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John Landells

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Norway's troubleshooter sets his sights on 1990s

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The International Maritime Organisation elects a new secretary general in two weeks. Shipping Correspondent JOHN LANDELLS talks to Norway's Leif Nygaard, one of four candidates seeking the post.

NORWAY'S candidate Leif Asbjorn Nygaard is a career diplomat who describes himself as a troubleshooter for the Norwegian shipping industry and has been credited with establishing the Norwegian International Ship Register which has brought so many of his countrymen's vessels back under the national flag with the help of financial incentives.

Although lacking the close ties with IMO enjoyed by Thomas Mensah and William O'Neil, he has dealt with the organisation down the years in his capacity as director general of the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With the exception of some technical matters, Mr Nygaard has co-ordinated instructions given to Norwegian delegations to IMO meetings, and has personally represented Norway at IMO assemblies.

After 11 years heading Norway's maritime policy he now feels his accumulated experience would be well matched to the role of secretary general.

Mr Nygaard has worked for the Norwegian civil service since graduating in economics from the University of Oslo in 1967. Following a spell as an economist in the Ministry of Finance he was appointed head of division in the foreign exchange department of the Ministry of Trade and Shipping, moving to his current post

as director general of the ministry's shipping department in 1978, which merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last year.

He has overall responsibility for Norway's internal and external shipping policies and the national maritime administration of 500 employees, including the directorate in charge of maritime safety and prevention of maritime pollution.

Apart from his IMO work, Mr Nygaard has regularly represented Norway at meetings of Unctad's shipping committees and served as president at its 11th session.

He has also been responsible for a number of multinational and bilateral negotiations and consultations on behalf of the Norwegian government.

"I would claim to be an experienced diplomat and bureaucrat with the essential qualities to head an international organisation," said Mr Nygaard.

If elected as secretary general, Mr Nygaard believes the office should be used for overseeing the smooth-running of the organisation rather than as a policy generator.

"I would not like to appear as the policy maker of IMO. I would want to see IMO working smoothly, but it should be the member states and the council which decides policy," he said.

He favours continuing the consensus approach adopted by present secretary general Mr C. P. Srivastava, believing this

LEIF Asbjorn Nygaard, 45, who is Norway's candidate for the post of IMO secretary general is currently director general of the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He has an economics degree from Oslo University and is a former editor of the Norwegian Economic Journal.

He was appointed head of division in the foreign exchange department of the Ministry of Trade and Shipping in 1974 and director general of the ministry's shipping department in 1978, taking overall responsibility for



Norway's internal and external shipping policies including the launch of the Norwegian International Ship Register.

provides a good working atmosphere.

"The main advantage of the consensus approach is that it allows the opportunity for countries to present their views and have them discussed," he said.

In practical terms, Mr Nygaard wants to see more technical co-operation programmes encouraged by IMO, including more projects to help the developing countries. But they would have to be placed on a firmer financial basis. To achieve this aim, it was important that the IMO's budgetary problems were solved, he said.

His personal view is that proposals to levy shipowners to solve IMO's financial problems go far beyond what is currently needed by the organisation, and he remains hopeful that the budget crisis will turn out to be only a short-term problem.

But with finances so high on the IMO agenda, Mr Nygaard sees scope for financing train-

ing projects with contributions from the United Nations development programme.

While many minds are being focused on the present, Mr Nygaard has his thoughts on the challenge the 1990s will pose the new secretary general, who feels will have to come to terms with the continued impact of technological progress on the industry.

He believes that the balance IMO has struck down the years, allowing both developed and developing countries to make progress on technical standards, will come under increasing pressure during the next decade as the next generation of ships using new technologies start to become available.

"My anticipation for the early 1990s is that there will be pressure for new technological solutions, to some extent from the shipping community, and from port states regarding pollution avoidance. The task for IMO will be to find the appropriate balance," he said.