



Transport workers' and dockworkers' unions joined JSU in marching for fair practices in the maritime trades.

JSU joins FOC, POC protests

Seafarers, dockworkers bring campaign to Kotoku Kaiun in nationwide rally

The 93rd nationwide campaign against flag-of-convenience (FOC) ships and ports of convenience (POCs) was staged on Feb. 4-6, 2014 at various ports in Japan.

On Feb. 4, a group of seafarers and dockworkers protested against Kotoku Kaiun Co., Ltd. at Hakatajima, Imabari, Ehime Prefecture. The members said it was unforgivable for the carrier, which had not even concluded the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) agreements toward international and social labor standards, to compete with others unfairly.

Made up of 30 workers, the protesters were supported by ITF Coordinator Fusao Ohori, ITF Inspector Shigeru Fujiki and the Chu-Shikoku Regional Office of the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU) as well as the Japanese Confederation of Port and Transport Workers' Unions (Koun Domei), the National Federation of Dockworker's Unions of Japan (Zenkoku Kowan) and the All Japan Dockworkers' Union (JDU or Zenkowan).

On the previous day, the group members handed out fliers among local residents to inform



Union negotiators attempt to speak to Kotoku Kaiun's president at the shipping line's headquarters at Hakatajima, Ehime Prefecture on Feb. 4.

them of the protest and completed other preparatory work to confirm their protest action plan.

The protesters left Arozu at Hakatajima at 8:35 a.m. on Feb. 4, walked in front of the head office of Kotoku Kaiun and arrived at the Port of Hakata's ferry terminal. While marching on the route, which measures approximately 3.2 kilometers, they read

a letter of protest and chanted a slogan, yelling, "Kotoku Kaiun must conclude the ITF agreements!"

When the seafarers and dockworkers reached Kotoku Kaiun, a group of negotiators led by ITF Coordinator Ohori visited the shipping line's headquarters, where they demanded that the company abide the rules of ship-

ping and ports and harbors, respect the rights of seafarers and agree to hold talks for concluding the ITF agreements.

Kotoku Kaiun, however, did nothing but respond to their demands deceitfully. "The president is not here now," a female employee said on an intercom. "If you want to say anything, write it down on paper, and submit it."

The negotiators patiently continued to talk with the carrier, asking for a meeting with the president, but the employee said that it was impossible and cut off intercom communication unilaterally.

The group of negotiators called for an opportunity to speak to the president many times, but the company denied them of any such opportunity. The negotiators were left with no option but to tell the shipping line that the ITF would contact it at a later date. The entire group of seafarers and dockworkers then ended their protest for the day and left the island.

When the protest group returned to the JSU's Ehime Branch, all of the members gathered to review their activities, agreeing that they need to continue to take action until Kotoku Kaiun sits down with them for talks. After exchanging views, they decided to enhance their protest activities, taking into consideration the fact that the International Labor Organization (ILO) Maritime Labor Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006) went into effect on Aug. 20, 2013. The meeting came to an end after the agreement was reached.

Shipping gets in public eye

As purveyors of maritime tittle tattle, a recent academic study into media coverage of maritime accidents caught our eye.

The study examines the media coverage of major maritime accidents in order to determine whether incidents that have made the headlines in the maritime media have also attracted the attention of the general media. The question seems to be whether the media has a good, bad, or indifferent perception of the shipping world.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the report found a difference between general press and specialised press. While the maritime press presents a balanced and comprehensive picture, the general press likes to focus on larger scale events, such as tragic disasters and accidents. As we probably already knew, bad news sells.

Researchers looked at six key shipping stories which were likely to generate negative views of shipping. These ranged from fires, arrests, sinkings and piracy and they assessed coverage in a range of leading newspapers for reference (for up to 10 days after an incident) to build a picture of the actual event and aftermath.

Of the articles generated, most were news stories and a limited number were opinion or comment pieces. None were editorial, special reports or special issues. Some articles made the front page, but these were all related to the "Costa Concordia".

Interestingly, they found that the more factual information which is gathered, journalists tend to become more negative towards the shipping company and crew, but they tend not to join the dots against the wider shipping industry and its key players.

The general conclusion was that what makes headline news in the maritime press does not excite the general press, where journalists seem rather detached, if not indifferent, towards events that hinder the public image of shipping. Indeed it was deemed that sensationalism and alarmism were not reported as widespread. In a blow to PR consultants, it was also found that most journalists ignore the prepared statements which are made, and the more a company says the more the journalists are prompted to dig deeper for the "truth".

A full report on the research will be published by the WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs. (Source: *Shiptalk*)

IMO World Maritime Day theme launched

IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu has launched this year's World Maritime Day theme, "IMO conventions: effective implementation", expressing the hope that the year would see genuine progress towards effective and global implementation of all IMO conventions.

Speaking at a reception to mark the launch of the theme, at the end of the first day of the first session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC), Mr. Sekimizu said the theme provided an opportunity to shine a spotlight on those IMO treaty instruments which have not yet entered into force, as well as wider and more effective implementation of measures already agreed or in place.

"The adoption of an IMO convention cannot be the end of a process. A conference is held, the text agreed, there are hand-

shakes all round. But it's not the end of the process. It should be just the end of the beginning. Because an IMO convention is only worthwhile and meaningful if it is effectively and universally implemented," Mr. Sekimizu said.

Treaties still to enter into force include the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004; the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009; the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, 2007; the 2010 Protocol to the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS); and the Cape Town Agreement of 2012

on the Implementation of the Provisions of the 1993 Protocol relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels.

"The sooner these conventions enter into force, the sooner the benefits would be received by us and the international community. During the course of this year, under the banner of the World Maritime Day theme, we will do all we can to encourage the ratification and implementation of all these instruments," Mr. Sekimizu said.

"As well as conventions yet to enter into force, the wider and more complete implementation of measures already in place will also be a major element of this year's theme. Energy efficiency measures for ships, the availability of fuel oil to meet increasingly stringent sulphur content requirements, and the verification of goal-based ship construction

standards are all important activities for which we wish to make significant progress in the Organization's work this year and will all contribute towards wider and more effective implementation of measures already agreed or in place," Mr. Sekimizu said.

Mr. Sekimizu noted that implementation of IMO measures was, ultimately, the responsibility of the Member States and the industry, while the forthcoming mandatory audit scheme for Member States would be an important tool for assessing Member States' performance in meeting their obligations and responsibilities as flag, port and coastal States under the relevant IMO treaties. The Organization and the Secretariat also had a role to play, specifically through IMO's extensive technical cooperation program. (Source & Image Credit: IMO)

RP senator: Marina bill to save 400,000 jobs

Senate President Franklin Drilon recently hailed the passage on second reading of Senate Bill 2043 or the Marina Bill.

Drilon, who is also the bill's sponsor, said the measure proposes to create a single maritime administration to oversee the training and certification of about 400,000 Filipino seafarers across the globe.

"The passage of this bill demonstrates a serious effort on the part of the Philippine government to overhaul its policies concerning our seafarers and make them aligned with the international standards," he said.

The Senate chief cited reports

coming from the European Union (EU) that a ban on Filipino seafarers on board EU-flagged vessels is being considered because of the unsatisfactory and incomplete compliance by the country to the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, as amended, or the STCW Convention.

Drilon said that the backlash from an EU ban will affect not just the seafarers and their families but the entire country who will surely lose billions of pesos from sea-based workers' remittances which has aided the economy by fueling domestic consumption

and preventing foreign exchange instability

Seafarers' remittances reached nearly \$5 billion in 2012.

Drilon said that around 80,000 Filipino workers may eventually lose their jobs if such a ban is implemented by the European Union, and put at risk some 300,000 more Filipino seafarers around the globe if other countries follow the EU's move.

Senate Bill 2043 seeks to make the Marina as the single maritime administration in the country, tasked with overseeing the training and certification of Filipino seafarers, and ensuring that these follow international standards

based on the STCW Convention.

Drilon also commended his colleagues for acting swiftly on the proposed measure, which he described as "a very urgent measure" to evade a looming blacklist from the European Union (EU) due to the country's continued failure to demonstrate compliance with the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, as amended (STCW Convention).

"Let us not wait for the impending ban to commence, which will cost our country even more in terms of resources and efforts," Drilon stressed. (Camille P. Balagtas/Sunnex)

SE Asian maritime unions end action week against FOC ships

Dockers and Seafarers unions in the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar inspected a total of 34 merchant vessels flying flags of convenience (FOC), as ITF Unions concluded the South East Asian Week of Action from January 13-17.

Inspectors/contacts and union activists targeted merchant vessels to check for onboard crew conditions, employment contracts, safety and compliance of the Maritime Labor Convention which came into force in August 2013. Also under scan

were ships without ITF acceptable agreements that stipulate decent and negotiated wages and ship board conditions for crew members.

In the Philippines, ITF affiliated Unions AMOSUP & PSU along with the dockers' Unions led the inspections during the week. ITF Inspectors targeted 11 ships at the Davao port in southern Philippines which handles major agricultural cargoes including bananas and links the region to Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Australia, Europe, the Middle East and the

United States. Unions are now following up with owner companies to prevail upon them to sign ITF approved agreements.

In Singapore a total of 17 vessels were inspected during the week. Efforts are on to contact the ITF Union in beneficially owned countries to assist in covering the crew on board these vessels with regulated collective agreements. Inspection teams also visited Australian flagged Pacific Raider 4, a fishing vessel which lies abandoned since September 2013. Of the original

16 Indonesian and Vietnamese crew only four are left onboard. Crew wages have not been paid since December 2012.

In Indonesia, only six vessels could be inspected due to poor weather conditions.

Similarly in Thailand, in spite of preparations, due to political tensions in and around Bangkok, the week of action activities had to be abandoned at the last moment in consultation with the participating Unions. (Source: *Shipmanagement Int'l and Africa Oil and Gas News*)

Security standards seminar aims to clear up confusion over armed guards

There has been much talk across the shipping industry about the standards of maritime security companies. As we approach the official green light for the new ISO standard, an important seminar looks to puncture the spin, marketing, posturing and politics which has surrounded so much of the development. The Security Standards Seminar will provide a

true and honest picture of what has really happened and highlight the real value of the new international standard to the industry.

The Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI) is pleased to announce an invaluable opportunity for the shipping industry to hear the latest reports, views and guidance on the maritime security standard

ISO/PAS 28007:2012 which is shaping the way in which seafarers and vessels are protected by Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP).

The "lessons learned" conference will provide feedback on the development by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) of the ISO/PAS 28007:2012 Standard for Private

Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs), the reasons for the standard, how it is being implemented and the lessons learned by the auditors and those being audited.

ISO/PAS 28007, as part of the ISO 28000 family of security standards, gives established international guidelines to PMSCs. Certification to these standards

demonstrates to the international community that they, and their operatives, can legally, safely and effectively guard ships. However, there is a detailed process underlying the adoption of a new ISO – and the industry is currently moving through the various stages and coming to the end of an industry wide pilot scheme. (Source: *Shiptalk*)

VOICES from SEAFARERS



Capt. Fernando S. Soriano of M/V AYUTTHAYA BRIDGE

Everytime our vessel's berthed in ports of Japan, JSU staff never forget to visit our ship and to talk with us. Thanks for your untiring support and we are hoping that this union could provide more welfare and benefits for its members.



C/E Tomas M. Edpan and Crew of M/V LINDA HOPE

We are extending our sincere gratitude to this union for its wholehearted support in uplifting members' lives and welfare on board. More power to all staff of JSU and we hope your continued support of all non-domiciled special members.



Capt. Danilo D. Ortega and Crew of M/V CAPE UNIVERSE

With JSU's ship visitation, we learned that this union is sincere in letting its members understand the welfare benefits we acquired. Thanks for sharing the latest news and information with us.



C/O Benedicto M. Eco and Crew of M/V AFRICAN KINGFISHER

Now that the MLC 2006 has come into force, living and working conditions on board have become more comfortable. Thanks for guiding us and hope that you will continue JSU activities for all non-domiciled special members. More power!



C/E Eric J. Alunan and Crew of M/V MUROTO

We are so grateful to the JSU staff for visiting our ship at the Port of Suzaki, Hakata and bringing us the latest news and information. We are looking forward to seeing you again on our next voyage here in Japan.



Capt. Nepal Chandra Sutradhar and Crew of M/V HYPERION LEADER

With the implementation of the MLC 2006, the seafarers' bill of rights, it could improve working and living conditions onboard. Thanks to the JSU staff who managed to answer our queries regarding the Maritime Labor Convention.



Capt. Ruthemberg T. Rodoble and Crew of M/V IRIS SKY

We appreciate very much JSU's ship visitation and for giving us the latest information on the shipping industry. As of now, we are using the crew's free email access to communicate with our families and hope that broadband Wi-Fi Internet connections will be implemented on all JSU-member vessels.



C/E Gilson V. Rafio, Officers and Crew of M/V GLORIOUS EARTH

While the crew were busy hauling and checking the delivered ship-supply on board, some crewmembers inquired of their rights as JSU members and the welfare benefits provided by this union. All queries regarding JSU membership were answered accordingly.



C/E Brigido B. Gumahad Jr. and Crew of M/V MUROU

We are grateful to the JSU staff for visiting our ship and bringing us the latest news and information regarding the shipping industry. We are looking forward to seeing you again on our next voyage here in Japan.



Capt. Frederick S. Suni and Crew of M/V SIMURGH

We applaud JSU's effort to visit our vessel and bringing us updated news. Thanks for your endless support and hope that the welfare of seafarers will be improved through the implementation of MLC 2006.



Capt. Ronito C. Magarzo and Crew of M/V PEARL ACE

We express our heartfelt gratitude for JSU's regular ship visitation to its members. It shows that our rights and welfare as seafarers are being protected. We wish that this union could negotiate more from shipping companies for improving the lives and welfare of its members.



C/O Takbir and Indonesian Crew of M/V SUN ISLAND

Thank you JSU staff for visiting our vessel and for bringing us souvenirs onboard. We will support JSU's intention to let its members understand about union activities and the policy to all non-domiciled special members.

Piracy in 2013 at lowest level in 6 years

The latest annual report from the International Chamber of Commerce International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Center (PRC) shows that piracy at sea in 2013 reached its lowest level in six years, with 264 attacks recorded worldwide, a 40 percent drop since Somali piracy peaked in 2011. The number of incidents reported off Somalia was 15, down from 75 in 2012 and 237 in 2011.

However, piracy still has tremendous human costs, with more

than 300 people taken hostage at sea in 2013 and 21 injured, nearly all with guns or knives. During the year, 12 vessels were hijacked, 202 boarded and a further 22 fired on. The report says that: "Nigerian pirates were particularly violent, killing one crew member, and kidnapping 36 people to hold onshore for ransom."

The decrease in Somali piracy off the coast of East Africa is the main reason for the reduction in piracy, said IMB director Captain Pottengal Mukundan, pointing to "the key role of international

navies, the hardening of vessels, the use of private armed security teams, and the stabilizing influence of Somalia's central government". But he commented that: "It is imperative to continue combined international efforts to tackle Somali piracy. Any complacency at this stage could re-ignite pirate activity."

West African piracy made up 19 percent of attacks worldwide in 2013, with Nigerian pirates and armed robbers taking 49 people hostage and kidnapping 36, more than in any year since

2008.

The IMB also reports a high number of "low-level opportunistic thefts" in Indonesian waters, which accounted for more than half of all vessels boarded in 2013, and armed robbery increased for a fourth consecutive year.

Despite the reduction in Somali piracy, the European Union Naval Force reported the first pirate attack of 2014 in the Gulf of Aden. A pirate skiff attempted an attack on an oil tanker on January 17, which was thwarted by the onboard private security

team. The skiff then headed to a nearby dhow, believed to be used as a pirate mothership. The following day, an EU warship, in cooperation with Japanese forces, located the dhow, which had been pirated several days earlier, sent in a boarding team, released the dhow's crew and arrested five suspected pirates.

All attacks and suspicious sightings should be reported to the IMB Piracy Reporting Center, tel: +603 2031 0014 (24 hours), email: imbkl@icc-ccs.org (*Source: ITF Seafarers*)

Recruitment may be hit as Internet drought looms large

Facebook is now celebrating its 10th year. Yes, a decade of being poked, bothered by incessant updates on how your so called friends are getting along building an imaginary farm, and awkward friend requests from people you were glad to leave behind in the nineties.

For seafarers though, the 10 years hasn't had quite the same problems – what with so few ships providing web access. Sure, the number has been steadily grow-

ing, but still there is a massive gap between the ship and the shore.

Is that about to change thanks to MLC, or are we still going to see the digital divide maintained? A recent survey of seafarer's usage of crew communication solutions in the commercial shipping sector to establish a picture of mariner communications requirements and of how this ties into MLC 2006 has been conducted with some interesting results.

Pressure from seafarers for a bet-

ter offer of private onboard communications is growing, and ship owners will have to react. Providers also stress that offering such services to crew does not necessarily mean an increase in costs for the vessel operator.

The fact that costs can be handed on to crew unsurprisingly means that owners offering "free" communications services to mariners are still the exception. Indeed 85% of those questioned do not have free internet access

while at sea, while the majority of crew still have no access to the web at all.

The desire to be able to access the web on board – ideally for free – is right at the top of any seafarers' wish list and could well begin to affect recruitment. According to the survey, the best, most skilled and experienced seafarers are beginning to turn their backs on ships which do not offer online access. So we can see that recruitment and retention into the future

will be shaped by access to the internet.

Amazing as it may seem to some, a job offering for a vessel with free on board internet will have a strong appeal, whereas there will be an increasing exodus from those who do not – for employers competing for scarce resources, communications could be key. Mind you, given some of the things our friends get up to, we could do with a few months offline! (*Source: Shiptalk*)

ICS publishes annual best and worst of flag states

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the trade body for the shipping industry worldwide, has published its annual "performance table" for all shipping industry flag states for 2013/14. The aim of the chart is to encourage shipowners to look at the performance of flag states measured by a range of criteria in the public domain in assessing whether to use that country's registration for its shipping, as well as to put pressure on those states to effect necessary changes,

including the provision of decent living and working conditions for seafarers.

The ISC performance table uses information about countries' port state control performance, ratification of international conventions and other criteria to mark states as red for poor performance and green for good performance. Of the more than 100 flag states assessed, the only ones to have a clear run of green marks for all indicators are: Denmark, France, Germany,

Greece, Isle of Man, Japan, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Norway, Russia and the United Kingdom.

No states have a clear run of all red marks for poor performance, but the worst performing countries, with red marks for 10 or more of the 18 ICS performance measures, include: Albania, Bolivia, Congo, Costa Rica, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Moldova, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sierra Leone.

While urging caution in

drawing conclusions from the table, the ICS does point out that the absence of a large number of positive indicators "might suggest that performance is unsatisfactory and that shipping companies should ask further questions of the flag states concerned".

Shipping industry flag state performance table 2013/14, International Chamber of Shipping (ICS); www.ics-shipping.org/docs/flagstateperformancetable (*Source: ITF Seafarers*)

Survey seeks seafarer views on ability to keep in touch

The International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) is seeking the views of seafarers to gain a picture of the communications facilities provided at sea. ISWAN hopes that the data from the survey – which covers seafarer access to phones, emails, SMS and the internet – will benefit seafarers and the wider industry by allowing companies to benchmark provision.

You can complete the survey at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Crew_Comms_Survey (*Source: ITF Seafarers*)

Living conditions at sea affect efficiency and safety

MLC gives port inspectors authority to detain ships not conforming to decent habitability standards

The need for seafarers to have decent living conditions is enshrined in the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC) but the latest issue of "International Maritime Human Element Bulletin Alert!" explains why habitability is important for reasons of efficiency and safety.

The MLC gives port state inspectors power to detain vessels that do not conform to decent habitability standards and provides a strict regulatory framework to ensure that seafarers live in decent conditions, but it's a bit more complicated than that.

Habitability is an important design factor in modern ships, with the need to consider such matters as noise, vibration, the indoor climate and lighting in living and working spaces. But there are real benefits to be gained from a comfortable crew, it is more than merely providing each seafarer with a cabin and a bunk—but there are incredible efficiency boosts to be gained by getting it right.

Gone are the days when seafarers should just fit in where they can after the cargo, the engines and the passengers have been accommodated aboard a ship. Habitability matters and there is no reason why seafarers should not enjoy modern facilities that offer comfortable, clean and convivial accommodation aboard any ship on which they serve.

"Habitability" is about people and place and the need to ensure that working spaces,

just as much as the accommodation, are properly designed for real people to work in. "Human-centered ship design" is a great concept, and while noise and vibration has always been an issue aboard mechanically propelled ships, but completely new criteria could minimize structural noise.

"Alert!" gives an insight by an occupational health consultant into how this was achieved by a Danish shipowner who designed exceptionally low levels of noise and vibration into a newbuilding. The fortunate crew aboard this sophisticated new ship report that she is one of the best ships in the fleet to serve on.

Just like the issue of onboard communications, if you owners want to attract or retain the best seafarers they need to think about comfort, too. (*Source: Shiptalk*)

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