

UNIONS SUPPORT CATHAY PACIFIC STRIKERS



An all-out strike at Cathay Pacific by around 3,000 cabin crew members of the ITF-affiliated Cathay Pacific Airways Flight Attendants' Union (FAU) grounded the majority of the airline's flights for more than two weeks in January including the peak holiday season of the Chinese New Year.

The ITF launched international solidarity actions in support of the strike, after the FAU appealed for assistance (see overleaf).

The strike began on January 13 over increased workloads due to understaffing in the airline and after the sacking of three cabin attendants for following union instructions.

However, company threats to victimise union activists escalated the dispute into a wider protest concerning the lack of labour rights in the colony.

The dispute initially stemmed from the company's moves to cut costs. These had included transferring some of its support operations to less costly countries and scrapping cost of living adjustments for its 10,200 Hong Kong based staff. Hong Kong's annual inflation rate over the last ten years has been ten per cent.

But the airline also put the squeeze on working conditions. The FAU says this resulted in routes being flown understaffed and cabin crew having to work longer duty hours. Staff shortages also led to company demands for flexible working that require senior crew

having to perform junior crew duties and vice versa.

Last year the union wrote to the management with its concerns about low staff morale and warned:

"Cabin crew are not guinea pigs for experiments, nor are they machines designed for long arduous hours without adequate rest."

Talks between the union and management through October and November got nowhere. The company simply continued to intensify the workloads of cabin crew. On December first the union instructed its members not to undertake any work outside the duties agreed for their staff grade.

On January 12, after the company refused to reinstate three FAU members sacked for following their union's instructions, the union decided that there was no alternative to strike action.

The bulk of Cathay Pacific flights were immediately grounded as 3,000 cabin attendants followed the strike call. Cathay aircraft were stranded overseas as flight attendants refused to board

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Practical support for Cathay strikers:

In a remarkable exercise in practical international union solidarity, ITF aviation unions helped to track down — and in some cases stop — aircraft chartered by Cathay Pacific to break the cabin attendants' strike.

The ITF launched international solidarity actions after the FAU appealed for international support.

The first task asked of ITF affiliates around the world was to assist striking Cathay Pacific cabin crew members at overseas airports. When the FAU launched its strike on January 13, many cabin crew members on stop-over at airports around the world refused to board their aircraft. This left many Cathay Pacific planes, but also many Cathay Pacific cabin crew, stranded away from their home base.

To get assistance to these union members the FAU sent out a call for help to the ITF. ITF unions immediately set about contacting Cathay cabin crew stranded in various airports.

The JCAL in Japan, for example, came to the aid of 50 FAU members having problems with Japanese immigration authorities at Narita airport and assisted 15 more cabin attendants at Nagoya. "We were happy to assist them and give them our full support. We told them we are all members of the ITF." In Canada CUPE assisted 19 cabin attendants stranded in Vancouver. In Australia the FAA came to the rescue of 44 Cathay cabin crew in Sydney and also got them back home to Hong Kong.

The next request to the ITF concerned strike-breaking aircraft.

As the strike grounded its flights the Cathay Pacific management scoured the world for aircraft and crews to break the strike.

The FAU supplied the ITF with a list of 14 airlines from which the company was trying to charter aircraft. ITF unions were requested to track strike-breaking charters and to stop planes wherever possible.

In Holland the ITF-affiliated VKC refused to work on any aircraft of Martinair or Transavia hired for strike-breaking. This resulted in the companies being unable to undertake the contracts.

In Australia the FAA refused to

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... Hong Kong unions mobilise in support of FAU

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flights. The dispute is estimated to have cost the airline HK\$10-15m per day.

In Hong Kong daily pickets of up to 1,000 strong laid siege to Kai Tak airport. Many Cathay cabin crew are from other Asian countries and without family support in the city. But strikers received support from many quarters. Members of the public donated food and blankets against the cold weather. Sympathy for the strike was widespread, as one striker reported:

"I went home yesterday morning and even my night watchman downstairs, who is an old man said to me 'Don't lose this battle. Fight for every union in Hong Kong'."

On January 21st the Cathay Pacific management presented the union with a proposal to settle the dispute which contained the following memorable paragraph. Under the extraordinary heading "No intimidation or victimisation" this read:

"In the interests of future industrial and crew harmony in Cathay Pacific appropriate disciplinary action must be taken against crew members who have played a major role in intimidating colleagues or who explicitly re-

fused to operate during this dispute."

Courtney Chong vice chairman of the FAU observed: "the management will want to sack many of our members, especially the committee members and the senior members, almost immediately."

While the company's threats, including a deadline that all cabin crew would be sacked who failed to report for work on January 27, did intimidate numbers of cabin crew back to work, it also had the immediate effect of politicising the strike. With Hong Kong unions already sensitive about the lack of legal protections, the dispute became the focus of a major protest over lack of trade union rights in the colony.

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions held mass demonstrations in support of the strike. Over 50 community organisations joined a coalition supporting the strike, and a petition of 10,000 signatures was collected calling on the company to end its threats to strikers.

The FAU set up a round-the-clock strike camp outside Hong Kong's Government House. On the night of January 25 around 2,000 strikers were evicted from the strike encampment in front of Government House by

police.

Nevertheless the protests and rallies continued to put pressure on the Hong Kong government.

On January 27, the Hong Kong legislative Council called for a Government Inquiry into the dispute and appealed to the union to end the strike and for the company to refrain from any victimisation of the strikers. This move was welcomed by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, and the FAU decided to return to work. Negotiations are continuing with the company.

The union is wary that while they have returned to work as a gesture of good faith in response to the Council's appeal, the company may still try to victimise some of its members.

In the meantime the union can draw some satisfaction from having launched the most significant union action in Hong Kong in recent times, and of incidentally unleashing a tide of pressure for labour reform in Hong Kong which may now be unstoppable.

The ITF, as well as maintaining a close watch on any moves at serious disciplinary action against strikers after the return to work, is also offering its assistance to Hong Kong unions in pressing for new labour protections.

— crews aided, scab planes stopped

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work on Qantas flights chartered by Cathay Pacific. The VPOD in Swissair warned the airline that no aircraft should be used for strike breaking. Aviation workers (PALEA) at Philippine Airlines requested their management not to take on strike-breaking contracts. Japanese aviation union JCAL warned JAL, who increased their number of flights to Hong Kong, of industrial action if the airline took on Cathay Pacific designated flights. The JCAU cabin crew union similarly demanded that JAL not operate strike breaking flights.

Nationair, which has currently locked out its own Canadian flight attendants who are member of CUPE, was soon chartered to strike-break in Hong Kong. "These (replacement) Nationair flight attendants are scabs...our union will do anything possible to assist the FAU in their struggle," wrote Cathy Kirkwood of CUPE.

The ÖTV in Germany initially missed one strike-breaking flight by Lufthansa, but quickly negotiated with the company a stop to any further planes being hired out to Cathay Pacific during the dispute.

US flight attendants in the AFA refused to board Tower Air aircraft chartered for strike breaking. This act of solidarity was made even more remarkable by the fact that the flight attendants did not even have a union contract with their company, and were therefore outside of the AFA's power to protect them against any disciplinary measures from the company!

The Teamsters' union in the US was contacted by the ITF-affiliated Machinists after the FAU found out that a charter operation called World Airways was flying two key Cathay routes Hong Kong—Bangkok and Hong Kong—Taipei.

The Teamsters (who are not affiliated to the ITF) readily agreed to assist the international solidarity action. When the Teamsters' members refused to work strike-breaking flights, the company took the union into the federal courts. While this case was still in progress the Teamsters

and the Machinists held talks with the management of Northwest Airlines which resulted in the stopping of all Northwest Air strike breaking flights for Cathay Pacific. Marvin Griswald, Director of the Teamsters' Airline Division, faxed a message to the ITF: "On behalf of Ron Carey, the General President of the New Teamsters, I am pleased to inform you that Northwest Airlines has pledged to cease flying strike breaking Cathay Pacific flights."

The chartering of aircraft from around the world was the key to Cathay Pacific's attempts to break the cabin crew strike. ITF unions were by no means able to prevent every strike-breaking flight. A good many more of the world's airline operations (especially charters) will have to be unionised before that will be able to happen. Many unions were hamstrung by laws banning sympathy strikes, although quite a number of these warned

airlines they might nevertheless hit some problems if they tried to supply aircraft for strike-breaking.

Nevertheless, action by ITF unions severely hit Cathay Pacific's strike-breaking strategy, the cost of which spiralled to an estimated HK\$200m. While it is difficult to analyse fully the effectiveness of this solidarity action, it is certainly clear that Cathay Pacific was never able to obtain the number of charter operations they required to maintain their full operations during this peak season. The airline made two separate attempts to charter Martinair, both were stopped by the VKC. Even a week after the strike began the airline was still having to cancel 25 of its 39 daily scheduled flights.

One message is clear. Aviation unions have demonstrated their growing readiness to undertake global solidarity action in a globalising aviation industry.

Malawian trade unionist jailed

A puppet court of the Malawian dictatorship has found trade union leader Chakufwa Chihana "guilty" on two charges of sedition and sentenced him to two years' hard labour.

The court decision, handed down on December 14, has provoked outrage from the international community and has led the ICFTU to renew its call for foreign aid to Malawi to remain suspended until legitimate human and trade union rights are restored.

In a strongly-worded message to President Banda ICFTU General Secretary Enzo Friso dismissed the trial as "a farce, based on trumped-up charges and mainly aimed at silencing one of the most prominent democrats in the country". Friso demanded that Chihana be freed at once pending his appeal.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the opposition Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), which protested that the trial of its interim chairman had been marked by "unprecedented

political interference in judicial proceedings".

The government-backed campaign of intimidation against the pro-democracy movement shows no signs of letting up. Over 150 AFORD activists were arrested on December 20 and then released on bail. Hundreds of opposition figures have also been picked up since Chihana was first arrested in April 1992.

While some long-term political prisoners have been released recently, there are hundreds still languishing in the country's notorious jails.

One of these is Vera Chirwa, widow of the late Orton Chirwa (see **ITF News**, November 1992) and Malawi's first female lawyer, who has the unenviable distinction of being Malawi's longest-held female political prisoner, having been detained for the past eleven years.

Chihana himself is no stranger to Malawi's prison system. He has already served six years for his opposition activities.

Free trade union leader backs economic reform

Han Dong Fang—the former railway worker who helped establish the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation in 1989—continues to fearlessly advocate free trade unionism in the People's Republic of China. China is undergoing massive economic restructuring (similar in many ways to what is happening in the former Soviet bloc states, except that there is no political reform at all), and Dong Fang publicly backs these economic reforms. But economic reform, he argues, can only work properly and fairly if workers have autonomous unions to stand up for them.

This article is extracted from Hong Kong Times (a pro-Taiwan Hong Kong newspaper), Sept 18, 1992. The interview was made during Dong Fang's two week stay in Hong Kong for medical treatment of his tuberculosis (which he developed while he was a political prisoner). It was originally written in Chinese and now translated in English for ITF News by ITF Education Officer April Lai.

Han Dong Fang, a worker activist and pioneer of the free trade union, the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation (BWAf), established in Tiananmen Square on May 30, 1989, was interviewed exclusively before his departure for medical treatment in the United States. He talked of the significance of BWAf in the democracy movement of 1989 and the prospects of the labour movement in China.

"It is necessary to consider the reality of People's Republic of China (PRC). The flag of free trade unions spread out when there was the opportunity in the democracy movement of 1989. If this flag was successful and known to workers, it had achieved its basic goal," said Han.

"Under that specific circumstances [Tiananmen], there was no opportunity to develop the grassroots.

"However, when I consider BWAf, it carried forward an important message—that PRC workers could have their own trade unions after a long period of silence. In a broader sense, I believe that was the value of BWAf." *Workers were sympathetic to the stu-*

dents at the time of 1989 and many students expected workers to launch a strike as a support. Why couldn't the worker supporters organise a strike? "PRC workers did not have the condition to strike. If there is no organisation to initiate a strike, it is impossible."

How do you look at the 'official' 'All China Federation of Trade Unions'? *Do you recognise this organisation?*

"There does not exist the issue of whether we recognise the 'official' trade unions or not. I felt the ACFTU does not represent the interest of labour. Hardly does it reflect the needs of workers. It predominantly serves as a 'transmission belt of the state'. We do not accept such a role.

"I do not oppose to ACFTU acting as a trade union. Yet I wish through working with workers, through our efforts, we can promote free trade unionism in PRC.

"What I mean by free trade unionism is that every union deserves independent and autonomous development. ACFTU has covered up this perspective. If it were to express the needs of workers and function as a genuine union, it could have an equal role with us. And we could see which gets the support from the workers. Whichever does well, speaks out for workers, struggles for workers' rights, they can gain the workers' support as return. It must not be the case that some unions are permitted while others not.

"Today our BWAf is banned. If it is legitimised tomorrow, we will not negate the other unions because such act deviates from the principle of equality."

Currently Communist China is advocating Labour Reforms, which aim to destroy 'Three Irons' (principles of guaranteed livelihood for all Chinese workers). How did you find the balance between the discrepancy of fighting for labour rights and supporting the reform?

"It is a relatively complicated issue. It could not be clearly explained in one word or two. Making it simple could cause misinterpretation. It is because some consider that workers are an

obstacle and burden for economic reform in PRC.

"I do not take such perspective. It is true that workers' personal interests are being suppressed in the process of reform. Yet it is not necessary to deduce an opposition manner towards the reform since in the long run, the interests of workers rely on the reforms even though it hurts their interests temporarily. So long as there is an understanding in the relationship and a good co-ordination of the conflicts in the reform, and provision of appropriate welfare measures to the workers, the problems of workers' opposition to the reforms could be eliminated.

"To secure the workers' rights, to enable workers not to fall in the spectrum either as an obstacle or opposer, the Communist Party of China have to lift the ban on free trade unions. In addition, the state has to provide space for the 'official' union to develop freely its autonomy."

Apparently, there exist underground trade unions in the PRC. What is their situation and do they get support from the workers at large?

"Their situation is very tough either in terms of expanding their organisation or fundamental work. They are facing a lot of difficulties due to the state constraint which blocks its work as any unions. Whenever they promote the union activities, the members will be identified and imprisoned by the state apparatus. Their situation is harsh."

How do you foresee the future prospects of labour movement in the PRC?

"I am very optimistic. Free trade unionism has favourable conditions to establish and process further development. The conflicts between workers and capitalists are deep-rooted and are further deepened as economic development moves to its high gears. Consequently, there will be a direct conflict of workers' interests. In order to soften the conflicts in different sectors and balance the industrial relations, the only way out is to legitimise the free trade unions which can act as a mediator in these conflicts."

Development of world trade blocks must be avoided, says international union leader

The need to avoid the break up of the world economy into competing protectionist blocs was heavily underlined by Enzo Friso, General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), when he addressed the general conference of the International Trade Secretariats in Geneva on 12-13 January.

PROTECTIONISM & HUMAN RIGHTS

The conference is an informal get together of senior officials of the 16 industrial international trade union federations, which meets at the beginning of each year for a general exchange of views. Friso, elected last year to the ICFTU's top job, explained that he wants to put defeating regional protectionism at the top of the international trade union movement's agenda. He has asked to address each of the ITS Executive meetings on the same issue. Of equal importance, however, he stressed is the protection of human and trade union rights. The ICFTU had established a new Committee on this topic and a new department was being set up in its Brussels headquarters under newly appointed Assistant General Secretary Eddie Laurijssen. He proposed (and the meeting agreed in principle) to the idea of a permanent ICFTU/ITS presence at the Washington headquarters of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to stress the need for respect of trade union and human rights in the implementation of their development programmes.

MERGERS

Closer working relationships between various of the ITSs and even in some cases mergers were discussed at length by the meeting. 1993 will see the creation of a new ITS when the International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions IFFTU merges with another

body the COTP to form a new ITS to be called simply the Education International. Discussions are underway on a merger between the Miners' International (MIF) and the ICEF which covers the Chemical and Energy sectors.

ILO

A review of developments within the International Labour Organisation began with an introduction by Heribert Maier, ILO Deputy Director-General and himself a former general secretary of the white collar ITS FIET. Maier talked about Central and Eastern Europe and explained the ILO's key role in training employers so that unions could have someone to negotiate with. The ILO was putting pressure on lending institutions, including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to take account of the social aspects of their policies. Budgetary problems were slowing down the ILO's response to the huge demand for expertise in drafting and revising national labour codes.

EUROPE

Everyone is talking about Europe these days, and the ITS meeting was no exception. For the second year running, the participants welcomed Emilio Gabaglio, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), to give his views of recent developments. Gabaglio pointed to the very gloomy economic situation in the EC countries and to the ETUC demand for a jobs and growth programme which had been presented to the Edinburgh summit. The Maastricht treaty had been put "back on the rails" and would probably be ratified. There was a changed climate in the EC with a more inter-governmental approach to decision

making. The ETUC was organising a European Day of Action on April second which would involve demonstrations in all the European capital cities. There was considerable discussion about the decision of the ETUC to establish its own committee for "international affairs". This was intended to help guide unions in assessing the EC's external policy, Gabaglio explained, but many of the organisations represented felt it risked duplicating the work of the ICFTU and encouraging a "bloc" mentality.

John Evans, General Secretary of the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD gave an overview of the economic crisis in the industrialised countries with 34 million unemployed forecast for the end of 1993. There was a sign of a real change in the OECD away from ultra free enterprise neo-liberalism back towards an approach which gives a high priority to employment.

The conference also discussed measures to combat corruption amongst governments, disarmament and re-conversion, AIDS, racism and fascism. Amongst specific countries which were the subject of special examination, the conference noted once again the appalling human and trade union rights record of the government of Burma, and pledged support to the development of free unions in that country.

In accordance with a decision taken two years previously in favour of rotating different ITS positions, the conference decided to elect Dan Gallin (International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations IUF) as its Chairman with Marcello Malentacci (International Metalworkers' Federation) as Vice-Chairman. The Conference made a special presentation to Harold Lewis on the occasion of his last meeting and wished him all the best for his retirement.

EC transport white paper released

As Denmark takes over the EC Presidency, the biennial reshuffle in the European Commission welcomed the beginning of the year all pro-Europeans have been waiting for — 1993 and the opening of the single market.

NEW COMMISSIONER TACKLES TRANSPORT POLICY

Karel Van Miert handed over the Commission Transport portfolio to Spanish Commissioner Abel Matutes. Van Miert was reported to be disappointed over the failure of Member States to reach agreement over the linked issues of liberalisation of road transport cabotage and taxation at a special Council meeting on 21 December.

Around 70 per cent of the community's goods are carried by road, and the Council's failure to reach a decision on liberalisation by January first 1993 leaves it open to court action at the European Court of Justice — the Netherlands and Luxembourg are rumoured to be in favour of such action. Should the court find in their favour, liberalisation will then be imposed.

Van Miert, however, can take the credit for sketching out future EC transport policy. His White Paper on transport policy appeared in Brussels on December second. According to Van Miert, Europe's transport sector is threatened with paralysis unless the proposals put forward by the Commission are implemented quickly.

The paper emphasises that the proportion of goods carried by road is too high, and stresses the importance of rail, inland navigation and coastal shipping. It also finds fault with the lack of public investment in transport infrastructure, EC-wide, and underlines the importance of environmental considerations, particularly in the urban transport sector.

The draft policy sets out a seven-point strategy for strengthening the single market in the transport sector, creating integrated transport systems which charge the user for infrastruc-

ture and environmental costs, and for providing credit facilities at the European Investment Bank (EIB) as well as creating a new investment fund. It envisages stringent standards on the environment implemented via new tax instruments and environmentally-friendly transport, action to improve road safety, and the adaptation of EC measures in maritime and air transport to harmonise with international instruments. Social policy, including access to employment, the training of workers, working conditions, and the encouragement of collective agreements, are also featured.

Trans-European networks and transport links with third countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, are also stressed as vital elements of the Commission's plans for the future.

The task of carrying out this policy and opening up the EC's transport sector falls to the Spanish Commissioner, Matutes, who also takes on the Energy portfolio.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS — A NEW PRIORITY

Social Affairs, left vacant following the departure of Greek Socialist Vasso Papandreou, goes to Padraig Flynn, a former Fianna Fail Irish justice minister. Flynn will also have the job of monitoring EC immigration policies.

With 18 million unemployed in the Community — the highest number since 1988 — and the EC's record of inaction on the social dimension, Flynn faces a daunting task. Following the conclusions of the Edinburgh summit in December, where the Social Charter unexpectedly re-emerged as a priority, the development of social dialogue between unions and employers as provided for in the Maastricht treaty has been made a prime objective for the Commission.

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW NOISE DIRECTIVE

A proposal for a Directive concerning protection of workers against noise, mechanical vibrations, optical radiation and electromagnetic fields was

submitted to the Council of Ministers by the Commission on December 23rd.

The measure will fill the gap left by a 1986 Directive which provisionally excluded workers in the air and maritime transport industries. Falling under Article 118a of the Treaty of Rome, the Directive will need only a Qualified Majority Vote from the Council of Ministers to be approved.

POLLUTION MEASURE AGREED

A Council meeting on December eighth dealing specifically with shipping matters agreed on a Directive obliging ship's masters to give prior notice to ports when arriving with hazardous or environmentally harmful cargoes.

Although a provision in the Directive allowing Member States the right to intervene with and board ships carrying dangerous cargoes is already agreed under the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) 1980 Protocol, and is applied by most Member States, there was some opposition to the measure from Denmark and Germany in the name of "freedom of movement at sea". A rider was added to the Directive to remove the binding force of this measure.

SWISS VOTE "NO"

The Swiss people's "No"-vote to involvement in the European Economic Area (EEA) — the free trade zone linking the EC's 12 members with the seven countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) — has left EFTA with a problem.

EFTA now has to find an approach that allows the EEA to go ahead without Switzerland. The principal problem is the funding that Switzerland was supposed to provide for the development of poorer areas of Europe — meaning that Spain and other Southern Europeans may well demand higher contributions from the remaining EFTA members of the EEA.

European transport unions debate future

The completion of the EC internal market on January first and the slow but steady progress towards ratification of the Maastricht treaty are both imposing heavy new demands on European transport workers.

As a result, ITF affiliates in the European Community countries together with those in the other members of the European Economic Area are looking for ways to strengthen their European structure and activities. The first step in this process was taken at a special meeting of the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community (the "Brussels Committee") held in July 1992 (see *ITF News*, August 1992). A second meeting to discuss detailed changes to the constitution of the Committee took place in Brussels on 21-22 January 1993.

Despite lengthy preparatory work by the Secretariats of the Committee and the ITF, and a detailed debate, the meeting did not reach a consensus. Of the points to be resolved, the most important of all is the definition of the constitutional and practical relationship between the Committee (which has limited itself since its establishment in 1958 to liaison with the EC institutions) and the ITF (which co-ordinates trade union policy and trade union action). Pressure from transport unions for a much higher profile to be adopted on European transport policy issues has resulted in an expansion in activities both within the ITF and the Brussels Committee (two organisations which have virtually the same membership). In the period since the ITF Florence Congress in 1990, the Committee has begun discussions on creating a General Assembly and activating its sectional meetings, and the ITF has, in response to Congress decisions, revived its own European Committee and created European Committees within its own industrial sections. If proper ground rules are not established laying down what these bodies are supposed to do, the potential for confusion and duplication of effort is clear.

A further complicating factor is the

enhanced position given to the sectoral "Industry Committees" within the European Trade Union Confederation at its 1991 Luxembourg Congress (see *ITF News*, May 1991). This has led some ITF unions to demand that the Brussels Committee, which has traditionally acted as a co-ordinator of union views to the EC, be transformed into a European Transport Workers' Federation representing a wider European constituency and with full ETUC membership. Other unions prefer the Brussels Committee to retain more or less its current function relating to the EC and leave the ETUC industry committee status to be shared, as it is at present, between the Brussels Committee and the ITF.

During a long and detailed debate, chaired by Brussels Committee president Rudi Schäfer (German Railwaymen's Union), the one point of agreement was that both organisations had to co-operate together as closely as possible in order to maximise the impact of transport workers on the developing common transport policy in the European Community. Joint proposals covering constitutional changes

and working arrangements will be worked out by the Secretariats and presented first to the ITF Executive Board and secondly to another Brussels Committee meeting to be held in the Spring. Any constitutional changes would then need to be ratified at a first General Assembly of the Committee to be held sometime in the Autumn.

The two day meeting adopted an important change in the way in which the Committee is financed, moving from a formula relating to the size of each EC country towards one related to the size of affiliated membership. It also agreed to accept into affiliation the ITF affiliated Austrian Railwaymen's Union, reflecting a decision in principle to extend the Committee's membership to EFTA countries which had already been taken in July 1992.

The ITF Secretariat was represented at the meeting by General Secretary Harold Lewis, Acting General Secretary (designate) David Cockroft, who has replaced Lewis as the ITF's nominated Vice-President of the Brussels Committee, and Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers.

Australian unions fight 'reforms'

The Australian trade union movement is mobilising against the threat of a New Zealand-type assault on workers' collective rights.

The right-wing opposition to the governing Labour Party has pledged to dismantle the existing industrial relations system and replace it with the "Thatcherite" cocktail of pro-business labour market "deregulation". This involves a combination of eliminating regulations which affect employers' "freedoms" whilst simultaneously introducing harsh restrictions on trade union rights (restricting the right to strike, eliminating payroll deduction for union dues, removing acquired benefits and outlawing solidarity action).

A Federal election must take place before this June. Opinion polls put Labour marginally ahead of the right-

wing coalition. The Federal opposition have pledged to radically alter Australia's industrial relations system if they are elected.

In a hint of what is in store for Australian workers if the opposition take power federally, the newly elected right-wing government in the State of Victoria has introduced a local version of what the opposition would like nationally.

The state government has effectively dismantled the entire industrial relations system. All state-wide awards are being terminated on March first — workers and employers may then mutually agree new collective agreements, or employers may insist on individual employment contracts.

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... Opposition promises major assault on workers' rights

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When there is any disagreement, the old award remains in force.

Additionally, the state government has unilaterally scrapped workers' holiday leave loading (an average of 17.5 per cent of earnings).

There are, of course, savage new restrictions on the right to strike and the virtual elimination of provisions for solidarity action by unions.

The trade union movement has reacted rapidly to these threats. More

than a million workers went on strike on November 11, and in one of the largest demonstrations ever seen in the state, 130,000 workers marched on the state capital.

The November action was supported strongly by ITF affiliates — Waterside Workers' Federation members in Victoria were backed by action and meetings all over the country. Stopwork meetings were held in all major WWF ports in the days following November 10.

On November 20 all public transport, trains, buses and trams stopped for 24 hours in protest at the state government's actions.

A nation-wide day of action in support of the unions in the state of Victoria was called by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). The ports, mining and metal industries and most railways were brought to a halt and hundreds of thousands of workers attended protest rallies throughout the country.

OBITUARIES

In memoriam: Roger Dekeyzer, Teddy Gleason and Don Nicholson — transport union leaders of distinction

Former ITF President and Belgian transport trade union leader **Roger Dekeyzer** died on December 16, aged 86. Roger's life-long links with the labour movement go back to the late twenties when he became an official of the national teachers' union. His boundless energies and flair for trade union work were soon to benefit the Belgian Transport Workers' Union (BTB), the union in which he first became active as a local branch official when he worked on a fishing trawler in the 30s. He quickly established a considerable reputation in union circles and when war broke out in Europe he was to go first to France and then to Britain where he became Secretary of the Scottish Area of the ITF-linked Belgian, Dutch, Danish, French and Polish Transport Workers' Organisations in exile. Once hostilities ended, he returned to his home town of Ostend and to the BTB. By now his talents had marked him out for leadership and in 1946 he became BTB General Secretary. When the position of General Secretary was abolished three

years later, he assumed the union's presidency, a post to which he was to be re-elected at intervals for the next twenty-two years until he retired in 1971. As well as his busy life in his own union, Roger also found time for the many other commitments that made him such a prominent figure in Belgian public life. He served both as an Antwerp city councillor and a Senator in the national parliament and was also Belgium's official representative to the United Nations. His skills as a linguist made him the natural choice for the many international missions that he carried out on behalf of the ICFTU, the Belgian national trade union centre, of which he is a former president, and of course the ITF. In the early fifties he served as Chairman of the ITF Dockers' Section — an important period in the Section's history when much of the ground work for international policies was laid. His expertise was often called on, especially in connection with ITF efforts within the ILO at that time to update international instruments on dock work. His own

early experience on a fishing trawler gave him a first-hand knowledge of the rigours of the fishing profession and a deeply-rooted conviction of the pressing need to improve the conditions of the world's fishermen. Roger liked to call himself the father of the ITF Fishermen's Section and he had perhaps as good a claim to that title as any. For it was during the time he spent in war-time Britain that he produced the first draft of the ITF Fishermen's Charter, based on an investigation into the conditions of European fishing crews. He remained active in the Section after the war as a Committee member and played a leading part in many aspects of the Section's work within the various international institutions with which the ITF is involved. He was closely associated as a technical expert in the work of the Committee of Experts on Fishing Questions in the early 1950s and when the EC Joint Consultative Committee for the Fishing Industry was set up in 1970 he

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was chosen as its first president. These long and close links with the ITF's work on behalf of its fishermen members were to reach a fitting peak in 1968 when Roger was elected Section Chairman — an honour which he especially appreciated as it meant that he was able to spend his last three years of active trade union life leading the group of transport workers for which he had always had a special affection. His activities within the ITF's industrial sections also extended to the Seafarers' Section of which he was a long-serving committee member as well as to other industrial sections. The early post-war years were very important ones in that they also marked the start of Roger's long and distinguished service on the ITF's governing bodies. Election to the small nine-man Executive Committee came in 1952 and then in 1960 his years of service to the international union cause were appropriately rewarded when the ITF Congress elected him as ITF President, a post he was to hold for the next two years and for which he was to be duly honoured with the ITF Gold Badge. After his period of office as ITF President ended, Roger retained his seat on the ITF Executive Board throughout the 1960s, finally giving up his seat when he retired from active union life.

Thomas W ("Teddy") Gleason, former ITF Vice President and President Emeritus of the US International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), died on December 24, aged 92. With his death, the American labour movement has lost one of the last of a generation of trade union leaders who developed their organising skills during the long and bitter labour conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s. The son and grandson of longshoremen and the oldest of thirteen children Teddy became one of New York's youngest ever fully fledged dock workers when, at the age of 14, he accompanied his father down to the waterfront for his first day's work on the West Side piers. In 1919, he joined the ILA and became closely involved in its activities. Over

the next thirteen years he moved up through several different dock jobs until, in 1932, he had advanced to dock superintendent. That year, in the depths of the Depression, he was blacklisted by the stevedoring companies for his union activities and was forced to take a day job in a sugar factory, supplemented by night work, in order to support his family. With the coming of President Roosevelt's New Deal administration and the legalisation of union activity on the docks Teddy eagerly returned to his trade and took up his union activities once again. He quickly became president of Local 1, the largest checkers' local in the ILA and in 1947 his work took on a national character when he became a full-time ILA union organiser. It was his first-hand experience of the low pay and tough conditions in the industry during these early years that made him decide to "do something to bring dignity and self-respect to the longshoremen" and which won him a strong following among rank and file dock workers. When Patrick J Connolly died in 1961 he was elected to the vacant post of Executive Vice President — a position which placed him at the head of the ILA team negotiating with the waterfront employers. Having made a success of his job as the union's chief negotiator it was only natural that before long he should be elected union president. His first task when he took over as President in 1963, when he was already 62, was to restore respect for the ILA from the low ebb of the 1950s and to turn it into a modern labour organisation capable of responding to the changing needs of the docks industry. It was his foresight in recognising early on the need for job security for dock workers in the face of the inevitable and far-reaching changes which were to radically alter the face of the industry that led to one of the most significant achievements of his entire period of office and the one of which he has often said, with justice, that he is the most proud. This was the guaranteed annual income (GAI) which he secured while leading the crucial 1965 contact talks. Under this agreement the New York employers

undertook to guarantee all dockers 1,600 hours' work a year or its equivalent in pay, regardless of whether work was available. At first many of the dockers opposed the change but as automation gained a hold in the sector and there were fewer and fewer dock jobs they came to appreciate the benefits of the safety net provided by the GAI and the container handling rules he later negotiated which gave dockers the right to stuff and strip containers at the piers. Though he always proved a tough and extremely tenacious opponent in fighting for his members' rights, the industry negotiators who faced him on the other side of the table had to acknowledge that he never sought to hold back progress and that it was his willingness to face the challenges of the new methods of cargo handling head on that made it possible for containerisation to expand and provided a period of stability both for ILA members and the steamship lines, stevedoring companies and port authorities on the eastern seaboard. There were other successes too — he fought fiercely against racial segregation when it was still widespread elsewhere in the US, with the result that the east coast labour force was integrated long before many others and able black leaders were soon to emerge in the ILA. His many other commitments notwithstanding, he never forgot his roots and always remained accessible to rank and file union members, who appreciated having a leader who had come up the hard way and could understand their everyday problems. "We got everything we fought for" said a satisfied Gleason when he relinquished the reins of office and passed them on to John Bowers in 1987 after serving six consecutive four year terms as ILA president. It was always inevitable that one of the US's most prominent transport union leaders would also play a leading role in the ITF. He had already been an active member of the committee of the Dockers' Section helping shape ITF policy in a number of areas before he was elected its Vice Chairman in 1974, a

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position in which he was to serve until 1983. His membership of the Fair Practices Committee also helped prepare the ground work for his union's present-day involvement in the Foc campaign in which it occupies a vital coordinating role. Membership of the ITF's highest governing body, the Executive Board, came in 1973 when he was elected as one of three members representing the US affiliates. When the ITF decided at the 1974 Stockholm Congress that there should be in future three Vice Presidents Gleason was one of those elected to this high office. He continued to serve the ITF in this capacity until the 1986 Congress and remained a member of the Board until the Florence Congress in 1990, when he was awarded the ITF Gold Badge as a token of the high esteem in which he was held.

Don Nicholson, former President of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT) and member of the ITF Executive Board, died on December fourth, aged 75. Born into a union family in the mining town of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Nicholson was brought up on the long and bitter mining strikes of 1909 and 1925. He was thus following a family tradition when at the age of 19 he began work underground in the Pictou Country mines. The young Nicholson joined the United Mine Workers and soon became active both in the Mine Workers and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. After war service, he rejoined the Mine Workers and served for six years as Secretary of its largest Local. It was at this period that he first came to prominence in the national labour movement. He was the driving force behind many of the organising campaigns of the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) of those years and the CCL was to call on him many times for his help with major labour disputes. It was Nicholson who ran the 17-month long Nova Scotia quarry workers' strike of 1956 and who was one of the leading figures in the 1958 International Woodworkers' strike in Newfound-

land, which was brutally smashed by the then Premier Joey Smallwood. An important turning point in an already remarkable union career came in 1959 when Nicholson joined the Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT) as a union representative. His decision to move to the CBRT was greatly influenced by the esteem in which he held its founder A R Mosher whom he had worked under at the CCL. He also very much wanted to work for a trade union that was Canadian in origin and not part of a North American international union. He spent the first three years providing services to five Nova Scotia locals and then in 1962 he moved to the Toronto area where he continued with his organising activities, setting up several new locals while looking after the interests of CBRT-organised truckers, railway and St Lawrence Seaway workers. By 1970 he had secured a sufficiently strong base within the union for him to feel that the time was right to seek national office. He put his name forward as a candidate in the elections for National Vice President at the Brotherhood's Québec City Convention and won. This meant a move to the Brotherhood's national headquarters in Ottawa and it was here for the next six years that he took charge of the general workers' section of the union. When CBRT National President Don Secord retired in 1976 Nicholson was the clear and obvious choice as his successor. For six more years he skillfully steered the affairs of the union until he finally retired in 1982. As the CBRT National President Nicholson was one of the standard bearers of the Canadian transport workers unions' proud tradition of close links with the international labour movement. He had a seat on the Committees of the ITF Road Transport Workers', Dockers' and Seafarers' Sections and also became the Canadian dockers' union representative on the Fair Practices Committee. This gave him a chance to make his voice heard when important decisions were taken on ITF policy, especially in the flag of convenience campaign. In 1977 Nicholson was elected to one of the two Canadian seats on the ITF Ex-

ecutive Board, a post in which he served without a break until he retired from office. In recognition of the years of dedicated service he had given to the Federation, he was awarded its highest award, the Gold Badge, in 1983.

The General Secretary, Harold Lewis, adds:

It is very sad that Roger Dekeyzer, Teddy Gleason and Don Nicholson should all have died recently. The youngest of them, Don Nicholson, was 75 but even so it came too soon. Aside from the great services they gave to their unions and to the ITF, they were, all three, "characters". Roger with his flamboyant manners and colourful cravats (he never wore a conventional tie), Teddy the wisecracking New York Irishman who had a genuinely modest personal style that made you wonder how he had climbed to the top of a very tough tree, and Don Nicholson, the grizzly bear who could never remember his glasses and could never find his documents but could gobble you up in an argument because he was actually as sharp as they come. They were very different in so many ways but they all added enormously to every cause and every organisation they joined.

The Croatian trade union leader **Milan Krivokuca** has been assassinated. Krivokuca, the founding President of the Railroad Engineer Trade Union of Croatia (Sindikato Strojnog Osoblja Hrvatske — SSOH), was stabbed several times at the door of his apartment in Velika Gorica near Zagreb on December 17. He was rushed to a Zagreb hospital where he died. A distinguished and very popular trade union leader, who was the moving force behind the creation of the first truly independent union in the former Yugoslavia, Krivokuca was also active politically on the democratic left, serving on the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Union of Croatia. With his tragic death at the age of only 42 Croatia has lost one of its finest organisers and activists.



INLAND TRANSPORT

Japanese railway workers' strike

4,600 members of the ITF-affiliated Japan Confederation of Railway Workers' Unions (JRU) in the west of Japan went on strike from 8 to 11 December after the local rail management refused to back down on its plans to make drivers and guards work longer hours.

According to the JRU, Japan Railways-West (JR-West) intends to stop treating "waiting time" (the period of about an hour during which train crews both take a short rest and prepare for the next turn of duty) as working time and to cut the working day by 21 minutes from 7 hours 31 minutes to 7 hours 10 minutes.

The proposed changes will mean that train crews will be paid for an average 35 hour working week, although they will be working far longer hours, as "waiting time" (totalling an average 240 hours a year) will be deducted from total working hours and will only be partially offset by the 21-minute reduction in daily hours.

JR-West is also insisting that drivers on some lines collect fares, carry out maintenance tasks and clean platforms and trains during what is now waiting time.

The JRU has opposed these changes in meetings with the management, arguing that shorter rest periods and longer driving time pose a serious risk to the health of train crews and that greater driver fatigue could endanger passenger safety. But management has so far refused to listen to their views or make any concessions.

It has totally rejected the JRU's proposals that a shortening of working time should be brought about by granting more annual leave and ending overtime working, claiming that a shortage of drivers makes regular overtime an essential element in its plans. Instead train crews have been offered extra pay in compensation for the loss of waiting time, in the hope that more money would persuade

them to accept the new proposals.

Despite the heavy-handed tactics of JR-West, including widespread intimidation of union members and the use of retired drivers as replacement crews, the union's action was an outstanding success, with a total of 14,000 train services cancelled as a result of the four-day work stoppage.

JRU representatives visited London in the third week of January where they held talks on waiting time with ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers and the drivers' unions RMT and ASLEF. Whilst in Europe they also met officials of the

German Railwaymen's Union GdED, who were briefed on the situation in JR-West.

As we went to press, the JRU was making determined efforts to get the rail company to change its mind. An industrial tribunal is investigating a charge of unfair labour practices brought by the union and the Transport Ministry has been asked to intervene.

Further strike action is planned from March 18, when the new regime is due to be introduced, if the union is not able to reach a satisfactory settlement before that date.

ITF seeks permanent seat in Central Rhine Commission

For some years, the ITF has taken part on an ad hoc basis in the work of the Central Commission for Rhine Navigation, the six nation body with headquarters in Strasbourg that regulates all aspects of navigation on one of Europe's principal waterways. It has been represented at several tripartite consultative conferences where it has contributed to the debate on important matters of concern to Rhine boatmen such as manning scales and navigating and rest times.

Now that increasing importance is being attached to the development of regional inland waterway systems as an environmentally-sensitive transport mode, the ITF feels that the time is right for its participation to be put on a firmer footing.

The ITF's "Rhine-Main-Danube" Working Group has also been pressing for some time for the ITF to become more closely involved in the activities of the Central Commission.

General Secretary Harold Lewis has therefore written to the President of the Central Commission putting forward the ITF's arguments as to why it should be granted permanent repre-

sentation.

In his letter the General Secretary points out that the ITF is by far the most representative trade union organisation in the transport sector, with seven major inland navigation affiliates in the six countries that make up the Central Commission.

The best way for the ITF to play a full part in the future development of the Rhine waterway would be for the Central Commission to give it the status of official spokesman of inland navigation employees, the General Secretary said.

This would mean that the ITF would be regularly invited to meetings of the Commission and its committees convened for the purpose of holding consultations with interested professional organisations.

Closer cooperation with the employee organisations would have positive benefits in many areas, the General Secretary pointed out, and he promised the President of the Central Commission the full support of the employees' organisations in helping ensure the economic prosperity of Rhine navigation.

British Rail privatisation plans announced

The British government has been forced into a climbdown on one of the main planks of its planned privatisation of British Rail.

It had originally intended to introduce open competition between private operators granted permission by the new Franchising Authority to run passenger services after privatisation.

But Transport Secretary John MacGregor has responded to the fears of would-be franchisees by announcing that private sector companies will be granted exclusive franchises covering all passenger services in many areas.

During the interval between the end of the consultation of interested parties last autumn and this month's publication of the privatisation bill it had become increasingly clear that private companies would be reluctant to bid for franchises only to see their profits eroded as the most profitable routes were taken by rivals.

The operation of a completely free market in passenger service operation, a central feature of the white paper published last July (see **ITF News**, August 1992), has thus been an early casualty as the government now prepares for what looks likely to be a very bumpy ride as it steers its privatisation legislation through parliament.

PRIVATISATION BILL PUBLISHED

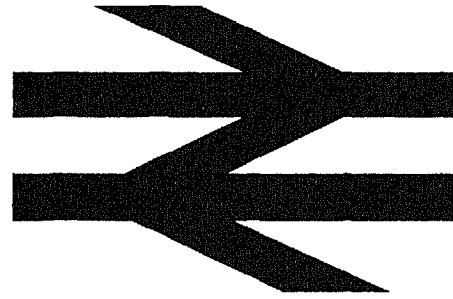
Details of the government's about-turn were announced just two days before the 131-clause privatisation bill was unveiled to the public.

As previously announced the privatisation plans centre round continued state ownership of the tracks, the outright sale of freight operations and the contracting out of passenger services to the private sector.

The privatisation bill, which seeks to put flesh on these plans, has come under fierce attack from all sides, with consumer groups, the public transport lobby, professional institutions and MPs of all parties joining the three rail unions in condemning the government for the bureaucratic complexity of its proposals and the intricate web of agreements and regulatory proce-

dures involved in the dismantling of the unified national rail system.

Even at this late stage a number of important questions have still not been answered. The bill does not spell out what will be the level of track charges or how BR's freight business will be



reorganised prior to being sold off. Details of these will apparently come in separate papers over the next few months.

Already the Ministry of Transport is dropping heavy hints that privatisation will have to be primed by £2 billion of public money for investment in projects such as the updating of ageing track and signalling and new rolling stock in order to attract private sector interest. This will come as no surprise to the management of British Rail and the rail unions who have been pressing the government for some years not to cut back subsi-

dies. But it will be a bitter irony if more money is made available only to fund the break-up of a vital public service.

Commenting on the bill, Richard Rosser, General Secretary of the BR clerical staff union TSSA, complained that BR privatisation heralded the end of a national railway timetable. Fares would rocket, investment would plummet, services would be cut and the railway network would contract, he forecast in an interview with a British Sunday newspaper.

Well before railway privatisation is introduced it is already undermining rail employment. BR announced late last year that 5,000 rail workers had to go before the end of March and it is about to ask for further manpower cuts in the run-up to the sell-off. More savage job losses are anticipated once the first franchises are awarded, probably in April 1994.

As we went to press, the privatisation bill was receiving its second reading in the House of Commons, during which details were revealed of the seven route complexes or "shadow" franchises — equivalent to one fifth of the passenger route network — which will be groomed for sell-off.

Pakistan bans rail workers from joining trade union

Thousands of Pakistani rail workers are being denied the right to join a trade union.

Invoking the 1969 Industrial Ordinance the Pakistani government has declared that all rail workers in grades 1 to 16 will from now on be classed as supervisory staff.

According to Pakistani labour legislation, workers in supervisory posts are not allowed to belong to trade unions.

In all, rail staff in 35 different categories have lost the right to organise.

Other public sector workers, especially those in posts and telecommunications, are similarly thought likely to be prevented from joining unions.

Workers in several industrial sectors are also facing new restrictions as a strike ban, already in force in a number of key industries, is extended to electricity supply workers and Karachi Port Trust employees.

Slovenian bus workers appeal for support

330 bus workers from Koper in Slovenia are staging an all-out strike in the Slovenian coastal town of Koper in protest at the non-payment of their wages.

The bus workers are members of the Bus Drivers' Syndicate, which is part of the ITF-affiliated Union of Maritime Employees of Slovenia.

A strike was called from January 14 after the Syndicate had failed to make any headway in talks which had begun last November on their members' grievances.

The striking bus workers, who are employed by Slavnik International Limited, have been suffering financial hardship as the result of the company's actions over recent months.

A first blow came when their pay was cut by twenty per cent last summer but matters came to a head at the end of the year when the company, which is effectively owned by the gov-

ernment through the State Agency for Restructuring, refused to pay wages for November and December or the traditional annual bonus. Nearly US\$700,000 in all is now owed to the bus workers.

At the request of the Union, ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers has written to European road transport affiliates asking them to send protest messages to the Ministers of Labour, Transport, and Commerce and Trade urging the government to meet its financial obligations to the bus workers.

Affiliates wishing to send further protest messages should send them to:

Ministry of Labour
Mrs Jozica PUHAR
Ljubljana
Slovenia
Fax: +38 61 212 432

Ministry of Transport
Mr. UMEK
Ljubljana
Slovenia
Fax: +38 61 218 707

Ministry of Commerce and Trade
Mr. KRACUN
Ljubljana
Slovenia
Fax: +38 61 123 101

Please send copies of your messages to the ITF Secretariat and to:

Strike Committee
Bus Drivers' Syndicate
"Slavnik International Ltd" Koper
Fax: +38 66 23 287

Trucking industry council set up in South Africa

There has been a major breakthrough in long-standing union efforts to achieve a National Industrial Council regulating industrial relations in the trucking industry in South Africa.

At the beginning of December, the employers agreed to begin talks with the road transport unions on a draft constitution for the Council.

This follows a ballot of members of the Road Freight Association, the employers' national body, which produced a clear majority in favour of setting up a Council for the sector.

The employers have only made one condition — that once the content of the draft constitution has been agreed between the parties association members must be asked to give it their formal backing.

If the result of this second ballot is positive and the governing bodies of the road transport unions approve the constitution text the Council can then be officially registered.

It is clear that the unity of workers in the Goods Transport Industry will be crucial to the success of this process. For if the employers' ballot fails

to win the necessary support, all the union efforts over a number of years will have come to nothing.

Under the umbrella of the Transport Unions' Forum, the five road transport unions involved — they include the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union and the

Transport and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa — have begun mapping out their strategy.

The Forum has already held one meeting at which it has formulated the union position on the draft constitution and intends to present this to the employers shortly.

Light rail for Manila?

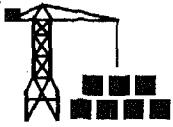
A new light railway could prove the answer to appalling traffic congestion in Manila.

In recent years traffic on the roads of this city of eight million people has grown at such a rate that even a simple journey can take hours.

Traffic tailbacks and rising levels of pollution are making the daily journey to work for hundreds of thousands of hard-pressed commuters a real misery.

President Ramos has given the go-ahead to a light rail scheme for the capital, capable of carrying 500,000 passengers a day over eighteen kilometres of track.

The contract for constructing and maintaining the new light railway, which it is estimated will cost around US\$350 million, has been awarded to a local consortium. Once built it will be operated under lease by the government.



DOCKERS

Grenada government threatens de-recognition

In December, dockers in the West Indian Island of Grenada reached a crisis point in their long-term dispute with port employers over the negotiation of a collective agreement for the term 1990-1993.

All cargo shipped to and from Grenada is currently handled by members of the Grenada Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Union through collective agreements between the union and the local agents for the shipping lines, Grenada Shipping Agents Limited.

But by December, negotiations over the current agreement were at a stalemate, and the union was considering taking action to kick-start the process.

The government of Grenada then authorised the Grenada Ports Authority to start proceedings to enable it to provide direct services for cargo handling in the port within three months

Mass lay-offs in Trinidad

The Trinidad and Tobago Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union wrote to the ITF at the beginning of January when workers heard that there were to be 1,000 redundancies on the waterfront.

This new measure follows successive reductions of the workforce over recent years.

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis wrote to Prime Minister Patrick Manning expressing his concern at the "immediate and savage" job cuts and giving the ITF's total support to the union.

"The social and industrial impact of such a measure would be disastrous," he warned.

"If you believe that yet more needs to be done, then the government and the Port Authority should seek an agreement with the union that all three parties can accept," he added.

— effectively meaning the introduction of non-union labour, an initiative which the union believed was designed to destroy its organisation.

The ITF sent a circular to all docks affiliates requesting them to send messages to the Prime Minister of Grenada, Nicholas Braithwaite, protesting against the proposed use of non-recognised dock workers and requesting that negotiations be resumed with the aim of arriving at a settlement acceptable to both sides.

"Members of the union have traditionally supplied the labour for loading and unloading cargo on to and from ships calling at the port of St.

George's and elsewhere in the state of Grenada," said C. Eric Pierre, General Secretary of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Union, in a letter to the Port Authority.

"The Authority is doubtlessly aware that the union's rights under the agreement, including the right to be the exclusive supplier of labour for the loading and unloading of cargo, are rights which the union has secured for its members in struggles that at times have been intense and bitter. The members of the union wish to assure that Authority of their unwavering commitment to the protection of those rights," he added.

Dutch dockers discuss Rotterdam "Masterplan"

Dutch dockers' affiliate Vervoersbond FNV are renegotiating their "Masterplan" agreement with the Rotterdam port employers' federation.

If a settlement is reached the agreement will mean that there will be a guarantee of no forced redundancies in the port at least until 1995. However, port employers are resisting the changes, protesting that the plan for early and voluntary retirements is too expensive.

The FNV is considering asking for an element of state funding to overcome this problem.

Meanwhile, a dispute is brewing over 400 jobs which are threatened at the newly-merged European Bulk Services (EBS) company.

EBS employs around 12,000 workers in the bulk cargo sector since it was formed after the merger of three companies, GEM, Interstevedoring and Franz Swartsouw. Now it wants to make 400 GEM workers redundant.

The union has vigorously opposed the job cuts, pointing out that the company cannot make any obligatory redundancies under the current agreement with Rotterdam port employers.

Negotiations at the end of January ended in the Vervoersbond FNV giving an ultimatum — either the company produced a proposal which meant no forced redundancies by February fourth, or the union would consult members in the port area over taking action.

Talks are already being held with FNV members in the port area. There have been some spontaneous strikes at GEM and it is likely that more industrial action will follow, says Kees Marges, Rotterdam port representative for the union.

ITF conference on new technology in ports

The introduction of information technology (IT) in the ports industry means a radical change in working practices for port workers in their workplaces.

Where retraining is offered the introduction of new technology can be a benefit to workers — but where existing port workers are not given the opportunity to learn new or alternative skills, they can often find themselves without a job. Automation usually means a reduction in the workforce, and port workers' unions urgently need to adopt strategies to face this challenge.

It is to develop such strategies that representatives from port workers' unions worldwide have been invited to an ITF Conference on New Technology in the Ports Industry.

The Conference will be held on May third, immediately prior to the 1993 Section Conference in Hamburg, at the invitation of dockers from the ITF's German affiliate, ÖTV.

There will be a presentation giving an overview of the role of the ports industry in the integrated transport network. The Conference will then examine the German and Dutch experience of the introduction of new technology in the industry, giving port workers from unions in other countries an insight into the methods used to bring in new working practices in Holland and Germany, and a chance to compare the different approaches in those countries.

The importance of negotiation and consultation rights for trade unions will be examined.

ITF port workers' unions will then discuss the tactics they must develop in order to benefit from the introduction of new technology whilst minimising any detrimental effects.

Assistant General Secretary David Cockroft was enthusiastic about the Conference, urging affiliates to ensure they attend.

"The meeting will be very useful both for those port workers now facing the introduction of IT and who need to look at negotiating new technology agreements, and as a comparative exercise for those who are already using new facilities. There are many new issues that are thrown up by new working practices which we should examine. I am sure the Conference will be a very productive exercise for all participants."

Amsterdam Wijsmuller dispute settled

The Dutch port workers' union Vervoersbond FNV have resolved their dispute with the Wijsmuller group over redundancies at its Amsterdam tugboat subsidiary, Goedkoop.

Wijsmuller had wanted to lay off 23 of its 110 staff, citing changing working practices, but this was bitterly contested both by the ITF-

affiliated FNV and by other unions in the sector.

A strike on November fourth was followed by mass demonstrations by Wijsmuller workers outside the company's headquarters a month later.

The board of directors then made an alternative offer, which meant that only 13 of its tugboat staff will

be laid off — and only on the basis of voluntary early retirement, saving nearly half of the threatened jobs. Unions and management also came to an agreement on shifts.

A new collective agreement for the Goedkoop workforce has now been concluded, say Vervoersbond FNV representatives.

Dock strike brings Italian ports to a halt

A two-day dock strike, called by the three ITF affiliates; FIT-CISL, FILT-CGIL and UILTRASPORTI paralysed many of Italy's ports nationwide from December 14th.

The strike was in protest at a Bill which the government plans to in-

troduce, reorganising Italy's ports system and turning the state-run port authorities into commercial concerns.

Many jobs are threatened by the proposed changes.

Unions cancelled a strike planned for a fortnight before when trans-

port minister Giancarlo Tesini promised to meet them to discuss the Bill.

But when it became clear that Tesini did not intend to find time to meet union representatives the action went ahead.



SEAFARERS

European tanker casualties raise public awareness of sub-standard shipping

A string of major maritime casualties in European coastal waters has concentrated public attention on the maritime industry and safety issues. A firm commitment to "do something" has emerged from the transport ministers of the European Community.

THE AEGEAN SEA

The Greek flag OBO *Aegean Sea* was grounded near the entrance of the Spanish port of La Coruña on December second. The ship broke in two and sustained a number of explosions, leaving a devastating oil slick on the Galician coast.

Conditions were very bad—a Force Nine gale and six metre high waves made the vessel's passage treacherous. The 19-year-old vessel was approaching the tricky port entrance and preparing to take a pilot on board when she hit the rocks. The pilot then came aboard, but all attempts to save the situation failed. All 29 crew (Greek and Filipino) and the pilot were winched to safety by a helicopter.

Questions about the pilotage provision in La Coruña are now being asked. Critics wonder why authorisation to enter the port was given to the vessel in such bad weather, and why the pilot was not placed on the ship before the approach. Once again, the sense of operating 19-year-old OBO's is also being questioned.

On the other hand, the *Aegean Sea* did have a double bottom. It's clear that those who consider double bottoms as a cure-all should think again.

THE BRAER

The US owned, Liberian flag of convenience tanker *Braer* (built in 1975) ran aground in the Shetland Islands on January sixth. Carrying oil from Norway to Québec, she suffered an engine loss and drifted for many hours

before running into rocks. Once again, the environmental disaster was appalling. All the crew were rescued safely.

Crew conditions on the ship were poor. The ship had applied to sign an ITF Agreement, but clearance had not been given because of a number of outstanding claims.

The crew of the ship wrote to the ITF in January 1992, complaining about a series of violations in their collective bargaining agreement. Their complaints included unpaid standby pay, insufficient food allowance, unpaid excess overtime for officers and engineers as much as 200 hours per month, inadequate manning in the vessel's deck department and inadequate compensation for Sunday and Holiday work.

In addition, the ITF Special Seafarers' Department is pursuing claims on behalf of two former masters of the vessel both of whom believe that they have been denied their full contractual entitlement to sickpay.

While there is no reason to link these problems directly with the disaster in the Shetlands, they show clearly that the *Braer* was not a happy ship. They also provide a graphic illustration of the risks inherent in using flag of convenience ships to transport cargoes which are potentially hazardous to the environment.

Something was clearly wrong with the operation of the *Braer*, and only a full public enquiry with wide ranging terms of reference will reveal the truth. Former master Capt. Johansen, in a statement made on January eighth to the Norwegian newspaper *Dagens Naeringsliv*, said that although the ship was in good condition while he was on board, he finds it strange that the present master chose the route he did. "The most natural thing in the pre-

vailing weather would have been to sail North of Shetland. I would not have gone that close to land in bad weather," he said. The *Braer* disaster demonstrates clearly also the need for port states to take a more active role in controlling access to coastal waters for ships carrying hazardous or potentially environmentally damaging cargoes.

THE JAN HEWELIUSZ

The 1977 built Polish flag *Jan Heweliusz* freight ro-ro carrier capsized in the Baltic on January 14 claiming the lives of 51 crew and passengers. Ironically, this disaster received far less publicity from the mainstream media, despite the appalling loss of life—probably because there was no consequent environmental damage.

Weather conditions were very bad at the time of the capsizing, but with a previous history of stability problems (and the long list of similar casualties involving ro-ros), the need for greater attention to ro-ro loading and stability is clear.

THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE

A meeting of the Transport Ministers' Council of the European Community in the last week of January agreed a lengthy statement on "Maritime Safety and Pollution Prevention in the EC".

It calls for greater vigilance in port state control, more action on safety and pollution from the IMO and encourages the Commission to come up with firm proposals in June. By avoiding any unilateral measures (the European Parliament passed a motion calling for tankers over 15 years of age to be banned from European coastal waters, but they have no power to make this happen), the transport ministers could do little more.

Australian government 'Ships of Shame' report unmasks reality of shipping today

The Australian government should tighten up port state control inspections of ships, increase its activities in the International Maritime Organization, and make compliance with minimum labour conditions mandatory for all ships visiting their ports.

These are among the recommendations of "Ships of Shame" — the report of the Australian Parliamentary inquiry into ship safety published in December.

The detailed report provides an in depth analysis of the international maritime industry, identifying a noticeable deterioration in the quality and safety of ships due to flagging out and economic pressures.

The inquiry was originally charged with identifying the threat international shipping poses to Australia's marine and coastal environment, but the Parliamentary Committee realised that it was the lives of seafarers as well as the marine environment that were at risk.

"This report is about a minority of ships," says Chairman Peter Morris in the report's tabling statement, "bad ships, ships that endanger the lives of those who serve in them. Ships that are the source of major risks to the marine environment and marine facilities of the nations they visit. Ships on which seafarers are abused and exploited by officers and management alike. Ships that well deserve to be known as 'ships of shame'."

The Committee held a number of public hearings in Australia and also solicited submissions from a number of international organisations associated with the shipping industry.

The report outlines the present state of the maritime industry:

"It became apparent early in the inquiry that the causes underlying the decline in ship safety were economic. Cost cutting in response to commercial pressure has led to a decline in the quality and standards of ship management, as some ship owners/managers sought to avoid essential ship safety

issues...This decline in ship safety standards has been exacerbated by the failure of many ship owners and flag states to observe convention standards of the international ship safety regulatory system. Additionally, the IMO has been powerless to ensure observance of its Conventions."

While identifying these economic factors as influences, the report does not see them as excuses — particularly for shoddy treatment of seafarers:

"... crew members have been shockingly treated by owners and ships' officers."

The report cites evidence of physical and sexual assaults against crews, double-bookkeeping (ITF rates signed for and lower wages paid), lack of medical care and shabby accommodation.

"Evidence has been received that mistreated crew members are reluctant to complain as they will be black listed by crewing agencies and will be refused work as a seaman. Many are now forced to sign contracts which forbid them to contact the ITF, if they do they are instantly dismissed and threatened that they will never work again..."

"The Committee views the exploitation of any crew as being totally unacceptable. Substandard ships operated by an irresponsible owner, worked by crews that are poorly led, inadequately trained, underpaid and abused, lowers morale to a level where ships pose a grave threat to the lives of seafarers, property and the marine environment."

The report points out that it is only the maritime unions and the Missions to Seamen who are doing anything to help these crews.

In a wide ranging and detailed discussion of the maritime industry (one of the report's greatest strengths is the fact that it is written for a non-maritime audience — for example, it explains in detail how chartering, in-

surance and classification works), the report raises some important doubts about Classification societies:

"With the widespread 'flagging out' of ships to open registries, the traditional association between classification society and flag state broke down. The response of classification societies to the declining number of clients available through association with a particular flag has been to become more active in securing clients and more circumspect in losing them. There seems little doubt that the quality of classification society inspections declined as societies sought to maintain their client base...The requirement for classification societies to accommodate both regulatory responsibilities and the desire to respond to market pressures explains the decline in classification survey standards."

The report states that "all major classification societies have problems" and identifies these problems and variations in quality (combined with market pressures) "as a major impediment to raising the general safety standard of shipping".

The Committee makes a number of recommendations:

It views the principal means of improving vessel safety in Australian waters as a tightening up of existing port state control (supervised by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority [AMSA]). They want to see a "tougher stance towards substandard ships that visit Australia's ports". To this end, they want to see more money given to AMSA so that it can improve the level and effectiveness of inspections. The committee further recommends that vessels arriving in Australia must be able to prove they have effective Protection and Indemnity (liability) insurance and that they comply with ILO 147 employment conditions before they are allowed in.

The Committee also recommends that AMSA should publish monthly reports of vessel inspections, and that

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Indonesians deny murder was pirate attack

Two seafarers were murdered by pirates in Indonesian waters on December 11 and the Indonesian authorities are trying to smear the crew by saying they invented the story.

The absurdity of this shameful allegation only compounds the maritime community's outrage at these unnecessary killings and raises some very disturbing questions about the Indonesian dictatorship's attitude to piracy in their coastal waters.

Captain John Blashforth and Chief Officer Teodolfo Pereja were shot onboard the Bahamas flag *Baltimar Zephyr* by an armed gang — according to all the surviving crew.

After finally getting in contact with the authorities (their radio was disabled), the ship was escorted into Tanjung Uban naval base by an Indonesian naval vessel. The Indonesians then detained the ship for six days.

The seafarers were interrogated, the ship was searched, and the crew were forced to sign documents in Indonesian that they didn't understand.

The Indonesian authorities held press conferences raising doubts about the crew's account of the attack. Pressure was applied on the crew to change their story.

According to *Lloyd's List* newspaper, an Indonesian naval officer asked the relieving master if it was possible to change the original distress signal. "All this is embarrassing. The signal talks about pirates." The master refused.

The ship was only allowed to leave Indonesia on December 19 after the relieving master signed a statement saying there was "insufficient evidence/proof that piracy was the cause of the master and Chief Officer's killing". The statement was subsequently denounced by the Hong Kong Ship-owners' Association (HKSOA) as something the master was forced to sign to get the ship released.

Arriving in Singapore on December 20, the crew were questioned by Bahamas flag representatives and P&I Club lawyers. Both groups concluded that there had been a pirate attack and that the crew's stories were entirely consistent.

"This appears to be a blatant attempt to deflect public criticism of the Indonesian authorities," said HKSOA Chairman Peter Cowling, "which you may agree should be closely scrutinised and if necessary exposed and deplored. It is particularly alarming coming at a time when IMO has announced the establishment of a Piracy Task Force on which Indonesia is to be represented".

The ITF-affiliated UK officers' union NUMAST has sent a formal protest to the Indonesian government stating that the evidence is clear that it was a pirate attack.

International Shipping Federation (ISF) secretary David Deardsley has said there was not "a scrap of evidence to suggest it was anything but piracy".

On this issue, unions and owners are united. The ITF will be discussing piracy with the ISF at a meeting next month, with a view to formulating a common plan of action to counter this growing threat.

The international trade union movement knows full well that the Indonesian dictatorship is brutal, anti-democratic, corrupt and violent. Political repression against opposition — illustrated by the bloody massacre in East Timor in November 1991 — is common practice.

Given the nature of the regime, and their disgraceful behaviour in this case, it is time for the international community to ask some serious questions about Indonesia and armed attacks in their waters.

Basque seafarers learn about ITF

The ITF-affiliated union from the Basque country, ELA-STV, has been doing valuable work publicising the ITF and its work in the Bilbao seafarers' training school.

"The Basque country, situated on the Bay of Biscay, is a community with a great maritime tradition," says ELA official Juan Cruz Lopez.

Due to this strong maritime tradition the region possesses a marine and fisheries training school as well as the Bilbao Maritime College where ELA-STV has initiated an education programme designed to inform seafarers in training and retraining about the ITF's activities, solidarity action and member organisations.

ELA-STV resolved to carry out a joint project based on cooperation between its transport confederation and teachers' federation. ELA's ITF Inspector, Rodrigo Garciandia, cooperated with the ELA-STV members in the Maritime College to distribute ITF materials amongst the pupils of the college, including seafarers on retraining courses.

The initiative was very well received and the union is now looking at the possibility of extending it to the other marine and fisheries training schools in the Basque country.

"This is a first step for us, given that in our opinion it is important to instil the values of solidarity in the seafarers at the Training Centres, previous to their entrance in the labour market, and to widen their knowledge about the existence and the fundamental role of the ITF, thus making a contribution to the improvement of living and working conditions in the seafaring world," said Juan Cruz Lopez.

... Ships of shame

Continued from page 17

an "easily accessible" international ship information data bank should be set up by AMSA and the IMO.

The Committee also wants Australia to take a lead in international bodies in fighting to eliminate substandard shipping. To this end they welcome the 15 nation Asia/Pacific regional port state control inspection system proposal now being discussed. The Committee also recommends that the Australian government should strengthen its representation and level of activity at the IMO — they say the government should include owners and union representative in its IMO delegations.

Maldivian seafarers who join the ITF face imprisonment by government...

Seafarers are often told by manning agents and owners that they mustn't contact the ITF.

Some agents make them sign "loyalty letters", clauses in their contracts saying that they mustn't join the ITF, and that, if they obtain additional money as a result of ITF action, they must pay this money back.

But there are only a few governments who put the force of law behind such abuses of human and trade union rights. The "People's Republic" of China and Burma are well known in union circles as dictatorships that deny any rights to their seafarers.

Another country — which claims to be a democracy — is using the full force of the law to exploit its citizens who work on ships. The ITF has obtained clear evidence that the Republic of the Maldives, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, is systematically banning its seafarers from joining unions or receiving higher pay, under threat of imprisonment.

Maldivian manning agents are all government regulated and all seafarers engaged must sign contracts that are registered with the government.

One typical contract specifies that "the seaman shall not join any local or

International Trade Unions or any such organisation, with the intention of increasing his wages or demanding any other facilities, without prior permission of the Ministry of Transport and Shipping, Male, Republic of Maldives".

The manning agent and the seaman sign the contract, which is then "approved and registered at the Ministry of Transport and shipping of the government of the Republic of the Maldives". The government seal and a signature appear on every contract.

The majority of Maldivian seafarers are working on Greek-owned ships, either Greek national flag or Cyprus flag of convenience.

The manning agents openly encourage the owners they deal with to operate double books that give ITF Inspectors the impression that higher wages are being paid. The average real earnings of a Maldivian Able Seaman appear to be about US\$350 — under the Greek national agreement, ABs on Greek flag ships should receive US\$760 and on Cyprus flagged, Greek-owned ships (Flags of convenience) an AB should be earning at least \$1000 a month.

This clear evidence of government

collusion in crew exploitation from a country which pretends to be part of the democratic world is scandalous.

The Maldives is a member of the United Nations and the International Maritime Organization, but not the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

It is clear that present laws and procedures are in breach of the ILO Constitution and many Conventions. But the Maldives does not permit any trade unionism at all, and it is unlikely that they will join the ILO.

The ITF is launching a campaign that aims to change the Maldivian government's anti-trade union policies.

Should the Maldivian government refuse to modify their unacceptable behaviour, the ITF will consider bringing pressure to bear on governments that give aid to the Maldives.

The Maldivian economy relies heavily on tourism, mostly from Germany and Scandinavia — countries where many people are trade union members, and whose citizens may be asked to consider whether they wish to back a government that treats its own citizens so badly.

... Nevertheless crew defy threats and take Forum Shipping to court for back wages

A major legal battle between Maldivian seafarers and the Greek shipping company Forum Maritime is now underway in the USA.

Crewmembers from the Cyprus flag of convenience *Forum Wind* have filed for back pay and penalty wages.

They charge that a double book-keeping system operated on the ship. Evidence of the Maldivian government's involvement in underpayment of its crews has been uncovered in this case by US lawyer Richard "Jerry" Dodson, who is representing the men. That evidence has been given to the

ITF (see above).

Dodson sent one of his researchers to the Maldives, who posed as a ship-owner's agent. He was arrested, held for 21 hours and then deported.

Forum claim that all their ships are covered by ITF approved agreements. Their Greek national flag ships do have national agreements with the ITF Greek affiliate the PNO — perfectly acceptable to the ITF, so long as the PNO is satisfied that the agreements are being adhered to. But their Cyprus flag ships are flags of convenience and do not have ITF approved

agreements. They have national Cypriot agreements which are only acceptable for genuine Cypriot owners (which Forum clearly isn't). These Cypriot flag vessels are not covered by approved agreements and are targets for action by ITF unions.

The legal case is still pending in the USA, but Forum have already indicated a novel defence against double book-keeping — that they were required to sign double books by the government of the Maldives (as an "exit visa" for the crew), but are, in fact, paying their crew the higher wage.

Flagging out fever grips European owners

European registers continue to shrink as shipowners flag out their fleets — although not all European shipowners are doing as badly as they would like the shipping world to think.

There has been an impressive upturn in the number of **German** newbuildings this year, says the Association of German Shipowners (VDR). The Association says that 102 new vessels were under contract to German owners in October 1992 — more than double the 45 vessels on the books the year before. But it is likely that a considerable number of these ships will be flagged out to Foc registers — or to the German second register GIS. The German flag fleet declined by 75 vessels (gross tonnage 490,000) from 402 ships with 4.68m gross tonnage in October 1991 to 327 vessels with 4.19m gross tonnage in October 1992. A staggering fifty-six German vessels went to Foc registers over the same period. The VDR claims that even the second register cannot compensate for the higher costs of using the German flag and protests that the government does not provide sufficient aid; but German shipowners are sufficiently well-off to build twice the number of ships that they did last year. Twenty-eight of the 76 ships owned by the ex-East German state shipping line Deutsche Seereederei Rostock (DSR) are to be flagged out, the company announced in January. Following privatisation, the company said it needed more “flexibility in handling wage costs” — but would not reveal what flag it intended to use (nor what nationality of seafarer it intended to exploit). Around 600 seafarers will lose their jobs because of the company’s decision. The company had already reduced its workforce from 13,000 to 4,000 and says it intends to reduce the fleet by another 35 vessels in 1993 — meaning further job cuts. The ITF-affiliated union ÖTV, which represents the workers whose jobs are threatened, plans to protest against the measures. Germany has demanded special port state controls in the EC for all oil

tankers not classified by the leading classification societies (many of which are Foc ships) the transport ministry announced on January 19th. Transport state secretary Dieter Schulte said that International Maritime Organization (IMO) resolutions demanding double-hulled tankers would have only a delayed effect, and added that vessels must be checked thoroughly until all older tankers had been replaced with those complying with the new specifications.



The **French** Compagnie Générale Maritime (CGM) has announced that it is reducing its 23-vessel fleet by four — with the loss of 160 jobs over the next three months. The company says it is considering laying off another three ships in 1994. The company says it hopes the reductions can be carried out without compulsory redundancies, adding that most of the job losses will be covered by early retirement and natural wastage. But unions are worried that this move heralds a running-down of the state-controlled company and point to CGM’s earlier commitment to maintain the number of ships at 23 until the end of 1993. Company chairman Eric Giuily said that the company would be opening negotiations with the unions to study other cost-cutting measures — including the possibility of using the Kerguelen second register. French seafarer’s unions demonstrated in Paris on December 16th against job losses in the country’s merchant fleet.

The **Netherlands** government is about to introduce a new scheme to stimu-

late growth in the country’s shipping sector (see **ITF News**, October 1992). The plan supplants the IPZ incentives system which has been functioning from the 1980s until January first 1993. Now owners will qualify for investment incentives in the form of 10% tax relief if purchasing a vessel which is new or under five years’ old, or they may opt for relief on operating profits. The system of allowing income tax relief for seafarer employees will remain. Companies will have to have most of their administration in the Netherlands in order to qualify and must be flying the Dutch flag. Dutch owners flying Focs can get the subsidy by signing on the Dutch register, but will have to stay under the Dutch flag for at least six years — a move welcomed by the ITF.

The transport policy White Paper presented by the **European Commission** on December second notes the “erosion” of the Community’s deep sea fleets through flagging out. It backed the “Euros” register, saying that the measure was important because it “re-balanced the conditions under which they (shipowners) have to operate in competition with third country carriers”. At the December transport ministers’ Council meeting it was agreed that the new shipping register would be set up in 1993. Following heated discussions over government aid a series of guidelines were set out, stating that governments should have an *option* whether to support shipowners joining the “Euros” flag by way of waiving payments of income tax and social security on crews of the ships under the flag. Governments offering this support should not do so to an extent that would make for unfair competition, the guidelines said. Van Miert promised that the Commission would look at formulating a “Euros” proposal that would do this without distorting competition. “Flexible crewing arrangements” (i.e. measures allowing the employment of cheap non-European labour) are still supported by the Council of Ministers, the Commission said.

Chinese seafarers granted political asylum by US judge for trying to contact the ITF

Two Chinese seafarers have been granted political asylum in the USA because they faced imprisonment for trying to contact the ITF.

US Immigration Judge Alan Vomacka (Harlingen, Texas) granted political asylum on December 12, 1992 to two Chinese seafarers — part of a group of six who defected in Lake Charles, Louisiana after they were told they would be thrown in jail upon their return to the People's Republic of China. Their crime? Attempting to contact the ITF.

The six were working on a Cyprus-flag, Greek-owned bulk carrier. The Chinese crew were contracted to the Greek company by a Chinese government manning agency, which retained a sizeable portion of their low wages.

The ship was unseaworthy and the Chinese crew were regularly subjected to physical abuse. Before they left China, each crew member was specifically told not to contact the ITF because "...the ITF is watching such labour contracts between the Chinese government and shipping lines".

The crew obeyed this instruction, and reported their abuse to the Chinese government. They were betrayed — their complaints were passed directly to the abusing Captain. Only then did the crew threaten to contact the ITF.

The Chinese bosun — an unqualified supernumerary who was in fact Communist Party secretary of the ship's work unit — told the crew they would be imprisoned if they complained to the ITF.

Judge Vomacka concluded that the crew's labour activities were a political statement as "the very core of any Communist government's power rests with its rank and file workers".

He also ruled that the attempt to report their treatment by the Chinese government to the ITF was a direct threat to the current regime because the only union recognised by the PRC is the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

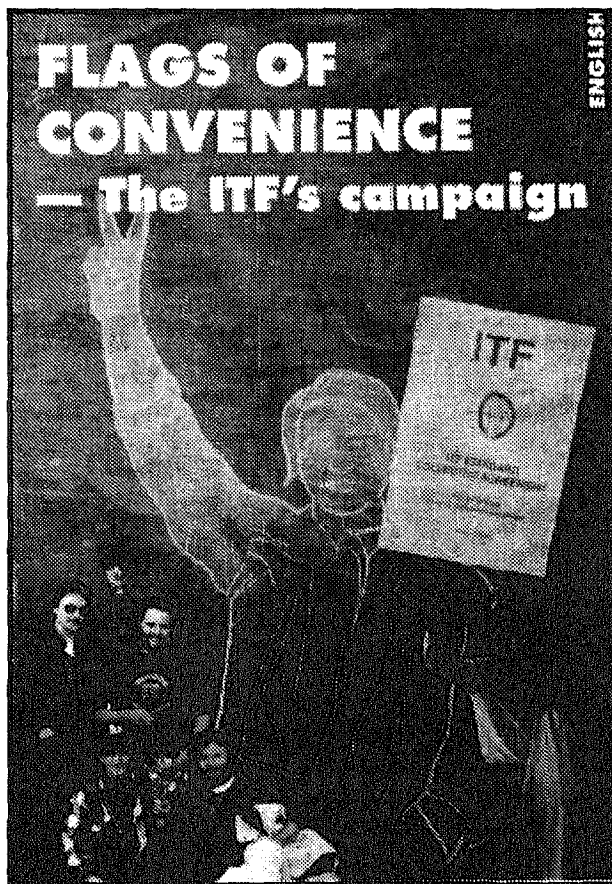
The two men were represented in Immigration Court by Los Angeles-based attorney Paul Isel (Tsoi & Isel).

Isel, in a statement issued after the ruling "credits Mr. John Sansone, Jr, the ITF Coordinator for the United States, for providing him with ITF materials regarding the independent labour union movement in the People's Republic of China that were cru-

cial in persuading Judge Vomacka to grant the requests for asylum".

Sansone provided Isel with copies of articles from ITF News reporting on the activities of the banned Workers' Autonomous Federations (WAF).

Interview with Beijing WAF activist Han Dong Fang — see page 4.



Flags of Convenience — the ITF's campaign is now available in English. Many other language versions will be available within the next three months.

This new booklet presents basic advice for seafarers serving on Flag of convenience ships, an explanation of what the ITF campaign is all about and how seafarers can get help, a history of the campaign and extensive explanations of the roles of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Along with *Message to Seafarers* — the booklet that provides crews with ITF contact names and numbers in many of the world's ports — and the annual *Seafarers' Bulletin*, ITF affiliates can be proud of the fact that a truly comprehensive package of Campaign information is available to every seafarer who works on a Flag of convenience ship.

If you are not already part of the global distribution network for ITF Seafarers' materials, and you would like to help distribute this new booklet and other materials, or if you would like your own copy of this brochure please write to the ITF Research and Publications Department.

Language versions will be available (at least) in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Tagalog (Filipino).

German government withdraws pilotage exemption

The German Transport Ministry has suspended a controversial decree exempting Hapag Lloyd's huge container ships from the requirement to take on a river pilot in bad weather when entering the Elbe, Weser and Jade rivers on the way to dock at north German ports.

When news of this relaxation of the current pilotage rules — conveyed in a letter marked "confidential" from the ministry's shipping division to the Hapag Lloyd board — was leaked to the local press in late November of last year it unleashed a storm of outrage from the seafarers' union ÖTV and the national pilots' association and local pilot guilds which were not consulted before the decision was taken.

While the exemption was in force container ships as big as 500,000 grt were able to sail, navigating busy waterways in gale force winds guided only by a port based pilot offering navigational advice provided by a radar screen. Only when they had reached a point where a pilot could safely be taken on board did he join the ship for the rest of the journey into port.

Hapag Lloyd had won the concession after arguing that pilot transfers during storms presented an extreme risk for the pilot. It also made it clear that riding out a storm at anchor cost the company money it would rather not spend. Ships should be able to put into port in Force 8 or 9 as long as the container cranes were still in operation, the company added.

The pilots' organisations countered that it was obvious the concession had been granted as a favour to enable the shipping company to save time and money, and with little thought for the safety of the vessel and its crew, the pollution risks involved or other river users.

They accused the government of acting irresponsibly in further undermining safety standards and of totally disregarding their recent warnings over the dangers posed by the growing number of collisions on the Elbe.

"It would be unthinkable for a container ship with a dangerous load of

thousands of tonnes of bunker oil and a surface exposed to the wind equivalent to that of a large sailing ship to enter port without a pilot in any other neighbouring European country," retorted Heiko Rose, chairman of the Bremerhaven pilots' guild.

Other pilots pointed out the difficulties of guiding container ships via radar from a station onshore, especially in the event of a sudden emergency.

Additional problems such as weaknesses in the radar coverage of some areas and the tendency of the system to sudden breakdown were also mentioned.

Russians win crew strike in Finland

The crew of a Russian national flag ship have won a strike, with support from Finnish unions, for wages at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) minimum.

The Russian flag reefer *Slavyanka* — with a crew of 30 — arrived in Helsinki on November 28, carrying oranges from Morocco.

The crew's agreement with Vladivostok-based Far Eastern Shipping Company (Fesco) stipulated that the crew would receive wages in line with the ILO minimum (US\$356 for an AB).

The ITF recognises the ILO rate (which is lower than the ITF minimum) only for genuine national flag

ships (as opposed to Flags of convenience).
Warning against any extension of the dispensations, seafarers' union ÖTV spokesman Wulf Steinvorth said it would be horrifying if Foc ships no longer had to have a pilot on board. Today's reduced crewing levels make it even more important that ships should carry a pilot in coastal regions, he added.

The government seems to have heeded these arguments and as a result of its intervention Hapag Lloyd container ships entering German coastal waters will once again have to wait offshore at anchor in bad weather at least for the time being.

But the crew were only receiving between \$140 and \$230 a month. They went on strike on the evening of November 30, with some of the oranges still on board.

The Russians were assisted by ITF Inspector Lauri Heinonen, who organised the backing of the Finnish Seamen's Union and solidarity action from the Helsinki dock workers.

The local Fesco agents threatened the crew with dismissal, but they remained firm and, after a week's action, the company settled and unloading was completed.

IMO to revise STCW Convention

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has begun the process of revising the 1978 Convention on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping (STCW).

The 61st session of the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee — meeting last year — decided to undertake a comprehensive review of the Convention. The MSC has instructed the Standards of Training and Watchkeeping Sub-Committee to draw up a list of the items which need to be reviewed. The items will then be considered by the MSC, with a plan to complete discussions by 1996.

The review is charged with examining "the extent to which the STCW Convention makes proper provision for new systems of work against developments in the industry".

ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander has written to all seafarer affiliates, highlighting the areas that the MSC intends to examine and urging ITF unions to lobby their national administrations with a view to ensuring that these issues are also considered by the International Labour Organisation/IMO Joint Committee on Training (a body where unions have a vote).

Flag state compliance and the Bahamas Foc

"Flagstate compliance" is one of those phrases on the lips of many in the maritime community these days.

What everyone really means is that Flag of convenience registers are unwilling and incapable of performing the duties once considered central to the operation of a national ship register.

The recent appalling behaviour of the Bahamas flag of convenience authorities in response to a casualty on board the Spanish government owned *Castillo de Ricote* demonstrates, yet again, the incompetence of Foc registries.

The ship was en route to the east coast of the USA on December 11, when the crew discovered that Indian Second officer Pinakin Mody was missing. His cabin was empty and the ship was searched, but he was not found. Conditions the previous night (when the Second Officer had been on duty) were poor — a Force 10 wind and very high seas.

The crew were all sure that the disappearance was not suicide. Mody had had no arguments or fights, no one was aware of any problems nor any suicidal talk or behaviour.

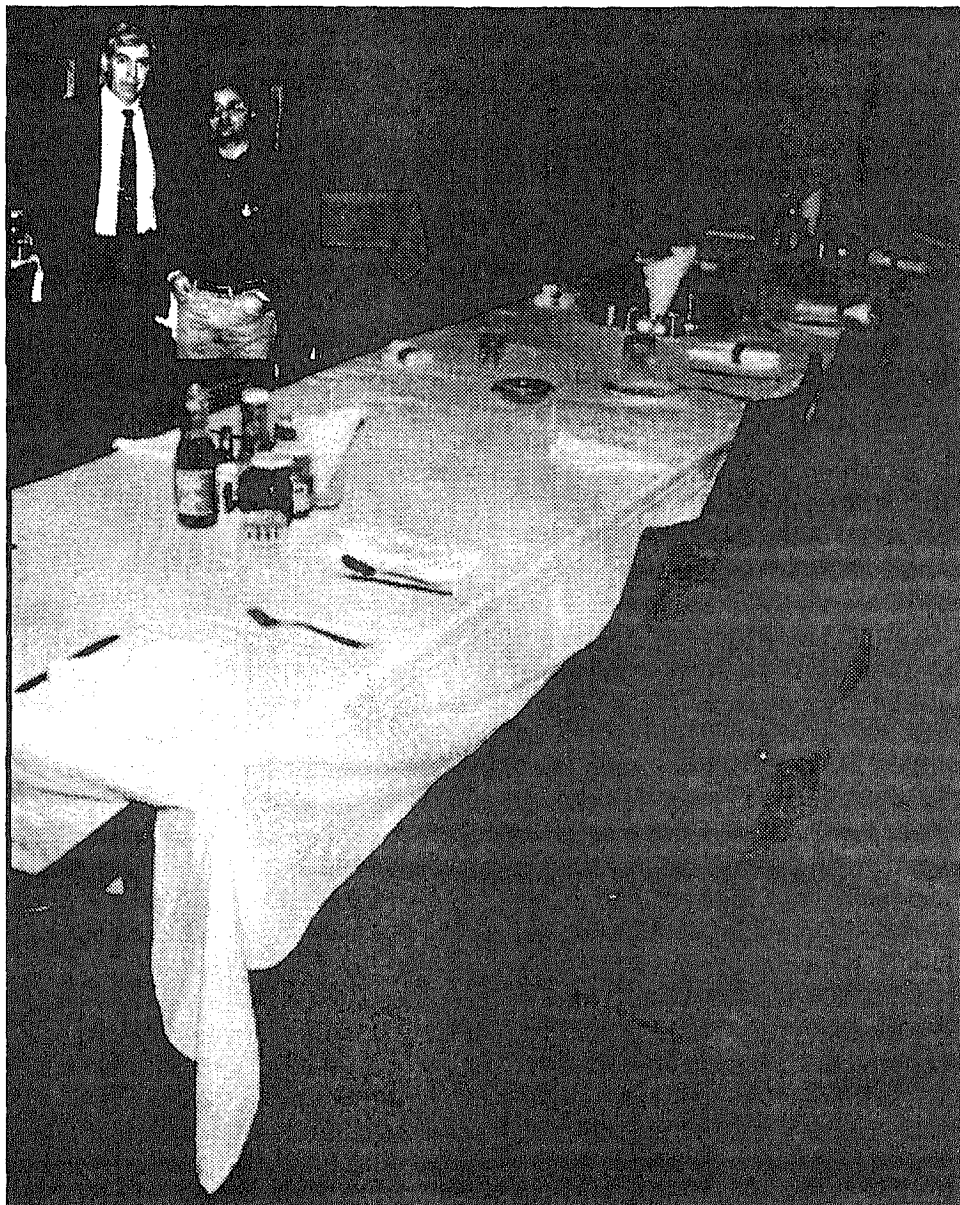
The ship notified the Coast Guard and continued its voyage (turning around in heavy seas up to 5.5 hours after the crewmember was last seen was not sensible).

Because the ship was 200 miles from the US coast at the time of the incident, the Coast Guard had no jurisdiction to investigate the case. Coast Guard Commander Cordell Vehweg, senior officer in the New York marine investigating office, told the *Journal of Commerce* newspaper:

"As soon as we received notice of it, we notified the Bahamian and Indian consulates." — December 11.

But when the ship arrived in the New York area on December 13, no one from the Bahamas was to be seen.

Representatives from the vessel's Protection and Indemnity Club were on board soon after the ship docked. The Vice-Consul of India also visited the ship.



The missing second officer's chair in the *Castillo de Ricote*. Pictured inset (left to right): ITF Inspector Spiro Varras and the missing man's brother, Pinakin.

ITF Inspector Spiro Varras was contacted by the ITF-affiliated Maritime Union of India, who asked him to investigate the situation.

Varras visited the ship in Bayway, New Jersey on December 15, where he interviewed the master and met the brother of the missing officer.

All of the people Varras met confirmed that Mody was a "normal person and doubted that it is suicide. Therefore the case must be investigated..."

When Varras left the vessel on the evening of December 15, there had still been no sign of the Bahamian authorities.

The Bahamians arrived the next day,

shortly before the ship was due to leave — five days after the incident was reported.

Their late arrival meant that they were unable to interview all members of the crew because some had already left on vacation.

"If it was us," said Vehweg from the Coast Guard, "we'd be on board as soon as the vessel hit the dock".

"This situation is really incredible," said Varras, "It's terrible, because they (the Bahamas) have the jurisdiction".

When the US Newspaper the *Journal of Commerce* tried to contact the Bahamian consulate about this case, none of their phone calls were returned.

Drunken master and crooked manning agents meet their match in Denmark

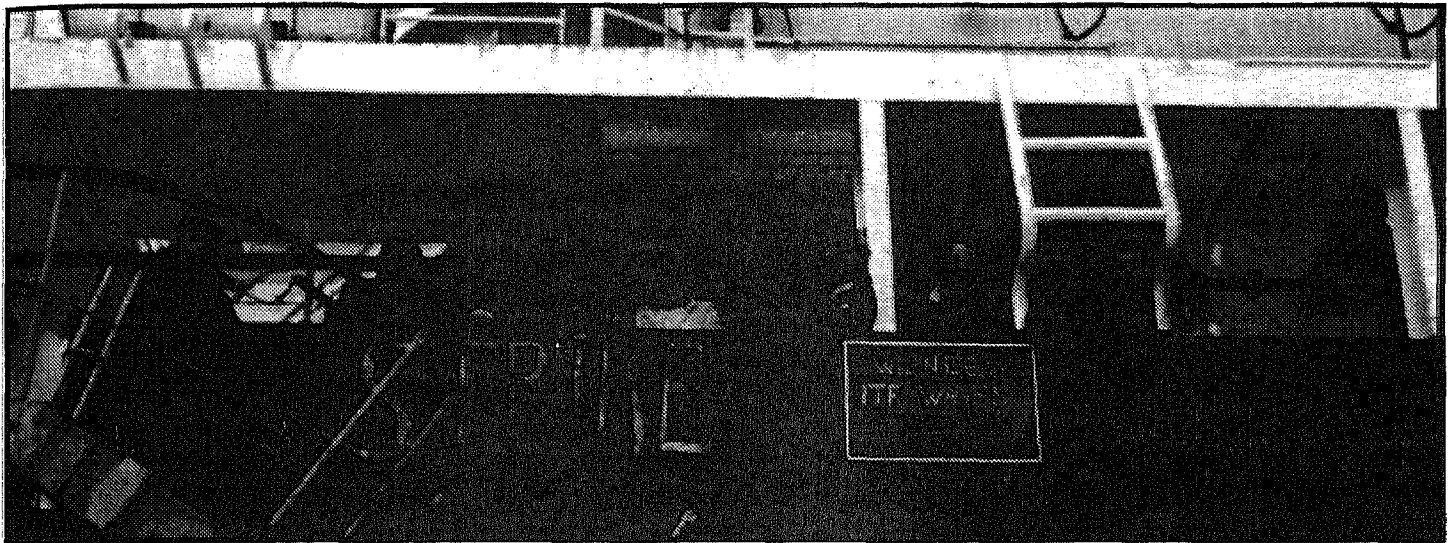
A double act by Danish ITF Inspector John Jacobsen led to the successful conclusion of two cases in the port of Århus in December. On December fifth, Jacobsen inspected the Egyptian-owned, Bahamas Flag of convenience *Al Fath* in Århus. The Master was "unfriendly", couldn't speak English and had obviously been drinking. Jacobsen was shown an agreement signed by the Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of the Ukraine, which was made to look like an ITF agreement, but wasn't one. After half an hour's discussion and argument, the Master finally let Jacobsen see the contracts of employment—the wages and fixed overtime were even lower than the rates in the CBA. Jacobsen asked for the wage accounts, and the irritated Master said none had been prepared since the crew joined the vessel! Jacobsen told the master to prepare them for the next day. In fact the crew had not received any wages since joining the ship (September and October). Jacobsen visited the ship on Sunday December sixth, at nine in the morning. After some argument, Jacobsen convinced the master to let him copy some of the vessel's documents. There were still no wage accounts, and the Master (who had been drinking again) promised he would produce them the next day along with a cash payment of US\$20,000 for the crew. Meanwhile, Jacobsen received more information about the Master's drunken behaviour. The crew informed him that the Master had been drunk "every day" since leaving Odessa in the Ukraine. On the way into Århus harbour, he had sailed the wrong way around a marking buoy and ran aground on the way to meet the pilot. He had claimed, in his report, that he had no sea charts. Jacobsen sent a fax to the vessel's owners requesting them to enter into an ITF agreement. The next day (December seventh) Jacobsen talked to the SiD dockers' union, briefed them on the situation, and they agreed to offer sympathy action. Jacobsen went on board and explained to the Master that action was going to be taken

against his vessel—"He informed me that he did not believe that I would take any action while the vessel was in Denmark!!!" The \$20,000 was distributed on board and Jacobsen was presented with a set of wage accounts. At 16h00, the Dockers boycotted the vessel and said they wouldn't start working again until a settlement was reached. The next day (December eighth), the crew went on strike to support the Dockers' sympathy action. On December ninth, Jacobsen received authorisation for the master to sign an ITF agreement on behalf of the company, but the Master refused to sign (he was drunk again). Finally, after a number of calls directly to the owners, an agreement and employment contracts were signed. Jacobsen also requested back pay for the crew. Upon examination of the wage accounts, and other documents, Jacobsen discovered that the shipowner (Faise Al-Araq)—who is new to shipping—was being cheated in a big way by Joruss Trading Co. Ltd, the manning agents. Joruss had withheld close to \$100,000 of the owner's money. Jacobsen gave this evidence to the agent and owner. The boycott continued, and on December 13, the owner and his accountant arrived in Århus. The master was replaced and the owner agreed to pay \$69,355 in backpay. Several of the crew decided to stay on the ship, and the rest were repatriated. The shipowner thanked Jacobsen for showing him that he was being exploited. The owner asked for seven ITF Special Agreements to be sent to him for his other vessels, which he also agreed to sign up. In the middle of this case, on Sunday December 13, Jacobsen was contacted by Swedish ITF Inspector Sten-Ove Niklasson regarding conditions on board the Swedish-owned, Maltese flag *Lucie*, which was in Århus. The ship had signed an ITF Agreement in Sweden on July first, and was paying basic wages properly, but only \$179 lumpsum overtime per month was being received by two ABs. Jacobsen visited the ship on December 14, and was received cordially by the Master.

There were wage accounts, but no overtime records. The owner was visiting the ship at lunch time, so Jacobsen left and came back later. He briefed the SiD dockers on the situation, and they offered boycott action if it was necessary. Jacobsen met the owner who was very upset. Jacobsen said he would be back at 17h00. He met the owner again, and after several hours of talks, he still refused. The next morning Jacobsen and a dockers' union official went on board the vessel and informed the owner that a boycott would start at 10h00. After discussion with the shipbroker, another meeting was arranged, and the boycott was held back until that meeting. A total of \$13,421.90 was agreed and paid to the two Filipino ABs as overtime compensation and train tickets to Hamburg were provided. After some difficulties with German immigration (that involved the men having to stay in Århus for a few days), the men left with their money.

US ITF Inspector Enrico Esopa came to the aid of the crew of the Greek-owned, Panamanian flag *Antonis P. Lemos* at the end of October last year. The ship was covered by an ITF Agreement, but the crew were being paid far less. Esopa visited the vessel in **Wilmington, Delaware** on October 28—the crew were on strike. In addition to a substantial wage claim, they also had a number of complaints about the seaworthiness of the vessel. Esopa contacted the Coast Guard and the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) asking them to inspect the vessel. Upon examination of the ship's articles, employment contracts and pay vouchers, it was clear that the ITF agreement was not being honoured. Esopa asked the Master to pay the backwages. The Coast Guard and ABS visited the ship and instructed the Master to make certain repairs before the ship could sail. Since no payment of outstanding wages was made or offered, Esopa contacted lawyers and the vessel was arrested on

Continued on page 25



The striking crew of the *Al Fath*, in Århus, Denmark.

Continued from page 24

October 29. Talks with the company attorneys on November second led to an offer of a total payment of \$336,500 and full repatriation for all 22 crew. The crew accepted this and the money was paid out on November fourth. Esopa, a new ITF Inspector, deserves special congratulations for a job well done.

The crew of the Honduran flag *Florida*, abandoned in **Malta** for months, are finally going home. The 30-year-old vessel arrived in Valletta carrying a cargo of cement on November 12. The crew had no money and provisions ran out at the beginning of December. The crew's case was taken up by ITF Inspector Charles Briffa. In response to running out of food, port chaplain Mark Enriquez called upon local churches to donate supplies to the nine man crew (Turkish and Romanian) — a generous response replenished the crew's supplies. Briffa held a number of meetings between the 20th and 30th of January and got an agreement that the crew would be repatriated and paid some money (between \$1,200 and \$2,000 each).

ITF US Foc co-ordinator John Sansone received a phone call on November 21 from Russian Chief Engineer Vladimir Andreev, serving on the Panamanian flag *Zachary*. Andreev said he had fled his ship after a confrontation with the Master and was in **New Orleans** without a shore pass. He refused to go back to the ship, and said he had no money. Sansone arranged with the port chap-

lain to pick him up and put him up at the Stella Maris seamen's centre. Andreev later told Sansone that the Master had threatened him with a gun for not following orders to pump oil into the river. He also hadn't been paid for five months. Sansone contacted the New York based ship managers (Kedma), who told him the Chief Engineer was missing. Sansone told Kedma he had the officer in a safe place. Sansone also told the company what had happened — during repairs the Captain had instructed Andreev to use a pump he knew was full of oil. Andreev refused and the Captain got very angry and threatened him. The company agreed to pay the outstanding wages and repatriation. A few days later, Andreev was paid off at Stella Maris by an agent who also brought his papers and suitcases with personal effects. Andreev received \$11,051.86. He opened a special bank account and came back to say goodbye to Sansone: "When they came back, I greeted Vladimir a farewell and he thanked me with every bit of appreciation he could muster up. He then asked me what he could give me to repay me for my help. I told him when he got back to Russia, he was to take his family out to a nice dinner and tell them I bought it for him. That brought a smile to his face and I bid him farewell," said Sansone. The next day, Andreev went home.

The German International Register (GIS) flag containership *Atlanta*, crewed by seven Germans and 13 Filipinos, arrived in **Newark**, New Jersey on January 14. The Germans were being paid in line with German na-

tional rates, but the Filipinos were receiving less than ILO rates. The Filipinos had been supplied by the ALU-TUCP "union" which claimed to have an agreement for these sub-ILO rates. That day, as the ship was preparing to depart at 18h00, ten of the Filipino crew went on strike and asked for assistance from ITF Inspector Spiro Varras. Varras immediately went on board, where the Captain and Pilot were manoeuvring the vessel in preparation for departure. Varras told the pilot that the ship was unsafe to sail (because of the strike). Varras also informed the dockworkers and tug operators who were dealing with the ship lines, and they agreed to honour the strike. The ship stopped. Food was provided to the crew by the Seamen's Church Institute. Varras was also in contact with German ITF Co-ordinator Hans Kreitlow from the German 'Transport Workers' Union ÖTV. Varras arranged for the strikers to join the ÖTV. Because the ship was German owned, it was supposed to be covered by an ÖTV German national agreement. Kreitlow negotiated with the German owners and reached an agreement on January 16 to sign an ÖTV agreement and to pay back pay of DM 21,643.14 to the crew — the owner recognised the Filipinos as ÖTV members and they will now receive German national rates. Varras then went on board the ship to assist in the settlement and ending of the strike: "The seafarers thanked the Seafarers' International Union and myself, the ÖTV and Mr. Kreitlow, the ITF and the Seamen's Church Institute of New Jersey for their support," said Varras.



CIVIL AVIATION

No joy for workers in EC air package

In January 1993 the European Commission's final package of aviation measures came into force, and formally ushered in a new era of liberalisation for air transport in Europe.

There seems little for trade unions to celebrate. The ITF has already spoken out about how the EC's Third Package takes a fast track on liberalising the market and a very slow (even invisible) track on social measures (see *ITF News*, June/July 1992). The Commission's White Paper *The Future Development of the Common Transport Policy* issued on December second continues to refer to "social policy for employees in the transport sector". Yet it is still to be determined what social measures it intends to undertake, and there is still no timetable laid out for implementing any such measures.

Moreover, the recent pronouncement from the Council of Ministers that workers in the transport industries are to be excluded from the Directive on working time does not encourage union optimism.

Certainly European airlines seem to be singularly unaffected by the White Paper's commitment "to improve living and working conditions, protect and promote employment of transport workers and encourage social dialogue and collective bargaining".

In the run up to 1993 nearly every European carrier has announced job cuts as part of its preparations for liberalisation. In the last three months of 1992 alone 6,000 job cuts were announced.

In Portugal TAP has announced 1,500 jobs to go in 1993. In the offices of Air France the new "open skies of Europe" still hold the smell of tear gas used against Air France employees protesting against the first enforced redundancies in the company's history.

Where jobs remain, better paid, secure, full time jobs are being replaced by sub contracting and lower paid jobs. In December, British Airways workers at Gatwick struck a blow against a ruthless BA management by preventing the company transferring

their existing jobs into a new company for less pay, but new recruits into BA's new Gatwick airline, which is specifically set up to compete in the new European market, will be part of a lower paid European aviation workforce.

JCCA plenary raises issue of working time

Flight and duty times and personnel licensing continue to dominate the business of the European Commission's Joint Committee on Civil Aviation (JCCA). On December 18 the plenary of the JCCA met in Brussels to view the progress of its working group.

The working group on personnel reported that licensing recommendations concerning pilots have been almost finalised and common licensing standards have been agreed for flight operations officers, though with the disagreement of some of the employers. Cabin crew is the category of employees meeting the fiercest employer opposition to licensing. This working group continues to meet, looking at training standards. Work is now to begin on discussions on training standards and certification for various categories of ground staff.

Flight time limitations remains a difficult and controversial area. The group has been looking at EC measures on the basis of the current JAA proposals. The workers' side in the working group failed to reach a consensus over the changes to the JAA draft being proposed by some of its members.

The employers refused to enter any discussions which involved any major revisions of the JAA proposals but did agree to further meetings, though

these are to take place only after the JAA's process of taking amendments to its FTL proposals has been completed. These meetings would be to review the JAA proposals in the light of the EC's proposed Working Time Directive.

The Council of Ministers' decision to exclude the transport industries from the proposed directive on working time was discussed. In response to this decision, the Commission is bringing forward proposals for equivalent measures to cover transport workers.

The JCCA members agreed to take part in the consultation process discussing working time. This includes looking at which categories of transport worker will come under these measures. It was agreed that a working group should be established to consult on what is clearly a crucial issue for aviation employees.

A presentation by a member of the Commission was given to the committee on the Commission's White Paper on *The Future Development of the Common Transport Policy*.

The committee also heard from a Commission representative about possible future procedures for social dialogue when the Maastricht Treaty is ratified. In the strengthened procedures for consultation the role of bodies like the JCCA will become more important and its recommendations will carry more force in the future.

Air France: the social dialogue of the riot baton

Air France has been hit by an unprecedented wave of industrial action, including strikes and mass rallies in protest against its restructuring plans. The plan would involve the disappearance of 5,000 jobs, 1,500 of them during 1993, and calls for compulsory redundancies for the first time.

All 14 Air France unions, including the ITF-affiliated FETS-FO; FGTE-CFDT; SNPNC and USPNT have rejected the plan. In November and

ducing redundancies, reducing wages and weakening working conditions."

On November 23, to co-incide with a company board meeting, the unions held the first in a series of co-ordinated mass actions. The strikes showed an extraordinary level of support.

Unions reported 80 per cent support for the strike throughout most of the French mainland; 80 per cent on strike in Corsica; 100 per cent in Martinique; Guyana 90 per cent;

When the company announced that the meeting was to go ahead regardless, the unions announced that no union representatives would attend. Instead, the unions planned work stoppages by ground staff during the day with sit-ins at offices and workshops, and a mass picket of the management office where the redundancy plans were being made.

On December 17, staff representatives and members of the works council, who were due to attend a Central Works Council meeting were surprised to find inside the Air France building, groups of riot police, as well as private strong arm men recruited by the company. The company chairman, Bernard Attali, was supposed to present the company plans at the meeting, but unions set two conditions for the meeting. Firstly the clearing of the building of all non Air France employees, and secondly that the next day's meeting of the redundancy committee should be cancelled. When the management refused the union representatives walked out.

On December 18th as the redundancy committee was due to hold its first meeting, union representatives

"The recent conference on globalisation in the aviation industry organised by the ITF in London showed how neither workers nor users have anything much to benefit from the deregulation of civil air transport.....In the context of a globalised air transport industry, this strike of Air France workers is part of a necessary international trade union campaign to mobilise all aviation workers against deregulation."

FETS-FO union leaflet, November 1992

December the unions staged a number of united protest actions and strikes, impressive for the level of support shown at the workplace, and for the level of inter-union co-operation achieved.

The unions say the whole corporate culture in Air France is being changed to meet the new competitive environment brought about by the liberalisation of air transport in Europe. The unions have called for the government (which is the main shareholder) to adopt a different approach and to invest the money needed to get the airline into a better financial position.

They say the company has avoided all attempts to negotiate an agreement for voluntary redundancies only. According to a joint union statement: "the unions reject a series of restructuring plans which would put onto the employees the sole burden of compensating for serious mismanagement and the effects of the first phase of (European) liberalisation, by intro-

Guadeloupe 81 per cent and Réunion 80 per cent support for the strike.

About 3,000 employees in Paris

"...vigilantes, riot police patrolling the square, coaches of police in the street, identity controls, threats to elected representatives. Such is today's 'New Social Dialogue'."

UFA-CFDT Newsletter, December, 1992

demonstrated in Max Hymans Square where the Air France board meeting was taking place. Mass meetings were held in other French cities and at overseas bases.

The carrier was grounded by a second strike on December 15, three days before a redundancy committee set up by the company was set to meet on December 18 to draw up the first list of redundancies.

who tried to enter the room were attacked by tear gas. All day work stoppages, rallies and demonstrations hit the company. Many executives joined the ranks of the protesters. On December 23 strike action hit Orly and Roissy airports and every regional airport and airports in French overseas territories once more.

Unions say protests will continue until the company rethinks its restructuring plans.

Crisis in Aerolíneas Argentinas: unions resist hundreds of job losses

Union protests have hit Aerolíneas Argentinas (AA) after the airline announced, last December 17, that it was suspending 775 workers and reviewing all collective agreements.

The airline also announced fare rises of up to 30 per cent and cuts in local flights.

Aerolíneas Argentinas has been

surrounded by controversy and financial scandal in recent months. The Argentinian flag carrier was privatised in November 1990 and quickly fell under the control of Spanish carrier Iberia.

However, the rapid downsizing of the company, with union accusations that it was being plundered to serve

Iberia interests, along with scandals about Iberia buying AA shares by mortgaging AA's own aircraft, led the government to "re-nationalise" 30 per cent of the airline's shares in August 1992.

However, the management of the airline was left in the hands of Iberia,

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Union action — the apple of discord

The AAA came up with a novel form of protest during their dispute with Aerolíneas Argentinas.

As a form of industrial action against the company the crew selected a day of action on December 22 when they refused to carry out on board service. But they accompanied this with an imaginative piece of campaigning aimed at passengers.

Alicia Castro explains:

"As this measure was not directed against the long-suffering customer, we offered passengers, as a gesture of understanding, a juicy, fresh and natural apple, kindly donated by the ITF regional office."

Along with the apple, passengers were given a leaflet entitled Apple of Discord, explaining the union's action and in particular the effects of staff cuts on safety. The leaflet ended:

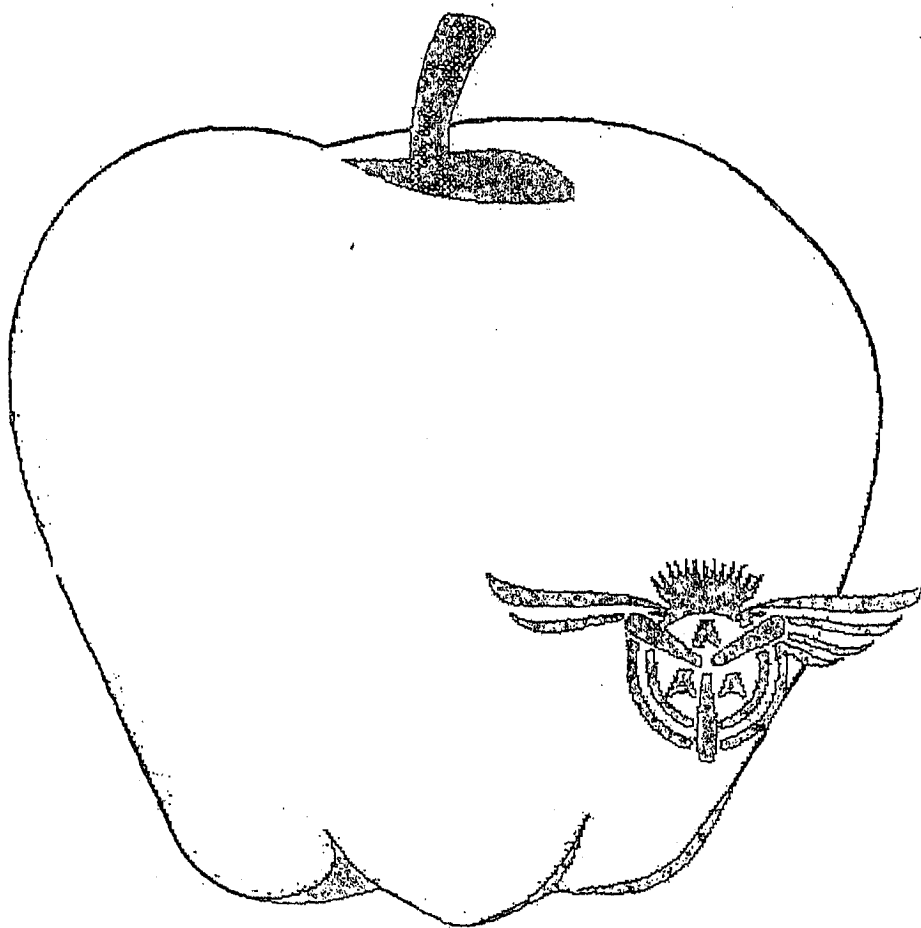
"We know that we can count on you in the defence of our national airline, and our fight to oblige its operator, the Spanish state company Iberia, to make the airline safe, efficient and profitable again.

We have decided to concentrate our efforts on your safety. For this reason we cannot offer you on-board service. We can only offer you an apple, counting on your understanding and support.

Help us to revive Aerolíneas Argentinas, so that we can give you a good service.

Thank you.

Your apple is donated by the ITF."



According to Alicia Castro:

"The passengers gave us their sympathy and support, and there was even one passenger who presented us with a poem."

Unknown to the union the form of their action caused an additional irritation to the company.

"What we did not know" says Alicia

Castro "was that the company had produced a New Year's greetings card for its clients, which was accompanied by a little apple made of plastic. After our action the company decided to withdraw its free gift.

"What is still unknown to us is what the company has done with the 5,000 plastic apples!"

BA unions win battle against transfer to cheap labour airline

The threat of strike action during the Christmas holiday period forced British Airways to reach an agreement with unions in December over the setting up of its new Gatwick operations. The company has set up a new low cost subsidiary at Gatwick out of its purchase of Dan Air combined with its existing Gatwick operations. The company was ordering the compulsory transfer of staff into the new company, in which they would have to take pay cuts of up to 30 per cent (see *ITF News*, December 1992).

More than 1,000 employees organised in the ITF-affiliated Transport

and General Workers' Union balloted overwhelmingly in support of strike action against the BA plan and picket lines were already going up around Gatwick airport before the management caved in and reached an agreement accepting all the union's major demands.

The agreement means that: nobody will be forced into a subsidiary company; there will be no loss of BA terms and conditions for any employee; all existing staff will retain their current BA contract; nobody will be forced to undertake different work or work from a different base;

and, importantly, that the existing national negotiating structure is retained.

The agreement does not involve the union having to accept the new Gatwick subsidiary.

According to TGWU National Secretary for Civil Air Transport, George Ryde:

"The company was clearly taken aback by the mood of militancy and unity across the whole workforce. They knew we were very well prepared, they knew that this would be a very solid strike, and they knew we already had international support."

...ITF unions will give solidarity to Argentinian unions

Continued from page 28

which still keeps a 30 per cent share holding. Unions claim AA is still being treated as an Iberia feeder airline, and Argentinian air transport policy is still being set in Madrid.

They point out that the buy-back did little other than saddle the government with an \$800m debt. No safeguards were gained against further asset stripping and no guarantees were given about security of jobs and conditions (see *ITF News*, September 1992).

The arbitrary announcement of mass dismissals has fulfilled union fears. Moreover the company's wider restructuring programme intends to re-negotiate all collective agreements.

According to Alicia Castro, General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated cabin crew union Asociación Argentina de Aeronavegantes (AAA):

"This means all the gains made by the unions are under threat. The company intends to intimidate us with these sackings and with the threat of future rationalisation."

The AAA was particularly shocked by the announcement of redundancies. 146 of the lay offs were to be cabin crew. Only two days previously the company had signed an agree-

ment on crew complements. The lay offs render the agreement meaningless.

A week after the cabin crew members were laid off, the airline hired 111 temporary crew.

When the unions threatened industrial action over the job losses, the Argentinian Ministry of Labour quickly ordered the unions not to strike, and the company to enter negotiations with the unions over redundancies. The company ignored the ruling.

In response, the unions mounted a number of protests short of striking (see opposite). But after a goodwill gesture of industrial peace over the peak Christmas travelling period brought no further progress towards negotiations, the AAA held a one day strike on January 4. The strike grounded 23 out of 43 flights planned for that day.

The union also refused to crew planes below the previously agreed complement. The company responded by, as the union puts it, "kidnapping" cabin crew — placing them directly on planes, avoiding security controls, before allowing them to know the routes and rosters they were flying.

The airline continued to be hit by

increasing levels of industrial action and constantly disrupted airline schedules. The wider Argentinian union movement issued a public threat of a general strike. The Argentine president Carlos Menem came out with a statement declaring that "no one could be in agreement with the process" being undertaken by the company.

On January 12 the company modified its original proposals, and has reduced the number of lay offs to 524 after talks with some of the unions.

However, the company appears determined to strike at the AAA, which is one of the most militant of the airline's unions. The company is trying to prevent union organisers from having contact with employees, and on 12 January the company began a legal action against the AAA's General Secretary Alicia Castro to remove her union privileges in the company, as a prelude to firing her from the company.

The ITF has protested to the company and the Argentinian government, and is calling on civil aviation affiliates to send letters of protest. The ITF's Spanish affiliates have been actively involved in discussions with Iberia management in an attempt to find an acceptable solution.

Aviation industry globalisation gathers pace

Paul Dempsey, the University of Denver law professor, who was guest speaker at the ITF civil aviation section conference in November, is being tipped as a possible member of the Clinton administration's transportation team dealing with aviation policy. Dempsey told the ITF conference that the solution to the US industry's woes "lies somewhere between the US regulatory regime established in 1938 and the contemporary environment of laissez-faire market Darwinism". US aviation unions are pushing hard for Dempsey to get the post of Assistant Under Secretary, but the pro-deregulation lobby, including Alfred Khan of the original Democrat team who passed deregulation in 1978, are whipping up fierce opposition to such an appointment. The Wall Street Journal has gone into a pitch of hysteria describing Dempsey as "a fanatical cheer leader for reregulation of the airlines". Dempsey also described the ITF unions' discussions on globalisation as of "immense importance". Goodness knows what the Wall Street Journal would make of that.

Another East-West airline link was formed in December after Alitalia bought 35 per cent of the Hungarian carrier Malev.

Aeroperu has been sold to Aeromexico. A year ago the government was asking \$100m for the carrier. Unions say the airline is worth \$400m. Aeromexico acquired its 70 per cent share for \$54m. In 1992 Aeromexico reduced its own workforce by 1,000 employees, 12 per cent of the workforce.

Merger discussions are going on between KLM and the European Quality Alliance carriers SAS, Swissair and Austrian Airlines. Swissair is very keen to improve its international links after the rejection by Swiss voters of closer links with the European Community. Unions are planning their own international links shadowing the merger talks.

Swissair has bought a 20 per cent share in Air Nigeria. Swissair will also manage the airline, a fact that has caused some political controversy in

Nigeria.

Air Canada has taken a 27.5 per cent stake in the bankrupt US carrier Continental Airlines.

Lufthansa has bought a 13 per cent stake in Luxair.

BA has had to scale down its proposed investment in USAir to 20 per cent at a cost of \$300m, but has extended its merger network eastwards with a 25 per cent investment in Qantas. This deal was not popular with the Australian public, some of whom clearly do not regard BA as their favourite airline. A billboard appeared on the approach to Sydney airport declaring: "No British Airways Ownership of Our Qantas. Piss Off Poms".



Unions at Australian Airlines which is now fully owned by Qantas have recently negotiated an immediate 7 per cent pay rise with a possible further 2.5 per cent to come. Qantas unions are currently asking for a 10 per cent rise over two years.

This January, the British courts found BA guilty of "dirty tricks" against Virgin Airlines, including illegally hacking into the Virgin computers. The lost court case means that £3.5m of the money that the workforce

saved in its recent cost-cutting programme has been thrown away in court costs and damages awarded to Virgin Airlines.

State investment in Aer Lingus became an issue in the recent General Election in Ireland. Shortly before the election the government had made a proposal to sell off Aer Lingus. Bill Attley, joint president of ITF-affiliated SIPTU, attacked the proposal as "great folly". According to SIPTU, which helped organise the Aer Lingus Equity Campaign, the election results in a number of Dublin seats were decisively affected by what commentators came to call the Aer Lingus factor.

A government-appointed Task Force on Tourism has recently recommended a much greater level of state investment in Aer Lingus.

TAP has announced 1,500 jobs will be lost through voluntary redundancy in 1993 out of a workforce of 10,500. The ITF-affiliated SITAVA union, however, is protesting that TAP's charter operation Air Atlantis is shutting down putting 300 workers out of a job.

Sabena has settled with its three main unions with an agreement which allows a reduction in the workforce to 9,000 mainly through early retirement.

ITF-affiliated Hava-Is is threatening industrial action in a pay dispute with Turkish Airlines. The airline has denied rumours of imminent lay offs.

Unions in Northwest Airlines are protesting at the airline's announcement in January to reduce the 47,000 workforce by 2 per cent which was made without consultation with unions. Unions recently agreed to a \$900m wage investment programme.

United Airlines is threatening to lay off 2,800 workers (3 per cent of the workforce) and to slash wages by 5 per cent. Plans to hire 1,900 new employees in 1993 have been shelved.

Six members of the ITF-affiliated Fiji Aviation Workers' Association (FAWA) have been arrested after the Fiji Ministry of Labour declared the union's strike against Air Pacific over the relocation of employees, to be illegal.

JAL transfers routes to low cost subsidiary

JAL is transferring most of its Asian regional flights to its lower cost subsidiary Japan Asia Airways (JAA) which will be based out of the new Kansai International Airport, near Osaka, when it becomes operational. JAA mainly employs cabin crew from other Asian countries on lower wages than Japanese crew and without union representation. A special recruitment company is being established in Osaka to recruit more foreign cabin crew and pilots for JAA operations.

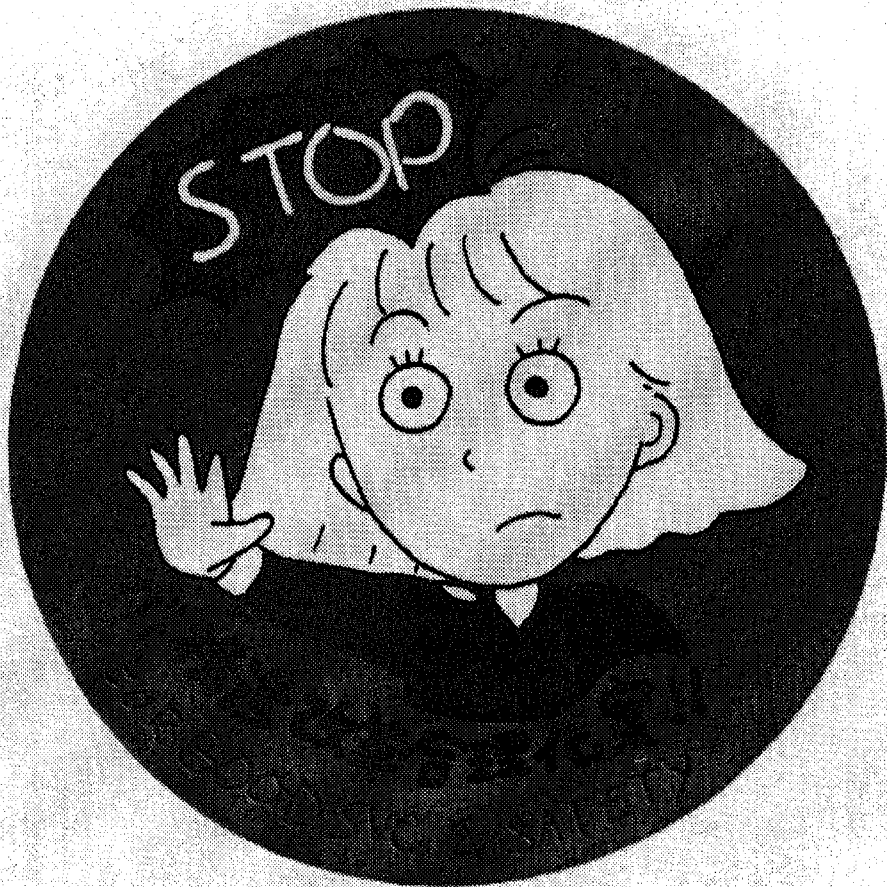
The move, which is part of JAL's restructuring plan, hopes to cut JAL personnel costs by 20-30 per cent.

JAL itself intends to increase its recruitment of foreign cabin crew and flight deck personnel. JAL recently signed a contract with World Corp of the US for 150 captains, co-pilots and flight engineers over a three year period.

The company also plans wage cuts. According to Katsuo Iwata, of the Japan Airlines Cabin Attendants' Union:

"The annual wage including bonuses in 1992 is already 10 per cent less than in 1991...The plan is aiming at creating a lower cost operation to tide over the intensified competition in both domestic and international markets."

He says that as well as employing



even more foreign crew the plan will also involve more alliances and joint operations with other carriers.

"...We can see the epitome of air-

line globalisation in this restructuring plan and we have to stop this process which is hitting our members' conditions."



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

16-19 February

3-4 March

16 March

16-17 March

24-26 March

29-30 March

26-27 April

3 May

4-5 May

6-7 May

26-28 May

17-18 June

30 June - 1 July

Asia/Pacific Regional Conference

European Road Transport Section Committee

Management Committee

ITF Executive Board

Fishermen's Section Conference

Civil Aviation Steering Committee

Civil Aviation Health and Safety

Working Group

Seminar on New Technology in the Ports

Dockers' Section Conference

Fair Practices Committee

Railwaymen's Section Conference

Communications Meeting

Urban Transport Committee

Singapore

Geneva

London

London

Torremolinos

London

Copenhagen

Hamburg

Hamburg

Hamburg

Luxembourg

London

Birmingham



PEOPLE

John Halas has been elected as the new General Secretary of the Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) in succession to **Michalis Zenzefyllis**. Halas was previously the President of the Masters' and Mates' Union.

Eddie Laurijssen has been appointed as the new Assistant General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. A 46-year-old Belgian, Laurijssen has been Director of the ICFTU's Geneva Office since 1988. He first joined the ICFTU in 1964 and since that time has served in a variety of posts. He was in charge of youth activities in the early 1970s and has also been involved with ICFTU regional activities and relations with the ITSs. Laurijssen has been based at the ICFTU Geneva office since 1981 when he was appointed its Assistant Director.

Nenad Mrgan has been elected as the new President of the Railroad Engineer Trade Union of Croatia (Sindikatski Strojnog Osoblja Hrvatske — SSOH). He succeeds **Milan Krivokuca**, whose tragic death is reported in this issue.

Shoshiro Nakanishi was re-elected President of the All-Japan Seamen's Union at the JSU's 53rd Annual Congress held in Tokyo during November. Brother Nakanishi is Chairman of the ITF's Asia/Pacific Regional Committee.

In view of his forthcoming retirement, **Ricardo Pérez** decided not to stand again as General Secretary at the recent Congress of the Argentinian Road Haulage Workers' Federation. Until he leaves in about two years' time Pérez will be the Federation's Secretary for International Relations. Brother Pérez has been Chairman of the ITF Road Transport

Workers' Section since the Florence Congress. The new General Secretary is **Hugo Antonio Moyano**.

Giuseppe Querenghi of Italy has been appointed Chief of the Workers' Education Branch of the International Labour Office, replacing **Cesare Poloni** who retired at the beginning of December.

The Namibian Transport and Allied Workers' Union has a new leadership team following its 4th National Congress last October. **Emmanuel Kavaa**, previously the union's Director of Education, has been elected as the new General Secretary, replacing **Willy Matsi**. Other important new appointments include: Treasurer, **Niklaas Steenkamp** and National Secretary **Pamela Jephthas-Crail**. The only member of the previous union leadership to be re-elected to his original position was the National Chairman **S E Iyambo**.

GENERAL SECRETARY : **HAROLD LEWIS**

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Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation
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