

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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In this issue//IMO: Crew Change Woes Turning into Humanitarian Calamity//ITF Floats New Approach on Crew Change Crisis//CMES Looks to Reopen in July//APL EISENHOWER Chief Recounts Mariner Rescue//Authorization Process Begins as MarAd Bill is Introduced//Keep HQ Updated with Your Contact Info//Houston Hall Closed Tomorrow for Juneteenth//

CREW CHANGE CRISIS: IMO URGES IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION TO AVOID HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The International Maritime Organization has urged world governments to act immediately on ship crew changes to keep world trade flowing and avert a humanitarian and ship safety crisis. IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim said, "We are on the verge of a humanitarian crisis and a real safety issue - we cannot expect seafarers currently on ships to stay at sea forever. It is the responsibility of Governments to allow shipping to continue moving, and for seafarers to return to their homes, or get to their ships to begin work."

It's estimated that almost 200,000 desperate seafarers are waiting to leave their ships following the expiration of their contracts and additional extensions. International COVID-19 travel restrictions have severely hampered crew changeovers.

Lim thanked countries which have made progress by designating seafarers as key workers, by facilitating rotations by implementing crew change protocols endorsed by IMO, by easing travel restrictions including facilitating the issuance of passports and visas, and by giving seafarers access to medical care. "But I remain very concerned about countries where restrictions are still in place for seafarers," Mr. Lim said.

American mariners overseas – some serving months past their scheduled assignments – are among those anxiously waiting for relief. M.E.B.A.-contracted companies continue to make efforts to navigate the enormous challenges that are obstructing crew rotations during these difficult times.

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH" – ITF LOOKS FOR SOLUTION TO ASSIST MARINERS' ESCAPE FROM FLOATING PRISONS

After repeated and unheeded calls to governments to alleviate the crew change predicament that is disintegrating into a humanitarian crisis, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is suggesting that a new approach may be necessary to help alleviate the most affected mariners.

The ITF now suggests that mariners serving long beyond their assignments who are not able to be repatriated may need to remain onboard – as passengers. ITF says this approach could be "highly disruptive to global trade." The ship may not be able to sail if manning levels are inadequate. However, ITF noted, there has been insufficient action by governments to designate seafarers as 'key workers',

exempt them from COVID-19 travel restrictions and facilitate repatriation of almost 200,000 seafarers who have been caught up in the crew change crisis.

ITF Seafarers' Section Chair Dave Heindel pointed out that, "Some seafarers have been onboard for more than a year, and over the course of this pandemic many have been prevented by governments from coming ashore even for a walk and alarmingly refused emergency medical care. Frankly, we have seafarers killing themselves at the prospect of this misery continuing without end. They call them 'floating prisons'. This situation is intolerable to the ITF family."

A June 16 deadline for governments to implement IMO protocols allowing crew changes has now passed. There has been limited progress on the issue but most governments have not done enough. "Seafarers have done our part in this pandemic, and plenty more. Enough is enough," said ITF General Secretary Steve Cotton.

ITF President and Dockers' Section chair Paddy Crumlin reiterated that repeated warnings have been given to governments from unions and industry of this unfolding humanitarian crisis. "We have urged them on the consequences of tired, fatigued, depressed crew – to trade, to the environment. We have worked with industry and the international community to offer solutions... We have to draw a line in the sand and today is the day that we make it crystal clear to governments, that from June 16, seafarers are going to start enforcing their right to stop working and to return home."

Cotton noted, "If getting seafarers off these ships causes chaos in supply chains, if ports back up from Singapore to San Francisco, and if this causes ship insurance providers to pull their coverage and global trade to grind to a halt; then that is on the heads of politicians, not the world's seafarers."

CMES LOOKS TO REOPEN IN JULY

The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School is in the process of putting protocols in place and looks to reopen its doors to students in July. Director Chuck Eser pointed out that members should check the CMES website (www.mebaschool.org) early next week for an announcement along with the subsequent release of a revised course schedule. School officials have penciled in July 20 as the tentative date for the safe resumption of continuing education at the facility.

APL EISENHOWER CHIEF RECOUNTS RESCUE OF SAILBOAT MARINER

The crew of the PRESIDENT EISENHOWER will always be spoken of in hallowed terms by a sailboat mariner who was delivered from Davey Jones Locker in early June. Managed by APL Maritime, the M/V PRESIDENT EISENHOWER is a 7,500 TEU containership that sails under the Maritime Security Program. M.E.B.A. Engine Officers aboard the vessel included C/E Matt DesEnfants, 1st A/E Joe Marino, 2nd A/E Sam Stewart and 3rd A/E Conor Golden.

On June 4, about 500 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, a 67-year-old man, who had been adrift for weeks in the disabled 38-foot sailboat *Miss Lilly*, finally had enough.

EISENHOWER Chief Engineer DesEnfants told the *Telex Times* that the rescued mariner (not identified by name) said "his sails were in pieces, his engine was dead (he changed two starters), the batteries wouldn't turn over enough to start and the onboard radio equipment was broken. Also his heater no longer worked and he was unable to keep warm - this is what led to him finally activating the EPIRB [Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon]."

Just after dawn, the EISENHOWER had passed Alaska and was making good time to Yokohama, Japan from Oakland, CA when the distress alert was relayed to the ship by the Coast Guard using the Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) system. Understanding that his was the closest vessel to the distressed mariner, Captain William Westrem conferred with company and crew and the EISENHOWER changed course around 0800 to sail to the rescue, diverting about 30 miles.

Chief DesEnfants said, “The engine crew performed well and readied the ship for slowing down and maneuvering. We started all remaining generators and bow thruster as well as getting the aux boiler online so that we could respond to speed changes. At 16 miles from the position on the USCG SatC report radar contact was made, we attempted to reach the sailboat over VHF radio but received no response.” The EISENHOWER crew later learned that the distressed mariner could hear the ship calls but could not return them.

Soon after, around 0840, the sailboat was sighted and the “Man Overboard” signal was sounded. Chief DesEnfants noted, “Just after 9 a.m. (ship time), the vessel started the bow thruster and attempted to get near the sailboat. The weather was exceptionally calm. Getting a large ship near a sailboat is not easy - the wash from the propeller is enough to push a sailboat away when the engine is started. Using the bow thruster [in this situation] was not easy as the wake from the ship would push the small sailboat away.”

After the EISENHOWER maneuvered close enough to the sailboat, the castaway boarded his lifeboat and rowed himself to the APL vessel’s gangway. The Chief said, “When he got close, the Bosun grabbed him between swells and the gangway was raised.”

At 1030 (ship time), the PRESIDENT EISENHOWER was back underway to Yokohama along with the lucky survivor who was treated by the crew and repatriated when the vessel reached its destination in Japan.

APL Maritime issued hearty congratulations to the ship’s crew who made saving a life ‘just another day’s work.’ They said, “Kudos to the crew of APL’s PRESIDENT EISENHOWER for such display of courage and resolute in this successful search and rescue mission.”

Built in 2005, the 984-foot PRESIDENT EISENHOWER has a MAN B&W 12K98MC-C diesel engine rated at 93,000 horsepower.

AUTHORIZATION PROCESS BEGINS, MARAD BILL INTRODUCED

The M.E.B.A. legislative team reports that several positive provisions have been incorporated into a Maritime Administration reauthorization bill recently introduced by Senate Commerce Committee leadership. Authorization measures represent the first of two Congressional steps to fund federal agencies and programs. Once Congress agrees on Authorization language, work begins on Appropriation measures to provide the funding for those enacted programs.

S. 3930, introduced this week by Commerce Committee Chairman Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) contains a number of important provisions affecting mariners, including the authorization of a Tanker Security Fleet. M.E.B.A. and other U.S.-flag shipping interests have been pushing for the establishment of such a fleet that would operate similarly to the Maritime Security Program to address the Department of Defense's refueling needs and reduce our military's reliance on foreign-flag vessels.

The legislation would provide a \$6 million per-vessel stipend for the Department of Defense to utilize 10 U.S.-flagged commercial petroleum product tankers available to the U.S. Government to help meet national defense needs. A provision to create such a fleet was part of a House National Defense Authorization bill in last year's cycle, but did not survive in the final version of the bill agreed upon by House and Senate conferees.

S. 3930 would also provide a measure of relief for shipping companies participating in the Maritime Security Program (MSP), by easing the minimum 320-day operating requirement that has come under stress during the ongoing pandemic. Among other things, the bill would also improve MarAd's Marine Highways program by streamlining eligibility and application requirements, and it would authorize increased funding for the Small Shipyard Grant program as well as full funding for the Title XI maritime guarantee loan program to assist U.S. shipyards.

KEEP HQ UPDATED WITH YOUR LATEST CONTACT INFO

As a reminder, you should keep the Union updated with your current contact information including mailing address. This can be easily achieved using the address change form available on the M.E.B.A. website. It can be found at www.mebaunion.org under the "Members" tab or in the "Documents & Member Notices" section. Alternatively, you can send your updated information to Renee Bowman at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org. Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you must also forward a signed change of address form to the Plans Office if you wish to update your information with them.

HOUSTON HALL CLOSED TOMORROW FOR JUNETEENTH

M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in Houston will be closed tomorrow (Friday, June 19) in honor of the Texas holiday known as Emancipation Day or "Juneteenth." The observance harkens back to 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger and his Union troops arrived in Galveston bringing late word about the Emancipation Proclamation, which took place 2 ½ years earlier. Granger announced that "all persons held as slaves" in the rebellious States were "thenceforward, and forever free." Though it was cause for immediate celebration, the wheels turned slowly and many of the 250,000 slaves in the Lone Star State wouldn't enjoy their freedom until many months later. By the next year, the annual celebration of Juneteenth had begun.

Forty-three other states and the District of Columbia commemorate or recognize the day, and the U.S. Congress has designated June 19th as National Juneteenth Celebration Day, a day of great rejoicing. Only Texas treats the day as an official state holiday. However, that will change after the Governors of both Virginia and New York announced this week that Juneteenth will be recognized as a holiday in their states by this time next year.

JULY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, July 6 – Boston@1200;

Tuesday, July 7 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Wednesday, July 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, July 9 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, July 10 – Honolulu@1100.

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