

HEAD OF IMO SPEAKER AT SNAME ORGANIZED LUNCHEON

Mr. William A. O'Neil was elected Secretary-General of the IMO for a first term of office beginning in 1990, a second term beginning in 1994, a third term beginning in 1998 and a further two-year term beginning in 2002. He graduated in civil engineering from the University of Toronto in his native Canada in 1949 and served in various positions with the Federal Department of Transport and was particularly closely associated with the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority.

He was Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard from 1975-80 and then became President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, a position he held until joining IMO. This links with the Organization go back to 1972, however, when he represented Canada at the IMO Council. He became Chairman of the IMO Council in 1980 and was re-elected four times. IMO is the United Nations smallest agency with a staff of 300 and a budget of 40 million. The agency was created in Geneva in 1948. Under Bill O'Neil's 14 year reign it played an increasingly vital and visible role during a time of tremendous change. Also during Mr. O'Neil's tenure there was the adoption of the ISPS code, which gives specific standardized, consistent framework for evaluating risk.

Capt Frank Nicol, former president of Shipping Federation of Canada says "O'Neil is one of the "great unsung heroes who, without fanfare, work behind the scenes preparing and creating a better world for us all."

Besides his work at the IMO, in 1991 he became Chancellor of the World Maritime University, Malmö, Sweden and Chairman of the Governing Board of the International Maritime Law Institute in Malta. Most recently he was named the chair of the advisory board of the Panama Canal Authority.

Attendees of the World Maritime Technology Conference International Luncheon were privileged to hear Bill O'Neil. He discussed the changing trading patterns globally and the increased volume and bulk of the goods requiring increased size and power of ships. He pointed out this also increases the potential hazard to the environment. Simultaneously ship crews are fewer and require greater and more demanding skills.

He talked about the proposed changes at the IMO which would affect the role of classification societies promising the organizations intent was not to take over the work of the classification societies but to develop a goal based standard for ships construction and equipment. The IMO would state what is to be achieved but not get involved in the details of how it is achieved. The key factor here being the standards which would be internationally agreed on and monitored by national administrations. He spoke of how it is everyone's goal to eliminate sub-standard ships and operators as they mark their leave on the industry.

Pointing to politics playing an increasing role in the work of the IMO Mr. O'Neil stated that politics are nearly driving the agenda. While he warned that this political involvement is necessary it cannot be adhered to at the risk of tuning out technical advice regarding the long term benefits for safety and protection of the environment.

Mr. O'Neil credits the successes of the IMO to what he calls the four pillars: technical expertise, political awareness, economic understanding, and plain common sense. He said the proof of the validity of the IMO is the continued decrease in shipping casualties statistics, not both in terms of ship lost, lives lost and damage to the environment.

Since the World Maritime Technology Conference, Mr. O'Neil has left the IMO. Moitropoulos will be O'Neil's successor.