



APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

5166 Rue Parthenais, MONTREAL, QUEBEC, H2H-2H3

1 August 2000

Hon, Peter Moms
Chairman
International Commission on Shipping

Dear Mr. Moms:

I would first like to express my gratitude for inviting me to be a participant of ICONS. I am sorry that I was late to be informed about the Commission. I was barely home this last week due to Port Visitation as the Apostleship of the Sea's National Director in Canada, as well as having my summer holidays.

However, I am submitting herewith my response as my participation for the preparation of the Commission's deliberation next September in Montreal. The views raised in this submission are based on my 15 years experience as a Catholic Port Chaplain and my responsibility as AOS National Director in Canada for the last 5 years. I expect that the Commission (ICONS) will make appropriate recommendation to stop the abuses that have been suffered for so long by seafarers on board FOC ships.

The purpose of our Ministry is to support seafarers in all aspects of their life. For years, we had been concerned with the fact that they are denied some of their human rights and we tried through our collaboration with the ITF Inspectors to be as cooperative as possible.

Praying that what I am sharing may provide light to the needs of Seafarers.

May God bless you!

Very sincerely

Rev. Fr. Guy Bouille

National Director AOS

SEAFARERS RIGHTS ABUSES

Physical Abuses:

- Bad treatments, over-worked (mainly on passenger ships)
- Improper medical care – no choice of doctors, no medicines available. No mention of sickness for fear their job. Sailors were left behind in the hospital while family is not being notified after an operation – then sent back home not in good condition for a long trip (India). Papers are signed by the Company's doctor indicating sailors are "Fit to Work" even if they are not.
- Suicide due to : overworked; could not stand the stress; discrimination, repatriation delayed; depression

Moral Abuses

Discrimination:

- Double standard, less paid because they come from the 3rd world;
- Filipinos are called "yellow monkeys" by Master and C/O;
- On Good Friday at 15 hrs, religious service cancelled by Master;
- Muslim officers not permitting Christian Seamen access to their Chaplain;
- Bangladeshers are denied shore pass, suspected to jump ship.

Provisions:

- Too often sailors are poorly fed – no fruits, no vegetables – just expired mutton and rice;
- Catering officers are taking bribes from ship chandlers;
- Double accounting concerning the cost of food for the daily ration;
- Liquors for the use of officers paid on the money reserved for food;
- Water provisions are improperly kept – not renewed for months – dirty reservoirs, etc.

Wages

- Under the international standards;
- Delayed for months because of companies financial problems;
- Fake contracts, name of ship is different from the one on the contract;
- Not respected contracts: the one signed ashore was destroyed when arriving at sea;
- The position on the contract is different from the one that is executed on the ship;
- Money (payola's) that are demanded by the Manning Agents before delivering contracts to seafarers;
- Minimum overtime required before starting to pay for overtime hours;
- Overtime hours that were never paid – 2nd officer paid by the standard of a 3rd mate; on a passenger ship were done by the same man who received the wages just for one job.
- Spies on the ship reporting to Manning Agents – and those who complain about rights abuses
- Contracts that stipulate that when there are problems on board, no help should be requested from ITF, and/or Seafarer's Club.

Safety

- Insufficient life jackets;
- Life boats are in bad conditions;
- Regular fire exercises are not done for months;
- Inspections are not properly done by Coast Guards;
- Ships are tied up under Jacques Cartier Bridge;
- Ships are not properly heated in the winter season;
- Unseaworthy ships reported by engine room workers were not acted upon;
- ITF recommendations or improvements were not welcomed;
- Cracks in the hull, spare parts not available, not seen by Coast Guard;
- No heat on ship because of repairs – officers were living in a Motel for 4 days while crew were kept on

Some dramatic stories:

- A tugboat on her way for repairs sunk with 6 men lost. The only survivor was denied to talk and not to interfere with inquiry. The responsibility of this disaster was never made public but kept secret;
- Luis Ledres, a carpenter, got drowned in St. Lawrence River – the body was recovered 2 days later. His contract stipulated that the corpse should be repatriated. The captain made it incinerated, the family complained that ashes not of Luis.
- A mess man – on his first contract was overworked. The cargo ship had also 6 regular passengers he had to attend plus the crew. His contract was extended without his will when the reliever did not show up. The repatriation was before the departure he committed suicide. He had expressed that he was out of energy. He was only 19 years old.
- A ship in bad condition was not inspected because the Coast Guard was on strike. The men in the machine had information about the unseaworthiness. The ship was listed in a storm near Newfoundland. There were no survivors.
- An Indian bossun was on her way to Montreal. In the Atlantic Ocean, during stormy weather – he was sent alone C/O to check if the containers were getting loose. He was washed away by a big wave and got lost.
- A deck man had frost bite in the right hand. He was chipping ice on the deck with rubber gloves – the weather was 20°C. He lost part of his index finger. He was declared fit to work. He had to keep on working with no compensation.