass roots level and producing a Hindi language version of the collective agreement and a Hindi educational section in union newsletters.

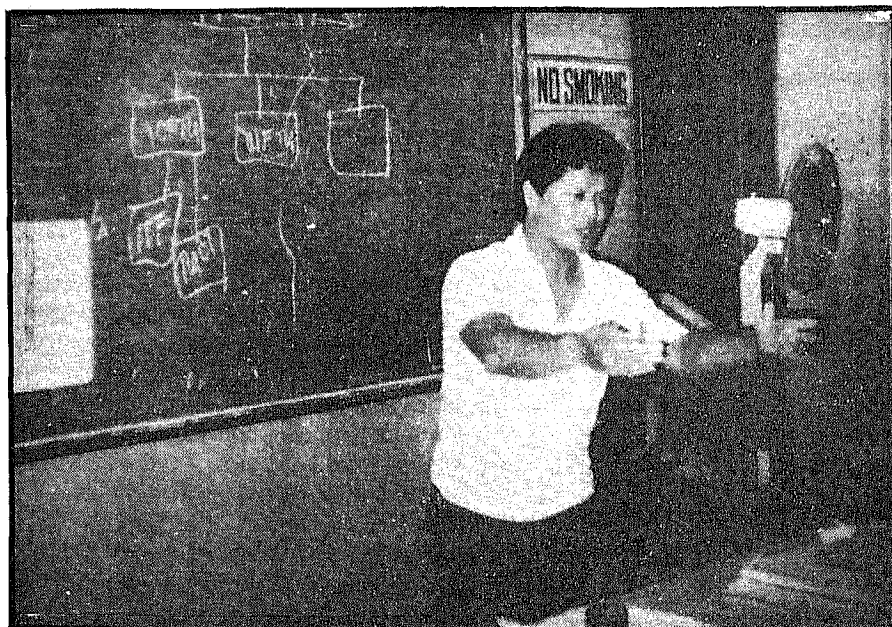
The ports sector EO, D.V.K. Sastry, is also involved in helping participants prepare for organising their own trade union education programmes. Recent monthly courses have identified a number of areas for future positive action including trade union organising skills, union funding for educational work, occupational health and safety programmes and relationships between union leaders and the rank and file.

During 1986 the Indonesian EO, Hanafi Rustandi, working largely with the ITF affiliated seafarers' union KPI, has trained union members to be shop stewards on board ships, forging direct links between the union and members at sea. Grievance handling, collective agreements and the international trade union movement (including the ITF) have been the most popular recent topics.

The one day courses conducted by Kiribi Birima for rank and file transport workers in Kiribati aim to enable all participants to conduct similar brief workshops among workmates so that they may pass on what they learn. Over the last few months, course participants have formed education committees at local branch level and on board some ships. On board shop stewards are also now being elected. The current series of courses focus on preparing bargaining proposals and analysing financial reports.

In Korea, Oum Min-Ho is conducting three to five day courses on basic trade unionism and the ITF's aims and policies. Most of the courses are for grass roots members, but recently there have also been special advanced leadership training programmes which have covered aspects of labour law, the

Continued on page 11



David Velasco, ITF Education Officer, at work in the Philippines

process which, by the end of the five year period, will have reached an enormous number of ordinary trade unionists.

Every month each education officer provides an average of 16-20 hours training, and follow up sessions, with some 20 new participants. Detailed reports of the progress of the scheme are regularly sent to the Asia/Pacific Regional Secretary.

Topics covered in training sessions include: basic trade union philosophy, grievance handling, labour laws or agreements, learning how to communicate better and the ITF's aims and activities.

Follow up activities decided upon by participants have included organising

of three-day seminars for local transport union leaders. In the latest, for the Bangladesh Railway Employees' League, discussions centred on effective communications skills and the free trade union movement. Like many of the courses in this ITF programme, it was conducted in the local language and a good proportion of the time was spent in small group discussion.

In India there are three EOs working in different transport sectors. J.M. Biswas holds 3-day seminars for railway workers' union leaders covering aspects of basic trade unionism, leadership skills development and collective bargaining.

For seafarers, R. Muthuswamy runs courses of weekly meetings. The

...ITF Asia/Pacific programme...

Continued from page 10

role of trade union leaders, tips on conducting meetings and some of the social and economic activities of the unions.

David Velasco was appointed in the Philippines in mid-1986. His one day courses have quickly evolved into an effective means of making rank and file members aware of their union rights and responsibilities and of developing their skills in dealing with topical union concerns. An increasing proportion of time during the courses is now spent in small group work and follow-up activities. These have already encompassed a membership campaign, and a plan to draw up a trade union manifesto on wages and benefits.

In spite of the alarming political upheaval in the country, education courses in Sri Lanka have continued. In addition to the grass roots seminars, there have been courses for branch

officers and follow up activities which have examined subjects such as grievance handling, effective communication, trade union principles and the effects of modernisation on employment in greater depth.

The programme in Taiwan was launched near the end of 1986 with a three day seminar for seafarers and railwaymen. By using the "study-circle" method, education officer Hong Dah Ih gave participants a chance to develop their own educational skills for later use in their unions. After first splitting into small groups to work out objectives and definitions, seminar participants prepared and presented team teaching assignments to their colleagues on questions of basic trade unionism. By this technique, they produced their own guidelines for self-reliant education work in their union branches. *Look out for further reports on the activities of the ITF Asia/Pacific education programme in later issues of ITF News.*

PEOPLE

Captain Henry A Duffy was elected to a second four-year term as President of the US Air Line Pilots' Association (ALPA) at the union's biennial meeting in November. Duffy has won widespread respect at home for the vigour with which he has defended US airline pilots' interests in the post deregulation climate and is well known internationally for the contribution he has made to the work of the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations and the ITF Civil Aviation Section. The meeting also elected Captain Roger Hall of United as 1st Vice President and Larry Schulte of Eastern as ALPA Secretary.

New leaders were elected recently to the US Railway Labor Executives' Association - the joint trade union negotiating body for US railways - they are Chairman Richard Kilroy, who is President of the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks (BRAC) and Vice Chairman Geoffrey Zeh, who is the recently elected President of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE). The changes follow the retirement of RLEA Chairman Ole Berge from the BMWE presidency.

Hassan Sumomnu of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has been elected General Secretary of the newly reunited Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU).

We extend warmest birthday greetings to Knud Mols Sørensen, President of the Danish Mates' Association, on the occasion of his 60th birthday which he celebrates on 21 January. Mols has a wide circle of friends in the ITF, gained over the many years he has served as Chairman of the Seafarers' Section and Co-Chairman of the Fair Practices Committee. We know they all join with us in wishing him many happy returns of the day!

Rita Gassmann, Central Secretary of the Swiss Transport Workers' Union (VHTL) has been elected to the Vice Presidency of the Swiss Trade Union Confederation (SGB.)

Frank Griffin has been elected as the next General Secretary of the British United Road Transport Union (URTU). In April, he succeeds Jackson Moore who is retiring. Griffin was previously a URTU regional officer.

Lawrence Lautier was elected as the new President of the Malta General Workers' Union (GWU) at its recent national delegate conference. Lautier was previously union Vice



Knud Mols Sørensen — happy 60th birthday

President as well as head of the Chemical and General Workers' Section. His position as Vice President is taken over by Edmond Mallia, who comes from the section organising textile, garment and leather workers. GWU General Secretary Carmel S Consiglio also retired at the year end on taking up his appointment as ambassador to the Soviet Union and has been succeeded by Angelo Fenech and on the retirement of Vincent Esposito from the post of Deputy General Secretary Jack Calamatta (previously secretary to the public service workers' section) has been confirmed in office as his successor.

Edmond Gjennestad, formerly the union's Stavanger regional secretary, has been elected Vice President of the Norwegian Seamen's Union. Gjennestad is a member of the ITF's Standing Committee on Maritime Mobile Offshore Units.

Lane Kirkland, President of the US AFL-CIO, has been elected President of the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Kirkland is the first American union leader to hold this position.

DOCKERS

French report calls for 2,000 job cuts

A government sponsored report on the ports in France has advocated the axeing of 2,000 dockers' jobs.

The report, commissioned last July by the French ministers of Transport and the

Sea, was written by Jacques Dupuydauby, former head of the SCAC Transport Company.

The report criticises port management and also advocates that the country

should limit itself to three main ports (Marseille, Dunkirk and Rouen/Le Havre).

Along with a call for 2,000 of the 11,700 dockers' jobs in France to be cut, the report also calls for the repeal of the 1947 legislation that set up the Dockers' working conditions and labour pool system. Dockers, the report says, should "return to normal working conditions."

The government has said that they will consult with the unions and employers before acting on the report sometime this year.

Baltimore bonus plan to create youth jobs

A \$50,000 bonus, which may be taken in a lump sum or over two years, is currently on offer to dockers in the port of Baltimore in an early retirement package aimed at bringing in more young dockworkers and creating new jobs on the waterfront.

The offer, available from October 1986 to April 1987, is expected to attract about two hundred takers. The ILA and

the Baltimore Steamship Association have put up the money for the scheme from their joint pension and benefit fund.

Mombasa dockers strike

Members of the Kenyan Dockworkers' Union in the port of Mombasa came out on strike for two days at the beginning of January in a dispute over the non-payment of wage arrears. The strike halted all loading and unloading operations at the port.

SEAFARERS

BROAD BACKING FOR GREEK STRIKE

The rolling programme of 48 hour strikes by Greek seafarers called by the Pan-Hellenic Seafarers' Federation (PNO) in December met with a wide degree of support from union members both in Greek and foreign ports. Support by ITF seafarers' and dockers' unions for the striking crews was a major factor in ensuring the strike's effectiveness.

The strike was in protest against government intervention in wage negotiations and the reintroduction of so called 'bilateral crewing arrangements' which enable Greek shipowners to employ foreign seamen on appallingly low wages. In a message to Prime Minister Papandreou, PNO Secretary-General Michael Zenzefyllis condemned the government's decision to give retroactive effect to the arrangements. This went against the Greek constitution and international labour conventions, he complained, and was also 'ethically wrong'.

The PNO, together with other transport unions, took part in the 24 hour strike called by the Greek trade union

confederation (GSEE) on 15 January in protest against government economic and social policies.

Belgian tug strike wins gov't delay

700 Belgian tugmen employed by the Union de Remorquage et du Sauvetage (URS) and Scheldt Towage came out on a week's strike in December in a dispute over manning levels. The Belgian Transport Workers' Union, (BTB) which represents the tug crews, called the strike in protest at new government regulations cutting minimum crews from 5 to 4 which would have cost one in five tug jobs.

A number of large bulk carriers were diverted to Rotterdam or Bremerhaven by the action while

smaller ships were unable to leave port or had to remain at anchor offshore. The strike also affected some services into nearby Dutch ports.

The action was lifted when the government agreed to delay implementation of the new regulations until January 1988. This breathing space will be used for further negotiations between the two parties. It is hoped to avoid compulsory redundancies, with the cutbacks being achieved through natural wastage or early retirement.

French FOC plan shelved after 3 week strike

French seafarers have succeeded in securing significant concessions from the government following their 26 day long strike, which ended in the first week of January.

What began as plans for a series of rolling 72 hour protest strikes (see ITF News, December 1986) snowballed into an indefinite stoppage. In the wake of the dockers' and railway strikes, the government was forced to the negotiating table. The seafarers' dispute centred on two issues, government threats to interfere with the Maritime legal code concerning workers' rights and benefits, and the use of the Kerguelen register.

The French government have set up a flag of convenience register in the Antarctic island colony of Kerguelen — best known for the giant seaweed that covers its icy shores— allowing French shipowners to employ non-French

crewmembers at lower rates of pay while still flying the French flag.

In the seven months of the register's existence, 17 bulk carriers have registered under Kerguelen's flag.

The government have now agreed to temporarily freeze Kerguelen registrations, until a Constitutional Court ruling on a claim that the register's employment practices are illegal. They

have also agreed, that no more than 30 ships will be allowed onto the register

The government has also backed down on their proposals to modify seamen's professional status as outlined in the maritime code, and they have promised to postpone amendments of the code until 1988. Further discussions over Kerguelen, and sickness benefit for seafarers are also being held.

Japanese jobs shock

A massive blow to employment prospects for Japanese seafarers was struck with the announcement by two of the country's biggest shipping lines Nippon Yusen Kaisha and Mitsui OSK Lines to cut their fleets and seagoing workforces by 40% and 50% respectively.

The decision, which will be implemented over the next four years, will result in some 2000 seafarers' jobs being lost. NYK intends to carry out the programme by lowering the retirement age to 50. The two companies have announced their intention to make up the loss in tonnage by chartering in vessels and using more foreign seafarers

New EC maritime policy signed

Following two years of long and acrimonious negotiations, European Community transport ministers finally agreed, on December 16, on the basis for a common EC maritime policy.

The measures adopted, which will take effect from July 1987 more or less follow the 'free competition' philosophy which has dominated most transport policy discussion in the EC for the past few years. Of the four substantive proposals put forward by the European Commission in 1985 only one, dealing with cabotage (flag reservation of coastal trades), has been dropped from the Ministers' agreement, following strong opposition from Southern EC states and particularly Greece.

The UK government, which has been the strongest opponent of cabotage restrictions, will now have to consider whether to challenge cabotage rules in the EC courts, or to introduce similar rules in the UK.

The Council of Ministers' policy proposals cover the following points:

• **Freedom to Provide Shipping Services** - new cargo sharing and bilateral agreements concluded by member states are to be forbidden except in special circumstances such as when third countries demand it and the alternative is no EC trade at all. This 'freedom' will be phased in as follows:

from 1989 all trade between different EC countries will be open to all EC flag ships;

from 1991 all trade between EC countries and third countries will be open to all EC ships;

from 1992 all trade between EC countries and third countries will be open to ships of any nationality.

• **Coordinated Action** - EC states will be able to take concerted action against other countries which restrict access of EC ships to their trade;

• **Unfair Pricing Practices** - the Commission will be able to impose punitive import duties on the cargo carried by foreign lines which use unfair pricing policies. Although directed primarily at state shipping lines from Eastern Europe which charge freight rates below cost, this opens up the possibility of claiming that violation of IMO or ILO social and safety standards constitutes 'unfair competition' and provides a mechanism for acting against it.

• **EC Competition Rules** are confirmed as applying to liner shipping and to liner conferences, removing an area of legal uncertainty.

The Commission is still studying the question of defining a national shipping line for the purposes of these regulations, but ministers rejected the proposals put forward by the European Parliament that the ships owned by such lines must fly the flag of a member state, must employ Community nationals, and must abide by ILO and IMO Conventions.

Following this agreement, the Commission was authorised to study other measures designed to boost the EC merchant fleet which has seen its share of world tonnage fall from 33% to 21% in the past 15 years.

Although relieved that cabotage was not included in the EC liberalisation package, ITF seafarers' unions will not find much to be cheerful about in the new agreement. As the ITF already pointed out in its 1985 publication "Towards a Common Maritime Transport Policy", the Commission's ideas for tinkering with the competition rules were a grossly inadequate response to the steady destruction of the EC shipping industry. The new policy provides little disincentive for Europe's shipowners to use flags of convenience, neglects the question of harmonising social conditions for seafarers, and ignores the crucial links between shipping and shipbuilding. A major political initiative from the Community to save Europe's fleet is still sadly lacking.

12 CREW DIE ON SYNETA

Sinking of Gibraltar registered ship exposes "colonial flags"

The Gibraltar-registered but UK owned *Syneta* slipped into freezing Icelandic waters just outside Faskrudhsfjordhur harbour on Thursday, December 26 with the loss of all 12 crew.

This appalling accident, which occurred in what appeared to be clear weather, has brought world attention to focus on the Gibraltar flag of convenience register.

Gibraltar is one of a group of British colonial territories which provide shipowners with usual Flag of Convenience facilities while enabling them to fly the British flag. France has now followed this model with the establishment of the Kerguelen registry, and both Spain and Norway are considering similar moves.

The *Syneta* sinking has starkly demonstrated that these colonial registers rather than being "superior" versions of the more traditional Focs like Panama or Liberia are just as bad, or even worse.

The most striking revelation — very embarrassing to both the British and Gibraltarian authorities — is that the Gibraltar register is governed by an almost complete absence of regulations.

The UK's ratification of International Maritime Organisation (IMO) conventions on safety and certification standards does not apply to its colonies. Gibraltar's only piece of maritime legislation is the British 1894 Merchant Shipping Act.

Gibraltar has no powers to inspect or refuse registration of ships. Ships do not even pay an annual tonnage tax, but simply a one-off registration fee, and there are no age limits on registering ships.

The *Syneta* was 17 years old. The Icelandic inquiry, chaired by Sigurdur Eriksson, Iceland's eastern fjords' Sheriff, concluded that the captain misjudged the ship's position and hit a rock.

This human error, however, raises serious questions about the navigation equipment. The inquiry was told that the *Syneta's* radar was faulty.

Even more disturbing was the standard of lifesaving equipment on the ship. The enquiry heard evidence that the vessel had replaced a 25 man liferaft with a six man raft when she was flagged out from the Swedish flag to the Gibraltar register in October 1985.

No further action is expected on the Icelandic enquiry, since none of the dead were Icelandic nationals and the ship was a foreign flag.

Six of the crew were UK nationals and six were either Portuguese or Cape Verde nationals. However the owners have refused to give the UK officers' union NUMAST a crew list. Despite initial resistance by both Britain and Gibraltar to calls for an enquiry by NUMAST, the British eventually changed their mind.

On January 9th the British Department of Transport announced that the Gibraltar Maritime Administration had asked the British to provide a marine surveyor (Gibraltar has none) to conduct a preliminary inquiry. This preliminary enquiry has been welcomed by John Newman, NUMAST

deputy general secretary as "a step in the right direction."

European Community (EC) Transport Commissioner Stanley Clinton Davis also called for a public enquiry, saying that the loss raised serious issues in relation to EC shipping policy. He also raised questions about the effectiveness of the Port State Control inspection system, noting that the *Syneta* had been in Liverpool a week before the sinking.

"Did inspectors go on board in this case and if so, what was the result of the inspection? If the ship was not inspected while docked in Liverpool, when was she last inspected?" he said.

New ship law planned

The *Syneta* sinking has focused world attention on the Gibraltar flag of convenience and its lack of provisions for seafarers' welfare.

The register has been the subject of intense debate within the small Gibraltarian parliament, where the opposition Gibraltar Socialist Labour party, with the backing of the Gibraltar branch of the British Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), have continually demanded action from the Government.

The Gibraltar government is in the process of passing a Merchant Shipping Ordinance, that will introduce tonnage taxes for registered ships for the first time, but the key issues of safety and social security for seafarers on Gibraltar ships have yet to be directly addressed. The government promise further action in the follow up to the present ordinance.

The government have stated, in Parliament, that they wish to "avert the danger of our being considered as a flag of convenience" and that they do not want to end up "in serious problems with the International Transport Workers' Federation."

The reason Gibraltar has been classified as a flag of convenience registry by the ITF Fair Practices Committee is not because of questions of safety and welfare, however. It is because the register provides facilities for foreign shipowners to leave their genuine national flag and hire whatever nationality crew they like at low wages. As the Gibraltar TGWU stated in a press release at the end of December:

"Ships registries are classified as Flag of Convenience because the countries operating open registries, like Gibraltar, do so at the expense of established maritime nations by undercutting pay, conditions and manning levels below the standard established by maritime unions in their respective countries."

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... Gibraltar has no power to enforce standards

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Gibraltar's peculiarity is that as a British colony, but also a part of the European Community, it is obliged to enforce certain social security standards. However, it has no legal powers to enforce them for ships under its register.

This issue has been highlighted by the Opposition in Gibraltar, who have forced the government to admit that shipowners on the register are legally obliged to pay social

security payments on behalf of their crews, but that in practice, no such contributions are paid.

Under current British maritime legislation, the government has virtually no control over Gibraltar registered ships. This will change marginally with the new Ordinance, which will, ironically, allow Gibraltar to refuse registration to ships like the *Syneta* which are more than 15 years old. Fundamentally, however, the Gibraltar government remains committed to operating an open register.

Britain promises action on substandard colonial flags of convenience

Faced with a growing chorus of condemnation for its inaction over the existence of colonial flags of convenience, the British government has announced plans to introduce new laws to regulate their burgeoning colonial registries.

Under the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, the fourteen colonial territories (which include ITF defined Flags of Convenience in the Cayman Islands, Gibraltar and Bermuda) have no power to refuse registration to a vessel and little authority to administer their registers.

For the first time, in response to the outrage over the *Syneta* sinking, the British government's Transport Minister John Moore has admitted that there is a problem with the colonial registers.

This in itself is a major concession from a government whose previous contribution to shipping policy has been an attack on the seafarers' unions for "pricing themselves out of the market" and overt support for shipowners who transfer to flags of convenience to cut crew costs.

Now Mrs Thatcher's government is promising maritime

legislation in 1987/8 to tighten up the status of the colonial registers.

It seems likely that the British government will allow Gibraltar, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands to continue as Foc registers, but it may clip their wings by setting a limit on ship tonnage that they can register.

According to a report in *Lloyd's List* the government "is considering" restricting the three colonial Focs to registering ships of 500 gross tons or less, along with measures to prevent other, smaller colonies (such as the Falkland Islands, Pitcairn Island and St. Helena) from registering anything but fishing vessels and pleasure boats.

This 500 tons gross limit would be a blow to Bermuda, which has just passed the two million ton mark on its register, and has recently taken a number of tankers and other large cargo ships on to its books. Given the UK government's past attitude towards shipping policy, it is unlikely that the promised legislation will pose much of a threat to Foc operators, however.

OBITUARIES

James Martin, formerly Vice President of the US National Maritime Union and long-time consultant to the United Seamen's Service, died in November at the age of 72. ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander adds "over the years Jimmy played an important part in the work of the ITF Seafarers' Section and was a champion of efforts to coordinate seafarers' welfare activities internationally. He will be sadly missed in the international seafarers' movement."

Lovemore Madzinga, a founder member of the Zimbabwe Transport & General Workers' Union (TGWU) and its Treasurer since 1982 died in a road accident while on driving duty to Zaire on 28 December 1986.

Ragnar Grønsand former General Secretary of the Norwegian Ships' Masters' Union died recently at the age of 68. Grønsand was also the President of the International Federation of Ships

Masters' Associations and, as such, maintained a good working relationship with the ITF Seafarers' Section.

Bill Sinclair former Assistant General Secretary of the British National Union of Seamen, died last year at the age of 86.

Frank Cannon, former Assistant General Secretary of the British National Union of Railwaymen, died on 6 January

Chilean 'union' threatens seafarers

An incident involving three Chilean seafarers and a Greek flag ship in the USA has uncovered an illegal conspiracy to cheat crewmembers in defiance of Greek and international law. The lawyer representing the three men has accused the owner of trying to treat his crew like slaves.

The dispute also highlights the exploitative nature of the so-called "bilateral" agreements that the Greek government has now reintroduced.

These agreements allow a shipowner to employ non-Greek seafarers who are paid only one quarter of the wages of Greek seafarers doing the same job.

The government originally introduced the bilateral agreement procedure in 1983, but as a result of strong pressure from the ITF and the Greek Seafarers' union PNO, they were withdrawn in October 1985. The government announced that they were to be reintroduced in December 1986.

"forcing men to work against their will is a form of slavery"

Even while they were outlawed, some owners have continued to hire non-Greek crewmembers on wages and conditions well below the Greek collective agreement provisions. They have been assisted by manning agencies, and in a number of cases, by a shady Chilean organisation which calls itself a union, but in practice operates as a supplier of low cost seafarers to Greek shipowners.

Chilean seafarers Manuel Araya, Abraham Garcia and Luis Cordova entered a 9 1/2 month contract of employment with the Greek ship *Mnimosyni*, owned by Prometheus Maritime Corporation, on December 8, 1985 — two months after the bilateral agreement had been repealed. The agreement therefore was in violation of Greek law but the owners didn't even abide by its terms.

When one of the seafarers was injured on the journey, the owner refused him medical treatment. When he finally had an ear operation in the USA, the company refused to pay the costs, even though the crew contract held it liable for such costs. The three men also found that they were not even paid in line with the contract.

The ship reached the Port of Tacoma, Seattle, on the US West Coast, on October 4, 1986. The men's contract was already overdue, and they had given the captain one month's notice of their intention to leave the ship in Seattle.

Ignoring the signed contract, again, the captain refused to pay the men outstanding wages or to finance their return trip to Santiago. In fact he told the men that they were "deserters".

Because the three men had no immigration status in the USA, the captain's attitude placed them in a very dangerous situation. Leaving the ship without the captain's permission meant that the men could be held in a US immigration gaol and then deported. John Merriam, the lawyer representing the three, has said that this method of trying to force men to work against their will is a form of slavery:

"In the United States, to force seamen into a choice

between an immigration jail and working illegally after the completion of their contract constitutes involuntary servitude. Involuntary servitude was outlawed in the United States more than 100 years ago when slavery was abolished," he said.

The three men eventually fled the ship and sought help from the Tacoma Seamen's Centre (run by a religious organisation) who put them in touch with US Foc coordinator John Sansone.

After three days in which the captain refused to pay the men (by law they must be paid within 24 hours of leaving the ship), the Lutheran Minister concerned contacted Merriam, from a local law firm. With the ITF's backing the ship was then arrested pending a full hearing in court.

At this point the so called "Union of Chilean Seamen in Foreign Vessels" intervened to support the owners and against the three Chilean seafarers who were supposedly their members.

Under the bilateral agreement the "union" receive a large proportion of the men's wages — paid directly — for administration and "dues". Clearly their

main aim is to guarantee this income and ensure that their exploited "members" cause no trouble for the shipowners.

The President of the "Union" Alfredo Gonzalez went to Seattle to "settle" the strike. He was quoted extensively in a Chilean Newspaper *La Estrella* on November 10, 1986. Before he even set off to "settle" things, Gonzalez had clearly made up his mind — the three seafarers' demands had "no justification" he told the newspaper, adding, ominously, that he had "been successful in 'settling' three previous strikes..."

According to a report on the case in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* newspaper, mafia-style tactics may well have been used by Gonzalez's union. They say that pressure has been brought to bear on the three men's families in Chile to tell them to settle the dispute. The three men have also been told, by the union, that they will never work on board a ship again.

"mafia style" tactics

There are a number of outstanding claims in Chile by seafarers against Gonzalez, charging him with the misappropriation of funds. The situation has even prompted the government to examine the "union" bank account and financial records.

In the meantime the ship remains arrested pending a full court hearing on the case, which lawyer Merriam describes as "a test case that could develop into an international case. It's like a slave-labour contract."

The ITF is providing full assistance to the three men, and has posted a \$10,000 bond to cover the costs of the Federal Marshalls watching the arrested ship.