

MARINE NEWS

In the November issue, we noted that a new company, called QMT Navigation, had been formed by Socanav Inc., of Montreal. It now is known that the name of the firm is an acronym standing for "Quebec Montreal Tankers". In our report, we mentioned our understanding that the new company was to have three vessels, and that they would be W. M. VACY ASH, L. ROCHETTE and LE BRAVE. In fact, those three tankers are in the new fleet, but so is one additional Socanav ship, the HENRI TELLIER. It is reported that they will be carrying different funnel markings in their new service, which will be carrying petroleum products for the Ultramar organization.

QMT Navigation's tanker LE BRAVE, (a) TEXACO BRAVE (II)(86), will be carrying a new aid to navigation this winter whilst she operates between Montreal and Quebec City. An electronic chart-display and navigation system, developed by the federal government together with Offshore Systems Ltd., of Vancouver. The project is part of a six-year, \$7.6 million federal programme to develop production of electronic navigation charts for major commercial vessel operations.

THALASSA DESGAGNES, (a) JOASLA (79), (b) ORINOCO (82), (c) RIO ORINOCO (93), now owned by the Desgagnes organization after having been salvaged from the shore of Anticosti Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, finally left the dry-dock at Lauzon, Quebec, on November 10th, after the completion of extensive hull repairs and an overall refurbishing. Her first trip was short, however, for she just moved across the St. Lawrence River to Section 30 of the Port of Quebec, which is located at the mouth of the St. Charles River.

At the close of the 1965 navigation season, the Canadian Pacific Railway abandoned its Great Lakes passenger service, which had been operating for more than eighty years. The last two vessels running the route between Port McNicoll and Thunder Bay were the magnificent 1907-built, steam-powered sisterships KEEWATIN and ASSINIBOIA, which for their entire lives had been immensely popular amongst the travelling public. KEEWATIN was retired completely at the end of 1965, and then lay idle at Port McNicoll, while ASSINIBOIA, more economical to run because she was fired with oil rather than coal, carried on in freight-only service during 1966 and 1967, following which she, too, was retired. ASSINIBOIA went to the Philadelphia area in 1968 for use as a restaurant, but soon burned to a total loss. KEEWATIN was eventually acquired by Roland J. Peterson, who took her to Douglas (Saugatuck), Michigan, and has displayed her ever since as a marine museum. She has remained open to the public, but all reports indicate that her condition has deteriorated considerably, most notably in respect of the wooden boat deck over the upper deck cabin.

It was reported during the autumn of 1993 that a group of private investors in Thunder Bay is hoping to acquire KEEWATIN and return her to Thunder Bay for restoration and use there as a floating museum, restaurant, nightclub, casino, or whatever. The plan is a costly one, reportedly to cost some \$2 to \$3 million in excess of the U.S. \$750,000 which her current owner is said to be asking for KEEWATIN, and the investors have requested assistance from the City of Thunder Bay. We are very wary about any plans to use KEEWATIN for anything other than a museum (the thought of a casino aboard the grand lady does not impress us), but it certainly would be good to see the steamer return to the waters in which she operated for so many years.

Another venerable vessel which survives today is the 1896-built steam tug EDNA G., which for many years was operated at Two Harbors, Minnesota, by the Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railway. For the last twelve years, however, EDNA G. has been a static display at her old home port. On September 13th, the Two Harbors city council voted to expend the sum of \$100,900 on a general refurbishment of EDNA G. in an effort to ensure her continued existence. It was reported that the 102-foot tug would be towed to Superior, Wisconsin, for drydocking there as part of the work.