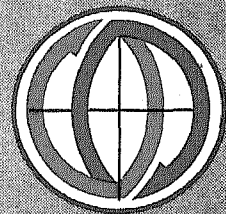


INFORMATIONS : NOTICIAS

ITF NEWS



NACHRICHTEN : NYHETER

EUROPEAN PORT WORKERS' CHARTER CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Full respect for trade union freedoms and bargaining rights, and the establishment of coordinated systems of labour supply for the ports industry at port, national and European level are among the key demands of the ITF European Port Workers' Charter adopted at a meeting of European ITF dockers' affiliates in Rotterdam on November 13.

The meeting, which was attended by 19 delegates from 13 unions in 13 countries, was called following the adoption in principle of a resolution outlining the Charter's demands at the ITF Congress in Florence in August.

European dockers' unions have highlighted the need to establish common minimum standards of wages, hours and conditions of work in the context of the competitive conditions being created by the final stage of development of the Single European Market. They are also determined to rebuff the attacks on dockworkers' job security and working conditions that are being mounted by some European port employers and governments.

The Charter calls for joint regulation of the labour supply in the ports industry in line with International Labour Convention No. 137 and Recommendation No. 145, and for the same joint bodies to enforce training, health and safety and other standards which have been agreed by employers and port unions at local, national or European levels.

Delegates called on the ITF, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community (the "Brussels Committee") and their affiliates, together with political parties and the European Community

institutions, to take action to ensure that the provisions of the Charter are implemented.

The Charter is now to be produced as a campaigning document by the ITF, and a series of conferences is to be organised at European, national and local levels to marshal support for its implementation.

The Rotterdam meeting heard a report from Clive Iddon, Secretary of the Brussels Committee, on recent developments in the European Community as they affect port workers. He described how the Council of Ministers was vetoing attempts by the European Commission to produce measures to integrate the ports in a common transport policy, and how most port employers were continuing to sabotage the creation of a Joint Committee for the Ports Industry. There was also a danger that transport would be exempted from many of the labour protection measures being passed in connection with the EC's Social Charter.

Delegates gave a warm welcome to representatives of new ITF affiliates — the Romanian Seafarers' Union, which recently formed a federation of maritime workers with dockers in the port of Constanta, and the Spanish transport workers' union FETCOMAR-CC.OO. — as well as to the Turkish Port Workers' Union Likat-Is, which has reactivated its participation in ITF affairs.

Nov/Dec 1990

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ITF NEWS

wishes all its readers
fraternal greetings of
the season and all the
best for the New Year

FORMER PM'S WIDOW LEADS FIJI ANTI-APARTHEID FIGHT (3)

ITF support for Fijian workers

Inevitably, union activities in Fiji have been severely curtailed in the climate of hostility towards trade unionism that has existed since the 1987 coup.

The ITF has made determined efforts to support the national labour movement during this difficult period with the assistance of the local Coordinating Committee of affiliates. Regional Secretary Mo Hoda has visited Fiji on a number of occasions to lend support and to press the case for the restoration of trade union freedoms.

The difficult political situation in the islands explains why no activities have taken place in Fiji for some years as part of the long-term education programme in the Asia/Pacific region.

However, it has now at last proved possible to relaunch the programme, with the holding, during August and September, of four two-day basic trade union education seminars, two in Suva and two at Nadi airport, for a total of 48 participants.

Attended by members of the ITF's four affiliates, the Transport and Oil Workers' Union, the Federated Airline Staff Association (FASA), the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA) and the Air Pacific Employees' Association (APEA), as well as the non-affiliated Foreign Going Seamen's Union, the seminars were designed to equip Fijian trade unionists with the skills they will need to become active within their unions.

For nearly all of the participants these were the first union courses they had ever attended and they benefited greatly from this opportunity to get together with other trade unionists for group activities and discussions.

The participants made a number of suggestions for future activities as part of the programme. In particular, they would like to see longer seminars, of at least three days, and special training courses held for members of union executives. Interest was also expressed in seminars on specific topics such as grievance handling, occupational safety and health, and negotiating and com-



"Strengthening the Union Movement" Seminar — Nadi Airport, Fiji, 21 August 1990

munications skills.

As only a few women (seven in all) had taken part in these first seminars, it was felt that more women should be encouraged to come forward in the future.

All four seminars were coordinated by the Fiji ITF Coordinating Committee, with technical assistance from Salote Qalo, who is the Publicity and Education Officer of the FPSA.

Top officials of the ITF's Fijian affiliates played an active part in each of the seminars, and the FPSA and the national centre, the FTUC, generously made their headquarters available for two of them. ITF Coordinating Committee Chairman Michael Columbus also lectured at one of the seminars in Suva on the aims, objectives and functions of trade unions and the ITFs, with special reference to the ITF.

ICFTU women's committee

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Women's Committee met on October 25 and 26 in Brussels, Belgium. The ITF was represented by Administrative Officer Eva Leigh.

The Committee stressed the need to organise women in transnational corporations and export processing zones. They also discussed homeworkers and workers in the informal sector — both growth areas that trade unions must organise.

It appears that the average wage gap between men and women is growing worldwide. The main cause of this seems to lie with lack of promotion for women workers and the segregation of the labour market — women still represent the highest percentage of part-time workers, for example.

Statistically it is clear that union jobs are better paid than non-union ones — which is a very good reason for women to join unions, and a useful recruiting tool for trade unions who wish to organise more women workers.

In preparation for International Women's Day on March 8, the committee agreed to continue promoting two projects in El Salvador and Burkina Faso. Only US\$23,161 has been raised so far for these projects out of a targeted total of \$101,250. The El Salvador scheme is a combination of trade union and vocational training for women and the Burkina Faso project is a literacy course for women.

The Committee also discussed preparations for the fifth ICFTU World Women's Conference which will be held in Ottawa, Canada in April 1991.

Fighting apartheid in Fiji

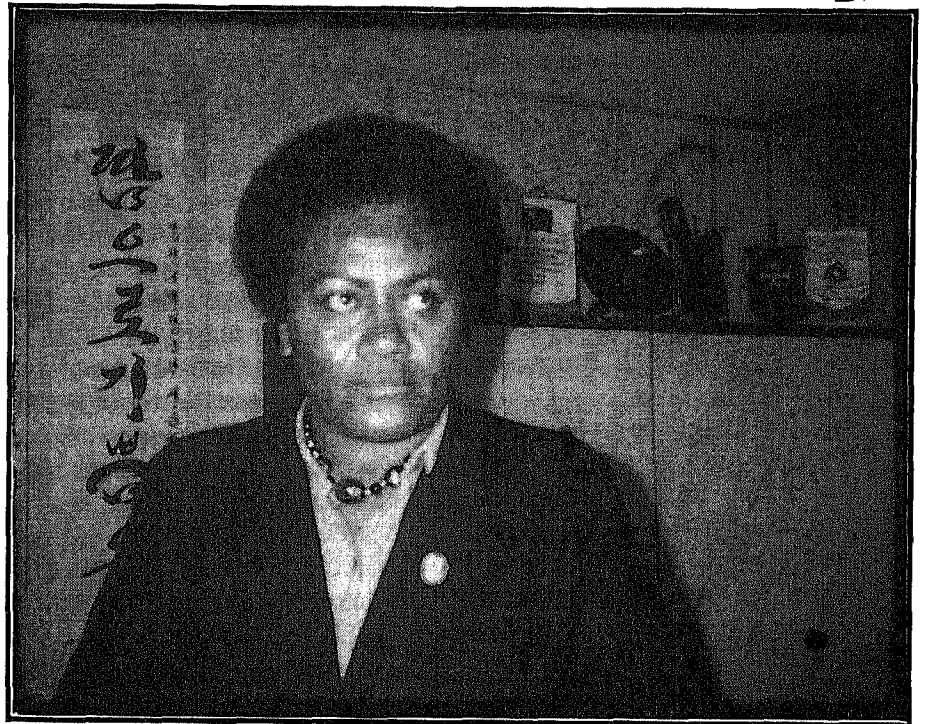
While in London to deliver a lecture at a seminar organised by the human rights organisation International Alert, Kuini Bavadra, widow of the former Prime Minister of Fiji and now President of the Fiji Labour Party and leader of the opposition coalition, visited the ITF headquarters and spoke to ITF News. She commented on the fact that the situation in Fiji no longer receives much attention in the international press:

"There is no interest unless there is violence or unrest", she said, "we are involved in peaceful protest in the tradition of Gandhi but that doesn't make good headlines."

She is particularly bitter at a recent decision by the European Communities to grant \$40m in assistance to the 'government' of Fiji under the terms of the Lomé Convention. "They don't seem to realise they are dealing with an unelected one-party regime kept in power with the backing of the army" she says, pointing out that since the 1987 military coup there has been no elected government in Fiji either at national or local level.

Recently there has been an increase in acts of violence against opposition figures and trade unionists. Mahendra Chaudhry, President of the ITF-affiliated Fiji Public Service Association, has been beaten up by unidentified thugs and the same thing happened only a few days ago to a university lecturer. Opposition to the adoption of the new Constitution is growing and she believes the government is trying to provoke violence to give it an excuse to crack down hard on its opponents. (The Constitution, which installs Apartheid-style separate racial voting rolls and rigged constituency boundaries was condemned in an emergency motion passed by the 36th ITF Congress in Florence in August this year.)

Mrs Bavadra has found herself thrust into Fiji political life as a result of the death of her husband last year. She formerly worked for the country's Public Service Commission and was an active member of the FPSA. Now



she is a "full-time politician". Despite the fact that she is the undisputed leader of the opposition on the island, she cannot draw a parliamentary salary since the Parliament has been dissolved. The Labour Party provides her with a small allowance "so I can feed my children".

Having enacted the new Constitution (it was ratified by the unelected Council of Chiefs, all of whom are cronies of Prime Minister Ratu Mara), the next move will be the organisation of blatantly rigged elections in 1991:

"The coalition will not contest these elections", says Mrs Bavadra, "since there is no way we can win them. Unlike the governing party which gets its support from those of purely Fijian origin, the opposition coalition draws support from across the ethnic divide. But the system is designed not just to disadvantage those of Indian origin, but also grossly under-represents Fijians from urban areas who tend to be trade union members and who don't always support the regime. This can easily be seen in the proposed make-up of the Parliament which reserves 37 seats for those of Fijian race with 27 for Indians and 6 for other groups. Only

five of the 37 'Fijian' seats are allocated to urban areas despite the fact that 33% of the Fijian population lives in the towns. The entire system is blatant gerrymandering designed to keep power in the hands of a few conservative politicians all of who come from one tribal grouping. The trade union movement, which created the Fiji Labour Party, and which has led the movement against the governing group, is now once again becoming a target for military hit squads — soldiers dressed in civilian clothes who pick up key figures, beat them severely and then release them as a warning to others.

The FTUC and the coalition are now concentrating on mobilising grass roots workers, particularly in the rural areas. An education campaign "Operation Sunrise" will be launched next year:

"Only by educating our people can we bring about a return to democracy" says Mrs Bavadra. She adds that the efforts of ITF affiliates and other trade unions, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, were a major factor in curbing the army's excesses in the early days after the coup and that pressure may once again need to be exerted to bring about a return to democracy.

Chemical hazard cards produced

A series of International Chemical Safety Cards summarising chemical data and health and safety guidelines for chemicals in common industrial use has been published by the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS). The IPCS is a joint undertaking of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Covering 87 different chemicals at present and with a target range of 2000 chemicals by 1994, the Cards can provide handy, straightforward information and advice on potentially hazardous substances which are in common use by employees in many types of workplace.

The Cards, which will be available in all languages of the European Community (and in other languages if funding from other agencies is forthcoming), are to be accompanied by a user manual and a package for one-day training

courses, which are crucial if they are to be used safely and effectively.

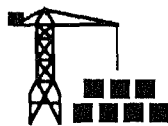
The International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions (ICEF), which has provided the trade union input into the production of the Cards, stresses that the Cards cannot cover all possible applications of the chemicals and problems that they may cause. ICEF also points out that the Cards should not be used as an excuse to reduce management's responsibility to provide workers with full information and safety data sheets on chemicals that are in use.

The Cards are available in full sets or in bulk copies of individual Cards. ITF affiliates which are not also affiliated to ICEF and which wish to enquire about obtaining supplies of the Cards should contact David Cockroft at the ITF Research and Publications Department.

*The use of the International Chemical Safety Cards was one of the items discussed at the annual meeting of the

Occupational Health, Safety and Environment Working Party of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Trade Secretariats (ITSS) in Brussels on October 29-31. The meeting also considered how to improve cooperation between the ITSS in the field of health and safety, how to strengthen trade union input to the work of the international regulatory organisations and what trade unions can do to link their activities on the work environment with campaigns to protect the general environment.

**The ICFTU has published a booklet on "Occupational Health, Safety and the Environment in Eastern Europe", which is being translated into Eastern European languages. The booklet contains sections on health and safety and environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe, the relationship between health, safety, the environment and economic reform, and on trade union policy and action.



DOCKERS

ITF appeal for Liberian dockworkers stranded in Sierra Leone by civil war

The continuing civil war in Liberia has had serious repercussions for all who have become caught up in the violent events of recent months.

In fear of their lives, thousands of Liberian citizens have sought refuge in neighbouring African countries as the fierce fighting continues and homes are wrecked and the livelihoods of working people destroyed.

Inevitably, members of ITF unions have been among those to suffer, and the ITF has issued a special appeal for assistance on behalf of one such group, the dockers and their families — fifty in all — who have fled the carnage to

the safety of Freetown in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

As members of the Dock Workers' Association of Liberia, the dockers sought assistance from the ITF's Sierra Leone affiliates on their arrival in the country. The Sierra Leone unions have provided the dockers' families with accommodation and basic food supplies, but it is clear that given their very limited means they cannot continue to meet the dockers' needs if the situation in Liberia compels the dockers to remain in Sierra Leone for any length of time.

At the request of the Sierra Leone

unions, ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has already authorised two modest donations from ITF funds to meet the dockers' most pressing needs. ITF affiliates have responded generously to the ITF appeal, in October, for contributions for the exiled dockers and as a result they now have sufficient financial means for themselves and their families for the next couple of months or so.

ITF News appeals to any unions that have not already sent donations please to do so. We can assure them that any monies raised will be put to very good use.

People are a port's best resource

People are the most important resource in enabling the ports industry to meet the technological and competitive challenges of the current period.

This was the central message of a conference on "Ports, People and Technology" on November 14-16 organised and hosted by the Port of Rotterdam and attended by over 200 representatives of port authorities, port employers and trade unions from most regions of the world.

Participants were able to choose from a wide selection of presentations and discussions on aspects of new technology in the ports, training, productivity, health and safety and labour relations issues.

Among the areas examined in detail were the experiences of port workers in the Netherlands, Germany, Canada and the USA. Representatives of ITF-affiliated dockers' unions in these countries showed that their organisations are at the cutting edge of modernisation and the humanisation of work in the ports industry.

The General Secretary of the Dutch transport workers' union Vervoersbond FNV, Ruud Vreeman, spoke of his union's efforts to ensure that rationalisation and the restructuring of work organisation leads to an improvement in the working conditions of port employees. The union, which has not shrunk from taking strike action to enforce its demands when necessary, has developed an innovative programme for employment opportunities, working hours and safety protection in the industry.

Don Garcia of the Canadian region of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) gave an account of the long battle by his union for justice in the hiring of port labour and for the introduction of new technology to the benefit of all parties in the industry. Together with Robert Wilds of the British Columbia Maritime Employers' Association, he also explained the extensive joint efforts by union and employers in the Port of Vancouver to improve the training of workers and managers in occupational

safety and health.

Peter Reckewell of the German transport workers' union ÖTV, a works councillor in the Port of Hamburg, spoke of the initiative taken by the union in securing a commitment by the employers to retrain a section of the existing workforce in the use of information technology, which was introduced from the 1970s onwards.

A less positive note was struck by certain representatives of British port employers, whose boasts about their attacks on organised labour and about the minimal levels of training now re-

quired in some British ports where the existing workforce has been dispensed with were evidently a source of some embarrassment to port employers from other countries.

The position of the host Port of Rotterdam, which is celebrating its 650th anniversary this year, in the front rank of the world ports industry is a tribute to the productive relationship between a strong and imaginative port workers' union, forward-looking management and public authorities which are keen to coordinate infrastructure planning with the development of the port itself.

UK privatisation plans

The British government has revealed plans for the privatisation of over 100 ports.

Plans for a Bill allowing trust-owned ports to opt for privatisation were included in the legislative programme unveiled at the opening of a new session of Parliament on November 7. There has already been an enthusiastic response to the move from some of the major trust ports, which are keen to raise extra finance for development projects and to mount a further attack on labour costs.

Over half of the registered dock workforce which existed under the National Dock Labour Scheme, which was abolished by the government in 1989, have already been made redundant. On October 5 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which is the largest employer in the port of Liverpool, announced that it would be making a third of its dockers redundant.

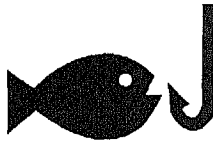
Many port employers have shown their determination to do away with the entire workforce of formerly registered dockers as part of a sustained purge of wage rates and working conditions. New workers are being employed on much less favourable terms, and some port authorities have contracted out cargo-handling work to agencies as a first step towards casualisation.

The ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) has pointed out that the spiralling costs of redundancy payments to former Scheme dockers — currently standing at £130 million (US\$253.5 m.) compared to the government's original estimate of £25 million (US\$48.8 m.) — show how no public expense is being spared to rid the ports of a well-organised and unionised workforce.

The union has consistently warned that the government and the employers had a long-term agenda for axeing thousands of jobs in the ports and casualising dock labour (see ITF News February 1990).

However, the privatisation plans may yet run into conflict with some port employers, as the government has declared that it intends to retain 50 per cent of the profits when ports are sold off.

* A new front in the attack on British dockers' jobs was opened in late November with the announcement by the port of Felixstowe that it intended to cut the number of dockers employed there by over 100. Felixstowe has been plagued by problems of loss of custom and income since it lost many of its competitive advantages created by being outside the Dock Labour Scheme. Two major carrier companies — Evergreen and CMA — have recently moved their operations to a new terminal on the Isle of Grain.



Union aid for Filipino fishermen

A sad story of gross exploitation of Filipino fishermen has emerged after the ITF's fishermen's affiliate in South Africa — the Trawler and Line Fishermen's Union — with the support of the ITF investigated why five Filipino fishermen had left the Taiwanese trawler *Soon Hung No. 1* in the port of Cape Town.

The men left the trawler on 11 October and sought refuge at the local Missions to Seamen. Norman Daniels, Secretary of our affiliate, made contact with the five on 19 October and was amazed by what they told him.

All the men were on eighteen month contracts, copies of which they showed to Daniels.

The ITF is only too familiar with the unfair terms of employment of seafarers, particularly on Foc ships, but the contracts signed by the *Soon Hung No. 1* crew imposed intolerable conditions on a group of workers who rarely come to the notice of unions and thus have little chance of redress.

The fishermen's contracts clearly stated that the fishermen had no fixed hours and would be required to work for unlimited hours for no extra pay.

They were also expected to pay for their air ticket home to Manila on being signed off after serving for a minimum of 18 months(!)

Salaries were set at 5,200 New Taiwanese Dollars (US\$190.55) a month for the first twelve months, 6,500 New Taiwanese Dollars (US\$238.18) for months 13 to 18 of the contract and 7,800 New Taiwanese Dollars (US\$285.82) if the contract was renewed after the first eighteen months. But these salaries would only be paid out in the home port of Singapore if the fisherman concerned did not return to Manila for the period for which he was contracted. In the meantime, the fisherman would receive 1,000 New Tai-

wanese Dollars (US\$36.64) a month while serving on board the *Soon Hung No. 1*.

Under the terms of the contract, the Filipino fishermen further agreed to a three-month probationary period on the vessel. If they failed to complete this period satisfactorily they were liable to pay Step Up damages of 2,800 pesos (US\$105.10) for processing a work permit, 1,620 pesos (US\$60.81) for travel tax and 1,200 pesos (US\$45.04) for accident and medical reimbursement insurance.

Other clauses in the contract can only have added to the misery of the fishermen serving on the *Soon Hung No. 1*.

One clause stated that supplies of fresh drinking water would be rationed and that salt water would have to be used for bathing, clothes washing and even toothbrushing.

Another clause is so amazing that is worth quoting in full:

"Fishing vessel leaving port is empty, therefore it sways when it passes through heavy waves so naturally it causes dizziness, vomiting and non-appetite. This is called Sea-Sickness. If this happens to anybody, it is understandable. However, continuous sea-sickness is not tolerable. So anybody who would be caught habitually having sea-sickness will not receive salary. Only valid reasons are acceptable." [underlining as per contract]

So any fisherman unlucky enough to become sea-sick during the voyage and unable to produce a 'valid reason' for it (whatever that may mean) would not be paid for as long as he was incapacitated.

The terms of the fishermen's contracts were bad enough, but when Daniels spoke to the men they told him of other indignities they had suffered while on board. Food supplies were very poor and consisted mainly of rice

— a diet clearly inadequate for the heavy work the fishermen were required to perform. What was more, if they reported late for duty they received no food at all.

Water was rationed to 3 to 5 litres a day, shared between the 19-man crew and the water was dirty and not fit to drink.

The men were also being cheated of their pay and had not received their allowances.

The special clothing they needed was either defective (they were given torn gloves) or simply not supplied at all.

They also regularly worked very long hours and got little rest. In general, they said, they were treated very badly.

This last allegation was amply borne out by what happened next. At about 6 p.m. on the day that Daniels had visited the men at the Missions to Seamen the captain appeared with 15 crew members and Mr Charles Lee, Chinese Liaison Officer, General Agency Division of Ellerman and Bucknall (Pty) Ltd. It was obvious that they intended to force the fishermen to go back to the fishing vessel as they set about them and started tying them up with ropes.

Alerted by the noise, the duty officer appeared to ask what was going on. He remonstrated with the captain and Mr Lee, saying that he would not allow anyone under his roof to be "tied up like dogs" and forcibly removed. He also called the police and the captain and Mr Lee were persuaded to leave the building.

Next day, Daniels again saw the crew members with Mr Lee present. They were asked to return to the vessel, but no doubt afraid of what would happen if they did, they refused.

The five men were eventually repatriated on 2 November but only after being detained by the immigration authorities for two weeks at Pollsmoor Prison.

Submarine sinks Scottish vessel

Concern is growing about the mysterious loss of 18 vessels, and fifty lives, off the Scottish coast in the last few years — and the finger of suspicion is pointing at military submarines.

The most recent tragedy occurred on November 22, when the UK-registered fishing vessel *Antares* went missing off the western Scottish coast. Wreckage was later discovered with the vessel's name on it, but none of the four crew were found.

It would appear that a British navy submarine snagged the fishing boat's nets and dragged it underwater.

The UK Ministry of Defence said that a submarine surfaced after it felt interference, believing it had snagged nets. It was ordered to check that the crew were safe.

The sub could see two fishing vessels, but was unable to make radio contact with them. It reportedly stayed in the area for over two hours, but found no

survivors.

Many similar incidents have occurred in the shallow Irish Sea between Ireland and Scotland over the years. The Sea is used as a submarine exercise ground.

Previously a number of trawlers have disappeared without trace, and others have been dragged backwards for miles till their trawl wires snapped or the vessels capsized. Others have been swamped by freak waves in a calm sea. These waves are believed to be caused by the close passage of submarines.

NAFO catch agreement

The European Community has agreed to accept some, but not all, of the international fishing quotas for the north-west Atlantic.

Quotas for these international waters are set by the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) — a body con-

Fishermen in liferafts have been circled by subs at periscope depth which have waited till they were picked up by other vessels before disappearing.

The government has admitted to 13 incidents round the British coasts. The UK High Court has recently ordered the Ministry to produce all its submarine log books for September 5, 1985, the day the trawler *Inspire* was sunk by a freak wave in the Irish Sea and two crewmembers were killed. The government denies responsibility for the sinking.

sisting of Canada, Iceland, Denmark (for Greenland and the Faroes), the USSR, Norway, the USA and the European Community (EC).

Despite its NAFO membership, the EC has ignored the body's quotas and set its own catch limits at higher levels than those agreed for a number of years.

At the annual NAFO meeting held in Halifax, Canada in September, the EC agreed to accept all but three of the quotas. The catches the EC refused to ascribe to were for cod, redfish and witch. NAFO called for a moratorium on cod catches in the heavily depleted "Nose" of the Newfoundland Grand Banks (the part of the Banks that extends into international waters) — and the Canadian government, in particular, were upset by the EC's insistence that it will continue to fish for cod in these waters. In general, however, other NAFO members were happy that the EC has finally agreed to most of the NAFO limits.

The NAFO meeting also agreed to set up a working group to develop detailed proposals for the improvement of surveillance and control of fishing in the north-west Atlantic. NAFO members are especially concerned about the proliferation of European-owned flag of convenience registered fishing vessels in the area. These "runaway flag" vessels abide by no quotas and are a serious threat to the maintenance of viable quotas and sustainable yields.

Environment conference in USSR

Trade unionists should become leading "guardians" of the environment and should start a dialogue with industry and government about how production processes can be made more environmentally friendly, according to a major trade union environmental conference.

The International Trade Union Follow-up Conference on the Sea Environment was held in Leningrad from 10-14 September. It was organised on the initiative of the USSR Fish Industry Workers' Union, the Women Workers' Union in Denmark (KAD) and the ITF-affiliated General Workers' Union in Denmark (SiD). A previous conference of its type was held in Denmark in 1988.

The event was attended by representatives of trade unions and environmental organisations, together with scientists, politicians and researchers, from the Nordic countries, the USSR, Poland, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, the Faroe Islands and Brazil. Mark Dickinson of the ITF Secretariat at-

tended the conference together with a representative of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

The ITF outlined the work being carried out on marine pollution by its Fishermen's Section and its contribution to the work of international regulatory organisations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Delegates adopted a comprehensive Plan of Action for the Marine Environment urging all trade unions to intensify the debate on the protection of the marine environment, so that a truly international trade union strategy can be developed. To this end the conference asked the ITF and IUF, together with the chemical and energy workers' international ICEF, to organise an international trade union conference on the marine environment and to appoint a co-ordination committee. Delegates also called for more information campaigns about the environment which would encourage the involvement of as many trade union members as possible.



SEAFARERS

Bulgarian strike victory

Bulgarian seafarers have delivered a stinging rebuff to attempts by their employers and the government to ignore their demands for collective bargaining rights and for higher wages on voyages abroad.

A five-day strike by seafarers employed by the Bulgarian Sea Fleet (BSF) forced the company and the Ministry of Transport to the negotiating table on November 2. The action was organised by the Varna-based Trade Union of Seamen with the support of the independent trade union confederation Podkrepa. This represents an encouraging development in united activity by the country's trade unions.

The demand for foreign currency payments for overseas voyages which would bring Bulgarian seafarers into line with those of other countries dates back to early 1989 but had not been met by the company. This increased the flight of Bulgarian crews to jobs with foreign companies.

The government and the BSF had previously failed to agree on who should be the responsible party for negotiating with the unions, and the company attempted to have the strike declared illegal.

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis and labour leaders from many countries sent messages to Bulgarian Prime

Minister Andrei Lukanov protesting against the failure to negotiate with the seafarers and the moves towards legal action against the strikers.

The unions feared that the BSF management, who are in a state of great anxiety about the process of transition to a market economy in Bulgaria, might use the strike as a pretext to liquidate the company, sell off its assets and dismiss the workforce.

When crews of tankers and coal carriers joined the strike during the negotiations, the employers were forced to concede an increase in overseas pay allowances and signed an agreement with the unions the same day.

Cyprus Foc abandoned in Taiwan

The multi-national crew of the Cyprus flag of convenience *Dascalos D* can tell the maritime community a thing or two about the respectability of the Cyprus flag and the shady companies who hide behind it.

While the Cyprus flag continues to promote itself as a quality "flag of choice", it remains a flag of convenience register with a poor safety record, low wage rates and rules of secrecy that allow real owners to hide easily behind phoney corporate structures.

The *Dascalos D* has been abandoned by its owners in Taichung, Taiwan since September 29. The Greek officers were eventually repatriated, but the rest of the crew — from Egypt, Ghana, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey — have been left without food, money, power or facilities of any kind. The crew are owed US\$142,483.78 in backwages.

The crewmembers sent a message to the ITF originally asking for help in obtaining the monies owed to them in

October. In November, they sent another message saying that the "situation is much worse. Facing very very hard time - request immediate help - no light - no food - no money - no doctor's facility".

The ITF has organised emergency relief for the crew, and has contacted lawyers.

Urgent messages have been sent to the Cyprus government's Ministry of Communications and Works — after weeks of not replying, a M. Pissourios "for the Director Department of Merchant Shipping" merely sent a copy of a message from the "managers" of the vessel which stated that, as far as supplies were concerned "the crew were never short and we wonder what was the reason to reported (sic) such a thing."

The message claimed that the crew's wages will be "shorted (sic) out of the next few days" — presumably meaning that they will eventually get paid. The ITF has replied to the Cyprus government, saying that this is hardly

an adequate response to an appeal for assistance. Clearly, the Cyprus government considers the word of unnamed "managers" to be sacrosanct, warranting no further investigation.

The ITF has also tried to contact the owners. This is never easy with a Cyprus flag ship. The vessel's registered owner, according to the usual industry sources, is a company called "Seaworthy" that lists its address as care of a Cypriot concern called "Eurointerlink".

So far, no one has answered the telephone at Eurointerlink. Fax and telex messages remain unanswered.

The ITF then received another message from M. Pissourios stating that the Cypriot Ministry has now sent messages to the "owners/managers" of the ship "in order to arrange payment of the crew as per their contracts and to restore their living conditions." But, it would seem, the government had the same problem as the ITF — "unfortunately we received no reply."

Union role in rig safety stressed

Urgent improvements in standards of safety and training and a major shake-up of the safety inspectorate for the offshore oil industry have been recommended by the official report on the disaster at the Piper Alpha oil platform in the North Sea in July 1988.

167 workers were killed in the explosion and fire at the platform, many of them because they were unable to escape the smoke caused by the fire.

The report by Scottish High Court judge Lord Cullen heavily criticised Occidental, the company operating the Piper Alpha platform, for adopting a "superficial" attitude to the risk of major hazards, and for failing to train workers and managers in emergency procedures and communications.

"The safety policies and procedures were in place: the practice was deficient", the report concluded. Operators should in future be required to submit details of their safety management systems and safety assessment techniques to the regulatory body.

Cullen also attacked the British Department of Energy's tendency towards "over-conservatism, insularity and a lack of ability to look at the [safety] regime in a critical way". His report concluded that responsibility for overseeing safety in the offshore industry should be transferred from the Department to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The report highlights the contrast between the situation on Norwegian rigs, where trade union safety representatives are a legal requirement, and the harassment and victimisation of safety representatives by companies operating in the British sector.

An official British inquiry into safety in the industry in 1980 ignored the argument put forward by the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF) in a minority report that the safety standards applying in onshore oil installations should be extended to the offshore sector.

Cullen also called for the provision

of temporary safe refuges on the rigs and the upgrading of onboard safety equipment and standby vessels.

The TGWU's National Secretary for the Oil Industry, Fred Higgs, commented: "It is tragic that it took this disaster to convince the government of the need for an independent inspectorate. However, the offshore safety inspectorate will need to be properly resourced and financed as a matter of

ILO minimum is now \$340!

Shipowners and maritime administrations who claim to support the International Labour Organisation's Recommended minimum wage for seafarers should take note that the figure is not US\$286, but about US\$340, due to the deterioration in the value of the US dollar.

The ITF recognises the ILO figure as the minimum basic rate that should apply to national flag, as opposed to flag of convenience, shipping. For Foc shipping, the ITF standard minimum wage for an Able Seaman is US\$821.

Nevertheless, there are many Foc shipowners who refuse to pay the ITF rate. The government of the Philippines' official labour supplying agency — the POEA — uses the ILO minimum as its basic wage for seafarers.

The last time the ILO minimum was set, at the 25th Session of the Joint Maritime Commission meeting in Geneva in October 1987, a "Resolution on the Minimum Basic Wage of Able Seamen" was adopted which stated that the rate should be "US\$286 and £176".

The Recommendation that contains the minimum rate (Number 109) states explicitly of the two currency rates that the operative one should be "whichever of these amounts may from time to time be the greater."

The International Shipping Federation — the global shipowners' body that co-ordinates the employers' group in the ILO — stated, in their own report of the 1987 meeting that "On this basis therefore the Shipowners' Group reluctantly conceded that the minimum wage figure should be increased to

urgency. At present there are only five inspectors in place to carry out offshore inspections, instead of the agreed complement of 14. I believe that the industry now ought to take the opportunity for talks to improve industrial relations on the rigs."

The trade unions have called for Occidental to be prosecuted for its failure to enforce the requisite safety standards on the Piper Alpha platform.

US\$286 or £176, whichever was the greater, and this was accepted by the seafarers."

Due to currency movements in the last year, the US dollar value of £176 is now approximately US\$340 — an increase of nearly 19 per cent for the seafarers covered by ILO rates.

Norway to raise seafarers' taxes

Norwegian seafarers reacted angrily in October to moves by the conservative coalition government to abolish the tax advantages they now enjoy.

The government was proposing to halve the tax concessions of two groups of seafarers next year (currently they pay tax at 23 per cent and have a maximum annual tax deduction of 55,000 kr (US\$9,540)) and to remove them entirely in 1992.

The unions held mass meetings when the plans became known and a protest strike was held in the afternoon and evening of 19 October against the proposed new tax regime, which affects seafarers in coastal navigation and on mobile rigs in the Norwegian sector.

The unions are lucky as the government fell at the end of October over the question of future Norwegian membership of the EC. It is now extremely unlikely that the incoming socialist government will press ahead with plans that the unions say would cost this group of seafarers 15,000 to 25,000 kr a year (US\$2,600 to US\$4,335) in lost net earnings, the equivalent of between one and a half to two months' pay.

ITF protest over Greek crewing cuts

Safety on Greek ocean-going ships will suffer if plans for crew reductions are implemented, argues ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander in a protest note to the Greek shipping minister Aristotelis Pavlides.

Commenting on the government's plans to reduce manning levels by four to five (officers and ratings) on ships over 3,000 grt, Selander protested that crew cuts on this scale would endanger the safety of life at sea.

Seafaring is already fatiguing and stressful and would become even more so, he said, if there were fewer crew members sharing the same number of tasks. Pressure of work would also make it impossible for seafarers to pay proper attention to vital shipboard safety procedures. This would inevitably result in more maritime casualties, with vessels and lives being lost unnecessarily.

The letter also points out that the manning cuts would mean fewer jobs

in future for Greek seafarers on national-flag ships, with as many as 4,000 trained seafarers facing a bleak future without employment.

Selander added that the Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) campaign to defend maritime safety and jobs had the ITF's full support. In the light of strong opposition from the world's seafaring community to these controversial plans he urged the Greek minister to reconsider.

IMO ignores nuclear fuel threat

The ITF has expressed its anger and disappointment at the failure of representatives of national governments at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to give serious attention to the dangers posed by the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuels (INF) on passenger ferries and other non-purpose built ships.

The government delegations at the meeting of a special Working Group on the transport of INF convened by the IMO's Sub-Committee on the Carriage of Dangerous Goods (CDG) on 8-10 October were heavily stacked in favour of the interests of the nuclear industry.

The ITF, which was represented at the meeting by four observers, was concerned that the transport of INF should be restricted to purpose-built vessels, on safety grounds. Alarmed at the number of INF shipments being carried on ro-ro ferries on busy passenger routes in Northern Europe, the ITF Congress in Florence adopted a special resolution calling on the IMO meeting to ban INF from non-purpose built vessels.

Attempts by the United States and Japanese governments merely to secure restrictions on the amount of INF

carried in this way were swept aside by the French, British and German governments, which wanted no restrictions at all.

At the plenary session of the CDG which followed the meeting of the Working Group, the ITF delegation protested strongly about how the concerns of seafarers and other transport workers were being ignored by the member governments, and indicated that the ITF and its affiliates would be forced to look to other means of enforcing a ban on the carriage of INF in unsuitable and unsafe ships.

Herald manslaughter case dropped

The case against the P&O ferry company and seven of its former employees over the loss of the ro-ro ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* was dropped in late October when the judge directed the jury to acquit the defendants on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

The *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized outside Zeebrugge harbour in March 1987 with the loss of over 190 lives. Three of the seafarers who were charged, including the *Herald's* master, are members of the ITF-affiliated officers' union NUMAST, which pro-

vided them with strong support against attempts to turn them into scapegoats for a tragedy where the ferry's operating conditions, which were beyond the seafarers' control, were centrally at fault.

NUMAST General Secretary John Newman commented on the outcome of the trial: "We believe justice has prevailed for our members. The search for scapegoats among seafarers does nothing to create safer ships and does nothing to address the fundamental problems of safety at sea."

The dropping of the case also means that P&O European Ferries (Dover) no longer faces charges of corporate manslaughter, a decision that has brought criticism from the Opposition Labour Party. NUMAST warns that since the tragedy the operating practices of ferry companies have become, if anything, even less safe.

"... All we find is shipping companies talking about fewer—not more—crews aboard their ships," reports Newman, "and seeking faster turnarounds and other ways of maximising profits."

Predictions of labour shortages are good news for seafarers

The crisis in Liberia continues, and more and more states look set to establish Second Registers. Seafarers, used to seeing the future as bleak, can take heart from some of the long-term forecasts now emerging for the industry. The world fleet is expanding and, according to Lloyd's Register, has now reached the second highest-ever tonnage. The recession in the shipping industry from 1982 to 1988 is now officially over. The best news for seafarers, however, comes from recent studies that confirm there is now a worldwide shortage of officers, and there will eventually also be a shortage of ratings. A report commissioned by the International Shipping Federation (ISF) and the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and produced by the University of Warwick in the UK says that shortages by the end of the decade are almost inevitable and that current recruitment and training levels are unlikely to be adequate. The bargaining power of seafarers' trade unions and the ITF will be bound to be strengthened by this — and it will be a lot harder to blacklist individuals or intimidate crews if their skills are in high demand.

The Chinese government has announced they will be opening a maritime office in Cyprus before the end of the year. This paves the way for the transfer of Chinese flag vessels to the Cyprus flag of convenience in 1991.

The ITF-affiliated German transport workers' union ÖTV has won a battle in their legal campaign to overturn the German second register GIS. The GIS

allows German shipowners to pay crewmembers different rates of pay according to their "national wage rates" — in other words they can exploit cheap labour from the developing world. The ÖTV correctly condemns this discriminatory pay regime, and have challenged the constitutionality of the GIS. The Bremen Labour Court,

petition within the European shipping sector and promotes worse working conditions. The European Court ruling will have important ramifications for all workers, and particularly seafarers. Meanwhile, the former East German state shipping line DSR has announced savage cuts in its workforce and the elimination of many of its ships. They plan to cut their older general cargo vessels and give up their entire reefer fleet. DSR employed 13,200 people at the beginning of 1990. Their workforce now numbers 10,800 and further reductions to 6-7,000 are planned by 1992.

After five years of work, the new Hong Kong Shipping Register opened for business on December 3rd. The transfer of the Hong Kong flag from the British register "group" to autonomous status is an integral part of the 1984 Sino-British deal for the transfer of Hong Kong sovereignty to the People's Republic of China in 1997. The fees for the Hong Kong

Register are comparable with the European second registers, and less than the Panamanian and Liberian flags of convenience. All existing ships on the register are being transferred to the new one (777 vessels of 6.4 million GRT at the end of 1989). According to D. A. Hall, Marine Adviser to the Hong Kong Government Office in London, the register is based on three concepts: maintenance of the highest safety standards; a genuine link between Hong Kong and the ships on its register; and that overall conditions "should be conducive to encouraging all aspects of shipping in Hong Kong". The registration requirements, however, do allow ships to be owned by overseas com-

where the legal case is being heard, has now decided to refer the issue to the European Court of Justice. They want the Court to determine whether the GIS violates articles 92 and 117 of the Treaty of Rome — the European Community's founding document. Article 92 on "aids granted by states" says that members should not grant aid "which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods" — and Article 117 (under "social provisions") states that members agree to "promote improved working conditions and an improved living standard for workers." The GIS both distorts com-



The ITF's Flag by Flag Roundup

Continued on page 12

...Luxembourg register open for business

Continued from page 11

panies in certain circumstances. The new register removes the old British requirement that certain officers be British, and extends recognition of certificates to equivalencies from many nations. There is no genuine link provision so far as the seafarers working on the ships are concerned. Following pressure from shipowners, ships in the new register will be exempt from Hong Kong profit (income) tax. The ITF and the Hong Kong unions have been extensively consulted about the framing of the regulations surrounding the register, but ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander says that the ITF will need to study the rules of the new register in detail and evaluate the practical operation of the flag before making any final decisions. Any such decisions would be taken by the ITF Fair Practices Committee, which meets annually in June and has the power to add or delete registers from the list of Flag of Convenience registers. At the present time, ITF policy on the Hong Kong register remains unchanged — the register is not a flag of convenience as such, but Hong Kong ships are subject to a ship by ship evaluation of their status that can result in their being declared FOC—depending, ultimately, on the real beneficial ownership of the vessel.

Shipowners in India have joined the international clamour for a second register. Shipowners meeting in Bombay in October called for the city of Bombay to be the centre of the proposed

register. The Indian-flag fleet has declined from 6.35 million tons gross in 1985 to 5.9 million tons this year, while its share of Indian trade has fallen from 39 per cent last year to 34 per cent this year. Shipowners claim that a Second Register would reverse this decline.

More bad news for the beleaguered Liberian registry. World-Wide shipping of Hong Kong, the single largest shipowner with the flag of convenience register and one of the biggest shipowners in the world, is transferring some of its ships from Liberia to Panama. World-Wide have 35 ships of more than seven million grt registered in Liberia. Helmut Sohmen, World-Wide Chairman, told *Lloyd's List* that his company was "over-exposed" to the Liberian flag. Sohmen also admitted that Panama's recent problems have shown "that a shipowner could not be entirely safe anywhere". As far as the Cyprus flag is concerned, Sohmen said that certain charterers would be cautious about using World-Wide ships if they were flying Cyprus flags. As far as the Marshall Islands is concerned, he said "We cannot take the risk of going to such a young register." Perhaps World-Wide, being a Hong Kong based company, might consider going back to the "national" flag, now the new register has been launched (see separate item in this story).

The Luxembourg register begins operations in the new year, and Belgium's largest transport operator CMB has announced its intention to reflag all 14 of its Belgian flag ships to the new

register. Antwerp-based CMB calculates that they will save US\$585,000 per vessel per year on operating costs. CMB stated that they do not want to register their fleet under a flag of convenience, due to having to use international crews—"We wanted to keep the Belgian expertise" a CMB spokesperson told *Lloyd's List*—which is good news for the ITF-affiliated BTB transport union and their members. ITF policy on the Luxembourg flag, supported strongly by the Belgian unions, is that Belgium and Luxembourg are considered to be the same country and therefore the new flag is considered to be a Belgian second register. So long as the Belgian unions are satisfied with the crewing arrangements of Belgian-owned Luxembourg ships, the ITF will treat those ships as national flag. In the event of non-Belgian owned ships registered with Luxembourg, they will be considered as flags of convenience under ITF Second Register Policy.

In the face of virulent opposition from seafarers' trade unions, the Spanish government seems set to establish yet another European second register in the Canary Islands by the middle of 1991. Shipowners have fought hard for the establishment of a Spanish Second Register, which was first suggested by a Canary Islands Senator a year ago. Apparently, the government has stated that the register would be open to all European Community nationals. The ITF-affiliated transport federation of the UGT, and the non-affiliated SLMM seafarers' union have both opposed the plan very strongly.



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

1991

10-11 January

17-18 January

21-23 January

30-31 January

21-23 February

25-27 February

10-11 April

Channel Tunnel

Maritime Safety Committee

3rd African Road Transport Workers' Conference

Standing Committee on Maritime Mobile Offshore Units

Asia/Pacific Regional Committee

Asia/Pacific Seafarers' Regional Committee

Civil Aviation Section Committee

London

London

Nairobi

Rotterdam

Kuala Lumpur

Taipei

London



INLAND TRANSPORT

German rail workers' unions unite

A new chapter in the history of German railway trade unionism was written in Kassel in late October when delegates attending an Extraordinary "Reunification" Congress of the Railwaymen's Union (GdED) voted to accept the members of its former East German counterpart, the GdE, into membership.

The GdED now goes from being a union of 320,000 to one of 530,000 members, which makes it the largest rail union in the non-communist world. In its new form it incorporates the ten districts in the east of the country. The majority of the GdE district officials previously in charge of these offices have become GdED officials and will seek reconfirmation in their posts at the next ordinary GdED Congress which is due to take place in 1992.

The Congress voted to expand the GdED executive, with former GdE President Peter Rothe and Vice President Dieter Grau winning election to the two new posts thus created.

At the same time as the Kassel conference was taking place the GdE met and decided to dissolve itself and to recommend its members to join the GdED.

The sole remaining task for the GdE is the disposal of its former assets in the east, and a company has been set up for this purpose. The GdED has made it clear that for political and legal reasons it will not lay any claim to these assets. Any monies remaining after the union has been wound up will accrue to the non profit making foundation that runs the holiday and training centres for young GdED members. The GdED, however, intends to pursue a claim to the former properties of the railwaymen's union seized by the Nazis in the 1930s.

The first task for the enlarged union will be to increase the pay of its new members who earn on average between 1,300 and 1,400 DM a month as em-

ployees of the Reichsbahn (former East German railways). Its immediate aim is to bring their pay to between 50 and 60 per cent of that of workers for the West German Bundesbahn, with the eventual aim of achieving full pay parity between rail workers in the former two halves of the newly unified country. At the same time the GdED will seek to defend rail employment in the east of Germany against attempts by the Reichsbahn to cut one in three rail jobs.

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis attended the reunification congress, where he delivered an address in which he congratulated the GdED and extended warm fraternal greetings.

Speaking on behalf of the over a million rail workers represented in the ITF, Lewis welcomed the unification of Germany's railway workers, saying that a bigger and stronger GdED would be a great asset to the ITF's work. The GdED had always been prominent in ITF affairs and the enlarged union would have an even more important role to play within Europe in the new era that had come about with the creation of the independent unions in the eastern countries. The GdED's support was also welcome in the context of ITF efforts to ensure that the transport industry and the railways in particular did not fall victim to unrestricted and unfair competition with the completion of the EC single market.

The General Secretary said he recognised that the task facing the newly enlarged union would not be an easy one but he assured it of the ITF's wholehearted and unwavering support in its endeavours to achieve social justice for all its members and especially the many thousands of rail workers who had been denied their fundamental rights for almost sixty years.

*The first major industrial dispute since reunification ended on 28 November when Reichsbahn employees

in the eastern region of Germany returned to work following a three-day strike after winning assurances on a number of key issues. In talks with the GdED, the former East German railways has agreed to raise salaries by next June, reduce the working week to 40 hours and increase holiday bonuses in line with seniority. Talks are to continue between the two sides on the question of job security.

LPG truck blast in Thailand

A horrific accident in Bangkok involving a truck carrying Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) has highlighted the way in which safety standards are being widely ignored in the rush for economic growth in many countries of South East Asia.

The truck, which was carrying two LPG cylinders behind its cab, crashed and exploded in a busy street in the Thai capital on September 24, turning shops, homes and vehicles into a giant fireball which left at least 44 people dead.

The Thai government has now promised measures to regulate the operating hours of such trucks and to control the sale of LPG, which is commonly used as cooking fuel in Bangkok.

But the underlying threat to the safety of transport workers and the general public caused by economic pressures on working hours and technical standards remains.

Major international regulations on the carriage of hazardous materials, such as the dangerous goods rules for road transport (ADR) drawn up by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), do not apply in South East Asia. Transport workers' unions have pointed to the urgent need for similar regulations to be adopted and enforced in all parts of the world.

North American "smart trains"

By the year 2000 "smart trains" will be running on 320,000 kilometres of track in North America.

The sixteen largest railway companies in Canada and the USA are cooperating in a project known as Advanced Train Control Systems (ATCS) which is already using computer technology to enable the railway industry to improve its safety record and to give it the flexibility to compete with the trucks that in recent years have been taking more and more business away from the vast North American railroad system.

Under ATCS, all the control systems of a train, its route and the configuration of the track are linked to an onboard computer terminal under the supervision of a central dispatch computer.

The onboard computer, which is located in the locomotive cab, sends a beam of energy to transponders embedded every few kilometres in the tracks. The transponders receive and relay the train's position to both the central and onboard computers. In an experiment using ATCS transponders, Union Pacific found it could pinpoint trains to within 0.06 km.

The safety benefits of the new system are considerable as the onboard computer makes it impossible for the train drivers to ignore safety instructions.

Take the example of a train driver approaching a curve subject to a 25 kph speed limit. With ATCS on board the driver receives a flashing screen warning that he should reduce speed, together with an indication of the point at which he should begin to do so. If he ignores this instruction the system automatically applies the train's brakes.

Or consider the case of two trains on a collision course. In this case, the computer decides which train has the right of way and which train is directed on to a siding (most of the Canadian system is single track and there are sidings every 16 to 24 kms). If the two trains are between sidings and neither stops the computer does the braking for them.

The second key benefit of using computers to guide trains is that they make trains much more flexible and

better suited to the task of moving large quantities of freight safely and efficiently in a manner suited to the needs of manufacturers and freight forwarders.

Under the old system guards were given written orders as the train departed and reported at the end of their shift on the pick-ups they had made or been unable to make. Once a train departed it was impossible for a shipper to request a pick-up. Little could be done immediately about a missed pick-up and information on deliveries and delays was not available for some hours — a disadvantage which with changing methods of production has led more and more shippers to use trucks for freight shipments.

Using the new system of Work Order Reporting, part of the ATCS system,

the guard can be informed of requests for a pick-up received after the train departs. If it proves impossible for the train to make a pick-up for whatever reason the next train can be ordered to make that pick-up. Customers also know immediately if their goods are late and just how late. This is done by the computer link (the guard is provided with a lap-top computer).

Pilot projects using Work Order Reporting have begun in both the USA and Canada involving customers who make rail shipments a number of times each week and are proving their adaptability.

All this accords well with the just-in-time production systems being introduced by more and more manufacturers and should bring more business back to the rails.

EC cash for high speed rail

A number of high speed rail networks in Europe are to get a massive injection of EC funds following the adoption by the Council of Ministers on 20 November of a three year infrastructure action programme in the run-up to the completion of the single market.

The major beneficiaries of the funds (60 million ecus {US\$84 million} for 1990 and 105 million ecus for 1991) will be the Paris—London—Brussels—Amsterdam—Cologne rail link and the rail routes linking Seville in Spain with Milan and Venice in Italy, the Portuguese cities of Oporto and Lisbon with the Spanish capital Madrid and the Belfast/Dublin line.

Other projects singled out for EC support include the Brenner pass route, the Somport Pyrenees road tunnel, Greek road links and the Scanlink bridge between Denmark and Sweden.

The plan, which was first proposed by Transport Commissioner Karel van Miert in June 1989, also makes provision for improvements in combined transport, the elimination of traffic bottlenecks, and the reduction of transit traffic costs in cooperation with the relevant third countries.

* New truck tonnage and length limits came into force in Austria on 1 October which will permit 42 tonne and 18 metre long trucks on Austrian roads for journeys to and from railway goods yards where the trailer, container or entire truck is to be carried by rail.



PEOPLE

Gunnar Tønder has retired as President of the Norwegian Locomotivemen's Union and has been succeeded by Oddvar Skaar. The union's new Vice President is Thorbjørn Naess. Skaar has recently replaced Tønder on the Committee of the ITF Railway-

men's Section.

Stuart Johns — the ITF's permanent representative at ICAO — has been made an honorary member of the Canadian Airline Dispatchers' Association.



Olympic Catering — ITF protest

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis wrote on 23 November on behalf of ITF civil aviation affiliates to the Greek Minister of Labour, protesting at the situation at Olympic Airways and its subsidiary, Olympic Catering.

The ITF-affiliated Licensed Airline Technicians' Union (ETEM & P) believe that, in the run up to the transfer of shares to the private sector (see ITF News, October 1990), the Board of Directors has been irresponsible in its management of the company's affairs. One allegation is that the board's aircraft sale and purchasing policy over the past twelve months has weakened the airline financially. A Parliamentary Sub-Committee has now been set up to

look into these allegations.

Olympic Airlines is seeking to employ technical personnel whose qualifications do not meet the standards set out in the company training manual. This poses a significant threat to safety standards at the airline.

In addition, sixty-six percent of shares in Olympic Catering, an Olympic subsidiary, are to be sold to the private sector. Following the decision to sell the shares, 950 of Olympic Catering's 2,000 employees have lost their jobs.

Protests by workers have met with severe repression. Eleven members of the Executive Council of the Panhellenic Federation of Catering and Tourist Industry Employees and Fed-

eration President Stelios Koletsis have been dismissed and the Federation's offices have been destroyed.

Workers at Olympic Catering, including union members, have been subject to attacks by anti-terrorist police which have led to numerous injuries. Workers have been chased and beaten by police who have also thrown tear gas.

In his letter, Harold Lewis demanded the reinstatement of those workers who have been dismissed and immediate consultations with the unions concerning Olympic Catering's future. He also protested at the violent tactics being used to suppress protest on the part of workers.

French strike against job cuts

The European Commission has given the go ahead for Air France's takeover of UTA — a private competitor — and Air Inter — the biggest French domestic carrier — a deal which it initially opposed on the grounds that it would hurt competition policy in the European Community (EC). In return, the French government has agreed to open up its air transport market before it is obliged to do so by EC legislation in 1992.

Air France has agreed that eight domestic routes representing 52 per cent of internal air traffic will be made available to private airlines in two stages by March 1992. Up to 50 international routes will also be open to competition by January 1992.

The agreement is not welcomed by aviation unions in France, who are worried that the concessions made by the company will lead to job losses. Already ground staff at Nice, Marseilles, Bordeaux and Toulouse — members of the ITF-affiliated Fédération Générale des Transports et de l'Équipement (CFDT) and Force Ouvrière — have taken strike action. The dispute centred on 63 workers who

the management planned to transfer from Air France to Air Inter — where working conditions are inferior. Agreement was reached on this issue on 27 November.

Problems remain on a national level, however. Air France is planning to make a sweeping reorganisation of its flight programme. Like many European airlines, Air France claims that an economy drive is essential because of deteriorating financial performance. The company plans to close or cut capacity on its most unprofitable routes and increase flights on the busiest lines.

Air France's capacity will rise slightly in the reorganisation — there will be an increase in intercontinental capacity — but cuts on medium-haul flights. The biggest cuts will fall on services between the French regions and Europe, East Africa, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. Air France is also to suspend routes from Paris to nine secondary European cities.

Unions were not consulted about the measures which they do not feel are entirely justified. Now a special meeting with management is planned for 7

December to discuss all the changes facing the new Air France group. If the results of this meeting are not satisfactory, a national strike is still a possibility.

Australia "opens" the skies

Australia is to embark on an "open skies" policy, followed over the next 12 to 18 months by the sale of domestic carrier Australian Airlines and Qantas.

Australian Airlines is hoping that some of its shares will be bought by British Airways, since the two airlines already have a marketing agreement.

There are fears for the effects of deregulation on the industry which is currently depressed. John Staag, the Australian Airlines chief executive, says that "competitive lunacy" has overwhelmed the domestic industry.

In preparation for its partial privatisation, Qantas has already frozen employment and the airline has announced its intention to cut 500 jobs to bring the workforce down to 16,500 by the end of February.

Gulf crisis fuel cost rises bite into airline profits

Airlines' third quarter profits have been hit by the sharp rise in fuel prices brought about by the Gulf crisis. Stronger carriers are fighting to snap up attractive assets which weaker carriers are forced to sell. British Airways also faces setbacks in its ambitious plans to establish European hubs, while Thai Airways International is to be privatised.

The sharp rise in fuel prices may force Continental Airlines to sell some of its assets. However, the company — in which Scandinavian Airlines System now has an 18.4 per cent stake — is denying that it is planning to seek protection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy code.

Pan Am — another financially troubled US airline — is having to sell its valuable transatlantic routes into Heathrow, together with a route between Washington Dulles airport and Paris. United Airlines is set to buy the routes for \$400 million but the deal has run into a number of difficulties, not least fierce opposition from United's competitors.

The United deal has also stirred up controversy over slot allocation at Heathrow, one of Europe's most overcrowded airports. Existing UK rules bar new airlines from operating out of Heathrow — viewed as the most desirable destination for long haul flights — forcing them to use Gatwick or Stansted instead. The US government argues that under the air transport agreement between the two countries, the US is entitled to have two airlines serving Heathrow — currently Trans World Airways and Pan Am — and that United should be considered as a replacement for Pan Am and not a new entrant.

However, the UK government is unlikely to allow United to fly to Heathrow. A review of slot allocations at Heathrow is underway and the

recommendations should appear in January. Competition for slots at Heathrow is intense — Virgin Atlantic Airways is campaigning for access to Heathrow for services to the US and the Far East, while British Midland is also seeking greater access. The European Commission is conducting a review of airport take-off and landing slots at congested European airports.

Many of United's competitors, including American Airlines, Northwest, Delta and Cathay Pacific, have been forced to go to Gatwick or Stansted. They have been waiting for the chance to operate out of Heathrow for some time and feel they should be given precedence over United.

Trans World Airways is entering the race by offering Pan Am a \$450 million merger package conditional on the cancellation of the United deal. At present, TWA and Pan Am are the only two US airlines flying to Heathrow. United would be a far more serious competitor to TWA than Pan Am, if it ever gains access to Heathrow.

Success in the Pan Am deal would also change United's relationship with **British Airways**. United has said that, though the two airlines would compete fiercely on the transatlantic routes, they would maintain their marketing alliance. However, the outlook is not good for BA, since United has a far better computer system than Pan Am and will provide the UK carrier with more competition on the transatlantic routes which generate 65 per cent of BA's operating surplus.

BA is also facing problems in its plans to develop European hubs in Brussels through the Sabena World Airways joint venture and in Berlin through an association with Interflug. The plan to set up a hub in Brussels is threatened by the delay of the European Commission in approving the deal.

The agreement on the Air France link up (see separate story) is likely to set a precedent for the decision.

In addition, a disagreement has developed between British Airways and **Lufthansa** over the future of **Interflug** — the former East German carrier. The **Treuhandanstalt**, a government body charged with privatising former state-owned East German enterprises, is currently considering what to do with the airline which has serious financial problems.

BA had hoped to acquire a large minority stake in Interflug but its chances of success have been receding as Lufthansa puts increasing pressure on the Bonn government to take over the former East German carrier. Now BA is considering setting up a new German airline, 51 per cent controlled by German interests to overcome these problems.

Thai Airways International the state-controlled airline is likely to be privatised within three to nine months. Under the privatisation plan, the airline, which has registered and approved capital of 3bn baht is likely to sell an initial section of 1 bn baht to the general public. With public sector borrowing capped at \$1.5 bn a year, its plans to spend about 100bn baht on new aircraft would be impossible without access to the equity markets.

National airline **LAN-Chile**, privatised last year, is retiring half its fleet following fuel hike profit losses — a significant number of workers will lose their jobs.

OBITUARIES

Jacob Musa, General Secretary of the Sierra Leone National Seamen's Off-shore and Inland Waterways Workers' Union, died on 10 November.

GENERAL SECRETARY: HAROLD LEWIS

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER: DAVID COCKROFT

International Transport Workers' Federation

Federación Internacional de los Trabajadores del Transporte

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