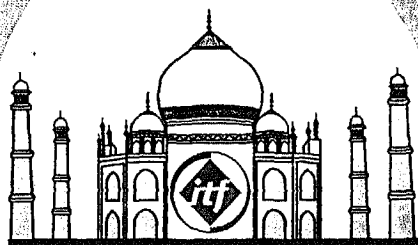
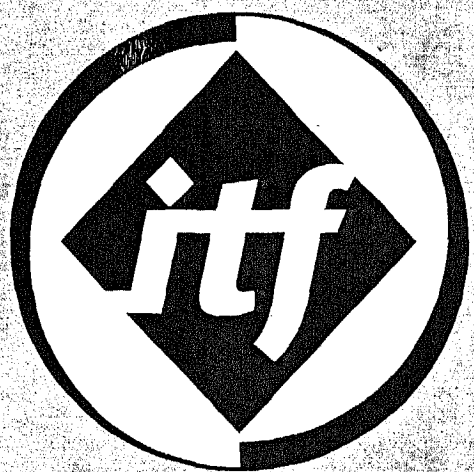


ITF CONGRESS

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NEWS

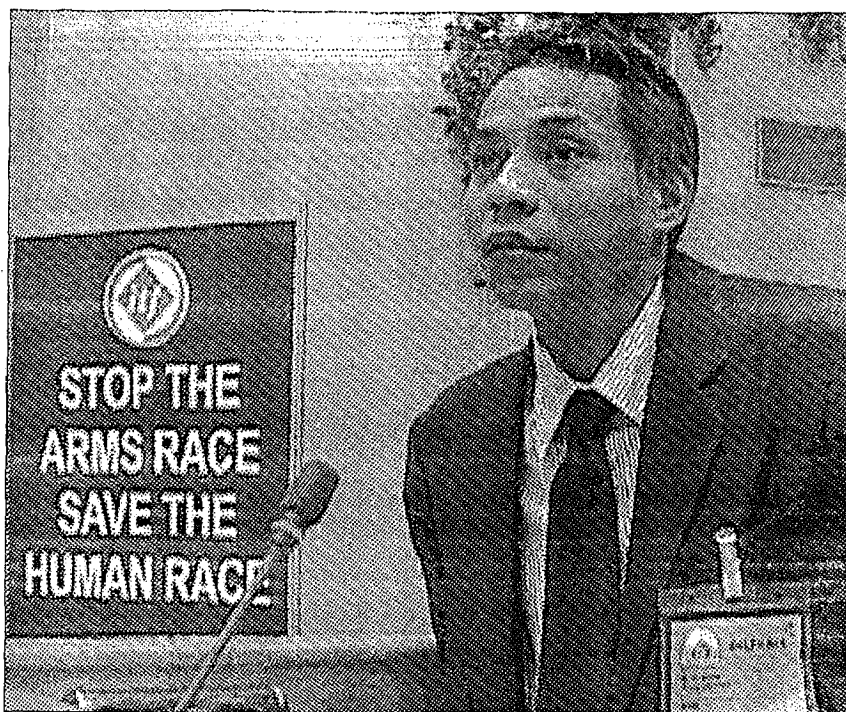
INFORMATIONS

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Ko Ko Khaing, of the Seafarers' Union of Burma, who spoke of the need for international solidarity to restore trade union rights in his country.

Fight for global workers' rights

Worldwide standards would help tackle inequalities, say delegates in Mobilising Solidarity debate

The "Mobilising Solidarity" statement was unanimously adopted by Congress yesterday amid calls for the new policy to be underpinned by a drive to redress global economic inequalities and establish worldwide minimum employment rights.

Many of the speakers from developing countries said that a fairer distribution of wealth between rich and poor nations should be pursued alongside the aim of strengthening cross-border trade union solidarity contained in the new policy.

Other speakers – out of a total of 28 who addressed Congress during the debate – stressed the need for unions to campaign for greater global social regulation, echoing demands by the international trade union movement for social clauses guaranteeing basic labour rights in international trading and economic agreements.

The "Mobilising Solidarity" policy spells out the need for the ITF and affiliates to adapt their



OTHER NEWS

Give IMO more power, says ITF

The 50th anniversary of the International Maritime Organisation – celebrated on World Maritime Day, 24 September – was marked by a call from the ITF for the IMO to be given sweeping enforcement powers. Writing in the London-based shipping daily, Lloyd's List, ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft said the IMO should be given the right to audit implementation of international minimum requirements by member states. "If substandard shipping is to be eliminated, then the IMO must be able to deliver punitive measures against companies and flag states which do not meet their obligations," he added. "They must not be allowed to compete with those that do."

European pact on seafarers' hours

European Union shipowners and trade unions have agreed a pact on maximum working hours for seafarers in EU waters.

The deal between the European Community Shipowners' Association and the FST (Federation of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Union) was signed in Brussels on 30 September, the day before an EU directive on working time took effect.

Seafarers are excluded from the general directive, which introduces a 48-hour week for most industries. Now the two sides of the shipping industry have become the first exempt sector to voluntarily reach agreement.

The terms of the deal, which must now be approved by the EU states, enshrine the provisions on seafarers' working time agreed at the International Labour Organisation maritime session in Geneva two years ago.

Under the ILO guidelines, a standard working week is defined as six eight-hour days and one day off. A maximum of 14 hours can be worked in any one day, and no more than 72 in a week. Breaks must be taken in no more than two periods in a day, of which one must be at least six hours.

Stalemate in drivers' hours talks

Talks on professional drivers' hours broke up on 30 September in Brussels as European employers remained hostile to fixed standards for all road transport employees.

According to ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers, the road transport employer body, International Road Transport Union (IRU), insisted on an unreasonable number of exemptions, undermining the possibility of reaching an acceptable standard for the whole of Europe. Drivers' trade unions affiliated to the ITF regretted that the intransigence of road transport

operators had led to this, said Brothers.

The talks, centering on the demand for a 48-hour week, were held under the auspices of the European Union's Joint Committee for Road Transport.

The European Commission has announced it will now prepare its own proposal for a legally enforceable directive – which will have to pass through the lengthy procedures required by European Union legislation.

"Only by imposing such limits could the European Union fulfill its obligation to pursue social progress and ensure public safety," commented Brothers.

Thanks from Romania

Romanian rail union Federatia Nationala Drum de Fer has thanked the ITF for the messages of support sent to government ministers and the management of the SNCFR rail company during its difficult negotiations over pay and the restructuring of the country's railways. Union President Gabriel Craciun reports that the union succeeded in securing a 26 per cent rise, but restructuring has still not been resolved. "The solidarity messages received from the ITF and its affiliates strengthened our position in negotiations with the Romanian government," he wrote to the ITF.

European crews for ferries

European Commission proposals to promote the employment of European seafarers on board ferries trading in EU waters have been welcomed by the Federation of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Union (FST). If they are agreed, the proposals would eliminate the practice of paying non-EU seafarers less than European ones. The number of EU nationals employed on EU-flagged vessels fell by 37 per cent between 1985 and 1995, while the number of third country seafarers rose 14 per cent during the same period, according to figures supplied by the European Commission.

End of Congress rally

The ITF's Indian affiliates are hosting a rally to mark the end of Congress today. A fleet of buses will leave the Conference Centre at 3pm and arrive at the Talkatora Stadium in time for the 3.30pm start of the rally which is expected to finish by 5pm.

Final facts and figures

Updated attendance statistics confirm that this 39th Congress is the ITF's biggest ever: it has been attended by 588 delegates and 628 advisers representing 294 unions from 84 countries. At the previous full-length Congress, in Geneva in 1994, there were 581 delegates and 531 advisers representing 278 unions from 85 countries.

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Fight for global workers' rights

structures and improve communications and training in order to strengthen international solidarity between unions. This is needed to meet the challenge of the global economy, deregulated labour markets and the international dimension of more and more industrial disputes.

Masayuki Kotani (Japan) was one of several speakers to denounce the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for ignoring workers' rights while promoting privatisation and deregulation in order to assist transnational companies.

On the subject of global inequalities of wealth, Eduardo Chagas (Portugal) quoted a report



stating that the combined wealth of the world's 225 richest individuals was greater than that of 40 per cent of the planet's total population.

Tony West (Great Britain) urged unions to engage in constructive self-criticism about whether they were properly geared up to handle international solidarity matters and whether they were educating their members on international trade union issues.

This point was also taken up by Omar Jose Gomes (Brazil), who said that unions had been slow to adapt to change. His union, the CNTTT transport union, was trying to improve things by devoting more resources to trade union training courses, with a quota of 30 per cent women.

Jagdish Lal (India) pointed out that allowance had to be made in international solidarity strategies for differing experiences in non-

Western countries. For example, in south India there was a tradition of passive resistance, such as sit-down protests, chain-fasting by off-duty employees or wall-poster propaganda campaigns against companies.

From Bill Morris (Great Britain) came a special plea for the ITF and unions to help the communities in Central America, particularly Nicaragua, to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch which had now hit the region, resulting in up to 10,000 deaths.

Ko Ko Khaing (Burma) described how his union, the Seafarers' Union of Burma, was having to operate in exile in Thailand. International solidarity was urgently needed to restore trade union rights in Burma, currently ruled by a military dictatorship.

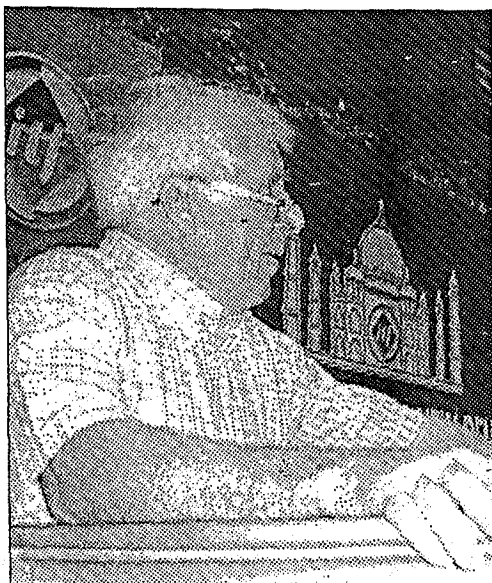
Moving a motion on the global economy, Erika Young (Italy) spoke of the need for social regulation in response to the increasing integration of the world's economy. European social structures represented a good standard to follow.

Many speakers referred to how well placed the ITF is to co-ordinate international solidarity as it had 50 years of doing exactly that in the campaign against flags of convenience (FOCs).

Asbjørn Wahl (Norway) said the FOC campaign gave the ITF a unique vision. The "Mobilising Solidarity" statement was therefore based on real experience and provided unions with ambitious but realistic guidelines.

It was now time to turn the other ITF sections into campaigning organisations like the Seafarers' and Dockers' Sections, he added.

"It is time to turn the other ITF sections into campaigning organisations like the Seafarers' and Dockers' Sections."



Saying it in verse...

John Coombs (left) fittingly chose the "Mobilising Solidarity" debate as an opportunity to publicly thank the ITF and affiliates for their role in securing a "historic and unprecedented" victory in the dispute between Patrick Stevedores and the Maritime Union of Australia.

And he did it by reciting a poem, called "The Union Man", which would sum

up the spirit of the sacked dockers in standing up to the company and the solidarity shown to them by others...

One voice to speak
One step to take
A thousand men as one
As like a wall
Lest one should fall
They stand till all is won.

These are the men
Who foot by foot

Beat down the might of
wrong
And now hold fast
In case the past
Should rise again still
strong.

A thousand men
No two alike
And yet they stand as one.
While so they stand
No alien hand
Can bring them down
undone.

MARY GILMORE

Key decisions taken at yesterday's plenary session

Transport workers and the global economy

- Congress rejected the concept of a transport industry based on the free play of the market. Where competition takes place, it must be within a strong regulatory framework and should not be based on the exploitation of labour costs.
- The campaign to keep passenger transport under public ownership and control is to continue. The ITF will begin talks with international organisations involved in restructuring, such as the World Bank, to ensure that the interests of ordinary workers are taken account of.
- Affiliates are to be encouraged to campaign at national level against restructuring programmes in the transport industry which do not provide guarantees on jobs, union rights, wages and working conditions or which threaten transport safety.

Trade unions and trans-national corporations

- The ITF is to oppose by all possible means any imposition of the draft treaty for Multilateral Agreement on Investment, negotiated by representatives of governments in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.

Globalisation and the economy

- Congress called for a world government project which would challenge the destructive aspects of globalisation. Growth in social development and living standards must catch up with economic expansion and the social regulation of the transport system must be a key priority for the Federation over the next four years.

Union membership

- The ITF is to launch a campaign to recruit new types of workers in the transport industry. Key target groups will include the young, women, and white collar workers who are less well organised than those in traditional transport professions.

Working hours and job security

- Reduced job security and worsening conditions of employment resulting from changes in working patterns will continue to be challenged by the ITF. The federation will work with other international organisations at every opportunity to raise its concerns with international bodies.

Women want to play their part

"Women transport workers want to play their part in shaping the next century of the ITF," said Diana Holland (Great Britain), introducing the item on women transport workers to plenary yesterday.

"The unanimous support of this Congress for creating a women's structure demonstrate a spirit of unity in the ITF we can all be proud of.

"Pregnant women transport workers should not be sacked. They need to know health and safety hazards for themselves and for their babies... every new child and every mother should have basic rights; but we have a very long way to go to achieve this.

"As trade unionists we all need to organise to end discrimination against women transport workers, prevent sexual harassment, bullying and violence at work and support women particularly when they are isolated in the workplace.

"As birds are born to fly, so are women born to be free," she concluded.

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