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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

EUROPE

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Council of Europe to admit Spain to membership

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has un-animously adopted a resolution inviting Spain to seek membership. The decision means that Spain will almost certainly be formally admitted as its twentieth member when the Council's Committee of Ministers meets on 24 November, thereby greatly facilitating Spain's eventual entry into the EEC.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL

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ILO experts call for world-wide action on safety and health in the offshore oil industry

An international tripartite meeting of experts on safety and health problems in the fast-growing offshore oil industry was held in Geneva under ILO auspices earlier this month. A. Selander, ITF Assistant General Secretary, attended the opening sessions of the meeting. The meeting drew up a series of guidelines recommending that the ILO, in cooperation with other bodies, should prepare a code of safe practices for the construction of fixed offshore installations; develop an internationally recognized system of alarms, warning signals and other means of communication between workers, often of different nationalities, engaged in offshore operations; and obtain professional advice on medical examinations for offshore workers, the occupational health risks of diving and the development of an internationally recognized divers' log book.

The experts felt that governments and the oil industry itself should attach particular significance to the establishment of joint safety and health committees and elected safety representatives. They also stressed the importance of safety and survival training, including training in the emergency evacuation of installations.

The experts further asked the ILO to consider a number of possible research areas, including the collection of statistical information which might help prevent accidents and promote healthy working conditions; the safety and health of workers on vessels moored alongside offshore installations; safety during drilling;

transport on to and off the installations; the effects of the arrangement of working time; and the analysis of laws and regulations, standards and guidelines for the industry. They also recognized that the problems of personnel engaged in ship operations in the offshore industry were best dealt with by the ILO Joint Maritime Commission.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Transport workers' leader urges cut in lorry drivers' hours

In his address to the annual national conference of the British Freight Transport Association, Jack Jones, who is general secretary of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union and an ITF Vice-President, called for a cut in lorry drivers' hours, a lower retirement age and longer holidays in order to improve recruitment to the industry. He also urged the government to provide an adequate road network for haulage in and out of cities where traffic congestion was now causing long and wasteful delays and for hauliers to allow union meetings to be held during working hours without loss of pay.

NORWAY

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Commission of inquiry publishes report on Ekofisk blowout

The Commission of Inquiry into the Ekofisk blowout, in its report published on 10 October, blames human error as the primary cause of the eight-day incident on Phillips Petroleum's Bravo platform last April, which led to a team of American experts having to be called in to cap the rogue well. The many warning signs that were present should have been heeded and an immediate cessation of work and the closing of the well ordered, the report says.

One of the most serious allegations against Phillips was that the company had failed to fulfil its established duty to inform the oil directorate of the changes it had made to the agreed "workover" programme it had devised for the rig. The oil directorate is also criticized for not reacting to the lack of information (only the one word "workover" was given in messages from Phillips) and for not sending an official to the rig to check that the agreed procedures were being followed in what is generally acknowledged to be a very tricky manoeuvre.

The Inquiry team also found:

- weaknesses in the approved programme for the working operation at the well;
- improper planning of the work at the platform;
- improvised procedures instead of revision of the programme;

- misjudging of a critical situation;
- weak leadership and control. Key personnel on the platform were not present during the most critical phase of the operation;
- unreasonably long working periods for some personnel, with key staff vital to the operation on duty for over 30 hours without a break for sleep.

Commenting on the report, Jon-Erik Roth, secretary of the newly-formed union for Norwegian oil workers, said that Phillips should heed the criticism levelled against it in the report. In particular, there should be proper consultation between the company and workers on the rig when operating decisions are taken. Roth also felt that the report had quite clearly revealed a need for the oil directorate to be given additional staff and financial resources to carry out its responsibilities.

SWEDEN
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Union leader urges updating of seamen's law

Folke Havik, president of the ITF-affiliated Swedish Ships' Engineers' Union, is urging revision of the country's seamen's law which dates from 1973 to bring it into line with recent legislation introduced for workers ashore. Included in the changes which Havik would like to see introduced are: fixed-term contracts for seafarers issued only where permitted for shore workers under the terms of the law on security of employment; greater employment protection for seafarers standing in for certificated officers; and revision of the provisions relating to grounds for dismissal (i.e. it should no longer be possible to dismiss a seafarer because of alleged unsuitability for the profession etc.).

TRADE UNIONS

AUSTRALIA
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Maritime unions campaign for participation of Australian-flag vessels in the overseas tanker trade

Australian maritime unions (four of them ITF affiliates) are applying sanctions to foreign-flag tankers importing crude and refined oil into Australia in an effort to secure a reasonable participation of Australian-owned and -manned vessels

in the overseas tanker trade. The unions are also seeking Australian manning on vessels operated by the UTAH Development Corporation, which exports coal to Europe and Japan.

The unions believe that the foreign-owned oil companies importing crude oil into Australia should be required to carry ten per cent of these imports in Australian-flag ships. This would correspond to a fleet of four bulk carriers which could be operated by an independent Australian company or the Australian National Line. The unions contend that the oil industry has calculated the costs of the introduction of Australian-flag operation artificially highly and that own-flag participation in the international oil trade is very much a viable proposition.

The unions point out that what they are seeking to achieve is effectively implementation of the UNCTAD Liner Trade Convention which establishes a country's right to participate in its own world trade - a principle recognized by the recent ITF Congress.

SCANDINAVIA =====

Nordic radio officers oppose further exemptions from radio safety provisions of SOLAS

Nordic radio officers recently held their annual meeting in Oslo. The Conference adopted resolutions drawing attention to the radiation hazards which radio personnel are subjected to when operating and servicing shipborne satellite and radar equipment; urging more widespread use of satellite equipment and requesting that more attention be given to satellite communication in the curricula of radio officer training schools; and expressing support for the strike of radio officers on Greenland (see ITF Newsletter No. 9 of 1977, page 87).

The Conference was informed that the Finnish maritime authorities were considering whether to grant exemptions from regulations 3 and 6 of Chapter IV of SOLAS for vessels sailing between Finnish and Swedish ports. A letter was sent to the authorities in the name of the conference enclosing a copy of the resolution on Safety at Sea adopted by the ITF at its recent Congress in Dublin and pointing out that the Federation would not tolerate any further lessening of radio safety.

SOUTH AFRICA =====

EEC foreign ministers draw up code of conduct for companies operating in South Africa

The Foreign Ministers of the Nine, meeting in Brussels on 20 September 1977, adopted a seven-point code of conduct for companies with subsidiaries, branches or representation in South Africa.

The salient points from the code are summarized below:

Relations within the undertaking: employees, irrespective of racial origin, should have the right freely to choose the type of organization they wish to represent them. Employers should respect the employees' decision if this involves union membership and should allow collective bargaining to develop in accordance with internationally accepted principles. They should also inform their workers at regular intervals that consultations and collective bargaining with organizations representative of the workers are part of company policy. Employers should actively encourage their black African workers to form or join trade unions by permitting union officials to explain the aims of trade unions and the benefits of membership; and should give union officials reasonable time off without loss of pay to carry out their duties and to organize meetings.

Migrant labour: employers should alleviate as far as is possible the effects of the present system of migrant labour, which limits job choice for black Africans and causes grave social and family problems. They should furthermore exhibit a sense of social responsibility and work for the eventual abolition of this iniquitous system.

Pay: companies should assume a special responsibility for their employees and should formulate specific policies aimed at improving their terms of employment. They should also pay an initial minimum wage at least fifty per cent above the minimum level required to satisfy the basic needs of workers and their families.

Wage structure and black African advancement: all jobs should be open to persons with the necessary qualifications, irrespective of the racial origin of the applicant, with wages being based on a qualitative job evaluation. Employers should introduce training schemes to enable black Africans to compete on equal terms for jobs and should reduce their dependence on immigrant white labour.

Fringe benefits: company funds should be set aside for use in the following areas: housing, transport, leisure and health facilities, pensions, education, medical services, insurance against industrial accidents and unemployment.

Desegregation at places of work: employers should make every effort to abolish the practice of segregation at the workplace and in canteens, as well as in other areas such as sports activities, education and training.

Reports on implementation of the code of conduct: parent companies to which this code is addressed should publish annually a detailed and fully documented report on the progress made in applying the code, the number of Africans employed in the undertaking to be specified and progress in each of the six areas to be charted. Governments of the Nine should review annually the progress made in implementing the code.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

CANADA

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Air Canada agreement rejected by union membership

With the assistance of a federal mediator, the ITF-affiliated Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants' Association (CALFAA) has recently negotiated a new collective agreement for cabin crews employed by the national carrier Air Canada. Notable in the contract, which run from 1 July 1977 to 30 June 1978, are the introduction of severance pay and of a 25 cent night premium from the beginning of next year. It also includes the following provisions: a 7 per cent pay increase from 1 July 1977; a check-in/check-out allowance of \$2.25; uniform cleaning allowance raised from \$8 to \$12; substantial increases in meal allowances; and a guarantee of uninterrupted rest periods at layover stations.

We have since learned that the settlement has been rejected by the union membership.

GERMANY

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Seafarers' talks break down

Negotiations on a new basic agreement for German seafarers have broken down. The shipowners have refused to grant the demands put forward by the ITF-affiliated Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) for a 40-hour week for seafarers and more annual leave. Attempts will now be made to reach a mediated settlement.

GREECE

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Seamen's union protests at move to recruit cheap foreign crews

The ITF-affiliated Greek Seamen's Federation (PNO) has made known its total opposition to the attempts of Greek shipowners to recruit cheap foreign labour for service aboard Greek-flag vessels and has asked the government to refuse the owners permission to conclude bilateral agreements with Asian and African countries for this purpose. The union argues that there is a sufficient pool of Greek labour available and that the need to recruit a proportion of non-Greeks would disappear if overall conditions in the industry were improved and more nationals could be recruited to the profession. The shipowners are currently seeking leave to increase from 25 to 45 per cent the number of foreign nationals permitted on Greek-flag vessels -- a move which the PNO is strenuously opposing.



ICELAND

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Strike of merchant seafarers averted

A threatened strike of Icelandic merchant seafarers organized in the ITF-affiliated Icelandic Seamen's Union was called off only hours before the strike deadline when a satisfactory settlement was reached with the shipowners. The union has succeeded in achieving near parity of pay for seafarers with similarly skilled workers ashore and a number of important fringe benefits have been negotiated.

The union had asked ITF seafarer affiliates meeting in conjunction with the recent Dublin Congress for support and solidarity in the event of a strike being called.

INDIA

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Air India cabin crews work to rule

Cabin staff organized in the ITF-affiliated Air India Cabin Crew Association are currently working to rule in support of demands for increased meal allowances, better hotel accommodation and more leave at home base. The union is attempting to reach an amicable solution with the Air India management but has asked ITF civil aviation affiliates for support and solidarity should this prove impossible and strike action has to be called.

SPAIN

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Strike of Iberia Airlines cleaning workers at Malaga Airport

At the request of the ITF-affiliated Spanish General Workers' Union (UGT), the ITF has informed its aviation affiliates of a strike of cleaning workers employed by Iberia Airlines at Malaga Airport and requested their solidarity and support until a settlement acceptable to the union can be effected.

Meanwhile, ground staff at Madrid airport have decided not to go ahead with a threatened one-day strike in support of demands for an increase in the minimum wage for the lowest-paid workers and the payment of wage increases frozen last April. The ground staff say that they are now satisfied that the dispute can be resolved without striking.

SWEDEN

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Union agrees to smaller crews on Broström's new ro-ro fleet

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Seamen's Union has reached agreement with the shipping company Broström on a new system of manning aboard nine highly-automated ro-ro vessels which will be built

for the company in Japan. In return for a promise that Broström will not request permission before the end of 1980 to 'flag out' any of its vessels (including ships added to the fleet by that date) and that the new ro-ro fleet will fly the Swedish flag, the union has agreed to the new vessels being manned by smaller crews of specially trained men, with nine months sea service who will be known as 'ships' operators'. These pilot crews will work for short, intensive periods on board ship, followed by equal time off ashore. Maintenance and repair work, which owing to the reduction in numbers on board cannot be carried out at sea, will be performed by special personnel recruited, where possible, from among the ranks of the Union. Examples of the new manning levels will be as follows: North Sea trade -- present 18-man crew reduced to nine; Mediterranean and worldwide trades -- current manning between 28 and 30 reduced to 16.

It is hoped that the manning agreement, by introducing a new and more rational method of ship operation, will help restore the international competitive position of the Swedish fleet. Broström also intends that similar arrangements should eventually apply to the other ships in its fleet.

Simultaneously, the Seamen's Union has concluded an outline agreement with the shipowners' association on manning levels on vessels belonging to other Swedish companies. Negotiations with individual shipowners are expected to commence shortly.

UNITED STATES

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Strike of East and Gulf coast dockers no nearer solution

The strike of dockers belonging to the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association against container, roll-on/roll-off and LASH vessels calling at Atlantic and Gulf coast ports continues with no immediate hope of a settlement (see ITF Newsletter No. 9, page 88 for earlier details).

American Airlines to pay compensation to dismissed stewardesses

American Airlines has agreed to pay out \$2.7 million in compensation to about 300 stewardesses who were dismissed between 1965 and 1970 on grounds of pregnancy. The airline has also said that it will rehire the former stewardesses with full seniority provided they satisfy current entry requirements for the profession. The decision follows a suit brought by one individual on behalf of all former stewardesses dismissed before the airline introduced maternity leave in 1970 (see also ITF Newsletter No. 5, 1976, page 52) and alleging violation of the stewardesses' rights under the 1965 Civil Rights Act.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amnesty International, the international organization which fights for human rights, has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1977. The award was granted in recognition of Amnesty's practical humanitarian support and brave defence of prisoners of conscience imprisoned because of their race, religion or political views. Amnesty has said that the prize money will be used to build up the organization in countries where it is weak or non-existent at present and to strengthen its work in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Amnesty's aims have the full support of the international trade union movement and many individual unions make financial contributions to enable it to carry on with its good work.

Australian dockers in the ports of Sydney, Brisbane, Darwin and Adelaide have announced a ban from 15 November on handling nuclear fuel shipments and mining equipment necessary to the development of the country's uranium reserves. Other unions are expected to decide their attitude to uranium mining in the next few weeks following the government's refusal to concede the Australian Council of Trade Unions' demand for a referendum on this controversial issue. Mass protest demonstrations have also been announced for the weekend of 22/23 October.

The unions organizing flight deck crews working for the French private airline UTA called strike action from 19 to 22 October in protest at the airline management's refusal to grant to the highest-paid staff the increases due to them under the collective agreement. The decision is in line with government policy which aims to keep down increases in the pay of the highest-paid in 1977.

The General Council of British Shipping and the merchant navy officers' unions have agreed on a joint submission to the Department of Employment putting the case for special treatment of the officers' pay claim following last month's rejection by the unions of a stage 2 offer (see ITF Newsletter No. 9, page 85). A meeting has already been held with the relevant minister and a reply to the officers' submission is expected in due course.

Striking air traffic controllers in Great Britain^{x)} are expected to return to work shortly after being balloted by their union with a recommendation that they accept a new pay offer from the Civil Aviation Authority.

^{x)}See ITF Newsletter No. 9, 1977, page 89.

Officers on British Rail's North Sea ferry vessels operating between Harwich and the Hook of Holland staged a 24-hour strike earlier this month in protest against the continuing erosion of pay differentials between officers and ratings due to a local agreement. A meeting has already been held with officials of the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association to discuss the men's grievance.

Clerical staff employed by Aor Lingus in London staged a 24-hour strike on 27 September in pursuance of a pay dispute with the Irish airline. The staff involved deal with checking in and loading of aircraft.

Government employees in Iceland called off a two-week strike on 25 October. It is understood that the new collective agreement which has been negotiated is likely to grant price index-linked rises of between 30 and 35 per cent. The stoppage, which was the first of its kind since public sector workers were granted the right to strike two years ago, had virtually isolated the island by halting international flights and cutting mail and telephone links.

Over two thousand ground staff employees of Indian Airlines in Bombay struck from 29 September to 5 October following the alleged man-handling of an employee by a security officer at the airport.

PERSONALIA

Alex Gárate has succeeded José Lizarraga as general secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation of ELA-STV (Spain).

Hugo Hogstad has been appointed radio secretary of the Norwegian Seamen's Union. He succeeds Ernst Rolf Olsen, who has been appointed chairman of the Kristiansand branch of the union.

John Thompson, assistant national secretary of the British National Union of Seamen, died on 19 October, aged 37. Brother Thompson had been a full-time union official since 1966, having served in Liverpool, Hull and Dover and latterly at the union's London headquarters.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- =====
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Radio Officers | - London, 26 November 1977 |
| Civil Aviation Section
Conference | - Geneva, 5-6 December 1977 |

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

STOP PRESS

FINNISH RADIO OFFICERS SEEK SOLIDARITY
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An official of the Finnish Radio Officers' Union met representatives of the ITF Secretariat and the ITF's British seafarer affiliates in London on 25 October to discuss recent attempts by the Finnish Board of Navigation to grant exemptions to certain Finnish ship-owners from the SOLAS requirement to carry radio officers aboard passenger vessels. On 11 August this year the ITF reminded the Finnish Board of Navigation about its moral obligation to apply the radio regulations of SOLAS in toto and drew attention to a resolution on this subject adopted by the recent ITF Congress in Dublin in which all administrations concerned were strongly urged to uphold the radio safety at sea as laid down in SOLAS in order to ensure the overall safety of life at sea. The Finnish Radio Officers' Union, (with the full support of the other seafaring unions in Finland) is prepared to call out its members on strike unless the exemption threat is removed and, if such a strike take place, will ask other ITF affiliates to carry out the terms of the Dublin resolution.

ITF action on recent hijackings leads to urgent debate in UN

(see supplement to this Newsletter)

We have just learned that the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly has adopted without a vote the resolution on hijacking that was still before it when this Newsletter went to press. The draft resolution will now be submitted to the General Assembly for endorsement.

ITF action on recent hijackings leads to urgent debate in UN

The ITF has reacted to the two most recent cases of hijacking -- the first involving the JAL DC-8 hijacked to Algeria and the second the Lufthansa B 737 from which the passengers and crew were eventually rescued at Mogadishu -- by renewing its urgent demands that the relevant international organizations should take the action necessary to prevent the resurgence, after a relative lull, of this grave menace to the world community.

The handling of the case of the JAL aircraft by the Japanese government -- which adopted a policy of total surrender -- and by the Algerian government -- which allowed the hijackers to go free after their demands had been met in full -- flew in the face of the attitude adopted by the great majority of governments which have taken the view long advocated by the ITF that hijackers should never be given sanctuary and their acts should be severely punished. When it became clear that the hijackers were to triumph, the ITF sent cables to the President of Algeria, the Prime Minister of Japan and to the Secretaries General of both the UN and ICAO demanding that the hijackers be dealt with in accordance with the Hague Convention for the Suppression of the Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (16 December 1970).

While the outcome of the Lufthansa hijacking, overshadowed though it was by the callous murder of Captain Schumann, was in every other respect a model of principled and determined action by the governments involved -- the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Somalia, directly, and others that lent their ready cooperation -- the central problem of preventing further hijackings remains. The ITF therefore again cabled the Secretaries General of the UN and ICAO on 17 October demanding "drastic and immediate action" on their part. The cables also emphasized that it was "in particular imperative to maximize airport security and to require all governments to refuse sanctuary to all hijackers on pain of harsh sanctions".

In reply, Dr. Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations, assured us that he was pressing for an urgent debate on these problems within the UN. This has since been confirmed and a debate on the subject of hijacking took place in the Special Political Committee of the UN General Assembly in the last week of October. A resolution submitted in the name of 40 member countries of the UN was still being debated at the time of writing. The resolution is understood to call on UN member nations to ratify existing conventions on hijacking and to urge effective measures to improve airport safety.

These two hijacking incidents have again shown just how easy it is for heavily armed hijackers to board aircraft at certain airports. The ITF is greatly disturbed by this and has accordingly decided that the question of airport security should be discussed at an early meeting of our civil aviation section. Meanwhile, aviation affiliates are being urged to monitor security procedures at the airports where they work.
