

GREETINGS OF THE SEASON

One of the things to which your Editor looks forward each year is his opportunity, as the Christmas Holidays draw near, to chat with all of our members in these pages on a most informal basis, and to pass along the special wishes which are exchanged amongst friends at this time of the year. It is not often that we enjoy the luxury of having space available in "Scanner" for such ramblings, but as we consider all of the members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one large family of friends, we think that it is very important for us to find space to do so in the December issue.

This also gives us an opportunity to review the year that has just passed and to comment, in a very subjective way, we must admit, on the various developments which have taken place on the marine scene during the year. This is the twenty-fifth time that we have done this bit of year-end business, and we are pleased that we still are here, trusty typewriter in hand, to record our thoughts. We are also pleased that you, our faithful readers, are still just a leap of the Post Office away and still there to read our musings.

What all has happened on the lake shipping scene since last year when we reviewed the state of things? Not really very much! Our governments are still telling us that the depression is ending and that economic recovery is at hand. But people are still losing their jobs, wages are frozen if not decreasing, and the governmental hand dips ever deeper into the taxable pocket of the people while the authorities run the local and national debts to unprecedented heights. And the lake shipping industry has not seen any substantial improvement in its operating position since last year. If anything, the situation has worsened, most especially on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes.

The Canadian grain trade has been unusually bad. The horrible weather of 1992 on the prairies was such that the grain yield was very low, and exports to Russia were, in any event, minimal because there was no money forthcoming to pay the freight for moving the grain across the ocean. The summer floods of 1993 which closed the Mississippi River to barge-carried U.S. grain exports did help to provide some cargoes for those Canadian fleets which carry U.S. export grain, but there were not nearly the number of such cargoes that might have been expected by those who listened to the news broadcasts each day and heard the reports of the flooding on the Upper Mississippi.

A considerable number of straight-deck bulk carriers remained idle for part or all of the 1993 season, and there is a very real possibility that some of them, despite their relatively young age (as lake ships go), have sailed their last and soon will be going to the breakers. The trend to fewer ships in fewer fleets seems inescapable, and we wonder just what a vessel operator must now do to be able to make the shipping business profitable.

There was some iron ore moving upbound through the Seaway, but not enough to activate any additional ships. Tankers continued to be sold or flagged out, and one of our few cement carriers was chartered to a U.S. operator for storage purposes. Most of the self-unloaders kept running, although one, SAGUENAY, remained idle the entire year at Toronto. An idle craneship, YANK-CANUCK, was reactivated for a summer charter for Arctic supply service but did return to the lakes when those duties were concluded.

On the United States side of the lakes, there remained operations which could interest the shipping observer, as the economy generally showed more signs of recovery there than in Canada. The steel business continued active and hence most of the "captive" U.S. carriers stayed busy, and even the Inland Steel straight-decker EDWARD L. RYERSON continued to flaunt her handsome lines around the lakes. Kinsman Lines' traditional-style bulkers remained active in the domestic grain trade to Buffalo and Cleveland, and both KINSMAN ENTERPRISE and KINSMAN INDEPENDENT received drydocking for sur-