

Anyone want to buy a tug? After many years of work in the marine contracting trade, Durocher Dock & Dredge Inc., of Cheboygan, Michigan, is leaving the business. Two public auctions will be held; one at Cheboygan on October 9 will deal with four lake tugs, 16 barges and other assorted equipment, while another at Jacksonville, Florida, on October 11, will see the offering of three tugs and 14 more barges.

Extreme drought conditions this summer in many areas of Canada's prairie provinces have led to one of the poorest grain harvests in many years. Many of the Canadian straight-deckers that might otherwise have operated this autumn probably will not do so. ALGONORTH and ALGOSOUND are two bulkers that will run, both fitting out at Montreal in early October. CANADIAN MINER also is operating after her drydocking at Port Weller. ALGOCEN, which took a rest for the better part of two weeks at Toronto, sailed again on September 30. Remaining idle at Toronto are the retired SEAWAY QUEEN and CANADIAN VENTURE, as well as CANADIAN MARINER and ALGOISLE, which are unlikely to fit out despite earlier suggestions that the MARINER might see some autumn service.

Also reactivated during late September was the KINSMAN INDEPENDENT (ii), the last operating U.S.-flag straight-deck bulker. After a summer hiatus at Buffalo, the INDEPENDENT fitted out for a projected seven autumn trips to Buffalo with grain. As the last remaining active elevators at Buffalo now can receive grain shipments in self-unloaders, it would seem likely that the 1952-built KINSMAN INDEPENDENT (iii), which is owned by the Minch Transit Company, of Rocky River, Ohio, and operated by Great Lakes Associates Inc., also of Rocky River, the last vestige of the Kinsman Transit fleet, will not see service beyond this season.

Unexpected arrivals at Toronto on October 1st were the McAsphalt Marine tug EVERLAST and barge NORMAN McLEOD, which were secured along the west wall of the Docks Entertainment complex at the foot of Polson Street. Although many harbour-area residents might have wished that the pair were there to bury "The Docks" in asphalt and stop the high-decibel noise emanating from the site, it turns out that the tug and barge, all freshly painted up, were there for an official dedication ceremony scheduled for October 2nd. The vessels were suitably dressed for the occasion.

It appears as if the 1925-built railroad carferry VIKING 1, (a) ANN ARBOR NO. 7 (64), (b) VIKING (96), owned by Contessa Cruise Lines LLC, of Lafayette, Louisiana (or Eden Prairie, Minnesota), soon will have to vacate her berth at Erie, Pennsylvania, where she has been lying since October 17, 1996. The City of Erie wants VIKING 1 moved to make a berth for the rebuilt river trainferry LANSLOWNE and wants VIKING 1 gone by the end of October. The trouble is that the current owner of LANSLOWNE stripped off much of her superstructure earlier this year and has not yet begun the reconstruction process. We would like to see both vessels survive, but...

And speaking of ferries, it is difficult to know what to say about the continuing efforts to establish a fast ferry service across Lake Ontario between Toronto and Rochester. Canadian American Transportation Systems has let to Austal Ships, of Australia, a contract to build a 40-knot, 282-foot catamaran for the service, but the contract is conditional upon the necessary funding being committed. Canadian governments have committed no specific funds, while U.S. governments at various levels seem determined to get the project rolling and we, quite frankly, cannot keep track of who is committed to what. The largest problem is the creating of the necessary infrastructure at Charlotte, which is complicated by the need for environmental remediation at the nearby site of a late-2001 train wreck in the area. Added into the pot has been a study by economics professors at Rochester-area colleges which suggests that estimates of the ferry's ridership may be overly optimistic. It still is hoped by the operator that the ferry service may begin in August of 2003.