

**Hon. Peter MORRIS**

**Address to**

**Mare Forum**

**30 October 2001**

**Amsterdam  
The Netherlands**

Chairman, Ministers, Delegates. I would like to thank organisers of this forum for the opportunity to be here, to participate and hopefully to encourage more progress in improving ship safety and the treatment of seafarers.

The International Commission on Shipping (ICONS) was born here at the Mare Forum of September 1999. It was during that Forum that I made the decision to accept the task of leading an international inquiry into ship safety.

David Cockroft, else where known as ‘Chief Officer’ Cockroft, had approached me some nine months earlier to accept the task to carry out the inquiry. My initial response was for the inquiry to have credibility it needed to have the support of governments, maritime agencies and major industry organisations.

It was during the Mare Forum of September 1999 I became convinced that such support would be there for the inquiry, and accordingly agreed to accept the leadership of the International Commission on Shipping.

This morning I will try to give a brief report on the work of ICONS, where we are, the responses to the Report and the outlook for the future.

My fellow Commissioner, James Bell is present and we will be happy to go into more detail during discussion period or in the breaks.

The ICONS report ‘*Ships, Slaves and Competition*’ was presented at the APEC Symposium on Safer Shipping in Sydney on 6 March 2001.

Since the release of the report, the structure of the Commission has been reduced to James Bell and myself. Our task is to:

- Present, promote, explain, brief, publicise the report and its recommendations;

- To assist and facilitate wherever possible in the implementation of the report and its recommendations;

We received 126 written submissions and met with well over 400 people across the world.

ICONS held public meetings in London, Mumbai and Manila. We received a great deal of support from government maritime agencies in the UK, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong, the Greek Coast Guard, Cyprus, and India.

In some sectors we faced a deal of scepticism, which wasn't shared in most quarters.

Let me say I have some sympathy for International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and 'Chief Officer' David Cockroft. What isn't generally known is that the ITF in its agreement with ICONS insisted on the insertion of a disclaimer clause stating that they would not necessarily agree with anything we may say or recommend.

We based our recommendations on what we believed could be achieved in reasonable time and recognising the various time consuming processes of international bodies.

One shipping organisation has commented, "*well they didn't make any radical proposals for change*"... That comment says a great deal because, as we heard here yesterday and I told the Mare Forum in 1999, radical proposals aren't required – what is required is:

#### COMMITMENT TO QUALITY OPERATIONS, QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY TREATMENT OF SEAFARERS

We gave prominence to quality performance, and the drivers of quality operations are in this room.

The response to the report has been encouraging and heartening for us. Remember it's the objective of each of the recommendations that is critical NOT the text or even the process in some cases.

The UK Government, Australian Government, Canada, Paris MOU, Singapore and the European Commission have been commendatory and supportive, while not dotting every 'i' and crossing every 't' of each recommendation.

The positive reactions of INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO and BIMCO have been helpful.

BIMCO's president has made it clear to me in unambiguous words "*BIMCO supports the objectives of ICONS and wants to see substandard shipping eradicated*".

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) supports or agrees with most recommendations. Overall there is much we can do together.

ICONS in a way we hope, can play a catalytic, good broker role in ending the abuse of seafarers and the establishment of a fairer market for shipping – a market where all shipping meets the required standards and quality shipping and seafarers gain proper recognition for the vital role they play in world trade.

I agree that the image of shipping and its participants needs to be lifted – away from the 3D's – delays, disputes and disasters- which is when there is most media interest in shipping

There are two problems in promoting a positive image in shipping. Firstly, shipping in reality is a mosaic of sea transport services and activities. In reality there is a multiplicity of ship types, sizes, ages, operational routes and locations, however the general impression is that the shipping industry is homogenous, that everything is uniform.

Second, international shipping delivers 90 % of world trade safely, reliably, and at reducing real costs over time. Therefore because it works remarkably well almost all the time, it is taken for granted and makes the news only when one of the 3D's occurs.

To develop a more positive, public image leading shipping organisations and operators need to devote more resources to explaining the role of shipping, the essential nature of its services, emphasizing the major contribution that maritime related services make to national economies.

There is a growing realisation among politicians and governments of the importance of shipping and maritime related services to their economies. That is why we see the substantial marketing efforts by the Dutch Maritime Cluster, the Norwegian Maritime Forum, the British Maritime London, the EC Marine Forum, the Australian Maritime Network; and the promotion of Singapore and Hong Kong as leading international maritime centres.

I believe operators, companies and associations have to lead in the drive for quality and the achievement of higher performance standards.

We need to examine why shipping is so complex, so intricate and such a slow moving industry. This mornings comments by John Millican and Doug Lang on methods and systems of operating ships is worthy of consideration. Meanwhile we must get the best from existing arrangements.

Let me turn to the subject of this forum, the Human Factor. I am very pleased that the focus of these two days is on the people who make the metal and machinery that is shipping work.

The level of performance on board is dependant on the competence and commitment of crewmembers. To that we must add the quality of leadership of the crew by Captains and Officers.

Seafarers that are well treated and respected are more efficient, more reliable than crew who are abused, ill treated, and or underpaid. The frequency of ill treatment of seafarers and depth of the suffering of some is regularly documented by the Seafarer's Welfare Organisations across the world.

The Commission received extensive information on the exploitation, abuse and ill treatment of tens of thousands of seafarers, many of who were literally slaves. These seafarers need action now to relieve their suffering. Ask the Apostleship of the Sea.

Good managers know that social conditions in the workplace do impact upon job performance and the incidence of work related illnesses and injury. Knowledge of work related illness and injury is an essential tool of good management in shore-based businesses.

However, there is no regular, industry wide availability of information on the incidence of work related injuries and illnesses at sea.

In fact, ICONS learnt that there are many decision makers at senior industry and bureaucratic levels who have any practical knowledge of operational conditions on board international ships today.

There are moves in train for consolidation and improvement of existing labour conventions and instruments at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

However, unless the rate of progress of ILO and IMO deliberations is substantially accelerated, most of the seafarers suffering today will left the industry or have passed away before the new instruments take effect.

Thank you for your support for ICONS and the opportunity to advance the better treatment of today's seafarers and the improvement of the international shipping industry.

