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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

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Working Group "Rhine/Main/Danube" meets in Munich

The Working Group "Rhine/Main/Danube" of the ITF Inland Navigation Section met in Munich on 24 and 25 October 1977. The main items on the agenda were: -- the employment of women in Rhine navigation and flag jurisdiction on the Rhine.

The meeting agreed that moves to require women to perform the same work as men on the Rhine would further aggravate an already difficult economic and social situation. As it was vitally important that the unequal conditions of competition which exist on the Rhine should not get any worse -- especially in view of the dumping by vessels of the Eastern bloc countries which was likely to occur on the completion of the Rhine/Main/Danube canal -- the Working Group was of the opinion that the protective regulations on the employment of women in Rhine navigation should be retained.

The meeting also adopted a resolution on flag jurisdiction on the Rhine, an issue which will assume even greater importance with the opening of the Link. The ITF has long held the view that the new Link will necessitate an element of restriction in inland navigation. It is also opposed to complete freedom in the matter of choice of flag. The resolution therefore demands that the issuing of operating licences by national authorities should be made obligatory.

ITF support sought for international boycott of US textile manufacturer J.P. Stevens

The ITF has received a request from the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) for support in pursuing its international campaign against the giant US textile manufacturer J.P. Stevens. In response, we have circularized our seafarer and docker affiliates in Europe giving details of the major shippers of Stevens' products and the ports through which they are most frequently imported and have asked them to offer whatever they can in the way of practical solidarity for Stevens' oppressed workers. Details of the company's foreign shipments will be circulated in due course to assist unions in planning their action.

J.P. Stevens is the second largest textile manufacturer in the United States, employing 44,000 workers. The vast majority of its operations are carried out in North and South Carolina, two states notorious for low wages and poor social standards. The American Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, an ITGLWF affiliate, has been trying to organize the workers in J.P. Stevens plants for

the last fourteen years, but so far the company has fought them off by coercion and intimidation. Its actions have often been flagrantly illegal -- there are over 1,500 instances where it has been judged to have violated American labour law -- but it has been happy to pay the consequences in damages to aggrieved workers (over US\$1.3 million to date) rather than see trade unionism established in its plants.

J.P. Stevens' limited export trade (most of it to Europe) consists almost entirely of waste materials (mostly in bales). Its finished products -- clothing and household furniture -- are now the object of a national consumer boycott in the USA which has the full backing of the entire American trade union movement. The ACTWU and the ITGLWF feel that international support would help them enormously in their struggle against a reactionary and unscrupulous employer. Hence their request for ITF support.

The decision to launch an international boycott of Stevens' products was reported in the September issue of the Newsletter (page 81).

#### United States withdraws from the International Labour Organisation

The United States has confirmed its decision to withdraw from the International Labour Organisation and its membership of the UN agency will therefore cease on 6 November. The statutory two years' notice of withdrawal was first given in 1975 and the present US administration has announced that as the ILO has not made the changes that were demanded of it at that time it has no alternative but to give effect to its earlier letter of intent.

The United States government has advanced as its reasons for leaving the ILO the increased politicisation of the organization, the disregard of due process in examining complaints and political trends leading to the erosion of genuine tripartite representation at ILO meetings.

Francis Blanchard, Director-General of the ILO, issued a statement regretting the decision and saying that it would lead to a weakening of international cooperation and of instruments for achieving it. This theme was echoed by UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, who spoke of this "retrogressive step from the principle of collective responsibility and from the goal of universality in UN bodies".

ANTIGUA

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#### ITF responds to Antiguan dockers' call for solidarity

Attitudes are hardening in the long-running dispute between the Antigua Workers' Union, which organizes the country's dockers, and the port employers and its effects are being increasingly felt in other parts of the island, with workers being denied any right of industrial action.

In the case of the port dispute, the employers have the support of the government, which is determined to keep the port of St. John's open by using scab labour under the protection of armed police. Union members have been dismissed, bringing severe hardship on them and their families, while the employers have strenuously resisted any attempt to negotiate a new collective agreement. AWU officials and union members have been barred from entering the port area and union offices and even members' homes are being kept under police surveillance. Meanwhile, employers in other industries have taken their cue from the government and are dismissing workers who support legitimate trade union action, in the certain knowledge that they will have the protection of the police in the event of protests.

The Antigua Workers' Union is convinced that a defeat for the union would mean the end of any significant trade union influence in the ports for a long time to come, with consequences that would extend far beyond that one industry. As the AWU quite clearly stands in great need of international support, ITF seafarer and docker affiliates have been requested to send the union messages of encouragement and solidarity. Additionally, seafarer affiliates have been warned that the situation in Antigua generally is very tense and that there is every chance that the port workers they come into contact with will be blacklegs.

NIGERIA

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ITF warns affiliates of attacks on vessels at anchor in Nigerian ports

The ITF circularized its seafarer affiliates on 7 November alerting them to the danger of attacks by bandits on ships at anchor in Nigerian ports. According to reports from several of our affiliates, armed men have boarded vessels at night and stolen cargo and personal possessions. The attacks have been renewed despite assurances from the Nigerian government that steps have been taken to bring the situation under control.

TRANSPORT

GREAT BRITAIN

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Union to press for marine pilotage reform

The British government will be under renewed pressure from the marine pilotage branch of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union in the new session of parliament to reform the country's marine pilotage service. In line with

a recent conference decision, the union will be seeking speedy implementation of the recommendations of an advisory committee, whose report issued this summer called for new pilotage legislation (including the appointment of pilotage commissioners), the restructuring of pilots' pay and the securing of future pension rights.

TRADE UNIONS

GHANA

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Maritime workers hold successful conference in Takoradi

A number of important decisions were taken by the 4th quadrennial delegates' conference of the ITF-affiliated Maritime and Dockworkers' Union of TUC (Ghana), headed by ITF Vice-President J.R. Baiden, which took place in Takoradi at the beginning of October. Among the resolutions adopted by the meeting were ones calling for:

- measures (including the formation of safety committees) to improve health and safety in the ports;
- the establishment of a five-man special committee to investigate the implications of moves, now well advanced, towards the establishment of a "free port" in Ghana;
- the introduction by the Ghana TUC of training programmes in the rôle of consultative committees, with a view to more effective worker participation in the running of state corporations and private enterprises;
- the improvement of housing and transport services;
- the abolition by the government of the system of casual labour (especially in the ports) and government ratification of the ILO Convention and Recommendation on the Social Repercussions of New Methods of Cargo Handling;
- the participation of all African countries in the efforts of the international community to curb acts of air piracy;
- vigilance by governments and port authorities in ensuring that those Africans who are engaged by flag-of-convenience operators are paid at internationally acceptable rates;
- a close check by the government on the activities of MNCs;
- effective measures of port security.

NORWAY

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Norwegian oil workers' union encounters recruiting difficulties

The newly-formed Norwegian Oil and Petroleum Workers' Union (NOPEF) is steadily gaining influence; it now has fourteen branches and nearly one thousand members. However, it reports that many Norwegian and foreign workers have had to keep their membership of the union a secret from their employers because they fear the sack or other reprisals, and yet others have been too fearful for their jobs even to join. Interviewed by the Norwegian newspaper Arbeiderbladet, Lars Anders Myhre, who was recently elected president of NOPEF, has said that the union will concentrate its efforts in the near future on building up membership -- NOPEF has been increasingly successful in the last months in attracting foreign workers by issuing recruiting literature in their own languages -- and obtaining ordered working conditions in the industry. It is particularly concerned with the problems of low pay (especially among catering and some office workers) and by the problems arising from the short working lives of the most highly-paid group, the deep-sea divers.

SOUTH AFRICA

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Christian Concern calls for urgent action by British firms on trade union representation for black workers

A programme of urgent and immediate action by British companies with South African subsidiaries on trade union rights for black workers is called for in a report published in London earlier this month by the organization Christian Concern for South Africa. Entitled "Black Trade Unions in South Africa: The Responsibility of British Companies", the report calls on companies to dismantle their present coercive and discriminatory industrial relations machinery and asks them to be prepared to recognize and negotiate with such black trade unions as already exist. Writing in the foreword, Jack Jones, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union and an ITF Vice-President, says that black trade unions should be given every encouragement, even when such action might earn companies the overt or covert opposition of the South African government. Too many companies, Jones alleges, are willing participants in the government's apartheid policies, and any attempt to help black workers to secure trade union rights must be commended. The report believes that, given the inevitable trend of events in South Africa, it is in the long-term interest of companies actively to encourage the formation of unions through which black workers could exercise their democratic rights at the workplace. It is pointed out that black unions are not illegal under South African law and that a good deal of discretion is given to companies to negotiate with such unions at plant level.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

ARGENTINA

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Railway workers strike for higher pay

The past few weeks have seen the most serious industrial unrest in Argentina since the military government assumed power. Some 4,000 workers on the underground railway system in Buenos Aires went on strike at the beginning of November in protest at their low rates of pay. Employees of the state railways in the capital and the industrial cities of Rosario and Santa Fe interrupted a strike for higher pay at the end of October to allow talks to take place but resumed their action a few days later when these failed to make any headway. The government called in the security forces to keep the underground network going, and both they and the overground strikers were forced to return to work when the state railways began issuing dismissal notices to all those involved. The government has refused to improve on an offer of a 40 per cent pay increase to workers in state industries. The railwaymen, faced with steep rises in their cost-of-living, had been asking for double that figure.

Works-to-rule have also been staged by airport ground staff and dockers in Buenos Aires in support of salary claims.

CANADA

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Railway workers submit claims

Leaders of the 100,000 Canadian railway workers represented in the seventeen unions affiliated to the Associated Railway Unions (including a number of ITF affiliates) have held their first meeting with management in the current round of negotiations for new working agreements. Current agreements expire on 31 December 1977. Heading the list of union priorities are claims for salary increases, improved pensions (indexed benefits and improved survivor pensions are being sought) and better job security provisions. In addition to a cost-of-living escalator, the unions are also seeking higher sick pay, additional paid leave, the introduction of a dental plan and premium rates for jobs with a bilingual requirement.

GERMANY

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Seafarers' talks deadlocked

Negotiations on a new basic agreement for German seafarers, now in the mediation stage, appear to be making little progress and the German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has



warned us that strike action in pursuit of its claims for a 40-hour week and more leave is now a distinct possibility (see also ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1977, page 98).

At the call of the OeTV executive committee, over one thousand seafarers assembled in the OeTV building in Hamburg on 31 October to protest at the obdurate stance adopted by the owners. They were addressed by Siegfried Merten, Vice-President of the OeTV, who is also a member of the ITF Executive Board. Merten regretted that the owners had not even put forward an offer in response to the seafarers' demands and he strongly criticized their threat to "flag out", which would have serious consequences for German seafarers, the shipbuilding industry and other sectors of the economy. He assured the seafarers that the entire weight of the union would be behind them if they had to take strike action to press their claims.

Also present at the meeting was Brian Laughton, Secretary of the Special Seafarers' Section, who pledged ITF solidarity in the event of industrial action. He warned that if German owners were to make use of convenience registries they would be refused ITF agreements until they were willing to apply the terms of the German basic agreement to their vessels.

GREAT BRITAIN

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#### Merchant navy officers sign important agreement with CP Ships

In a significant departure from normal practice, British merchant navy officers' unions have signed a separate pay agreement with Canadian Pacific Ships. Pay negotiations are usually conducted with the General Council of British Shipping on an industry-wide basis, but this year's pay talks broke down when the owners refused to improve on their original stage 2 pay offer of £4 (see ITF Newsletter No. 9, page 85). The agreement with CP Ships has found a way out of this impasse by offering a self-financed productivity deal, which meets the demands of government pay policy while putting substantial sums of extra cash into the men's pockets, and it is possible that a number of other companies represented in the GCBS will break away from the central negotiations and conclude separate agreements. Indeed, it is understood that informal approaches have already been made by some owners to the unions on these lines.

The CP Ships agreement applies to 700 officers on the company's 35 ships. As indicated, it provides for a £4 stage 2 pay offer backdated to 1 June (when the current agreement covering the industry expired) plus the introduction from 1 October of a self-financing productivity scheme under which savings in company wage costs arising from union agreement to new and more flexible working procedures will be converted into salary increases to give total rises, with the stage 2 supplement, of between 15 and 22 per cent. Other improvements included in the package are: additional seniority payments to top officers, improvements in the leave of certain officer grades and consolidation of captive time payments.

Four unions are signatories to the agreement, including the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association and the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union.

Merchant seamen's leaders turn down pay offer

Leaders of Britain's 34,000 merchant seamen have rejected the pay offer made earlier this month by the General Council of British Shipping in response to a claim submitted in September<sup>x</sup>. The owners have offered an increase of £4.92½ on the basic rate, which would affect overtime, leave pay, cargo handling and leave food allowances; consolidation of last year's stage 2 increase of £4 into basic rates; and improved payments for captive time. They were also prepared to enter into a commitment to increase leave progressively over a period and had agreed that the 11 additional days' compensatory leave negotiated in September 1976 (see ITF Newsletter No. 9 of 1976, page 100), might be taken from January next now that this was permissible under government pay policy. A further meeting with the shipowners' side will be held on 17 November when the possibility of further improving the present offer, especially the increase in basic pay, will be discussed.

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<sup>x</sup>see ITF Newsletter No. 9, 1977, page 85

GREENLAND  
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Radio personnel win improvements in pay and conditions

Following their strike against the authorities this summer<sup>x</sup>, radio officers, radio sonde personnel and telecommunications technicians stationed in Greenland have won a number of improvements in pay and conditions. Agreement has been reached within the joint committee set up after the strike that pay should be increased by 12 per cent backdated to 1 April, that unsocial hours payments should rise by 30 per cent and that there should be substantial improvements in compensatory leave arrangements.

The ITF-affiliated Danish Radio Officers' Association has expressed its pleasure at this result, but has warned that in the next round of pay talks in two years time it will come back to the still unresolved question of pay parity between employees in Denmark and Greenland.

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<sup>x</sup>see ITF Newsletter No. 9, page 87

MEXICO

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Pilots and cabin crews reach agreement with Aeromexico

Only two hours before a strike deadline of 06.01 gmt on 6 November, the ITF-affiliated Mexican Airline Pilots' Association (ASPA) called off its intended action after reaching agreement with Aeromexico on the terms of a new collective contract.

Aeromexico cabin staff, members of the ITF-affiliated Cabin Staff Association (ASSA), ended a two-day-old strike against the airline on 9 November after accepting pay increases of 10 per cent and improvements to their working conditions.

Both unions cabled the ITF to express their thanks for the support they had received.

Eastern Airlines ground staff strike for higher pay

Eastern Airlines ground staff in Mexico, who are organized in the ITF-affiliated Union of Aviation and Allied Workers (SNTAS) have been on strike since 1 October in support of demands for improvements in pay to meet rises in the cost-of-living. Although the union has shown itself willing to compromise on the actual level of an eventual pay settlement, the airline management has adamantly refused to improve on its offer of a 10 per cent increase.

The ITF has cabled the President of Mexico asking him to use his good offices in bringing the two sides to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, ITF aviation affiliates in the United States have promised their support and solidarity to their Mexican colleagues.

NORWAY

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Improved rates of pay for seafarers in the overseas trade

The three Norwegian maritime affiliates of the ITF (the Seamen's Union, the Ships' Engineers' Union and the Navigating Officers' Association) have won the following improvements from 1 November in their current collective agreements: basic rate raised by 2.5 per cent plus 100 kr (rounded up to the nearest 5 kr), with appropriate adjustments to the overtime rate; victualling allowance increased to 25.50 kr on days off and for compensatory leave and to 57 kr during annual leave.

UNITED STATES

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East coast dock strike set to end soon

The six-week-old US east and gulf coast dock strike should be over within days if the dockers, as expected, endorse the settlement reached by the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association with the North Atlantic employers on 13 November.

Although precise details of the three-year contract are being withheld pending union approval, it is understood that agreement has been reached on the key issue of job security and that total increases in pay and fringe benefits of just over 30 per cent are envisaged. The agreement is expected to form a pattern for the remaining ports, where talks are currently taking place.

News of the strike was first carried in the September issue of the ITF Newsletter (page 88).

#### Pan Am ground staff call off work to rule

A go-slow by PanAm ground staff in the United States was called off in late October when the airline agreed to hold talks with the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Union of North America on the men's grievances. The action had been imposed after the airline dismissed a number of ground staff and increased work schedules.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australian maritime unions who are pursuing a vigorous campaign aimed at securing reasonable national-flag participation in the overseas oil trade<sup>x</sup> say that they are now prepared to discuss with oil company representatives the possibility of reducing manning levels in order to render Australian-operated tankers more viable on overseas runs.

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<sup>x</sup> see ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1977, page 95.

Pilots and mechanics with Air Inter, the French domestic airline, staged a four-day strike in mid-November in protest at the government pay freeze applied to high wage-earners. UTA flight deck crews staged a similar strike at the end of last month (see ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1977, page 101). The men are organized in the ITF-affiliated French Airline Pilots' Union (SNPL).

British air traffic control assistants, on strike since 1 September, have voted to return to work after accepting the Civil Aviation Authority's offer of a £315 lump sum payment plus a salary rise of up to 8 per cent from 1 April 1978. The assistants will also receive any increases that are won as a result of the next civil service pay review. British Airways flights, which had been severely disrupted by the industrial action, returned to normal during the first weekend of November.

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<sup>x</sup> see ITF Newsletter Nos. 9 page 89 and 10, page 101 for earlier details.

KLM baggage handlers at London's Heathrow Airport have agreed that their dispute with the airline over the introduction of a new roster system should be referred to mediation. The dispute led to a two-day strike late last month. The handlers are organized in the ITF-affiliated British Transport and General Workers' Union.

Members of the ITF-affiliated Air India Cabin Crew Association staged a one-day token strike in Bombay on 26 October to draw attention to what it regards as "the deplorable state of affairs regarding safety" on Air India 'planes. The union is concerned that the national carrier still allows weapons which might be used by potential hijackers to be brought on board by passengers.

Railway workers in Italy have recently staged two one-day strikes (on 22/23 October and 11/12 November) to press for substantially higher wages and the reorganization of the state-owned railway system.

Japan's lower house of parliament has unanimously approved a bill strengthening anti-hijacking laws and proposing a minimum penalty of ten years' imprisonment for seizing an aircraft.

Some 11,000 Spanish airport workers staged a three-day total stoppage from 11 November in support of demands for a minimum wage of 20,000 pesetas, completely halting all commercial air traffic. The workers have threatened to reimpose industrial sanctions if no settlement is reached of their claims.

PERSONALIA

Ludwig Rosenberg, a member of the executive of the German Trades Union Congress (DGB) since its formation in 1949 and DGB president from 1962 until his retirement in 1969, died suddenly in the night of 23/24 October, aged 74.

Jørgen Rosenmeier has been elected treasurer of the Danish Commercial Employees' Union (HK) in succession to F.B.Simonsen, who has retired. Carl Erik Slivsgaard has been elected administrative secretary in succession to Aage Jensen, who also retired.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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Civil Aviation Section  
Conference

- Geneva, 5-6 December 1977

Meeting of European  
Seafarers

- Oslo, 19-20 December 1977

LATE ITEM

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ITF General Secretary comments on Liberian ship safety record

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has written to the British newspaper "The Financial Times" commenting on a report carried in the paper on 15 November that Liberia had ratified the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Convention, which also included a statement by Mr. Gerald Cooper, the Liberian Commissioner for Maritime Affairs, to the effect that the proportion of substandard shipping under the Liberian flag had fallen from 10 per cent at the beginning of 1977 to approaching 5 per cent now.

In his letter, Harold Lewis said he hoped that when the Convention received the additional ratifications required for universal implementation, those maritime nations competent to do so would pay very strict attention in their ports to the condition, equipment and safety of Liberian ships. For the 5 per cent of tonnage admitted by the Commissioner to be substandard amounted to a scandalous 4 million gross tons!

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

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