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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

Executive Board meets in Oslo

The ITF Executive Board met in Oslo, at the educational and recreational centre of the Norwegian Seamen's Union, on 10 and 11 February 1976. Fritz Prechtel, the ITF's President, took the chair.

Spain and Chile were the main items of discussion, the Board concluding that there were grounds for hope in the one situation and signs of even further deterioration in the other.

The new Spanish régime was clearly the spiritual successor to the old, but lacked the self-confidence, however misplaced, of Franco's personal dictatorship. There was correspondingly a growing confidence among Spanish trade unionists, particularly in the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), with whose Transport Federation the ITF was in close touch. The Board approved a resolution calling on the régime to restore full democratic rights, release all political prisoners and legalize free trade unions and all political parties. The resolution finally urged all the ITF's affiliates to promote and intensify the political and economic harassment of the Spanish régime until democracy, in all its aspects, was restored.

The Board also unanimously approved a substantial programme of assistance to the UGT's Transport Federation and asked the Secretariat to examine the possibility of helping them provide trade union education for their members.

The Board's discussions on Chile led to the conclusion that repression, industrially and politically, had intensified rather than diminished. The Junta's suppression of the inter-denominational Committee for Peace, for example, had removed from the scene the only body able openly to succour the Junta's victims. The Board decided on further practical measures to express the ITF's unwavering opposition to the Junta, whilst maintaining the programme of harassment approved at its previous meeting. The General Secretary was also authorized to seek appropriate ways to channel material aid to those victimized by the Junta.

The Board received a report on the continuing struggle by some of the ITF's Japanese affiliates to secure the restoration of the right to strike in the public services. The Board unanimously decided to reiterate the ITF's support for their efforts and its willingness to do all it could on their behalf.

In addition to deciding on a number of administrative matters, the Board approved applications for affiliation from Colombia, Kenya, Malaysia, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Venezuela.

Finally, the Board recorded its sincere thanks to Ward Cassiers, President of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union (BTB), who was retiring from the Board. It was agreed, after consultation with the unions concerned, to co-opt Piet Potoms of the Railwaymen's Section of the Belgian Public Service Workers' Federation (CGSP) as his successor.

INTERNATIONAL
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ITF to study the effects of technological change on the railways

Next month, the ITF begins work on a major research project into the Human Effects of Technological Change on the Railways, which it is conducting jointly with the Manchester Business School. The field work will be carried out in Britain with the cooperation of British Rail and the rail unions. ITF railwaymen's affiliates in countries other than Britain -- notably those in Austria, Japan and Sweden -- have also agreed to make available information on the effects of technological change for incorporation in this international key study, which will be presented to the next Section Conference to be held in conjunction with the 32nd ITF Congress in 1977.

ASIA
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ITF Regional Conference for Road Transport Workers

The ITF, with the assistance of its North American affiliate, the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, recently held a Regional Conference for Road Transport Workers in Singapore. ITF Section Secretary Johann Hauf chaired the Conference and Donald U'ren, Regional Representative for Asia, acted as Conference Secretary.

The Conference discussed: international developments with special reference to the revision of ILO Convention No. 67 on Hours of Work and Rest Periods in Road Transport; working conditions; ITF and solidarity; and trade union organization and collective bargaining.

EUROPE

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Working Group looks into social implications of proposed inland waterway link

The ITF Inland Navigation Section has established a Rhine/Main/Danube Working Group of representatives from West European unions in the riparian States of the proposed trans-European inland waterway linking these three rivers, which is due to be completed by the early 1980s. Under the guidance of Section Secretary Johann Hauf, the Group, which has previously concerned itself with the international regulation of any future navigational régime on this link, is currently examining the effects that the construction of a waterway joining two economic blocs with inherently differing economic and political structures will have on the employment opportunities and conditions of work of West European inland boatmen. With this in mind, the next meeting of the Working Group will discuss the urgent need to harmonize social conditions between Rhine and Danube navigation and ways of pursuing this aim through the ILO.

TRANSPORT

GREAT BRITAIN

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Officers' union suggests changes at British Rail ferries

In a pamphlet entitled 'British Rail Shipping - Is there something wrong?', the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association argues that the loss-making ferry services operated by British Rail's shipping division could be run at a profit if they were to be separated from railway-orientated management and reconstituted as an independent public body with its own responsible Minister. The MNAOA is disturbed at BR's use of unsuitable and occasionally obsolete vessels, as well as by a general lack of enterprise in seizing opportunities for expansion, a situation which the association blames partly on the management structure, with members drawn largely from the British Rail Board who tend to give railway interests priority, and partly on a legislative framework which requires purchase plans and investment proposals to be examined first by the Board and then by a government department, a ponderous procedure which inevitably occasions considerable delays.

NORWAY

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Lessons to be drawn from the loss of the Berge Istra

Interviewed in the Norwegian trade union paper 'Fri fagbevegelse', Henrik Aasarød, General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seamen's Union and a member of the ITF Executive Board, outlines the lessons that are to be learned from the loss of the Liberian-registered and partly Norwegian-owned and largely Norwegian-manned vessel Berge Istra which foundered off the Philippines in the Mindanao Sea with the loss of all but two of her crew.

In the light of the time that elapsed before the search for survivors began, Aasarød suggests that vessels should be obliged to radio their position at stated intervals, thus enabling rescue services to be alerted shortly after an expected radio contact fails to materialize. The loss of the supertanker has also prompted discussion of whether current rescue equipment is suited to such large vessels. Aasarød believes that it is not: in the event of a violent explosion, as occurred on the Berge Istra, or in unfavourable weather conditions it can prove impossible to launch a lifeboat from the deck of a giant tanker, which can be as much as 10 metres above the level of the sea, without it being dashed to pieces against the side of the vessel. In bad weather conditions, too, liferafts can be blown away from crew members still in the water. To overcome these crucial launching problems, the union -- in cooperation with other interested groups -- is investigating solutions involving the use of lifeboats that can be launched with the crew already on board. The Seamen's Union also believes that the portable radio equipment carried at sea is unsuitable for use in an emergency. It would like to see easily-operated fixed long-range emergency transmitters complete with direction finder installed in lifeboats, with members of the crew being instructed in their use.

In a separate comment on the disaster, Eric Nevin, general secretary of the ITF-affiliated British Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, argues that the presence of a Radio Officer in the radio room when the vessel was rocked by a series of explosions would have pinpointed the area of search and might just possibly have saved more lives. We owed it to the members of the seafaring community, he said, to provide them with 24-hour radio contact with the outside world. The current statutory requirement for a Radio Officer to be on duty for only 8 hours out of every 24 was clearly inadequate.

SWEDEN

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Transport workers' union calls for nationalization of ports industry

In a report submitted to the Transport Ministry, the ITF-affiliated Swedish Transport Workers' Union has recommended that the country's ports should be nationalized. (The majority of the ports are currently under local authority control.) The union argues that the ports, like the roads and the

railways, should be regarded as public utilities for which the state would be directly responsible. The change to public ownership would undoubtedly be beneficial: it made sense in terms of the need for coordination and long-term planning in the ports industry and would also help create the right climate for an improvement in working conditions.

TRADE UNIONS

CANADA

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Canadian division of BRAC formed

Canadian members of the ITF's North American affiliate, the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, established their own autonomous division of the Brotherhood, with headquarters in Montreal, at a union convention earlier this month. President of the new division is BRAC Vice-President W.C.Y. McGregor, who is a member of the ITF Executive Board.

NORWAY

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Transport workers' union to recruit long-distance lorry drivers

The ITF-affiliated Norwegian Transport Workers' Union is to launch a recruitment campaign with the aim of attracting lorry drivers -- a largely unorganized group, whose wages now lag behind those of other workers -- into union membership. The union intends to draw up a draft agreement for the category, which will then be the subject of negotiation with the country's larger road haulage concerns. At the request of a group of drivers, who recently held a most successful meeting with representatives of the union, this proposed collective contract would include clauses relating to a minimum guaranteed wage, mileage allowances, working hours and a guarantee of subsistence allowances to drivers required to remain abroad for certain reasons.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRIA
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New contract for Austrian Airlines flying staff

A threatened 24-hour warning strike by pilots and stewardesses of Austrian Airlines, members of the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Union (HTV), was postponed and subsequently cancelled when agreement was reached with the airline, after difficult and protracted negotiations, on the terms of a new collective agreement, effective 1 April 1976. The key demands were for a reduction in the duty hours of both groups and proper pensions arrangements for pilots. Other staff claims will be put to arbitration.

DENMARK
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New pay rates for Danish seafarers

With effect from 1 March 1976, the following monthly wage rates (in Danish Kroner) apply in respect of seafarers covered by the current collective agreement between the shipowners' federation and the ITF-affiliated Danish Seamen's Union (these include cost-of-living allowances):

	3-watch system	2-watch system	Overtime per half-hour	
			Weekdays	Sun/Hols
Boatswain, pumpman	4770.16	5464.16	17.23	22.06
Able seaman	4540.16	5234.16	16.40	20.99
Junior seaman Over 18 years	1) 3756.69	4439.19	13.57	17.37
	2) 2696.46	3134.46	9.74	12.47
	3) 2055.08	2316.83	7.43	9.50
Junior seaman under 18 years	4) 1858.01	2052.26	6.71	8.59
	5) 1840.48	2034.73	6.65	8.51
	1) Over 2 years' service of which 1 yr. as deck rating		4) Over 1 yr's. service	
	2) Over 1 year's service		5) under 1 yr's. service	
	3) under 1 year's service			

GERMANY

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New agreement for dock workers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has negotiated a new 12-month pay agreement for German dock workers, effective 1 January 1976. Under a new eight-grade system, the improved hourly rates range from 8.40 DM to 12.56 DM, representing a monthly increase of between 79.58 DM and 110.72 DM.

ICELAND

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12-day general strike in private sector

A general strike of workers in Iceland's private sector began on February 17 following the collapse of central negotiations between the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the employers. Talks had been continuing since the expiry of existing contracts at the beginning of the year. The 12-day strike involving almost half the island's labour force closed shops, halted flights and caused buses to be operated according to Sunday timetables. The action was called off on February 28 when agreement was reached on a new collective contract, expiring in May 1977, which provides for total increases of 25% to 30%, to be implemented in four stages, the first of 6 per cent to apply from 1 March 1976. Shortly before the strike ended, agreement was reached with the employers on pensions and other key contract demands.

Three days prior to the commencement of the general strike, the ITF-affiliated Icelandic Seamen's Union called out its members on fishing vessels under 500 grt. At the request of our affiliate, we contacted ITF unions in Europe advising them of the fishermen's action and warning them that the owners might try to escape the effects of the strike by seeking to land catches and take on supplies and gear at European ports.

INDIA

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New agreement for Indian seafarers

The three ITF-affiliated seafarers' unions in India have won considerable improvements under a new two-year National Maritime Board agreement, effective 1 January 1976. These include: a monthly pay increase of 75 Rs; 50 paise added to hourly overtime rates; 42 days' annual leave (an increase of 6 days); the reimbursement of a return second class rail ticket from

the seafarer's home town to the port of engagement (previously seamen were entitled to reimbursement of the single fare only); and the payment of a subsistence allowance of 15 Rs per day when travelling on the company's account within India. In addition, a seamen discharged because of injury shall be entitled to his basic wage plus a subsistence allowance until declared fit or unfit, instead of the previous limit of 26 weeks.

MEXICO

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Cabin attendants' strike against Canadian Pacific Airlines

The ITF-affiliated Mexican Cabin Attendants' Association (ASSA) struck Canadian Pacific Airlines on 18 February in furtherance of its dispute with the airline management (see previous issue of ITF Newsletter). The efforts of the union to organize Mexican cabin attendants have attracted widespread international support. However, at the time of writing, no settlement of the dispute has been reached.

UNITED STATES

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Machinists win new contract with National Airlines

The ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers has won a new contract for its 1,500 members employed by National Airlines. Two cost-of-living adjustments written into the three-year agreement, which is backdated to 1 November 1975, mean that the current hourly rate of \$7.84 for a top-rated mechanic will rise to \$10 by 1 July 1978. Fringe benefits are also improved, notably pension and medical insurance benefits, and premium rates for holders of government proficiency licences.

FEIA takes action to save jobs

The ITF-affiliated Flight Engineers' International Association has instituted legal proceedings against Pan American World Airways in an effort to save the jobs of 337 flight engineers threatened by redundancy. The union charges the airline with having acted in bad faith in withdrawing unilaterally last December from an agreement which sought to prevent redundancies, thus jeopardizing the jobs of one-third of the total Pan Am F/E complement. The FEIA is particularly disturbed by the airline's action as it comes at a time when Pan Am seemed to be pulling out of its economic difficulties of the last two years, during which time the FEIA had done its utmost to help the airline restore its competitive position, notably by forgoing wage increases in 1975.

ERRATUM

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Lars Hellman was elected Vice-President of the Swedish Commercial Employees' Union and not Secretary as reported in the February Newsletter (see page 17). We apologise to Mr. Hellman for this mistake.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Some 4.000 French airport workers at the three Paris airports of Roissy, Orly and Le Bourget staged a 24-hour strike on 25 February in support of demands for employment guarantees and an increase in the purchasing power of salaries in 1976.

The ITF-affiliated German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) has been overwhelmed at the response of railway users to its 'Save the Railways' campaign (reported in Newsletter no. 2, 1976, page 12). According to a press communiqué, thousands of letters of support for the GdED action from people in all walks of life have been received at union headquarters.

The three ITF-affiliated British railway unions have strongly criticized British Rail's recent decision to increase passenger fares, bringing the overall increase in fares to 87% over the past two years, and the British government's subsequent announcement of only a £200 million subsidy for 1976, substantially less than forecast. The union fear that these two measures will lead to a further marked drop in passenger traffic and ultimately to a drastically reduced rail network.

British Airways pilots are to receive an extra £2,800 per year for flying Concorde.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has launched a campaign entitled 'A Better Life for All', the aim of which is to put an end to unemployment in the Province and to create a social climate in which all sections of the community, irrespective of their religious persuasion, enjoy certain basic human rights. A series of rallies and conferences will be held in connection with the campaign; and a six-point Declaration pledging support for its objectives collected over 20,000 names the first day it was opened for signature.

PERSONALIA

Gösta Hilding, who represented the interests of radio officers within the Swedish Ships' Officers' Association for 25 years until his retirement in 1970, has died after an illness lasting several years.

Arne Hoem, The Norwegian Seamen's Union representative in London since August 1971, died on 27 January, aged only 41. Prior to this appointment, he worked for ten years in the union's Liverpool office..

Ryo Kamisawa, formerly Director of the Educational Department of the All-Japan Seamen's Union, died on 11 February, aged 57 years. The ITF sent a condolatory message to the family of Brother Kamisawa, who was a member of the ITF Executive Board from 1962 to 1968.

E. Greve Petersen, chairman of the Danish Locomotivemen's Association, has been succeeded by K.B. Knudsen. G.A. Rasmussen, previously treasurer of the association, has been elected to Knudsen's old position of vice-chairman.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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| ITF Road Transport Workers' Section Conference | - | Vienna, 16-18 March 1976 |
| Meeting of ITF European affiliates | - | Vienna, 19-20 March 1976 |
| Preparatory meeting on Training and Qualifications of Seafarers | - | Baltimore, 22-23 April 1976 |
| Seafarers' Section Manning Committee | - | Baltimore, 26-27 April 1976 |
| Railwaymen's Section Sub-Committee on Transport Policy | - | Utrecht, 11-12 May 1976 |
| Conference on Cooperation and Resource Utilization in Connection with Welfare Programmes for Seafarers | - | London, 18-19 May 1976 |
| Fishermen's Section Conference | - | Grimsbj 21-22 June 1976 |
| Working Group "Rhine/Main/Danube" | - | Basle, 20-21 May 1976 |
| Seafarers' Section Conference | - | Early September 1976
(provisional). |

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST FROM
THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

STRIKE OF MADRID LORRY DRIVERS

From 24 February to 7 March 1976, 80% of Madrid lorry drivers (owner-drivers and drivers working for small transport firms) were on strike in support of claims to be relieved of excessive taxes and unfair competition and to force the Spanish Government to ensure that its own minimum tariffs and safety regulations are properly observed. The National Transport Federation of the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) reported that the strike had also spread to drivers in provincial cities, achieving 60% - 70% support in some cities.

The causes of the strike are:

1. Large industrial undertakings, many of which do not own their own vehicles, contract their transport out to small transport firms. Owing to excess capacity they have forced rates down below economic levels.
2. Unauthorised middlemen who do not own vehicles have gained control of contracting for the transport of produce to and from the Madrid fruit and vegetable markets and drivers who traditionally worked in this area are only able to obtain work by accepting it at rates laid down by the middlemen. Although the Government has laid down official minimum and maximum tariffs, 800/1,200 pesetas per ton, the middlemen only offer drivers 600-650 pesetas per ton, pocketing the difference. The authorities have turned a blind eye to the illegal operations of the middlemen.
3. Lorry owners are required by law to pay a "competition tax" to the RENFE (state railways); the amount varies but is 46,000 pesetas per year for a 22 ton vehicle.
4. Municipal tax is levied on all vehicles. The tax was 2,500 pesetas in 1975 but has been increased to 10,000 pesetas for 1976, an increase of 400%. Despite the increase, considered totally unjustified by the drivers, the municipal authorities refuse to provide any special facilities for parking or traffic movement in areas such as markets.
5. The price of diesel fuel has been increased by approximately 90% in a period of six months. However, the legal minimum and maximum tariffs have not been increased. Rather, they have been cut by the activities of the middlemen.
6. The legal life of a vehicle licensed for long distance road haulage is limited to 8 years. Typical current prices of lorries are: 3 axles, rigid - 2,200,00 pesetas; 4 axles, rigid - 2,500,000 pesetas; articulated - 3,000,000 pesetas. Given the

high cost of repairs due to a shortage of workshops, plus steep increases in taxes, social security payments and fuel costs, capital and operating costs have reached prohibitive levels.

7. Overloading of vehicles is widespread, undercutting the position of drivers who work within legal limits. Industrial concerns which operate vehicles with a licence to transport their own goods, tout for trade on return journeys, accepting loads at rates below the legal tariffs. The authorities generally ignore these illegal practices.

8. Membership of the Self-employed Workers' Mutual Insurance Fund is obligatory for all owner-drivers and small transport firms. It is necessary to contribute for five years before being entitled to any benefit. Contributions range between 4,000 and 12,000 pesetas per year. However, membership does not cover doctors' fees, medicine or clinical treatment and cash benefits for accident, incapacity for work and retirement are derisory.

The demands of the striking lorry drivers are:

1. That the tax payable to the RENFE by lorry owners should be abolished as it is a subsidy to a competing form of transport. A committee has been nominated to discuss this matter with the authorities.
2. The law should be enforced to prevent companies licensed to carry goods on their own account from carrying loads for third parties.
3. The legally established tariffs for the transport of goods be observed and the Ministry of Public Works employ sufficient inspectors for this purpose. The tariffs should be revised annually in accordance with increases in the cost of living index.
4. That the municipal tax on vehicles should not be increased.
5. That the permitted operating life of lorries be increased by 50%, subject to regular checks on their roadworthiness.
6. That proper checks be carried out to prevent overloading by the use of public weighbridges.

7. That no more operating licences be issued by the authorities as there is already excess capacity.

8. That operating licences should be transferable at the request of the holder to a person nominated by him where, for example, he is unable to continue driving for health reasons or retirement.

9. That, with the exception of the tax payable to the RENFE and the municipal tax, taxation on vehicles should be levied through tax on fuel on the principle that the vehicles covering the greatest mileage should pay the most tax. The settlement of this matter is said to be an indispensable condition of a return to work.

Having been informed of the situation and of the drivers' claims, the ITF sent the following telegramme to Senor Arias Navarro, the Spanish Prime Minister, on 3 March:-

The International Transport Workers' Federation representing 350 democratic and independent transport workers trade unions supports the Madrid lorry drivers in their present action and calls on the Spanish Government to desist from threatening to charge them with sedition.

The ITF urges the Spanish Government to discuss the claims of the lorry drivers with their freely chosen representatives with the aim of achieving a settlement which will relieve the lorry drivers of unfair taxes excessive competition and exploitation and which will permit them to operate in conditions which will provide them and their families with a fair income. The ITF also urges the Spanish Government to ensure that its own regulations concerning transport tariffs and the prevention of overloading of vehicles are observed.

(Sgd.) Charles Blyth
General Secretary

The ITF was informed by the UGT on 8 March that the strike had been suspended following a promise from the Spanish Government to reduce the "competition tax" payable to the RENFE, to prevent vehicles operating on own account from carrying goods for third parties and to take measures to ensure that minimum and maximum tariffs are observed. The Government also undertook to reply to the other claims by 28 March.

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