

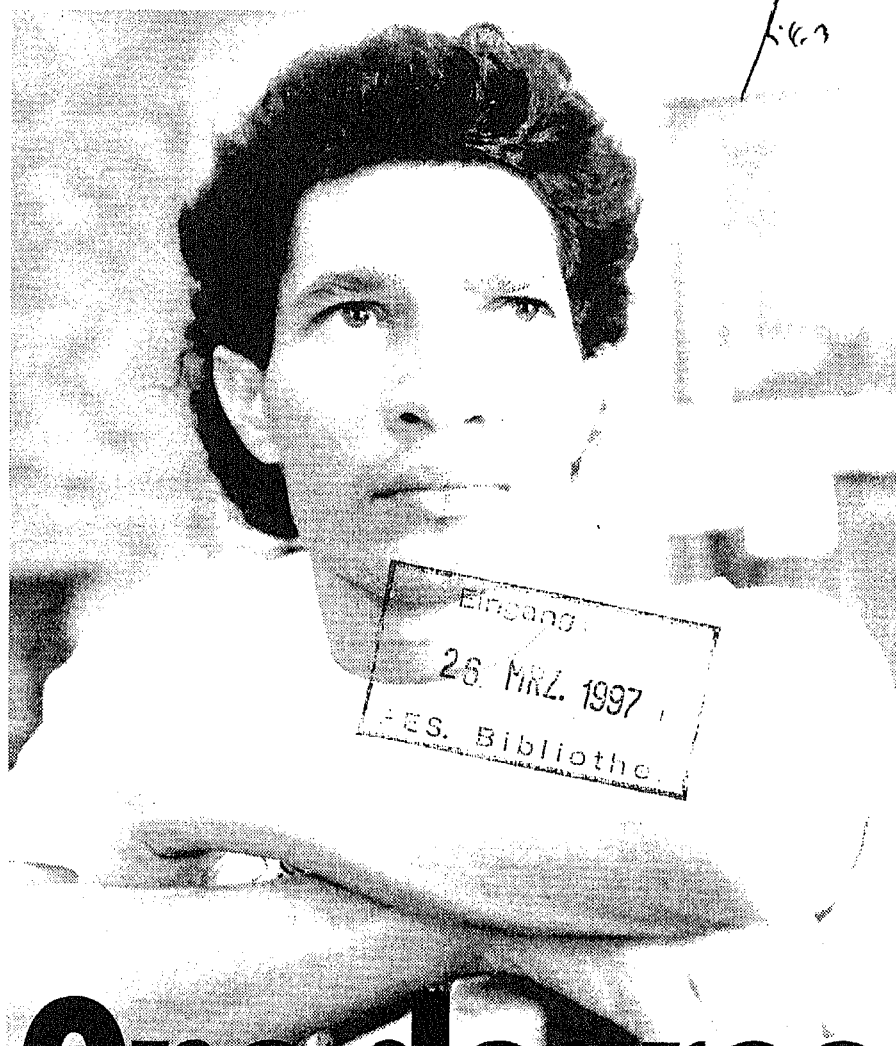
ITF

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION

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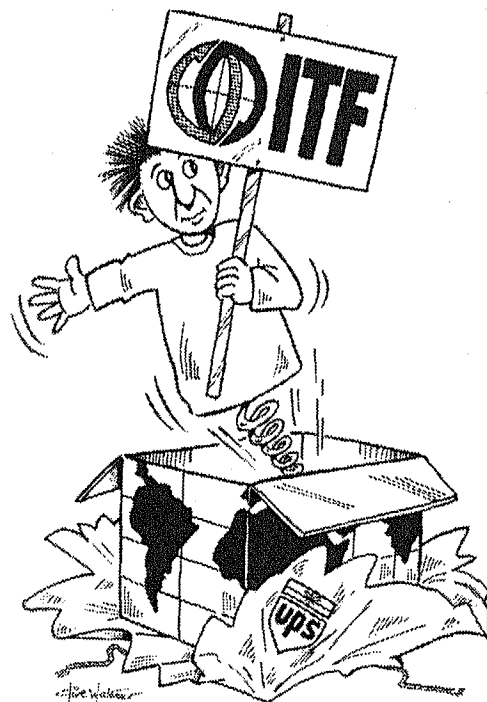


One degree from death

So bad were conditions on board his ship that Rommel Escalante threw himself into freezing, shark-infested waters. We tell his story, and review the ITF's flag of convenience campaign.

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ITF sets up world council for UPS employees



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■ ITF News is published by the ITF six times a year in English, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish.

■ This issue was published on 28 February 1997.

ITF unions representing workers employed by United Parcel Service (UPS) have agreed to set up a World Trade Union Council and seek recognition from the company as an international consultative body.

Workers from 11 countries representing more than 200,000 UPS employees in North America, Latin America and Europe met at ITF headquarters in London on 11 and 12 February.

They agreed to constitute themselves as the ITF's first world trade union council and to seek from UPS management recognition in discussions around a number of topics.

The meeting also agreed to establish an international network of trade union officials and shop stewards within UPS with the intention of exchanging information and bargaining strategies on a continuous basis using the World Wide Web, Internet, e-mail and regular information bulletins.

The unions agreed to organise an international day of trade union action within UPS this year in support of global dialogue with UPS management on a number of important priority issues:

- the implications of the huge losses currently being experienced by the company as a result of its global expansion strategy;
- the perception in some countries that UPS is not interested in recognising and establishing an effective dialogue with trade unions representing the workers;
- the need to prioritise full-time permanent employment for UPS workers and to oppose

the subcontracting of work done normally by UPS employees;

- to establish international standards for the protection of UPS employees' health and safety, including the handling of heavy packages, productivity schemes that affect driving speeds, handling hazardous materials and the use of split shifts;
- to establish international guidelines for the human rights of UPS employees at the workplace guaranteeing freedom from intrusive surveillance, searches at work and company interference in workers' private lives.

"The meeting was a historic first for the ITF which has never before held an international meeting of unions from one global company, and it proved to be very useful," said ITF General Secretary David Cockroft afterwards.

Delegates declared their strong support for the Italian UPS workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (USA) in their current contract negotiations with the company.

In brief

■ The ITF has added its voice to the chorus of international condemnation of the murder of Abdelhak Benhamouda, General Secretary of the General Union of Algerian Workers, who was shot dead outside the union's headquarters in Algiers on 28 January. The ITF has written to the Algerian President calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

■ South Korean President Kim Young-Sam has withdrawn arrest

warrants issued against union leaders of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and agreed to meet opposition parties to try and resolve the crisis over controversial new labour laws. ITF affiliate, the Federation of Korean Taxi Workers' Unions took strike action for two days in January.

■ Leaders of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions were arrested by security forces in January after calling for a two-day stay-away by workers

in protest at repressive labour legislation. The union's General Secretary Jan Sithole, President Richard Nxumalo, Vice President Themba Msibi and Assistant General Secretary Jabulani Nxumalo were arrested on 31 January and charged with violating the 1963 Public Order Act, related to intimidation - a charge which offers no bail. The ITF is supporting an international boycott of Swaziland on 3 March.

A clause to combat discrimination at sea

Flag of convenience operators may soon have to start protecting their crews from sexual and racial harassment.

The Seafarers' Section Steering Committee, which met in London on 6 and 7 February, agreed to recommend the inclusion of a standard anti-discrimination clause in all ITF-approved collective agreements.

The clause lays down that each seafarer shall be entitled to work, train and live in an environment free from harassment and bullying whether sexually, racially or otherwise motivated.

The ITF was mandated to draw up comprehensive policy guidelines to deal with this kind of abuse.

National-flag vessels are affected by the decision too; all ITF seafarer unions will now be required to include procedures covering harassment and bullying, whether sexual or racial, in national agreements.

The move to put such clauses into place came after ITF Women's Officer Sarah Finke carried out a survey of FOC ship-owners.

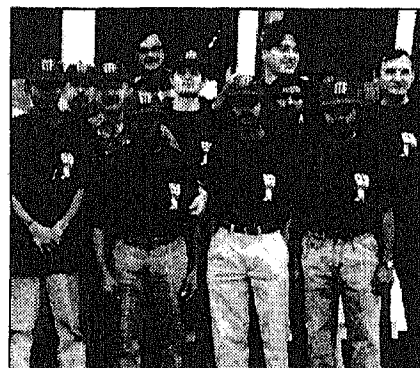
"About half the companies consulted

■ **March 21 is the United Nations' Day against Racial Discrimination — a day many seafarers might wish was better observed.**

Racism is a harsh reality in flag of convenience shipping, an industry which habitually recruits officers from one country and ratings from others. Job opportunities are ruled by race. Crewing agents and FOC operators commonly use racial differences to divide and rule a ship's crew.

The ITF continually hears of tales of threatening behaviour and racial abuse to intimidate crews. Our decision to include an anti-discrimination clause in seafarers' agreements will not eradicate these abuses.

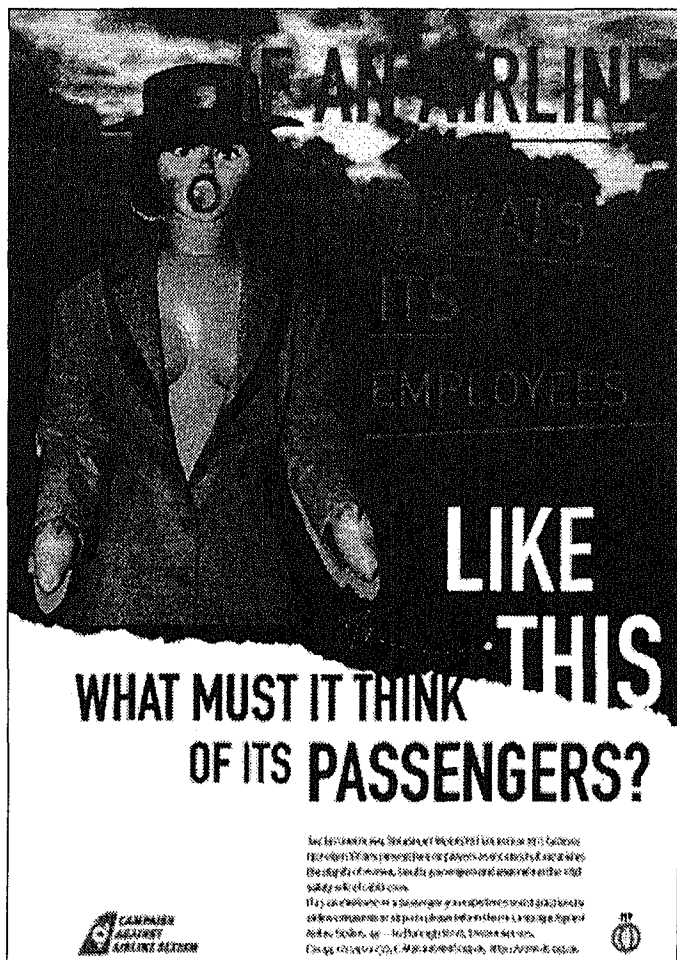
But it will provide an element of protection which, coupled with trade union education to encourage tolerance and diversity, can only improve conditions for the world's seafarers.



replied to my questions covering assault, harassment and bullying — a pretty good response," said Finke.

"Of those replying, three suggested there was no need for such procedures. Only two, of a total eighteen, had spe-

cific procedures. Most others felt their existing codes of conduct covered the problem — something we would question."



Sex doll poster for cabin crew campaign

March 8, International Women's Day, sees the ITF unveil a controversial poster in a campaign to stop airline advertising using sexist images of cabin crew. The poster shows an inflatable sex doll dressed in a cabin crew uniform under the heading: "If an airline treats its employees like this, what must it think of its passengers".

Section Secretary Stuart Howard admits that the poster may even offend some of the ITF's own affiliates.

"It is a deliberately provocative and shocking image," he says. "But it reflects the way many airlines effectively treat their cabin crew. We simply took what these airlines are doing to its logical conclusion, to show it for what it really is. We believe it brings the message home."

The campaign was launched after women cabin crew members from a number of Asian airlines voiced their anger during an ITF Asia/Pacific regional meeting. They worked in companies which openly declared they would only employ young and attractive "hostesses" because they say this is what male passengers want. But this didn't just happen in Asia. When the issue was raised cabin crew unions from all around the world reported much the same complaint.

Some carriers are blatant others are more subtle but effectively do the same thing. Howard says: "For years airlines have spent thousands of dollars on marketing aimed primarily at male business passengers, encouraging them to believe that part of what they are buying is personal attention from young, attractive, amenable 'hostesses'."

What are flags of convenience and why do we oppose them?

by Jane Barrett
of the ITF
Seafarers' Section

The genuine link

Historically the flag flown by a ship has been that of the state in which the owner of the vessel resides. This is what the ITF refers to as the "genuine link" between ownership and flag.

Put simply, a flag of convenience ship is one which flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership. Cheap registration fees, low (or no) taxes, and freedom to employ cheap labour are the primary motivations.

Very often such cheap flag registers are also not tightly regulated in terms of safety. The government of the country of registration is more often than not unable or unwilling to set up the bureaucracy and procedures to regulate the ships on its register.

In many cases the register is not even run from the country concerned. For example, all the paperwork for Liberian-flagged ships is done in Reston, Virginia, USA, and the Cambodian registry is based in Singapore. The flag state itself rarely has the infrastructure or technical backup to ensure that relevant international standards on social conditions, safety, training and crewing are adhered to.

How many FOC ships?

At the end of December 1995 there were 82,890 ships in the world of 100 gross tons and over. The total tonnage of the vessels was 491 million. A total

'All the paperwork for Liberian-flagged ships is done in Reston, Virginia, USA, and the Cambodian registry is based in Singapore.'

of 15,972 of these vessels were flying FOCs – 19.3 per cent of all vessels of over 100GT and 44 per cent of the world's gross tonnage in 1995.

The ITF campaign

The ITF was opposed to FOCs from the start as it saw owners using the system as a means of running away from trade union agreements. FOCs provided a

means of avoiding labour regulation in the country of ownership, and became a vehicle for paying low wages and forcing long hours of work and unsafe working conditions.

The cornerstone of the campaign has been to impose regulations on FOC ships by way of collective agreements covering all crew irrespective of nationality. These agreements have not only protected the crews of FOC ships against the worst forms of exploitation, but they have been designed to penalise owners for choosing to

'About a quarter of all FOC vessels are currently covered by ITF agreements, thus giving direct protection to over 70,000 seafarers.'

avoid national flags. Whilst the campaign has so far not succeeded in eradicating FOCs, the ITF believes there would be far more FOC vessels in the world had it not been for the campaign.

About a quarter of all FOC vessels are currently covered by ITF agreements, thus giving direct protection to over 70,000 seafarers.

It is the ITF Inspectors, based in ports in over 35 countries worldwide, who ensure that the industrial side of the campaign is effective. By inspecting FOC ships they monitor the payment of wages and other social and employment conditions. Where wage rates are lower than those laid down by the ITF, or are paid incorrectly in any way, the Inspectors follow courses of action which lead to the signing of agreements with owners. In the first instance negotiation is always attempted. However, shipowners are not always very obliging – in which case supportive action by dockers is often required to provide additional pressure. Alternatively (or sometimes in addition) legal action is taken.

Apart from low wages, the most common problems encountered by inspectors are double book-keeping whereby a fake set of shipboard

accounts is kept which shows that the crew are properly paid whereas often they are not; illegal deductions; and threats against crew for joining a trade union or making contact with the ITF.

Double-sided campaign

On the one hand the ITF through its inspectors and affiliates conducts the campaign against FOCs on traditional trade union lines – organising and mobilising workers, taking industrial action, and signing agreements. On the other hand it has for many years tackled the issue through the major international institutions which deal with shipping. In particular the ITF has made representations to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which is the maritime wing of the United Nations. The ITF has consistently argued for a tightening up and extension of all international regulations which support the genuine link concept.

The evidence against FOC ships

The ITF's opposition to FOCs goes beyond wages and working conditions. FOCs represented about a fifth of all

'Of the cases of crew abandonment that the ITF came across in the period July 1995 to June 1996, 86 per cent were abandoned by FOC operators.'

vessels in 1995. But in the same year they accounted for over half the worldwide losses of vessels at sea.

FOCs also have the worst record for crew abandonment. Of the cases that the ITF came across in the period July 1995 to June 1996, 86 per cent were abandoned by FOC operators.

How Rommel's leap overboard helped secure justice

by Zoe Reynolds,
Communications Officer of the
Maritime Union of Australia

Rommel Salvadore Escalante was one degree from freezing to death when Australian police hauled him out of shark-infested waters off the Newcastle coast on 22 January. Desperation had driven the 32-year-old Honduran seafarer overboard under cover of darkness to alert the world to conditions on board the Panamanian-flag bulk carrier *Hunter*.

"I heard talk that the ship would lift anchor and escape Australian waters that night," he told the ITF-affiliated Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). "I knew that the ITF was very strong in Australia and they could help us. No other country could help. No money was getting home to our families since we joined the ship. My wife had just had a baby. She could not pay the bills. She had to keep going back to the money lenders."

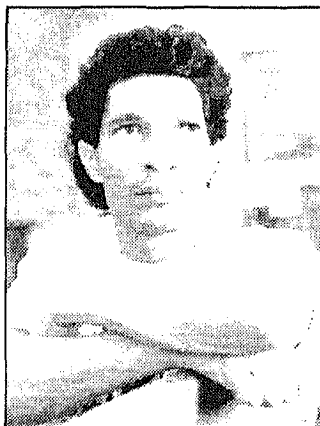
Rommel's baby was born in December. No family allotments had come through since he joined the ship. Any money he could send was not even enough to pay the interest building on his debts. "It was a very poor and sad Christmas," he said.

Rommel's crew mates and their families were no better off. On board the men were suffering bouts of diarrhoea from dirty drinking water. Complaints were met with threats. When the ship moored in China in December the Greek captain replaced seven of the crew with Filipinos. He also got police to bodily remove two Honduran seafarers who refused to leave ship until they were paid. The remaining crew faxed the ITF to come on board when the ship arrived in Newcastle.

■ ■

But the captain would not allow ITF Inspectors on board and its owners, Associated Euro Atlantic Shipping Corporation, applied in the Federal Court to sue the MUA under new secondary boycott legislation. This was despite the union taking no industrial action against the ship. The application for an injunction claimed the parties were "preventing or substantially hindering the applicant from engaging in trade or commerce between Australia and places outside Australia".

So Rommel fashioned a makeshift raft, tied all his possessions in a plastic bag and told a crew mate of his plan before climbing down a



"I knew that the ITF was very strong in Australia and they could help us. No other country could help. No money was getting home to our families since we joined the ship. My wife had just had a baby. She could not pay the bills. She had to keep going back to the money lenders."

Photo of Rommel Escalante republished courtesy of the Newcastle Herald

rope 10 metres over the side into the dark waters. He drifted 10 hours, seven kilometres out to sea, clinging to the raft. The captain failed to notify the Australian authorities until the following morning at 9.46.

The raft was sinking and dragging Rommel under the water when the rescue helicopter arrived on the scene. A police launch went out to complete the rescue and bring him into the harbour where he was rushed to hospital, suffering severe hypothermia. Rescuers reported that Rommel's body temperature had dropped so low that he was but one degree from death. Another half hour at sea and he would have fallen unconscious and drowned.

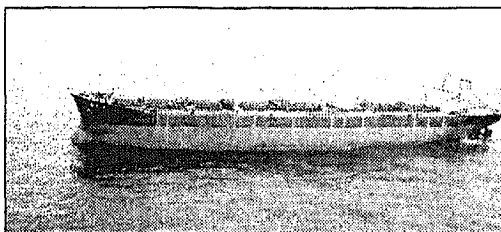
■ ■

The court adjourned the shipowner's attempt to take legal action, and ordered that ITF Coordinator Trevor Charles be allowed on board to interview the crew. Rommel's crewmates painted a picture of exploitation and intimidation. Their statements to the Federal Court exposed underpayment, excessive overtime for little or no payment, harassment and intimidation. While the Romanian and Honduran crew were forced to survive on desalinated water from the rusting engine room tanks, withered fruit and cockroach infested bread; the Greek officers each had fridges in their cabins overflowing with bottled water and soft drinks, milk and fresh fruit.

The crew also made sworn statements that the captain had attempted to bribe each member with Aus\$10,000 not to talk to the ITF.

■ ■

Armed with crew statements, the ITF successfully argued that the Federal Court arrest the vessel. The court received a \$200,000 bond from the owner to cover unpaid wages, repatriation, compensation and legal costs. Rommel's crew mates came ashore, with a new Filipino crew flown in to replace them. The *Hunter* finally left Australian waters for Chile after repairs on January 27. By 7 February, the case was finalised and all crew were repatriated with their wage settlements. Meanwhile the Australian authorities had arrested a second FOC vessel in the port of Newcastle and the ITF Canada has arrested the *Hunter's* sister ship in Vancouver after its crew went on strike.



■ **The Australian Federal Court made the owners of the *Hunter* (above) hand over Aus\$200,000 (US\$) to cover unpaid crew wages and other costs.**

When unions involved in the ITF's flag of convenience campaign get together in Miami in June at the Fair Practices Committee meeting, one of the main items on the agenda will be a review of the basis of the campaign itself.

The review was launched at the July 1996 meeting of the FPC and has been followed up by discussions on the subject at all major ITF meetings of seafarer and docker unions and a questionnaire sent to all maritime affiliates in December last year.

The campaign under review

The review is taking place in the context of an acknowledgement that 19.27 per cent of the world fleet (above 100 gross tons) and 44 per cent of the world's gross tonnage remains registered under FOCs.

Whilst the campaign to drive ships back to national flags has not succeeded in reducing the tonnage (or vessel numbers) registered under FOCs it is recognised that the campaign has nevertheless succeeded in slowing down the rate of flagging-out. Equally importantly, the campaign and the various supporting policies that go with it (including the coverage of FOC ships with acceptable agreements), has contributed to the raising of employment standards for seafarers.

Definition of a flag of convenience

Given that so many of the big shipowning companies are now multinational in nature, some observers argue that maintaining the strict position of the link between beneficial ownership and flag state has become increasingly difficult.

The role of the international banks is a further complicating factor in that often a bank may be the officially registered owner of a vessel, whereas the real owner resides in another country.

Furthermore, conditions on board many national fleets are substandard but not subject to ITF scrutiny.

Consultation with affiliates and inspectors

A set of over 20 questions were sent in December to all ITF seafarers' and dockers' affiliates.

Unions are asked to answer questions such as:

- Should the FOC campaign focus more on whether the flag state has control over the vessel rather than on whether there is a genuine link with the shipowner?

- Should national registers which don't meet acceptable minimum conditions also be added to an ITF "blacklist"?

- Should the ITF make a formal distinction between good and bad FOCs?

- Should the allocation of negotiating rights to unions be conditional on them actively seeking to crew the vessels concerned with their own nationals?

- Is the idea of a genuine link between flag and shipowners still relevant in today's world of global companies?

Many of the questions go to the heart of the campaign. The responses of affiliates will be collated and presented to the Fair Practices Committee in June. Thereafter the views of affiliates will be further debated in the Seafarers' Section Conference to be held in Singapore in October.

If any radical changes are recommended these will be submitted to the full ITF Congress in Delhi towards the end of 1998.

Intensification of action

Irrespective of the outcome of the debate on the future definition of FOCs, there has been no suggestion that the campaign itself should be relaxed. On the contrary, the 1996 FPC agreed that efforts aimed at driving ships back to national flags should be redoubled. To this end a series of regionally co-ordinated weeks of action are being planned.

■ Right: The ITF campaign has failed to stem the growth of FOCs, but has done much to raise standards for seafarers.



Delta jobs go at Frankfurt

Delta Air Lines has announced that it is to drastically reduce its Frankfurt operations. This will lead to up to 800 job losses, according to the ITF-affiliated ÖTV in Germany. The airline is to drop a number of intra-European routes and to contract out ground staff jobs. Until now Frankfurt has been the platform for the company's success story in becoming the world's leading transatlantic carrier.

The reward to employees for this achievement has been the recent announcement by the company that it is now massively shrinking the Frankfurt hub. The reason lies in the ever changing vagaries of international competition which keep even the giant airline companies in a state of permanent instability. Delta has recently added an alliance agreement with Air France to its existing alliances with Sabena and Swissair, and as a result from April 1997 Charles De Gaulle is to become Delta's major new European hub. The company says that by deserting Frankfurt and using its new alliance partner it will increase its earnings by \$62 million per year.

Delta's decision also involves dropping routes to Warsaw which will mean that jobs at its large flight attendants' crew base in Warsaw will also disappear. The company is showing the same level of contempt shown to employees in Italy, France and other European countries elsewhere last year when the company got rid of all its European reservations offices other than in London and Frankfurt; and to employees in Delhi when the company arbitrarily changed its route structure to India. ■

Viasa the flag carrier airline of Venezuela has stopped flying. A boardroom decision by Iberia in Madrid grounded all Viasa's flights on 23 January. But the final order of execution came from the Venezuelan government on 21 February. More than 2,000 jobs will be lost.

The fate of Viasa raises serious questions about privatisation as a strategy for maintaining national air services. Within the space of six years Viasa has been privatised, come under the effective control of a foreign carrier, and finally been killed off because of investment decisions made thousands of miles away. But most importantly the airline died because of a fatal lack of commitment to civil aviation by the Venezuelan government.

In 1991 Iberia decided its best strategy for surviving European competition was to develop a key position in traffic connections between Europe and Latin America by buying into Latin American carriers. This coincided with a number of Latin American

Viasa: Privatised to death

countries deciding that the future of their airlines was best served by privatisation.

Last year, however, Iberia reviewed its investments in Latin America, which had turned out to be a drain on its resources. Disinvestment from Latin America was also a key element of European Commission terms for approving an Iberia request for state aid from the Spanish government.

In December Iberia announced it was only ready to retain its interest in Viasa and even invest more money in it, if the Venezuelan government would also put in more money. After decamping to Madrid Venezuelan officials initially agreed.

Employees were required to

accept an 18 per cent reduction in the 2,250 workforce, pay cuts, and a rewriting of collective agreements to allow the company more labour flexibility.

The Venezuelan unions pointed out that Viasa was already a cheap labour feeder airline for Iberia. The company's new demands were excessive, but they were ready to negotiate with the company. Spanish unions, who are also facing demands for job cuts and concessions from Iberia, backed the ITF call to the company that it should meet together with all unions in the Iberia group.

On 20 January, events were overtaken by a shareholders meeting. Then it was learned that despite its earlier agreement, the Venezuelan government was backing out of committing more funds. The shareholders meeting immediately voted to put the airline into liquidation. ■

Clinton uses emergency powers

Intervention by President Clinton using emergency powers prevented what would have been the biggest shutdown in US aviation history due to a strike by American Airlines pilots. Shortly after midnight on 14 February a controversial clause in the Railway Labor Act was invoked for the first time in 30 years by the US President. An executive order declared the strike illegal because of the damage it would cause to the US economy.

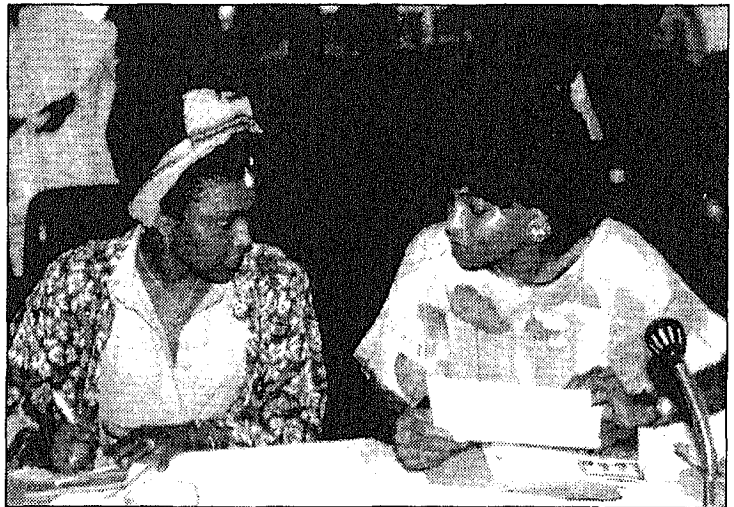
The order set up a presidential panel which had 60 days to try to break the deadlock between management and union. If no solution is reached in that time the pilots will be free once more to strike, and it would be up to the US Congress to decide whether to ban the strike once more.

The key issues in this dispute have been pay and the pilot union's resistance to the company putting core routes out to its regional carriers which might result in job losses. A range of company cost cutting proposals aims to save \$212 million in work rule changes.

On 16 and 17 February the Airline Pilots' Association organised a special conference in Washington DC aimed at sharing information on negotiations and co-ordinating tactics among all the key US airlines. ■



■ Members of the ITF-affiliated Hava-Is Turkish civil aviation union joined tens of thousands of trade unionists in a demonstration in Ankara in January to protest against government policies denying full trade union rights to public sector workers. Meanwhile, dock workers staged a one-day strike against plans to privatise the country's ports.



■ At the ITF Civil Aviation Section Africa Regional Conference (top left): Section Secretary Stuart Howard (right) with RJ Razafy, Secretary General of the African Civil Aviation Commission; (top right): Marianne Seck (left) and Julienne Demeideros, of the ISTAA (Togo) Air Afrique cabin crew union.

Co-operate to survive

ITF's message to African airlines

African unions have declared a state of emergency for civil aviation in Africa. They have warned governments that African countries risk losing control of their own air services unless urgent action is taken both to improve safety standards and to protect African airlines from the threat of global liberalisation.

The warnings came at the ITF Civil Aviation Section Africa Regional Conference, which was held in Lomé on 4 to 6 February and attended by a record number of unions from a record number of countries. The meeting formally launched an ITF policy document "Fair Skies for Africa: an orderly restructuring of African Aviation".

The document was developed out of the discussions which have taken place at ITF African civil aviation meetings held since 1983. It sets out proposals for the survival of African civil aviation through more professional airline management, pooling of resources and co-operation between countries and airlines rather than competition.

The conference also marked the increasing co-operation between the ITF and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), the inter-governmental body which co-ordinates African government aviation policies. RJ Razafy, Secretary General of AFCAC, addressed the conference as the keynote speaker.

Stuart Howard, ITF Civil Aviation Secretary, commented afterwards: "The meeting

recognised that African governments are caught in a dilemma. Most of them are so lacking in resources that they cannot afford to run an airline or provide proper infrastructure. Yet because of their urgent needs for economic development it is vital that they have international air services."

He added: "Private capital is more than welcome in the industry, but having a few mega-carriers coming along cherry-picking a few privatised African airlines and turning them into feeders will not solve Africa's aviation problems. It will only make them worse."

The Secretary General of AFCAC told the meeting that governments were taking increasing note of the ITF. He welcomed the ITF document and believed there was a clear convergence of interest between the position of unions and that of governments in many key policy areas.

He added that African governments were committed to implementing and updating the Yamoussoukro Declaration which urges a common African aviation strategy. How-

ever, he also said that governments were increasingly looking at the development of a liberalised aviation market within Africa, while retaining protection from foreign competition. He agreed, however, that any such moves should be accompanied by various safeguards.

He wholeheartedly supported the idea of increased dialogue between ITF affiliates and African governments on the future of the industry.

The meeting re-elected Ken Chipato (NAWU, Zimbabwe) and Akwei Adoté (STRANAVITTO, Togo) as chair and secretary of the Civil Aviation Section Africa Region Committee.

discriminatory height and weight restrictions and discrimination in the retirement age. The company has threatened to recruit replacement crews. However, the Fiji Ministry of Labour has now declared FAWA's industrial action illegal.

regular cabin crew workforce. The company is replacing the crews with casual crews. The French SNPNC union has been assisting its sister union in Gabon with legal advice to challenge this action. The ITF is protesting to the government.

News round-up

- Flight attendants in Air Pacific, members of the Fiji Aviation Workers' Association (FAWA), have taken industrial action against flight and duty time limitations in order to standardise cabin crew conditions of work. Cabin crew are also concerned about degrading and
- Air Gabon has sent notices of dismissal to its entire 94-strong



Cabin crew hold design meeting with Boeing

The ITF team which visited Boeing's headquarters at Seattle (pictured below) was drawn from members of the ITF Cabin Design Task Group: Ulla Bolter of HTF, Sweden; Mary Kay Hanke of the AFA, USA; and Michael von Reth of the FAAA of Australia. The ITF Secretariat was represented by Shane Enright.

A delegation from the ITF met senior executives of Boeing in February at their headquarters and major production centre in Seattle, USA. This is the first time that cabin crew organisations have met with an aircraft manufacturer at a world-wide level and reflects the growing recognition of the work of ITF affiliates in the certification and regulatory arena.

It is an acknowledgement, moreover, of the value of the many millions of hours of hands-on experience that cabin crew have of operating Boeing products. The company recognises that improvements in airplane design and operational safety will only be

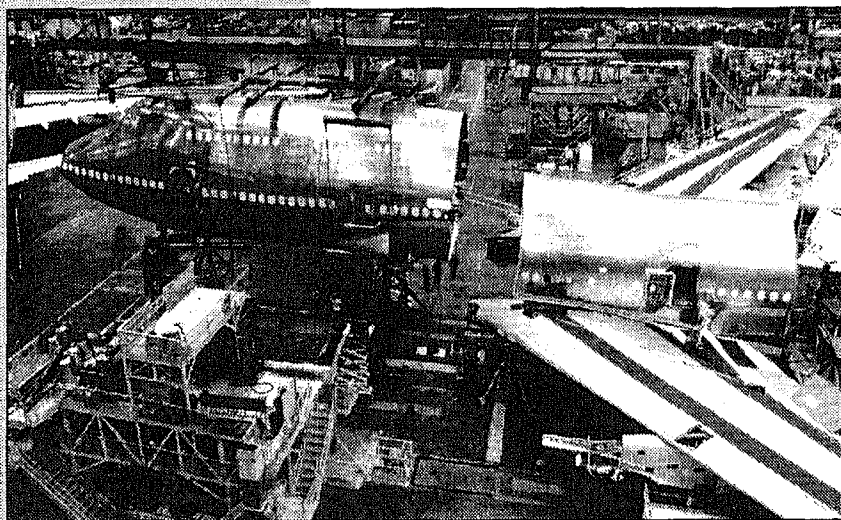
achievable through effective collaboration and co-operation between manufacturers, users (including crew organisations) and regulators.

The Seattle meeting builds on positive contacts established between Boeing and the US Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) and a separate approach by the company to the Australian cabin crew union FAAA. In November 1996 the ITF Cabin Crew Committee, meeting in London, decided to establish an ITF Aircraft Cabin Design Task Group to lead this area of work.

Reducing the underlying accident rate through continuous safety improvements is the key focus of the company

safety strategy, with a range of specific initiatives focusing on the most commonly identified causes of accidents. These include technological and operational improvements to deal with windshear, refused takeoff, wake vortex, Controlled Flight Into Terrain, and, of course, approach and landing.

The ITF delegation was, however, keen to give a different slant to this shared commitment to safety. For cabin crew representatives one of the key issues is not just how to avoid accidents, but how these can best be handled once they have happened. This involves aircraft cabin design issues, such as ensuring the safest possible crew jump seats, the ease of operation of doors and slides, and ensuring a direct view of passengers.



Topics discussed in Seattle

Cabin air quality

The design and operational procedures relating to filtration packs and ventilation systems were discussed with the payload engineers responsible for this aspect of design. The health impact of poor cabin air quality was also discussed. Boeing is supporting a major research programme in the USA which is looking at this issue and agreed to exchange data with the ITF.

Doors/slides

Discussions on door and slide design concentrated on the physical difficulty of operating some door types. Boeing designers explained that they were prioritising

standardisation and harmonisation of door design but described some of the barriers to modifying aircraft already in service.

Evacuation procedures

Boeing acknowledged, and were supportive of, the ITF's efforts to maintain and enhance the professional safety role of cabin crew. There was a frank exchange of views on "exit bypass" in which Boeing said that its objective was not to promote procedures requiring cabin crew to direct passengers past or away from usable exits during evacuation in certain circumstances.

Crew stations/jumpseats

The ITF delegation made a presentation on good and bad jumpseat design, using real examples from a variety of aircraft, to the payload systems supervisors directly responsible for jumpseat design. As a rule, Boeing was moving towards a more standardised range of designs in future products and acknowledged that this increased the need to get design right first time.

Galleys/overhead bins/crew rest facilities

There was a general discussion on these topics. During the visit there was an opportunity to review the cabin design of the new 737-700 and to look at the Boeing 777. During these interior mock-up tours, the ITF team were able to discuss a range of design, safety and operational issues relating to these aircraft.

INLAND TRANSPORT

In 10 years time, private railway companies may be operating services across Europe. Some of them may consist of just a small office, with rolling stock, staff and maintenance leased, hired or contracted out. Trade unions, for whom the railways have been a stronghold throughout their history, may face hostile employers. Working hours may be longer and trade barriers lower than in the remaining national railways.

ASBJØRN WAHL, ITF Assistant Secretary, reports on an ITF meeting to discuss the implications of transcontinental rail operations in Europe.

Are the ITF's fears exaggerated? Maybe, but if the European Union should succeed with its railway policy, our scenario is not unrealistic.

The EU White Paper, "A strategy for revitalising the community's railways", strongly encourages the entry of new, private companies into the railway industry and argues that market forces should be the main force behind the revitalisation: "The Commission believes that the further introduction of market forces is the most effective means of creating a railway that can compete with other modes of transport. It would give management and workers incentives to reduce costs, improve service quality and develop new products and markets."

And as non-members of the EU often pursue EU policy more consistently than member states, this may become an all-European problem.

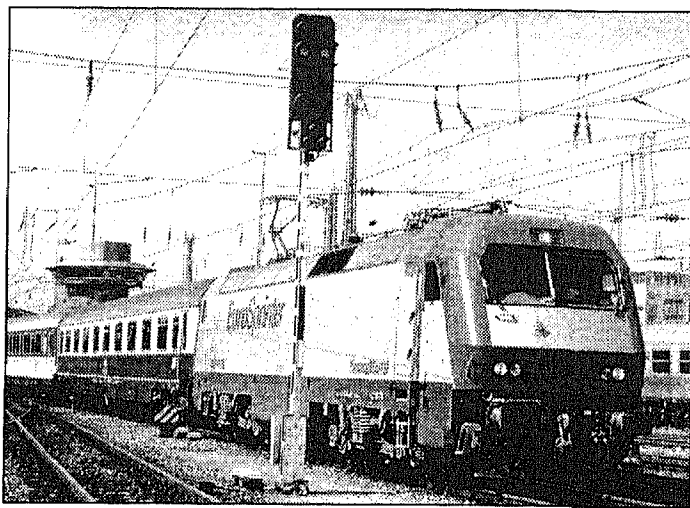
Now is the time for railway trade unions to start preparing for this worst-case eventuality, or to ensure that it does not occur. Social dumping almost inevitably follows deregulation, privatisation and the implementation of open access. In particular within international or cross-border traffic, this may become a reality if trade unions do not take appropriate measures.

This is the reason why the ITF on 19 February held its second Meeting on Train Crews Working in Cross-Frontier Traffic. Fifteen trade unions from 11 European countries discussed future perspectives and challenges associated with growing cross-border traffic. Expanding international trade and the consequently growing demand for cross-border transport make it necessary for the rail industry to be part of this development if it is not going to be increasingly marginalised.

Therefore, whilst trade unions of the railway industry welcome, in general, increased cross-border traffic, they are deeply concerned that this development will be used to undermine wages, working conditions and rail safety.

Unions in the Scandinavian countries have taken a lead in co-operation in this area, in particular the organisations of the locomotive drivers. At the meeting they presented a comprehensive report on their efforts and achievements and proved an example to other unions as to how to prepare for a borderless Europe.

The unions have already agreed a joint statement of intent with their respective railway undertakings, in order to prevent competition between train crews based on wages and working condi-



Preparing for borderless railways in Europe

tions. Currently, they are working to harmonise and develop joint demands regarding working hours regulations in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Conditions under which cross-border traffic can take place without change of crew are agreed between management and trade unions, as are training requirements and licensing.

Working hours regulations, railway safety, health and safety, training, legal implications, language requirements and increased trade union contacts and co-operation have been identified as the most important areas to those crews involved in cross-border traffic.

The unions decided to continue to improve their co-operation in these areas and to reconvene next year.

'Whilst trade unions of the railway industry welcome, in general, increased cross-border traffic, they are deeply concerned that this development will be used to undermine wages, working conditions and rail safety.'

News round-up

■ ITF Turkish road transport affiliate TUMTIS called off its strike in February, after successfully signing a collective agreement with the municipal authorities in Ankara, owners of the ASTI inter-city coach station. The union went on strike in May 1996 when a claim for negotiating rights at the coach terminal was refused. Intimidation, beatings and arrests did not deter the strikers, and 47 of them who were dismissed during the dispute have now returned to their jobs.

■ Unions representing the majority of the 180,000

workers employed by the French state railways SNCF came out on a 36-hour strike from midnight on 29 January in protest at plans for the reform of the company currently being debated in parliament. Under these latest plans, SNCF would be split into an operating company and a new state railway company which would own the rail infrastructure and take over most of SNCF's accumulated French F208 billion debt.

■ Tram, bus and light rail services in cities throughout France were disrupted on 24 January as urban passenger transport employees staged a one-day strike to back

demands for a working week of no more than 35 hours and retirement at age 55. Office and workshop personnel joined operating staff represented by five trade unions – including the ITF-affiliated CFDT and FO transport workers' federations – in the stoppages. Paris was excluded from the strike as staff at the Paris transit authority RATP have already won the right to retire at 55. Further strikes were held on 6 February, with drivers in 10 provincial cities voting to extend their action to 10 February.

■ *Right: Six different bus operators in search of passengers in the historic centre of Oxford – a stark example of the unco-ordinated services criticised in the report commissioned by the UK government into the impact of bus deregulation.*



Bus deregulation doesn't work – official

Passengers in the UK are increasingly more likely to avoid travelling by bus because of extreme problems resulting from lack of information on services, delays and poor connections with trains, according to a report, "Making Connections", compiled by a government-appointed committee charged with encouraging environmentally-friendly modes of transport.

The report, by the Round Table on Sustainable Development, accuses the UK government of creating a fragmented transport system through excessive deregulation.

The report concludes that the government needs to take the lead in setting a policy framework which takes account of transfer issues, both for passengers and freight.

Deregulation of the bus industry and rail

privatisation, together with reductions in local authority powers, have produced a more fragmented service and a lack of clear responsibility for ensuring that network benefits occur, says the report.

Unless these problems are overcome, the potential benefits from increased competition may be more than outweighed by the disadvantages.

Commenting on the report, ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers said it was significant that a government committee had criticised the consequences of the UK government's own policies. "There can be no greater condemnation of the policies of privatisation and deregulation." ■

Seafarers' turn to help dockers?

Dockers around the world have long given practical support to seafarers in the campaign waged by the ITF and affiliates against exploitation by flag of convenience employers. But now that dockers find their jobs, trade union rights and living standards under attack, can seafarers take reciprocal solidarity action?

The ITF hopes to find out the answer to this question through a survey of maritime affiliates. Seafaring unions are being asked what the legal position is in their country regarding solidarity action and what practical difficulties might be encountered in taking such action.

The questionnaire has also been sent to dockers' unions, who are asked whether they would welcome action by seafarers targeting individual ports or port employers.

The deadline for the return of the questionnaire, which has been jointly sent out by Assistant General Secretary Mark Dickinson and Dockers' Secretary Kees Marges is 31 March. ■

A new approach to the ITF's campaign against privatisation and other port reforms is emerging in the wake of two regional meetings of dockers' unions. The policy of outright opposition is being replaced by one of judging each privatisation on its merits, in particular whether job security and union rights are retained.

The Dockers' Section Steering Committee, which meets in London at the end of February, will consider these developments, with a major re-evaluation of the ITF's position at the full section meeting in Miami in June.

A resolution carried at the African Regional Dockers' Section meeting in Mombasa in December declared that each privatisation should be assessed according to its impact on the employment and working conditions of the port workers and neither opposed nor accepted as a matter of principle.

A similar resolution was adopted at the ITF's Latin American and Caribbean Region's meeting of dockers' unions in Lima in November.

Conditions for accepting privatisation specified by the

Port reform: ITF sets out principles for co-operation

record number of 40 delegates from 20 countries represented in Mombasa and by affiliates in Lima were:

- no forced redundancies
- any voluntary redundancies to be compensated by union-negotiated payments
- retraining for redeployed or redundant workers
- no casualisation
- union recognition to be retained.

Dockers' Secretary Kees Marges commented before the February steering committee

meeting that there could be no rigid formula laid down for accepting privatisation. "However, a minimum prerequisite is consultations and negotiations between governments, employers and trade unions which should result in an agreement on the social consequences of the reforms."

He noted that some US\$11.5 billion was being offered by the key international lending institutions to finance "port improvement schemes" in developing countries. Nearly all were accompanied by downward pressure on working conditions and employment rights.

Like the Lima meeting, the African regional meeting was attended by a record number of delegates: 40 delegates from 20 countries. ■

"A minimum prerequisite is consultations and negotiations between governments, employers and trade unions..."

News round-up

■ A proposal from the German seafarers' union ÖTV aimed at ensuring jobs for European seafarers on European-registered ships trading exclusively within European waters through the introduction of an ITF European minimum wage won the backing of the steering committee of the European Seafarers' Regional Committee when it met in London at the beginning of February. The proposal has been prompted by the increasing presence in internal European shipping services of flag of convenience ships. While most of these ships are covered by ITF agreements, West European seafarers find that the high cost of living in their home countries makes it virtually impossible for them to work for or compete against the ITF standard worldwide rate.

■ Greek seafarers called off their 10-day strike in January after negotiations between the government and the ITF-affiliated PNO Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation resulted in concessions on union demands for

improvements to pensions and tax breaks. The government's offer means that officers will pay tax at 8 per cent as basic rate this year, rising to 9 per cent from 1998 while a 4 per cent introductory rate will apply to ratings and increase to 6 per cent next year. Retired seafarers are to receive a minimum of 58 per cent of the basic salary under the collective agreement, a rise of 3 per cent.

■ The ITF-funded Seafarers' International Research Centre at the University of Wales has been awarded UK£300,000 (US\$480,000) to fund an investigation into the effect of polyglot crewing on communication at sea and between ship and shore. Partners in the project, which will concentrate on the safety implications of multicultural and multilingual crews, will include the language research centre at the university in Cardiff.

Protest to Romanian government over non-payment of crew wages

The ITF has taken the unprecedented step of sending an open letter to the Prime Minister of Romania to complain about the treatment of seafarers on Romanian-flag merchant ships.

The ITF and its affiliate, the Romanian Seafarers' Union, last year recovered over US\$1 million in unpaid crew wages, General Secretary David Cockroft points out in the letter, which was released to the press at the end of January.

Since July 1995 the ITF has handled 121 cases involving Romanian vessels, 85 per cent of which concerned the non-payment of wages and 34 per cent the poor living conditions on board or the ship's safety, says the General Secretary. New complaints – mostly involving companies such as Petromin, Navrom and Romline in which the Romanian government has a stake – are currently being received at the rate of five a week, he adds.

Cockroft calls on Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea to address these problems as an urgent priority. "Failure to do so will seriously tarnish Romania's international image," he warns. In the meantime the ITF will respond "quickly and vigorously" to the complaints it receives. "This will inevitably hinder the ability of Romania's merchant fleet to trade freely worldwide."

This is the first time that the ITF has singled out a national ship register (as opposed to a flag of convenience) for public criticism and the first time also that the ITF has had to communicate with a government by means of an open letter. The Romanian government failed to reply to a letter sent on 9 December last year.

Alexander's scholarship

The first recipient of the Mols Sørensen Research Scholarship, named in memory of the former Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section, who died last year, is Alexander Alexandrov, head of the navigational department of the Bulgarian Maritime Training Centre and a member of the ITF-affiliated Seafarers' Syndicate of Bulgaria.

Alexandrov took up his post at the Seafarers' International Research Centre (SIRC) at the University of Wales, in Cardiff, in January. The one-year scholarship of up to UK£15,000 (US\$24,000) provides an opportunity for research and writing on working conditions, health, safety and welfare of seafarers.

A further scholarship is being offered for 1997 by the SIRC, which is funded by a grant from the ITF Seafarers' Trust. No specific academic qualifications are required by applicants, who must be employed in the shipping industry. ■

Solidarity for Liverpool

Port and maritime workers throughout the world showed their solidarity with the sacked Liverpool dock workers by taking action in 105 cities in 27 countries during an ITF-backed week of action commencing 20 January. Meanwhile the dockers' union, the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union has published a plan to end the 18-month dispute.

The proposals envisage the 329 dockers setting up their own labour supply and hiring board by forming a co-operative stevedoring company.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), whose latest offer includes 41 permanent jobs and severance pay of about £28,000 (US\$44,000), has not yet commented on the idea.

Solidarity action taken by ITF affiliates in January included ship and container boycotts, stop-work meetings and all-out stoppages. ■

Medical care to be delivered by satellite?

The ITF is supporting a major new project, funded by the European Commission, which aims to provide expert medical advice and treatment to ship's crews by harnessing satellite and computer technology.

The goal of the Nivemes (Network of Integrated Vertical Medical Services) project is to plan the setting-up of a series of medical centres in European Union countries which could be contacted by ships in the Mediterranean and off northwest Europe when a crew member is injured or taken ill.

The medical centre – chosen either according to proximity or language used on the ship – would provide diagnosis and advice and could, in some cases, access the relevant computerised medical records of the patient.

Doctors at the centre would also assess whether the individual should be

transferred ashore for further treatment.

The ITF is one of the Nivemes Consortium of 13 partner organisations, including technology providers and hospitals, which is overseeing the ECU2.92 million (US\$3.39 million) project. One of the partners is the ITF-funded Seafarers' International Research Centre, Cardiff.

As well as seafarers, the "telemedicine healthcare" service would also be available to individuals and communities in remote parts of the EU.

The consortium met in Rome at the end of February to review progress in the three-year project, which was launched in January 1996.

The previous meeting was hosted at ITF head office in London last November. ■

ITF MEETINGS

- ITF Seafarers' Trust, London, 1 March
- Road Transport Action Meeting, London, 3 March
- African Fishermen's Seminar, Cape Town, 3-7 March
- South Asia Seminar on Privatisation of the Ports Industry, Colombo, 19-22 March
- Civil Aviation Section Occupational Health and Safety Working Group, Paris, 25-26 March
- Latin American Women's Seminar, Mexico City, 7-10 April
- Offshore Task Force, London, 10-11 April
- Management Committee, Palma de Mallorca, 23 April
- Executive Board, Palma de Mallorca, 24-25 April
- African Road Transport Seminar, Harare, 5-9 May
- Channel Tunnel Safety Meeting, London, 7 May
- Asia/Pacific Inland Transport Workers' Seminar, Bangkok, 26-28 May

OBITUARIES

■ **Rainer Vogel**, former Deputy Director of the Shipping Division of UNCTAD, has died, aged 58. Former ITF Assistant General Secretary Ake Salander writes: "Rainer Vogel was a prominent figure in the discussions leading to the adoption of the International Convention on Conditions for the Registration of Ships in 1986 and although the convention itself did not live up to the ITF's expectations Vogel did everything he could to accommodate the proposals made by the ITF and the developing maritime nations against opposition from the flag of convenience lobby at consecutive UNCTAD meetings."

■ **George Berger**, German translator/interpreter at ITF headquarters from 1953 to 1960, died on 14 January, aged 84. George worked for the Public Services International in London in the early 50s before coming to the ITF. When he left us he settled for a time in Switzerland where he was employed first by the International Graphical Federation and then the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International, both in Bern and as a freelance for the International Metalworkers' Federation and the International Food and Drink Workers' Federation in Geneva. He returned to Britain in the mid-sixties, with his wife Irmgard (herself later an ITF employee) and two young daughters where he continued his translation work, including freelance work for the ITF.

■ **Andy Fairclough**, Education Secretary of the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers (IFBWW), died on 17 November, aged 45, after a long illness.

■ **Charles ("Chip") Levinson**, General Secretary from 1964 to 1984 of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions (ICEF), died on 22 January, at the age of 77. In his 20 years as head of the International, Levinson was the driving force behind the growth of ICEF from a largely European body into a large and truly global trade union organisation. Levinson foresaw the rise of the multinationals to economic dominance, publicising his ideas in books such as "Capital, Inflation and the Multinationals", "International Trade Unionism" and "Vodka Cola".

■ **Erik Udby-Hansen**, President from 1967 to 1981 of the Danish Ships' Officers' Association, died on 29 December, aged 80.

PEOPLE

■ Finnish maritime union official **Sven-Erik Nyland**, who received the ITF Gold Badge at our Centenary Congress last July, retired at the beginning of February. Sven-Erik first went to sea in 1952, coming ashore at the end of the 1960s when he started work with the Finnish Ships' Officers' Union. He has been closely involved with the work of the ITF Seafarers' Section for nearly 30 years. From 1990 he was the ITF's International Maritime Organization co-ordinator during IMO deliberations on the human element in accidents at sea and on the revision of the 1978 STCW Convention on training, certification and watchkeeping.

■ Luxembourg **René Bleser** has resigned from the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union (EU) after 11 years, latterly as president of the transport and communications group, and has been replaced by Luxembourg union leader **Josy Konz**, President of the FNCTFEL.

■ Deputy General Secretary **Bill Connor** has been elected to succeed **Garfield Davies** as General Secretary of the British Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDW), when the latter retires in June. **Audrey Wise**, USDW president for the past six years, has been succeeded by Divisional Officer **Marge Carey**.

■ **Captain Efraim Marcovitz**, member of the ITF Fair Practices Committee and currently the ITF Co-ordinator in Israel, has retired as Secretary of the Israeli Sea Officers' Union. **Captain Mordi Haver** succeeds him.

■ The following officers were elected to the leadership of the Paraguayan Transport Workers' Federation at an Extraordinary General Congress held in December: President, **Percio Rafael Duarte D**; Vice President, **Samuel Arguello D**; General Secretary, **Maximino I Valiente**; International Relations Secretary, **Juan Aldo Snead Villasanti**.

■ Three long-serving officers of the German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) retired at the union's congress in Hamburg in November. They are: Chief Treasurer **Dieter Langendorf**; Vice President **Rolf Hofmann**, who headed the union's international affairs for many years; and Vice President (and Chair of the ITF Urban Transport Committee) **Siegfried Weiß**, who put the decisive stamp on union policies for railway civil servants.

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"I encourage you to continue your work on behalf of men and women in similar circumstances."

Burmese seafarers won asylum in USA with ITF help

I represented three Burmese seafarers in their efforts to gain asylum in the United States. I requested information from the ITF in support of their asylum claims. With your help, we were able to document a pattern of persecution of seafarers by the government of Burma when those seafarers have sought the assistance of the ITF in wage and other disputes with shipping companies.

I thought you might like to know that their claims to asylum have recently been approved. Each man is living here in Baltimore and trying to find work and to get settled.

Thank you very much for your sustenance. I encourage you to continue your work on behalf of men and women in similar circumstances.

MARK HORAK

Attorney

Immigration Legal Services

Baltimore

USA

Concern for suffering of our husbands

"I informed my friends whose husbands were seamen too and they were happy and thankful that there is the ITF attending and looking at seamen's plight all over the world."

I am a seaman's wife who happened recently to sort out my husband's employment papers. As I was placing his papers back in order, I chanced to find some ITF publications and anxiously I read them. As I was reading I imagined myself how really hard a seaman's life is. I was really informed about the consequences and as I have read everything page by page, I pitied my husband though he never clamoured nor talked about his life at sea and might not be suffering the same fates by those seamen as what have written here.

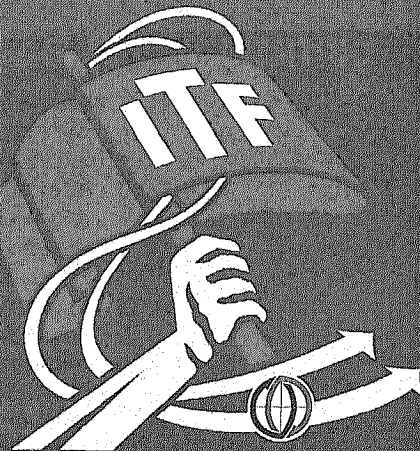
I informed my friends whose husbands were seamen too and they were happy and thankful that there is the ITF attending and looking at seamen's plight all over the world.

I also want to congratulate and thank all the staff and chaplains in every port for the help they have rendered to those seamen having sad fates on board ships. Thanking you for all the services you have done, and more power to you all.

RB

Estancia

Philippines



**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES
OUVRIERS DU TRANSPORT**

**FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LOS
TRABAJADORES DEL TRANSPORTE**

**INTERNATIONELLA
TRANSPORTARBETAREFÖDERATIONEN**

國際運輸勞連

**INTERNATIONALE
TRANSPORTARBEITER-FÖDERATION**

**МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ
ТРАНСПОРТНИКОВ**