

With so much bad news in the steel industry these days, one ray of sunshine came just before Christmas with the news that Algoma Steel has received the necessary approval from the bondholders for its reorganization efforts. Algoma, working under court protection from bankruptcy in a last-ditch attempt to save the venerable firm, made one proposal to the bondholders that was rejected. It then made a second proposal which was accepted subject to Algoma's work force agreeing to certain contract concessions, including a temporary 15% pay cut. Happily, the workers agreed that working for less was preferable to not working at all, and the deal was done. As a result, the federal government has now agreed to provide Algoma with a \$15 million loan guarantee, so it would seem that Algoma will be able to remain in business. This is good news for lake shippers and even better news for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, which would have been in dire straits indeed had the steel company folded.

Meanwhile, there continue to be efforts in the U.S. steel industry to negotiate mergers which might help to reduce costs and save at least some of the firms. United States Steel and Bethlehem Steel (the latter already having filed for Chapter 11 protection) are names frequently mentioned in this respect. The LTV Corp., however, has indicated that it does not wish to merge with anybody; it just wants to go out of business!

The St. Lawrence and Welland canals have now closed for the season, and the closing was much easier than in recent years due to the relatively warm air and water temperatures that precluded the formation of ice. The last complete commercial transit of the St. Lawrence canals was made by the tanker PETROLIA DESGAGNES, which passed down through the St. Lambert Lock late on December 24th. She spent the night on the lower wall of the lock and got under way, bound for Sorel, early on Christmas Day. The final complete transit of the Welland Canal by a commercial vessel also took place on Christmas Eve day. Clearing Port Weller downbound at 13:50 were the tug INVINCIBLE and barge McKEE SONS en route to winter quarters at Hamilton. The last salt-water ship to clear the Welland was GRIGORIY ALEKSANDROV on December 22nd. The ALEKSANDROV also was the last ocean boat to pass down at the Soo. Conditions permitting, the Seaway and the Welland are scheduled to reopen on March 26th.

Speaking of McKEE SONS, we should note that for the first time, Hamilton is hosting a Lower Lakes / Grand River vessel with storage soya beans - and not just one, but three of them! In addition to the McKEE SONS/INVINCIBLE combination, CALUMET and MISSISSAGI also have beans from Toledo for the CanAmera plant at Hamilton. It reminds us of those grand years when Toronto had three major grain elevators operating and the port would be full of ships with storage cargoes each winter.

The news on another front has been good for Hamilton and bad for Toronto recently. For some time, it had been rumoured that H.M.C.S. HAIDA, the retired Tribal class destroyer and Canada's most decorated warship, would be moving from Ontario Place, on Toronto's western waterfront, to Hamilton. The formal announcement of a \$5 million commitment by Parks Canada to move and restore the HAIDA was made on December 18th by Canadian Heritage Minister Sheila Copps, who just happens to represent a Hamilton constituency! The Ontario government, which owns HAIDA, and which acquired her many years ago from the group of enthusiasts who saved her from the scrappers after she was decommissioned in 1963, appears to be agreeable to the move, and there has been scarcely a whimper from Toronto city officials over the plans. It will be necessary to cut a special channel in order to remove HAIDA from her present almost-landlocked location, but it is expected that she could be in her new berth at Hamilton's H.M.C.S. STAR by the summer of 2003 even though she might have to make the move in a floating drydock because of the condition of her hull. HAIDA was built in 1943 and was designated a National Historic Site in 1984. Hamilton's gain will certainly be Toronto's loss and shame.