

In the November issue, we mentioned that the Bob-Lo Island ferries COLUMBIA and STE. CLAIRE had been retired and that passenger service to the amusement park no longer would be provided from Detroit, but only by smaller boats operating out of Gibraltar, Michigan, and Amherstburg, Ontario. In fact, the International Broadcasting Corp., of Minneapolis, owner of the Harlem Globetrotters, the Ice Capades, and several amusement parks including Bob-Lo, made a Chapter 11 filing in August. On November 15, the "Windsor Star" reported that, the previous day, a U.S. bankruptcy court in Minneapolis had accepted a bid of U.S. \$235,000 for COLUMBIA and STE. CLAIRE, submitted by Larry Spatz, proprietor of the Baja Beach Nightclub Company (which in September reopened the former carferry LANSDOWNE as a bar/restaurant on the Detroit waterfront). The Spatz bid beat out other bids submitted by the Detroit Sailing Club and by Europa Cruise Ltd., Pensacola, Florida. Press reports suggest that one of the Bob-Lo steamers may be moored permanently near LANSDOWNE, with shopping and restaurant facilities aboard, while the other ship may be retained in operation for excursion/charter service. The 1902-built COLUMBIA and 1911-vintage STE. CLAIRE are National Historic Sites as designated by the U.S. National Park Service, but their operation had become increasingly expensive over the years, and their former owners would have been faced with the major cost of drydocking the pair for five-year inspection before placing them in service in the spring of 1992. The wisdom of the sale of COLUMBIA and STE. CLAIRE is questionable, because in addition to being true North American classics, the two boats carried 55 per cent of the visitors who travelled to Bob-Lo Island in recent seasons...

Readers will certainly recall the disastrous explosions and fire which began on September 16, 1990, as the Cleveland Tankers Inc. motortanker JUPITER was unloading gasoline at the Bay City, Michigan, dock of Total Petroleum Inc. On October 29, 1991, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board ruled from Washington that primary responsibility for the accident lay with Total Petroleum in that, despite other contributory factors (such as the passing by in the Saginaw River of the self-unloader BUFFALO, inadequate flame screens on JUPITER's unloading gear, etc.), the accident could have been avoided had the oil company provided more satisfactory mooring facilities at its terminal. The ruling apparently refers to reports that some of Total's mooring pilings gave way, allowing the vessel to break free, rupturing a cargo hose and breaking a power line from shore, thus igniting gasoline vapours. The Board's decision reportedly contradicts a staff recommendation that primary responsibility be assessed against the BUFFALO's master for creating a wake in the river. The ruling is interesting, but will not be the end of the matter, as civil litigation arising out of the JUPITER's destruction undoubtedly will continue for years, and Total already is disputing the Board's findings. JUPITER, herself, has since been dismantled at a Bay City scrapyard.

In the November issue, we reported the accident in which the Polish salty ZIEMIA GNIEZNIENSKA damaged the wall of Welland Canal Lock Seven and put it out of service until October 15, when repairs allowed the upper gates to be operated. Unfortunately, we erred in respect of the date of the accident; it occurred on October 12th, not on the 14th. The repairs which were done to the lock were only temporary, and permanent repairs will be done as part of the canal's winter maintenance programme. The ship's owner was required to post a bond of \$300,000 to cover the estimated total cost of repairs.

As usual, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority has obtained the services of a tug to be used for breaking ice in the mouth of the Thames if flooding conditions appear likely from the early spring run-off. The tug to be used will be McKeil Marine's LAC MANITOBA, which reportedly will be laid up at Windsor, but will move to the river's mouth in January if flooding appears a possibility. McKeil's smaller tug GRETA V. also will be available in the spring if ice-breaking becomes a necessity.