

Despite the recently announced tariffs designed to reduce the importation to the U.S. of certain types of steel products, all still is not well in the U.S. steel business. On March 6th, the day after the new tariffs were announced, the National Steel Corporation filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Merger talks between United States Steel and National Steel are continuing.

On February 26, the tug EVERLAST and McAsphalt barge NORMAN McLEOD departed Port Colborne and commenced active service. It was not long, however, before troubles were encountered. On March 11, the pair stopped at Monroe with tug engine problems, and on the 16th, they were at the Sunoco dock at Sarnia, from whence ATLANTIC CEDAR and MENASHA towed EVERLAST to the Government Wharf at Sarnia. EVERLAST remains there today, apparently waiting for engine parts to arrive from Japan. At first, ATLANTIC CEDAR took over the towing of NORMAN McLEOD, but recently that task has been assumed by the 1963-built McKeil tug SALVOR (C.822510). On the entry into service of NORMAN McLEOD, the tug JOHN SPENCE and barge McASPALT 401 were laid up at Port Colborne. They then proceeded to Hamilton, arriving there March 28th. McASPALT will now receive a thorough refurbishing at Hamilton.

The bunkering tanker HAMILTON ENERGY departed the Port Weller shipyard on March 15th and was taken down below Lock One of the canal. She then spent two days having additional repairs done, and sailed for Hamilton on the 17th. Over the winter, the damage caused when she was rear-ended by UTVIKEN last spring was repaired, and the ENERGY was repowered with a rebuilt 12-cylinder locomotive diesel.

Also at Hamilton, the McKeil tug ALICE A., recently renamed WILLIAM J. MOORE, is receiving the final touches in her conversion to handle the aviation fuel barge LE VENT. The tug has been given the necessary coupling equipment and now is receiving a raised pilothouse so she can be navigated when pushing the barge.

On March 27th, CSL TADOUSSAC arrived at Toledo in tow of JOHN SPENCE. The self-unloader then was drydocked for the repair of rudder damage apparently suffered last autumn. The rudder problem was not related to the March 9th storm that broke TADOUSSAC's forward lines. Another C.S.L. vessel drydocked recently was FRONTENAC, which got an entire hull painting in the Pascol dock at Thunder Bay. For the last several years, FRONTENAC has, without doubt, been the shabbiest looking ship in the C.S.L. fleet, but now she sports fresh red hull paint with a white forecastle.

We have learned that the barge made from the hull of CANADIAN EXPLORER (whose stern went onto CANADIAN TRANSFER) has been re-registered under the name BARGE LAVIOLETTE. Her official number as CANADIAN EXPLORER (C.323003) is gone, and her new number is 815366. Her owner is recorded as Services Maritimes Laviolette Inc., of Trois-Rivieres, Quebec. The barge is used for grain storage. And speaking of CANADIAN TRANSFER, we should note that she has not fitted out yet this spring and is still laid up in Sarnia's North Slip, with a two foot square hole in her starboard bow. The hole may have been suffered when the TRANSFER was moved to allow MAUMEE, laid up alongside, to leave for service this spring.

Downbound in the Welland Canal on March 31st was U.S.C.G. SYCAMORE, downbound for the coast after her completion at Marinette. Two more "Juniper class" buoy tenders, CYPRESS and OAK, will follow her out of the lakes later this year.

It is just possible that 2002 may see the beginning of actual work on a new lock at the Soo to replace the closed Sabin and sometimes operated Davis Locks. Cofferdam design work should be completed this year and, if sufficient funds remain, tenders will be called and cofferdam construction begun.

The partially scrapped remains of VILLE MARIE II capsized in the Richelieu River at Sorel on March 15. Originally LAVIOLETTE, she was known in Toronto as BLUE WATER BELLE and CALEDONIA.