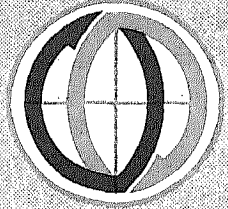


INFORMATIONS : NOTICIAS

ITF NEWS



NACHRICHTEN : NYHETER

ITF UNIONS TARGET BURMA FOR GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

More than 200 delegates from transport workers' unions throughout the Asia and Pacific region meeting in Singapore from 16 to 19 February 1993 agreed to take co-ordinated protest action against the military dictatorship which currently runs Burma. The country (called Myanmar by the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council but Burma by the rest of the world) has probably the worst record in terms of human and trade union rights violations in a region which has seen the number of such violations grow rapidly in recent years.

The meeting of the ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Conference heard a detailed report about the situation in Burma from representatives of the Seafarers' Union of Burma, whose leaders live in exile in Bangkok, Thailand. It decided to recommend to the ITF's Executive Board that the SUB be accepted as an affiliate of the ITF and that transport unions worldwide should be asked to participate in a boycott of ships and aircraft registered in Burma. The ITF's determination to act against Burmese shipping has been reinforced by a decision taken in London the previous week to add Burma to the ITF's list of countries flying flags of convenience (see separate story). The ITF Seafarers' Section has long been concerned about the savage intimidation, including large fines and prison sentences, imposed by the regime against Burmese seafarers on foreign flag ships who accept assistance from the ITF to improve their wages and conditions. Only the achievement of a democratic government in Burma can prevent the continued exploitation of Burmese seafarers who

are amongst the lowest paid of all workers in an industry notorious for its exploitative practices.

The four day meeting also adopted a resolution on trade union rights in China, welcoming the release of railway worker Han Dong Fang, a leading activist for free trade unionism, and calling on ITF affiliates to exert pressure on the Chinese government to ensure that workers in that country are able fully to exercise their right to organise free trade unions and their right to strike, and calling on the Chinese government immediately to release all political prisoners.

Trade union rights was the principal theme of the Conference and featured in a range of country reports which were presented to the Conference's plenary session as well as in the detailed debates which took place in sectional meetings for the Seafarers, Dockers, Civil Aviation and Inland Transport Sections held on 17 February.

A general declaration adopted at its closing session condemned govern-

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ITF BORDER BLOCKADE PROPOSALS ADOPTED (6)

Preparing for the ITF's 100th birthday

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) was founded in 1896 by seafarers and dockworkers in Northern Europe.

In the last century, the ITF has established itself as a truly representative global federation of transport workers with a proud tradition of practical solidarity and effective actions — beginning with the Rotterdam port strike of 1896, continuing through the blockade in the 1920s of Horthy's Hungary, the campaigns against fascism and the underground organisation of transport workers in Nazi Germany, practical support for Republican Spain, and continuing today with the unique international campaign against Flag of convenience shipping (in which seafarers and dockers, through industrial action, fight for minimum standards on Flag shipping).

In commemoration of 100 years (1896-1996), the ITF intends to organise a number of activities and support various publications. The final form of these celebrations will, of course, be determined by the governing bodies of the ITF, but we are interested in drawing together interested individuals and organisations

outside the ITF to assist us in the planning and execution of the anniversary.

A number of researchers and historians have already contacted the ITF with offers of assistance in this project. There are also a number of academics whose work concerns aspects of the ITF history.

We are organising a one-day meeting on June 16 in London to discuss the ITF anniversary. Interested individuals are invited, as well as representatives of ITF affiliates. This meet-

ing will be held in the English language only.

Individuals are requested to contact the ITF Secretariat if they are interested in supporting this project. Those of you who cannot attend, but are interested in participating in the ITF Anniversary, are asked to contact us as well, letting us know what your areas of interest are. We will keep everyone informed of developments.

For further information, please contact the Secretariat.

ITF to host trade union communications meeting

The ITF is holding a Communications Meeting for all affiliates on June 17 and 18, 1993.

The meeting will be held in the Conference Hall of the UK headquarters of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) in London.

The meeting will deal with union and ITF publications, external press relations and the use of new informa-

tion technologies (electronic mail, databases, CD-ROMs etc.) and will aim to generate greater co-operation in the communications fields between the ITF and its affiliates.

All ITF affiliates are invited to the meeting, and a formal invitation should have been received by everyone by now. Affiliates who have not should contact the Secretariat for an invitation.

... Trade union rights in the Asia/Pacific region

Continued from page 1

ments in the region for their increasingly aggressive attitude towards the rights of unions to organise and represent their members. This attitude is being adopted in many countries, delegates stressed, under pressure from multinational companies and international lending institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The Conference also reviewed the ITF's Long Term Education Programme for the region and agreed to restructure it to reflect the differing needs of the different countries in the region as well as the availability of outside financing.

Specific resolutions were also adopted by the Conference dealing with:

• The violation of trade union rights, privatisation and use of unqualified

seafarers in Pakistan;

- Trade union rights and the civil aviation workers' struggle in Fiji;
- The violation of seafarers' rights by the government of the Maldives;
- The need to phase out over-age ships which are a danger to maritime safety;
- The general problem of substandard ships;
- The need for better provisions to guarantee the repatriation of stranded seafarers;
- Solidarity with the cabin attendants of Cathay Pacific;
- Support for Indian Flight Engineers; and
- The need for the establishment of an ITF office in the region.

The closing session of the Conference (February 19) paid a warm tribute to retiring ITF Asia/Pacific Re-

gional Secretary M S (Mo) Hoda who has worked in the ITF Secretariat in various capacities for almost 30 years. He will be succeeded by Shigeru Wada, previously head of the ITF office in Tokyo. Wada will be assisted by Mahendra Sharma, formerly education officer with the Indian national trade union centre HMS, who will be setting up an ITF Education and Field Office in Delhi. Wada's place in Tokyo will be taken by Mashahiko Nakamura of the All Japan Seamen's Union.

The Conference agreed to confirm S Nakanishi (All Japan Seamen's Union) and M Fleming (Australian Maritime Officers' Union) as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Committee (APRC) for the next twelve months.

Southern African unions call for harmonisation

A call for the harmonisation of the national labour codes of the different countries in the region was issued by delegates attending the ITF Southern Africa conference on Labour Law and Trade Union Rights held in Manzini, Swaziland from 9 to 12 November 1992.

In all, twenty-three leaders from twelve ITF affiliates in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the conference, to which representatives of road transport workers in Mozambique had also been invited.

Country reports presented to the conference revealed that most labour legislation still bore the stamp of the region's former colonial status. Even in those few countries where industrial relations law and practice were being reviewed and updated the pace of reform was too slow so that there

was a huge gap between government intentions to promote even handedness and the continuing bias in favour of the employers. A significant number of countries also failed to respect workers' rights laid down in key international labour conventions.

Southern African governments could assist the process of reconstruction by taking affirmative action to extend the opportunities for trade unions generally and especially the transport trade unions to contribute to social and economic progress, delegates said.

In a series of recommendations adopted by the conference delegates stressed the importance of full worker participation in all stages of the integrated regional development programmes that were already being developed.

Governments were urged to amend existing labour laws in consultation

with trade unions and to conduct their legislative reviews in coordination with other countries in southern Africa. They were also pressed to draw up modern industrial relations structures and policies that were responsive to the needs of workers and would help ensure industrial stability in the region.

It is clearly important to have the proper machinery for dealing with the more serious labour disputes and the conference therefore proposed that Conciliation Boards or Industrial Courts be established in each country.

Inter-union cooperation is being stepped up with the conference decision to establish an ITF Southern Africa Transport Workers' Committee headed by L Shana (railway workers, Zimbabwe). A Solidarity Fund has also been started to help fellow trade unionists in Mozambique.

European trade unions' health and safety forum

Around six hundred trade unionists and health and safety officers gathered at the European Trade Union Confederation's (ETUC) Forum on Health and Safety in the Workplace, held in London from 17-19 March, attended by the ITF.

A variety of presentations on a wide range of topics, such as stress, exposure to noise, dangerous materials, the implementation of EC directives and new forms of work organisation were enthusiastically received by the participants.

NOISE HAZARDS HIT FISHING INDUSTRY

A presentation on the noise levels suffered by workers on fishing vessels was of notable interest. Recent research has shown that of all workers in all sectors, fish industry workers at sea suffer the worst levels of noise.

Fishermen's hearing has been proved to suffer gravely, and the effects are noticeably worse with seniority and age.

Noise can have other serious health affects. It has been proved to be a factor in cardiovascular diseases, and

causes loss of memory, aggressive behaviour, stress and fatigue.

Marcel Androu, a researcher from the University of Brittany, emphasised the necessity for the noise factor to be taken into consideration from the vessel design stage.

Job design and workplace planning was generally considered to be one of the vital elements in the process of improving occupational health and safety.

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION

Trade unions were facing challenges in the field which necessitated increased information and training of union representatives at the workplace, as well as of employees, delegates agreed.

Within Europe, information-gathering (eg. on fatal accidents and non-implementation of health and safety directives) and harmonisation needed to be urgently tackled; proper statistics had to be collected as workers' organisations needed hard data to formulate health and safety policy.

SOCIAL DUMPING UNACCEPTABLE

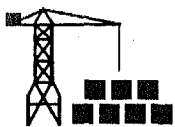
European social and economic prospects were a continual point of reference for the whole conference.

It was not acceptable for it to be cheaper for companies to relocate to countries where it was more dangerous to work, many speakers, including ETUC President Norman Willis, stressed.

The threat of unemployment for workers who complain, and the effect upon workers of problems in society in general (demonstrated by the upturn in violence against bank workers in some countries, for example) were indicative of the way social conditions could affect workers' wellbeing.

Privatisation, deregulation and decentralisation meant a lack of coordinated action on health and safety issues.

Issues for workers' representatives to highlight included measures on verbal, racial and sexual harassment, equal opportunities, stress, and the European-wide recognition of occupational diseases such as repetitive stress syndrome (RSI).



DOCKERS

Port of Spain: 1,000 jobs threatened

One thousand port workers in Port of Spain stand to lose their jobs when government restructuring plans go through.

The situation in the port has worsened since January, when ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis wrote to the Trinidad and Tobago government urging it to reconsider the scheduled redundancies (see *ITF News*, January/February 1993).

The company issued a letter to all port employees on February 15th, pleading debt as the reason for the job losses. The union contacted the prime minister and was informed that the whole question of redundancy was based on funding.

A long-term voluntary retirement scheme was already in operation at the port, and workers were encouraged to take up the terms it offered, but informed that if one thousand volunteers did not come forward by February 22nd, the remainder would be selected on a last-in, first-out basis, and given 45 days' notice.

EBS settlement

A dispute between workers at the Rotterdam bulk cargo group European Bulk Services (EBS) was settled on February second (see *ITF News*, January/February 1993).

After protracted negotiations over a four-day period, EBS agreed to reduce the number of jobs to be cut from the original figure of 400, to nearly half that — 234 jobs are now on the line.

None of the redundancies would be compulsory, the company, which currently employs 1,200 workers, agreed.

Further talks about the Masterplan agreement at EBS will be held on May 15th, and in the meantime, negotiations between the unions and Rotterdam port employers over the Masterplan agreement for the whole port, are to be held.

In a letter to the port authority, Assistant General Secretary David Cockcroft urged the initiation of a consultation process, warning the authority that if it failed to answer the union's concerns the ITF would consider asking affiliates to take action against the country's maritime traffic.

The ITF-affiliated Bermuda Industrial Union (BIU) also wrote to Prime Minister Patrick Manning expressing its objections to the developments.

"We urge your government to explore alternatives to your present

course of obvious confrontation with the union and other citizens of Trinidad," said President Ottiwell Simmons.

"Perhaps a delay, so that all concerned will have an opportunity to find a suitable remedy, is advisable.

"In the meantime, we protest your current action and express solidarity with the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union; our union stand in readiness to give assistance to our sister union in Trinidad," he added.

Brazilian restructuring plans

Amid controversy and strikes, legislation to restructure Brazil's ports industry was approved by Congress at the end of January — two years after the original reform plan was born.

Under previous drafts of the reform proposal, workers would have had equal representation on tripartite port authority councils (a measure secured by unions after they took forceful strike action which paralysed the ports last summer (see *ITF News*, June/July 1992)).

But under the redrafted proposal this representation has been downgraded.

Ports will be run by private enterprises, and private terminals have been given considerable freedom to function as cargo-handling companies for third party clients, enabling them to hire outside labour and pay the wages they wish.

There are fears amongst the workers — and particularly amongst stevedores belonging to the casual labour federations — that the changes will lead to considerable unemployment.

Stevedores took industrial action at the beginning of February in the ports of Santos and Rio de Janeiro in protest at the passing of the reform plan — which had subsequently to be ratified by President Itamar Franco.

Workers demanded to be told the terms of their new employment contracts before the legislation — which specifies that new contracts for stevedores need only be ready three months after the signing of the law — was brought into effect.

Delegates from the ITF-affiliated transport workers' confederation, CONTTMAF, met Franco on February third. They reminded the President that the most successful models in the world today were based on the privatisation of port services — but not of port infrastructure.

They emphasised the need for proper training and career development.

To resolve the conflict, separate government meetings with the unions and shipowners' representatives were held. They resulted in an agreement to form a joint commission of portworkers and shipowners which would work to find practicable ways to implement the reforms.

The joint group, composed of nine portworkers' representatives, three of whom were stevedores, and nine shipowners' representatives, was given three months to present its proposal.

Franco approved the proposal, with some modifications, on March first.

Pacific rim unions to meet in San Francisco

The ITF is supporting a conference to be held in April in San Francisco, by United States dockers' affiliate, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU).

The conference is to examine problems faced by port workers in the Pacific Rim countries.

To be held on April 22nd and 23rd, the conference initiative sprung from an idea conceived by countries attending the ITF seminar for Asia/Pa-

cific port workers, held in Yokohama in October (see *ITF News*, November 1992).

The ITF-affiliated unions ILWU and Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia (WWF) joined the Japanese dockers' federation Zenkokukowan in making a declaration which stressed the common threats faced and strategies to be developed in dealing with common multinational operators. The declaration proposed

the holding of a follow up meeting in April.

"We believe that we need to examine the major shipping companies in the Pacific Rim and see how we can collectively improve the conditions of our work forces. Secondly, we need to find ways of protecting our unions and work forces from adverse governmental legislation or policies," said the ILWU in a letter to Pacific Rim unions.

Rotterdam companies agree to merge

Rotterdam's two largest container handlers, European Combined Terminals (ECT) — whose major shareholders are Nedlloyd and International Muller — and Unitcentre, a Pakhoed subsidiary, are to merge.

Rotterdam hopes to expand its container traffic by more than 50 per cent by the year 2010, and the move goes hand-in-hand with a new investment plan to be financed by the state. This is the first time that the state has designated funds for such a development.

As part of the deal, the government requested that ECT and Unitcentre enter into cooperation.

Rotterdam port works on the principle that the state retains ownership of the river and riverside, thus maintaining influence over structured planning and development. The port authority owns the port and the quays.

Private operators, who lease the land, must invest in machinery and site development. ECT and Unitcentre will now be able to pool their resources to raise the necessary funds.

The merger between the two concerns, announced on February 19th, will prevent destructive competition leading to overcapacity and duplication of facilities.

On February 18th the port of Rotterdam announced plans to invest in the development of new container terminals in the Maasvlake area of the port (an artificial area on the river estuary).

Rotterdam port authority will be

responsible for the financing of a new flyover to link the terminals to the nearby "Distripark" (an industrial estate complex also in the Maasvlake area, where goods can be stored, assembled and distributed by companies in their own dedicated warehouses).

The second phase of government investment will come with funding for the foundations for the rest of ECT's Delta 2000-8 plan for the new terminals. So far, of the eight nearly fully-

automated terminals planned, only the Delta-1 terminal is officially in operation (although Sealand's Delta-2 terminal is operating unofficially).

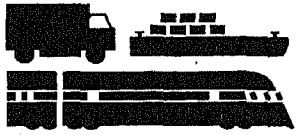
Pakhoed will now become shareholder in ECT, with the profits from the Delta terminals having been the focal point of discussions between the two companies.

The merger announcement was made after Unitcentre workers complained about the secrecy surrounding talks with ECT.



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

16 March	Management Committee	London
16-17 March	ITF Executive Board	London
24-26 March	Fishermen's Section Conference	Torremolinos
29-30 March	Civil Aviation Steering Committee	London
26-27 April	Civil Aviation Health and Safety Working Group	Copenhagen
3 May	Seminar on New Technology in the Ports	Hamburg
4-5 May	Dockers' Section Conference	Hamburg
6-7 May	Fair Practices Committee	Hamburg
26-28 May	Railwaymen's Section Conference	Luxembourg
17-18 June	Communications Meeting	London
30 June - 1 July	Urban Transport Committee	Birmingham



INLAND TRANSPORT

European border blockade proposals adopted

Truck drivers caught up in future border blockades are likely to find their enforced stay in frontier areas much less uncomfortable thanks to a recent initiative by the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section.

The first moves were made at the Section Committee meeting in Copenhagen in May 1991, which decided on a two-pronged approach to the problem. ITF road transport unions would take what practical steps they could to help drivers while urging governments to initiate positive action to ease the situation of affected drivers.

A contact list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of local union officials in border areas was drawn up by the ITF Secretariat and distributed among its road transport affiliates for use by driver members left stranded at frontier posts.

At the same time, the ITF contacted the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) calling on it to draw up contingency plans to help international drivers affected by road blockades in border areas.

It backed this up by submitting an eleven-point plan proposing that drivers be given advanced warnings of possible trouble ahead and that a range

of facilities be set up in designated emergency parking areas offering drivers who would still get held up at frontier posts at least minimum conditions of comfort and decency.

The ITF proposals were discussed by the ECE's Principal Working Party on Road Transport which then invited the ITF and the road transport operators' umbrella organisation, the International Road Transport Union (IRU), to prepare a joint submission for ECE approval.

Following consultations between the ITF and the IRU, joint proposals aimed at preventing hardship to drivers were drawn up, with the document divided into three sections, urging action by governments, professional transport operators and drivers themselves.

The employers would do all they could to ensure that drivers were provided with the requisite documentation, were given adequate funds to cover emergencies and that contingency plans were drawn up in collaboration with employees on the action to be taken should blockages occur.

In return drivers undertook to acquaint themselves with the regulations before starting an international

journey, to report back to their employers any untoward events that might affect their progress or that of other drivers, and to take alternative routes suggested by the public authorities or their employer to reduce to a minimum the risk of getting caught up in blockades.

The joint ITF/IRU proposals on the role of governments in easing the plight of stranded drivers were approved by the 55th session of the ECE Inland Transport Committee on February second.

This puts ECE member governments under an obligation to make adequate provision to ensure the comfort of drivers detained by actions at their borders.

They will now be asked to provide adequate sanitary facilities such as toilets, washrooms and showers; catering and food supplies, including free drinking water; money changing facilities; telephones (with possibility to pay by credit card); and laundry services.

The ITF and IRU will shortly be holding a joint meeting in Geneva to discuss how they can ensure that the measures recommended to employers and workers are implemented.

Slovenian bus workers' strike continues

Striking bus workers from Koper in Slovenia have at last been paid their November salaries thanks to prompt intervention by the ITF and its road transport affiliates (see *ITF News*, January/February 1993).

On February first, the State Agency for Restructuring agreed that the bus workers should have their pay and allowances due for the month of November.

There is little doubt that protests from the ITF and its member unions to the various ministries were behind the agency's decision to hand over at least some of the pay that the bus workers have earned but have yet to

see in their pockets.

But the bus workers could have a long wait before they get any further payouts as their employer — Slavnik International Limited — was declared bankrupt at a Koper Court hearing four days later.

Since the bankruptcy declaration, the bus workers' union — the Bus Drivers' Syndicate of the ITF-affiliated Union of Maritime Employees of Slovenia — has stepped up its efforts on their behalf.

Two meetings have been held with Ministry of Labour officials to demand that the company's employees

be treated as priority creditors and paid their outstanding wages and annual bonuses.

Future prospects for many of the bus workers are bleak as the new manager put in by the court to run Slavnik International has already told the press that he expects at least a hundred jobs will have to go.

Meanwhile, the strike continues, with only essential services such as regular school and factory runs operating as normal. The strike committee is keeping the situation under review, ready to match its tactics to changing circumstances.

Dutch union fights compulsory redundancies

Dutch Rail's plans to eliminate 3,500 jobs over the next five years have provoked an angry response from the ITF-affiliated Dutch Transport Workers' Union FNV because the management have refused to give any firm assurances that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

The FNV says that the NS management could be passing up an historic opportunity as most railway staff would support a long-term rationalisation plan for the railways, provided nobody is forced to leave.

It cannot understand why the NS is not prepared to commit itself to a voluntary redundancy scheme as the number of job losses that has been announced — equivalent to 1 in 8 jobs — is about half of what would normally be lost through natural wastage in that period. A no compulsory job cuts guarantee could easily be given as the effect on costs would be minimal.

The FNV is now suggesting that it be allowed to place before the NS



management an alternative modernisation plan which would have the backing of all rail staff and could help reduce the labour surplus.

Emphasis would be placed on obtaining the voluntary cooperation of rail workers for the introduction of measures such as part-time working, retraining and early retirement for older workers. This should be combined with positive action to create

new job opportunities for rail workers and a halt to the contracting out of non-core activities. Any redundancies that would still be necessary should be voluntary.

Despite appearances to the contrary, NS is a financially healthy company and so could easily afford to pay for such a plan, says the FNV, as some of the costs involved would in any case fall on the state social security system.

Hungarian railways back down in conflict

The Hungarian State Railways (MAV) have backed away from a confrontation with the ITF-affiliated Hungarian Free Trade Union of Railway Workers (VDSzSz) (see **ITF News**, December 1992).

Feelings over plans for a drastic restructuring of the railways involving huge job losses were running so high that all five Hungarian rail unions called their members out on a highly successful two-hour warning strike in the early morning of November 23.

Anxious to avoid further major disruption of national rail services — the unions had threatened an all-out strike from early December to back their demands — the government agreed to enter into immediate tripartite discussions on the rail plans.

A series of meetings were convened, leading to the signature on December ninth of an agreement in which the government made a number of significant concessions to meet union concerns about job security and fu-

ture wage levels.

Railway trade unions will now be consulted before any decision is made on future staffing levels of core rail activities, and cost considerations will take second place to ensuring that MAV has sufficient personnel to meet Hungary's transport needs.

Union fears that the remaining employees in a slimmed down MAV would see their standard of living cut back sharply have been lessened with

a government commitment that half of any cash savings made by reducing staff numbers would be used for salaries and an undertaking to meet 6.9 per cent of total wage costs for 1993.

The draft text of a new Railway Act was also presented to the unions at a separate meeting with ministry officials on December first. An initial debate on the draft legislation took place in the Hungarian parliament at the end of January.

German unions accept three per cent pay increase

After a hard-fought pay round, the six German public service workers' unions — led by the ITF-affiliated Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (ÖTV) and the Railwaymen's Union (GdED) — have succeeded in negotiating a three per cent increase in pay and allowances for their 3.2 million members.

The pay settlement was finally hammered out very late on February fourth, in the closing hours of the third round of the 1993 pay talks.

Union leaders made it clear that the end figure they accepted, while lower than in recent years, was the absolute maximum that the employers were prepared to offer.

Australian public transport unions merge

A major new Australian public transport union starts life at the beginning of this month.

The new union — the Public Transport Union (PTU) — is a merger of four previously separate unions organising rail, bus and tramway workers throughout the Australian continent.

Plans for the new super union were first laid at a joint meeting of union officers in August 1990 when a national steering committee bringing together the National/Federal Secretaries of each of the unions involved was set up to oversee the merger (see

ITF News, March 1991).

Progress towards unification reached a culmination late last year when the results were announced of the separate union ballots held on the amalgamation issue.

Union by union and state by state all four unions — the Australian Railways Union (ARU) (an ITF affiliate), the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemmen (AFULE), the Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association (AT&MOEA) and the National Union of Railway Workers of Australia (NURWA) — voted decisively for

forming the PTU.

Eighty five per cent of all the votes cast were in favour — a result that clearly signals the determination of the nation's public transport workers to create an industry union capable of meeting the threat to all three systems.

The national steering committee will now continue discussions with a fifth union — the Association of Railway Professional Officers of Australia (ARPOA) — confident that members of this union too will endorse a merger with their fellow public transport workers.



CIVIL AVIATION

Trade union rights are under attack throughout the Asia/Pacific region

A civil aviation industry section meeting was held in Singapore on February 17, as part of the ITF Asia/Pacific regional conference. The civil aviation meeting was attended by 50 delegates from 21 unions in 11 countries.

Delegates heard reports of attacks on union rights through new anti union legislation in India and New Zealand and the threat of sweeping anti union measures if there is a change of government in Australia after the elections.

The meeting heard from the Cathay Pacific Flight Attendants' Union about their ongoing dispute with the airline and about the difficulties presented by the lack of statutory protections for workers in Hong Kong.

The meeting reported attacks on conditions and employment rights through employment practices such as sub contracting of ground services, and cross border employment of cabin crew, both of which shifted jobs to workers not covered by union representation or collective bargaining agreements.

One of the latest developments is the practice of wet leasing cheap aircraft with non union crews from states of the former Soviet Union (see page 10).

A resolution was passed affirming the need for the ITF to continue monitoring the situation at Cathay Pacific

and to assist Hong Kong trade unions in their campaign for democratic trade union rights.

Resolutions were also passed in support of disputes of flight engineers in Air India and of aviation workers in Fiji.

Southern European ITF meeting

A meeting of ITF Civil Aviation Trade Unions of Southern Europe was held on the first and second of February in Lisbon.

The meeting was attended by around 20 delegates from aviation unions in Portugal, France, Italy, Greece and Spain. The meeting discussed the negative social impact of aviation liberalisation in Europe. The conference heard reports of impending job losses due to restructuring in carriers such as TAP, Air France and Iberia as European airlines enter the new environment of competition.

The conference called for a concerted union campaign to protect working conditions.

Union unmask Swedish safety cover up

The National Accident Investigation Board is seeking to cover up serious shortcomings in Swedish flight safety.

A number of critical defects in cabin safety design were exposed during an investigation into the SAS DC-9 crash which took place at Gottröra (near Stockholm's Arlanda airport) on 27 December 1991.

Yet despite these findings many planes are still flying with these defects, and this is happening with the Board's knowledge and approval.

The Board's investigation of the crash was undertaken with assistance from the Swedish Commercial Employees' Union HTF, which organises cabin crew. The union is insisting that the results of the research be made public now.

The union says that the SAS plane involved in the crash would have become a death trap, had it not split apart. Many of the interior doors and emergency exits were blocked by fallen equipment, but luckily passengers were able to evacuate the plane quickly through the large holes in the broken fuselage.

If the plane had **not** split apart and had a fire broken out passengers would have been unable to evacuate the plane quickly with the blocked doors and emergency exits.

It was a miracle that such a serious accident did not end in a tragedy, says Ulla Bolter, an SAS purser and Chairman of the HTF's cabin safety committee. Bolter was the cabin crew trade union representative on the National Accident Investigation Board's official accident inquiry team. The HTF also has a trade union expert on the team.

The HTF report reveals the chaos that was let loose in the cabin after the emergency landing. A number of emergency exits and interior doors were blocked by fallen equipment, outer clothing, baggage etc. The corridor to a rear door was partially blocked by a newspaper trolley. The emergency exits over the wings were obstructed by seats that had come detached from their mountings. Serv-

ice panels, including those housing oxygen masks, were hanging down and getting in the passengers' way. Sections of the runs of baggage lockers had also come loose.

When HTF Tidningen interviewed Eva Björnemark, the purser in charge on the crashed plane, a year ago she said:

"It can't be allowed that anyone should survive the actual crash landing only to be killed by a falling coat rack."

The HTF report also reveals that many passenger aircraft operated by Swedish companies offer inadequate protection in the event of a crash because they are equipped according to the safety regulations that were in force when they were constructed and type rated.

The DC-9 that crashed at Gottröra was built to construction standards that are 30 years old as Swedish regulations allow newly built DC-9s to be equipped according to outdated requirements.

The HTF report recommends that older aircraft types such as the DC-9 should have passenger seats that are more securely anchored than at present, baggage racks and service panels that would survive shocks in the event of a crash landing, and that cargo holds and baggage lockers should have improved locks and catches so that packages, hand baggage and outer clothing is not thrown around in the event of a crash.

The rapporteur wants Sweden to have cabin safety regulations that are just as rigorous as the American regulations. The Swedish aviation authorities come in for fierce criticism:

"The Swedish aviation authorities have unduly modest objectives with regard to crash safety given the major technical advances that have come about during the 1970s and 1980s," states the rapporteur.

"The authorities' role in exercising due responsibility is crucial given that the airlines by and large do no more than apply the minimum crash safety standards."

The inspection authorities should inform the public of safety levels airline by airline, insists the rapporteur.

But the National Accident Investigation Board wants to keep the results of Bolter's report under wraps for another six months until the full final crash report is ready. The Board is therefore refusing to take delivery of the HTF report, printed copies of which are waiting at the HTF's Stockholm headquarters. The day that the Board takes delivery of the report it enters the public domain.

The Board's attitude has led HTF President Lars Hellman to send a sharply-worded letter to its Director-General demanding that the authority take delivery of the HTF report. He is angry that steps to improve passenger and crew safety are being delayed because the report is being kept under wraps. Hellman states in his letter that the HTF intends to give it widespread publicity.

"We are not doing this to create difficulties for the Board but to protect passengers and flight crews," he says.

However, Accident Investigation Board Director General Olof Forssberg says that there is nothing in the HTF report that should lead the authorities to take immediate action to improve cabin safety.

He also states that if the HTF goes ahead with publication the union will be excluded from taking part in future investigations.

"We allow trade union representatives to take part in all stages of investigations, on the understanding that nothing is published until the Accident Investigation Board's report is ready. We have no reason to cooperate with organisations that don't play by the rules," he says.

The position of the HTF is equally clear. "We don't want to wake up one morning in the spring of 1993 to the news that many people have been injured in an aircraft crash as the result of defects that we have known of for some time but have said nothing about," says Lars Hellman.

Air Zimbabwe brings in job cut consultants

Air Zimbabwe has hired outside consultants to draw up recommendations for restructuring the airline.

The company has already indicated that this may result in many job losses. The carrier has said it will not privatise, but must operate according to commercial principles. In October 1992 the chairman of the company told an ITF seminar that "by any standards Air Zimbabwe is overstaffed ... Success is not achieved without casualties and there is no doubt that

Air Zimbabwe must go through a period which for some will be traumatic".

The outside consultants called in to look at the company are operating under terms of reference drawn up by the World Bank. The government in Zimbabwe recently made it easier for employers to make mass redundancies.

According to Ken Chipato of the ITF-affiliated National Airways Workers' Union (NAWU):

"Whereas Zimbabwe used to have legislation requiring employers to apply for Ministry of Labour authorisation before terminating the employment of any worker, the law now merely obliges the employer to inform the relevant ministry of its intention to lay off workers and approval is automatically granted."

He also fears that Air Zimbabwe intends to make workers redundant when it has no money to make redundancy payments.

Airborne "Flags of convenience" threaten safety

Passenger safety is at risk from airlines which wet lease aircraft from former Soviet states such as Uzbekistan in order to lower costs or to break strikes. The ITF Asia/Pacific civil aviation meeting held during the Singapore regional conference on February 17 heard how, in October 1992, an Uzbek Airlines TU-154, one of seven being leased by Indian Airlines to break a pilots' strike, crashed in Delhi. Miraculously, none of the 163 passengers or crew were killed.

According to the All India Co-ordination Committee of Trade Unions (AICCTU):

"It is quite evident that in order to crush the pilots' strike, the government went to the extent of compromising aviation safety."

According to AICCTU the aircraft which crashed did not have escape slide chutes. Passengers were able to escape because the aircraft had flipped over, enabling them to jump from the doors to the tarmac.

The aircraft's airworthiness certificate was signed in the USSR and it is not known what standards of inspection were applied.

According to the Indian Airlines Cabin Crew Association three days' conversion training normally undertaken by cabin crew flying in a new aircraft was reduced to 15-30 minutes. No emergency equipment was shown to Indian cabin crews, and no training given in how to operate it. There were no safety cards in either Hindi or English carried on the aircraft.

After the crash the wet lease air-

craft were withdrawn, but Uzbek Airlines are still operating in Pakistan under wet lease arrangements to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). According to the ITF-affiliated Pakistan Airline Pilots' Association there appears to be little check on the flying hours of crew and little information obtainable about the maintenance record of the aircraft.

This kind of wet leasing arrange-

ment throws out a challenge, not only to trade unions but to all those concerned with aviation safety. As Jagdish Lal of AICCTU puts it:

"The question remains whether the use of flags of convenience that exploit the crews of wet leased aircraft and which undermine the solidarity of workers in different regions of the world can be stopped in civil aviation."

European aviation day of action

The Committee of Transport Workers in the European Community Civil Aviation Section, which works in co-operation with the ITF on aviation affairs in the European Community, has called for a day of protest actions against measures threatening jobs and working conditions in Europe, to be held on the second of April, 1993.

The call has the full support of the ITF. The ITF's Civil Aviation Section Conference held in London in November 1993 called for a programme of international and regional protests against the effects of globalisation on aviation workers.

Possible actions will involve the presentation of a declaration containing union demands to European Community institutions and employers' associations. Actions are also called for in individual member states ranging from strike action against intra-Community flights and strikes in Community airports, to other protest actions such as the distribution of leaf-

lets at airports and holding press conferences publicising union demands.

The unions' declaration calls for swifter progress on social measures to provide civil aviation workers with protection on health and safety, night work, working hours and minimum rest periods. It calls for the extension of union protection for all aviation workers and for safeguards for jobs and conditions for workers affected by mergers and re-organisation.

It calls for the mutual recognition of training certificates and licences for cabin crew, ground staff and air traffic controllers, and for harmonisation of professional training.

The declaration also demands the setting up of a social watchdog to monitor the impact of liberalisation.

The conference also discussed other matters relating to Community transport policy and union participation in the work of the EC Joint Committee for Civil Aviation.

Unions in **KLM**, **SAS**, **Swissair** and **Austrian Airlines** met together in February to discuss the moves by KLM to join with the European Quality Alliance airlines. Unions are concerned that such a merger would result in massive job losses. The unions want a co-ordinated union response to any merger moves and are demanding consultation by the airlines from the earliest stages of any merger moves.

KLM has recently blamed fares wars for worse than expected financial losses. The airline has threatened that 500 jobs may be shed in 1993.

US airlines are trying to blame high labour costs for their current losses. Robert Crandall of **American Airlines** told journalists that high labour costs mean his airline cannot compete with low cost carriers such as Southwest. **United Airlines** recently told employees "In order for United to continue effectively to compete in its current form, it is essential that we substantially reduce our labour costs for each employee group". AFA union members are not impressed. "We hear all the standard excuses... 'The competition does it we have to do it'... Our mileage plus (frequent flier) programme is breaking us and no amount of give backs will improve profitability until we fix it. I'm not willing to take a pay cut or lose my job in order to subsidise ticket prices," says John Himble an AFA member in United's Honolulu base. Unions in United — the AFA, IMAW and ALPA (all ITF affiliates) — have formed a coalition to fight cutbacks.

At **Northwest Airlines** unions are in talks with management over the company's demand for \$900m in labour

Airline Roundup



concessions in return for union shareholdings in the company. The unions have proposed that they should have 80 per cent of shares and one third of the seats on the board, along with a union veto over major financial decisions.

Threatened industrial action by ITF-affiliated Hava-Is against **Turkish Airlines** has been averted after unions reached a settlement with the airline in March. The union has been seeking improved pay and better health and safety conditions during seven months of negotiations. After the union threatened a strike the company conducted an intensive campaign of intimidation against employees. A strike ballot resulted in a narrow majority against strike action.

Another two thousand jobs are expected to go at **Qantas** this year and next. The company's accountants advised it that the redundancies coupled with efficiency changes could save it A\$158 m (US\$108.9 m) a year. These latest job cuts come on top of the 5,000 jobs that have already been lost in the past eighteen months by Qantas and Australian Airlines, the domestic airline which merged with Qantas last September. Qantas and BA are now considering how they can make the most of their new relationship (BA has just made a 25 per cent investment in Qantas) and this could lead to further job cuts. The planned flotation of the Australian government's 75 per cent shareholding in Qantas has been postponed to later this year.

India's new civil aviation minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, has called for the scrapping of legislation paving the way

for privatisation of **Air India** and **Indian Airlines**. Azad reportedly wants to revoke the Air India Corporation Act (1990) which also opened up domestic markets to private airlines. His stance follows the strong union opposition and a recent national strike by pilots.

The Romanian government is preparing a privatisation plan for state-owned **Tarom** Romanian Airlines.

The management of **Philippine Airlines** has been thrown into chaos one year after privatisation with a power struggle between major investors. The president of the Philippine National Bank Daniel Locsan has said "We cannot allow PAL to disintegrate because of internal squabbles". However, the government's only intervention appears to be to put up its remaining shares for sale in the hope that a clear majority shareholder will emerge.

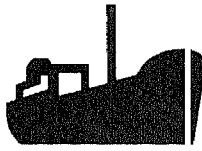
Ansett Airlines of Australia and Garuda of Indonesia have formed a strategic marketing alliance.

Aeromexico is spreading its wings. Having just bought **Aeroperu**, it has now won control in a share swap deal over its larger domestic rival **Mexicana**. This will give Aeromexico a controlling interest in a new holding company that will run both airlines, which will keep their separate names. The move will allow the two airlines to cut their losses by restricting competition on some routes and sharing reservations systems.

Cathay Pacific is suing **Nationair** for US\$172,000. The bill represents the unpaid balance of a deposit Cathay had to make with Nationair for strike breaking services during the dispute with its flight attendants. Although the strike is over Nationair appears to be hanging on to the money.

Nationair are currently suffering in a fares war with Air Canada and Canadian Airlines.

The European Commission has issued its revised code of conduct governing computer reservation systems. The code sets out procedures to prevent bias in computer displays, which have previously favoured airlines owning the CRS. Similarly the code requires equal treatment regarding the provision of information for all subscribers to the system.



SEAFARERS

Seafarers threatened by pirates and tyrants

The plight of seafarers from Burma and the Maldives, the growing threat of piracy and port state control dominated discussions at the ITF Asia/Pacific Seafarers' Regional Committee (APSRC) meeting (Singapore on 17 February). The APSRC brought together 32 delegates and observers from 16 countries.

On Port State Control, the meeting discussed developments in the Asia/Pacific region, and was of the firm view that ILO Convention No.147 (Minimum Standards in Merchant Shipping) was the most effective vehicle in combating sub-standard shipping, particularly those flying flags of convenience. The meeting welcomed the Australian government's "Ships of Shame" report (see **ITF News**, January/February 1993).

ary/February 1993).

The meeting expressed concern at the increased number of piracy attacks against ships and was informed of the outcome of an ITF/ISF (International Shipping Federation) Working Party held recently in London which discussed, among other things, the problem of attacks by pirates and armed robbery against merchant ships (see separate story). The meeting welcomed the convening of an ITF/ISF workshop to consider the adoption of detailed on-board safety precautions and improved training of shipmasters and crews.

The Secretariat reported that the Maldivian government is assisting shipowners to maintain double books and enforcing Maldivian legislation

that penalises seafarers who attempt to collect higher wages applicable to them under ITF agreements. A resolution was adopted (see story below) condemning the Maldivian government.

The issue of the denial of union rights in the Pakistani shipping sector was raised. The meeting expressed its full support for the Pakistan Seamen's Union in their efforts to maintain employment of union members through the medium of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1923.

The meeting welcomed representatives from the Seafarers' Union of Burma who briefed the meeting about the problems faced by Burmese seafarers and asked for the ITF's support and solidarity (see separate story).

Maldivians dismiss ITF complaints

The Maldivian government has dismissed the ITF's protests about their denial of human and trade union rights as "groundless allegations" and has stated that they do not recognise the "standing or right" of the ITF to question a "sovereign state".

Following clear cut evidence that the Maldivian government colludes with shipowners in cheating their own citizens through systematic double bookkeeping and that laws exist banning seafarers from joining trade unions or contacting the ITF (see **ITF News**, January/February 1993), ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander faxed the Maldivian Ministry of Transport on February 11:

"If the ITF is to be expected to continue to issue Blue Certificates to vessel owners employing Maldivian seamen it will be necessary that the

Maldivian government bring its laws and regulations into line with international law, specifically United Nations Conventions. In the absence of this commitment, it will clearly be difficult for the ITF to approve Agreements for ships employing Maldivian seafarers in the knowledge that agreements are being continually violated," wrote Selander.

A curt and dismissive reply arrived on February 15 from Ali Ahmed (Assistant Director, Ministry of Transport and Shipping, Maldives) simply stating:

"We note with regret that you have made certain groundless allegations against us in your letter of 11 February 1993. We do not believe you have any standing or right to make such allegations against a sovereign state. Neither do we need you to tell us

anything about international law. Indeed, it is even absurd to try and dictate your terms to us, backing them with your threatening actions."

The ITF Asia/Pacific Seafarers' Regional Committee, meeting two days later in Singapore (see story above) adopted a special resolution on the Maldives.

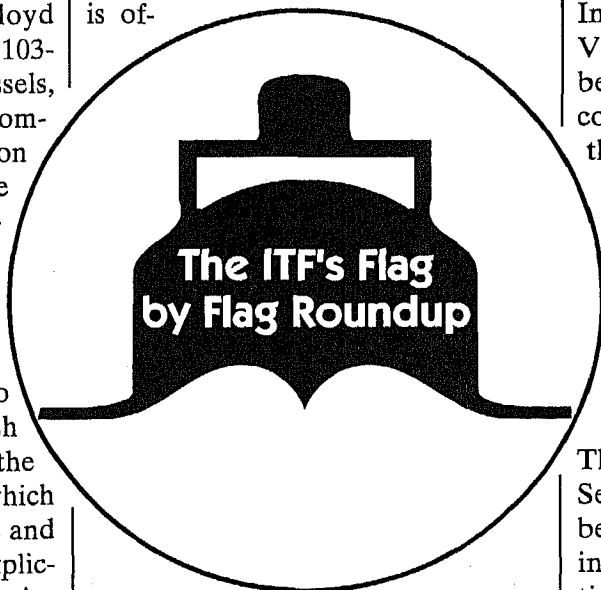
The APSRC demanded that the Maldivian government change its discriminatory laws and requested the ITF Secretariat to "vigorously pursue" the Maldivian government over this issue and to "decline to issue ITF Blue Certificates to any owner/operator who employs Maldivian crews for as long as the present unacceptable situation exists with regard to the recruitment and employment of Maldivian seafarers".

Lloyd Brasileiro to be sold to workers

Brazilian President Itamar Franco has said that the government now intends to sell state shipping line Lloyd Brasileiro to its employees. The 103-year-old company owns 17 vessels, but only seven are operational. Company debts stand at US\$400 million and assets at \$120 million. The government has said it will absorb "some" of the debt, and have yet to formally present their plans to the workers.

The **British** parliament is set to discuss the creation of a British Open Register (BOR) before the summer recess. The proposal, which has the backing of the insurance and maritime legal industry, would explicitly aim to attract overseas companies to the UK register. A report, being prepared by a consultant, would, according to what Baltic Exchange chairman Peter Tudball told *Lloyd's List*, not be an Foc "but rather a top quality

register with a first class name". Sounds familiar? So long as the BOR is of-



fering its "top quality" services to foreign owners, it will still be an Foc.

The **Gibraltar** flag of convenience is being revamped and may be priva-

tised. According to a report in *Lloyd's List* (denied by the Gibraltarians), International Registries Inc. of Reston Virginia (who already operate the Liberian and Marshall Islands Flags of convenience) are having talks with the Gibraltar authorities with a view to taking over the register. Why should Gibraltar be allowed to be considered a "Red Ensign" (i.e. UK related) register if it is owned and operated by a Virginian company?

The ITF-affiliated National Union of Seafarers of **India** (NUSI) has long been campaigning for maritime training facilities. Seeing that the authorities are doing nothing, the union has now finalised their own plan for a school at Nhava island, which will later be upgraded into a college. There is no such school in India, where children at the age of 13 are given formal education and maritime training. From this school, young people will then have access to admission in marine engineering training or work as trainees. There has been no recruitment of Indian seafarers since 1978 and the average age of Indian seafarers is 45-50.

Union deal gets Olau Lines to leave the Luxembourg flag

The German company Olau Lines announced transfer of its two cross-channel ferries back to the German International Register (GIS) at the beginning of February, after the company's desertion to the Luxembourg flag less than a month earlier.

Dutch dockers took action against the *Olau Hollandia* in Flushing on November 13th following the company's announcement to the German and British crew that they would be employed under inferior contracts under the Luxembourg flag (see *ITF News*, December 1992).

The German ITF-affiliated union ÖTV took the company to court to block the move, but the attempt was defeated when the authorities gave Olau Lines the go-ahead in mid-January.

The announcement that the two

vessels were switching again to the GIS register came after the unions agreed cost-cutting measures with the shipping company. In return, crew will have their current two-year contracts extended to four years.

The ÖTV has also reached an agreement with the German Shipowners' Association to negotiate an agreement for all German ferry operators.

Shipping group Hapag-Lloyd is now planning to transfer part of its considerable fleet to the Singapore register, making the ships Foc vessels.

Around 500 jobs are threatened under the group's restructuring plan.

Hapag-Lloyd has said that it wants employees' support before making the change, but seafarers' unions are unlikely to support the move — a measure which the company itself had previously discounted.

The **Vanuatu** Flag of convenience register has abruptly dumped its association with the colourful and flamboyant Cy Wentworth — the retired US insurance salesman who acted as a roving international ambassador and promoter of the register. Vanuatu, in ending their contract with Cy, have also given the big heave ho to his daughter Maryanne, and his son Clay. Cy's replacement is a Vanuatu company apparently controlled by interests close to Vanuatu Finance Minister Willie Jimmy. Despite having never agreed with Cy, the ITF will miss his bright and breezy communications — and if he ever needs a platform to tell the world what really happened inside the Vanuatu register, ITF News will be happy to oblige.

Canary Islands and Burma added to Foc list

The ITF has added Burma and the Spanish Second Register (Canary Islands) to its list of designated Flag of convenience (Foc) registers.

The decision was taken by the ITF Fair Practices Committee Sub-Committee (which has been delegated the Foc declaration authority by the Fair Practices Committee) at its meeting in London on 8-9 February.

Clear evidence that the military dictatorship in Burma are allowing non-nationals to freely register ships has convinced the ITF to make this declaration. The ITF has long known that Burmese seafarers are treated terribly by the Rangoon thugs who call themselves the "State Law and Order Restoration Council" — seafarers are

denied any trade union rights and are subject to imprisonment for getting in touch with the ITF.

Following the ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Committee's decision to launch a co-ordinated campaign of protest against the Burmese regime demanding the restoration of democracy (see separate story), and their endorsement of the activities of the underground Seafarers' Union of Burma — which happened the week after the Foc declaration, the ITF is now committed to the maximum possible pressure on the Burmese dictatorship.

The second Foc declaration is also highly significant. The Spanish Second Register (Canary Islands) is the first ever Second Register to be desig-

nated Foc by the ITF.

Under ITF policy, non-nationals' ships in a Second Register are treated as Foc, but domestically owned tonnage is left to the national seafarers' affiliates to negotiate acceptable agreements (which must, at least, be in line with ITF TCC rates). Should the affiliates be unhappy with this, they have the right to call upon the ITF to declare the register an Foc.

This is exactly what has happened. The Spanish unions, who have been ignored by owners and government, have asked for the Canary Islands to be an Foc. This now means that Spanish-owned Canary Islands vessels will be required to sign full ITF acceptable agreements.

ITF US Flag of convenience office now open

The ITF campaign against Flag of convenience shipping in the USA is now to be co-ordinated from a new office in Washington.

Under the direction of the US Campaign Co-ordinator John Sansone, who has previously worked out of Louisiana, the new office will provide administrative support to the growing network of US ITF Inspectors and will act as a focal point for lobbying and political work by the US maritime unions.

Situated within the headquarters of the US trade union national centre, the AFL-CIO, and within view of the White House, the new office will help to raise the profile of the Flag of Convenience campaign.

The opening of the office also conveniently coincides with a change to a new administration that is seen to be sympathetic to the maritime and labour sectors.

Maritime Reform legislation that died in the last Congress will almost certainly be passed by Congress and approved by President Clinton by the end of this year.

This message was delivered to the annual meeting of the AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department (MTD), held in February in Florida.

The meeting brought together ITF

US affiliates and Assistant General Secretary David Cockroft. Arrangements for the opening of the new office were agreed, along with an expansion of the ITF US Inspectorate.

"It was an excellent meeting," said Cockroft, "and we are all very confident that there is a bright future for the campaign against Foc shipping in the USA".

ISF meeting agrees on piracy

At a meeting on February fifth the ITF and International Shipping Federation (ISF — shipowners) focused attention on the problem of attacks by pirates and armed robbery against merchant ships. It expressed outrage at the report on the circumstances of the recent attack by pirates on the *Baltimar Zephyr*, resulting in the murder of the Master and Chief Officer (see *ITF News*, January/February 1993).

The meeting expressed particular concern at the subsequent treatment of the crew members during the vessel's detention in Indonesia. It noted that an International Maritime Organization Working Group will shortly visit South East Asia to study the problem of piracy and stressed the

importance of effective intergovernmental action.

Nevertheless the meeting urged the authorities of the coastal states to increase policing and patrolling activities to stamp out piracy in their waters and on the adjacent high seas. The two sides also agreed that regional co-ordination must be improved in terms of the provision of equipment including communication facilities and other means to combat piracy. Both sides reaffirmed that crews should not be armed and that masters should be encouraged to report all incidents.

The ITF and ISF agreed to arrange a workshop to consider the adoption of detailed onboard safety precautions and improved training of shipmasters and crews.

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Swedish court upholds rights to solidarity action

A Swedish court ruling has upheld the right of trade unions to take boycott action against vessels, and the Conservative government has threatened to revise the law. The Stockholm Labour Court, ruling on February 19, upheld the right of the unions to take action against the Kerguelen flag *Estoril* — which had been under boycott since January 15 in the port of Wallhamn. The *Estoril* is operated by United European Car Carriers, and jointly owned by Swedish and Japanese interests. Because of its foreign ownership, the French Second Register vessel is classed as an Foc by the ITF. Since the Japanese unions have given bargaining rights to the Swedes, ITF Policy also states the Swedish unions have initial rights to bargain any contract on the ship. But the ships' French officers had an agreement through the non-ITF CGT union, and the Portuguese ratings were covered by another non-ITF agreement. The Swedish unions carried out ITF Policy exactly by demanding a full ITF Agreement for the vessel. The owners chose to lose far more money than they would have had they signed an agreement. They further wasted their money by mounting a legal action against the boycott, which failed miserably. It would now appear, in fact, that the legal case was a set up, arranged by the Swedish shipowners and anti-union elements in the government, in order to justify a revision of Swedish Labour Law. The government have now announced they will review the law. Whether any such change would command a majority in the Swedish Parliament remains to be seen. The day after the Court ruling, the *Estoril* slipped out of port and sailed to Germany. The ship is, however, engaged in a regular Scandinavian trade.

Portuguese seafarers on the Portuguese owned, Cyprus flag *Marina C* received the assistance of ITF Inspector Harald Harvey in Cape Town, South Africa at the beginning of February. Crew contracts had expired, and most men hadn't received their wages in full. Harvey talked to the

owners, but they failed to respond in time and so the vessel was arrested at the beginning of February. The crew were paid, and those that wanted to return were repatriated back to Portugal.

Life on board the Canadian owned, Bahamas flag *Chemical Rubi* was hell for the Filipino crew. The ship's master was a bigot, who insulted and assaulted crew members and would instantly repatriate anyone who complained. At anchorage in Louisiana the Captain had an argument with two officers and decided to instantly repatriate them, with pay outstanding. One of the men met another man on shore — "After telling him what had happened he gave me a phone number of Mr. John Sansone, Inspector of the ITF and advised me to seek assistance. I gave him a call and luckily, I was able to explain the situation. I also informed him that I will be flying back to Manila the next day so I asked him if he will be able to settle such a controversy in a very short time..." Sansone arranged the man's pay before he left the next day (through the agent). "I am very thankful that in times like these, there are people and a union who are willing to assist seafarers, especially from a third world country such as mine to stand

up and fight for their rights...more power to Mr. John Sansone, more power to the ITF."

Danish ITF Inspector John Jacobsen visited the Polish crewed, Bahamas flag *Tyne Progress* on January 12 in Esbjerg. The crew were covered by a union agreement for Norwegian Second Register ships, which is not acceptable for Focships. Jacobsen asked the company to sign an ITF Agreement and pay back wages to the crew, and explained that if they did not, the vessel would be boycotted. The local dockers' union (SiD) shop steward accompanied Jacobsen in a meeting with the owners' representatives to confirm that this would happen. The company wisely agreed, and an ITF Agreement was signed for the vessel. The crew received US\$44,944 in backpay (the difference between wages received and ITF rates from the time they signed on in November 1992).

In last month's edition, we reported on the *Al Fath* action in Denmark. We incorrectly identified the owner as Faise Al-Araq — who is in fact the crooked manning agent from Joruss Trading Co. The owner is R.O.M Kassem. We apologise for the error.

ITF objects to Burma and Liberia

The ITF has formally objected to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) inclusion of Burma and Liberia as possible reserve members in a forthcoming meeting.

In a letter to Bjorn Klerck Nielsen, chief of the Maritime Industries Branch of the ILO, ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has expressed "strong reservations" about the inclusion of these states in the forthcoming ILO Tripartite Meeting on Maritime Labour Standards:

"The political and military situation in Liberia has resulted in the fragmentation of any administrative authority. The Liberian institutions and legislative framework have totally collapsed as a result of the civil war and we cannot see how they will be able to secure the necessary instructions to be able to properly participate in the meeting.

"Burma is rightly an international pariah state. The military leadership refused to recognise a democratically elected government and has instead detained for some three years to date the leader of the duly elected opposition. Furthermore, its human rights record is deplorable. It is our view that the inclusion of Burma gives spurious legality to a brutal and illegal regime.

"We hope that you will note our formal objections to the inclusion of these two 'regimes' and ensure that they are replaced by alternatives," wrote Lewis.



PEOPLE

When Australian dockers' leader **Tas Bull** retired last December he left behind him a union that is in good heart, having successfully weathered the major waterside reforms that have been the outstanding feature of his term of office.

Appropriately for a man, whose nearly forty years as a union activist have embraced both the seafarers' and waterside unions, he goes at a time when his union — the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia (WWF) — is about to join the Seamen's Union of Australia (SUA) in a merger that promises a new era of unity for workers in the Australian maritime industry.

Brought up in Tasmania during the depression years, Tas started work at age 14 sailing on overseas ships, and was witness to levels of poverty in many of the countries his ship visited that as an Australian he found deeply shocking.

"Those impressions, plus my parents' stories of the Depression, laid the foundation for everything I did later on," he says.

So when, after four years, he exchanged the overseas for the coastal trade, it was only natural that he should join the SUA and become quickly involved in its activities.

Significantly, his first industrial battles were fought on the waterfront, when as a seafarer he helped in local WWF strikes in the mid fifties, first in Port Pirie and then in Hobart.

When he finally came ashore in 1956 to work on the waterfront, Tas became a member of the WWF in Hobart and was soon making a name for himself among the membership.

By the early sixties, he had moved

from Hobart, first to Melbourne and then north to Sydney where he was an active rank and file member and took time out to study industrial law.

His abilities had long been recognised and so it came as no surprise when in 1967 he was elected as Sydney branch organiser and a few years later as branch president.

His position in the union was strengthened even further when in 1971 he joined the WWF's federal office in Sydney, this time as a federal organiser.

This is a job that in the WWF has traditionally provided the springboard for high union office and Tas was no exception.

When Norman Docker relinquished his position as Assistant General Secretary in 1983 to take the union's top job, Tas took his place. Less than a year later, when Docker decided to take early retirement, the process repeated itself and Tas became Acting General Secretary, until he was confirmed in the post at the WWF congress in July 1985. He has been re-elected by the membership either by massive majorities or unopposed ever since.

Tas has close links with the ITF that go back now over twenty years to the time in the early seventies when he was an ITF Inspector, visiting foreign ships putting in at Australian ports.

Since that time he has been the Australian dockers' permanent representative on the Fair Practices Committee, a position in which he has exerted a very substantial influence on ITF policy on Focs.

The ITF Madrid Congress of 1983 marked a further important milestone

in Tas' collaboration with the ITF at its highest levels. For it was at this Congress that he was first elected to the Executive Board and became Vice Chairman of the Dockers' Section — both posts that he still holds today.

Tas is succeeded as General Secretary by **John Coombs**.

ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis adds:

"I declare my interest. Tas has become a close personal friend over the years. But when every allowance is made for the bias I admit to (boast of actually), he has won a quite remarkable place in Australian labour history, managing with extraordinary dedication and finesse a fundamental transformation of the Australian waterfront industry and trade union movement. The Thatcherites among the employers and the political reactionaries hated him for it but even they would concede that they met their match. He would say that he could never have done it alone, but no-one thinks it could have happened without him.

"I am sure he drew great comfort and sustenance from his international commitments. However rough and tough Australian politics and industrial relations may be, they are played out in a rich country enjoying one of the highest standards of living in the world. The huge issues of human and civil rights, gross poverty, wicked exploitation are not fought out there. Tas knew where he stood on those and what the ITF ought to be doing about them. All those years wheeling and dealing in the daily union grind never really blunted the aims and visions that were formed in those early days at sea. The ITF owes him a lot."

GENERAL SECRETARY : HAROLD LEWIS

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