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## ON THE EVE OF THE OSLO CONGRESS

By **J. H. OLDENBROEK**

*General Secretary of the I.T.F.*

**W**HEN we met for the first time after the war in Zurich in May 1946, our main concern was to review the war period and to consider plans for the future, and it was left to the Executive Committee, Management Committee and Secretariat to steer the I.T.F. back to normality.

Without the assistance and co-operation of affiliated organizations and without a large degree of mutual confidence and singleness of purpose within the governing bodies of the I.T.F. this task could not have been undertaken. But there is such a thing as an I.T.F. tradition, and notwithstanding a considerable change in personnel in the last ten years, co-operation within the I.T.F. has on the whole been distinguished by that true spirit of comradeship, loyalty and sincerity which has made the I.T.F. the "Strong and Unbreakable International Federation" defined by its Constitution.

It is true that there have been some disappointments. The organizations of a few countries did not reaffiliate after the war, and one or two withdrew again because they could not reconcile themselves with the rejection of their views by the overwhelming majority. This is insofar a matter for regret that it has been extremely rare for an affiliated union to sever its association with the I.T.F. However, the Executive Committee had to make it clear that the I.T.F. is a democratic body in which no member organization, big or small, can impose its will, and that in the I.T.F. there is no question of such a thing as a veto right.

On the other hand it is satisfactory to report an appreciable growth in the numerical strength of the I.T.F. both in terms of number of unions and countries and of aggregate membership. During the two years under review there were admitted to affiliation no fewer than 22 unions in fifteen countries with an aggregate membership of 860,000, and at the first meeting of the Executive Committee in 1948 we were able to report the affiliation of five unions of the French Force Ouvrière movement, two German unions and a Chilean railwaymen's federation, representing a further growth of over 650,000 members. As a result of this, coupled with an almost general increase of membership among affiliated unions, the membership of the I.T.F. is today far greater than ever before.

Much of the growth in numbers and influence has come to the I.T.F. through the affiliation of American transport workers unions. Every member-organization of the I.T.F. will record that fact with great satisfaction.

Considerable attention has been devoted to the work of the industrial sections of the I.T.F. and separate meetings have been held for all of them, with the exception of civil aviation personnel, in whose case there appears to be as yet insufficient interest for international trade union work. We also availed ourselves of meetings organized by other international bodies, particularly the International Labour Conference and the meetings of the Inland Transport Committee of the I.L.O., for strengthening contacts with unions not yet affiliated with the I.T.F. Finally the sending of delegations on a hitherto unprecedented scale did much to spread enlightenment and establish valuable contacts. These meetings and the opportunities they afford for careful discussion of common problems and objectives are the best means of arriving at international co-operation and co-ordinated action.

The time has come to make a supreme effort on a world scale to realize the aspirations of those who founded our great international movement. The time

for slogans and phrases, for flaming manifestoes, is past. We have to enter an age of practical achievement and make our contribution towards bringing about the prosperity and peace for which the world is yearning. The period immediately following the second world war was, unfortunately, not favourable for making great progress, but the foundations were laid, and it is now for us to be determined in our efforts to help build a better world. One of the tasks to be accomplished in these efforts is the successful implementation of the European Recovery Programme which the I.T.F. was the first international trade union organization to acclaim without reservation. Another is to expand the I.T.F.'s machinery so that it may be equally effective in all parts of the world.

The Oslo Congress will demonstrate that the I.T.F. is strong and still growing stronger. May it demonstrate the will of all its member-organizations to make the I.T.F. equal to the tasks which lie ahead.

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BUS AND TRAMWAY WORKERS

An International Conference of Tramway and Bus Workers was held in Utrecht, Holland, from 3rd to 7th May, under the joint auspices of the International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Federation of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services. It was attended by some eighty delegates from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

The discussions at the conference were remarkable in throwing into relief the disparity between the working conditions of workers in publicly, and privately, owned passenger transport undertakings. This is particularly true of pensions, as was evidenced in the well-documented report submitted by Mr. R. Stonner of the Austrian Municipal Workers' Union, but it applies also, in most countries, to wages, working hours, paid holidays and many other matters. The main reason why working conditions in private undertakings are in many cases far less favourable seems to be the managements' anxiety to show profits rather than meet the claims of the workers.

In publicly owned undertakings in some countries the political influence of the workers appears to be of great assistance in obtaining good conditions, but it is remarkable that in countries where the forms of public ownership are such as to make management largely proof against political pressure, conditions are also generally and often far better than in private undertakings. This fact led the conference to advise the workers in the passenger transport industry to use their influence to bring about the transfer to public ownership of privately operated transport services. But the general feeling was that in practically all countries a more or less large part

of passenger transport will remain under private ownership for a long time to come. Organizations in these countries are advised to join efforts to equalize working conditions, and to enlist for the purpose the support of public opinion and try to educate it. The conference endorsed wholeheartedly the view of L. W. Peterse, Vice-President of the Dutch Railwaymen and Tramwaymen's Union, who reported on the subject, that, "Reason and equity support no argument to justify workers in one group of transport undertakings having lower wages, longer hours, fewer paid holidays and less security than their fellow workers in another such group."

All delegates came from countries which are highly organized and socially advanced, so their reports showed that negotiation and conciliation machinery was on the whole well developed. The comparisons were interesting and gave many a delegate useful hints for improving existing national machinery. There is no desire to bring about international uniformity in this field, but the conference endorsed some principles outlined in his report by the Mr. Jensen, leader of the Norwegian Municipal Workers' Union. These principles are that negotiations must be genuine bargaining between free agents, whether the transport undertaking is in private or public ownership; that the settlement must be effected by collective agreement and disputes prevented and settled by an effective conciliation machinery in which the workers can have confidence; that public decrees and statutory regulations are not suitable instruments for fixing working conditions, one of the major objections being that they place the workers concerned in an exceptional position in comparison with workers in other industries.

Mr. Jensen also pointed to the fact that in a number of countries, trade unions' or workers' representatives exercise a certain share of power and responsibility in the management of transport undertakings. He held, and the conference agreed with him, that the workers should seek to play an active part in the management of the undertakings which they serve and should therefore press for the setting up of appropriate committees.

There was a prolonged discussion on the question of hours of work in passenger transport, on the basis of a report by Mr. John Lauwereins of the Belgian Tramway and Bus Workers' Union. The conference endorsed his view that the international convention on hours of work and rest periods of drivers of road transport vehicles of 1939 was no longer a satisfactory instrument. It lags behind achievements and practices at present in force in a number of countries.

It is not up to date in respect of weekly and daily limits of hours of work and of spread-over nor in respect of payment of overtime and nightwork. Its main defect is that it provides for a standard working week of 48 instead of 40 hours. However, the economic consequences of the war are acknowledged to be in many countries a serious obstacle in the general reduction of hours of work to 40 per week in the near future. The conference embodied its conclusions on the question in the following resolution :

**Resolution on Hours of Work.** "This conference of tramway and bus workers affiliated to the International Federation of Unions of Employees in Public and Civil Services and the International Transport Workers' Federation, co-operating for the first time in a joint meeting under the auspices of the two Internationals, at Utrecht from May 3 to 7, 1948 ;

"Having given full consideration to the question of working hours in passenger transport in the light of the conditions temporarily prevailing as a consequence of the second world war ;

"Is of the opinion that the arguments, both social and technical, which have been advanced in the past in favour of the reduction of the working week to 40 hours have lost none of their force, but have rather been strengthened by the greater strain which later technical development has imposed on the tramway and bus workers.

"It further considers that the special character of the work of tramway and bus workers, with its irregular hours and ever-increasing demands on their nervous energy, justifies preferential treatment in the matter of working hours.

"On the other hand, the conference realizes that the material destruction and economic disturbance caused by the war have created a situation which in many cases precludes any immediate improvement on pre-war conditions, and that for some years to come a special effort will be required of the working class for purposes of reconstruction. If the tramway and bus workers are to make their contribution to this effort, they will have to envisage the achievement of the 40-hour week, and some other of their pre-war claims, by stages.

"The conference sees no reason why the old claims should be forgotten, however, or why new claims that have every social and technical justification should not be already formulated, so that they may be realized as and when circumstances permit.

"It therefore requests the executive committees of the two Internationals to initiate steps to secure the adoption of a new international convention on hours of work and rest periods in road transport, which shall permit of its flexible application during the period of reconstruction and which shall embody the following claims :

1. Standard working week of 40 hours, applicable to all workers on vehicles engaged in road transport, including those who ordinarily do a considerable amount of subsidiary work or whose work is frequently interrupted by periods of mere attendance.
2. Working day not to exceed 8 hours, extensible to 10 where serious technical difficulties make this absolutely necessary.
3. Spread-over not to exceed 10 hours, extensible to 12 where serious technical difficulties make this absolutely necessary.
4. All breaks not exceeding 30 minutes to count as working time.
5. Maximum of 5 hours' uninterrupted driving time.
6. Minimum daily rest period of 12 hours, reducible to 8 not more than once a week.
7. Minimum weekly rest of 32 hours comprising one full calendar day.
8. Rest days to include a minimum of 13 Sundays a year except where a proper public service otherwise requires.
9. Minimum rate of time and a half for overtime.
10. Minimum rate of time and a quarter for night work."

Although the European Recovery Programme, the so-called Marshall Plan, was not listed among the subjects on the Agenda, pre-occupations of an economic nature were so strong as to occasion a short debate on the question on the last day of the conference.

Mr. Henriksen, of the Delegation of Municipal Workers of Norway, submitted the following resolution which the conference adopted unanimously.

"This International Conference of Bus and Tramway personnel, organized by the International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Federation of Unions of Employees in Public and Civil Services,

"Notes with satisfaction the activities of the trade union movements in the western countries of Europe and in the United States of America, in respect of the European Recovery Programme.

"It also notes with satisfaction the results of the conference of the various national trade union centres held in London on 8th and 9th March, 1948, and of the Conference which the International Transport Workers' Federation held in Luxembourg from April 6th to 9th, 1948, in which representatives of other international trade secretariates took part as observers.

"The conference hails these activities as constituting an earnest endeavour to ensure the success of the European Recovery Programme in the interests of the working classes of the countries participating in the Plan.

"This conference sees in the success of this Plan the possibility of improving the economic conditions and the standard of life in the countries concerned, and by so doing of safeguarding their freedom and their democratic ways of life.

"This conference deplors the fact that a certain section of the labour movement in Western Europe still opposes the European Recovery Programme on political grounds and tries to undermine the confidences of the workers

in the ideas of international and human solidarity which underlie the Programme and inspire the American people, and also in the efficacy of the support given to it by the Trade Union centres and their affiliated unions.

"This conference wishes to express its firm belief that the participation of the working class movement in the countries concerned will ensure that the European Recovery Programme will be utilized in the interest of the working population and will in its effects counteract any attempts at exploitation by capitalist interests."

The Dutch trade unions and public authorities were

generous and congenial hosts to the conference. The country was in an optimistic mood celebrating the third anniversary of its liberation. This optimism seemed fully justified as the reconstruction of the country has progressed pretty far and is still proceeding at high speed. The achievements in the field of reconstruction, the schemes carried out between the two wars, and the monuments of bygone generations, testify to the industry and resourcefulness of Dutch workers by hand and brain. The delegates left the country with the feeling that their visit to Holland was something which everyone would recall with pleasure in future years.

## THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA CONFERENCE 1948

By H. J. PERKINS

General Secretary of the Radio Officers' Union of Great Britain

Subsequent upon the loss of the *Titanic* in April 1912, the first Safety of Life at Sea Convention was introduced into maritime affairs in 1914 and this was followed by the second Convention of 1929.

After a lapse of nineteen years a further conference has now been held in London during the period April 23rd to June 11th of this year.

Government delegations, comprised of Government officials, Shipowners and, in some cases, Seafarers' representatives have attended.

Among others, were those Seafarers' delegates from Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as representatives from the Seamen's Unions of both the U.S.A. and Australia, who were also members of their national delegations.

Prior to the conference these delegations in 32 countries have formulated proposals to improve upon the provisions of the 1929 Convention, and the work of the conference, now concluded, has been based upon the various views as expressed in the earlier work of the delegations and committees.

To proceed with the preparation of a new Convention the United Kingdom's Minister of Transport in formally opening the conference, stated that the express purpose facing the delegates was to provide for *greater safety of life* for those using the sea.

The work of the conference was delegated to main committees to deal with the following subjects :

(1) *Construction*. This Committee had to consider watertight sub-division of passenger ships and structural matters, pumping requirements, fire precautions, stability, steering gear, etc., and to decide whether any such requirements should be applied to cargo ships.

(2) *Life-Saving Appliances*. To consider modifications to the 1929 Convention in respect to such matters as life-saving appliances, musters and drills and whether such provisions shall apply to cargo ships of 500 tons gross and over.

Decisions were reached regarding cargo ships which are now to come within the Convention. Mechanical davits are approved. Lifeboats Class I (a) are to be fitted with internal buoyancy. The lifeboats of all

passenger ships, irrespective of tonnage, and cargo ships of 1,600 tons gross and over will include at least one mechanically propelled lifeboat. All lifeboats certified to carry 60 or more persons will be fitted with either motor or hand-propelling gear.

Two classes of motor boats will be provided for, Class A and Class B. The former to carry an ignition compression engine (Diesel) to develop a speed of six knots in calm water, and in the case of Class B any type of engine giving a speed of four knots in calm water.

(3) *Radio*. As distinct from the 1929 Convention, provisions are now made whereby ships below 1,600 tons gross will be installed with either radio telegraphy or radio telephony. This will apply to ships down to 500 tons gross.

Radio watches for safety at sea are now provided for in both passenger and cargo ships whether an automatic alarm device is installed or not. No safety watches were required by the 1929 Convention if an automatic alarm device was carried.

There is a general improvement in the technical specifications of modern apparatus and the more general use of direction finders is advocated.

The adoption of regulations to cover radio aids to navigation has been deferred pending a clearer picture of future development and requirement becoming available.

(4) *Safety of Navigation*. This Committee handled questions and proposals relating to the Safety of Navigation Chapter of the 1929 Convention, as well as navigational aids, life saving and distress signals, collision regulations, and the carriage of explosives and dangerous cargoes.

For the first time an International Convention will incorporate rules relating to lights to be carried, signals to be made and manœuvres to be carried out by ships at sea to ensure a high degree of safety.

An important decision reached by the conference is that a cargo ship shall not be allowed to carry more than 12 passengers. This decision was reached in spite of heavy pressure from some quarters to increase the number.

A matter of vital importance, in the view of seafarers, is the question of manning for safety at sea.

The 1929 Convention deals very briefly with this subject as can be seen by the provisions of Article 48 which reads :

“Manning—The Contracting Governments undertake, each for its national ships, to maintain, or, if it is necessary, to adopt, measures for the purpose of ensuring that, from the point of view of safety of life at sea, all ships shall be sufficiently and efficiently manned”.

The American delegation to the conference had submitted proposals which sought to cover manning more specifically than was done in the 1929 Convention, stressing more strongly the human factor in relation to safety at sea.

Consequently at a meeting of the Seafarers' delegates it was decided to support the U.S.A. proposals as a basis upon which more precise regulations could be introduced into the Convention.

A statement was therefore prepared and circulated to the delegates of all countries attending the conference. This statement is quoted hereunder :

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY THE SEAFARERS' GROUP OF THE I.L.O.**

“Article 48 (Manning). We represent those who must take steps in time of distress to save the lives of all those sailing on board ships. The present wording of Article 48 of the Convention is unsatisfactory from a safety point of view. It is a generalization and requires immediate implementation in detail. General rules are always difficult to apply. Therefore to promote safety at sea we must have more than general rules as are contained in the present Article 48 concerning manning in this Convention. Definite binding obligations must be assumed on the part of all contracting States, setting forth minimum requirements of manning in the interests of safety.

“The Seafarers have come to the conclusion that the Convention for Safety of Life at Sea must embody definite and practical minimum standards for the manning of ships. Failure to achieve this fundamental principle for safety is to acknowledge the basic failure of this Conference—to protect safety of life at sea.

“There is a definite distinction between the Safety of Life at Sea Convention and an International Labour Convention. The former is an agreement between countries which prescribes international rules to protect safety of life at sea. The latter is mainly concerned with international agreements on minimum working conditions, affecting the social and economic well-being of workers.

“We realize that the I.L.O. can deal with safety of life at sea solely in the interest of seafarers. However, safety of life at sea is not only a question which concerns seafarers. It concerns the lives of all those on board ship. It is not feasible to regulate safety of life at sea for the crew in one Convention and to bring passengers under another Convention. When the I.L.O. draws up a manning scale, social, economic and safety problems will be covered. To date this has not been done. To

delay solving safety questions which are related to manning by referring them from one conference to another is a means of avoiding the responsibility of this conference on Safety of Life at Sea.

“We subscribe, in principle, to the American proposals that the Safety of Life at Sea Convention shall provide for a minimum manning scale for each vessel and for certain provisions regarding watchkeeping, which are consistent with the recommendations of the International Seafarers' Charter.

“Most nations recognize the responsibility for protecting the lives of their nationals aboard vessels under their jurisdiction. Each administration is aware of the importance of adequate manning for the protection of life at sea. Therefore the adoption of minimum manning requirements by this conference gives protection to the lives of all nationals whenever they are on board vessels of any nation. This is the kind of protection every nation is anxious to extend to their people. We therefore urge that the delegates proceed forthwith to the drafting of minimum manning conditions.”

The question was referred to the Navigation Subcommittee B and then by that body to the Navigation Main Committee.

It became obvious that there was no desire on the part of the majority of the delegates of that Committee to deal with manning in the new Convention.

After discussion the following recommendation was unanimously adopted, while Article 48 was retained in the Convention by an almost unanimous vote of the Committee :

“The conference, recognizing that safety of life at sea is dependent not only on the construction and equipment of ships, the arrangements made to provide all possible aids to navigation and those made to ensure that assistance is afforded to ships in distress, but also on the adoption of measures as provided in Regulation 13 of Chapter V of the present Convention for the purpose of ensuring that from the point of view of safety all ships are sufficiently and efficiently manned, having noted :

“1. That the International Labour Organization has been concerned with manning and has adopted Conventions relating to

(a) minimum requirements of professional capacity for masters and officers on board merchant ships ; and  
(b) the certification of able seamen.

“2. That the constitution of the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization provides :

(a) that the Organization shall, through the Maritime Safety Committee, have the duty of considering, *inter alia*, matters relating to manning from the safety point of view ; and

(b) that the Maritime Safety Committee shall also have the duty of maintaining such close relationships with other inter-governmental bodies concerned with transport and communications as may further the object of the Organization in promoting maritime safety, recommends

that the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, when formed, and the International Labour Organization should maintain the closest liaison

and should arrange for a joint examination of this problem in order to ensure :

- (a) that the jurisdiction of each in regard to this question of manning is clearly defined ; and
- (b) that consideration is given to the question whether it is necessary to propose minimum manning standards for adoption internationally."

Seafarers' representatives who attended the Safety Conference were :

Australia—A. H. Moate ; Denmark—J. K. Olsen,

H. Rasmussen and H. Larsen ; Finland—N. Wälläri ; France—J. Bouchard and R. Allary ; Netherlands—J. F. Van Muylwijk ; Norway—Capt. E. Tønnesen, J. E. Johansen and E. H. Ottersen ; Sweden—A. Strömberg, A. Söre and N. Olssen ; U.S.A.—Hoyt S. Haddock and M. Weisberger ; U.K.—W. H. Coombs and T. Yates, and for the Seafarers' Group of the I.L.O.—T. Laursen, Denmark ; P. de Vries, Holland, and H. J. Perkins, U.K.

Twenty-one Seafarers' representatives versus approximately 230 Government and Shipowner delegates and advisers.

## A FIGHT AGAINST COLONIAL AUTOCRACY

by **KEN HILL**

*General Secretary, Transport and General Workers' Union of Jamaica.*

Is a strike of 200 bus workers (three months old at the time of writing) an event of sufficient importance to deserve the attention of the International Trade Union Movement? Let trade unionists read and judge for themselves.

Until they went on strike on 21st February, the employees of the bus company of Kingston, Jamaica, worked nine hours a day all the seven days of the week. They had no annual holidays with pay, nor did they receive any pay when sick. Many drivers earned from £1:18:6 to £2:2:0 per week, conductors from £1:11:6 to £1:15:0. Of the others who earned more, none earned as much as £4:0:0. Since the rates in the lower grades were fixed the cost of living has risen by 100 per cent.

The men were engaged on a daily basis. They were frequently dismissed without notice. In many cases they were not told the reason. They were subject always to arbitrary decisions of the employer.

The insecurity of tenure was still less bearable than the insufficiency of the wages. The Transport and General Workers' Union of Jamaica, affiliated with the Jamaican Trades Union Congress and the I.T.F., submitted claims for increases of wages, but put plenty of emphasis on the insecurity of tenure. The Union demanded the establishment of some joint machinery to which the men could apply for the settlement of their grievances. The Union demanded : "No suspension or dismissal without proper enquiry. Workers to be informed of the exact charge or charges laid against them and given a full and fair opportunity of defending themselves through their trade union."

It proved difficult to get the company to acknowledge the Union's representations. They came at last to a meeting to declare that they had no money to pay the wage increases and no time for setting up a joint Management-Labour Committee. That was the end of the "negotiations", after which the company made war on the Union with the time-honoured weapon of victimization. In small batches workers were dismissed or

"laid off". The response of the Government to an appeal of the Union was such that the company persisted in its refusal to bargain with the Union and went on hiring and firing to its heart's content.

The Union took a strike ballot, and on 21st February the men staged a sit-down strike. They sat in their buses but refused to operate them. The Government felt compelled to do something to ensure the operation of a public utility. It did not, however, call the parties to a conference, nor offer its good offices to mediate, conciliate or arbitrate. No, the Government issued a decree making it a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment up to one year with hard labour, to remain in the buses without the company's authority.

This decree took us by surprise. We rushed to the Governor. He explained that the decree had been promulgated in the public interest. He told us further that the company had declared to him their willingness to negotiate with us if they regained possession of their buses. There and then the Governor made an agreement with us whereby we were to instruct the strikers to surrender the buses, after which the Governor would "use his influence" to induce the company to negotiate with us or, failing agreement, to submit the dispute to arbitration. The strikers endorsed the Union's action. We were to learn later that while the Governor was making an agreement with us, the Commissioner of Police was engaged in making an agreement with the company concerning detailed arrangements for the eviction of the strikers from the buses by a strong force of armed police, as well as for the continued operation of the buses by strike-breakers under police protection. And these arrangements—not ours with the Governor!—were the ones which were actually carried out. Because the Union had trained its members to avoid clashes with the police, the eviction of the strikers from the buses was not accompanied by acts of resistance to the police.

The use of the police force did not stop there. The sympathy of the bulk of the population went to the strikers. It was felt, therefore, that the strike-breaker

needed protection. For the last three months Kingston buses have had armed police guards on board. In the early days of the strike protest could be made in public, there was a march of the strikers and their families, and this procession was reinforced by masses of other workers. Public meetings were also held. Although all that went off peacefully, the Government found it necessary to issue a second decree banning meetings, marches, assemblies, processions and the like. Then the inevitable happened: acts of violence occurred. In spite of armed guards, buses were stoned and even fired at. Strike-breakers were attacked, one strike-breaker died of a shot wound. As violence provokes more violence, strike pickets were arrested and brawls degenerated into scuffles. How and when this rising tide of violence shall come to a halt nobody knows. Already four bombs have exploded in buses, fortunately without causing catastrophes. By virtue of a further decree the police now have power to search intending passengers and their luggage.

What has the Government done since 21st February to put an end to this showdown between the bus company and the workers of a city of 200,000 inhabitants? It found nothing better than to grant the said company the monopoly of public passenger transport in the city and to keep the police force and the courts busy. So far, over sixty arrests have taken place. Trade union leaders have been arrested and tried on various charges. I was charged with sedition, but acquitted in court. Thus the plan to deprive the strikers of top leadership failed for the time being. Charges of unlawful assembly were dropped, but we were fined for not notifying the police twenty-four hours in advance that we were convening an emergency meeting.

The Kingston public must travel. Without buses the life of the capital city of the island would soon be

dislocated with harmful consequences for the population of the whole island. But bus travel in Kingston today is unsafe. A host of religious and other bodies, including the Chamber of Commerce, have appealed to the Government to use other methods to ensure the smooth and safe operation of a vital public service. So far without avail. Big business, local and foreign, and its stooges rule the roost in the "Executive Council" (as the Government is called) under the authority of a Governor who holds the "personal" opinion that in public utilities no trade union should exist. Thus a company hostile to the trade union movement can command "the whole power of the State to resist force".

In my opinion there is in this struggle more at stake than the livelihood of 200 bus workers' families or the existence of a trade union on a small island somewhere in the West Indies. This strike is an instance of the fight that workers must wage in a large area of the world against an evil autocracy that lingers on in colonial countries long after it has been broken and forgotten in the metropolis and replaced by a humane and civilized relationship between Government, Management and Labour. In my opinion it is the duty of the International Trade Union Movement to set an example by applying sanctions against Jamaican autocracy by direct trade union action. This is a case where counsel should be taken with the dockers of Great Britain and the U.S.A., Canada and Australia, Europe and New Zealand, with a view to their refusing to handle goods shipped from Jamaica or intended for that island until the strike is settled in an equitable manner.

Shall we see such action? The trade union movement of Jamaica and the West Indies anxiously watches and waits. And as the news spreads throughout the colonial countries, the number of keenly interested spectators grows.

## GRAVE CONFLICT ON THE AMERICAN RAILWAYS

By P. TOFAHRN

*Assistant General Secretary of the I.T.F.*

• **Cancellation of the legal right to strike.** World public opinion had been prepared to expect a nation-wide strike on the railways of the United States on May 11th. On May 10th wireless stations the world over announced that the strike had been called off. That was all that mattered as far as public opinion was concerned.

The railway trade unions throughout the world were not satisfied with this meagre piece of news, however. They wanted to know more about what was at stake and by what kind of settlement the big struggle had been averted.

The fact is that the struggle has not been averted.

"We have been compelled to work, but we have not retreated from our previous position that our wages must be increased and our working condition improved as requested", declared a spokesman of the American railwaymen involved in the dispute.

Compelled to work? In the American Democracy? Yes! "All the power of the Federal Government and the courts was used this week to prevent railroad workers from exercising their legal right to strike". That is how "Labor", the American railwaymen's weekly journal, characterized the event.

The explanation of this extraordinary state of affairs in a democracy is unavoidably lengthy.

**Formal aspects.** The U.S. railwaymen are organized in 22 Brotherhoods. The five organizations of Locomotive Engineers, Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Conductors, Trainmen and Switchmen form the "operating group", the seventeen others the "non-operating group". Wage negotiations are mostly conducted separately by the two groups and at different times.

Wage claims are first discussed between the organizations and individual companies. This stage of negotiations has become of late a mere formality. The companies are as united as the men. This results generally in the companies declaring their willingness to participate in the second stage, i.e. the appointment of a "national carriers' conference committee" authorized to negotiate with the Railway Trade Unions on behalf of all companies.

When these direct negotiations do not lead to agreement, the "National Mediation Board" steps in, at the request of either party. When mediation fails, the parties are free to take whatever action they think fit, unless the President of the United States initiates the fourth and final stage by setting up an Emergency Board. This is, in reality, a second attempt at mediation. If there is still no agreement the parties are free to take, thirty days after the Emergency Board has reported its failure to bring about agreement, whatever action they think fit.

Mention must be made of two legal instruments at the disposal of the U.S. Government. The first is a law, enacted in 1916, by which American Railways were brought under Government control during the first world war. It still enables the Government to take over the railways and operate them under its own control. The second is the "injunction". The Government can apply to the Courts for an order restraining individuals and organizations from carrying on a strike in government-controlled undertakings. For violating such a restraining order the U.S. Mine Workers' Union was fined twice to the tune of \$3,500,000 and \$1,400,000.

**Brief history of the dispute.** On March 25th, 1947, the non-operating group served demands on the railway companies for a wage increase of 20 cents per hour. These demands ran through the usual procedure of negotiation and mediation and finally on July 25th an agreement to arbitrate was reached. The Board of Arbitration awarded an increase of 15.5 cents per hour effective from September 1st. That settled the dispute in respect of the non-operating group.

On June 20th, 1947, the operating group served notices on the companies for 44 changes in the working rules. On the same day the companies also submitted to these five trade unions notices for 25 changes in the working rules. On September 30th the five trade unions submitted claims for a wage increase of 30 per cent subject to a minimum of \$3 per day. Negotiations on the proposed changes of rules started on October 7th, and on October 31st the parties combined their discussions on the rules and wages.

Two of the five operating organizations, the Order of Railway Conductors and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, signed on November 14th an agreement with the companies whereby wages were increased by \$1.24 per day, i.e. 15.5 cents per hour.

But no agreement was reached between the companies and the other three operating organizations, with whom separate negotiations continued in respect of wages and rules. The negotiations were broken off on November 19th without any agreement having been reached. The services of the National Mediation Board were then invoked by the companies, but no settlement could be reached by mediation. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and the Switchmen's Union then took a strike ballot. The National Mediation Board reported to the President of the United States that the dispute between these three organizations and the railway companies threatened substantially to interrupt interstate commerce.

The President then set up an "Emergency Board", an action which prevented the three organizations from issuing the strike order. The Board held public hearings from February 2nd to March 10th, and after the close of these hearings held conferences with the representatives of both parties but failed to secure a settlement by agreement. The Board then decided to make recommendations which were reported to the President on March 30th. In respect of wages it recommended an increase of 15.5 cents per hour as from November 1st, 1947.

The three trade unions rejected the recommendations. They fixed May 11th, at 11 a.m., as the date on which the strike should start. In the intervening period they endeavoured to induce the companies "to negotiate the recommendations into a form that will be acceptable". But they soon had to inform the President that the companies would "not budge an inch". The parties were then called to the White House. At the conferences there the companies remained as obdurate as ever. Up to May 10th no agreement had been reached.

**Seizure and injunction.** The President then ordered the seizure of the railways by the U.S. Government and instructed the Secretary of the Army to operate them in the name of the Government. This did not induce the leaders of three trade unions to cancel the strike decision, so the instrument of the "injunction" was used. A Federal judge enjoined the Unions, their officers or other agents to refrain "from in any manner encouraging, ordering or engaging in or taking part in a threatened strike" and from "in any manner interfering with or affecting the orderly continuance of work in the railroad system".

In a public statement, the President justified his action in the following terms:

"It is essential to the public health and to the public welfare generally that every possible step be taken by the Government to assure to the fullest possible extent continuous and uninterrupted transportation service. A strike on our railroads would be a



nation-wide tragedy, with world-wide repercussions". In respect of the working conditions, the statement read as follows :

"The Executive Order I have issued provides that, until further order of the President or the Secretary of the Army, the terms and conditions of employment now in effect on the railroads shall continue in effect, without prejudice to existing equities or to the effectiveness of such retroactive provisions as may be included in the final settlement of the disputes between carriers and the workers".

The "seizure" of the railways by the Army is looked upon as a mere "formality in a series of complicated procedures rather than one of operation" (*New York Times*). Seven leading company officials have been made "colonels" and the existing managements will conduct railway business "in the normal way". Apparently profits, too, are to be "handled as heretofore".

The judge who issued the injunction forbidding the Railway Trade Unions to carry out their strike decision justified his order by the consideration that any railway strike would "imperil national health and safety and interfere and obstruct the effective performance in discharge of vital and necessary Government functions, and will frustrate the powers conferred by the Constitution and by the acts of Congress upon the Executive branch of the Government, and cause the United States of America to suffer irreparable injury for which it has no adequate remedy at law".

**Why the trade unions rejected the terms offered.** The three trade unions involved rejected the wage increase of 15.5 cents per hour accepted by the other trade unions in September and November 1947 because the increase did not meet the position in May 1948.

In January 1941, the average straight-time wage for engine, train and yard service employees was 89.9 cents per hour. Between 15th January 1941 and 15th April 1948 the cost of living rose according to official statistics by 68 per cent. To compensate for the increase these hourly wages need to be increased by 61.1 cents. The increases granted since 1941 amount to 29.5 ..

The deficit on 15th April, 1948 amounted to	31.6 ..
Increase recommended by the Emergency Board as from .. .. .	15.5 ..

Additional amount required to meet increased cost of living as of 15th April, 1948 .. .. .	61.1 ..
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The Unions had further claimed overtime rates for work on Sundays and holidays and an allowance of 10 cents per hour for night work (6.30 p.m. to 6.30 a.m.). These claims, too, were rejected by the companies and the mediators. The concessions made in respect of the revision of the 25-year-old working rules failed to redress wide-spread grievances such as loss of time at starting and terminal points without proper payment, long waiting periods at points lacking adequate eating and sleeping facilities and adjustment of inequities in rate differentials.

**Why the companies refused to yield.** The trade union negotiators were particularly incensed by the companies' obvious determination to refuse all worth-while concessions and their confidence in the Government's ultimate decision to "break the strike". They told the press : "We have been confronted by legal talent in massed formation since the early stages of this wages-rules movement. It got so bad that we had to call in an attorney to keep us advised about what the phalanx of company lawyers were trying to say. . . . There are no lawyers operating trains . . . and legal skir-mishing is no substitute for honest and collective bargaining".

In his public statement of May 10th, President Truman points out that three trade unions "have declined to accept the findings and recommendations of an emergency board created by the President under the Railway Labor Act". The trade unions emphasize that "nowhere in his statement did he refer to the obstinate refusal of the carriers to offer a reasonable settlement". But what they emphasize still more is that "acceptance of any recommendations made under the Railway Labor Act is voluntary" and that the President's action introduces compulsory arbitration through the back door.

The President of the Switchmen's Union, A. J. Glover, said : "Now Management knows that when it gets into a dogfight, the Government will step in and act as a strike-breaking agent". The Unions suspect that the railway companies have known this for some time and were therefore sure that they could be stubborn with impunity.

**Solidarity of the 22 railway trade unions.** From the fact that the dispute only came to a head in the case of three of the railway trade unions, it should not be inferred that the other organizations are indifferent. Quite the contrary is true.

On April 10th, sixteen "non-operating" unions submitted claims for a reduction of working hours from 48 to 40 hours, with a simultaneous increase of present straight-time earnings (for 48 hours) by 25 cents an hour, all effective from May 10th.

If the locomotivemen's and switchmen's demands for an increase beyond the 15.5 cents granted last year are rejected, the claims of the non-operating groups are likely to suffer the same fate. The interests of all being thus at stake, the unions are united in the fight against the railway companies.

**Government action directed against workers.** Twenty of the twenty-two organizations are federated in the "Railway Labor Executives' Association". This Association has considered the implications of the Government's intervention and rôle in the dispute.

Their conclusions were laid down in a resolution demanding "that the Government, having designated itself as the legal operator of the railroads, assume the full responsibilities of operation ; that the Government take control of the revenues of the railroads as it already has taken control of the employees of the railroads, and proceed to bargain upon wages and working conditions".

The Association also resolved "that the Government, moved by the present demonstration of the inability of railroad management to maintain satisfactory labor relations and conditions upon the railroads, and further, in view of other recent and similar critical situations, as well as other failures of railroad management to meet the public need for efficient, prompt and full services, begin preparations for the transfer of railroad ownership from private interests to the United States of America".

By raising the question of government ownership the railway trade unions have thrown into relief that the present form of seizure is an imposture. Genuine control would have meant the appointment of an administrator to whom the railway managers would be responsible. For the duration of government control the boards of directors of the companies would have been out of business. Not an unjust penalty when "free enterprise" proves unable to ensure the functioning of the principal public utility by coming to agreement on conditions of employment with free employees. The government administrator should assume the responsibilities of the companies towards the State, the public, the railway employees and the shareholders.

But the government shuns these responsibilities. It has merely "assumed the rôle of a strike-breaking agency". After having prevented the strike, it proceeds to hold conferences with the disputing parties which,

of course, lead nowhere. Why should companies yield to employees who cannot strike, while their own authority, revenue and profits are left untouched?

The action of the Government raises complicated legal and constitutional problems. The railway trade unions cannot wait until the lawyers and the courts have disentangled them and are, therefore, seeking a congressional investigation into the way in which the entire case has been mishandled.

**World-wide solidarity with the U.S. railwaymen.** Railwaymen throughout the democratic world are in sympathy with their fellow workers in the United States in their defence of their standard of life, against private profit, in their defence of their right to withhold their labour.

They would join their voice to that of the American railwaymen if the U.S. Government were to play off the public interests of the country, and of the countries dependent upon American help against those of the American railwaymen in a manner that would reduce the Government's rôle to that of a custodian of narrow capitalist interests. The American railwaymen have indicated how the U.S. Government can reconcile national and world-wide public interests with those of the American railway workers. We hope that the negotiations between the U.S. Government and the railway trade unions will start soon. With private interests out of the way, it should not be more difficult in the U.S. than in other countries to work out a settlement beneficial both to the community and its servants.

## CO-ORDINATION OF THE FORMS OF TRANSPORT IN NORWAY—II.

**Bus System.** Development during the past few years on long-distance services has been so rapid that to-day the whole range of vehicles can still be seen on the roads, from the first buses, which were not capable of competition, to the latest type, which offer the traveller the last word in comfort and safety. The bus companies are working to consolidate their position, by merging into stronger units which will be able to meet the demand.

**Aviation.** Air transport will link up the different parts of the country more closely. It has also a part to play in the tourist traffic, in running air ambulances and for other special purposes. Overseas air lines are in a different class and should be considered with ocean shipping in relation to domestic traffic.

**Road Haulages.** Goods transport by road providing a link between rail and waterways, is the most flexible transport facility in the system of goods transport. The number of commercially licensed lorries (i.e. goods lorries for non-scheduled service as against the scheduled lines running on a concession) must be fixed in relation to the normal requirements. Lorries must be attached to the transport centre in their transport region. Their licence is valid for the particular region, where they

operate, but they can go outside this district—and return with a load—with the consent of the transport centre, when and where this is considered justified. Within each region also, trips must be made on the instructions of the transport centre, which sees to it that no competition arises with scheduled communications.

In order to avoid the issue of too many licences, undertakings having their own motor vehicles are under the authority of the transport centre and can be instructed to haul loads when the resources of licensed hauliers fall short of requirements.

**Scheduled and non-scheduled transport.** Scheduled transport is most suitable where the need is fairly constant and for a particular service. But a number of lines are of such importance that the State has found it necessary to grant a subsidy for carrying them on, even where the general conditions for a scheduled service do not exist.

Non-scheduled transport services are made available where the public or goods happen to be, and carry out transport according to a special agreement. Hence they are more flexible in their adjustment to transport demands than scheduled services.

Scheduled and non-scheduled transport services must be combined in such a way as to maintain the greatest advantage for both. Where traffic of an appropriate kind is constant it is of advantage for the public to collect the goods and passengers at certain points along a fixed route. Non-scheduled communications must bring people to and from the collecting points and furthermore must meet special demands for transport. Scheduled communications require the co-ordination of routes and charges.

In the case of non-scheduled transport much can be saved by the centralization of numerous small units. This was borne in mind in the drafting of the Communications Bill, which provides for lorries engaged in professional road haulage to be registered in the transport centres. Different kinds of haulage can be combined here, small loads being brought together to make one full load, return loads arranged, etc., and overlapping can be cut out. War experience has shown how much can be saved in this way.

The transport centres will have certain definite duties. They must co-operate with all forms of transport, but are empowered to give special permission for vehicles to go outside the area specified in their licences.

**The co-ordinating bodies.** In addition to the Ministry and National Communications Boards, the Communications Bill provides for local Communications Boards, which will look after transport interests in their own areas and contribute in promoting the country's communications as a whole.

It is proposed that the local boards be appointed by the civic area authorities (County Council) in each case. The chief administrative officer of the area (County Sheriff) will be the chairman, and an expert on transport matters will be appointed secretary to the Board. The work of the local boards will be co-ordinated by the Communications Ministry, with the assistance of the National Communications Board.

Moreover, co-ordination is needed between the different areas (countries). The Ministry and the Communications Board must deal with the appropriate extension and improvement of inter-area transport, and settle conflicts between the different areas.

Adjustment between transport requirements and transport capacity is an important aspect of co-ordination. Transport expansion requires labour, material and capital, all of which are so short that caution is called for in expansion, if a balance is to be maintained with other economic fields.

*A distinction must be drawn here between the forms of transport used to meet the existing need, and those which are themselves instruments in creating further demands. In the last category comes aviation, more particularly overseas lines, but also domestic lines which represents a factor in the Norwegian tourist trade. This applies also to road and railway lines laid down to provide access to a district, and contribute to economic development, as well as to other transport services.*

The co-ordinating organs must keep a record of transport which is either not carried out or not carried out in good time, or of loads which are unremunerative

for the carriers. They must look into the possibilities for improving conditions and enforce such regulations as may be suitable in each case. It is a matter of judgment to decide how much service transport should offer with respect to the country's economic situation as a whole. Here it is useful to look at the whole situation, including public finance, etc.

**Future prospects.** On even a conservative estimate it will require 700 to 800 million kroner per annum to maintain, repair, renew and improve inland transport in Norway. Of especial importance from the imports point of view are motor vehicles and aircraft, with their spare parts, rubber and fuel. But shipping, electrical material for the telegraph and telephone systems will also weigh heavily on the import budget.

The present situation makes it essential that the different initiatives in this field should be weighed up against the need in other fields of reconstruction. Regulatory organs are in existence to make such a judgment—the Export-Import Board, the Housing Board and the Labour Board. But a co-ordinating body has also been created in the National Budget Committee set up in the Ministry of Finance. This Committee is drawing up an economically realistic budget for the government and parliament. The Communications Ministry is taking part in this work as the co-ordinating organ for transport.

Special interest is attached to great public works like roads, railways, etc., because of their impact on labour supply, as man-power is still short in Norway.

As, on the other hand, these are fields in which workers can be employed with advantage when there is a surplus of labour, it is essential that plans are already prepared now so that these works can begin at short notice.

## PNEUMATIC-TYRED VEHICLES.

The idea of running pneumatic-tyred vehicles on rails is about a hundred years old and the first patent was taken out by Mr. R. W. Thomson. Thomson's drawing shows a rail vehicle with a guiding rail between supporting rubber-tyred wheels for horizontal guide wheels on vertical axes. The astonishing idea of Thomson's that pneumatics might be used on rails remained dormant for many decades. It needed the development of modern motor-transport on improved roads to challenge the monopoly of long-distance transport on steel rails in steel-tyred railway vehicles. The question became acute when road transport won more and more traffic from old-fashioned and even obsolete railway rolling stock. Then the long series of experiments started in Europe to adapt the soft-riding pneumatic to the needs of the ordinary railway wheel. These experiments are by no means yet concluded and are to a degree combined with the problem of door-to-door transport in the same vehicle partly by road and partly by rail.

The best known example of the pneumatic-tyred railcar is the Micheline, developed in France. It has pneumatic-tyred wheels with inner emergency treads, so that a deflated tyre is rendered harmless; there are special

wheel flanges. Then there is the Dunlop-Fouga car, which is a compromise in so far as the bogie is provided with an elaborate equalizer system to distribute the car weight on two outer wheels on each side with steel treads and flanges supporting and guiding the car, and two inner pneumatic-tyred wheels which have no flanges and are only supporting. The wheels are independently arranged on stub axles.

Austro-Daimler chose another solution. To remove the obstacle of the low carrying capacity of a rubber wheel on the narrow profile of the steel rail, the pneumatic-tyred wheels have their own axle which bears the load and is connected in the usual manner by leaf springs to the chassis. The pneumatics are not in contact with rails but located within very wide drums of special steel running wheels. This enables the designer to increase the load capacity to any desired extent.

While this car was put on the rail in Austria, the

Great Northern Railway of Ireland began service with cars embodying a similar idea, viz. the indirect rubber-tyred wheel. The Meredith-Howden wheels have a steel rim between the pneumatic tyre and the rail. The steel tyre has its outer surface shaped in accordance with standard railway practice, but the inner surface is machined to correspond with the profile of that part of the pneumatic tyre with which it is to be in contact. When machining the inner surface of the steel tyre, annular projections are left to engage with the grooves of the pneumatic tyre. The inside diameter of the steel tyre is somewhat less than that of the fully inflated pneumatic tyre. As no movement occurs between pneumatic and outer steel tyre, and as there is no contact with rails, accidental deflation is very remote. Furthermore, a safety brake block comes into contact if deflation goes beyond a certain limit. This at the same time keeps the wheel vertical and switches off engine ignition.

## AGENDA OF THE SECOND POST-WAR CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

From 19th to 24th July, well over 200 delegates and guests will meet at Ingeniörföreningen Kronprinsensgatan 17, Oslo, for the second post-war congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation. There will be representatives of over one hundred organizations in nearly 50 countries with a membership of something like four millions and they will form the biggest congress ever held by the I.T.F. The following is the Agenda to be dealt with :

1. Opening and Welcoming Addresses
2. Presidential Address
3. Election of Credentials Committee
4. Standing Orders
5. Report on Activities
6. Financial Report
7. Report on Regional Organizations
8. Resolutions and Proposals Submitted
9. Affiliation Fees

10. Elections :
  - (a) General Council
  - (b) Executive Committee
  - (c) Management Committee
  - (d) General Secretary
  - (e) Assistant General Secretary
  - (f) Auditors

11. Headquarters
12. Date and place of next congress
13. Any other business.

This journal is also published in Swedish under the title *Internationella Transportarbetarnas Tidskrift*.

**The Record of the Proceedings of the Conference on the European Recovery Programme, held under the auspices of the International Transport Workers' Federation at Luxemburg, from 6th to 9th April, 1948, are now available on request. For particulars write to International Transport Workers' Federation, Maritime House, Old Town, Clapham, London, S.W.4.**