

On the Canadian side, things have improved considerably as the summer has progressed, with an almost-record grain crop in Ontario and prospects of the same in the prairie provinces. It all bodes well for the remaining straight-deckers in the Algoma Central and Upper Lakes Shipping fleets. CANADIAN PROVIDER fitted out for the first time this year and departed Toronto on August 8th. CANADIAN LEADER cleared her Hamilton lay-up berth on August 19 in tow of VIGILANT 1 and LAC COMO and, with the assistance of SEAHOUND, she was placed on the graving dock at Port Weller for her five-year survey and inspection, which would appear to safeguard her future. CANADIAN MARINER is apparently to see some autumn service, and the rumours are that even ALGO-ISLE, idle at Toronto since late in 1999, may see service this fall.

As evidence of the great Ontario grain crop this year, grain shipments have been going out of ports which normally are receivers of grain. The saltie LITA loaded 9,500 tons of grain at Owen Sound (using the loading leg installed there last year), then went on to load more at Goderich, and was then off to top off at a St. Lawrence River port. And the ULS bulker GORDON C. LEITCH arrived to load at the Great Lakes Elevator at Owen Sound on July 30th. The last salt-water ship to call at the elevator in Owen Sound was ABBOTSFORD 'way back in 1960!

But despite all the positive reports about the 2003 grain harvest, all is not well with the Canadian flatback fleet, as more and more bulkers are dispatched to the shipbreakers. With COMEAUDOC's scrapping almost completed by International Marine Salvage at Port Colborne, CANADIAN VENTURE will soon be towed there from Toronto. Meanwhile, breakers at Alang, India, have acquired Canada Steamship Lines' MAPLEGLLEN, (a) CAROL LAKE (87), (b) ALGOCAPE (i)(94), of 1960, OAKGLEN (ii), (a) T. R. McLAGAN (90), of 1954, and Algoma Central Corp.'s 1965-built ALGOSOUND, (a) DON-DE-DIEU (67), (b) V. W. SCULLY (87). All three of these ships have had their names and corporate insigniae painted out, and at the time of this writing, the 150-foot tug SEAWAYS 2, of Seaways International LLC, of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was waiting at Montreal, reportedly to head off to Alang with MAPLEGLLEN. It also has been reported, although as yet without confirmation, that Upper Lakes Shipping has given up on its efforts to see the 1959-built SEAWAY QUEEN preserved somewhere on the lakes, and has sold her to the same Alang breakers. All of these developments are sad indeed, and we cannot help but wonder whether in future years, if there should be an exceptional grain harvest, there will be enough Canadian bottoms to carry it.

The scrapping of another flatback, albeit one long idle, is now well underway. Last operated in 1991, the 1965-built QUEDOC (iii), (a) BEAVERCLIFFE HALL (88), was moved into the scrapping slip at the Canadian Soo on July 28, and cutting began almost immediately.

Scrappers in India have also taken two former Canadian tankers. Beached at Alang on May 1st was the 1970-built NAVSTAR 3, (a) LUDGER SIMARD (82), (b) LE SAULE NO. 1 (97), (c) AL JOUL (02), which was sold to the breakers by Navstar Shipping Co., Panama. She served the Branch Lines and Socanav fleets well for many years before going off-lakes in 1997. The other vessel was less well known on inland waters. She was the 1964-built NADA, (a) IRVING OURS POLAIRE (93), (b) REXTON KENT (95), (c) REXTON (98), (d) NOWRAT AL KHALEES, which was sold by Fouda Group Maritime S.A., Bolivia, and was beached at Alang on April 21, 2003. She operated for the Irving Oil interests until sold foreign in 1995. Most of her time was spent on the east coast or in the Arctic, but she did venture up the Seaway in 1968.

A vessel soon to experience a "new beginning" is H.M.C.S. HAIDA which, since last December, has been going through a major refurbishing at Port Weller. At the time of this writing, HAIDA was to be towed from Port Weller on August 29th, with a grand entry to Hamilton Harbour being planned for the 30th. Toronto observers regret the loss of HAIDA to Hamilton, but politicians in Toronto, who think "ship" is a dirty word, couldn't care less.