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Costa Rica Conference adopts new ITF strategy



A programme for reviving ITF activities in Latin America and forging new links between Latin American transport unions and those in the Caribbean and North America were the impressive results of the 7th ITF Latin American Regional Conference held in San José, Costa Rica from 22 to 24 March.

The Conference, which brought together 94 delegates, advisers and guests from 41 unions in 12 countries (including the USA), was hosted by the ITF affiliated Railway and Port Workers' Union of Costa Rica, whose General Secretary Ana Isabel Montero is one of only two women members of the ITF Executive Board, and chaired by ITF Latin American Vice President Ricardo Pérez from Argentina. Orlando Coutinho (Brazil), the third Board member from the Region, was elected as chairman of the Conference's Resolutions Committee. Its opening session was addressed by Anna Isabel Montero, Ricardo Pérez, José Joaquim Melendez from the national trade union centre Rerum Novarum, Eugenio Salano Calderon of the Ministry of Labour and ITF Acting General Secretary David Cockroft. To mark the importance of the relaunch of activities in the region, the ITF Secretariat was represented by a strong delegation including Assistant General Secretaries Graham Brothers and Åke Selander, Education and Projects Officer Kees Marges and Special Seafarers' Department Secretary Bruno de Bonis.

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...ITF Latin American Regional Conference

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The first two days of the Conference were taken up with an analysis of the disastrous impact of neoliberal economic policies on the transport industry and transport workers in Latin America. As delegates made clear, the four years since the last Regional Conference has seen a determined effort by virtually all governments in Latin America to deregulate and privatise the transport industry and to permit the flagging out of national merchant fleets to flags of convenience. The result has been widespread attacks on jobs, living standards and union rights sometimes more devastating than those experienced under military dictatorships. In Argentina the transport unions have grown tired of a government which claims to represent workers' interests while attacking them at every opportunity and have formed a new labour grouping dedicated to reversing the policies of the Menem government.

The Conference's second day was devoted to sectional meetings. Groups representing seafarers, fishermen and inland waterway workers; dockers; road transport workers; railway workers and civil aviation workers met separately to assess developments and plan how they could strengthen their effectiveness within the overall ITF structure.

The final day, however, was dedicated to a fundamental discussion about future structure and activities, designed to provide clear advice to the ITF Executive Board about how Latin America should be organised from now on.

In this debate, there was unanimous agreement that ITF activities in the region needed urgent attention. In his introduction to the debate, David Cockroft painted a sombre picture. Out of a potential of 19 countries in which democratic trade unions operate only 11 were represented at the conference by even one delegate. Many important transport unions were not present. Out of 52 ITF affiliates only 38 were represented and 32 were seriously in arrears with their affiliation fees and at risk of suspension. In ten years the ITF had been forced to suspend 65 Latin American unions, some of them large and important ones, for non-payment of fees. In the last four years since the Florence Congress, ITF membership had grown in every region of the world except Latin America where it had fallen.

Serious problems had led to the closure of the Lima office, he said, and since then the ITF's activities had been at a very low level. An attempt at establishing a system of sub-regional offices had failed, with only one office, in Buenos Aires for the Southern Cone countries, being established in six years.

This was not a time for raking over the past and

trying to attribute blame, he said, but for starting afresh with new ideas and a radical approach. Hence the Executive Board had circulated to all its affiliates a discussion paper which it had prepared outlining a possible new approach.

A number of replies had been received to that document which envisaged the recreation of a single Regional Office, possibly with one or more sub-regional offices dealing with specific economic groupings. It envisaged the creation of national co-ordinating committees in each country and the establishment of a Regional Committee made up of one representative from each National Committee together with the Regional Board members, and it proposed the reactivation of a programme of ITF educational activities. Two more radical ideas were also included. One was the formal extension of the regional structure to include the Caribbean, the other was to extend it still further to create an Interamerican structure extending to the USA and Canada. Making this work would require the right people as well as the right structures and some of the ideas might take some time, but he pledged that the ITF would provide the necessary resources and political commitment to make it happen provided the affiliates of the ITF also played their part.

The discussion which followed demonstrated a remarkable degree of consensus. All speakers accepted the need for a new start and a new structure and the only disagreements arose about the speed with which it could or should be introduced. Even on the question of integrating North America, there was no real disagreement. The need to react to the growing economic integration of North and South America demonstrated by the conclusion of the NAFTA and Mercosur agreements, both of which ignore social questions overcame any resistance which might have existed to the idea, which has been implemented in many other international trade union bodies. Observers from US unions who were present also strongly endorsed the idea. The consensus of the meeting was, however, that the strengthening of Latin America had to take place without delay and that the integration of the Caribbean countries and creation of an interamerican structure should therefore be included in a phased programme of structural change.

Summing up the debate Cockroft said that the degree of consensus achieved had been truly remarkable and that it would now be a relatively simple matter to put firm proposals to the Executive Board at its next meeting in Geneva in August. He hoped it would be possible to put

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Pictured from left to right at the ITF Latin American Regional Conference: Ana Isabel Montero, David Cockcroft, José Joaquim Melendez, Kees Marges and Åke Selander.

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together a team of staff for the regional office and identify a suitable venue by early 1995.

The Conference's final session adopted unanimously the reports of all the industrial section meetings (something which has frequently not been the case at past Conferences).

The conclusions of the **Maritime** group included a resolution on integrating the work of the Interamerican Seafarers' and Dockers' Federation (FIMP) within the ITF Latin American Seafarers' activities, one on strengthening the Flag of Convenience campaign in Latin America through the creation of a Regional Co-ordinator and a network of inspectors, and one on the need to establish a single ITF approved Total Crew Cost (TCC) Concept agreement for Latin American seafarers. It agreed to integrate seafarers, fishermen and inland navigation workers in a single sectional committee for the future.

The **Civil Aviation** Section approved the establishment of a new regional committee for civil aviation workers, condemned the Argentine governments policy of airline privatisation and deregulation which has culminated in the sale of 85 per cent of Aerolíneas Argentinas stock to Iberia, and established a section work programme.

The **Dockers'** Meeting adopted a resolution calling for a united policy programme against

deregulation of the ports and the increasing threat posed by unregulated temporary employment.

The **Road Transport** section adopted conclusions calling for the ratification and application by all Latin American governments of ILO Convention 153 and Recommendation 161 on Hours of Work and condemned the governments of Costa Rica and Colombia for permitting drivers to work up to 20 hours per day.

Finally, the **Railway Workers'** section drew attention to savage government attacks on national railway networks under pressure from multinational lending institutions such as the World Bank.

The meeting ended with the adoption of a special statement, the San José Declaration which condemned neoliberal policies and pledged the ITF's affiliates to fight against government repression and for a transport policy that respects development needs. The closing session paid special tribute to Ricardo Pérez, who will retire as ITF Vice President at the August Congress and whose dedication to the ITF, both as Executive Board member and as Chairman of the Road Transport Workers' Section will be marked at Congress by the award of the ITF Gold Badge as well as to Ana Isabel Montero whose union, although relatively small, had done a magnificent job in the Conference preparations.

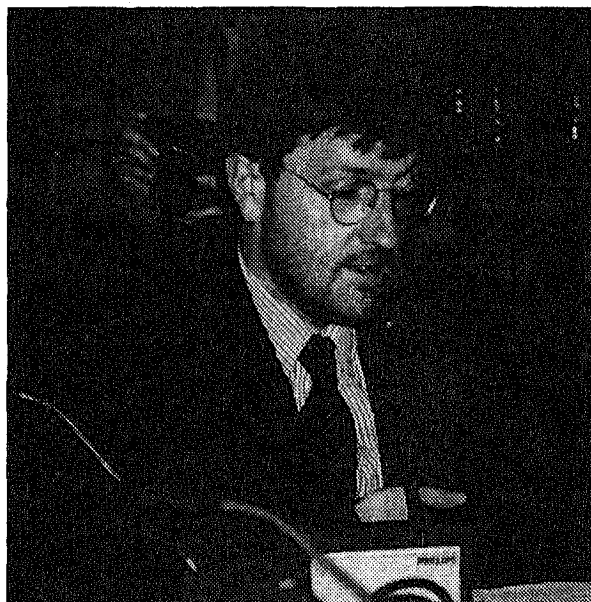
ITF must seek to be more efficient and responsive to members' needs

The months before the 37th ITF Congress in Geneva in August seem to be flashing by at the moment and the ITF's fax machine is running hot as affiliates submit motions before the 4 April deadline. The Executive Board in Sydney gave approval in principle to the draft discussion document 'Transport Workers — Beyond 2000' which will provide the focus for an in depth debate about the future direction of our International as it approaches its 100th year. The Board also approved in principle a series of activities designed to celebrate our Centenary in 1996.

But the review and renewal process cannot wait until Congress and major steps forward have already been made, particularly in the ITF's Regional structure. Following the meetings in Manila in February which examined the ITF in the Asia/Pacific Region, March saw the conclusion of what many delegates described as the most successful ITF Latin American Conference in 30 years. After a period of nearly 10 years in which our activities in the region have retreated, the San José meeting laid out a very clear plan for the future. In contrast to recent meetings which have been marked by difficult discussions and disagreements, there was a new spirit of unity and purpose which should mark the beginning of a major new phase in the Latin American region. As part of this, moves will now begin to unite Latin American ITF structures with those for unions in the Caribbean and North America resulting, within a period of two to three years, in the creation of a new Interamerican Regional Structure. This idea, which received unanimous support, is a necessary response to the decisions taken by the governments of the Americas to integrate their economies, placing a high priority on the transport sector, with little or no consideration of the social effects of their actions.

ITF Communications

The ITF Research and Publications Department will now be known as the Communications Department. The Department, which produces ITF News and other ITF publications, is only changing its name, not its functions. This change, ratified by the Executive Board meeting in Australia, is a reflexion of the tasks now performed by the Department and reflects a terminology utilised by many ITF affiliates.



Comment

by ITF Acting General Secretary David Cockroft

In May we shall be holding a regional conference for our affiliates from Africa, a continent facing even greater economic problems than Latin America. Once again, we intend to put in place a more effective regional structure which will guarantee both a high level of educational and organisational activities and a better means of channelling the views of African unions into the ITF's wider structures. The May meeting will take place in Lagos, a city of some historical importance for the ITF since its last Regional Conference there was closed down by the Security police. Many things have changed in Africa since then and the May meeting will be the first attended by delegates from a democratic South Africa, following the elections scheduled for the end of April.

The process of review and renewal continues in other areas too. In each section, we shall be examining how to make our work more efficient and more responsive to the needs of our members. The ITF's most famous activity — the Flag of Convenience Campaign — is undergoing an in depth review as the separate article on the Ad Hoc Review Group makes clear. Important changes are taking place too within the ITF Secretariat. The aim of all of these moves is the same — to adapt the ITF to the changing priorities and needs of its affiliates while building on the principles and traditions of free and democratic trade unionism established by a Federation which is almost 100 years old.

Australian Board meeting adopts ITF strategy for the 21st Century

Outlines of an international trade union strategy for the next century were agreed by the ITF Executive Board meeting in Sydney, Australia — hosted by the Maritime Union of Australia — on the 15th and 16th of March.

"Transport workers — beyond 2000" — an Executive Board document that will be discussed by the forthcoming ITF Congress in Geneva in August — was approved in draft form by the meeting. The document aims to synthesise ITF sectional policy, drawing upon the organisation's experiences in this century, in order to present a strategy for trade union activities in the next century.

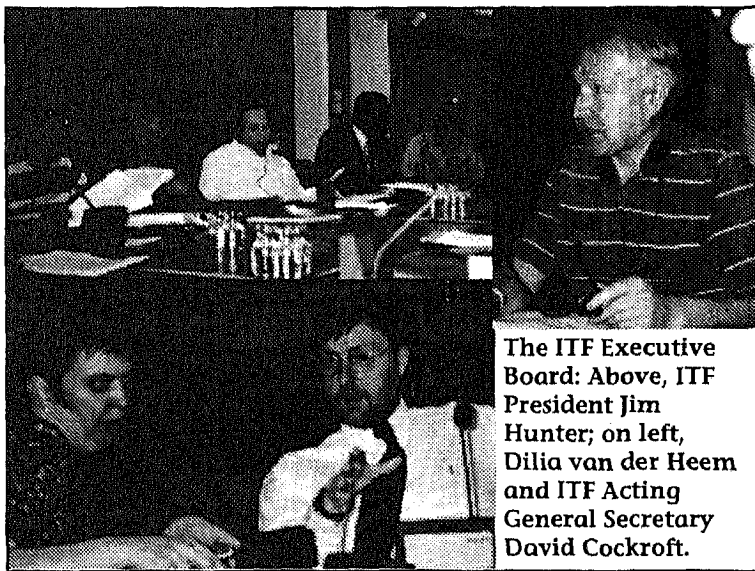
The final version of the document will form a major part of discussions at the forthcoming ITF Congress. The Executive Board, which meets shortly before Congress, will approve the final draft.

The Executive Board considered many technical and organisational issues relating to the organisation of the ITF Congress (which will take place from the 4th to the 11th of August in Geneva). In one significant departure from previous practice the Executive Board agreed that Japanese will be an official language of the ITF Congress. This will mean that in addition to the five standard ITF languages (English, French, German, Swedish and Spanish), Congress interpretation and documentation will also be provided in the Japanese language.

The ITF is also organising a conference on women transport workers in Geneva on the 1st and 2nd of August — before the ITF Congress. Special provision is being made in the agenda of the ITF Congress for proposals that emerge from the Women's conference to be considered by the Congress.

The meeting received a report from the Executive Board member Dilia van der Heem (Vervoersbond FNV, Netherlands) who had participated in the working group on the arrangements of the Conference. A provisional agenda and documentation are now prepared for the meeting. The ITF Executive Board unanimously elected Sister van der Heem as the chair of the conference. The Executive Board also appealed to ITF affiliates that they return the ITF survey on women transport workers and that they endeavour to participate in the ITF's women's conference.

As with most recent Board meetings in the last few years, there were a large number of applications for ITF affiliation at the meeting. A total of 27 unions from 22 countries were accepted for affiliation into the ITF — pending the completion of formalities, including the payment of the first six months' fees. New countries now repre-



The ITF Executive Board: Above, ITF President Jim Hunter; on left, Dilia van der Heem and ITF Acting General Secretary David Cockroft.

sented in the ITF from affiliation at this meeting are: Lithuania, Madagascar and Mozambique.

On the subject of the rate of ITF affiliation fees, the Executive Board agreed to recommend to the forthcoming ITF Congress a staggered increase in ITF affiliation fees each year for the next four years at approximately four per cent (the estimate for UK inflation).

The Executive Board also discussed celebration of the ITF's anniversary in 1996. The Board agreed to endorse the work of the existing ITF history group which consists of academics and interested trade unionists and agreed to establish a special ITF History Fund from which contributions from affiliates and interested outside organisations will be solicited for the purposes of staging an exhibition in 1996, publishing a popular volume about the ITF's history and supporting the publication of additional works covering the centenary. Depending on the amount of money raised by the fund, the ITF will support a wide range of activities for the centenary. The Executive Board also agreed to allocate £20,000 per year for the next three years to the ITF History Fund.

The Board also agreed to increase the amount of money allocated by the previous meeting to the funding of an investigative side-scan sonar search for the wreck of the British bulker *MV Derbyshire* — following the previous Executive Board's allocation of funds it became apparent that additional financial support was required to pursue the project. On the recommendation of the Project Monitoring Group, the Executive Board agreed to increase the allocation. Three motions were agreed by the Executive Board — on the situation in the Australian airline ANSETT; on conditions of transport workers in Argentina; and opposing the privatisation of Australian national shipping lines.

Swiss road-rail freight decision hits European Union enlargement talks

European enlargement has been put to the test this month.

The Swiss decision early in March to shift all freight traffic from the roads to rail, to be in full effect from 2004, rocked the boat of European expansion, and led to an agreement in which Austria will maintain restrictions on heavy trucks using Alpine roads over the next nine years. There was also the row between Spain and Norway over fisheries quotas.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT FOUND LACKING

The British drive to flexibilise the labour market came to a halt on March third when the House of Lords — the country's highest court — ruled that laws on part-time redundancy pay and unfair dismissal breached European law.

The Equal Opportunities Commission, which brought the case, argued that the provisions allowed for discrimination in the workplace.

In addition, the European Court of Justice's advocate-general has made an advisory ruling against the British government for failure to implement safeguards on workers' rights.

The advocate-general found that Britain had failed to designate workers' representatives for consultation when businesses change hands, and when dealing with collective redundancies.

A final decision will be adopted by the Court later this year, but is unlikely to contradict the advisory ruling.

COMMISSIONER TO GO

Following the meeting of the Council of transport ministers planned for April 18th, European transport Commissioner, Abel Matutes, will resign from the Commission. Matutes is leaving before the end of his two-year term, intending to stand for election to the European parliament in his native Spain. He will be replaced by Marcelano Oreja.

AIRLINE AID TO BE INVESTIGATED

The European Commission will investigate state aid to the Greek and Portuguese national airlines.

The investigation into the Portuguese airline, TAP, follows government approval two months ago of a US\$960 million package, which is part of a restructuring process and which will be

allocated in four stages over the next four years.

The US\$ two billion aid package to be offered to the Greek carrier Olympic Airways will be split in two stages.

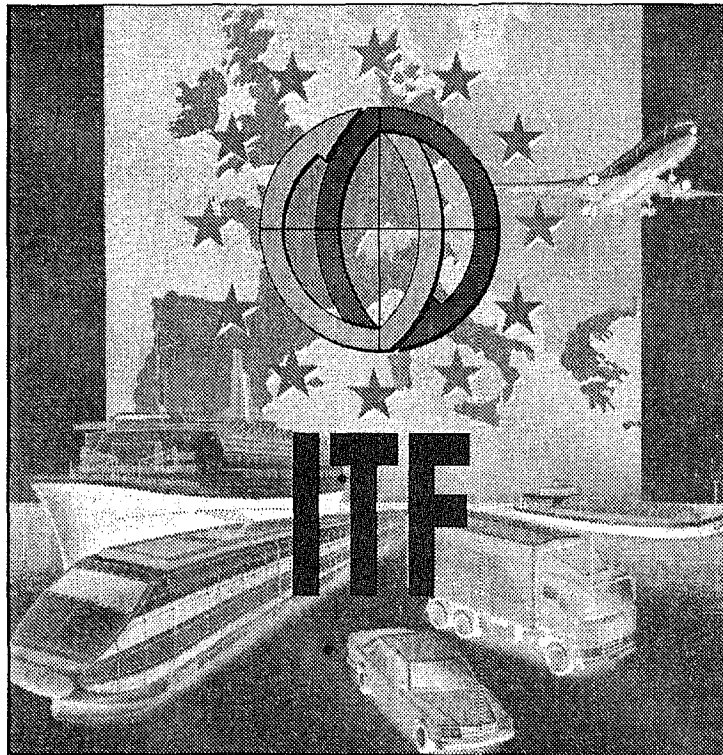
The Commission's inquiry will question whether the states' aid packages are one-off attempts to make the airlines viable concerns to compete in the future, and will not distort the free market.

DRAFT DIRECTIVE ON PORT STATE CONTROL

The Commission has adopted a draft directive on the enforcement of international standards for ship safety, pollution prevention and living and working conditions on board vessels using community waters and ports.

Common criteria for ship inspection and detention, the establishment of adequate national inspection structures and qualification requirements, and a monitoring system to assess the effectiveness of these systems are included in the proposal. Inspection results are also to become more transparent.

If approved, the directive, which comes under the action programme of the Communication on Safe Seas, adopted by the Council in June 1993, and the European Parliament in March 1994, will provide a legal basis for the application of the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (MOU), the Commission said.



Pan-European Transport Conference



Nearly forty ITF trade unionists gathered at the Second Pan-European Transport Conference, organised by the European Commission and the European Parliament, in Crete (Greece) on 16-18 March 1994.

They joined six hundred participants from European governments, the European Parliament, the European Commission and a number of employers' representatives.

The trade union delegation was able to make clear input to the meeting due to thorough preparation work carried out by trade unionists within the European institutions, and particularly within the European Parliament's Economic and Social Committee, ECOSOC.

While the Conference served to some extent as a vehicle for some western European employers and governments to promote privatisation, and to publicise competition as a cure-all for inefficiency, there was a general consensus that liberalisation and deregulation should not be taken to an extreme. Most participants agreed that the social dimension should be given an important place within a European market economy.

Six working groups examined topics under the headings of transport and market structures, socio-economic aspects and competition, network guidelines, financing, tendencies in modal choice, combined transport and new technologies, safety and environmental protection in transport.

ITF European Vice President Eike Eulen (ÖTV Germany), the rapporteur of the working group on socio-economic aspects and competition, relayed the trade union point of view in his summing up to the Conference's closing session.

He stressed the need for consultative mechanisms and outlined the dangers of social dumping, highlighting the importance of good working and safety conditions.

ECOSOC rapporteur and MEP, G. Lüttger, agreed; in his speech to the Conference he underlined the importance of trade union involvement in the process of developing a harmonised transport policy.

Representing the ITF in the working group dealing with transport and market structures, Eulen insisted that the prospect of a pan-European market and a uniform policy raised hopes of fast growth, but it also raised working people's fears that the new European transport industry would be based on exploitation of labour.

René Bleser, of the ITF-affiliated Fédération Nationale des Cheminots, Travailleurs du Transport, Fonctionnaires et Employés Luxembourgeois, and Christopher Veselka of the Czech Association of Transport Workers, spoke on the need for Pan-European mechanisms for consultation between employers and workers.

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...Second Pan-European Transport Conference

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The rapid changes in eastern Europe meant that collective bargaining mechanisms had been set up very quickly, said Veselka which had resulted in hastily-drawn and sometimes unsat-

ITF policy launched



"European Transport Policy — A Trade Union Strategy" — this document was launched by the ITF at the Second Pan-European Transport Conference. It lays down the basic policy principles that the ITF's eastern, central and western European affiliates believe should underlie their work in the new European environment. Copies are available from the Secretariat.

isfactory industrial agreements.

Hugues de Villèle, Secretary of the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community (Brussels Committee), criticised the absence of political will to implement existing instruments for the protection of workers' rights.

Sarah Finke, representing the ITF Secretariat, speaking on health and safety, picked up a recurrent theme when she cautioned delegates that any liberalisation of transport safety was unacceptable. Both Finke and de Villèle referred in their interventions to the tragic collision of two Cyprus-flagged Focs in the Bosphorus straits — an accident which overshadowed the Conference.

The Greek transport minister, Y. Charalambos, expressed his sympathy to Cyprus during the opening session of the Conference. As both ships were Greek-owned, and some of the lost crew members were also Greek (not Cypriot), trade union observers felt this to be inappropriate.

Debating infrastructure, the Conference concluded that transport should be integrated in pan-European networks, achieved through the development of transport corridors. The improvement of existing traffic infrastructure was preferable to rebuilding it, delegates agreed.

Public and private partnerships were promoted as the best way to achieve financing for such transport development.

Port development was recommended, with much emphasis being placed on the environmental advantages of short-sea shipping and inland navigation, together with rail transport. These modes should be given a bigger share of the market, participants insisted.

The need to charge external costs to users was also considered by many delegates. "The badly-needed splitting of functions between the different transport modes can only be achieved by a system of user charges, made in accordance with market conditions," said German transport Minister Matthias Wissmann in his conclusions to the Conference.

The Declaration adopted at the end of the Conference brought together a series of key principles, to become the basis for the future development of pan-European transport policy. It included a point calling for the establishment of mechanisms for social dialogue in the context of Europe-wide co-operation on transport policy.

Future work is to continue with a strong sub-regional emphasis. The transport conferences that have already been held in central Europe, the Mediterranean, south-eastern Europe, and the Barents and Baltic regions are to be followed by a conference to be held in Russia.

Free-trade frenzy in the Americas

Following three years of tense negotiations, Mexico and Costa Rica have signed a free-trade agreement, to go into effect January 1, 1995. It is expected to double trade between the countries within five years. "This trade pact... is one of the most advanced trade agreements between any Latin American countries," said the Mexican Commerce Secretary.

The chief stumbling block to the conclusion of the agreement centred on rules of origin, with the final compromise establishing a special commission that will rule on origin disputes. Tariff schedules and quotas also proved to be a difficult negotiating point. The final agreement calls for a maximum of ten years to phase out all quotas and tariffs.

NAFTA FORCES PUERTO RICAN DIVERSIFICATION

Changes in US tax laws reducing investment credits, coupled with competition for foreign investment associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), are making it necessary for Puerto Rico to diversify its economy.

Formerly, three basic factors were the support of the Puerto Rican economy: its ability to attract manufacturing, particularly in the pharmaceutical sector, due to a very special US corporate tax exemption status; low wages, which attracted the textile industry; and finally, the country's unlimited access to the US mainland thorough its commonwealth status.

Last year, however, the tax exemption code was modified. The changes will have wide-reaching effects for the entire region, while Puerto Rico is obliged by US congressional decree (hoping thus to strengthen ties to the region), to lend a minimum of US\$100 million of the funds it earns through the tax break status to eligible countries.

In efforts to counter the losses, Governor Rossello says that his country will continue to develop its manufacturing base, while also lending attention to new areas that will allow for

economic advancement. One such area is tourism.

CHILE, LIKELY NEXT IN NAFTA, JOINS PACTS WITH BRAZIL AND ECUADOR

The administration of US president, Bill Clinton, wants, as soon as possible, to open talks with Chile on a free trade accord, in an effort to decide if a bilateral accord should be sought, or whether Chile should join NAFTA. The Chilean economic situation is currently the healthiest one in Latin America, and the only country considered to be at the level necessary to enter NAFTA.

Chile and Brazil recently signed a reciprocal agreement offering investors from each country full rights and protection under the laws of the other.

Ecuador, which already has free-trade pacts with Colombia, Peru and Venezuela hopes to sign a free-trade agreement with Chile within a matter of weeks, and eventually accede to the Group of Three, comprising Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela.

ARGENTINA SEEKS FREE TRADE WHEREVER POSSIBLE

Argentine President Carlos Menem and his senior advisers have promoted Argentina for membership in an array of existing and proposed free-trade blocs, lobby groups and zones.

Already involved in the Mercosur, Argentina supported a recently revealed Brazilian plan for the so-called SAFTA, or South American Free Trade Area. In addition, it is a member of ALADI, the 11-nation Latin American Integration Association, formed in 1980, to achieve a free-trade zone in south America; the Rio Group of major Latin American nations, created in 1986, and the 26-nation Latin American Economic System, created in 1975 to promote regional commerce and technological co-operation. If this weren't enough, President Menem want his country to join the NAFTA, and any free-trade zone in the Caribbean Basin that may emerge from several existing proposals.



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

26-27 April	Fair Practices Committee Sub-Committee	London
10-12 May	African Regional Conference	Lagos
31 May	Dockers	London
1 June	Seafarers	London
1-3 June	Fair Practices Committee	London
1-2 August	ITF Conference on Women Transport Workers	Geneva
2-3 August	Executive Board	Geneva
4-11 August	37th ITF Congress	Geneva
5-9 September	Inspectors' Seminar	Eastbourne



SEAFARERS

US rail owners in New Zealand attack ferry workers' conditions

The new American owners of New Zealand Railways appear set for a major confrontation with the seafarers' union over the inter-island ferry services.

Wisconsin Central Transportation Corporation, which now owns New Zealand Railways, has declared to the unions, the crew working on the inter-island ferries and the New Zealand public that they wish the union's own workforce to agree to a massive alteration in working conditions and mass redundancies by May 1st.

The company has demanded 246 redundancies out of a total of 487 employees — more than 50 per cent. They have stated that they intend to call for voluntary redundancy initially and then that the company will select further redundancies.

In addition to getting rid of most of the staff, the company wishes to increase the working hours of the remaining staff by approximately doubling them and introducing twenty-four hour a day working.

The company has also stated its desire to replace the collective agreement with individual contracts of employment for senior operating officers on the ferries.

The company has written to every employee outlining their proposals and has set up a toll free telephone numbers for workers to ring for more information about redundancy.

Even though the negotiations for a new collective agreement to cover the rail ferries only began on Tuesday, 15th of March, the media hype surrounding the talks — generated by New Zealand rail — has given many New Zealanders the impression that there is already a major dispute. The railways have already pointed out that the contract expiry date is close to the school holidays and they are clearly preparing the general public for a major confrontation.

The company has placed advertisements in the newspapers seeking staff for "an alternative ferry service". It appears as if they are preparing for the possibility of a lock-out of the ferry staff and the employment of strike-breaking labour.

ANTI-UNION GOVERNMENT DECISION

The NZSU is highly disturbed by the recent decision of the New Zealand government permitting the cruiseship *Marco Polo* to operate in its country's coastal waters. The Orient Lines-

owned, Bahamian-registered ship, which is manned by Filipino crew and Scandinavian officers, is scheduled to undertake a 35-day long series of cruises between the North and South Islands.

The length of the ship's presence in New Zealand territorial waters, says the union president Dave Morgan, is a breach of national immigration law, which only entitles foreign seafarers to a 28-day stay in coastal waters. Morgan asserted that there are competent New Zealand seafarers who could crew the ship, and that the open coast policy as supported by the government would only result in the loss of seafaring jobs for his countrymen. NZSU membership is down from 2,500 in 1987 to a current 1,100.

Stringent new bulk carrier 'matrix testing' introduced by US State

In its drive to make bulk carriers safer, the State of Washington, USA, has introduced a new vessel risk assessment programme. The testing is carried out by the Washington State Office of Marine Safety (OMS), which maintains a high risk identity for bulk carriers, more so than for any other type of vessel.

'Matrix testing', as it is known, was launched last September by the OMS and has been used on some 1,438 cargo and passenger ships, and 276 tankers of 300 grt or greater. Upon entering state waters all of these vessels were tested by 'cursory inspection', a procedure which utilizes Lloyd's Register of Ships in a process of elimination to determine a ship's potential need for inspection. The key elements for Matrix screening are age, vessel type, classification society, owner/class/flag change and violation and casualty histories of ship and key personnel.

Argentina opens up national flag register regulations

"Plans to revive a stagnant shipping industry and encourage shipowners from around the world to register their vessels under the Argentine flag", (*Journal of Commerce*, March 4, 1994) means, in real terms, the creation of a Second Register in Argentina. A proposal, drawn up by the Ministry of Economy over six months ago, which would ease Argentinian registry regulations has now been sent to Congress. Government officials declare that the easing of restrictions surrounding crew levels, insurance, taxes, paperwork, etc., will place Argentina on par with Norway's registry laws. Fortunately, the bill, sent to the lower House of Deputies, is expected to face opposition from members of Congress who support labour. There is a current debate in the Argentinian legislative body concerning labour reform, which will certainly influence the registry bill. The potentially damaging measures will most likely not be approved before June, when the results of the labour reform bill will be known. Currently, shipowners registered in Argentina technically must use Argentine crews to staff their ships, although they are able to use foreign crews in certain hardship situations, such as when an Argentine crew is not available. Under the new regulations, only the captain and first officer must be Argentinian, allowing for the rest of the manning to come from other countries. In addition to the manning regulation changes, in the hopes of luring national shipowners back to Argentina, the proposal will permit shipowners to purchase their property and liability insurance from any insurance carrier in the world, as well as eliminate bureaucratic delays in the registration and de-registration processes. The revisions in ship registry requirements are part of a new navigation law developed by the Ministry of Economy over the past three years. In 1991 a decree was issued that allowed Argentine carriers to register under another country's flag for a period of two years while still using their vessels for domestic trips, whereas most countries reserve their domestic traffic only for national flag carriers. This measure saw a significant drop in the number of ships registered under the Argentine flag — from 130 to about 15 — and now, about 80% of Argentine vessels travel under foreign flags.

Australian transport and industrial relations minister Laurie Brereton has agreed to meet with maritime union officials in an attempt to head off growing opposition to the privatisation of state-owned shipping line ANL. Talks were called between the minister and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) following the leak of cabinet

papers from June 1993 indicating that the government had agreed to relax conditions applying to the ANL sale. According to the leaked documents, the cabinet would no longer require ANL's vessels to remain under the Australian flag, nor would it be required that seafarers be employed according to standard wages and conditions. In addition, the papers indicated that the government had considered permitting foreign ownership of up to 49 per cent of the company. When the MUA reacted angrily to the leaked reports, warning they'd take industrial action if the conditions of the sale of ANL were weakened, a government transport spokesman responded by saying that: "It is the government's preference that ANL should continue to play its part in Australian shipping and that it should continue to operate as Australian-owned, Australian-crewed and Australian-flagged with its employees working under Australian award conditions." The ITF Executive Board, meeting in Australia on March 15 and 16, adopted a motion condemning the leaked plan.

The ill standing suffered by Malta for its Foc registry (see ITF News, March 1994) has finally forced the country to revise its registry policy in an effort to weed out the worst vessels and improve the flag's reputation. Initial improvements include additions to the technical department, as well as a policy of conducting random ship inspections around the world. The Maltese shipping register has grown from 1.7m gross tonnes in 1987, to 15.05m tonnes (2,131 vessels) at the end of February this year. But the growth in quantity has not at all been matched by an equal growth in quality, and the expansion has been accompanied by a poor casualty record. Lino Vassallo, executive director of the Merchant Shipping Directorate of the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA), who is responsible for the registry regretted that the reputation of the Maltese flag had been allowed to deteriorate, and now he wishes to change things. "We are very aware of our responsibilities," he said, "because of the flag's economic importance, but also because we are in the middle of the Mediterranean and we have ships passing all the time. They can also be a threat to us." Besides increasing manpower in the technical department, the MMA has taken on 36 agents world-wide who have begun random ship safety inspections on Maltese flagged vessels, with the aim of checking 25 per cent of all its ships per year. The stricter inspections and tighter regulations could mean fewer Maltese registered ships, and therefore, a certain loss of income for the island.

—The ITF's Flag by Flag Roundup—

European seafarers define common goals at joint meeting in Stockholm

Seafarers' trade unionists from throughout Europe gathered in Stockholm on the 10th of March for a joint meeting of the ITF European Seafarers' Regional Committee and the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the EC Maritime Transport Section meeting.

The joint meeting was chaired by ITF Seafarers Section Chairman Mols Sørensen (who also heads the CTWUEC maritime section).

The joint meeting adopted a work programme that highlighted the need for further trade union work in the areas of second registers, cabotage, European Port State Control, revision of the STCW convention, a survey of working conditions of European seafarers, coastal shipping, European maritime safety, European Works Councils, European ferry services, the implementation of the European seafarers' trade union strategy and Flag of convenience shipping.

In addition to the work programme, a statement on the EUROS flag proposal was adopted which states that European Union seafarers firmly believe that if such a European second ship register is introduced it must provide jobs for European seafarers and not be a flag of convenience for the European Union. Because seafarers' unions are still awaiting the final proposal on the EUROS flag from the European Commis-

sion, the meeting requested that both the ITF and the CTWUEC Maritime Transport Section should be prepared to respond rapidly to any proposals from the European Commission.

The meeting adopted four resolutions — on the recognition of diplomas and certificates of competency at sea; on the revision of the 1978 STCW convention; on second and parallel registers; and on European shipping. The meeting expressed its deep concerns at the negative impact that the growth of use of Flags of convenience and non-domiciled seafarers on European second registers has had on the employment and conditions of European seafarers — noting also that such developments have a very negative impact on the quality of transport and the safety of vessels. The meeting expressed its deep concern over the lack of integration of European shipping into any possible European transport policy and the absence of a proper integration of seafarers into the European social dimension or dialogue. The meeting demanded that national European parliaments and governments and the European Union Parliament along with the Commission should formulate a European Shipping Policy which should be based on the principle of national flag shipping crewed by European domiciled seafarers.

US Coast Guard increases numbers of female officers

This spring, at 26 years of age, United States Coast Guard (USCG) Lieutenant Catherine Tobias will take over as operations officer on the USCG training ship *Eagle*. This is the first time since the *Eagle* became the USCG Academy's training vessel in 1948 that all of its procurement, electronics, navigational planning, passages in and out of harbour, and cadet training, will be managed by a woman — and she was hand-picked for the post by the vessel's commanding officer. This is an important distinction considering the fact that her predecessor had to compete for the honour against 30 other applicants.

Tobias is one of 385 women CG officers, whose ranks will increase substantially once the almost 200 women cadets currently attending the Coast Guard Academy are commissioned into the service upon completion of their studies.

She graduated from the Academy in 1989 where she later went on to work as an admissions officer, which goes a long way in explaining the fact that 28 per cent of the present freshman class is women. This number represents the highest female percentage of any class

entering a US service academy.

As third ranking officer on the *Eagle*, Tobias' duties are of a good variety, and even include hosting assorted diplomats and foreign officials who come aboard as part of the many events where the *Eagle* represents the US at tall ship events around the world. But of all the responsibilities she will hold, Tobias expects that the supervisions of cadets during their summer training will be the most challenging and rewarding.

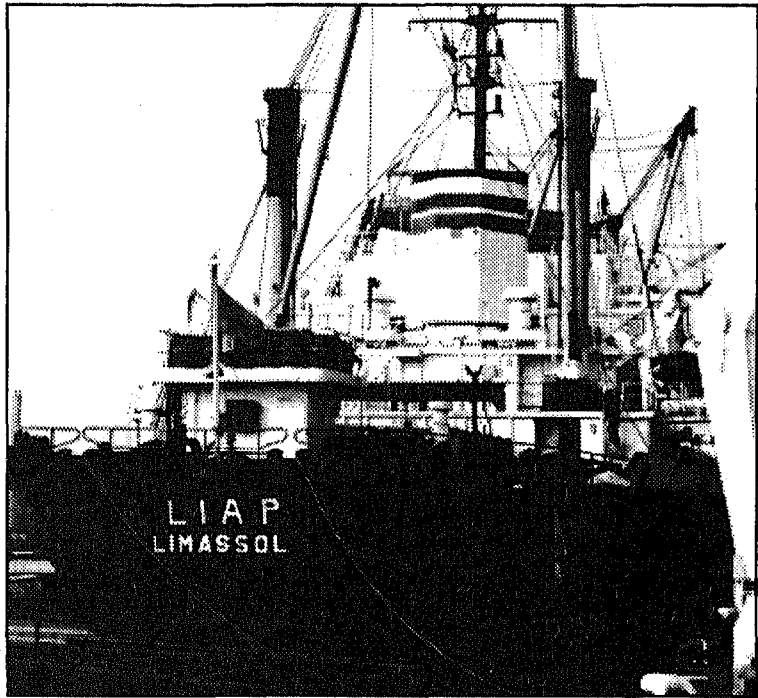
The ship's commanding officer affirms the positive role that Tobias, and other female officers can play: "It is instructive for everybody to see terribly capable females like Ms. Tobias and Ms. (Teri) Jordan," who is the *Eagle's* assistant operations officer. "It is important that we have positive female role models."

Lt. Tobias credits part of her success at the USCG to the respect that women are afforded throughout the agency, which is the only service that has no restrictions on female job assignments. Still, she warns that: "People really have to be aware of gender discrimination. The Coast Guard is more active than most services (in regard to equal opportunities for women), but there is always room for improvement."

Another boycott victory in Denmark; Copenhagen gets new ITF Inspector

The Greek owned, Maltese flagged *Link* was boycotted in the port of Aalborg, Denmark for twelve days from the 18th of March until the 29th. The Greek owners of the *Link* — Alexandria Maritime of Piraeus — take the record for the longest boycott in Danish ITF history. On the evening of Tuesday, 29th of March, the owners agreed to sign an ITF standard worldwide collective agreement for the Polish and Filipino crew, thus agreeing to tear up the Philippines' Seafarers' Union (PSU-ALU-TUCP) collective agreement (the PSU agreement is not accepted by the ITF, nor is the PSU affiliated to the ITF). The ship was carrying a load of cattle food and the action that was taken against the ship by the ITF-affiliated Danish General Workers' Union (SiD) Dockers' Section was coordinated by ITF Danish Inspector John Jacobsen. In reflection of the growing importance of Denmark within the ITF campaign, and in respect of the growing importance of the ITF-affiliated SiD dockers, a new ITF inspector begins work in the port of Copenhagen on April 1st. Kjartn Gudmondsson from SiD will be Denmark's second Inspector. ITF Inspector John Jacobsen will assume the role of ITF Danish coordinator.

Dutch ITF Inspector Ruud Touwen met the Cyprus-flagged *Lia P* when it arrived in Rotterdam in February, after having been alerted by a crew member that there were problems on board, namely that the Cyprus contract was not being honoured for the Greek, Polish and Maldivian crew. Touwen alerted the Dutch Port State Control (PSC), which detained the vessel immediately when it discovered that a lot of the safety equipment was out of order. In addition, the PSC found that many of the crew did not hold proper certificates: the electrician, for instance, was acting as 3rd officer. (There was also a Chilean radio officer on board, whose contract included a so-called loyalty clause, wherein he pledged not to contact the ITF in case of a wage dispute.) The PSC detained the vessel 15 days in all, while safety and other equipment repairs were carried out. During that time, Touwen was able to settle the grievance of the seafarer who had originally contacted him. His back wages were paid, and he was repatriated. This was not the first time that Touwen had the pleasure of visiting this particular vessel. It was detained in Terneuzen for similar problems in October of 1992, but gained permission to load cargo, after which she passed through Dutch waters, escaping detention.



The ITF Belgian Inspector, Roger Opdelocht, was recently able to celebrate the happy ending to a wage settlement case for eight Thai seafarers that originally began in March of last year. The Panamanian-flagged *Magellan Rex* was visited by the ITF inspector in Antwerp on March 25 of 1993, at the request of eight Thai crew members for reasons of victimisation and low wages. At the time, Opdelocht successfully negotiated the conclusion of a retroactive Standard ITF Agreement. He was then able to obtain back wages for the crew, a sum totalling US\$40,000. Among the terms of the settlement agreement, which the ship's captain did sign, it was stated that "no disciplinary measures or legal procedures or any other action will be taken against the crew." This turned out not to be the case, however, when, on February 24 of this year, the Bishop's Commission for the Welfare of Seafarers at Bangkok informed Opdelocht that the eight crew members were being sued in court by the local manning agents, with the aim of recovering the US\$40,000 from the crew. Opdelocht contacted the owners, protesting that the legal proceedings were in breach of the settlement agreement and demanded that they be stopped at once. The owners and the agents were reminded that to neglect the demands could result in all their vessels world-wide being reported. The owners then duly confirmed that they had instructed the manning agency to drop the suit. On March 4, the "Bishop's Commission" informed Inspector Opdelocht that the proceedings had been withdrawn.

— Foc Campaign News —

ITF Foc campaign review body meets

A fundamental review of the nearly 50 year old ITF campaign against Flags of Convenience began on 1-2 March with a meeting of the Ad hoc Campaign Working Group, which was established in 1993 at a meeting of the ITF Fair Practices Committee in Hamburg. The Group, composed of representatives of seafarer and docker unions, and chaired by FPC joint chairmen K Mols Sørensen and John Connolly, together with ITF Inspectors from different regions of the world was convened to look at three key areas of the campaign: negotiating tactics; campaign strategy; and inspectorate performance. As the world's maritime industry has developed, so has the Campaign, responding to the growing flagging out of traditional fleets, the creation of second registers, the growth in new labour-supplying countries and the varying economic fortunes of the shipping industry.

The meeting's most important decision was the necessity for the FPC to establish a permanent Campaign Steering Committee, which, in addition to generating a more pro-active approach, will advise the Secretariat on all aspects

of campaign strategy and tactics. It strongly supported the FPC's decision to create a more uniform system of ITF approved agreements, and recommended that the organisation adopt a more active role in assisting its affiliates in labour-supplying countries in their negotiations with shipowners.

There was a resolve to adopt a higher profile for the policy of boycotting or taking other industrial action against ships not meeting ITF standards. Recognising this as the heart of the Campaign's effectiveness, the group recommended a programme of legal research, educational and organisational work designed to increase the number of ports in which ships without ITF approved agreements are at risk of facing industrial action. The Group welcomed a secretariat decision to recruit an experienced in-house lawyer to coordinate the ITF's legal strategy worldwide.

The Ad Hoc Group's recommendations will now be discussed in depth at the forthcoming Fair Practices Committee meeting in London in June as well as at the ITF Congress in Geneva.

Resurgence of pirate attacks off China: a cause for concern

After several months of comparative calm, incidents of piracy appear to be picking up in the South China Sea, particularly in waters immediately adjacent to China. According to a report issued in early March by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a London-based organisation which monitors piracy, there have been around 20 attacks in China's coastal waters this year. "These attacks range from pirates boarding merchant vessels and stealing crew's belongings to the full-scale interception of ships," said Eric Ellen, director of the IMB.

During a number of attacks at this same time last year, ships' captains spoke of men dressed in military-style uniform, and Ellen supports the contention that Chinese naval or other official personnel are responsible: "Ships are escorted back to port where their cargoes are discharged and a ransom extorted from the owner for the return of their vessel." In spite of being aware of the military involvement, as far as Ellen knows, no formal protest has yet been presented to the Chinese government.

Attacks in the Malacca Strait and Straits of Singapore, fell to only one in 1992 from 200 in 1991. Many in the shipping industry complained that the three states surrounding the Malacca Strait — Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore —

failed to act swiftly enough when piracy was rampant. As with China, accusations were made of official complicity in attacks, or at least lax supervision of off-duty military officers alleged to be taking part.

Without the willing support of the three Malacca Strait countries, the IMB was nonetheless able to establish an anti-piracy centre, in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. The centre seems to be quite effective in combating piracy problems as revealed by the drastic decrease in reported attacks.

Waters between Hong Kong, China's southern Hainan Island and the Philippines, where 33 attacks took place last year, have now replaced the narrow Malacca Strait as the world's worst zone for piracy.

China justifies some seizures as a way to stop smuggling of goods to and from Vietnam. A Panamanian-registered vessel carrying cigarettes worth US\$5 million was stopped at the end of January en route to South Korea from Singapore. The captors told the crew that they were agents of China's Border Patrol Bureau, but the ship was seized illegally, well outside China's 200-mile economic zone. The same ship was discovered three weeks later in the Chinese port of Shanwei, its cargo confiscated.



PEOPLE

Brian Laughton retires

Brian Laughton, Secretary of the ITF Special Seafarers' Department who cycled the six miles from Clapham to the ITF offices almost every day, retired, formally at the end of February after a period of extended sick leave that followed major heart surgery in 1992.

As a young man, Brian Laughton's life was dominated by cycling. In the winter he took casual jobs in order to earn enough money to spend the summer months track racing in France, Belgium and Holland. Although Brian reached the peak of his sport, representing England on several occasions, he knew that eventually he had to find regular employment away from the cycle track. In November 1959, he joined the ITF at Maritime House as a general clerk, and was made assistant to Mr Klatil, the Office Manager. Klatil, as Brian, says, "was something of an institution". An Austrian/Czech, he had been with the Federation since 1930 and was soon inculcating the impressionable young Laughton with romantic stories from the early history of the ITF.

Brian quickly became aware of the importance of the Flag of Convenience campaign but it was some time before he was to become exclusively involved in its activities. In 1969 he visited his first ship at the Port of London, the Liberian flagged, Greek owned, *Good Fortune*. This experience was to have a lasting impression on him. Conditions on board were awful and the Ethiopian crew were being paid well below the Greek Agreement. In the days before pocket calculators, Brian remembers that it took four hours to work out the backpay. One grateful crew member was later to send Brian a specially carved shell.

After the re-launch of the Foc campaign in 1971, the Executive Board appointed Laughton as Administrative Secretary of the Special Seafarers' Section which, at first, he ran with one part-time assistant. The Foc campaign really took off during the 1970s and the Section was bombarded with requests for information at all times of the day and night. During this exciting period, Brian remembers operating a system of "telephone sales" — after checking on the movement of suspect ships, he, or one of his assistants, would call the country where the targeted ship was heading to encourage the local union to take action.

By the end of the 1970s, the Section had twelve personnel. As the campaign prospered, the ITF began to find itself regularly defending



Brian Laughton (left) pictured with his successor as ITF Special Seafarers' Department Secretary **Bruno de Bonis**.

its actions in the courts, and it was felt that regular legal advice was required.

In 1982 the Section was renamed the Special Seafarers' Department.

By the mid-1980s, the worldwide recession and the growth of right-wing governments had slowed down the momentum of the Foc campaign and, with many governments passing legislation restricting trade union rights.

The late 1980s and early 1990s have been a tough time for trade unions, but Brian leaves the ITF knowing that the Foc campaign is now an established force in international shipping, and that any shipowner risks a great deal by sailing without an ITF agreement.

Brian leaves the campaign in good shape (we have now recovered from the 1980s) and is succeeded by **Bruno de Bonis** (appointed in October 1993).

Thomas Abrahamsson has been appointed as the new International Secretary of the Swedish Seafarers' Union and Coordinator of the ITF Foc campaign in Sweden. He succeeds **Malte Segerdahl**, who is moving to Stockholm where he will be taking up a new post as International Secretary of the Swedish Transport Workers' Union.

Joel E Bem was elected as the new President of the US National Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (NMEBA) at NMEBA's National Con-

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Faroese fish industry under threat from Danish government

The Faroes, a small island community of 1,400 sq. km with a population of around 45,000, which are administered by Denmark, are located in the north Atlantic roughly midway between Iceland, Scotland and Norway. The main occupation of the country is fishing, and the country's largest fishermen's unions are ITF-affiliated.

The Faroes currently finds itself in a deep crisis, which is due in part to falling fish stocks. There

has also been a fall in the market price of other fish types, notably dark saithe, large quantities of which are landed for processing. These conditions in themselves are enough to give rise to a crisis in an economy as dependent on fish as that of the Faroes. The crisis has been aggravated by the failed economic policy of the 1980s and 1990s, which burdened the Faroes with a large foreign debt. The over-all policy has also been noticeably hostile to trade unions.

The Danish government has concluded agreements with the Faroes government on the refinancing of its large foreign debt, but certain conditions of the accord prove to be unjust for the islands' fishermen, including a worsening of the income guarantee, which the state makes to Faroese fishermen.

Fishermen and their unions are determined to resist this attack on their rights, declaring that if the planned restrictions of income guarantees are implemented, there will be an immediate stoppage of work. This firm position was enough to persuade the Faroese parliament to delay implementing the scheduled changes; and workers' groups were able to support their action with a letter they'd received from the Danish Prime Minister, announcing that his government would not interfere in this domestic matter.

At the end of February, however, the Danish Prime Minister issued another statement announcing that his government would not in fact consider refinancing the foreign debt until the proposed measure threatening fishermen's income guarantees were implemented.

As the proposed changes are in conflict with the aims of the fisheries policy adopted by the ITF, the organisation has issued a statement in support of its affiliated members. The ITF points out that the Faroese fishermen's organisations, which are ITF members, had received a clear undertaking from the Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, that the Danish government would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Faroes. This undertaking conflicts with the legislation now being proposed following direct pressure from the Prime Minister.

The ITF supports the Faroese fishermen in their views that they have every right to take the Prime Minister at his word and to act on that assumption.



PEOPLE

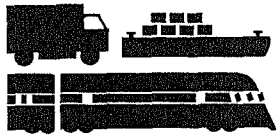
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vention in Washington. He succeeds Gordon M Ward, who had earlier announced his retirement.

H J A H Hylkema has taken over from **John Vriesen** as the new General Secretary of the Dutch Seafarers' Federation FWZ. Vriesen remains with the union as its International Secretary.

R Muthuswamy, one of the ITF's Indian team of Education Officers involved with the ITF's Long-Term Education Programme in the Asia/Pacific region, is retiring at the end of June. Brother Muthuswamy has been Education Officer for road transport unions in the Indian sub-continent for the past seven years.

The ITF now has three new Inspectors — working alongside the established Inspectors, in Canada, Denmark and France — as members of its worldwide team. They are: **Yves Reynaud** of the French transport workers' union FGTE-CFDT, who is based in Marseilles and covers Marseilles and the Mediterranean ports; **James Given** of the Seafarers' International Union of Canada who works out of Montréal and looks after the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes region; and **Kjartan Gudmondsson**, a shop steward for the Danish General Workers' Union (SiD) in the port of Copenhagen, who assisted in the ITF's first ever boycott action in the port — that of the Antigua flag *Flamingo* — which was featured in last month's edition of ITF News.



INLAND TRANSPORT

US rail unions abandon national bargaining

Believing they have lost the right to strike in industry wide bargaining, major rail unions in the USA have decided to negotiate the next round of contracts on a carrier-by-carrier basis. And although several unions are willing to negotiate informally with railroads well in advance of the Dec. 31 expiration date of current agreements, they have decided to abandon national bargaining.

Under the Railway Labor Act, which covers labour relations in the railroad and airline industries, unions cannot strike over minor issues, which must be submitted to binding arbitration. In so-called major disputes, strikes are permitted, but usually only after a lengthy mediation process conducted by the National Mediation Board, which administers the Railway Labor Act. Carriers may not make changes in wages or work rules, and workers may not strike during mediation. Sources at the NMB said that under some circumstances where the carrier had changed the status quo, a union might have the right to strike before mediation.

Ronald P. McLaughlin, international president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), and chairman of the Railway Labor Executives' Association (a labour umbrella group), called it "an historic enterprise." He went on to explain that: "Victimised by adverse decisions stemming from various Study Commissions, Presidential Emergency Boards and Arbitration Boards, rail labour has come to the conclusion that on-property bargaining with individual carriers, rather than national negotiations, is the best avenue for achieving the objectives of our members."

Labour also hopes the structural change will mean a quicker bargaining process, McLaughlin said. "The process has been drawn out because of politics the last couple of rounds. The National Mediation Board would not release us."

The exception to the joint union decision is the United Transportation Union (UTU), which has decided to go its own way, and has already been in talks with the National Railway Labor Conference (NRLC), the bargaining organisation for most carriers.

The trend within the industry seems to be affecting both sides. Last year, Southern Pacific Rail Corporation withdrew from the NRLC, and

is conducting its negotiations separately with unions. Illinois Central Railroad remains a part of the NRLC, yet has chosen to deal separately with workers' organisations.

McLaughlin said the unions believe they can bargain more effectively with individual companies. He says that unions don't believe the Railway Labor Act will work on a national level: "We intend to bargain locally, and in that respect, we believe the RLA will work. Even the carriers concede the fact that we might be able to (strike individual systems.)"

Ideally, the BLE, BMW and Transportation, International Communications' Union would like a mix of national and local negotiations. Issues such as health and welfare and wages could be dealt with nationally, whereas work rules, or other local issues could be decided 'at home,' so to speak. Management, however, is not likely to favour such an arrangement.

A management source declares that: "The unions might not necessarily gain the right to strike by going local, but they believe they would have more leverage." McLaughlin confirms this, saying: "Carriers are in fierce competition with each other. None want to be shut down and lose business and maybe not get it back. At least we have some leverage. When we lost the right to strike, we lost all leverage in national handling."

BMW win arbitration for US\$29 daily allowance

A US National Mediation Board arbitrator has ruled that Burlington Northern Railroad (BN) must pay a US\$29 daily food and lodging allowance to members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees union (BMW).

The union struck part of BN over the issue in October of last year. After the strike, which was ended by a federal court injunction, both sides agreed to submit a dispute over the per diem payment to arbitration. The union claimed that it was entitled to the payment under provisions of the contract imposed on the industry by the US Congress when the legislative body ended a one-day nation-wide strike in 1991.



Turkish public sector workers staged a nationwide work stoppage and mass "sick out" on 13 January in protest at draft legislation which would deprive public sector workers of the right to strike and bargain collectively. The action, which was supported by all three trade union centres, caused extensive disruption to train services throughout Turkey as thousands of rail workers took to the streets. Dockers in the port of Mersin also joined the day of struggle, halting all operations in the port.

Mexican rail system in major intermodal expansion

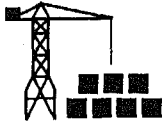
Mexico's state-owned railway, Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México (FNM), will invest US\$10.3 million this year to expand the country's largest intermodal terminal, the Pantaco terminal in Mexico City.

While new facilities are expected to begin operation in the first part of this year in Monterrey and Guadalajara, Pantaco is currently the nation's only large-sized, working public-use intermodal terminal. It serves as an intermodal terminal for predominantly double-stack container trains, but half the station is dedicated to box cars and commodity traffic. The expansion, however, will convert the entire station to an

intermodal terminal. Non-intermodal traffic will go to the nearby Ceylan station.

The expansion plans are the latest in a series of moves aimed at boosting intermodalism in Mexico. Intermodal traffic has grown notably since the opening of the Pantaco station in 1990, with container handling increasing from 5,000 containers the first year, to 50,000 handled in 1993.

The director general of Terminales Intermodales Mexicanas (TIM) expects the development plans to be completed by the end of the Salinas administration this year.



DOCKERS

Australian company renews attack

Australian dockers again came under attack from the union-busting company, Australian Stevedores (AS) in March (see ITF News, March 1994).

Following a reinstatement order by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) in favour of 55 dismissed workers at AS in Sydney, the ITF-affiliated union MUA decided to call off last month's industrial action, which had paralysed ports country-wide.

The 55 workers were not immediately rein-

stated, but put on discretionary leave. In the meantime the company, which had been citing its need to shed employees in order to stay commercially viable, took on supplementary labour.

Now AS has said that it wants 37 more job cuts.

The IRC has ordered the company to allow the employees to return to work, criticising the company's behaviour as provocative.

UK port admits 'unfair dismissal'

270 British port employees were vindicated in mid-March when the privatised port which sacked them last year, Medway Ports, admitted unfair dismissal.

The workers, member of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, were sacked when they refused to accept new, low-pay contracts in December 1992.

They voted in favour of a work-to-rule, and were told by the company that this meant they had made themselves "voluntarily redundant".

But a tribunal hearing last month was not convinced by the company's arguments and Medway Ports settled the claim on the second day of the hearing.

A compensation offer of £10,000 (US\$14,900) each has now been made to the workers. Reinstatement was not included in the offer.

Former Medway Ports employees are also pursuing compensation over a share deal that made the company's chief executive, Peter Vincent, a millionaire.

Individual managers and workers had bought Medway Ports shares at £1.00 each following the privatisation of the port through a buyout scheme in March 1992.

On being sacked, the dockers were obliged to sell them back to the company at £2.50 each in April 1993, according to accountants KPMG Peat Marwick's valuation at that time.

But when the port was taken over by Mersey Docks six months later, a share cost the Liverpool company £38.

The sacked dockers are taking legal advice on whether to claim that KPMG was negligent in its valuation of the shares.

Japanese dockers demand twelve per cent

The National Council of Dockworkers' Unions of Japan (Zenkoku Kowan), and the Japanese Confederation of Port and Transport Workers Unions (Koun Domei) opened the annual shunto, or "spring wage offensive" by demanding a minimum 12 per cent increase in base wages. Over all, the unions will be seeking a higher guaranteed minimum for the entire range of workers.

During the official talks, which are set for March 14 and 24, with a hoped-for settlement set for the end of March, initial demands are always high and subsequently negotiated downwards, but industry officials say that this year's opening proposal seems particularly high.

In a time of relative recession, Japan showed a 1 per cent inflation rate for the fiscal year ending

March 31, weak national economic output, a net decline in Japanese export volumes as well as poor shipping industry results. With this in mind, many foreign shipping officials are surprised at what they call the union's hard line stance.

Yet, some Japanese shipping officials say that port worker unions continue to push for higher than average wages because their compensation levels are still below levels enjoyed in other service and manufacturing sectors.

In other industries, management is calling for a total wage freeze, while union organisations are asking for 5-6 per cent wage increases. Last year, waterfront workers eventually agreed to a 3.8 per cent average wage increase.

Vancouver seeks government aid to foster waterfront harmony

The ITF-affiliated Canadian International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union's (ILWU) strike in January and February which halted activity in all Canadian west coast ports was only brought to a close through government intervention (see ITF News, March 1994). Emergency legislation that ordered the British Columbia longshoremen back to work called for unresolved issues — basically, wage increase proposals — to be settled by binding arbitration. But management and labour were even unsuccessful in choosing an arbitrator, forcing the federal government to appoint one.

And now, as a result of this latest strike, the Port of Vancouver is asking for further government intervention to end the current waterfront labour-management arrangement that they see as the cause of five incidents in the last 25 years which served to paralyse cargo traffic through British Columbia's ports. The port is therefore asking for the appointment of an industrial inquiry commissioner who would investigate ways to prevent disputes between longshoremen

and stevedoring companies from turning into prolonged cargo tie-ups.

Canada's human resources minister, Lloyd Axworthy has discussed "decisive action" on British Columbia's waterfront labour problems, but such action won't likely be announced until after an arbitrator sets ILWU wage levels for a contract running through the end of 1995. The arbitrator's ruling is due by May 9.

Both the Canadian ILWU and the British Columbian Maritime Employers have gone on record against appointment of an industrial labour commissioner. "Labour and management should be allowed to work out their differences in the normal collective bargaining process," said Richard Jones, vice president at the Canadian ILWU headquarters.

The Vancouver port authorities insist, however, on government intervention, while they don't believe that a disagreement over "a few pennies an hour" should be allowed to destroy the port's ability to compete.

Argentinian port health and safety "terrible" says union

The ITF's affiliated dockers' union in Argentina, the Sindicato Encargados Apuntadores Marítimos (SEAM), has written to the ITF to draw attention to the terrible health and safety conditions faced by its members.

One of the union's members, Carlos Maria Sardi, suffered a fatal accident on March 23rd when he fell down a 5-metre gap between huge rolls of paper on board the Russian-flag ship *Norilak*, in the port of Buenos Aires.

He suffered cranial injuries and died instantly.

"The terrible working conditions to which the port workers are exposed on a daily basis, added to the productivity incentives which the workers are offered, mean that our members are obliged to accept any situation, just to be able to take a little more money home," said the union.

"The lack of control and monitoring by the regulatory authorities... mean that our complaints are ineffective," continued SEAM.

"Does the need to reduce labour costs in the ports industry imply there has to be the same cost to health and the life of port workers?"

According to a study carried out by the union, over 40 per cent of members answering a ques-

tionnaire on working conditions had suffered a work accident during their working life; of these 86 per cent had been left with a permanent injury.

*The maritime employers and the dockworkers' unions are involved in a dispute which began with work slowdowns in November of 1993 and which centres around a contract that expired December 31, 1993 (see ITF News, March 1994).

Stevedore company officials assert that more workers will lead to increased chances for accidents, when most work is done by machine. Furthermore, maritime employers did not want to negotiate a new contract because operating conditions at the port will change dramatically later this year when the ports are privatised. As part of the privatisation process, each terminal operator is to absorb several hundred stevedores, who will then work directly for each terminal operator.

In the meantime, maritime industry and labour union officials are waiting until the end of March before submitting a proposed labour accord to a second union vote.

Union fights nuclear waste trade

The international executive board (IEB) of the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) adopted a policy in December of last year encouraging its West Coast members (40,000 in California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska and Hawaii) not to handle highly radioactive spent reactor fuel rods that the US Department of Energy (DOE) is planning to bring back from overseas for security reasons.

In the so-called "Atoms for Peace" programme, the United States began in the 1950s leasing enriched uranium to 28 foreign countries for research reactors. The recipients promised in turn not to develop nuclear weapons and to return the spent fuel to the US; the return being necessary for security purposes, because, spent though it is, the fuel rods still contain enough high grade uranium to develop nuclear bombs.

In 1986, the DOE attempted to ship the spent fuel through the Port of Seattle, Washington, but ILWU dockers refused to handle the shipments and later, working together with local citizens' and environmental groups, aided in establishing Seattle as a Nuclear Free Zone.

In 1993, the DOE again proposed shipping the highly radioactive material to the US, this time targeting the three west and three east coast ports of: Oakland, California; Portland, Oregon; Seattle-Tacoma, Washington; Hampton, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Savannah, Georgia.

In a letter to the DOE, the Port of Seattle Commission issued the following statement, which clearly shows the strong position taken by ILWU dockers: "The Port of Seattle is not interested in being the gateway for spent nuclear fuel rods. This stance supports the position of our longshore workers who have a policy of not handling high level nuclear waste, and the City of Seattle which is a nuclear-free city."

Now, a similar protest is being waged in the city of Portland. It is led in particular by longshoremen there, who encouraged the IEB coastwide ban on shipping hazardous nuclear materials through ports under ILWU jurisdiction, an area which includes all three west coast ports named by the DOE.

In the wake of that decision, and with growing concern about radiation safety, Portland longshoremen were prompted in January to refuse to handle shipments of uranium products scheduled for export to Japan, even in light of the fact that the shipments are not considered "a big radiological concern", according to an Oregon health institute official, and that such shipments have passed through the harbour several times a year for the last five or six years.

The (IEB) policy concerning the handling of hazardous waste materials did not specifically apply to the uranium export shipments to Japan, according to the international spokesman, who did state, however, that union locals can "take positions of their own."



TOURISM SERVICES

International union cooperation

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers (IUF), one of the two other international trade secretariats representing tourism industry workers, formally agreed to international trade union cooperation in the sector at a meeting in Calvi (Majorca, Spain) on March 16-18, at which the ITF was represented.

Participants unanimously supported the strengthening of cooperation with the ITF and the white-collar international FIET.

Delegates denounced the growing tendency of employers to rely on precarious forms of employment contracts, stressed the necessity of trade union representation for all workers, and called for the establishment of agreed procedures limiting the circumstances under which workers may be employed on terms other than continuous, direct employment.

A key issue for participants was the introduction of new technologies in restaurants and catering, hotels and tourist agencies.

Unions were urged to campaign energetically to press their national authorities to ratify ILO Convention 171, which outlines measures for the adequate remuneration and protection of night workers, both men and women.

The Conference also reaffirmed the necessity of maintaining a specific agency within the structure of the ILO devoted to hotels and tourism.

The delegates expressed their solidarity with Spanish trade unions in their struggle against their government's proposed labour law reform, drawn up without consulting with the country's trade union organisations.

In particular, the new legislation threatens the right of seasonally employed workers to return to their jobs from one season to the next.

Maintaining quality standards of service in the sector requires workers with recognised professional qualifications, and who benefit from stable employment and proper living and working conditions, the conference concluded.



CIVIL AVIATION

Aviation workers tell Brussels "No More!"



Helping to make the union voice stronger as they make it heard in Brussels, Greek aviation workers joined the march of EU aviation unions.

Employers join unions in saying jobs will be lost

On March 8, Stuart Howard of the ITF Civil Aviation Section warned a conference of the Airports Council International (Europe Region) held in Brussels, that "airports which currently provide high grade services using good industrial relations would be turned into brokers of airports services in which they would be forced to sell to the lowest cost contractor".

This, he continued, would mean that "airport companies would lose a large degree of control over their product; they would lose the close co-ordination of airport services working within one business plan; and it would open airports to operators with the worst records in recruitment, training and treatment of staff".

The conference was attended by airport management and authorities, members of the European Commission, and unions. René Valladon (FETS-FO, France), who also addressed the conference, told the meeting that the airlines asking for the liberalisation of ground services amounted to an attempt to gain compensation from the airports, for losses brought about by airline liberalisation.

In its own response to the Commission's proposals to liberalise ground handling, the ACI predicts that: "The introduction of competition would be at the expense of employment, as handlers lose business, employees would lose jobs. They would not necessarily be taken on by new handlers, especially those of middle or retirement age. They may also suffer loss of rights and poorer working conditions."

One thousand aviation workers from European Union member countries marched on the European Commission on March seventh to protest proposed liberalisation of ground handling arrangements at airports (see ITF News, January-February 1994).

The protest, called by the Committee of Transport Workers Unions in the European Community (CTWUEC) and the ITF, was the first ever EU-wide trade union industrial protest at the Commission.

The CTWUEC Secretary, Hugues de Villele, told a press conference prior to the rally that liberalisation had already cost thousands of aviation jobs in Europe, and that further liberalisation in the ground handling sector would mean the loss of even more jobs.

The latest proposed measures appear to follow the ultra-liberal path set by the Comité des Sages, which suggests that the problems caused by deregulation should be solved by more deregulation. De Villele stated that the current steps were being forced on the industry by the Commission, which was bowing to pressure from a small number of airlines. He added that the legal status of what the Commission has been doing is also highly questionable.

No more deregulation in civil aviation — was the message that union delegations brought to Brussels. Taking along their flags, banners and songs, delegate members travelled hundreds of miles to converge on the Belgian capital. The Spanish had chartered an aircraft, the British had started out in buses at 4.00 am. The workers from Heathrow airport brought with them a beautiful banner made by local children, expressing the importance of the airport to their

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Riot police surround the European Commission building while aviation workers rally outside. A banner draped over the barbed wire surrounding the European Commission building bears the ITF slogan: "Deregulation? No Thanks!"

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community. The Portuguese sent a delegation to the Brussels rally while at the same time organising strikes at their domestic airports.

The rally, which brought the streets around the European Commission and European Parliament to a standstill, showing the remarkable strength of feeling among airport workers to keep deregulation out of airports, was loud but remained peaceful.

As one Spanish participant put it: "You have to measure the strength this rally represents in a different way than you would a national rally. Many, many more workers wanted to come, but it was just not possible to bring them here. It should be seen that those of us here are here on behalf of many hundreds back home who were not able to come."

Stuart Howard of the ITF civil aviation section, addressing the rally outside the Commission offices, praised union members for bringing their message to the doors of the Commission. He noted that the liberalisation of ground services was part of a globalisation process which serves to take air transport services away from the control of the public and communities they serve, putting services instead into the hands of a growing group of transnational service companies.

A delegation of union leaders was allowed into the Commission building to present the union position to officials within DG IV (Competition Directorate) and DG VII (Transport). They submitted demands that the EC withdraw its preparations for airport deregulation. The delegation demanded that the Commission withdraw its ill-conceived consultation paper and conduct a

proper investigation into airport ground handling.

The union position put to Karel Van Miert of DGIV and Abel Matutes of DGVII contained five main points:

- The Commission should conduct a full investigation into ground service operation, in order to obtain an accurate picture of ground handling in the EU airports. This must include full consultation with the trade unions.
- Before taking any action, the Commission should conduct a full evaluation of the social, technical and economic effects that would result from liberalisation of ground handling.
- The Commission should be ready to distinguish between monopolies that have a negative impact and those that do not. It should focus primarily on ensuring the transparency of operations, to prevent abuses of monopoly positions. Measures to enforce transparency and proper conduct should be incorporated into a Code of Conduct.
- The Commission needs to provide strict protection for minimum working conditions, and standards (e.g. training) and must prevent social dumping.
- Any measures taken by the Commission in the future should be phased in as part of a clear process of transition.

Emerging after meeting with the Commission officials, George Ryde TGWU (Britain) told the rally: "Social dialogue is only real when both sides are listening. We have talked to the Commission before, but they have not listened. Today, with this support here, outside the very entrance door of the Commission, making itself heard even through their-sound proof windows, today the Commission had to listen to us."

Working time: progress on ground staff; stalemate on air crew

Discussions in the European Commission's Joint Committee for Civil Aviation (JCCA) have managed to lead to some agreement between employers and employees over measures regulating working hours for ground staff. The discussions did, however, run into the predicted deadlock on measures for flight crew.

Talks, which have been going on for over a year, to come up with proposals for working time regulations for aviation workers, became necessary when the Council of Ministers decided to exclude all transport workers from its General Directive on Working Time.

At a working group meeting on March first in Brussels, the unions and employers finally reached agreement that all aviation ground staff should be covered by a working time directive, equivalent in all aspects to the General Directive, which covers workers in all other industries.

The unions declared that while they believe the measures only provide a bare minimum of protection, and offer too many possibilities for derogation, even with provisions for compensatory measures, it is important that aviation workers come under some form of legal protection — at least under the same standard used for workers in other industries.

It was agreed that any new arrangements should not preclude more restrictive measures for other staff with special safety responsibilities, such as air traffic controllers.

In spite of advances made in other areas,

discussion concerning working time measures for cabin crew reached a complete stalemate. The main point of contention between employers and employees has been the employers' firm stance against discussions being held before the JAA flight time limitations have been finalised.

Unions point out that the employers are equating operational safety to occupational health and safety. The JAA has consistently refused to discuss social aspects of flight and duty times, whereas the discussion in the JCCA initiated by DGV (social affairs) is specifically concerned with occupational health and safety. The employers have even refused to discuss the possibility of coming to a set of joint guiding principles on health and safety.

During the discussion, one employer representative was admonished by the Commission for the assertion that under current conditions in the industry airlines would never be prepared to pay the costs involved in working time protections. Mr Chalamet of the Commission warned that the Commission could not regard minimum health and safety protection as a commercial cost factor.

Unfortunately this did not prevent the employers from making it quite clear that they were not interested in reaching an accord with unions on this matter after which it was agreed to suspend the working group.

The unions have put forward their own proposals to the Commission, based on the ITF policy for flight and duty times.

Australian Ansett seeks to establish a "people-less, state-less" airline

Ansett Airlines is showing how ruthlessly refined airlines are prepared to be in keeping their labour costs low.

Ansett has set up a new airline to take up international routes, for which it is now allowed to bid under Australian deregulation. The new company, Ansett International, will only directly employ managers and cabin crew. Pilots and all ground staff will be hired from contract companies.

The cabin crew will for the most part be non-Australian crew, based outside Australia in low cost neighbouring Asian countries. Flight and duty time limitations required for its intended routes to Singapore and Malaysia will break internationally recognised safety standards.

At a press conference in Sydney on March 17, 1994, David Cockroft, ITF Acting General Secretary warned that "Ansett International is conducting an industrial-social experiment in ex-

ploitation, combining the concepts of the "people-less" and the "state-less" airline. Its ground staff will be supplied by companies offering only low cost, insecure, temporary and part time employment, in which staff will be employed and laid off according to Ansett's traffic flows.

"The only staff the airline will directly employ, the cabin crew, are to be low cost workers, based outside the labour protections and safety rules of Australian law. If this airline wants the route privileges of an Australian registered airline then it should provide secure and decent employment according to Australian social standards.

"If the airline goes ahead with violating international labour and aviation standards the ITF aviation unions will take strong international action against it."

A resolution condemning Ansett's plans was passed at the ITF Executive Board in Sydney on March 16.

Airline inter-union links spread

International airline mergers and alliances call for an international union response. The ITF Civil Aviation Section Conference in 1992 launched an international union strategy on globalisation, including a call for unions to create new structures to co-ordinate union strategies within international airline groupings. Aviation unions have begun to do just that.

The cabin crew unions in the British Airways-USAir-Qantas carrier grouping issued a declaration of union co-operation between TGWU (United Kingdom), AFA (United States) and FAAA (Australia), during the ITF Civil Aviation Section Committee meeting in London on November 10, 1993 (see ITF News, December 1993).

This has been rapidly consolidated by a series of meetings between the leaderships of the unions at USAir's Pittsburgh base in January and at the FAAA offices in Sydney, Australia in February. These meetings involved more in depth discussions about co-operation and the introduction of the full union leaderships to each other. A similar meeting is scheduled soon for London.

The Sydney meeting also led to a co-operation statement between the FAAA and FARSA the New Zealand cabin crew union. Qantas has shares in Air New Zealand.

Similar links are now being developed between ground staff unions in British Airways represented by the TGWU and workers in USAir represented by the machinists (IAM). These unions note in a resolution of co-operation signed on February 12 that "the management of USAir and British Airways will be exchanging aircraft and work procedures" and that "the IAM and TGWU as affiliates of the International Transport Workers' Federation, representing 6.5 million ground workers world-wide, are dedicated to unity and solidarity in the aviation world" and need to "meet on a regular basis and exchange information in order to protect their members' interests."

Cabin crew unions in United Airlines and Lufthansa have also begun to co-operate. Kevin Lum the AFA president in UAL reports: "Last October, United and Lufthansa signed a bold new code sharing agreement. The pact, which is attached to the recently negotiated US-German bi-lateral, will eventually give both airlines the ability to share codes on each others' flights around the world. In anticipation of this alliance, the AFA has begun to strengthen ties with ÖTV, the flight attendant union at Lufthansa. During a meeting of the ITF's Cabin Crew Technical Committee last fall, I met with Ingo Marowski of ÖTV to exchange information about our airlines and unions. Both AFA and ÖTV agree we should be increasing our communications, as United and Lufthansa management

are."

In July 1993 Iberia Group unions, AAA, APA, APTA, APLA, ATVLA, UPSA from Aerolíneas Argentina; SITLAV from Viasa (Venezuela); FETS-UGT and FETCOMAR-CC.OO met in Buenos Aires at a meeting organised by the ITF, and signed a joint statement for an international dialogue. A second international meeting of Iberia unions met in Madrid in January 1994 and proposed an Iberia Conference to take place late in 1994.

During the proposed Alcazar merger (KLM-Swissair-SAS-Austrian Airlines) Dutch, Swiss, Austrian and Scandinavian unions held regular meetings to forge a unified union response. Ground staff unions were making similar preparations.

With the collapse of those talks, these union associations were no longer necessary. However, the renewed co-operation between KLM and its US partner Northwest has led to closer union links across the Atlantic.

The VKC Dutch cabin crew union says: "It is predictable that within the near future KLM and NWA will further intensify their co-operation which may well influence labour conditions. For the VKC this was the reason to enter into a dialogue with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters."

One of the major reasons that airlines undertake global mergers is to take advantage of economies of scale, to reduce labour costs and to increase labour flexibility. Unions are well aware that globalisation increases the scope of airlines to use workers in one country to undermine the conditions of workers in another.

There will always be inequalities in conditions between workers in different countries. A recent VKC delegation to Washington and Minneapolis to meet their American counterparts was shocked to learn some of the differences in conditions. Apart from differences in pay and bonuses, Northwest flight attendants, for example, may fly any of the seven different aircraft types used by the airline, while KLM cabin crew are restricted to three aircraft types. And employers like to take advantage of this. European unions are regularly told by the airline operators (most recently in the report of the Comité des Sages) that their labour costs make them uncompetitive with US workers.

Kevin Lum of the AFA in United Airlines notes: "Lufthansa flight attendants are concerned that code sharing will threaten their flying. This is due, in part, to the large cost advantage American carriers have over the European airlines.

"With operating costs often three times higher than United, Lufthansa has recently gone

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...Aviation unions respond to globalisation with new structures

Continued from page 25 through major restructuring. They have reduced their route structure, both internationally and within Germany, negotiated concessions from their employees, and started a short haul, lower cost airline within an airline called Lufthansa Express."

This, says Lum, will all sound very familiar to United employees, because it is the very solution being sought by United in the US where, "the same 'low' costs which make us threatening to our German sisters and brothers are not low enough, in UAL management's mind, to compete with the lower cost carriers like Southwest.... In the biggest irony of the new global aviation market place, we find ourselves working for an airline whose operation beats its international competitors' costs by a mile, while simultaneously the same operation cannot compete at home."

The Comité des Sages report urges a European labour productivity war with the United States. But as Lum points out, while European airlines compare their labour costs to UAL's, UAL is already trying to push its costs lower than Southwest's. Productivity wars amount to an international auction of labour where workers are invited to down bid their labour costs against each other.

Moreover, while benefiting from such wars,

the airline operators themselves are blurring the nationality distinctions within their airline alliances.

Airlines increasingly view their operations less and less as American or European and actively blur nationality distinctions with global marketing strategies and with a global labour strategy, painting aircraft in global brand colours, switching different nationality crews in and out of different uniforms, basing them in different countries, with crew exchange schemes, franchise arrangements and overseas bases.

It is clear that international union links are going beyond symbolic gestures of international solidarity. International union co-operation and information exchange is now a basic part of the aviation union bargaining tool kit.

It is vital to prevent employer manipulation. It is vital to prevent misunderstandings between unions with different industrial cultures and work practices.

These initiatives are also likely to involve some hard decisions within unions and between unions having to adjust to a new global environment. But it is vital that unions adapt to change in unity and with a collective international commitment to the well-being of aviation workers in this increasingly transnational industry. These early initiatives are charting an important course.

French and Portuguese restructuring plans unveiled

Air France has recently announced a rescue plan involving a US\$3.46bn French Government injection into the troubled state airline. Unlike last year's plan, which provoked massive strike action (see ITF News, November 1993), the new proposals do not include wage cuts or compulsory redundancies. The package, announced on 12th March by Air France's new Chairman Christian Blanc, does, however, include a three-year wage freeze and 5,000 voluntary redundancies, together with shared ownership and equity-for-salary swap proposals. The French Government has approved the plan before an April 1st deadline set by all fourteen Air France trade unions as a condition of its cash aid. But if the plan is not

approved unanimously by the fourteen, Air France management says it will take the matter over the heads of the unions submitting a direct ballot to the workforce.

• Several flights of the Portuguese flag carrier TAP had to be cancelled on March seventh as a result of a one day strike by ground staff unions.

The stoppage was the latest in a series of strikes to protest the company's restructuring plans, which would lay off up to a quarter of TAP's 10,000 employees, as well as impose more flexible working hours.

The strike was timed to coincide with the March aviation union day of protest against the liberalisation of ground handling (pp22-23).

Filipino court overturns settlement



On June 1, 1993 ground workers in Philippine Airlines were banned by the government from going on strike to improve their pay and conditions (see *ITF News*, July 1993). The Department of Labor imposed compulsory arbitration and on July 30 issued a ruling which accepted that a number of limited improvements to pay and conditions were warranted.

The union, ITF-affiliated PALEA, was ready to accept the ruling, but the company refused to implement any improvements. The union appealed to the Department of Labor, which still banned any strike action, to enforce its own ruling, but in vain.

In January 1994 the union raised this situation at the ITF Asia/Pacific Civil Aviation Section Conference in Hong Kong and a resolution was passed condemning the inaction of the Department of Labor on this matter and a letter of protest was sent to the Secretary of Labor.

On March 10, 1994 the Supreme Court overturned the settlement imposed by the Department of Labor, backing the employer's refusal to concede any pay improvements. The union was not allowed to fully present its case in the Supreme Court hearings.

Moreover, according to the union, the Solicitor General who was supposed to present the information to the court on behalf of the Department of Labor in defence of their ruling against the appeal of Philippine Airlines, happens to be a member of the Advisory Board of Philippine Airlines. Union protests to the DOLE and to the court that they should change their representation to the court were ignored.

PAL, which was privatised in 1992, has been suffering from competition by US carriers. The Philippines government recently eased capacity restrictions on US-Philippines routes. Under the new agreement US airlines have been capacity dumping. Northwest Airlines, UAL, Continental Air Micronesia have all increased frequencies

to a level which PAL cannot possibly hope to match.

The United States would like a full "open skies" agreement with the Philippines. In the meantime Philippine aviation workers are made to pay the price for increased liberalisation of the existing agreement.

PALEA refuses to accept that it can be banned from striking on the basis of the Department of Labor taking over jurisdiction of the dispute, and then have the result of that jurisdiction set aside by the Supreme Court.

According to the union President Mario Santos: "The blatant disregard of the Supreme Court of trade union rights of the civil aviation workers in the Philippines must not be taken lightly. Our organisation will lead and initiate a crusade to fight these abuses by the Philippine government and PAL management." — he says the union is planning strike action.

Latin America

A meeting of Latin American Civil Aviation affiliates took place in Costa Rica at the end of March to elect a Latin American and Caribbean Regional Committee for the Civil Aviation Section. Alicia Castro of the Asociación Argentina de Aeronavegantes was elected President of this Committee while José Trajano Da Silva of the CONTMAF of Brazil was elected as one of the two vice-presidents with the remaining vice-presidential position to be filled by LACSA of Costa Rica. In addition the Committee will comprise one representative from each country in which the ITF has affiliates. The meeting agreed an outline work programme for the Committee and adopted resolutions on Aerolíneas Argentinas, anti-labour practices in the TACA Group, and on ratification by Costa Rica of ILO conventions.

Argentinian unions defend the flag status of Aerolíneas

Trade unions in Aerolíneas Argentinas are fighting through the courts against the possible loss of the airline's flag carrier status, when such a loss would pose a major threat to jobs.

The unions say that AA's flag carrier status is under threat after the Argentinian Economy Minister, Mr Javier Salas concluded a landmark deal to resolve a three-year dispute over Iberia's stake in Aerolíneas on 17th March.

The deal between the Argentinian Government and Iberia raises Iberia's stake from 30 per cent to 85 per cent, and would result in a dilution of the stakeholding by the Government from the current 43 per cent to 15 per cent.

There is a history of controversy surrounding Iberia's involvement with AA. A barrage of criticism over Iberia's control of Aerolíneas led to a partial-renationalisation of the airline in 1992. And trade unions have also been critical of Iberia's management of the company which they say has treated AA as a feeder airline rather than a national carrier.

Unions also fear a loss of influence with Aerolíneas management in the current deal, and a more aggressive management cost cutting approach. The company has already said it intends to shed around 800 more (mostly office) jobs. Nevertheless, above all, the unions support a secure future for the airline and a continuing commitment to investment by both Iberia and the Argentinian government, yet they believe that the shift to 85 per cent ownership by Iberia poses new problems, threatening the airline's flag-carrier privileges for international routes.

The Argentinian government has changed the law to decree that flag carrier status will depend, not on ownership, but residence. However, such

a measure is likely to carry little sway with foreign governments or foreign airlines who will claim that by giving up its "golden share", Buenos Aires is declaring that AA is now a Spanish-owned airline.

Most critical will be the US position. Aerolíneas routes to the USA are a significant part of its international operation, and the US authorities may seek trade-offs as part of their commitment to greater liberalisation and "open skies".

As Alicia Castro of the Asociación Argentina de Aeronavegantes says: "American Airlines is not going to stand aside while Iberia picks up all Aerolíneas Argentinas flag carrier privileges. The US government is going to say the deal makes nonsense out of existing international air agreements, and we all know what the pressure will be then for an 'open skies' agreement."

The unions have acted fast. Only a week after the government struck its deal, a union-backed court injunction has frozen the government's moves. The unions now demand that the government reconsider its ability to maintain the investment the airline needs and retain its flag-carrier status.

Mexican pilots dispute settled: strike threat brings airline concessions

Threatened strike action by the ITF-affiliated pilots' union ASPA (see ITF News, March 1994) has once more brought about a change of tactics by the management of Mexicana.

The company after violating union contracts and trying to use non union pilots has now reached a settlement with the union and has promised to stick to its collective bargaining agreement.

ASPA has sent thanks to the ITF and its affiliates who sent letters of protest to the company and offering international support with which, says ASPA General Secretary Captain Dominguez Galvez, "we were fuelled with more bargaining power in our negotiations."

Acting General Secretary: David Cockroft

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