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No. 1

January 1976

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

ITF FLAG OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN

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Affiliated unions recover over £1,300,000 in 1975

About 3,000 seafarers serving in 120 flag-of-convenience or crew-of-convenience ships have first-hand experience of the practical benefits of international solidarity. Thanks to the active intervention of ITF maritime affiliates and fraternal organizations, over £1.3 million sterling back pay was recovered during 1975 and paid out directly to the seafarers concerned.

We are still receiving reports of other cases but the total mentioned above was achieved through the efforts of maritime affiliates in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Curacao, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines and Sweden. The 1974 figure was just over £800,000.

Good news travels fast and more crews, mainly from the developing countries, are seeking the assistance of ITF affiliates to improve their miserable lot. Our affiliates' actions reveal that there are still far too many worn-out, unsafe ships in operation with appalling living and working conditions for their crews. There are far too many 'first-time' seamen being recruited from the areas of mass unemployment who in their desperation to find some means of livelihood are willing to pay anything from one to two hundred pounds sterling to the crew suppliers in order to get a job where they will daily risk their own lives and those of other members of the seafaring community through their inexperience and lack of training for the job and through the shipowners' callous disregard for national and international regulations and conventions designed to safeguard life at sea and to protect the community at large from the risk of pollution of the sea and coasts.

Representatives of docker and seafarer affiliates of the ITF will be discussing all aspects of the flag- and crew-of-convenience problems at the meeting of the ITF Fair Practices Committee being held in London on 27 and 28 January. A report on the meeting will appear in the next issue of the ITF Newsletter.

TRANSPORT

AUSTRIA

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Training course for lorry drivers

The first of what is expected to become a series of advanced training courses for lorry drivers is being jointly organized by the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs and the ITF-affiliated Transport & Commercial Workers' Union. The four week course - which will be held from 8 March to 2 April 1976 - will provide full-time study of technical and regulational matters (including legal provisions concerning insurance and injury compensation), the laws governing the transport of goods, customs and excise as well as accident protection and labour and social legislation. These matters will be covered during the first three weeks of the course in Vienna, after which the final week will be held in Knittelfeld for a series of practical training sessions covering driving techniques, loading, etc.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Review of maritime discipline proposed

The British Department of Trade has recently published working group reports proposing that systems of discipline on board merchant ships and fishing vessels should be modernised.

With regard to the merchant navy, the recommendation is that shipboard fines should be abolished; the present system would be replaced by a system of formal warnings recorded at the time of the offence and action taken by shore-based disciplinary committees with statutory backing. A code of conduct should be published and issued to all seafarers serving on UK ships advising them on behaviour and the consequences of breaches of the code. In the most serious cases disciplinary action might involve discharge from the industry. The working group also recommended that shipping companies and unions discuss ways in which its recommendations on shore-based disciplinary committees could be paralleled in overseas countries from which substantial numbers of non-UK-domiciled seafarers are drawn.

On the question of discipline in the fishing industry, the working group concerned recommended that there should be a statutory basis for port disciplinary committees and a tightening up of the rules on drinking - the largest single cause of indiscipline among fishermen. These should be associated with improved recruitment and training and consideration should be given to the establishment of a national registration scheme for fishermen and decasualization of employment in the industry (see following item).

TRADE UNIONS

GREAT BRITAIN

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Decasualisation proposed for trawlermen

The ITF-affiliated Transport & General Workers' Union has published a plan seeking nationalisation of the trawler industry and a statutory registration scheme administered jointly by the Union and trawler owners at national and port level. This would permit only registered employers to operate and only registered fishermen to be employed at ports covered by the scheme. Other proposals in the union plan include 100 per cent union membership, sickness, pension and holiday pay, and worker representation.

Closed shop agreements

Following the negotiation of closed shop agreements between British Rail and the ITF-affiliated British railway unions, further agreements are in course of negotiation with the National Freight Corporation and London Transport, mainly affecting members of the National Union of Railwaymen. The agreements will mean that membership of a recognised trade union will be a condition of employment.

SPAIN

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Dutch trade unionists have passports confiscated

Three out of a delegation of five Netherlands trade unionists had their passports confiscated after attending a meeting to commemorate the death of Pablo Iglesias, founder of the Spanish trade union organization UGT. The three unionists, one of whom was Siem Barendregt, of the ITF-affiliated Netherlands Transport Workers' Federation, were accused of providing funds to an illegal organization. Their passports were returned after the Netherlands embassy intervened.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

ITALY

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Airline workers' strikes continue

On 20 December the latest in a series of strikes by Italian airline workers took place - an earlier stoppage had been held on 5 December. The workers are campaigning for a single overall contract covering all flying and ground staff employed by the Italian airline companies.

MALTA

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Benefits for harbour pilots follow reorganization

Agreement has been reached between the Ministry of Finance and Customs and organizations including the ITF-affiliated Malta General Workers' Union (Port and Transport Section) on a reorganization of the harbour piloting and mooring services. The agreement, which came into operation on 1 January 1976, not only provides for greater efficiency of operation with the provision of improved equipment, particularly for communications, but also means better conditions for the men involved. A new allowance has been introduced for those who obtain proficiency certificates; retirement age has been reduced from age 65 to age 61; an insurance policy has been introduced for injuries at work; and better arrangements for collecting fees have been agreed.

NORWAY

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Increase in seafarers' pensions

With effect from 1 January 1976 pensions are increased for seafarer pensioners who have not yet reached age 67, as a result of the increase in the basic rate of national pensions from that date.

Seafarers' pensions increase from 71.30 kr to 76.50 kr per trip month for lower ratings and from 99.80 kr to 107.10 kr for higher categories.

The bonus for wartime merchant service also increases - from 95.10 to 102 kr for lower ratings and from 133.14 kr to 142.80 kr for higher categories per sailing month.

SPAIN

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### Underground railway workers strike in Madrid

Workers employed on the Madrid underground rail system struck for five days as from 5 January in support of demands for pay increases and a 40-hour working week. The strike was extremely successful and was given sympathetic support by other groups of Spanish workers. The government attempted to counter the paralysis of the system by bringing in troops to operate one of the main lines for a limited period. The Metro workers called off their strike temporarily on the understanding that negotiations would continue and that there would be no reprisals against them.

The ITF cabled the Spanish Prime Minister during the strike pressing for a fair settlement of the claims and stressing that coercion or repression on the part of the Government would provoke an immediate and fierce reaction from the world's transport workers.

Labour unrest continues in other industrial sectors, accompanied by the arrest of workers' leaders and brutal police action against demonstrations, both in Madrid and outside the capital.

UNITED STATES

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### UAL Ground Staff strike over

A strike by members of the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists employed by United Air Lines, which commenced on 6 December, ended 16 days later when the Association signed a new three year contract giving wage increases averaging about 28 per cent over the period of the agreement.

The increases are in stages of 5% from 1 November 1975, 4.7% on 1 July 1976, 2.8% on 1 January 1977; 4.3% on 1 July 1977; 3.4% on 1 January 1978 and 2.2% on 1 July 1978. In addition, a cost-of-living escalator clause provides for pay adjustments of up to 12 cents per hour in November 1976 and November 1977 on the basis of movements in the consumer price index. The agreement also improves pension arrangements and job security provisions.

### Unions join forces to fight redundancies

Three unions with members employed by Pan American World Airways - the ITF-affiliated Flight Engineers International Association and Transport Workers' Union, and the Teamsters - have issued a joint

statement as the first step in their campaign to combat threatened redundancies which may affect 337 flight engineers and other groups of Pan American employees. Furloughs are due to begin on 1 March 1976 with the layoff of 100 engineers. A further 168 would be laid off by 1 June and the company holds open the possible termination of the jobs of 69 more employees by mid-1977. The Engineers' Union considers these plans a violation of an agreement signed with the company in October last year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The United Nations have voted to hold the next session of the UN Law of the Sea Conference in New York from 15 March to 7 May.

The Republic of Guinea has joined the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, becoming its ninety-third member.

The two Netherlands national trade union centres NVV & NKV joined in a new organization, the Federal Netherlands Trade Union Movement (FNV) on 18 December 1975. President of the new body is Wim Kok.

PERSONALIA

Egil Halvorsen, President of the Norwegian Railwaymen's Union celebrated 30 years as a full-time union official last November. He was appointed publications secretary of the union in 1945 and then became editor of its magazine in 1949, a post which he held until 1968. He was elected Vice-President in 1962 and President in 1968.

Peter W. King has been elected President of the Swiss Transport and Commercial Workers' Union with effect from 1 January 1976. He has previously worked in the Cooperative movement.

Hans Schmölz, General Secretary of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union, has been elected to succeed Fritz Prechtl as Vice-President of the Vienna Trades Council.