

World Maritime University

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WMU in the News

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University of the sea setting sail

By SHIRLEY WON
of The Gazette

Solve Arvedson is charting a new course in international shipping waters these days as rector of the fledgling Swedish-based World Maritime University (WMU).

"It's the only global (studies) project in the world," Arvedson said during an interview in a Montreal shipping company office yesterday.

Arvedson is on a two-day Canadian tour to promote and drum up funding for the international educational experiment.

The university — sponsored by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) — opened in July last year in the city of Malmo to train senior maritime administrative personnel, mainly for developing countries.

(The IMO is a London-based United Nations agency that promotes shipping safety and efficiency of international shipping operations and the prevention of pollution by ships.)

The educational program is geared for the most part to the developing countries to make them "understand their responsibility for the total shipping community," said Arvedson, attired in a blue suit and a navy and white nautical-patterned tie.

"If the ships coming from other countries do not have high standards ... or if the crew is not very well educated, they may endanger your port," he said, referring to foreign ships carrying potentially dangerous cargo such as chemicals or oil.

The World Maritime University offers a Master of Science degree to students enrolled in two-year courses in marine administration, maritime education and the technical management of shipping companies.

The university can only receive 70 to 75 students annually, all of whom must have approval from their governments. Some students have been sent to Canada for two months of on-the-job training.

The institution, which has an annual budget of \$4 million U.S., gets recurring contributions of \$1 million from Sweden; \$800,000 from the UN Development Program; \$350,000 from Norway and \$120,000 from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

"If the developing countries could come



Gazette, George Bird

Solve Arvedson talks about World Maritime University.

up with a couple of hundred thousand dollars on a recurring basis, the university would be on a good neutral footing," he said.

Arvedson said the university also receives donations from private sources — such as shipping companies — while some developing countries make donations in the form of \$12,000 fellowships, which are earmarked for students of countries of their choice.

But a problem with the "earmarked" fellowships, he said, is that the university may get several students from one developing country and none from another, which is "not the satisfactory system.

"What I want is to eventually do away with the earmarkings so we can use them (fellowships) irrespective of the donor," he added.

Arvedson, who met shipping industry and union representatives in Montreal yesterday, plans to be in Ottawa today to meet officials of the federal Department of Transport and the Canadian International Development Agency.

He said the marine university is situated in Sweden because of its proximity to shipyards and shipping test basins and because it is a "relevant place" to attract students irrespective of their country's political colors.