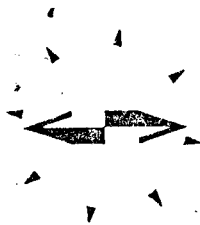


SEALIFE PROGRAMME



A few things we would like to make clear about Sealife:

It is a serious and concerted industry-wide attempt to improve the life of the UK seafarer aboard ship. This is the first time UK shipping has initiated a venture of this size in the ship operating field. It supplements the many other efforts being made within the industry in the personnel field and will build on much work already done in the shipping industry both in UK and abroad.

The Steering Group controls and directs what is carried out. The Group is not interested in academic research for its own sake, and is concentrating on getting hard practical evidence of which improvements can be brought about and how. They are putting the emphasis on active experimental work on board ships and in shore offices.

Some of the major benefits which Sealife is aimed at are going to take a long time to bring about. Sealife's purpose is to help as many people in the industry as possible to start moving along the path to these ends - to get the process of change going.

Those responsible for the industry's affairs: the shipping companies, the maritime unions, the Government and their joint organisations, the National Maritime Board and the Merchant Navy Training Board are the authorities for approving and implementing any change suggested. The Steering Group's job is to provide all interested parties with evidence and recommendation which enable these bodies to agree jointly the actual industry-wide improvements to be implemented.

Finally, we do not expect unquestioning support from all quarters of the industry. It is up to us to secure this support and the active involvement of people in the industry by demonstrating that Sealife can help them to achieve the improvements they want. So far only three of the seven projects are fully launched. We hope to have all seven off the ground before Christmas, with the first results from our endeavours emerging in the second and third quarters of next year.

A further Bulletin will be published in December.

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P. W. R. Smith
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Steering Group

SEALIFE BULLETIN NO. 1

OCTOBER 1975

The Sealife Programme, launched by the General Council of British Shipping in February this year, has now completed its first six months.

This Bulletin, the first of a series to be released quarterly, describes achievements and progress to date and plans for the future.

Sealife, financed by the British Shipowning community, is an industry-wide attempt to develop ways of making the working life of the seafarer more attractive. This initiative has its roots in the deteriorating seafaring manpower position facing the industry in 1974 (in common with most major maritime nations) and in the joint agreement of the owners, unions and the Department of Trade that active measures should be taken to safeguard and improve the UK Merchant Navy's ability to attract, train and retain the UK manpower essential to its future wellbeing.

A joint committee, called the Programme Steering Group, was set up in March 1975, and on it sit representatives of each of the 5 seafarers unions, the Head of the Marine Division of the Department of Trade, two shipowners' representatives - one of whom is its Chairman, Peter Smith of Panoscean Shipping and Terminals Ltd., - and the Deputy Director (Manning) of GCBS. This joint Group, by May 1975, had defined 6 major areas in which they believed projects should be carried out:-

PROJECT 1 - TASKS AND SKILLS

This is to extend and update where necessary our knowledge of what seafaring work is really about these days as a result of the big changes that have taken place in ship design, equipment, and control systems and the more intensive utilisation of ships. With this factual knowledge it is intended that, if necessary, it will be possible to re-examine the skills and experience needed by today's mariners, as well as developing means of increasing their job satisfaction.

As a first step the techniques and results developed from a major investigation by the Germans in their Flensburg study are being assessed to verify their usefulness in this field.

Progress -

A Project team of 6, including staff from BP, P & O and GCBS carried out check-voyages on a sample of UK ships and will be submitting a report in November.

PROJECT 2 - ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For several years the Norwegians and Swedes have been trying to develop improved working structures and relationships aboard their ships by participative methods - the ships company themselves playing a part in establishing - for instance - how work is allocated and organised between them.

Sealife intends to develop similar knowledge from corresponding work on ships in, initially, two UK companies.

Progress -

A Project Leader, (ex P & O) and two outside specialists have been appointed. Discussions are well-advanced with two companies - BP Tankers and Stag Line Ltd. - to establish, with their seafaring staffs, a programme of experimental change on board a number of ships in each case. It is planned to have a total of 5 companies similarly involved by the end of 1976.

PROJECT 3 - COMMUNICATIONS AND SHIP/SHORE RELATIONSHIPS

Closer support for seagoing staff and greater autonomy for the management of the ship's affairs by those aboard are improvements a number of companies believe would help in achieving Sealife's main objective. Under this project such companies can avail themselves of help from Sealife staff to get the necessary changes going.

Progress -

Work is well advanced in preparing for changes in the shore and ship operating procedures of Panoecean Shipping and Terminals Ltd. By November it is hoped to have similar work under way in at least one other company, in three companies by Spring 1976 and in 5 by the end of next year.

PROJECT 4 - EMPLOYMENT PACKAGE

This project reflects the Steering Group's view that it is time to undertake a thorough-going re-examination of the conditions, in the broadest sense, under which seafarers live and work - e.g. amount and frequency of leave, dependents' provisions, means of communication with their families, amount of pay, number of hours of work, eligibility for pensions, etc. It will be necessary to undertake this examination in relation to varied categories of seafarers at different stages of their careers.

Progress -

A feasibility study will be the first stage. A Project Leader is being sought to carry this out by February 1976 and then co-ordinate a major study over the following 6 to 9 months.

PROJECT 5 - RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND INDUCTION

Here again it is felt important to take a fresh look at the practices now used to attract and select recruits to the UK industry, and to see what scope there is for new approaches.

Progress -

Project Leader candidates are currently being interviewed. It is hoped to get work under way before the end of October and to complete a report within 6 months.

PROJECT 6 - DESIGNER/USER RELATIONSHIPS

The object here is to develop a more effective bridge between the ship designer and the men who have to operate and live on their ships. The Scandinavians have made good progress in this area, particularly in relation to the layout and standards of accommodation, facilities and equipment.

Progress -

No action to date but by November it is planned to have opened discussions between representatives of the shipowning and ship-designing ends of the industry to decide on the basic scope and management of a joint venture involving, if possible, several shipping companies and the corresponding design and ship-building firms.

PROJECT 10 - MANAGEMENT TASKS ABOARD

This project was commissioned by the MNTB before Sealife was launched and has been put under the responsibility of the Steering Group. It is similar to Project 1, being concerned with the present day tasks and skills required, but with specific emphasis on managerial work aboard. Staff of Plymouth Polytechnic are carrying out this work.

Progress -

A researcher has been appointed to carry out this project, taking up duties on 1st October.

Clearly this summary is very brief. Those who are interested in further details or who feel they or their company could be involved in some way are asked to contact the Projects Manager, Peter Sharpe, at 01-481 8131.

This is the scope of the Sealife Programme so far developed. As the project list built up, it soon became evident that extensive funds and numbers of skilled people were going to be needed.

So far, the GCBS has authorised expenditure of up to £591,000 to carry the work involved on to the end of 1976. In view of the national importance of the industry (it contributed some £789 million to the country's 1974 invisible earnings) it is hoped that some contributions may be forthcoming from an appropriate governmental source.