

## Book Review

*Paul Chapman was in Houston, Texas, for the World Congress of the Apostolate of the Sea. Since retiring as Director of the Center for Seafarers' Rights, in New York, .he has dedicated himself to working as Chaplain and writer, gathering the harsh testimony of the new sea going slaves of this world, those that sail in the super tankers and refrigerated container carriers, who are often jailed and abandoned in distant lands, far from their families and totally defenseless. Merchant marine organizations have yielded their role as defenders of seafarers to the vested interests of their leaders and those sailors have no organizations of their own.*

*The cause of justice is also a task for the churches and, in its pursuit, church ministers are persecuted.*

*Flags of convenience have created a situation of great injustice and abuse of crews throughout the world. Everyone must denounce those abuses and seek to generate international maritime law which will protect the rights of seafarers. Sailors are obliged to obey their mates and captains as though they were slaves. There are no fixed work shifts, nor are the cultural identities of the sailors respected, producing breakdowns in communication which lead to conflict and tragedy.*

*Some suggestions and tasks:*

1. *Organization is essential and every sailor should belong to a legitimate organization.*

2. *Maritime workers should have permanent labour contracts which cover health risks and unemployment.*

3. *Tours of duty should be no longer than 2 months so that sailors may live with and participate in their families and communities.*

4. *The policy of fixed overtime should be eliminated and a man-mum of hours to be worked should be established.*

5. *Ship owners should allow for worker participation in the taking of decisions which affect them.*

6. *Workers should participate in discussions about the corporate policy of their employers: profit sharing, stock options, cooperative property.*

7. *Countries which serve as flags of convenience should not hide the identity of the phantom owners, who should be clearly identified as responsible agents. specially in case of injustice.*

TROUBLE ON BOARD  
THE PLIGHT  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
SEAFARERS

Paul Chapman

ILR Press ITHACA, 1992