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FISHERMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CHARTER.

THE International Fishermen's Conference organized by the I.T.F. in Britain's biggest fishing port, Hull, on 6th and 7th June last, marked the opening of another interesting chapter in industrial history.

Fishermen, though employed in an industry providing a valuable food to the community, have rarely earned more than a frugal living, to say nothing of the risks to life and limb to which they are constantly exposed.

Yet, like all industries in which small-scale enterprise plays a major part, it has proved strongly resistant to attempts to improve conditions. The many old-established practices and customs of the industry have been a contributory factor impeding progress in this direction.

Gradually, nevertheless, a change has set in. New methods have come to be adopted, tending to enlarge the scale of operations, contacts with other sections of the community have become more general, and the change is reflected in a different mood among those who man the fishing boats. As the men become alive to the value of the trade unions for improving their status, so these bodies are able to devote more attention to the fishing industry's problems with prospects of success.

Fish is a commodity which under modern conditions has an international market, and therefore the conditions under which it is produced in one country, such as labour costs, must affect those in others. Hence the recognition in fishermen's circles that, just as within a given country no section can hope to achieve lasting results unless it joins hands with others, so the fishing trade of any one country is to a greater or lesser degree dependent on the position in other countries supplying the fish market.

At the conference in Hull, where fishermen's representatives of seven countries met under the auspices of the International Transport Workers' Federation—Belgium, Britain, Finland, France, Holland, Norway and Palestine—while a number of others had associated themselves with its objects, these two points found expression: first, that trade unionism is gaining ground among fishermen, and second, that co-operation between the fishermen of different nationalities is indispensable if their position is to be improved.

Thus the pre-conditions were satisfied for the formulation and realization of an international reform programme for the fishing industry, a programme which would lay down international minimum labour standards below which no country should fall, giving backward countries an objective to which to advance in the shortest possible time, and progressive countries a safeguard against unbridled competition based on inferior conditions.

At Hull the groundwork was done for the framing of such a programme, and after a two-day discussion the conference appointed a committee which will draft the terms of a Fishermen's International Charter, with a view to its adoption by a further International Fishermen's Conference in the near future.

The Charter will be primarily concerned with conditions of employment as such—wages, hours, manning, holidays, quarters, social insurances, etc.—but

what fishermen can expect to achieve under these heads clearly depends on what happens to fish between the producer and the consumer, on the price which is asked for fish in the shops, so they are also interested in the marketing and distributing of the produce of the sea, in short in the entire structure of the industry.

The Charter is still in the preparatory stage, but its broad lines can be anticipated. Fishermen will demand the ending of the practice of remunerating fishermen wholly or largely by a share of profits, with a fixed payment playing only a subsidiary rôle. Such a method of payment, under the existing methods governing prices, operates against fishermen whether fish is plentiful or scarce.

As regards hours of work, though recognizing the special exigencies of the industry, they will want treatment equivalent to that of the workers of other trades. There is indeed no compelling reason why fishermen should not receive compensation, in the shape of special shore leave, for the long hours of hard toil which are unavoidable at the fishing grounds.

Similarly, they will demand equivalence of treatment in respect of social insurances, and living, sanitary and safety conditions on board.

Finally, they will call for adequate industrial machinery to regulate relations between the employers and the employed of the industry, for the creation of Fishing Boards armed with adequate powers, e.g., to arrange for the cold storage of fish during gluts, in brief for a satisfactory organization of the industry throughout, in order that the community may be assured of regular supplies of fish at reasonable prices, and those who provide them of a steady job at a fair wage.

Once the Charter has been framed, the next step will be to translate it from theory into practice. Its significance will be to give fishermen in countries where their social conditions are backward a programme for which to fight in the knowledge that they can depend on the solidarity of their fellow workers in other countries. For fishermen with superior conditions its significance will lie in the fact that a bottom has been put to conditions of employment, on which they can build further improvements without the constant threat of unfair foreign competition. Thus the Charter will lay the foundation

of an all-round levelling up of the standards of the industry.

Parallel with endeavours to carry the Charter into effect in the national sphere, the fisherman's trade unions will take international action to enforce their claims. For this purpose an instrument lies readily at hand: the International Labour Organization.

After the first world war, when the I.L.O. was still new to its task of promoting better social conditions for workers all over the world, the method was tried of adopting general conventions in principle applicable to all industries, and to exclude certain industries for which they proved impracticable. These conventions, however, to a great extent remained a dead letter, and the fishing industry was one of those which were excluded from the benefits of international legislation.

In the light of experience methods changed, and it was found more expedient to deal with industries individually. The new piecemeal approach is reflected in the new type of machinery which has been developed by the I.L.O. in the shape of Industrial Committee and Conferences dealing with separate industries, where representatives of labour and management, with the requisite special knowledge and experience, thrash out the problems of an industry in the presence of government representatives.

The shipping industry was the first for which this type of machinery was evolved. The results secured on the bipartite Joint Maritime Commission and the tripartite Maritime Labour Conferences of the I.L.O.—more especially the International Conventions adopted in Seattle, U.S.A., in June 1946, which constitute such an important instalment of the post-war aims formulated by the men of the merchant navy in their International Seafarers' Charter—are a striking example of the opportunity offered by the present day I.L.O. machinery.

It is an example which has inspired the fishermen, uniting in growing numbers in their national and international organizations. Like the merchant seamen, they carried on their hazardous calling during the war; also in time of peace they render a service whose value is beyond question. The Fishermen's International Charter presents a great opportunity for acknowledging and settling the debt which the community certainly owes the men of the fishing fleets.

INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY ON THE DUTCH RAILWAYS

The Dutch Railway Corporation has for some time past been using psychological tests as a means of selecting personnel. The testing was entrusted in the beginning to a private firm, and for a time it looked as though their decision in personnel matters would be final, as they claimed to be able to determine with a high degree of certainty whether a candidate was suitable for any particular position.

The Staff Council was not so certain, and took the matter up when it was found, in practice, that men who were regarded by their superiors as excellent employees failed to pass the tests, while others who were not so good came through them with flying colours. Another

disadvantage of the psychological tests, in practice, was that they delayed very considerably the taking on of new personnel at a time when it was necessary to fill vacancies speedily.

The President of the Railways, while believing that there was something to be said for the psychological test, agreed that the results had not been entirely satisfactory, and that the test should not be regarded as decisive, and as from 1st March, 1947 the testing was taken out of the hands of the private undertaking that has hitherto conducted it, and the Railway Corporation set up its own Psychological Department.

At a discussion between the Staff Council and the
(continued at foot of next page)

THE END OF E.C.I.T.O.

By P. TOFAHRN

Assistant General Secretary of the I.T.F.

"The economic and social development of the separate countries will be determined by the degree in which they recognize, in the form of practical measures directed at real co-operation, the mutual interdependence of their economic and social life."

I.T.F. Report on the Organization of European Transport, 19 September 1944.

When, during the war, plans were laid in London for the re-conquest of Europe, the problem of transport claimed early attention. Discussions within the Board of the "Post-war Requirements Bureau" and the General Staffs led to the setting up of T.A.C.I.T. (Technical Advisory Committee on Inland Transport).

It was not difficult to foresee that the European transport system would be thrown completely out of gear, seriously damaged and partly destroyed. If it was to be quickly made usable again for military and civilian requirements on the morrow of Europe's liberation, all controllers and operators of European transport would have to make a tremendous concerted effort. And the effort would have to be prepared beforehand.

As it turned out, things were not everywhere quite so bad as had been anticipated, but on the other hand the restoration of European transport did not progress quite so well and rapidly as had been hoped. Nevertheless, in the autumn of 1945 and the following winter large quantities of essential relief goods were carried across the whole of the Continent and millions of people were somehow brought back to their homes, many of them over distances of a thousand miles and more. This was the result of a prodigious effort, and it bears witness to the resourcefulness of the military and civilian transport technicians on the spot, the devotion of the transport workers, and the excellence of the preparations made and the assistance given by T.A.C.I.T. and its post-liberation successor E.C.I.T.O. (European Central Inland Transport Organization).

The outstanding achievement of E.C.I.T.O. has been

the routing and movement of traffic over a net of railways, waterways and roads of which major parts were, in the beginning at any rate, disconnected at many of the vital points. Much transport had to be routed in very unorthodox fashion. Availability of means of transport at the wrong point on the wrong line also often dictated unusual solutions of movement problems. As the natural or traditional points of contact between lines and systems were re-established, traffic could be directed gradually in a more or less rational way.

The peace time international machinery for the solution of movement problems cannot yet function for political and physical reasons. E.C.I.T.O. has created routing and movement services for traffic across occupied countries. For international transport through other countries it has set up machinery for consultation and working agreements between the national transport authorities concerned. On the uninterrupted working of this emergency machinery depends the continuous movement of international traffic.

But E.C.I.T.O. was not established for the performance of this service only. It was conceived as an instrument of mutual assistance between European States, with a double purpose. The primary purpose was—or should have been—to bring help to all European communities according to their needs. Obviously the fewer the means or, in other words, the more extensive the damages and the pilfering—the greater the needs. The second purpose—which should also have been the secondary one—was to help every State to recover effective control over its transport industries. Obviously, again, the greater

Industrial Psychology on the Dutch Railways—contd.

Administration, on 14th March, the President of the Corporation stated that the Psychological Department would have four tasks, i.e. : (1) the selection of applicants for employment ; (2) the transfer of employees who are clearly in the wrong positions to others for which they are more suited ; (3) to advise on promotions when necessary ; (4) to ascertain whether applicants who prove unsuited for a particular vacancy can be fitted into another. He expressed the opinion that it was necessary that the Psychological Department should fully appreciate the requirements for the different jobs, and that it should co-operate closely with those whose responsibility it is to determine these requirements. He agreed that the influence of the Psychological Department should not be dominant, and that its judgments should be regarded as advisory and explanatory, and not decisive. He promised to let the Staff Council have a

monthly report on the results of the psychological tests.

The Staff Council is of opinion that industrial psychology can render useful service, both to the undertaking and the workman, in placing people in the work for which they are best suited, but that it cannot determine and should not be allowed to assert the absolute unsuitability of a candidate for a particular post. The undertaking formerly conducting the tests turned candidates down by the dozen, and the process often had a very discouraging effect on young people. The Council considers that it is the duty of a large undertaking like a railway to find places for average men ; there is also a social side to the question, and personnel policy should not confine itself to the purely "business" aspect. It is prepared to give industrial psychology a fair trial, but is determined to do so with its eyes open.

(Adapted from an article by F. Landskroon, in the *Weekblad* of the Dutch Railwaymen's Union).

the means, and the less the destruction and pillage, the swifter the recovery of control and of independence from E.C.I.T.O. Very soon it was to become clear that the two purposes conflicted.

To a mind thinking only along technological, economic and social lines, it would have seemed rational to take stock of the means of transport available in Europe and to give a fair share to every liberated country. But the political minds said: No, what we have we hold! All E.C.I.T.O. could do was to plead on behalf of the have-nots and lend assistance in complicated negotiations whereby some have helped to some extent some have-nots.

E.C.I.T.O. was empowered by its Charter to help in the acquisition of new transport material and equipment. Ever since 1943 T.A.C.I.T. had been pressing for a plan for the joint purchase of one hundred thousand railway wagons to alleviate the shortage it had accurately predicted. On the initiative of T.A.C.I.T. a "European wagon" was designed, and European governments were literally begged to entrust a joint body with the ordering of these wagons during the war. Incidentally the design was such as to make possible the substitution of automatic couplings for the screw couplings at any future time.

The war ended without the plan being carried out. E.C.I.T.O. came into existence, and the begging for an orderly remedying of the wagon shortage by jointly procuring a substantial number of wagons for common use by the European railway systems was resumed. It was of no avail. European governments were each and all so obsessed with the idea of furthering their own national interests, to the exclusion of any other, that they refused to make this common effort to overcome common difficulties. So a plan that could have been a first real step toward technical unification and technical progress came to nothing.

Instead U.N.R.R.A. supplied 7,900 wagons. E.C.I.T.O. helped in allocating them, and also 400 locomotives, to Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia.

Barely one year after VE-Day E.C.I.T.O. had to wind up its division responsible for the supply of transport equipment. States have to—and the have-nots want to—use their own judgment and their own means in securing equipment and materials. As the means of some are far larger than those of the others, it is a case of every one for himself and the Devil take the hindmost. The States have recovered their controlling power to the point that they can dispose of transport equipment without regard to the needs of others who have gone with them through the ordeal of World War No. 2. To quote one example that has been made public, Czechoslovakia is selling wagons to Turkey, while liberated Europe suffers from a shortage of wagons. Mutual assistance for the primary purpose of all liberated countries helping each other to overcome the consequences of a war fought in common never got going on a substantial scale.

Every European railway system has developed vehicle types of its own. These vehicles can, by reason of their

variety, be used, repaired and maintained most economically in their country of origin. Therefore, E.C.I.T.O. started a movement of "reparation" of railway vehicles. 140,000 such vehicles have been repatriated. But as the liberated countries never pooled any means of transport no foreign vehicle may leave a railway system unless a "home" vehicle is returned in exchange. How many vehicles are outside their home countries nobody knows, but it is estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the railway wagons still run on foreign lines. The problem of their repatriation is unsolvable on the wagon for wagon basis. If they are German vehicles, the State concerned declares them on its own authority to be booty or reparation. If they belong to the railway system of some other country they are kept and used while the problem of their restitution to their lawful owners keeps the legal experts busy.

In inland navigation, the principle of "what we have we hold" is enforced rigidly especially by the occupation authorities. E.C.I.T.O. was not enabled to alter that situation. All it could do was to suggest bilateral arrangements for restitution through exchange of unit for unit. The bulk of the task of bringing physical, economic and legal order into the business of inland navigation still remains to be done.

Many other important tasks originally assigned to E.C.I.T.O. remain unfulfilled. In the present physical and legal disorder on European railways, most of the international conventions governing international traffic cannot be reapplied. The monetary disorder adds to the obstacles in the way of international traffic, making it difficult if not impossible to establish a unified clearing system. Co-ordination of international traffic, i.e., the sharing of such traffic between rail, waterways and road, hangs fire. The same applies to the unification of rates, conditions and terms of international transport.

One of the simplest but most useful tasks performed by E.C.I.T.O. was the organization of mutual assistance in the field of wagon repair. A running survey was kept of the wagon repair capacity of workshops, steps were taken to ensure that all available capacity was used to the full, spare parts interchanged, raw materials supplied, machine tools loaned, etc. For a time notable progress was made. Then there came stagnation, and last winter even a worsening of the situation. On the one hand the shops became ever less able to cope with current repairs and so could not overcome arrears, and on the other, some railway administrations became less and less helpful. The difficulty of paying for repairs carried out abroad also played a rôle.

Again, the mind that thinks along technological and economic lines would suggest that E.C.I.T.O. should be given more powers and means to cope with its tasks. But the political minds say: No, E.C.I.T.O. is already overriding national sovereignty too much.

In the conflict of purposes, the secondary purpose has quickly become the primary and finally the only one. Help to the needy soon ceased to be one of the purposes of E.C.I.T.O. Nevertheless, E.C.I.T.O. performs an indispensable function, for it helps to expedite inter-

national traffic in spite of national sovereignty; in spite of the impossibility of reapplying the international conventions which used to govern international traffic between the two wars; in spite of the legal and monetary disorder resulting from the fact that Germany and Austria have no internationally valid currency; in spite of the partition of Germany and Austria into four zones whose demarcation lines are obstacles as cumbersome as any boundaries between States can be.

All this notwithstanding, the Economic and Social Council has decided that E.C.I.T.O. must be liquidated not later than 27th September 1947, and replaced by a transport body of the Economic Commission for Europe.

One reason for the disintegration of E.C.I.T.O. was the conflict between the two purposes. The restoration of the full controlling powers of national authorities soon overshadowed and finally eliminated altogether the primary purpose, which was to bring help to the needy. The selfish purpose triumphed over the principle of solidarity and E.C.I.T.O. was made to fulfil the selfish purpose so swiftly that disaffection set in long before the two-year Charter was due for revision.

The second important reason—some consider it to be the first—was the attitude of one of the big signatory powers of E.C.I.T.O.'s Charter, the U.S.S.R. E.C.I.T.O. was empowered to exercise its functions in any territory of Continental Europe under the authority or control of its member Governments, except, of course, the national territories of Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. found that it could best affirm and strengthen its hold over the transport industries in the territories under its control by hampering E.C.I.T.O. in the accomplishment of certain parts of its task. So Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia and the Russian zones of Germany and Austria supplied no figures for the census of railway rolling stock, which other countries and zones carried out in February and March 1946. They did not take part in the scheme for the identification of foreign rolling stock on their railway systems. They did not take part in the action for the repatriation of railway vehicles. They supplied no returns for the census of inland water craft, carried out in the other countries of Europe in 1946. The little that some of them did in the way of mutual assistance in wagon repairs is not worth mentioning. But the most effective brake applied on E.C.I.T.O.'s activities was the withholding of an important part of the contribution the U.S.S.R. had undertaken to make to the budget of E.C.I.T.O.

Therefore, for "budgetary reasons", E.C.I.T.O. had to close down nearly all its departments on 30th of June, 1947. It carries on until 27th September, or may be for some time beyond that date, the indispensable function of routing and moving international traffic across occupied countries. For that purpose a tiny staff is retained. But the rest of the capable team of technical and administrative experts, translators and interpreters, clerks and typists, have been dismissed and dispersed, the preliminary results of the study of a dozen complicated problems abandoned to "the biting criticisms of the mice", the archives bundled in red tape.

The staff of E.C.I.T.O. has had a raw deal. For no really imperative reason they were shifted from London to Paris. For the majority of them it meant moving from a place where living conditions were reasonable to one where they were extremely difficult. For many it meant separation from their families. When the Soviet contribution was withheld their wages were cut. After having served with devotion the European cause they are left to their own devices to find new employment. The constituents of E.C.I.T.O. apparently do not consider that they have a responsibility in this matter, to judge by the following advertisement published in a "Situations Wanted" column:

"Inter-Governmental transport organization, ending its activity, seeks employment for its personnel, including experts of various nationalities, in transport, legal and economic matters, interpreters and translators (English, French, Russian, etc.), administrative officers, including accountants, secretaries, shorthand-typists, clerks.—Apply to European Central Inland Transport Organisation, 19, Avenue Kleber, Paris."

Of course, goods and passengers will continue to be carried across Europe by rail, road and water after the dissolution of E.C.I.T.O. But the machinery for preventing and solving troubles will be sorely missed.

Some European transport organization is indispensable. That is acknowledged by all, including the bigwigs who decreed the dissolution of E.C.I.T.O. But the existing organization is being dissolved before its successor is able to take over, even before the constitution of the new organization is adopted. The transition is made as difficult as possible. Politics—in this case petty and power politics combined—have produced a grotesque procedure.

The result can only be the prolongation and aggravation of existing difficulties in European transport, the retarding of its reorganization and further disintegration of the European economy. The economic revival of Europe is being delayed if not made impossible. The improvement of the standard of life in Europe is receding still farther into the future.

In Paris, experts are drafting plans for the economic reconstruction of Europe, or at least a substantial part of it, with American aid. It is to be hoped that when dealing with transport they will call for, and provide for, a European transport organization capable of meeting the technological, economic and social necessities of that hapless continent. The experience gained with E.C.I.T.O. should be a valuable help in devising means to ensure the achievement of a purpose that should be paramount: mutual assistance by all European communities to lift themselves together out of the slough of post-war misery.

The element in the Marshall proposal that aroused so much hope earlier in the year was the suggestion it made that Europe's present extremity could be used as a lever to create something better and stronger and firmer than existed before. But these hopes are diminished. The Western European nations find it very difficult to rise above their national preoccupations.

The Economist (London) of 27 September, 1947.

THE PROBLEM OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN PORTS

By A. KIEVIT

President of the Dutch Transport Workers' Union

Seaports play an important role in international trade, but if they are to yield the maximum utility to the community, the cost of transhipping the goods from one means of conveyance to another should be kept as low as possible. If the goods can reach their destination over other ports in such a manner that the total cost of transport to the final destination is lower, the competition of these ports is bound to make itself felt.

Conditions under which the natural advantages of one port over another can be utilized without hindrance is desirable in the interests of world trade. To introduce artificial preferences for the purpose of deviating traffic from its natural routes to serve particular interests is to incur the danger of starting a competitive struggle that will adversely affect the prosperity of all the ports.

To endeavour to prevent the natural consequences of natural advantages by such means as subsidies, unduly low port charges, the building of unnecessary canals, etc., is an economic evil, and leads to forms of competition that in the long run ruin the ports to the sole advantage of their users.

Cut-throat competition between ports also involves dangers to the social position of those who find in them their means of livelihood, and this is a factor that should not be lost sight of. Tens of thousands of men earn their daily bread in port work, and their interests should not be forgotten in the endeavour to keep port costs as low as possible for the purpose of attracting the largest possible number of ships and increasing the total tonnage handled. A fair balance must be struck between the most favourable working conditions for the dockers and the lowest terms for users of the ports.

This is a principle that has been very much sinned against in the past. The interests of the community as well as those of the men who earn their living in the ports have constantly been seriously injured by the mutual competition between seaports. Only too often have artificial means been used to increase the attraction of a port to shipping.

The several ports should together form a harmoniously working whole. This does not mean that competition between them should be rigorously excluded, but that unjustifiable differences in charges, and competition by unfair means, should be avoided.

The difficulty about preventing competition which is unfair and harmful to the community lies in determining what is permissible and what is not, and the difficulty is increased by the fact that political as well as economic factors are now playing a part in the interchange of goods between the peoples. The provisioning of Germany chiefly depends, at present, on the help which Great Britain and the United States are now giving her. In giving this help the occupying powers (Great Britain

and the United States, in so far as Western and South-western Germany are concerned) wish to keep the cost of transport as low as they can, and they try as far as possible to avoid sending goods to and from Germany over other than German ports. The wish to avoid using foreign currency is a very important factor in this endeavour.

The port of Rotterdam, and to a certain extent Antwerp as well, is severely hit by this policy. Before the war Rotterdam largely depended on the transit trade in bulk goods (ores, coal, grain and timber) to and from the industrial region of Western Germany, and the intention to prevent this region developing to its pre-war level has also left its mark on the goods traffic by sea to and from Germany. The fact that the traffic is, for several reasons, being carried through German ports, even when economically illogical, is having serious consequences for some Western European ports, and particularly for Rotterdam.

If it could be agreed internationally that a solution of the problem should be sought jointly, the community would very greatly benefit.

Cut-throat Competition or Regulated Co-operation

The competitive struggle between ports serving, or able to serve, the same hinterland has always been considerable. This competition has been mainly, though not exclusively, between the big ports. Rotterdam's great national competitor is Amsterdam, but along the estuary leading to Rotterdam we find a number of smaller ports that try to hold and increase their share of the traffic. We find the same thing in Belgium, where Ghent, Brussels, Bruges, Ostend and Liège compete to a greater or lesser extent with Antwerp.

National competition will have to be tackled nationally. The Dutch Government is seriously engaged with the problem, and is working towards a national port policy.

It is quite otherwise, however, with the international competition, and in particular with what concerns the struggle between the Belgian, Dutch and German ports for the traffic to and from Middle and Western Europe.

Pre-war Germany had rapidly developed, since 1870, into an exceedingly important industrial country. Germany had coal enough of her own, but had to import other raw materials required for industry—particularly ores—and further needed for her growing population large quantities of grain and other foodstuffs.

This increasing industrialization of Germany was of very great importance for the development of the larger ports, as will be seen from the following figures relating to movements of shipping in five of them :

Ships entering and leaving	1900	1938
	N.R.T.	N.R.T.
Rotterdam	6,423,523	27,610,000
Amsterdam	1,536,127	4,664,000
Antwerp	5,668,022	19,799,000
Hamburg	8,037,514	20,833,000
Bremen	2,171,142	10,139,000

Before the war Rotterdam was, apart from London, the biggest port in Europe. Situated at the mouth of the Rhine, it had developed into the main transit port for the industrial area centred on that river and the network of canals connected with it.

Trade through the port of Rotterdam was three quarters bulk goods and one quarter piece goods. Ores, grain and timber for Germany, and coal from that country, topped the list. The port's equipment was much larger than was required to serve Holland alone. In 1938 the quantity of ores coming through Rotterdam for its industrial hinterland totalled 11,000,000 tons.

Holland is interested in the restoration of mining and industry in Western Germany, for on the extent of their restoration depends the extent of the recovery of the Dutch ports, and particularly Rotterdam.

Although the port of Antwerp is also interested in the restoration of activity in the Western German industrial region, it has behind it Belgium's own highly developed industry—for which Antwerp is the only port—as well as the supply of the country's dense population with its many requirements.

Before the war there was an often keen struggle between the Belgian and Dutch ports—mainly between Rotterdam and Antwerp—for the traffic to and from the same hinterland. Since the war there has been still keener competition for the traffic to and from Switzerland—in which the Swiss undertakings also take part—and for the motor transport to and from Czechoslovakia.

In the competition between Antwerp and Rotterdam there has been artificial attraction of Rhine traffic by premiums such as free towage between Antwerp and the Dutch port of Dordrecht of barges destined for Germany, and exemption by the French Government of goods imported through Antwerp from payment of certain charges (surtaxes d'entrepôt et d'origine). And the Belgians complain that port dues in Holland are lower than in Belgium, and that since 1940 wages in Belgian ports have been higher than in Holland.

In 1939 the competition between Dutch and Belgian ports had reached such dimensions that it stood in the way of the so urgently necessary economic rapprochement between the two countries.

Fortunately the need is now understood of forming a powerful economic block, and endeavours are being made to achieve closer co-operation. The constitution of the Belgo-Luxemburgian customs union with Holland promises much for the future. Consideration of the matter and the search for agreement has been entrusted to a joint Belgo-Dutch commission, and negotiations are already under way.

Now that the two great ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp are to form part of the same economic unit, competition between them is likely to make way for a better understanding of each other's difficulties, and lead to better economic co-operation.

The struggle for the traffic with the German industrial region by the ports of Emden, Bremen and Hamburg is another side of the question. Before the war the Germans applied on the Western German canals a system of preferential rates of canal dues and tonnage charges, with the result that the freight between Emden or Bremen and the middle and eastern Ruhr basin was lower than for the much shorter distance to Rotterdam.

The German railways also applied preferential rates, so that those for railway transport to Hamburg were as low as, or lower than, than those to the nearer foreign ports, while those to the nearer German ports were always lower. For the inland traffic these preferential rates are still in force in Germany.

Whatever the influences may be that have led to the resumption of the pre-war competitive system, it is certainly to be deplored. It is short-sighted policy to try, by costly artificial means, to change something that has grown naturally out of geographical circumstances.

When the present chaos in Germany has given way to more ordered conditions it will be necessary to try to bring about harmonious co-operation with that country. At present, however, the German ports are under the control of the Allied powers who are in occupation. We can admit that for the time being this is unavoidable, but it is nevertheless true that the normal development of port activities is being hampered, and even prevented. It is unnatural, and wasteful economically, to force traffic to follow routes which are longer and more costly.

This is not a question of competition, but a phenomenon closely connected with the war, and one in which the port interests of countries such as Holland and Belgium are unreasonably neglected and injured. The sooner traffic is free to choose the economically best and cheapest route the better it will be.

It would be a good thing if the powers concerned would look at the matter more from the international standpoint than they have hitherto. The proper solution would be a system, based on an agreement general applicable to Western Europe, that would prohibit the diversion of traffic by artificial means.

In so far as the problem is affected by differences in the wages and working conditions of the dockers, the I.T.F. has already considered it at the regional Dockers' Conference in Antwerp. In this connection there are also difficulties that are not of easy solution now that the governments of several countries have forbidden wage increases. It is, however, a happy augury that the labour movement is determined to co-operate and to point out the way to a solution of the difficulties.

The common aim must be the restoration of the welfare of all peoples, an aim that rises superior to local interest or advantage.

CREW ACCOMMODATION ON BOARD SHIP

By JOHN BORLASE

Research Officer, National Union of Seamen of Great Britain.

Adequate accommodation in the living quarters provided for the crew of all vessels has always been a matter of great importance to seafarers. The provisions of the Merchant Shipping Acts of 1894 and 1906 are no longer sufficient to meet present day needs and should be radically amended.

The Committee set up by the Union to go into this matter, declared this one of the most important questions that has, for a number of years, affected seamen. We are firmly of the opinion the time has arrived for this problem to be tackled forcefully. Thousands of cases have been quoted by Port Medical Officers of Health which clearly illustrate that seamen have suffered ill-health, and many have died as a result of bad accommodation, poor sanitary arrangements and an absence of pure air. Much has been said about allocation of the accommodation for crews. The ideal space for this to be erected (and this was the unanimous opinion of the Committee that went into this question) is the amidship part of the vessel. The question of accommodation is dealt with in Section 210 of the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act, and Section 64 of the 1906 Act. The Sections simply call for a certain number of cubic feet of space, and make it quite clear that this space is to include all space taken for mess rooms, bath rooms, and washing places. In the light of present-day circumstances, this question should be entirely separated from the mess rooms and washing places. Moreover, the latter amenities should not be deducted from the space allotted for sleeping and messing quarters.

The practise of housing men together in large numbers should be entirely discontinued. The examinations I have made of the Acts with regard to the storage of provision and water, reveal no reference to instructions as to where ships' stores shall be housed on board. Within my own knowledge, provisions in many vessels have been rendered unfit for human consumption as a result of not having proper hygienic and refrigerated space for the storage of such goods. Any new Merchant Shipping Acts of the future must make provision for suitable space to be erected for storage of all ships' provisions.

Now with regard to WATER. Again, I have found on examination, that of the water mentioned in the Acts, there are no instructions as to how it shall be carried on board ship, except in the case of emigrant ships, where it has to be carried in barrels. A regulation should be laid down which outlines whether, and in what conditions water shall be carried, and which call for the installation of adequate fresh water tanks in all vessels, for the use of the crew for drinking and cooking purposes. These should be properly cemented and made subject to survey prior to the commencement, and during the progress

of a voyage. Whilst the present Act provides so much drinking water for the use of the crew, and inspection thereof in case of complaint by the Ministry Inspector, there are no regulations as to the proper survey of tanks, or which state in what manner water should be carried, except in those covering passenger and emigrant vessels, and inspections of tanks and barrels by emigration officers.

Since this matter is viewed very seriously, certain regulations are laid down in the proposed new Act put forward by the National Union of Seamen. It seems to be beyond understanding that regulation should call for the issue of water without making proper provision for its care and carriage. The important question of ventilation must also have greater attention than hitherto. There are various systems in existence which will ensure the taking away of impure air in addition to supplying pure air throughout the living quarters on board ship, and we should not rest content until one of the systems approved by the Ministry of Transport is installed in every existing cargo and liner type of vessel.

FURNISHING. With regard to the furnishing of the living quarters of the crew, the materials should be entirely of metal instead of wood. The use of such metal furnishings has been proved in these ships where they have been utilised to have been the successful antidote to vermin. In giving consideration to the question of accommodation, hygiene and medical services, when providing a programme of post-war conditions for the Merchant Navy which is set forth in the International Seafarers' Charter, the following statement was made.

"Far too little attention has been given to the accommodation of ships' crews. Although admittedly, progress has been made in this direction recently. The poor quality of crew quarters made this doubly felt in war time. There have been numerous conflicts, and many changes have had to be made to make things just tolerable. The unhealthy conditions on board, deter many from choosing or continuing at a career at sea. It may be expected that modern ideas about accommodation and hygiene will also have their effect in the shipping industry, and on the one hand, everything will be avoided making for discomfort and uncleanness and that on the other it will be borne in mind in designing and building ships that seafarers spend a considerable portion of their lives there. For that reason it would be desirable if, amongst other things, seafarers' organizations were consulted in connection with plans for building and converting ships in so far as character and the situation of crew quarters are concerned."

The seafarers' organizations in Great Britain have

been dealing with the question through the National Maritime Board and appropriate Ministry of Transport Committee, which made a short statement recently intimating that it is intended to issue a revised edition of the 1937 Instructions as to the Survey of Master's and Crew Spaces as soon as possible, but in the meantime they have agreed, with the National Maritime Board Committee on crew accommodation, that pending the complete revision of the instructions certain improvements on the 1937 standards should be made applicable to ships now being built or are to be built. Minimum provisions or proved equivalents should be made in specifications for new deep-sea non-passenger ships of 3,000 G.R.T. and over, subject to limitations which shortage of labour and material may impose. The provisions thereon are to be read in conjunction with the 1937 Instructions to Surveyors. Whilst the new regulations for the new type of vessel will mark a considerable step forward, I am bound to say that there is still room for a great deal of improvement and leaves the question of accommodation in the liner, small cargo type and coasting vessel, yet to be decided.

Pressure from the Union caused the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade to issue the 1937 Instructions as to the Survey of Masters' and Crews' Spaces. Whilst these regulations made a definite advance in seafarers' accommodation, they did no more than establish minimum standards of health and comfort on board ship. The fact to be noted is that these instructions applied to new vessels only, and therefore do not confer any benefit to seafarers who still had to continue service on vessels which were several years old when the new regulations came into operation. In all legislation dealing with crew accommodation, the first question that presents any difficulty is the minimum space to be afforded to each man. It must be expressed in two dimensions: (a) cubic or general breathing space, (b) floor space. It has been pointed out by all who have handled this subject, with a view to reform, that the legal minimum does in practice become the maximum. It is interesting to note that the Commonwealth Government of Australia does not regard the minimum space provided by the Imperial Act as being adequate, and a similar view apparently has been taken by the Norwegian and Swedish Governments, thus:

	Gt. Britain	Australia	Norway
Cubic space in ft.	120	140	140
Floor area in sq. ft.	15	18	18

It is a peculiarity of the Merchant Shipping Act that the allowance of space, as mentioned hitherto, may be taken to include any accommodation provided, such as mess rooms, etc., save when the space allotted for sleeping should not be less than 72 cubic ft. and 12 sq. ft. of floor space respectively. In the Colonial and Swedish regulations, the minimum of 140 cubic ft. and 18 sq. ft. is for the space set apart for berthing and sleeping, and space appropriated for messing, washing etc., would appear to be additional. The Colonial regulations make

a departure in legislation specially for officers in ships of 300 G.R.T. and upwards, allotting to each officer a separate room with not less than 180 cubic ft. of space, and in the case of the class of vessels of less than 300 G.R.T., for each two officers a separate room with a content of not less than 350 cubic ft. Another striking provision is found in the Norwegian regulations, where on any vessel of 800 tons and upwards, two berth cabins and separate mess rooms must be provided for the crew.

But on passenger vessels of 3,000 G.R.T. and upwards, where the crew would, of course, run to large numbers, these arrangements may be modified subject to the preliminary deposit, and approval by appropriate officers, of a plan of the cabin arrangements.

This question was brought within the realm of practical politics when the International Transport Workers Federation tabled the International Seafarers' Charter, and secured recognition thereof by the Joint Maritime Commission of the I.L.O. which was held at London in January, 1945, which devoted its session to a general survey of conditions of employment in the Merchant Marine, including, with other subjects, the question of crew accommodation of the seafarers of the world, which it submitted to the Preparatory Technical Maritime Conference for the preparation of a draft text, formulating International Standards for final consideration to the Maritime Session of the International Labour Conference which was held at Seattle, U.S.A. in June, 1946, which agreed upon the adoption of an International Convention which is cited as the Accommodation of Crews Convention, 1946. This now awaits the ratification of the British and other Governments who took part in the conference and will ensure that the seafarers who have to spend a considerable part of their lives on board the ship are provided with comfortable, clean and healthy mess rooms, sleeping accommodation and sanitary facilities, as well as appropriately furnished recreation rooms, where they can spend their leisure time on board.

The merchant navies of the United Nations made a magnificent contribution in the fight which brought peace to a war-devastated world, therefore it is only fitting that something substantial should be done to improve the living and working conditions of the seafarers who man our ships, which have, in the past, so far lagged behind those of their fellow workers in shore industries. This Convention, when it is ratified and implemented by the British and other nations, will abolish for all time the slogans one hears about coffin ships and slums of the sea.

This newspaper has more than once insisted that the European economic crisis is, in fact, an international economic crisis in which the United States is quite as deeply involved as any European nation.

New York Herald Tribune, 13 September, 1947.

DOCK LABOUR DECASUALISATION SCHEME OF GREAT BRITAIN.

By J. DONOVAN

National Secretary, Docks Group of the Transport and General Worker's Union.

The temporary war-time schemes providing for a guaranteed payment to British dock workers have ended: on 1st July, 1947, a permanent scheme was introduced. This permanent scheme is based upon the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act which was passed by the British Government in February, 1946. The Act directed the Unions and Employers to reach agreement on the new scheme and to make provision for the amount and form of guaranteed payments. The Unions asked for a payment of 6/- per half-day attendance money for eleven half-days each week, provided a man was available for work and was not employed. Further, if the total amount due to a man at the end of the week from attendance payment and earnings during the normal week (that is, excluding overtime) was less than £4 16s. 0d., that the guarantee should be made up to that figure.

The Unions also demanded that half the members of the Boards of Management should be workers' representatives.

The Employers' reply was to offer a guarantee of £16 each four weeks; all earnings due from time-work, piece-work and overtime, to be taken into account; that the Employers should have full control of the management of the scheme; and that only a limited number of the larger ports should be given the guarantee.

The Unions and Employers failed to reach agreement.

The Minister of Labour appointed a number of Committees of Inquiry and finally issued an Order setting out the conditions which are now in operation.

This provides, for men under 65 years of age, a payment of 5/- attendance money for eleven half-days each week, with a fall back guarantee of £4 8s. 0d. per week; all earnings from Sunday midnight to Saturday mid-day to be taken into account.

Men over 65 and under 70 years of age—Category "A", 11 half-days attendance money, 5s. per half-day; Category "C," six half-days attendance money, 5s. per half-day. Fall back guarantee, Category "A," 66s. per week; Category "C," 36s. per week.

Men over 70 years of age—guarantee of six half-days attendance at 5s. per half-day. No additional guarantee.

The Scheme is under the control of a National Board, consisting of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman and eight other members, four representing the Unions and four representing the Employers.

All ports claimed by the Unions are in the scheme. The present minimum wage in Britain is £5 4s. 6d. per week of forty-four hours. It will be noted, therefore, that the

attendance money represents 52.63 per cent and the fall-back guarantee 84.21 per cent of the basic weekly wage.

The scheme has met with the unanimous approval of the men in the Industry.

Registers. The National Board is responsible for deciding the total number of men to be registered in each port, but Local Boards, set up in the ports, consisting of equal numbers from the Unions and Employers, will decide who will be registered. The National Board has agreed that all men who were working in the Ports on the 30th June, should be registered under the new scheme, the total number being 74,457.

Mobility. It is a condition of the guarantee that men will agree to travel when necessary to away ports within reasonable daily travel distance.

Travel to ports which compel a man be to away from home overnight is voluntary.

Discipline. Men reported for any breach of the scheme must be reported in writing. Such reports will be considered by the Port Board, which will decide what action is to be taken against the man. The Board may:

- (a) Suspend the man's entitlement to guarantee payments for a period. This means that a man would not be prevented from working, but would not be entitled to attendance money if not at work.
- (b) Suspend him without pay for not more than seven days. This would prevent a man seeking work.
- (c) Give seven days' notice to end his employment as a dock worker.
- (d) Dismiss him summarily.

Any man given notice of punishment has three days to make an appeal to an independent appeal tribunal.

Where a man makes an appeal, the punishment (except summary dismissal for misconduct) is suspended until the appeal is heard.

The appeal tribunal can vary the punishment, but cannot increase it. Should a registered Employer be in breach of the scheme he can be suspended for a period not exceeding three months.

Welfare. The National Board is responsible for the control of Port Welfare Schemes, these to include Port Medical Services, Canteens, Rest Rooms, Calling-on Stands, and Educational and Training facilities.

Finance. The cost of operating the scheme must be paid by a levy on the Port Employers.

The present charge is:

For casual men supplied to the Employer from the Pool, 15 per cent on top of the total wages due to the man.

(continued at foot of next page)

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE AUSTRIAN RAILWAYMEN'S UNION

By **ANDREAS THALER**

General Secretary of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union

Before hostilities in Vienna ended prominent representatives of the former free trade union movement met representatives of all political tendencies and agreed to rebuild the trade union movement in Austria on entirely new lines. For the purpose of representing the interests of the workers by hand and brain more equally and effectually than before the war, and to eliminate the struggle for members inside the movement, it was decided to set up the trade union movement on a politically neutral basis, so that it might embrace members of all political tendencies.

Up to 1934 the railwaymen were organized in political trade unions, and while the new union is not their legal successor, it is nevertheless recognizing the rights previously acquired by their members. Out of the former 45 "free" and Christian trade unions, therefore, 16 industrial unions have been formed, all united in the central Federation of Trade Unions.

One of these industrial unions is the Railwaymen's Union, which had to take over a highly important task at one of the most fateful moments in Austria's history. Practically every railway station of any size in our country was reduced to ruins by repeated air and artillery bombardments. Enormous fires threatened to destroy valuable goods, and such of the railway installations as still remained. On top of this, a large number of the leading railway officials had fled, so that there was a lack of responsible leadership to overcome the prevailing chaos.

At this point the railwaymen stepped in, especially the old and tried trade unionists, setting up at practically all the more important places of work Action Committees, drawn from their own circle, which accepted, during the early days following the liberation, full responsibility both for the reconstruction of the Railwaymen's Union and restoration of railway traffic.

The job which the Austrian railwaymen took upon themselves was a very big one. Over 45 per cent of the

Dock Labour Decasualisation Scheme of Great Britain—contd.

If the wages due to the man is £5, the employer must pay the Board £5 15s. 0d. The Board will pay the man his weekly wages. For Dock workers employed by an employer on a weekly contract of service there is a payment of 10 per cent on the wages due to the man. The Employer is responsible for the payment of wages to the weekly workers.

Holidays. The National Board must pay each dock worker one week's pay annual holiday, and payment for six public holidays each year.

Payment for holidays is at the standard time rate, i.e., 19s. per day, £5 4s. 6d. per week.

whole railway system had been destroyed. More than 300 bridges of a span exceeding four metres had been blown up. In eastern Austria, and particularly in the Vienna district, traffic was completely paralyzed. Particularly serious, and with far-reaching after effects, was the destruction of the bridges over the Danube, and that over the Danube canal. Between the Mauthausen and the Hungarian frontier the only bridge at present existing is the temporarily repaired North Western Line bridge, which has already sagged eight inches, and can only be crossed at three miles an hour.

The fact that by December 1945 220 bridges had been made fit for use, even though only provisionally, is an indication of the eagerness and self-sacrifice with which the railwaymen worked. By that time only 4 per cent of the railway lines were unfit for use.

The extent of the destruction of buildings can best be seen from the figures which follow. For the repair of the buildings most important for railway operation—not including, therefore, the stations, the following materials are needed among others :

Bricks	290,000,000
Cement	35,000 tons
Lime	10,000 tons.
Building blocks	140,000 sq. metres.
Glass	130,000 sq. metres.
Timber	50,000 cubic metres.

This material is naturally not available, so that reconstruction is progressing very slowly, which means for the railwaymen much more difficult working conditions and danger to life.

There is also a serious shortage of sleepers. Something like 1,200,000 are needed, and there are only about 100,000 at hand.

The rolling stock position is catastrophic. In 1937 we had 2,237 locomotives and tractor vehicles, of which 1,722 were regularly fit for service. In August 1946 we had 3,296, that is to say 48 per cent more than in 1937, but of these 565 were undergoing repair, 1,462 damaged and laid aside, and only 1,269 fit for use. And "fit for use" means nowadays that a locomotive will go: the diminished output is shown by the consumption of normal coal, which is now 33 kilogrammes per locomotive-kilometer, as compared with 23.6 in 1937. After the first world war it was 31 kilogrammes.

As regards vehicles, in 1937 we had 8,148 passenger carriages and 37,137 goods wagons. In August 1946 the figures were 9,302 passenger carriages and 76,933 goods wagons, of which 4,765 and 54,622, respectively, were fit for service.

The improved goods wagon position is only nominal, however, as owing to traffic difficulties we have to reckon with a turn-round three or four times as long as in 1937. And as the wagons come from all sorts of countries, so that for many of them no spare parts can be obtained, the number available for use is declining steadily.

Owing to the shortage of building materials and high costs it is not likely that it will be possible to reconstruct the Vienna installations in the manner that modern traffic calls for, so that for the time being improvement in the train service is being sought in reorganization only.

The present state of the permanent way and its equipment is such as to strain the capacity of the railways to the uttermost. Crowded trains, ruined stations and the many places where repairs are going on endanger the safety of passengers as well as personnel.

The food shortage and the division of Austria into its several zones of occupation force the railwaymen, when serving in other zones than their own, to bring their food with them, and therefore to eat it cold. And as the distribution of foodstuffs is very unsatisfactory, it sometimes happens that they have to live for days on nothing but dry bread.

But in spite of the heavy demands of the service, trade union work is not being neglected, and intensive work is being put in to rebuild the Union.

To facilitate representation of the interests of the personnel, the Union has been built up on lines analogous to those of the Administration, in the sense that separate Executives have been set up for the different branches of the service, and their chairmen constitute the Chief Executive Committee and are the representatives of the Union in the provisional staff representation scheme. The Railwaymen's Union is represented in the Federation of Trade Unions by its President and its General Secretary. It also sends representatives to the Chamber of Labour and the Sick and Accident Insurance funds.

The Union had a number of urgent tasks to fulfil. In the first place it had to make good, as far as that was possible, the injury the Fascists had done to many railwaymen. A large number of the latter were prosecuted under the Hitler régime, and many of them were cast into prison, superannuated or deprived of their pensions. As the Administration in the beginning only made reparation on its own account, without any strictly legal basis for it, the co-operation of the Chief Executive Committee of the Union was invoked, and now each case is dealt with, after hearing the shop stewards, in agreement between the Executive and the Railway Administration.

The Union had also to see about freeing the service from unacceptable Nazis, and its representatives had to decide which former members of the Nazi Party could be allowed to remain and which could not.

The Union regarded it as its chief duty to raise the wages of the personnel taken over by the Austrian Railways after 1945. On the Reichsbahn, which ran the railways under Hitler, there were 35,000 established "officials" and 60,000 "servants" at daily rates. The wages of the latter were so low that the Union had to take immediate steps to raise their monthly earnings from 108 Austrian shillings to 187. It was also necessary to draw up new holiday regulations, and now all employees are on an equal footing in this respect: whether officials or manual workers, they are all entitled to a holiday of 28 workdays after 25 years' service.

The Union has regarded it as absolutely necessary to fill the gaps in training and education that Fascism left behind it. In the first place it was necessary to make up as rapidly as possible the arrears in the training of shop stewards, and it was found possible in 1946 to put 140 stewards belonging to the Vienna branches through seven training courses lasting several weeks. 55 stewards also went through residential training courses in trade-unionism arranged by the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions in "Hueber House". In addition the Railwaymen's Union also arranged, with excellent results, courses of its own for the occupational training of its own railwaymen members.

At the beginning of 1947 the Union set up an Educational Department, which aims to continue and expand all educational measures taken so far, and later, as the railway traffic improves, to extend them to the whole of Austrian territory.

Owing to the shortage of paper, and other difficulties, it has been impossible to put our paper, *Der Eisenbahner*, regularly in the hands of all our members. It can only be brought out once in every five or six weeks, and the number printed is so small that not all our members can receive it.

After the changes required by the Allies had been effected in the Personnel Representation Regulations, and the rules for the election of staff representatives, it was found possible, following long drawn out negotiations with the Administration and the Allies, for the Union to arrange for the holding of the elections on 29, 30 and 31 October, 1946. In these elections the Austrian Socialist Party obtained 81 per cent of the votes cast, the Communist Party 13 per cent., and the Austrian People's Party (mainly Roman Catholic) 6 per cent.

The Union's first Congress was held in the spring of 1947. Information was given about the building up and work both of the railways and the Union since 1945, and the gathering bore testimony to the strength and unity of the Austrian railwaymen and to the fact that only with a powerful trade union will it be possible successfully to carry on the heavy struggle to rebuild the Austrian economy and continue our social work.