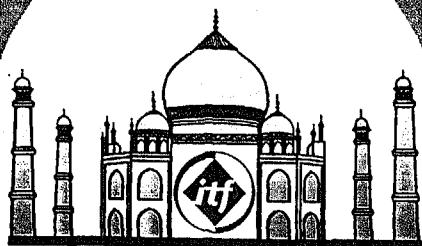
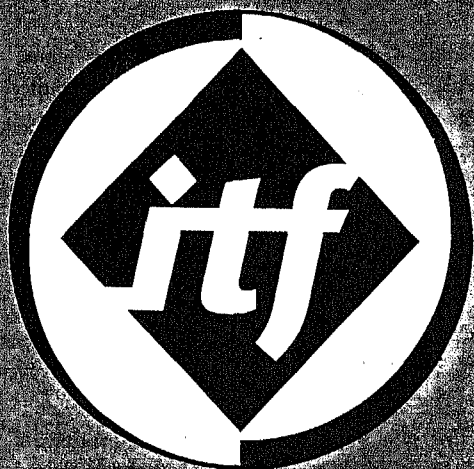


ITF CONGRESS

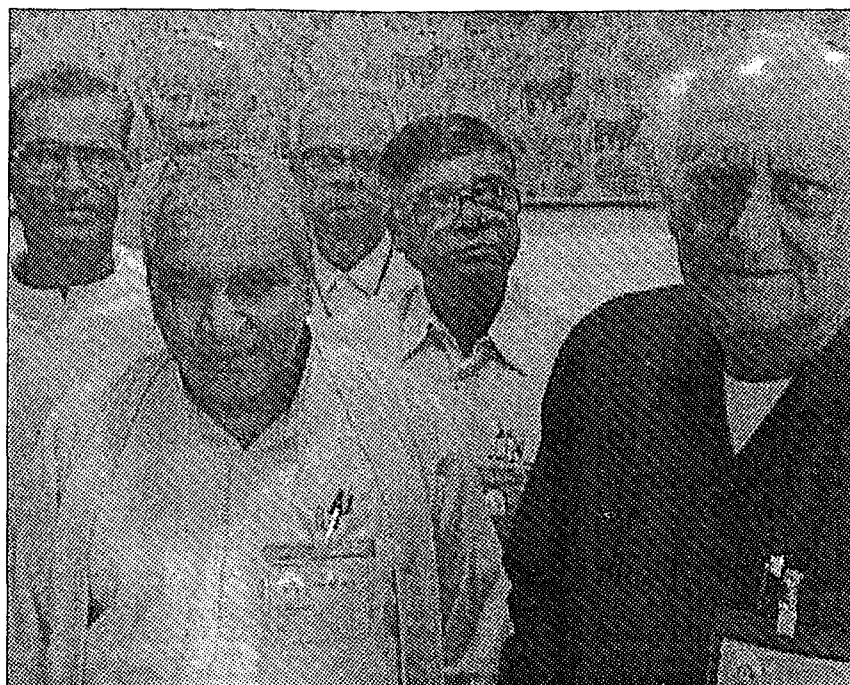
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Monday 2 November 1998



39th Congress-New Delhi
October 29 - 05 November 1998



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Umraomal Purohit, President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (right) leads his delegation into the Railway Workers' Section Conference on Saturday.

SECTION CONFERENCES

Railway workers face up to challenge of change

The railway industry worldwide is undergoing great changes in structure, ownership and employment practices, making this a difficult time for trade unions, delegates declared at the Railway Workers' Section Conference on Saturday. But because of differing national circumstances it was not easy to adopt a common position to the challenges they face.

However, prospects for the industry were good, the conference noted. As the most environmentally-friendly mode of transport, trade unions must seize this opportunity to expand the industry and its jobs.

Unions from Great Britain told the conference that the privatisation of the national railways was proving disastrous. The number of complaints by passengers was increasing, yet the government must still give out enormous subsidies to the railway companies with poor records because of the contractual terms of the privatisation sale. A Romanian delegate told the meeting that they were fighting the government's privatisation plan based on the UK model.

Delegates from Korea, Russia and Bangladesh reported that there had been a massive number of redundancies. In Venezuela, public transport was considered as an essential service and workers were prohibited from strike action. Even in a country like Japan, where railway restructuring took place more than 10 years ago,

Biggest Congress

This is the biggest ITF Congress ever in terms of numbers attending and unions represented. A total of 579 delegates and 531 advisers from 279 unions from 84 countries are at this 39th Congress.

The last full-length Congress before New Delhi was held in Geneva in August 1994. It was attended by 581 delegates and 281 advisers from 278 unions from 85 countries.

The first Congress took place in London in June 1898. The 100th anniversary of the foundation of the ITF two years earlier – when it was known as the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers – was marked by a special Centenary Congress, also in London, in June 1996.

NOTICE BOARD

Souvenir stall

Congress souvenirs, including T-shirts, towels and sarongs, are on sale near the briefcase area in the foyer outside the Plenary Hall.

Publications

Make sure that you regularly visit the publications area opposite the Information Desk in the main foyer of the Conference Centre. Free ITF publications are on display there, with new material being added daily. Please note that copies of ITF Congress News are available at the Information Desk.

Congress Dinner

The official Congress Dinner, to which all Congress participants are invited, will be held at 8pm tomorrow (3 November) at the Hotel Taj Mahal, 1 Mansingh Road, New Delhi. Buses will collect all guests from the Congress hotels at 7.30pm or 7.45pm (Le Meridien and Kanishka/Ashok Yatri/Janpath).

Press briefing

A press briefing is being held daily during Congress at 5pm in Room 314. All trade union journalists are invited to attend.

Excursion for partners

A tour of Old Delhi for the partners of Congress participants has been arranged for tomorrow morning (3 November). Free tickets are available from the Travel Pals desk at the Conference Centre.

Seminar/workshops

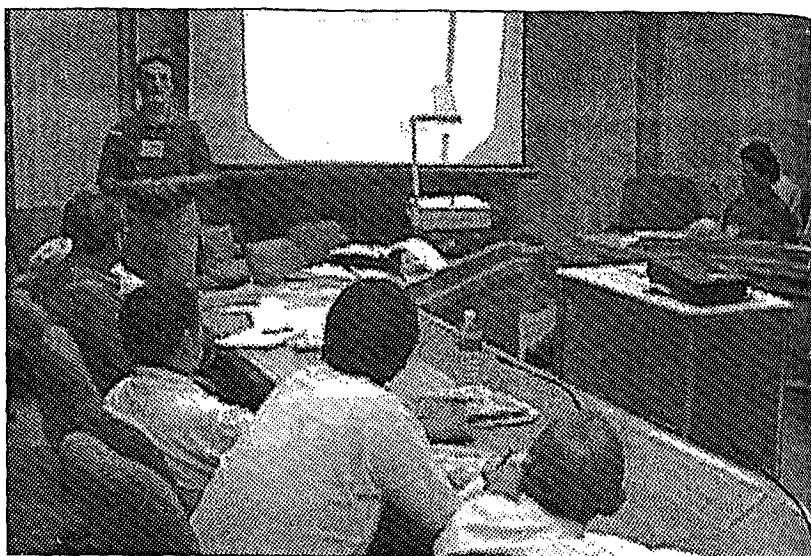
The series of seminar/workshops for Congress participants not involved in Section Conferences concludes today with two sessions. Both will be held in Hall 6 in the Conference Centre and will be conducted in English only:

■ The internet: spreading information at high speed and low cost:

Participants will have the opportunity of a hands-on demonstration of the ITF's worldwide website at this workshop, which will be held from 9am to 12.30pm.

■ Fighting back: trade union rights in the new millennium:

Two representatives of the International Labour Organisation, Michaël Sebastian and Bert Essenberg, from the ILO's Geneva office, will lead this workshop, which will be held from 2pm to 5pm.



Professor Peter Turnbull explains the findings of the joint ITF/Cardiff University report.

Flexibility: What strategies should unions adopt?

What do employees think about the growing trend towards labour flexibility? How should unions adapt their strategies to deal with the trend?

These were the main topics discussed at a well-attended seminar on Saturday at which Congress delegates were given a presentation by Professor Peter Turnbull, one of the authors of a new report, jointly published by the ITF and Cardiff University, on labour flexibility in the airline industry.

The workshop presentation demonstrated that the trends of deregulation and globalisation occurring in civil aviation could also be identified in the shipping and docks industries.

The report, which was formally launched at the seminar, is titled "Contesting Globalisation: labour flexibility".

The research on which it is based shows that workers are experiencing an increase in work intensity, a widespread reduction in job satisfaction, job security and earnings.

It shows also that cabin and flight deck crews have been affected in different ways to the ground staff, with crew numbers often expanding, while ground staff jobs have been both cut and contracted out. This requires different kinds of union response for different categories of workers. Both groups of workers have been experiencing a sharp increase in work intensity and pressure on working hours.

The report and its findings will be used as part of a campaign which the ITF Civil Aviation Section is launching early in 1999 to publicise the impact of flexibility on employees' conditions and on union organisation.

The survey conducted by the ITF and Cardiff

University – and sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust – is the first attempt at such a worldwide survey of trends in the industry as they affect employees.

The researchers set out specifically to look at cases where unions had survived the process of restructuring relatively unscathed in order to identify union strategies which appeared to be more successful. The report raises questions such as: When should unions decide to co-operate with management introducing work changes and when should they resist?

Civil Aviation Section Secretary Stuart Howard noted: "The airline industry is full of statistics on airline profits, fleet sizes, and numbers of passengers flown, and there is a whole new industry of airline conferences which get business leaders' views on the trends within the industry.

"Yet try to obtain a picture of how industry restructuring has affected jobs, working conditions, hours being worked and employee rights, and the sources of information suddenly dry up."

Professor Peter Turnbull told the workshop: "Unions are aware of the radical change of conditions in the industry but no-one is really systematically recording the impact on employment, on bargaining, or on the kind of jobs in the industry. We hope this information will be useful to unions who are trying to engage their governments and companies.

"There is one lesson that we all know from experience: to solve the problems caused by competition you do not use more competition."

there were problems. The government had increased the debt burden on the privatised companies and the freight railways were considering job cuts to save costs.

In India, although the national railway system was making a profit with virtually no subsidy, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are pressuring the government to commercialise the railways through back door. Delegates from India stressed the need for international union solidarity because business and multinationals were more united than ever in the global economy.

The German GdED railway workers' union stressed the fact that there was no single solution applicable to the problems faced in all countries, but international harmonisation of competitiveness and standards was necessary and trade unions' international co-ordination was vital.

Participants noted that the accurate exchange of information, trade union education programmes as well as the spirit of mutual support were essential in order to mobilise solidarity. The meeting unanimously endorsed the Congress Motion submitted by the Hungarian Free Trade Union of Railway Workers calling for an "Action Day for Railways".

Port reforms: still no consultation with unions

Attacks on trade union rights which inevitably seem to follow the privatisation of the world's ports, is a process which can and will be defeated through international solidarity action. This was the overwhelming message from the Dockers' Section Conference on Saturday.

Delegates reported how often covert privatisation – in countries as far apart as Australia, Sri Lanka and the UK – resulted in dockers losing wages, trade union protection, and ultimately their jobs.

Miguel Oses (Chile) explained that the Chilean authorities were undertaking a programme of privatisation disguised as port reform, which was threatening the livelihoods of dockers. Despite union protests, the government was refusing to consider compensation for those who may be affected and was threatening to dismiss workers involved in industrial action.

Tom Dufresne (Canada) updated delegates on the situation in Vancouver, where the port company Sultrans have moved to using non-union labour. He reported that demonstrators protesting against the action had been fined, and in the latest twist, that 20 pensioners who had

Railway workers face up to challenge of change

been protesting at the effect that actions by the company could have on their pensions, had been arrested.

Commenting on the situation at Sultrans, Section Secretary Kees Marges said that this was one example where broad international solidarity action could be made to work. Not only were world transport unions providing increasing support for their colleagues in Canada, but the ITF had been co-operating with ICEM, the chemical and energy international secretariat, to bring pressure to bear on the Sultrans' owners Shell to resolve the situation.

Co-operation plan for small and large scale fishing workers

A plan to avoid conflict between small scale artisanal fishing workers and their industrial counterparts in bigger ships and fleets was adopted on Saturday by delegates at the Fisheries Section Conference.

The key feature of the plan is that artisanal fishing workers should be given exclusive access to their country's 12-mile territorial limits or whatever other limit has been established.

Delegates agreed that such restrictions in favour of artisanal fishing workers should be based on a maximum engine size of 200 Kwatts and vessel length of 12 metres.

Exceptions should only be applied if the coastal state has historical or traditional fisheries which are used by larger vessels – provided these vessels fly the flag of the country concerned. Delegates noted too that legislation prevented restrictions in waters under Icelandic jurisdiction.

ITF Assistant General Secretary Mark Dickinson welcomed the adoption of the policy statement, pointing out that small scale fishing provided considerable employment opportunities and in many cases was a vital economic and social resource for local communities.

"Artisanal and industrial fishing workers share the same interest in preserving fish stocks and the marine environment, so it is a positive step forward for them to agree a formula designed to minimise the potential for conflict and the excessive exploitation of the seas," he added.

The conference – which noted with satisfaction the large increase in unions affiliated to the ITF – reaffirmed opposition to flags of convenience in the industry and support for the extension of the ITF flag of convenience campaign in shipping to the fishing sector.



CONGRESS NEWS

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Jane Saethre (Norway), elected to the Railway Workers' Section Committee

Election results

The following candidates were elected on Saturday (31 October):

Dockers' Section

- Chair: John Bowers (USA)
- First vice-chair: John Coombs (Australia)
- Second vice-chair: Bob Baete (Belgium)
- Asia/Pacific: Manohar Kotwal (India)
- N America: Brian McWilliams (USA)
- Europe: Knud Hansen (Denmark)
- Latin America and Caribbean: Mayo Urugualo (Brazil)
- Africa: Juma Khamis (Kenya)

Steering committee members:

- Asia/Pacific: Terry Ryan (New Zealand); Parbatl Das (India); Hiroyuki Nakao (Japan)
- Africa: Thulani Dlamini (South Africa); Uzolje Ukaumunna (Nigeria)
- North America: Gerald Owens (USA); Tom Dufresne (Canada)
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Carvil Duncan (Guyana); Jorge Cochía (Argentina)
- Western Europe: Manfred Rosenberg (Germany); Graham Stevenson (Great Britain); Antonio Marjano (Portugal)
- Eastern and Central Europe: Gheorghe Caralani (Romania)

Fisheries Section

- Chair: Oli Jacobsen (Faroe Islands)
- Vice Chair: Hiroyuki Kobori (Japan)
- Europe: Peter Sand Mortensen (Denmark)
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Luis Almonacid (Chile)
- Africa: Mohammed Sardy (Morocco)

Railway Workers' Section

- Chair: Jim Knapp (Great Britain)
- Vice-chair: Alois Weiss (Germany)
- Women's representative: Jane Saethre (Norway).

OTHER NEWS

Plight of stranded East European truckers

Some 10,000 professional truck drivers from Eastern Europe are stranded in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain and Ireland as a consequence of the Eastern European financial collapse. Some have been in this predicament for over two months.

According to the French road transport workers' affiliate, the FO National Transport Federation, who initially alerted the ITF to the problem, the truck drivers are very reluctant to talk, even to representatives of ITF-affiliated unions.

The ITF estimates that, based on information provided by major import and export shippers plus intelligence from ITF unions and media contacts in Western Europe, the number of truck drivers abandoned is:

- up to 5,000 in Germany
- 2,000 in France
- up to 1,000 in Holland
- between 1,000 and 1,500 in Great Britain and Ireland
- up to 800 in Belgium.

"We are still trying to establish how many abandoned drivers there maybe in other Western European countries such as Spain, Italy and Denmark," says Graham Brothers, ITF Assistant General Secretary.

The drivers have been effectively exiled and most are left to fend for themselves by their haulage company employers in the Eastern European countries who have ordered their truck drivers to remain in Western Europe and not to return home with empty trucks. Western European producers are not prepared to export to Eastern Europe as they fear that they will not be paid for the goods.

"The governments of Russia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Latvia and other countries have to take responsibility for the welfare of their citizens," says Brothers. Transport companies including Sovtransavto, one of Russia's biggest, are immediately responsible.

Drivers caught by the financial collapse in Eastern Europe are by and large destitute and the ITF and the IRU (International Road Transport Union) say that the situation can only be resolved by the prompt repatriation of the drivers with or without their vehicles.

The ITF took up the issue in Geneva when the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe held its Working Group on Road Transport on 19 to 21 October. Graham Brothers called on all parties to direct the attention of government representatives towards a positive resolution of this situation in consultation with the IRU.

International Transport Workers' Federation

Fédération internationale des ouvriers du transport

Federación Internacional de los Trabajadores del Transporte

Internationella Transportarbetarefederationen

国際運輸労連

Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation

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