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WMU in the News

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Maritime safety matters

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MARITIME SAFETY MATTERS...



Assembly of the I.M.O. Council.

When it was first proposed to establish an agency of the United Nations to deal with maritime affairs, the main concern was to upgrade the standard of maritime machinery to improve safety at sea. Because of the international nature of the shipping industry, it had long been recognized that action to improve safety in maritime operations would be far more effective if carried out at an international level, rather than by

individual countries acting unilaterally and without any form of co-ordination. Although a number of important international agreements had already been adopted, many believed that there was a real need for a permanent body which would be able to co-ordinate and promote further measures on a regular basis. It was against this background that a conference held by the United Nations in 1948 adopted a convention

establishing the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as the first international body devoted exclusively to maritime matters.

In the ten year period between the adoption of the convention and its entry into force in 1958, a number of other problems related to safety attracted international attention. One of the most important of these was the threat of marine pollution from ships, particularly



IMO

pollution by the ever-increasing amount of oil carried by tankers. The IMO duly assumed the responsibility of administering and promoting the fight against pollution. From the very beginning, therefore, the improvement of maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution have been IMO's most important objectives.

At the end of this year, from 11th to 22nd November 1985, the 14th Assembly of the IMO will take place in London. All 127 member states and many non-governmental organizations will be invited to attend this important meeting, and on the eve of this event, Holland Maritime looks back at some of the developments within the IMO since its last Assembly — and at Holland's involvement in these activities in particular.

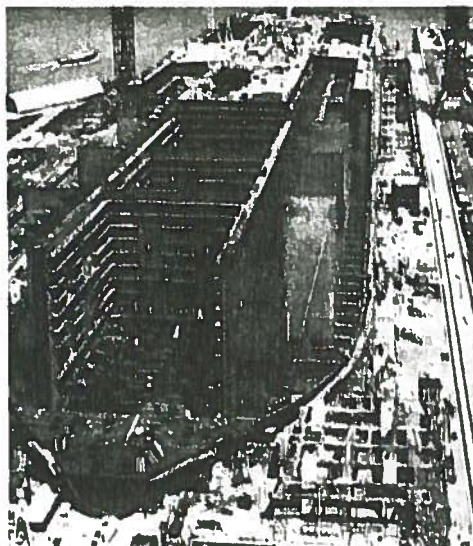
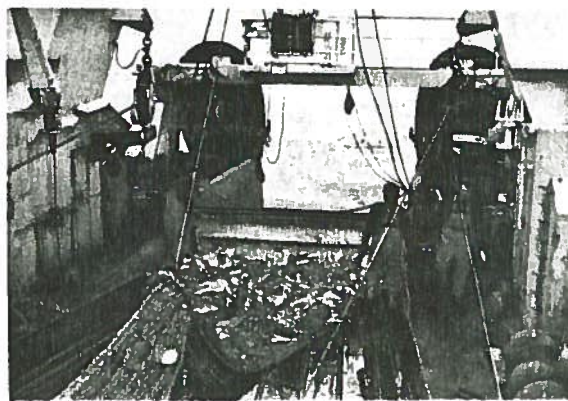
For the Dutch, these last two years have been of special significance. After an absence of ten years, the Netherlands was again elected as a member of IMO's council — or governing body — in 1983. Evaluating the intervening time, Gerrit Dubbeld, the head of the Dutch delegation to both the Council and the Assembly, comments: 'It is our sincere hope that our fellow members and the IMO Secretariat have appreciated our recent work in the Council. I personally feel that we have fulfilled our promise to play an active role both inside and outside the meetings. People must not forget, however, that the Netherlands' participation in the Council is only the tip of the iceberg and that we are intensively involved on all levels of IMO activity.'

Sure enough, if one turns one's attention to any crucial area of IMO's work, one is bound to find a Dutchman actively participating, more often than not as a chairman of a working group, a committee or a subcommittee.

A cleaner sea

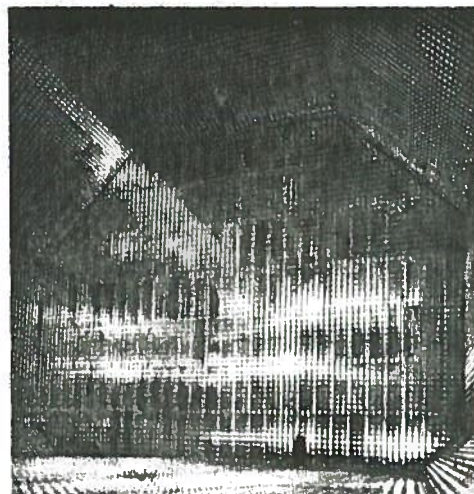
1985 will go down in IMO's history as the year in which the preparations for entry into Annex II of the MARPOL Convention were finalized. As those familiar with the international maritime world will know, this piece of legislation deals with the prevention of marine pollution by chemicals discharged from ships. The transportation of chemicals

Fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations of all. An IMO Convention is designed to make it safer.

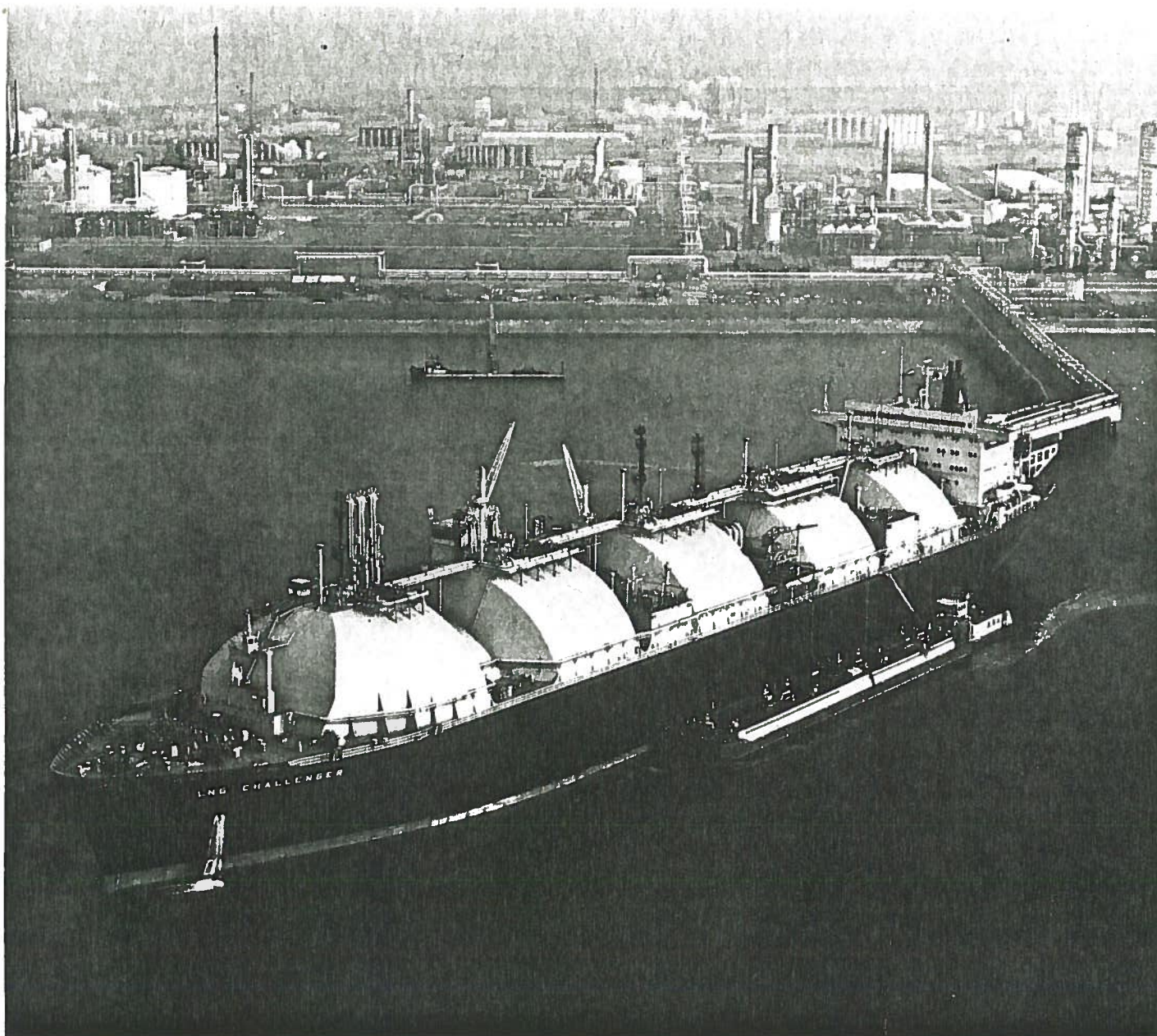


The SOLAS Convention deals with many aspects of shipping safety, like construction.

Inside a cargo tank on a liquefied gas carrier.



The safety of ships and their crews is IMO's greatest concern.



The unloading of LNG gas requires stringent safety measures.

by sea is an undertaking that requires a substantial amount of know-how and expertise. A typically Dutch mixture of experience and innovation has led Dutch shipowners to the forefront of the developments in this area: no wonder, therefore, that the Dutch were closely involved in IMO's deliberations on Annex II.

It was as a direct result of Dutch test-trials that the efficient stripping of cargo tanks and associated piping was considered for inclusion in the Annex II procedures. These test-trials involved the Port of Rotterdam Authority, the shipping company Gebr. Broere B.V., the Europoort Botlek Foundation, the Royal Netherlands Shipowners Federation and the Ministries of Transport and Public Works, Housing,

Physical Planning and Environment. IMO's Working Group on Bulk Chemicals, responsible for preparing the ground work for the finalization of the Annex, also benefitted from the positive results of these trials. Indeed, its Chairman, Dutchman Pieter Bergmeijer, received international praise for his able guidance of the Working Group's frequently difficult discussions in this field.

Salvaging in the 1980s

Recently IMO's Legal Committee turned its attention to the subject of salvage, the aim of its work being to seriously revise the 1910 Convention of Salvage. Dutch salvage companies, such as Smit International and Wijsmuller, are among the largest and most experienced in the world, as the topical 'European Gateway' and 'Mont Louis' salvage projects amply demonstrate. The fact that a Dutchman, R. Cleton, chairs the meetings of the Legal Committee further emphasizes the level of Dutch

involvement in this particular aspect of maritime affairs.

Back to school

Another major field of IMO activity concerns the level of technical co-operation between developed and developing countries. 1983 saw the establishment of the **World Maritime University (WMU)** in the Swedish city of Malmö. On IMO's initiative, this unique institute has been devoted to the training of senior maritime personnel, primarily from the world's developing countries. The WMU offers courses in general maritime administration, the technical management of shipping lines, maritime education and maritime safety administration.

From the very start of the university concept, the Netherlands — as a long-time sponsor of technical co-operation on all levels — has worked closely with the WMU's staff and students in order to improve and expand the academic programme. Dutch government experts

frequently travel to Malmö in the capacity of visiting professors to share their know-how with the students. In addition, visits from student groups to the Netherlands and on-the-job training with Dutch maritime administration and shipping companies are organized on a regular basis. These programmes include trips to the Port of Rotterdam, research institutes (the MARIN and the Delft Hydraulics Laboratory), shipbuilders and shipping companies, such as Nedlloyd and Smit International.

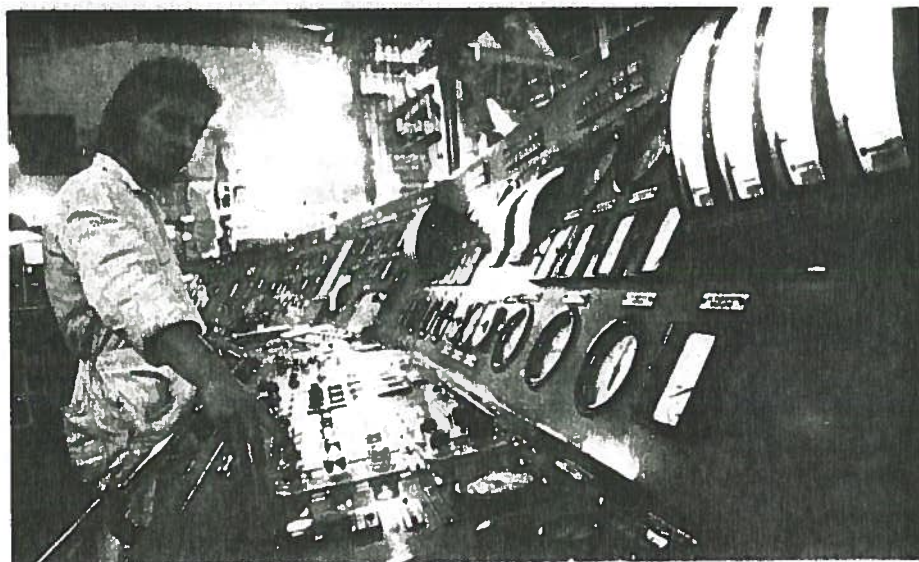
WMU professor, recently accompanying some students on a trip to the Netherlands, commented: 'I had explained to my group beforehand that the Dutch have a peculiar trait when it comes to doing things properly. They try to compensate for living in what they feel is a small country by tackling jobs in the biggest way possible. This attitude has undoubtedly produced outstanding achievements, and never more so than in the maritime sector.'

It is upon this combination of quality and quantity that the Netherlands will rest its candidature for a seat in IMO's Council during the November elections. Gerrit Dubbeld: 'The Netherlands seeks re-election in category B of the Council. This category, consisting of eight seats, is reserved for those with the largest interest in international seaborne trade. The total volume of goods passing through the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam amounts to roughly 300 million tonnes a year, representing the third position in the international trading league. Add to this the fact that every year no less than 40,000 ships from all over the world arrive at Dutch ports, and it becomes clear that Holland's candidature rests on a statistically sound basis.'

No council seat, however, is a question of figures alone. But numbers do give an indication; and in this case, an indication of Dutch maritime involvement. 'We can only assure the existing member states that we will attempt to be even more active in the next two years than we have in the past. Speaking literally, the tip of an iceberg represents a maritime hazard. However, the figurative iceberg of Dutch involvement in the IMO can only represent benefits to the maritime sector.'



The Amoco Cadiz disaster of 1978 was the world's worst ever pollution incident. But most marine pollution from ships is caused not by accidents but by routine tanker operations.



Two views of modern shipping: the control panel in the engine room of a tanker; berthing a tanker.

*written by
MR. P. de Heer*

