

INTRODUCTIONS

BY
WAR ON WANT
AND
THE ITF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**CONTENTS**

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KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT



I DREAM VS REALITY

For increasing numbers of Americans, Britons, Germans and others from the industrialised countries, cruises are a 'dream' way of taking a holiday. Just over 12 million of us did so in 2000. The image that we are sold is of fun, magic, romance, luxury, exotic ports of call from the relative safety of our floating hotel, and the comfort of knowing that our every need will be met by willing crew members.

Cruise ship employees too are often excited by the thought of working for such world-famous names as Disney or Carnival or Princess, in luxury conditions, with the chance to 'see the world' and earn money at the same time. For those from the developing world, work on board a cruise ship represents the dream of a better future, a way of providing for their desperately impoverished families at home.

"If you speak from your heart, you are gone, fired. You just have to keep saying 'yes'. Otherwise, keep your mouth shut. And it's no use thinking about a long-term career, only a few years if you're lucky. I just came off the telephone to my father; he said, 'Never mind how poor we are; just come home'. But I borrowed US\$800 to pay the agent for the job and I haven't saved enough yet to pay it back, and also they keep my passport."

Indian 'potato man' who peels vegetables for 11 hours a day on the Carnival 'Festival', interviewed by the author, early 2002.

"Without doubt, the 'hotel' employees on cruise ships, those in the galley, laundry, etc., suffer the highest levels of exploitation in the whole maritime industry."

Prof. Tony Lane, Director, Seafarers' International Research Centre, Cardiff University, UK.

"A ship owner can go any place in the world, pick up anybody he wants, on almost any terms. If the owner wants to maximize profit at the expense of people, it's a piece of cake... It's a sweatshop at sea."

Paul Chapman, a Baptist minister who founded the Center for Seafarers' Rights in New York, quoted in 'Los Angeles Times', 30 May 2000.

"Below decks on many cruise ships is a hidden world of long hours, low pay, insecurity and exploitation."

International Transport Workers' Federation

For many young, unattached croupiers, entertainers, beauticians and so on recruited from western countries to work on board, the dream can be near enough the reality. But what many other cruise ship employees all too often discover is, by contrast, a nightmare. Working conditions and pay on cruise ships can turn out to be as low, and management practices as abusive, as anything they can find in 'sweatshop' factories at home. That in itself is a deep shock.

But for some it can be even worse. Researchers have found seafaring families in India left more indebted, in greater poverty, than when they started. This is because many crewing agents in many developing countries illegally charge workers fees just to get the job. The money often has to be borrowed at high interest rates and, if anything goes wrong with the contract, the cruise ship worker and their family find themselves in a spiral of mounting debt.

WORKERS' RIGHTS ABUSES ON THE SEA

Cruise ships are possibly unlike any other workplaces in the world. Where else do you find many hundred, sometimes well over a thousand, workers from perhaps 60 different nationalities - all in a cramped, confined space, on 6-10 month non-stop contracts, and nowhere to escape to? It is thought that there are about 114,500 seafarers, both marine and hotel/catering staff, working onboard the world's cruise ships.

They are also deeply hierarchical and even segregated workplaces. Jobs are allocated downwards through the decks according to gender and nationality/skin colour. Developing world workers - particularly from Asia, the

Caribbean and Latin America as well as Central/Eastern Europe - are the ones doing the menial jobs in the restaurants, bars and cabins, and in the engine-room and galleys below. Virtually the only westerners below decks are in supervisory positions. Women, particularly from Central/Eastern Europe are increasingly being recruited for 'contact' jobs with the passengers, even more so to replace Asian men after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA.

Developing country workers generally face a greater degree of exploitation than those from the industrialised countries on board. Their contracts rarely state what job they have been recruited for, so that they can be moved around by the company at will. If they are allocated to a job below decks, they are not allowed up to the passenger decks, or face disciplinary action. Most seriously, the fees that many developing country workers are charged just to get the job reduce them to virtual bonded labour whilst on-board the ship.

All these workers are in service to a clientele on the top decks that is largely drawn from the white population of the industrialised countries. It is very reminiscent of colonial days. But perhaps more accurately it can be seen as a microcosm of today's global economy.

The cruise industry is one of the world's growth industries. But, like so many others and particularly over the past decade, companies have responded to fierce competition by attempting to squeeze ever greater value out of their workforces. As well as increasingly employing workers from the poor countries, cruise companies have casualised work contracts, and attempted to curb trade union organisation. Today, evidence from a great number of seafarers on board cruise ships, whether in the hotel/catering or deck/engine departments, is that they experience:



'JOYWAVE' - A "PIGSTY"

"I thought I'd seen it all, but I've never seen living conditions as bad as these. It was absolutely pathetic. 400 seafarers with no life in their eyes."

Jim Given of the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Office.

On the Cypriot-owned 'Joywave', which sailed in the Caribbean with passengers from Canada and Europe, there were only two showers and one working toilet for 100 men and women crew members, and one mess

room for 300 people. They had to sleep six to each tiny cabin containing only three bunks.

The ITF got the workers over US\$450,000 in back pay, reimbursement for their crewing agents' illegal fees, and their tickets home. The ITF had to lobby hard to get them repatriated through the US - and the airline got fined for it! **"The crew were treated like criminals"**, Jim remembers.

- insecure, short-term contracts.
- low wages and high costs, including illegal agents' fees to get the job.
- extremely long working hours and high work intensity, leading to fatigue.
- poor management practices, including bullying and favouritism, plus racial and gender discrimination.
- high labour turnover, fatigue and inadequate training, giving cause for concern about safety.
- employers who are hostile or resistant to trade union organisation and collective bargaining.

The extremely high rate of labour turnover reveals that cruise ship workers vote with their feet. More and more leave after just one contract. Those eight or ten months of non-stop sweated labour are enough to show them that cruise ship jobs are not a route out of poverty. The emotional and social costs to families of sending a member away for months or years are rarely offset by a higher or lasting income in real terms.

WHERE DOES THE LAW COME IN?

Ironically, on paper seafarers have even more explicit international protection than do workers in many other sectors of the global economy. As well as rights enshrined in international law such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, seafarers are specifically covered by International Labour Organisation and International Maritime Organisation conventions on minimum standards on board ships, including regulations on hours of work and crewing levels needed to maintain safety standards. Port authorities are given unprecedented powers to detain sub-standard vessels.

The problem, as in so many other areas of the world economy, is enforcement. The bodies issuing international regulations all too often seem powerless in the face of the companies they are supposed to regulate.

Many cruise ships are sailing under 'flags of convenience', that is to say they are registered in countries such as Panama, Bahamas and Liberia which are notorious for encouraging shipowners to their register by turning a blind eye to international maritime standards. The 'flags of convenience' system in the maritime industry since the Second World War can be seen as a forerunner of the 'runaway' sub-contracting practices of 'globalisation' taken up by manufacturing industries in more recent decades. The ITF has been campaigning for over fifty years against flags of convenience and the sub-standard shipping that the FOC system encourages.

TRADE UNION ORGANISATION ON BOARD

The right to form trade unions, free of interference from employers, is a fundamental right of workers. It is through their organisations that workers can legitimately negotiate and bring pressure on employers to raise their wages and working conditions. Trade union rights are inextricably linked to reducing poverty for workers and their communities.

Seafarers' trade unions find that cruise ships pose many problems for unionisation. Companies employ many different nationalities apparently in a deliberate attempt to prevent solidarity between workers building up. The threat of instant dismissal hangs over most seafarers on board who try to organise together with their fellow workers to take up workplace issues.

Many cruise ship workers are covered by agreements negotiated between maritime trade unions and employers. The ITF has a large force of ships' inspectors from affiliated unions in ports around the world whose job it is to help seafarers to reach and implement such agreements. But it is difficult for unions to ensure that the agreements are respected, especially when vessels are sailing in distant waters. Plus, the ITF also finds that some cruise ship companies are hostile to any union intervention and prevent access by ITF inspectors. On these vessels the abuse of workers' rights, and even fundamental human rights, is widespread.

With mounting complaints from cruise ship workers abandoned in ports far from home, summarily dismissed, or injured and sent home without compensation, the ITF launched a Cruise Ship Campaign. It has a special office in Port Canaveral, Florida, the port from which two of the most anti-union cruise ship companies, Carnival and Disney sail.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In a globalised world, we relate to workers from the developing world in increasingly complex ways. We buy the goods and services that their cheap labour provides, and this means we can use our position to offer solidarity to the most disadvantaged workers in the world. Solidarity is about using whatever power is open to us to help put people before profits.

At the end of this booklet are ideas for action which War on Want and the ITF recommend to support the rights of cruise ship seafarers.

Among the most important are:

- Join War on Want's 'Sweatships' campaign in the UK. For more information, contact Nick Dearden at War on Want, details on the back cover and from the War on Want website at www.globalworkplace.org.
- Keep yourself informed about developments in the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign and how cruise companies are responding, on www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/cruise_ships/index.htm

2 THE GROWTH OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

Tourism on cruise ships is one of the world's growth industries. Large-scale passenger shipping was once thought to be dying out because of the development of faster air travel. But the cruise industry took off in the 1970s when operators began to offer affordable fly-cruise packages to a younger clientele and not just the rich and elderly. They also became astute at 'niche marketing', offering different packages such as theme cruises (for example, 'chocolate' or 'country music'), speciality cruises (for 'honeymooners', for example), adventure cruises, and even 'cruises to nowhere'.

Throughout the 1990s, the number of passenger grew steadily, by about 10% a year. By the end of the decade, the big cruise lines were consistently enjoying occupancy rates of 100 per cent, and keeping the per person cost lower than many onshore hotels or resorts can. In fact, within tourism (which is one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy), cruise shipping is one of the two fastest growing sectors. Within the maritime industry too, cruise shipping has been outstripping the growth of any other sector since the mid-1980s.

'OCEAN GLORY I'

237 crew members from 24 countries got stuck in the British port of Dover in mid-2001 when the 'Ocean Glory I' was detained by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. On the initial inspection alone, the 51 year old vessel had 35 safety defects, despite its Panamanian certificate. One of the Lithuanian cabin stewardesses (pictured) said, "I didn't feel safe on this ship. I know what are proper fire drills but on this one, well I couldn't describe it."

The whole journey from Greece to Dover was a nightmare for the crew. The vessel stalled mid-Mediterranean, living conditions were filthy, the Greek officers abusive, and the passengers, most of them British, angry and frightened.

The vessel had to be sold off to compensate the tour operators. The ITF made sure the crew did not lose out, winning them US\$865,000 in back wages, compensation and severance pay through the British High Court.

CHERIE'S STORY

Nineteen-year old Cherie Scrivener from Australia worked as a beauty therapist on the giant cruise ship Carnival 'Triumph' sailing out of Miami. But after only three weeks, Cherie's job suddenly ended when a door closed on her foot and severed her achilles tendon.

Still bleeding, Cherie was bundled off the ship with just a change of clothes, US\$300 and a scrap of paper with the name of a hospital and the telephone number of someone called Stephanie. Cherie found herself alone in a Miami hotel.

Luckily her godfather back home contacted the Maritime Union of Australia. They called the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign office in Florida, which quickly swung into action with support and a lawyer. The operation on her foot was a success.

Now back in Australia with compensation payments, Cherie remembers it as a bad dream. "It was like I was a machine. Once you're broken they discard you and get someone else". Her godfather adds, "The unions were her saviour. The ITF really came to her rescue".

By the turn of the millennium, there were about 47 cruise lines operating around the world, with nearly 200 vessels of 4500 GT and above.

DEVELOPMENT OF CRUISE SHIPPING, 1980-2001

	1980	1998	2001	Growth 1980-2001 %
Number of ships	147	225	372	153
Total Gross Tonnage (GT)	2,045,000	6,307,000	8,939,000	337
Passengers	1,500,000	7,500,000	12,000,000	700

Sources: ILO, JMC/29/2001/3, and Lloyds Register World Fleet Statistics

WHO CRUISES AND WHERE?

Cruise passengers are almost entirely from the industrialised countries. They are usually middle-class and white.

Different cruise lines like to attract different age-groups. So Carnival with its 'Fun Ships', and Disney with its 'magic', seek out their market from younger couples and families with children. Meanwhile other lines such as Cunard and Holland America target largely middle-aged and retired people.

CRUISE PASSENGERS BY NATIONALITY

	1992	2000
North American	82%	61%
European	14%	22%
Other	4%	18%

Sources: Tourism Concern and MDS Transmodal data in ITF FOC Campaign Report 2000



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Of all North Americans who take a holiday, about 2% do so on a cruise. In Europe it is less than 1%, or about 2 million Europeans a year. For the cruise companies, Europe holds great potential. The number of European passengers has been growing at roughly 15% a year since the mid-1990s, faster than in North America. What is more, Europeans tend to take longer cruises.

Meanwhile, new markets are also being opened up in Asia, where the passengers are mostly from Australia and Japan. China is being eyed for passengers, destinations, and the supply of seafarers.

WHERE THE CRUISE PASSENGERS SAIL, 2000

America and Caribbean	58%
Europe	21%
Asia	17%
Other	4%

Source: MDS Transmodal data in ITF FOC Campaign Report 2000

TOP TEN CRUISE PORTS, 1999

Port	Number of passengers (out, return + transit) (million)
Miami, US	2.84
San Juan, Puerto Rico	1.68
Port Canaveral, US	1.35
St. Thomas, Virgin Is.	1.33
Cozumel, Mexico	1.20
Port Everglades, US	1.07
Nassau, Bahamas	1.00
Grand Cayman	0.97
Los Angeles, US	0.93
Singapore	0.90

Source: GP Wild (International), quoted in ITF, 'Transport International', No.1, 2000

THE 'BIG FOUR'

Company	Number of Ships	Number of Berths	Number of passengers per year
Carnival	45	60,000	2,400,000
Royal Caribbean	26	32,900	1,700,000
P&O Princess	18	29,450	900,000
Star Cruises	19	24,000	600,000

Sources: GP Wild International, 1999, Travel Weekly's Official Cruise Guide 2001, and company web-sites. Approximate figures only, as years vary.

Just four giant companies dominate the industry: Carnival, Royal Caribbean, P&O Princess, and Star Cruises. They account for over half the total number of large cruise vessels.

Carnival Corporation: based in Miami, USA, but incorporated in Panama, is the world's largest cruise company. Carnival was set up by Ted Arison, father of the current corporate Chair Micky Arison, and the family still owns 47% of the shares. Not only does the corporation own the **Carnival** brand but also five other cruise brands: **Holland America**, **Cunard**, **Seabourn**, **Costa** (a failing line that it bought to get a toehold in the European market), and **Windstar** (which operates luxury sailing yachts). In all, it has 45 ships, and about a 37% share of the crucial North American cruise market. Carnival also owns **Holland America Tours** through which it operates hotels, coaches and rail cars largely in Alaska. Altogether, the Carnival Corporation has annual revenues of over US\$3 billion, from which it makes a profit of around US\$1 billion a year. It has total assets of nearly US\$10 billion, and projects that annual revenues

will rise to over US\$8 billion by 2005. Its annual advertising bill is US\$180 million, and it is spending US\$7 billion on new vessels over the next five years.

Royal Caribbean: based in Oslo, Norway, was founded in 1969 by three Norwegian shipping companies. Today it includes **Celebrity Cruises** which it acquired in 1997, **Royal Celebrity Tours** which does land tours in Alaska, and a 20% stake in the British-based **First Choice** leisure travel company. A large portion of the parent company is owned by the Ofer and Pritzker families (Pritzker are also owners of the **Hyatt** hotel chain) and by the shipping and finance group Anders Wilhemsen. Revenue in 2001 was US\$3.1 billion, up from US\$2.9 billion in 2000.

P&O Princess: based in London, has 18 ships with 29,450 berths sailing largely in Alaska, Europe, and the Caribbean under the **Princess**, **P&O**, **Swan Hellenic**, **Aida**, **Seetours** and **A'rosa** brands. Revenue in 2000 was over US\$2 billion.



Disney, the world famous US entertainment and media corporation, has two cruise ships, the 'Disney Magic' and the 'Disney Wonder' which started service in 1998 and 1999 respectively. Each carries up to 2400 passengers from Port Canaveral, Florida, on 3- or 4-day cruises to the Bahamas/Caribbean, often after spending several days at Walt Disney World in nearby Orlando. Disney board members include the Hollywood actor Sydney Poitier. The Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Michael Eisner gets a salary of US\$1 million a year plus bonuses and owns over 13 million Disney shares.

Star Cruises: based in Pulau Indah, Malaysia, its brands include Star (9 ships in Asia/Pacific), **Norwegian Cruise Line** (8 ships in Caribbean, Alaska and Europe) and **Orient Lines** (2 ships in Europe). It is owned by Genting Berhad, a Malaysian corporation also involved in hotels, restaurants and leisure resorts, power, oil and gas, plantations, paper, property and e-commerce.

The many smaller cruise companies, such as **Crystal** (a subsidiary of the world's largest shipping company, Japanese NYK), **Radisson Seven Seas**, **Hapag Lloyd** and **Silversea**, each tend to occupy a particular niche in the market.

INDUSTRY SHAKE-OUT

The 1990s boom in the cruise industry led to more companies joining the industry and more, bigger ships being built. By the turn of the millennium there were too many berths compared to the demand from the tourists. Also, the cruise lines were facing higher fuel prices. Competition led to severe price cutting, which brought down ticket yields, especially in non-peak periods and for cruises at the lower to mid-range of quality. The stock markets around the world saw the price of cruise industry shares fall. The well-known Premier line went bankrupt and other, smaller operators were vulnerable. A shake-out was imminent.

Then came the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11 September 2001. Bookings dropped by 40%. Several cruise lines which were already struggling went under. The first was Renaissance, already at risk as a result of a poor marketing strategy. It was followed by American Classic Voyages, the largest US-flag company.

However, by the end of 2001, bookings were back to within 15-20% of expectations and, though a price war is on, the major companies still thrive. The shake-out of their weaker competitors is welcome, allowing them to consolidate their position.

The most significant development is that Royal Caribbean and P&O Princess are engaged in merger discussions. The two companies combined would turn them into the largest cruise company, out-ranking Carnival. This would reduce the industry to a duopoly controlling 70-75 per cent of the world cruise market. In response, Carnival has issued hostile bids to take over P&O Princess. At the time of writing, the merger is being considered by the British Monopolies Commission and the US Federal Trade Commission.

MORE, BIGGER SHIPS

The size of the largest companies is growing, and so are the number and size of the ships. The world order book for new ships has never been fuller, with 41 ships on order at the end of 2001, for a total cost of US\$14.7 billion. These will bring almost 80,000 more berths into the market over the next few years.

Vessels with over 1000 beds now make up a third of the fleet. The larger and newer ships offer lower running costs per passenger, with a passenger:crew ratio of 3:1 compared to the traditional 2:1.

ON THE ORDER BOOKS 2002-2005

Cruise Line	Number of ships on order	Number of berths on each vessel
Carnival	6	2100-3000
P&O Princess	6	1950-2600
Royal Caribbean	5	2000-3840
Holland America	5	1848
Costa	3	2100-2720
Cunard	1	2620
Celebrity	1	1900
Festival	1	1566
Royal Olympic	1	836
Radisson Seven Seas	1	700
Total	41	79658

Sources: Seatrade Cruise Review, December 2001

Royal Caribbean is going for the biggest ships. Its 'Adventure of the Seas', which started sailing in late 2001, can carry a total of 5020 passengers and crew. It has an ice-rink and a rock-climbing wall on board. The largest and most expensive cruise ship ever will be the company's 'Navigator of the Seas'. It will weigh a massive 140,000 gross tons (GT) and have 3840 passenger berths, for a cost of US\$520 million. The vessel is due to have its maiden voyage in early 2003.

Carnival took delivery of the 'Carnival Pride' in December 2001. It is currently sailing on 7-day cruises out of Port Canaveral, US, with berths for 2124 passengers. The ship boasts 16 themed bars and "lounges with dramatic interiors celebrating icons of beauty that exist in art, architecture, sculpture and decor". It also has a 13,700 square foot health spa, four swimming pools, an Internet cafe, wedding chapel, and conference centre.

The 'Carnival Legend' will come on-stream for the line's first European sailings in August 2002. It will be followed by four more vessels for Carnival in 2002-4, plus new vessels for Carnival's subsidiaries Holland America, Costa and Cunard. In total, the investment by Carnival Corporation is worth US\$7 billion. Interestingly, Carnival is funding this substantially from cash rather than debt, taking advantage of its annual profits of around US\$1 billion a year.

The number and size of new ships on order suggest a continuing problem of over-capacity and price wars to attract clientele. The industry is also facing higher insurance costs post 11 September 2001. The scene is set, then, for an even greater squeeze on cruise ship seafarers.

BRANCHING OUT

At the same time, the largest cruise companies are expanding into related services and products. In particular, the largest cruise lines are investing to take greater control of onshore facilities in ports, resorts and 'tourism villages'.

Star, for example, has fostered the development of port facilities in Asia, including its own Port Kelang terminal on the west coast of Malaysia. Carnival owns and operates port facilities at Puerta Maya on Mexico's Cozumel Island and has recently entered into partnership with a Mexican entrepreneur to build a 'cruise port village' south of Cancun, Mexico, that will receive four ships at a time. It is also developing homeport facilities in Long Beach, California. A number of cruise companies also own Caribbean islands and resort areas (see Section 4).

2



• FOOD & BEVERAGE SUPERVISOR
 • CASHIERS (FEMALE)
 • COOKS
 • PANTRY MAN
 • FOOD HANDLERS
 • KITCHEN SUPERVISORS
 (FEMALE NUTRITIONIST)
 • WAITERS / BAR ATTENDANT
QUALIFICATIONS:
 GOOD LOOKING PERSONALITY
 CAN COMMUNICATE WELL

3 CONDITIONS OF LIFE AND WORK ON BOARD

Carnival, the company that runs 'Fun Ships©', advertises 'Fun Jobs' on its web-site. Disney takes its new recruits to Disney World in Florida for training and reportedly tells them they are 'members of the cast', thereby extending the Hollywood fantasy even to its employees.

There is no doubt that, though the work is hard, working on a cruise ship is an opportunity to earn money, visit distant countries and mix with people from different nationalities. But talking among cruise workers, the disappointment is palpable. Within just a few weeks of starting work on board, the reality sets in.

“Good day, Mr. Given. I am from Trinidad & Tobago... I was once very enthusiastic about the food/pastry industry. [Working in the cruise industry] has surely taken away that enthusiasm. The video and promises are all lies. Then again, you already know that. I signed up for the position of bell-attendant. That’s the other thing: in the Caribbean we are not offered the luxury of better positions. At the interview, the officer sees me fit to be a pastry chef trainee because of my extensive background in the food industry. Did I mention that I’m qualified? Nevertheless, it makes no difference once you are at sea...”

All the hype about sexual harassment ‘Does Not Exist’. You are damned if you do, and damned if you don’t. I should know. I complained about a chef’s advances. A Scottish pig. I was transferred to the vegetable station. I had to report for breakfast duty at 7am, pick up my regular duty at 9am and finish at 2pm, come back at 4 pm and finish by 11pm. They never paid me for the breakfast shift. I was told ‘trainees’ are not paid for that duty. My extra duty also included the Crew Galley buffet which would start at 11pm and finish around 2 am, again worked for free...

Mr. Given, I cried daily. I prayed constantly. When I was fired it came as a blessing. In retrospect I now truly believe that I was fired because they were afraid of what I could probably say. There was nothing to learn but how humanity and morality was lost on that ship.”

Extracts from an email sent to the ITF. Jim Given, Director of the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Office, says, “I get three or four emails like this a day from workers who have left the industry but want an outlet for their feelings”.

“Disney, it’s like a book. It has a beautiful cover with colourful pictures, but when you look inside it is just dirt. In their training they say it is ‘one big family, you must give 100 per cent’. You are excited. Everyone at home knows Disney and is impressed. Who doesn’t know Disney? But when you get on board, it’s completely different. They don’t give you 100 per cent. There’s no chance to progress out of the galley. At least, not on merit.”

Trinidadian galley assistant, Disney ‘Wonder’, interviewed by the author, early 2002.

Whether low-paid workers from the galley or cabins or staff, for example in the Purser’s Office, many express anger at the exhausting hours, pay which is not what they expected, and unfair labour practices. Only a very few, such as the casino dealers, tend to say that the conditions are reasonable and match their expectations. For the marine crew in the engine room, working on board a cruise ship is very much like any other - the conditions are equally arduous.

Or they are the entertainers and musicians. Steiner Transocean from the UK operates spas and beauty salons on about 100 vessels worldwide.

A different way of looking at those working on board is to consider their reasons for taking these jobs. The vast majority from the industrialised countries are young, single, and often in some way still supported by their parents. Their aim is to work on cruises for just a few years, to ‘see the world’, and make some money at the same time. It is an interlude to gain experience.

For those from the poorer countries of Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and more recently Eastern Europe, the motivation is different. They are usually people with dependants, those who have to support children or elderly parents. They are mostly well educated but driven to find work abroad because of the desperate economic situation at home.

There are numerous stories of a cabin steward turning out to be, say, an out-of-work professor of philosophy or forensic scientist from Eastern Europe. “There are six Peruvian women like me on my ship. None of us would be here if we could find good jobs at home”, one told me. She had had five years’ education in the USA and was now working as a waitress on the Carnival ‘Fantasy’. Their driving aim is to send money home, but the hard labour aboard means that many of them too do not see themselves as working in the industry for more than a few contracts.

One sees very starkly the difference when the ship is berthed in port and the crew members come ashore for a few hours. All of them want to telephone or email home. The higher paid take the company bus to the crew service Internet cafés in the shopping mall. The low-paid head for the seafarers’ mission run by a local church, where volunteers provide them with free Internet computers, the chance to ring and send money home, along with a free meal and a game of table tennis.

WHO WORKS ON CRUISE SHIPS?

Of the 114,500 who work on cruise ships around the world, about 70 per cent are hotel/catering staff. They include the cabin stewards, bar tenders, waiters and waitresses, laundry staff and cleaners, chefs and kitchen crew, as well as receptionists and clerical staff, and so on. Then there are the sound and light technicians, social hosts and play-organisers for kids, etc. All these are usually directly employed by the cruise lines, on fixed-term contracts, generally 6-8 or sometimes 10 months at a time.

Another twenty per cent comprise the officers and crew who work in the deck and engine department. They include the greasers, fitters and mechanics, motormen and plumbers, deck cleaners and other non-officer ratings. The majority are experienced seafarers whose long-term working life is in the maritime industry, even if their repeat contracts are similarly short. A greaser I spoke to had been working for Carnival for 15 years, but only on 6-month contracts.

There are other crew members who are not the direct employees of the cruise line but come from ‘concessions’ or independent contractors. Mostly, those in this category work in the on-board shops, gyms, spas, and beauty



A SEGREGATED LABOUR FORCE

There is something very old-fashioned, colonial even, about the way that cruise ships are organised. Or perhaps it is simply a microcosm of the world economy today.

You can pretty much determine who works where on board a cruise ship, and what wages they get, by their gender and nationality/skin-colour. And your job determines where on the vessel you are and are not allowed. It is a deeply stratified and hierarchical world, where the different layers are kept apart.

The by-and-large white passengers from the industrialised countries, along with the Master and his senior officers, enjoy the luxury of the upper decks, with service staff to fetch and carry on a 24-hour basis.

The higher status employees, largely from industrialised countries, have cabins - often above the water-line - in which only two share. They eat at their own waitress-served restaurants, have their sheets changed every day, and may have access to some passengers' facilities such as the on-board Internet cafe.

Meanwhile, below decks, in the galleys preparing food, for example, the majority are from developing countries and Eastern Europe. These crew members are not allowed up beyond a certain level into the passenger areas, or face disciplinary action. They sleep in cramped, noisy cabins. Their food is often leftovers, taken in a crew canteen. There is usually a small area allocated on a lower deck where they can take some sea air but, with the long working hours, there is little time. In effect, they rarely come up above the water line when at sea. Those from industrialised countries, by contrast, rarely work below decks unless they are skilled maritime crew or supervisors such as the head chef.

The patterns of recruitment are, of course, not haphazard. Close examination of a Carnival crew manifest from 2000 reveals the patterns in detail. On that vessel there was a total workforce (including officers) of 936 from 64 countries. The largest supply nation was the Philippines (16%), in both the hotel/catering and the deck/engine departments. Then came India and Indonesia, both largely in hotel/catering, followed by Britain, Peru, Romania, US, Honduras, Nicaragua and Jamaica. Here are some examples of who works where:

- **In the engine room:** 39 men, mostly from Peru, Uruguay, Philippines and Romania, with a smattering each from Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, and Nicaragua.
- **Bar staff:** 21 men and 25 women from Asia and Eastern Europe, plus 8 men from Caribbean and Central America. The largest group was the women from Eastern Europe but there were no women from the Caribbean and Central America.
- **Hotel stewards:** 54 men from Asia, Central America, Caribbean, plus two women, one each from Trinidad and Colombia.
- **Cabin stewards:** 46 men from Asia, Central America, Caribbean, plus Croatia.
- **Galley stewards:** 50 men from Asia, Central America, Caribbean, plus Peru.
- **Laundry:** 12 men, all from China.

Meanwhile, from the industrialised countries:

- **Italy:** Master, marine officers and engineers.
- **USA:** Hotel manager, cruise director, casino supervisor, ship's doctor and nurse, entertainers/musicians, social hosts, light/sound and IT specialists.
- **Britain:** Corporate trainers, Food & Beverage Manager, Maitre d', Salon Manager, Backstage Manager, casino supervisor and staff, dancers, kids' play organisers, beauticians/hair-dressers, retail sales and art auctioneer, video technicians, plus one sous chef and one bar tender.

On this ship, only in the laundry was there a single nationality (Chinese), and this is apparently common. However, in all other low status positions, the crew was made up of one or two from this country, three or four from that, and so on. Again, this is common. The ITF believes that it is a form of 'divide-and-rule', the companies hoping that multinational crews are less likely to develop trust, solidarity and collective action amongst themselves.

"It is very much like fifty years ago when I started working on board ships. There's a very old-fashioned mentality in ship's management. It's authoritarian and they treat the seafarers with little dignity. They employ different nationalities deliberately. As soon as some workers get together and start asking questions, they replace them with workers from elsewhere." Birger Pedersen, Assistant Section Secretary, Special Seafarers' Department, ITF.

"But then, if you had too many of any one nationality, you might have a problem with unions. A few years ago, all the Italian waiters walked off a ship in St. Thomas. The ship didn't sail for a while." Russell F. Nansen, former training officer with Royal Caribbean, in an article in a Tourism Concern information pack.

Among those from the developing world, only the most experienced and/or 'presentable' get the jobs which involve direct contact with the passengers. *"It is mainly because these positions are in the key contact areas where our guests pay attention to our staff's appearance"*, one company representative told Dr. Minghua Zhao of the Seafarers' International Research Centre (SIRC) at Cardiff University. In fact, there seems to be a shift occurring from employing Asians to Eastern Europeans - particularly women - in these 'contact' jobs. Some crew members interviewed said that people with white skin are being more favoured for contact jobs since the terrorist attack in the USA on 11 September 2001.

Discrimination also occurs in the way that crew members are treated. A significant number of Asian women cruise employees in a recent SIRC survey said that they "must smell fresh". One doubts very much that Europeans would have been told this. In Port Canaveral, the cruise companies put pressure on port authorities not to let crew members walk about in the port area because they would somehow interfere with the image being projected for the arriving passengers.

In front of the passengers, the rule is to speak English. However, crew members from two nationalities (Peru, Lithuania) on different vessels told me that they had been discouraged from speaking together in their own language when away from passengers, or even during their time off on board. Supervisors apparently feel threatened. Preventing people from speaking in their own tongue is an age-old tactic for keeping those in

lower positions from exchanging views in private and forming compacts. Meanwhile those in higher positions on cruise ships use their own languages at will, even during working hours.

Dr. Zhao reported to the ILO in 1999, *"Racial discrimination is strongly felt by most of the seafarers from developing countries interviewed... It is something the seafarers feel daily as part of their work and life on the vessels. They feel that the officers and managers treat them with a strong superior attitude, 'as if we were idiots', as some women said."* Her view is backed up by Ross Klein in his book and my own interviews.

WOMEN ON BOARD

Women's employment on cruise ships grew steadily through the 1990s, and today women make up about 20 per cent of the cruise ship labour force, equivalent to 23,000 women. On each vessel the proportion of women varies from 5-25%. They are highly visible, though, because they tend to be taken on for jobs which involve contact with the passengers.

Cruise lines use the image of women crew to sell their 'dream' holidays. They lure men passengers with unspoken promises of beautiful women. They make women passengers feel at ease with pretty, smiling faces. Many women working on a cruise ship are encouraged to 'be nice to' the passengers, especially the men. Meanwhile, men working in lower positions on board are often banned outright from talking with passengers beyond the minimum necessary to do their job.

A fully-qualified teacher working as a waitress at the Captain's table told the ITF how she was denied reassignment to childcare because the Captain "liked her looks". Generally, women working on cruise vessels are aged below 35 years, unlike the men who can still be working the industry in their 50s. Women from Eastern Europe tend to be younger and single, and it is they who are increasingly being recruited into 'contact' jobs.

"The operation of the cruise ship is segregated by gender", says Dr. Zhao of SIRC. She has been undertaking a three-year study for the International Labour Organisation on women working on cruise vessels. A woman Captain is extremely rare, as are women in the deck and engine departments. Some companies (e.g. P&O) are reported to have policies to increase the proportion of women marine officers, but not ratings. For the rest, *"Women concentrate in hotel, catering and other 'non-technical' sectors of the vessel"*. Here, there are quite a few women managers, but the vast majority are waitresses, stewardesses, utility crew, etc.

Sexual harassment on board is not aimed only at women. But, as another SIRC researcher, Phil Belcher, explains, *“The terrain is male-dominated, and there are plenty of women working in the same confined space as the men.”*

A Lithuanian woman who worked in Reception on the ‘Ocean Glory I’ told me how the Purser’s cabin was a room off his office. The door between was tellingly left open during their work-related meetings, as he put pressure on her to sleep with him or he “couldn’t guarantee what might happen”. Her colleague, a cabin stewardess, added angrily, *“I told them, I came here to get money for my family, not to create a new one”*.

A number of the larger cruise companies have sexual harassment policies, and some include it in induction training. However, many crew members do not know when a policy exists or are confused about what it means. Many are reluctant to report sexual harassment, for fear of losing their jobs, a very real possibility.

As for pregnancy and maternity rights, many crewing agencies require pregnancy testing prior to accepting a woman to work on board. Or women crew members have to sign a letter that they are not pregnant, with the implication that they will be sent home if they are found to be so. It is indeed some companies’ policy to terminate the contract and compulsorily send a pregnant woman home. There are other stories of being sent home as soon as the ‘bump’ is showing, presumably because it gives the wrong ‘image’. Few cruise companies provide confidential medical care for their women crew members about pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. There are likely to be no maternity benefits either.

Dr. Zhao says that her research has uncovered a range of attitudes among employers but essentially they represent just different versions of very traditional ideas about the role of men and women.

MONEY, SEX AND POWER

It must be no small task to manage a workplace of such complexity. However, rather than following clear procedures and encouraging productivity through respect, there appears to be systematic abuse of employees. Obviously, this varies from company to company, and ship to ship. But in interviews, over and over again, those working on cruise ships report authoritarian and even aggressive behaviour by managers and supervisors, and rampant favouritism.

Discipline may entail on-the-spot fines or being moved to heavy work or to stations where tips are poor. Or the punishment can be instant dismissal and repatriation

home. “Who can you appeal to?”, I asked one Carnival crew member. *“No-one”,* she replied, *“They just send you home. You have no chance to go to the company office. They just put you on to the plane. It depends on your supervisor. If they are nice they will take it up but you cannot depend on them”*. The ITF even has cases of crew members taken off ship in handcuffs by private security personnel and held incommunicado in a hotel before being flown home.

Another Carnival crew member told me of his friend, a Filipino chef, who suddenly disappeared off the ship. *“I spoke to him the evening before and everything seemed OK but he had gone by the next morning. Nobody knows where or why, and nobody seems to care.”* The experience had left him shaken and scared. For a Filipino, summary dismissal may result in being ‘blacklisted’ and never getting work on board a seagoing vessel again.

In this kind of situation where the organisation runs on individual power, there are two key ways for crew members to buy themselves a better deal: money and sex. Stories are rife of money passing hands to keep a supervisor sweet. In fact, the highest earner on board is said to be often not the Captain but the Maitre d’ who enjoys a portion of the tips given to the numerous staff under his command.

Some men in positions of authority also use their power to gain sexual favours. The industry is riddled with incidents of sexual harassment and assault, against men as well as women. A law suit in 1999 forced Carnival Cruises to reveal that there had been nearly 100 accusations of rape and sexual assault against crew members between 1993 and 1998, all swept under the carpet.

Abuse of authority and turning a blind eye can lead to a situation where a highly sexualised environment is tolerated on board, involving crew members at all levels. One young Peruvian woman from the Carnival ‘Fantasy’ told me that this was for her the most difficult aspect of life on board.

All in all, one can imagine that many crew members might want to break contract and abscond. Many companies prevent this by taking an indemnity out of wages (see later). Not only do they not want to lose employees mid-contract but in the USA, for example, the company is fined for any crew member who jumps ship without the necessary documents. It is also the practice throughout the shipping industry for the ship’s administration to hold the passports of all those working on board. So, there is no way a cruise ship crew member can go home without permission from his or her employer. They are there for the duration.

This raises some serious questions. Is the charging of illicit fees by crewing agents keeping those workers captive, akin to ‘bonded labour’? What responsibility do the cruise lines bear if they employ crew members recruited through such agencies? There is evidence that some cruise lines use agents working exclusively for

them, suggesting that the cruise companies have the power to root out bad practices. Royal Caribbean is one that has announced it will not use the services of crewing agents who charge workers fees. Meanwhile others are still benefiting by turning a blind eye.

LONG HOURS, LITTLE PAY

Carnival Cruise Lines: Typical Wages and Hours, end 2001

Position	Monthly wage US\$	Opportunity to earn tips	Hours per day
2nd Electrician	1200		8
Laundry	1000		10-12
Security Guard	900		10-12
Quarter Master	884		10-12
Cook	700		10-12
Pantryman	700		10-12
Buffetman Jr.	500		10-12
Hotel Steward	480	✓	10-12
Galley Steward	400		10
Bar Tender	365	✓	10
Bar Waiter	50	✓	12-14

Source: ITF Cruise Ship Campaign

The hours worked by most of those who work on cruise ships are very long, and the pace of work intense. Fatigue is rife.

An ITF survey of nearly 400 cruise ship employees showed that over 95 per cent are working seven days a week. The only time off is when the vessel is in port for turnaround or, for favoured crew members, if they are allowed ashore during the passengers’ sight-seeing trips. It used to be common for ships to spend the night in port during turnaround. But in the highly competitive market of the 1990s, this time was compressed. These days, the next set of passengers embarks within hours of the last leaving. This gives the crew members only a few hours onshore to call home, shop and rest, before the next cruise starts. Recreation such as sport seems pretty much out of the question.

Each working day, over a third of cruise workers do 10-12 hours, and just under a third work as long as 12-14 hours, according to ITF data. On vessels where

there is a union agreement, overtime is recognised and should be paid. But where there is no union agreement, for example on Carnival and Disney, such long hours are considered “regular working hours” and there is not even a system of recording the overtime worked.

The work is often physically strenuous. Cabin stewards and stewardesses must carry up to a dozen plates at a time, up several flights of stairs and along corridors from the galleys to the cabins, all the while compensating for the motion of the sea, and under such pressure that they break into a jog. There is a high incidence of back injuries.

The pace of work is intensifying as the companies squeeze more out of their workforce. The ratio of passengers per waiter has increased from the traditional 12 to 18-20 or even 24, an increase of 50-100% in work intensity. Women who joined the industry in the mid-1980s and were still there by the late 1990s told SIRC, *“The hours were better then and we were not pushed so hard”*.

As for 'holidays', none are given during the contract. Once the contract has ended, crew members must go home and wait for two-three months before getting the next contract. This time is unpaid, apart from a small allocation that may have been included in their monthly wages when on board. Even so, between contracts they often have to undergo training at their own cost. Cruise workers only get wages when on board. They are not even paid while waiting in a Miami hotel for their placement, though they get their board and lodging.

Some crew members - waiters/waitresses and cabin stewards, for example - are paid extremely low wages, as little as US\$45 per month, on the grounds that they will earn tips. But those dependent on tips are very vulnerable. Some passengers are too miserly or come from countries where tipping is not as customary as it is in the US. Or, if the supervisor doesn't like you, you can find yourself stationed where your tip-earning potential is poor. If the ship is sailing under capacity, the chance to earn tips drops even more dramatically. And if you cannot work because, say, you get sick or injured, that basic pay of US\$45 is all you get.

Tipping policy varies between cruise lines. Some companies advise passengers that they are expected to tip at a certain rate per day, and under this system, tips can make up a month's gross earnings to well over US\$1000. On vessels sailing under a union agreement, the company guarantees to make up any shortfall in tips to a guaranteed minimum, and also to pay sick pay at that minimum level.

In the case of some working on board, such as those in 'concessions', the shops, spas and beauty parlours, there is great pressure to make up pay through sales. Some hairdressers and beauticians, for example, are told they will not get paid until they have sold a certain minimum of beauty products. Wine waiters are under pressure to sell wine and typically earn 15% of the value but, according to SIRC researchers, many feel very uncomfortable about having to do the hard sell.

The wages are low, and there are many other ways too in which cruise employers claw back value from their employees. For example, many crew members have to pay their own airfare to the port of embarkation. For bar staff, it is common to have to provide their own uniforms, pens to write down the customers' orders, and lighters to light their cigarettes.

As we have seen, on some ships disciplinary action takes the form of on-the-spot fines deducted from wages. After the 'Ocean Glory I' had been detained in the port of Dover on safety grounds, an Indonesian crew member told me how astonished he was to be fined US\$50 for "walking in the wrong corridor" when there were not

even any passengers on board. By the time all deductions were accounted for, some working on that vessel ended up with almost no pay for the month's work.

Also, some cruise lines take an indemnity from each employee against them breaking contract. Often it is held back from the first months' wages and when it is returned, it is without interest. The ITF has calculated that the US\$500 withheld from each of Carnival's 16,000 employees totals US\$8 million. At a 3 per cent interest rate, the company is pocketing US\$240,000 each year.

The work intensity has led to a second economy operating on board. Those who wish to shed some of their burden pay others to do it. For example, a cabin steward who is expecting good tips may choose to spend some of it on paying, say, a laundryman to make the beds in his set of cabins. There is generally someone willing to do it, to make up for their own low wages, even if it means a 15 or more hour day. Effectively, this is saving the company from having to hire the necessary staff for the work at hand.

Money passes all through the layers, as services are bought and sold. As Klein notes, a waiter may pay the dining room manager to get a larger station or one that is nearer the kitchen, the cooks to prioritise his orders, and the laundry to get his uniform cleaned quickly. Klein says that "workers quickly become aware of a 'mafia' on board".

"No rules given to crew when they start employment; told about them as they break them, with warnings. When late, punished with extra work (loading heavy boxes).

No safety gloves supplied. Told to go buy own gloves.

Have to supply own uniforms, shoes, pens, lighter for passengers' cigarettes. Skirt is US\$26 and need four, shirt is US\$28 and need two, bow-tie is US\$35. Even have to buy own wine opener for passengers' wine.

If crew lose ID, cost is US\$80 to replace. Room key is US\$10. If they want a seaman's book US\$50.

Sick days off no pay.

If emergency at home etc., crew are not allowed to call without paying first.

Only four washing machines, two dryers and two irons on board for all crew; laundry soap not supplied."

Notes from an ITF interview with a Carnival 'Fantasy' bar waitress, June 2000. She had bruises and scratches on her arms from carrying 50lb. boxes from the docks as a punishment.

IN DEBT BEFORE YOU START

Most cruise workers get their job through a crewing agent in their home country. For example, Global Management & Services Corporation (GM&S), the company which supplied crew members for the 'Ocean Glory I' (see page 4), is based in Greece and has offices in Athens, Jakarta, Manila, Goa, Sofia, and Bucharest.

However, there is a big difference in the way that crewing agents operate in industrialised countries and in poor countries. Crew members from the industrialised countries usually have been hired for a certain job, under specified terms and conditions. By contrast, most contracts of those hired through crewing agents in the Third World/Eastern Europe, do not state what job they have been hired for, only at what wages and for how many months.

British, US and Canadian crew members on board rarely have to pay to get their jobs. In Third World countries, by contrast, the common practice by crewing agents is to charge each new recruit for their return airfare, medical examination, seafarer's book, visa, and an administrative fee. One waitress from Peru told me she even had to pay the DHL courier cost of US\$10 for her passport to be sent off for a visa. The end result is that those from poor countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, India, are paying US\$1500-2000 or even higher just to get the job. As we shall see later, this violates international standards. The money is often borrowed from family or money-lenders at high interest rates. The desperate need to pay it back keeps crew members from absconding.

All this means that many cruise ship workers end up working for the first few months just to pay back their costs. It is only for perhaps the last few months of contract that they are able to save or send money home. Typically, the total sum sent home is about US\$300 a month for three-four months. This adds up to around US\$1000 for seven months' work plus two-three months' lay-off. Even at Third World living costs, US\$100 a month is barely a 'living wage'.

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CRUISE SHIPS JOBS SCAM IN AFRICA

Preying upon the desperate need to escape poverty in Africa, a shady United Arab Emirates company, Al Najat Marine Shipping, has been caught out running a nasty scam.

In Kenya, at least 10,000 job seekers were found to have paid US\$58 each for a 'medical examination' for cruise ship jobs which did not exist, producing a massive haul of half-a-million dollars for the company. A Moroccan newspaper "Le Matin" also reported an attempt by Al Najat to 'recruit' 20,000 in that country.

After complaints from the ITF and a full investigation, in May 2002 the Kenyan Government confirmed that the scheme was fraudulent. The ITF has in the past successfully assisted in the prosecution of companies involved in similar scams in Belgium and Canada. It issued a worldwide alert to seafarers' unions and other organisations to look out for Al Najat and to report any further money-for-jobs schemes.

EMOTIONAL LIVES

"Anxiety about family and loneliness caused by prolonged separations and lack of opportunity for contact can also impact on seafarers' work performance and this may have significant repercussions on safety within the work environment."

'Behind the Scenes: Seafaring and family life', SIRC, 2001.

Cruise seafarers suffer stress from the heavy workloads and long hours. But one of their greatest difficulties is homesickness and worry about their families.

On board cruise ships, it may be easier than on board merchant vessels. At least there is a large workforce from whom it is possible to find friends and even lovers. Those who share a nationality or language often form groups of friends for mutual support.

But not everyone has that chance. One woman told me, *"I am the only Israeli on board. I miss the chance to speak Hebrew"*. A Filipino chef with some six years in the industry told me his way of surviving is to trust no-one.

But cruise seafarers are supposed to be happy. Their smiling faces displayed in brochures and TV ads are there to convey a message - that on cruise ships, seafarers enjoy their work as much as passengers enjoy their fun and leisure.

"(We) not only want our crew to keep the cabins clean, to serve the passengers with the right wines and right foods... But we also want our crew to maintain a right attitude. They must always remember, this is part of the hospitality industry and they must help the company keep our guests happy, and they can do this only by keeping themselves happy, and demonstrate it to our guests through their service." Cruise company human resource manager, interviewed by SIRC.

No matter how they really feel, seafarers in contact with passengers must manage their emotions and smile. Companies deliberately employ Indians, Filipinos, Thais and Indonesians as waiters and bar tenders on the grounds that they *"seem to have been born with a wonderful service culture"*, as a company representative put it to a SIRC researcher.

But maintaining that facade of happiness for hours on end, greeting passengers by their names and remembering their likes and dislikes, takes a toll on seafarers, no matter where they were born. A Thai headwaiter told Dr. Minghua Zhao, *"Believe me, you can be totally drained just by greeting people, chatting with them, smiling to them"*. A Russian stewardess said, *"In my case I remember after I finish first and second contracts I could no longer smile. I lost my smile."*

There are few facilities provided by the cruise lines to provide emotional support, so that the happy smiles come from fulfilment at work rather than a facade.

"The companies seem to want to do everything for the passengers but so little for the workers. I spoke to a Personnel Officer once but he didn't seem interested. It has struck me that these cruise workers aren't given any support. There seems to be no chaplain on board or anyone else that they can turn to." Volunteer at the Space Coast Seafarers' Ministry, Port Canaveral, US.

HIGH LABOUR TURNOVER

Dissatisfaction among cruise ship employees translates into a very high turnover rate. Research shows that the average length of hotel/catering crew employment has dropped from three years in 1970 to 18 months in 1990 to just nine months in 2000. In other words, many are fed up and leave after just one contract.

So the industry is having to continually replenish its stocks of labour. The figures are difficult to pin down but the ITF calculates that at least 22,000 replacement workers a year are currently needed. Plus, if all current orders of new vessels materialise, there is a potential need for a further 29,000 cruise ship seafarers over the next few years. The crewing agents face a boom-time.

This demand for labour does not translate into decent pay and conditions, however. This is because there is a huge supply of those who are willing to take jobs on board cruise ships. In the Third World and Eastern Europe in particular there are plenty of relatively well-educated people (English language competence is necessary for many hotel/catering jobs on board) who are desperate for sources of income.

4 COMMUNITIES AT HOME

To work on a ship is a chance to earn an income and, especially for seafarers from developing countries and Eastern Europe, one that seems substantially better than can be found at home. Certainly to be a 'dollar earner' in a 'luxury' industry carries high status and expectations from families and communities.

As we have seen, however, there are 'hidden' costs which make real earnings much lower than expected. This is

borne out by SIRC which has been doing a long-term study among families in the Philippines, India, China and the UK who have a family-member at sea. The research covers all seafarers but its findings hold true for many on cruise ships, particularly those from developing countries who, as we have seen, are likely to be supporting families.

To pay the crewing agent to get the job, workers borrow either from money-lenders at exorbitant interest rates, or from their extended families. Often the seafarer is the only substantial income-earner in the household, the only one who can pay back the debt. Any problem with the contract - say, the worker suffers an industrial accident, or is summarily sacked, or the company goes bankrupt - and the family is landed in deep financial problems.

A lot of money is spent on communications between seafarers and home. Some relatively low paid crew members told me they spend up to US\$50 a month on telephoning home, quite a high proportion of their wages.

The two-three months' period that cruise ship seafarers are home between contracts - which is a stipulation of the companies - is unpaid time except for the small allocation paid in wages when on board. They and their families must rely on savings. Yet this time is not uninterrupted free time for seafarers to use as they wish. They may have to go for training, for example to comply with international safety standards, and they often have to bear the costs of both the courses and the travel to get there.

There are other costs too. For example, with one partner away for long periods, cash may be spent to buy in household maintenance services which otherwise might be done by D-I-Y.

To make ends meet, SIRC has found that 80 per cent of seafarers' wives in the Philippines have to pawn belongings such as jewellery, and most have a small home-based business such as selling iced water or sweets to supplement earnings. It turns out that families in India who have sent someone to work at sea over numerous contracts can actually be increasing in debt. So, cruise ship employment is not often the route out of poverty that many imagine.

SOCIAL COSTS

Whatever the economic benefits, there are deep social costs from seafaring lives. Not surprisingly, lengthy and repeated absences put great strains on families. Seafarers return home from sea, exhausted and stressed. They take time to unwind and adjust to family life. Their families have to get used to suddenly having them back again. It can be difficult to get to know each other.

"During my six years of marriage I haven't been with my husband more than a year. I really don't understand the attitude of my husband until now. Maybe because we're not together always so I don't really know him".

A Filipina woman to SIRC researchers.

"Regardless of their nationality, the majority of women found such long absences led to considerable problems, including loneliness while their partner was away and an irreconcilable emotional distance when their partner returned home."

'Behind the Scenes: Seafaring and family life', SIRC, 2001.

"When my mother gave birth to me, my father was at sea. I never saw a picture of him carrying me when I was a baby". The child of a Filipino seafarer to a SIRC researcher.



So, when seafarers are away, communication between them and home is crucial. There is no doubt that the Internet and mobile phones are a boon to seafarers. When ships are docked for turnaround, the seafarers' missions and crew centres in port are packed with crew members calling and emailing home.

One of the harshest punishments is to prevent a crew member from having shore-leave, thereby denying them contact with home. The shortened turnaround time in port means there is even less time than before for them to fit in all their calls and emails. It is especially frustrating in the US where port administrations often do not provide enough 'windows', time in which they process papers so that cruise ship employees can leave the port and take the bus into town. Cruise companies rarely intervene to solve such problems, and generally take little responsibility for improving seafarers' contact with their families.

Q: If there was an emergency at home, do you know how to contact him?

A: Yes, I try to contact the office. Last time, when I lost my mother, they didn't know where he was. We sent a fax message to them, but they didn't contact (him).

Q: How long was it, from when you lost your mother to when he came?

A: It was 28 days. My brother came from abroad. But my husband didn't get the message.

Q: So you knew how to contact him, but it didn't work. And you don't have any direct contact with the ship?

A: No.

SIRC interview with a motorman's wife, India.

The good news is that some cruise lines are now installing telephone and even Internet links in crew areas on board, with affordable rates. These include Royal Caribbean, the Norwegian Cruise Line and P&O. The ITF's charity arm, the Seafarers' Trust, has also provided funds for a new worldwide telephone service specifically for seafarers, called 'Crewlink'. The ITF hopes that cruise companies which do not already have their own scheme will join in this one and so take responsibility for this fundamental aspect of their employees' well-being.

COMMUNITIES ON THE RECEIVING END

Cruise tourism also has an impact on the communities and environments visited by the cruise ships. Some communities visited are no more than small villages, with populations as low as a few hundred or a few thousand people. These coastal settlements can sometimes be relatively remote by land, and so the arrival of several thousand day-trippers several times a week can be a 'shock to the system'. Klein calls it 'people pollution'.

In the 1980s, Princess Cruises stopped sailing the 'Royal Princess' around Alaska, acknowledging that the region's tiny port towns could not cope with the 1200 passengers the ship was putting ashore at one time. Yet today, Alaska is one of the major cruise routes, with most of the big companies, including Princess, visiting its coast. South-east Alaska gets 600,000 visitors a year.

A number of Alaskan communities have tried to take steps to keep the impact manageable. Juneau, for example, voted overwhelmingly for a US\$5 a head passenger tax on cruise ship visitors after Royal Caribbean was fined for dumping toxic chemicals and oil-contaminated water in Alaskan waters. When Haines (population: 1200; visitors: 120,000 each 20 week season) took a similar step in 2000, Royal Caribbean decided to pull out of visiting the town. This has cost Haines US\$450,000 in lost mooring fees and sales tax revenues.

In the Caribbean too, there have been attempts to raise port fees. In 1997, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States announced a visitor tax of US\$1.50 a head so as to pay for managing ship-generated wastes, as required by the International Maritime Organisation. The cruise lines eventually withdrew their opposition after the World Bank explained that the island governments had no option under international agreement. But two years later they renewed the dispute.

Carnival has been boycotting Grenada, claiming their tax is too high. *"Gallagher (Carnival's Vice President for Public Relations) conceded that \$1.50 a head - on top of the current \$3 arrival tax, the lowest in the region - seems paltry. But he stressed, 'The reason that Carnival Corp. makes the kind of money we do is because we pay great, great attention to controlling our costs'."*

Los Angeles Times, 20 March 1998, quoted by Ross Klein.

One response of the cruise lines has been to buy or lease their own islands and beaches, and develop facilities on them. For example, in the Bahamas, Disney has 'Castaway Cay', Norwegian Cruise Lines owns Great Stirrup Cay, and Royal Caribbean owns Coco Cay. Royal Caribbean also leases Labadee, an isolated promontory on the north coast of Haiti. Here they have 'remodelled' beaches, and set up water sports and barbecues. As well as paying lower per person port charges than is usual, this keeps within the company the profits made from tourism services provided.

In Belize Harbour, where the number of cruise ship visitors each year is projected to rise from 200,000 to over 300,000, a 'tourism village' for cruise passengers is being built. It will contain shops, restaurants and a cyber cafe, with water taxis to take tourists for snorkeling and air-conditioned buses to Maya ruins and a wildlife sanctuary. The development is costing US\$10 million, to be recouped partly by charging each passenger an extra US\$100 for the trip ashore.

Some local economies, especially in the Caribbean, have become quite dependent on cruise tourism revenues, and the cruise companies are not slow to take advantage. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, a "veteran Caribbean port authority manager who did not wish to be named" told the maritime magazine 'Fairplay', *"They were pretty quick to try to cut corners and screw (Caribbean) ports on charges and schedules... These guys already act like the Florida Mafia they way they push their weight around so it's only going to make them worse"*. (Fairplay, 7 March 2002)

For more on the environmental and socio-economic impact of cruise lines, see Tourism Concern's information pack and chapter 6 of Ross Klein's book.

5 BRINGING THE CRUISE LINES INTO LINE

To work on a ship is a chance to earn an income and, especially for seafarers from developing countries and Eastern Europe, one that seems substantially better than can be found at home. Certainly to be a 'dollar earner' in a 'luxury' industry carries high status and expectations from families and communities.

As we have seen, however, there are 'hidden' costs which make real earnings much lower than expected. This is

borne out by SIRC which has been doing a long-term study among families in the Philippines, India, China and the UK who have a family-member at sea. The research covers all seafarers but its findings hold true for many on cruise ships, particularly those from developing countries who, as we have seen, are likely to be supporting families.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Seafarers have rights on principle. Also their working terms and conditions are fundamental to maintaining safety at sea. These points have been recognised by two key bodies of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). They have agreed numerous international instruments which apply to all seafarers on board seagoing ships, including hotel/catering staff on cruise vessels.

The 'Core' Conventions of the ILO apply to as much to seafarers as they do to all other workers. They cover freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, child labour, and discrimination in employment and occupation.

On top of this, the ILO has agreed over 60 Conventions and Recommendations on issues specifically affecting seafarers. The key statement is ILO Convention No. 147 (1976) on minimum internationally acceptable labour standards on merchant ships. It says that each government that registers ships (flag State) should pass laws specifying minimum standards for shipboard safety, conditions of employment and living arrangements. Included are standards of hours of work and crewing levels that ensure the safety of life aboard ships. Perhaps the most important feature of this Convention is that it gives extensive powers to port authorities to detain sub-standard vessels. So, for example, the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency has the authority to make sure ILO Convention No. 147 is adhered to on all ships arriving in British ports.

Hours of work and crewing levels are specified in Convention No. 180 (1996). This says that crewing levels should be sufficient to make the vessel "sufficiently, safely

and efficiently manned". Seafarers should work no more than 14 hours in any 24-hour period, or 72 hours in any 7-day period. Or they should have a minimum rest of 10 hours in any 24-hour period and 77 hours in any 7-day period. It is clear that many cruise companies are infringing these hours as a standard practice, and getting away with it.

As the ILO says, "Serious problems remain concerning the recruitment of seafarers, particularly from developing countries where people are fleeing the worst forms of poverty and often become victims of unscrupulous recruiters. They go to sea with little or no understanding of the terms and conditions of their service, or the rights and protection to which they are entitled". Convention No. 179 (1996) requires each government to supervise closely all agencies in its country which recruit and place seafarers. Private agencies should be licensed and regulated. They must not charge seafarers a fee to get a job, and they must not interfere with seafarers' trade union rights. But many crewing agencies are infringing this, with governments and cruise lines turning a blind eye.

Seafarers are entitled to annual leave with pay of at least 30 calendar days for one year of service, excluding public holidays. Seafarers should be able to take their leave at the place where they were recruited, and be given their travel costs. This is according to Convention No. 146 (1976). But many companies get round this by hiring people only on short-term contracts.

Other ILO Conventions cover such issues as minimum age for working at sea, medical examinations for crewmembers, articles of agreement (work contracts), food and catering on board, crew accommodation, prevention of occupational accidents, sickness or injury benefits, and repatriation.

The maternity rights of women seafarers is something that the ILO will be shortly considering. SIRC has also proposed to the ILO that there is a great need for

anti-racism and sexual harassment to be included in seafarers' training and company guidelines for officers and crew.

The ILO cooperates closely with the IMO on questions that affect safety at sea, such as crew training and certification, as well as seafarers' health. The IMO has

guidelines on shipowners' responsibilities for injury to or death of seafarers. On top of this, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) also emphasises the need for good labour standards so as to ensure safety at sea, as well as to protect the marine environment.

SAFETY ON BOARD All those working on seagoing vessels, cruise ships included, must receive basic safety training. This is according to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) adopted by the IMO. However, there are flaws in the system which are giving great cause for concern to industry analysts. These include:

- **Fraudulent certification: the ITF caused shock-waves throughout the maritime industry when it bought a First Officer's certificate for ITF General Secretary David Cockroft from the Panamanian authorities for US\$4,500. Cockroft has no maritime qualifications or experience but with his new certificate he could be 'Number Two' on-board a sea-going vessel. Thousands of seafarers at all levels are thought to be sailing with fraudulent certificates.**
- **Casualisation of employment with short-term contracts, and the high labour turnover mean that cruise companies are constantly having to train thousands of new recruits.**
- **Many hotel/catering crew members on cruise lines give scathing accounts of the standards of safety training, for example just having to watch a video or look at posters with a brief discussion, followed by poor fire/evacuation drills.**
- **The high levels of staff fatigue and stress increase the risk of accidents.**
- **The bigger the vessel, the smaller the proportion of experienced marine crew compared to the number of passengers plus relatively inexperienced hotel/catering crew.**
- **The wide variety of languages on board.**

In recent years there have been several serious fires on board and even the loss of vessels. It seems pure luck that there has been no large-scale loss of life as yet. Workers, however, have died.

Poor safety standards are obviously of great concern to passengers but they also violate workers' rights to a safe workplace. Some of the risks would be lessened if cruise ship seafarers were on permanent contracts, with decent hours of work, and proper training. The ITF is currently involved in an IMO working group on improving safety in large passenger ships.



POWERFUL LOBBYING INTERESTS

Like all big businesses, the cruise ship industry spends time and resources on lobbying governments, making financial contributions towards election campaigns, and winning influential friends.

The International Council of Cruise Lines (ICCL) represents the interests of the most dominant cruise lines in the North American cruise market, including Carnival Princess, Disney and Royal Caribbean. According to its web-site, it “educates Washington leaders on the important economic contribution that the cruise industry makes in the US” even though, by incorporating companies offshore and flying foreign flags, ICCL member companies pay virtually no taxes in the US.

The ICCL has achieved successes on Capitol Hill. A one word change to a Federal budget bill in 1998 excepted them from paying a US\$6 per passenger immigration fee at US ports, saving the companies millions of dollars a year.

The ICCL doesn't always get its way, however. Members of the US Congress have complained of US cruise companies operating beyond the reach of the nation's criminal and environmental laws and avoiding paying taxes. In 1996, after successful counter-lobbying, the ICCL lost an attempt to bar foreign seafarers from suing employers in US courts.

Cruise companies are influential over other national and local governments, and port authorities too. In Panama, a country that is notoriously sympathetic to shipping companies so that they register their vessels there, Carnival reportedly secured a change in the law so that the compulsory day off per week for employees is now at the discretion of the employer, according to the writer Ross Klein in his book on the cruise ship industry, ‘Death by Chocolate’.

The ICCL is also active in the International Maritime Organisation, lobbying on behalf of its members on issues of safety, the environment and pollution. For example, the ICCL won against an IMO recommendation that all new passenger ships should have a helicopter landing pad which would have aided search and rescue at sea.

ICCL SHIPBOARD WORKPLACE CODE OF CONDUCT

At the end of 1999, the International Council of Cruiselines (ICCL) issued a ‘Shipboard Workplace Code of Conduct’. On announcing the code, the ICCL said it was a measure of its members’ “commitment to providing passengers and employees alike with the optimal levels of safety and security while cruising”.

But the code is entirely voluntary, its contents limited, and no monitoring or verification procedures have been announced. It refers to international standards but does not say how they will be implemented. It does not incorporate workers’ rights to freedom of association. There is little evidence that crewmembers are made aware that it exists, despite what the code says.

Jon Whitlow, head of the ITF Seafarers Section calls the code “little more than a PR sop to public opinion, given the well documented and widespread abuses”. He adds, “If the companies are sincere they should sit down and negotiate with the unions”.

The ICCL code is, of course, a far weaker instrument than negotiated union agreements. However, it could provide an extra tool for exerting pressure on companies, especially the non-union ones such as Carnival and Disney. The code covers:

Wages: These will be “competitive with comparable international pay scales” and crewmembers will be “provided employment opportunities and compensation packages that are equal to or exceed similar positions in the nations from which crew are recruited... Our policy additionally includes recruiting at the trainee level and providing education so crewmembers obtain work skills that facilitate promotion and career development.”

Living Conditions: “All crewmembers receive room and board at no cost and live in a clean, well-maintained living environment. The crew areas on each ship shall be inspected on a regular basis by the ship’s captain or his representative.”

Health and Safety: “A safe and healthy work environment will be provided in order to help prevent accidents and injuries. The shipboard work environment will be monitored and governed through safety and quality management systems. Cruise line sponsored medical care is provided for all crewmembers working on board. Crewmembers who become injured or ill while working are entitled to receive established sick leave provisions. The work environment also is operated in accordance with Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and respective flag states’ requirements.”

Minimum Age: “All crewmembers will be 18 years of age or older.”

Harassment Prevention: “Shipboard management will act in the highest ethical manner and will respect the rights and dignity of all crewmembers. No crewmember shall be subjected to physical, sexual, or verbal harassment or abuse. All ships will provide a mechanism for addressing any grievances of this nature.”

Complaint Resolution: “All ships recognize the right of employees to voice complaints. All ships will maintain an environment in which crewmembers may express complaints and obtain resolution of those grievances without fear of retaliation or retribution.”

Crew awareness: “This Shipboard Workplace Code of Conduct will be made available to all crewmembers.”

NATIONAL STANDARDS - AND FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE

International agreements are of course only as good as they are put into practice, and this largely depends on the will of national governments. The flag that a ship flies shows the country in which it is registered. This is the country under whose national laws the vessel operates, and the one which is responsible for the vessel's safety and labour standards under international instruments.

Some cruise vessels are flagged under national flags such as Greece, Italy, UK, Netherlands and Norway. This places their crew members under the labour protection

laws of those countries, and it is the trade unions of those countries which oversee that the laws are respected and try to reach collective bargaining agreements covering those ships.

However, most cruise lines choose to flag off to Panama, the Bahamas and Liberia. In fact, some companies like to put a romantic spin on sailing under such 'exotic' flags. But in doing so they are deliberately placing their ships under countries which have weak laws and even weaker enforcement, and are notorious for not enforcing international standards. This allows the companies to benefit from poor legal protection for the crew members, and little or no union movement in the country to defend them. Such registers (there are about thirty of them in total) have been declared by the ITF to be 'Flags of Convenience' (FOC).

FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE - SELECTED CRUISE LINES

Cruise Line	Flag Register (number of ships)
Carnival	Panama (8), Bahamas (8)
Celebrity	Liberia (8), Panama (1)
Costa Crociere	Italy (9)
Crystal	Bahamas (2)
Cunard	UK (2)
Disney	Bahamas (2)
Festival	Bahamas (1), Panama (1), Wallis & Futuna (1), Italy (2)
Holland America	Netherlands (8), Bahamas (2)
Norwegian Cruise Line	Bahamas (8)
Orient	Bahamas (2)
P&O Cruises	UK (5)
Princess	UK (8), Bermuda (2)
Radisson Seven Seas	Bahamas (3), Wallis & Futuna (2)
Royal Caribbean	Bahamas (8), Norway (6)
Royal Olympic	Greece (9)
Seabourn	Bahamas (3)
Silversea	Bahamas (4)
Star Cruises	Panama (5), Bahamas (3)

Source: data compiled by ITF, 2002

Notes:

Wallis & Futuna are two tiny islands in the South Pacific with a total population of less than 15,500. Liberia gains US\$15-20 million a year from its flag registry. It allegedly uses this revenue to support brutal rebel groups in neighbouring Sierra Leone, despite United Nations sanctions against the country. The ITF is campaigning to get shipowners to flag off Liberia. Royal Caribbean recently de-flagged 8 vessels from Liberia and moved them to the Bahamas register.



ITF CRUISE SHIP CAMPAIGN

The ITF has been campaigning vigorously to end the flags of convenience system in shipping for over fifty years. The ITF also tries to protect the rights and look after the interests of those who work on board FOC vessels. This includes reaching negotiated agreements with the shipowners of FOC vessels that give the crew members at least basic minimum standards of hours, pay, benefits, etc.

In the campaign to pin down 'runaway' shipowners, maritime trade unions try to reach agreements on vessels which are flying flags of convenience but are 'beneficially' or ultimately owned in their own country. The ITF has a standard 'model' agreement for these unions to use with cruise ships flying flags of convenience. But the agreements signed vary quite widely, some being better than others.

The Norwegian Seamen's Union is one example. It has agreements on board vessels flying the Norwegian flag, and those which are ultimately owned by Norwegian-based companies no matter which flag they are flying. It runs an office in Miami specifically to ensure that those agreements are respected and the crew members assisted, especially on those vessels sailing around the US/Caribbean.

Adding together all cruise ships sailing under agreements that are acceptable to the ITF, a total of about 54,800 cruise ship seafarers are covered. This is almost half of those employed in the industry. However, it is clear that many of these agreements are not fully honoured by the employers that signed them, and unions find it difficult to ensure compliance, especially on ships sailing in distant waters.

To help ensure that the union agreements are implemented, a vital part of the ITF's FOC campaign is its ships' inspectorate. This comprises about 120 ITF Inspectors from affiliated maritime trade unions, in ports all around the world. They board substandard vessels, cruise ships included, and offer trade union services to any crew members who request them. ITF Inspectors ask the local maritime authorities to detain a vessel in port if its safety is compromised or the crew is owed back wages.

Port workers are also key to the campaign. Throughout history dockers have taken solidarity action on behalf of seafarers in difficulty, by refusing to load and unload vessels. Their action can secure the signing of an on-board union agreement. In Europe, cruise workers' conditions are relatively better partly because port workers are more active in this region. In the US Gulf, Caribbean and Asia, by contrast, such activism can be illegal, unions weak, or local workers think cruise seafarers are 'better off'.

But as complaints from seafarers on cruise ships mounted, in mid-2000 the ITF stepped up its campaign for their rights. It opened up a special ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Office in Port Canaveral, Florida. It is from here that Disney and some Carnival vessels sail.

"What the office has learned about conditions for the employees of these two operators on board is truly amazing. Long hours, low wages, exploitation and bullying are just a few examples. The crews would like to be members of an ITF-affiliated union but the threat of being fired hangs heavy on each crew member", says Jim Given who heads the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Office.

www.help2loseawindcrew.com

Getting negotiated union agreements on board is crucial to improve working conditions. Jim Given says that on ships with an agreement, complaints from crew members are the more common ones such as excessive hours or unfair dismissal. These workers do not get fired for having a grievance, and the companies tend to know their responsibilities towards the workforce even if they don't always carry them out. On vessels where there is no union agreement, by contrast, the levels of exploitation and humiliation are far greater and crew morale far lower. The issues here are more likely to concern fundamental human rights.

Cruise ships pose special problems for unionisation. With so many different nationalities on board, and the workforce mostly on short-term contracts, constantly changing, and in fear of dismissal, there is not a lot of opportunity to build solidarity. Small groups can talk together in the canteen or cabins, but there is no large space on board for the crew members to meet together.

There was a strike on a Carnival vessel back in 1981. Then, some 240 crew members from Central America protested in Miami at the sacking of two co-workers. The company called in the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service. The strikers were declared illegal immigrants, bussed to the airport and flown home. The ITF is finding Carnival still hostile to trade unionism.

Disney says it is prepared to consider unions on board if the majority of crew members want it. The ITF is well-known to many deck/engine crew on board cruise ships, but not yet to many of the hotel/catering crew, and Disney does not let ITF Inspectors on board and their employees are scared to be seen with ITF people. The ITF and affiliated unions know that they have an uphill struggle to encourage those employed on cruise ships to organise.

"Seafarers are not allowed to apply to ITF if you wish to maintain your employment."

AB from Yugoslavia, Carnival 'Fantasy', ITF survey, mid-2000.

"On board there is a rule that you mustn't apply to the union, explicitly the ITF; otherwise you will be fired."

Bar waiter from Italy, Carnival 'Fantasy', ITF survey, mid-2000.

"Sorry but I'm not allowed to talk to anyone about my job."

Musician from US, 'Disney Wonder', interviewed by the author, early 2002.

"I've been working on cargo ships for years. But the cruise industry is far worse for the way it treats its workers."

Scott Brady, ITF Inspector, Port Canaveral, USA.

"This is an industry which is unwilling and unable to regulate itself, and seafarers and their unions are left to pick up the pieces".

Jim Given, Director, ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Office.

STRANDED CREWS RESCUED

Within weeks of opening up, the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign was inundated with requests for help from cruise ship seafarers. What was less expected was the sudden and massive intervention the ITF would need to make to support thousands of them as three cruise lines went bankrupt in quick succession.

When the Premier line went bust in mid-2000, some 3000 crew members were abandoned in ports as far apart as Canada, the Bahamas and Spain. Within hours, the ITF launched a rescue mission so that the crew members were kept informed, got over US\$3 million worth of back pay owed, and tickets home.

A few months later, the ITF ensured that the 230 crew members of the Bahamas-flagged 'Enchanted Capri', owned by bankrupt Commodore Cruise Lines, were returned to their 40 different home countries. As food and water ran low, and tensions rose, the ITF advanced the money for airfares, and has since been trying to claim it back from the bankruptcy proceedings.

The Renaissance line collapsed in October 2001. Some 1740 bewildered crew members from eight large and two smaller vessels were stranded in Gibraltar, London and Tahiti. Once again the ITF had to step in to assist them.

"We are still in Gibraltar. We have received no official information about what has happened with the ships. The rumour is that the auction was held on November 27 and that no-one bought the ships. We understand that some bank has taken over control of us, and that the Admiralty Marshall has been paid, releasing us from arrest. We are supposed to be moving to Marseilles to lay up the ships. All this information is rumour, there has been no confirmation of any of this given to the crew."

Extract from an email sent to the ITF by a Renaissance crewmember in early December 2001.

6 WHAT YOU CAN DO

“We have been on three cruises, with different companies. We tried to find out what the workers were earning but they wouldn’t tell us. We got the impression they had been told not to say.”

Cruise passenger, UK

This cruise-goer might not have been successful in finding out much about the working conditions of those who were making her holidays such a pleasure. But at least she cared enough to ask.

There is much that we can all do to help improve the life of those who work on board cruise ships. To sell holidays image is all, and cruise companies are in a highly competitive market. So they are very vulnerable to pressure from public opinion.



ACTION YOU CAN TAKE IN SOLIDARITY WITH CRUISE SHIP WORKERS:

- Join War on Want’s ‘Sweatships’ campaign. For more information, contact Nick Dearden at War on Want, details on the back cover and from the War on Want website at www.globalworkplace.org.
- Keep yourself informed about developments in the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign, on www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/cruise_ships/index.htm
- Write to cruise companies and tour operators to put pressure on them about cruise ship workers’ rights, particularly to stop using agents that charge developing country workers illicit fees to get the job. Company websites are given on the inside back cover of this booklet. Tour operators’ details can be got from the brochures in your local travel agent. A downloadable letter exists at www.globalworkplace.org
- Join War on Want’s ‘Invest in Freedom’ campaign. You may not think of yourself as a shareholder, but if you have an occupational pension scheme you may have holdings in some of the very companies perpetrating workers’ rights violations. Details from www.globalworkplace.org

THROUGH YOUR TRADE UNION:

- Write to your government (Department of Transport) or Member of Parliament and ask them to work towards phasing out the flags of convenience system. Cruise companies must be subject to proper regulation like everyone else.
- Ask the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) ‘Decent Work at Sea’ programme to investigate and stop agents’ fees turning developing country workers into a captive workforce. See www.ilo.org
- Challenge the International Council of Cruiselines (ICCL) to include trade union rights in its ‘Shipboard Workplace Code of Conduct’. Write to: Michael Crye, President, ICCL, 2111 Wilson Boulevard, 8th Floor, Arlington, VA 22201, USA; email: info@iccl.org

IF YOU WORK ON A CRUISE SHIP:

- Join a trade union in your country and be active in it.
- Contact the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign or the ITF Inspector in the ports you visit if your rights are being violated. The ITF booklet ‘Message to Seafarers’ gives the contact details of all ITF-affiliated seafarers’ trade unions and Inspectors. It is available free from ITF Inspectors, maritime unions and on the ITF website at: www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/message_to_seafarers/index.htm
- Find out if your ship is covered by an ITF-acceptable collective bargaining agreement, and talk with your fellow workers on board about how to make sure it is implemented. Contact the union that negotiated the contract or the ITF if the agreement is not being upheld.
- Support ITF activities in solidarity with other cruise ship workers. The ITF website at www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/cruise_ships/index.htm gives more details about the ITF Cruise Ship Campaign.
- Let others know about your experiences on-board.

IF YOU ARE GOING ON A CRUISE:

Ask questions when you book your holiday, and write to the cruise line you are using to challenge them about their support for cruise ship workers’ rights.

- Make sure you go with a cruise company that recognises trade union organisation.
- Support the UN sanctions against Liberia by boycotting ships which fly the Liberian flag. Ask which flag your chosen ship is flying. Remember, not only the workers’ rights are governed by the country under whose flag you are sailing, but also your own.
- Think carefully about what might be the pressures on the cruise workers who are serving you before making a complaint.
- If you see injustices on board, make your views known to the ship’s management. Remember, though, to be very careful - you may put individual worker(s) concerned at risk of being put off the ship at the next port.
- Report any injustices against cruise ship seafarers to the cruise line, your tour operator, your local newspaper, your friends, and the ITF. Use the Internet to air your views too.

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