ANNUAL REPORT 2000
SIRC Management Board

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DIRECTOR’S OVERVIEW

Largely as a result of the long economic crisis in world shipping, the 1980s and 1990s saw the development of a global labour market for seafarers. The fact that this market is now entering a mature phase is a clear indication that the long crisis is over and unlikely to return in the foreseeable future. Of course the business cycle as represented in the perennial fluctuations of the freight markets continues as always to resemble a side elevation perspective of cartoonists’ imaginings of the Loch Ness monster. But shipbrokers and market analysts have for several years now been cautiously optimistic. The more settled economic outlook has encouraged a growing readiness to reflect upon the structures, practices and organisation of the labour market.

The rediscovery of the labour force as a positive factor in running ships rather than as a necessary but regrettable cost is not entirely due to better trading conditions. The development of environmental politics, especially in the more established developed economies, has undoubtedly been a powerful factor in promoting a strong regulatory climate increasingly centred on ‘human factors’. At the same time the industry has virtually exhausted the possibilities of finding any new and substantial sources of low cost labour that could be introduced to seafaring without running up against the current drive by international organisations to improve labour standards. And so in recent years there have been no major additions to the list of what have become known as ‘labour supply countries’. Of course there have been new recruits from such countries as Romania, Bulgaria and Cuba where national fleets have almost disappeared and where training has been historically of a high standard. But the numbers have not been large and anyway the likelihood of continuing low rates of domestic economic growth in the Philippines, Indonesia, Russia and Ukraine will ensure that dollar-earning employment on ‘foreign-flag’ ships will
continue to be very attractive for seafarers from these countries. The only country apparently capable of making a significant new entry into the global labour market is China. But in this case international political considerations, coupled with an extraordinarily high rate of internal economic growth make it unlikely that China’s entry will be disruptive.

Labour market conditions are fundamental to the lives of seafarers and are, therefore, no less fundamental to the research concerns of SIRC. ‘Labour market conditions’ is interpreted by SIRC as meaning anything to do with seafaring employment which has an impact on seafarers themselves and, through them, an onward impact on all parties with critical roles in the shipping industry. In the last year the Centre has been able to make some useful contributions to wider developments in world shipping. At the end of 1999 and running through into 2000, SIRC produced a synoptic report for the ILO, *The Impact on Seafarers’ Living and Working Conditions from Changes in the Structure of the Shipping Industry*, which provided the background for the historic debate at the ILO’s Joint Maritime Commission in January 2001. And while this report was being debated in Geneva, another SIRC report was being presented to IMO delegates in London. Meanwhile and further afield, other SIRC researchers were in Denmark, Portugal, Turkey, Brazil and Ecuador looking at local and national training provisions for ratings, and yet another was aboard a shuttle tanker in the North Sea carrying out tests for the joint SIRC-Centre for Occupational and Health Psychology project on fatigue, health and injury. This pattern and spread of Centre activity is normal.

The Centre’s unique capacity to conduct professional scientific research solely focused on seafarers means that we are able to generate genuinely useful information and perspectives and then, through our organic linkages into world shipping, make it publicly available to all interested parties. Our own publications are widely read and reported and SIRC staff are now routinely invited to speak at industry conferences and seminars. We are also and as a new venture,
organising travelling seminars where SIRC staff take relevant research findings to relevant end users. At the same time, albeit in different venues and outlets, we are also able to contribute to scientific debates by presenting data and analysis on an industry which while little known outside shipping circles, is actually the world's first wholly globalised industry. It is not always such a straightforward thing to be engaged in delivering useful information to the shipping community while simultaneously reflecting on the significance that SIRC's analyses might have for understanding the dynamics of the global political economy. The task is made so much easier by the openness, commitment and enthusiasm of the SIRC team, administrative and research staff equally.

PROJECTS COMPLETED

Fraudulent Certification

Late in 1999 SIRC was commissioned by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for a 12-month study of the practices and extent of fraudulent seafarers' certification. The final report, delivered early in 2001, was largely based upon extensive fieldwork in S and SE Asia, Central America and E and S Europe and ran to 258 pages. Interim reports to the IMO showed that although the problem was extensive and deep rooted, immediate reforms were possible. At the time of writing the full report had not formally been presented to IMO delegates.

Research Team: Badigannavar, Bloor, Lane, Maguire, Obando-Rojas.
ILO Background Document

This paper was commissioned by the International Labour Office (ILO) in October 1999 and the 180-page report was delivered in December 1999. Further contributions were made in response to requests from the ILO secretariat into the early summer of 2000. The report was published by the ILO as background for the Joint Maritime Commission meeting in Geneva in January 2001 and was the subject of debate in plenary sessions on the first and second days of the Commission’s meeting. An up-dated version of the report is expected to be published in book form for worldwide distribution by ILO Publications in 2001.

Research Team: Alderton, Bloor, Kahveci, Lane, Obando-Rojas, Sampson, Thomas, Winchester, Zhao.

Former SIRC employee Stephen Roberts completed his SIRC-funded research for Cardiff University PhD in 2000, an examination of the files of the Registrar General for Shipping and Seamen in Cardiff and the MAIB in Southampton, in order to analyse data on deaths at sea from 1976 to 1995 in the British, Hong Kong and Singaporean merchant fleets. His thesis points to higher mortality levels in the foreign fleets.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Transnational Seafarer Communities

Due for report at the end of 2001, the fieldwork for this Economic and Social Research Council-funded study is almost complete. The co-operation and hospitality provided to SIRC researchers by shipowners, shipmanagers, trade unions, training colleges, community organisations, the Anglican Mission to Seafarers and the Roman Catholic Apostleship of the Sea has been so readily offered that, surprisingly for such a complex study, the programme has already exceeded its targets. A further four voyages remain but the research among seafarer communities in N Germany and Rotterdam and seafarer families in India and the Philippines has been successfully completed.

Research Team: Kahveci, Lane, Sampson.
Flag State Audit

Commissioned in mid-1999 by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), the study was designed to produce a legal, social and administrative audit of the regulatory capacities of 38 flag states selected by the ITF. To date, 20 flag state reports have been completed, the remainder will be delivered in mid-2001. The project has developed an indexing scheme using over 70 criteria covering regulatory practices and provides a robust, transparent and verifiable method for evaluating the quality of any flag state’s regulatory capacities. The study has generated a wealth of data which vividly illustrates the problems and possibilities of international regulation. It is hoped to publish the full details of all country reports in a CD-ROM version.

Research Team: Alderton, Winchester

Outreach Seafarers’ Welfare Schemes

This study evaluates the effectiveness of sailing chaplain and similar schemes aimed at providing shipboard welfare services for seafarers. Funded by the ITF’s Seafarers Trust, the project began in January 2000 and reports in June 2002. The principal partners in the project are the Finnish Seamen’s Mission, the Deutsche Seemannsmmission and the Apostleship of the Sea who are all operating outreach schemes. The project is also documenting the largely historical but post-WW2 experiences of French seagoing worker priests and the current but evolving role of political commissars aboard PRC-crewed ships. The study will help the Seafarers Trust assess how far it is possible to provide and organise effective and alternative ways of reacting to seafarers’ welfare needs in a rapidly changing maritime environment, and help welfare agencies evaluate their practices.

Research Team: Berger, Kabveci, McDaid, Shi, Zhao.
Global Labour Market

Based upon an extensive and globally assembled sample of crew lists, this study covers approximately 380,000 active seafarers serving on some 15,000 ships of all types and sizes. This will provide for the first time a finely detailed and accurate picture of crewing practices aboard the world's merchant ships. Thanks to the co-operation of maritime administrations in various world regions it will in future be possible to conduct an annual survey of the supply side of the global labour market. Apart from its basic value to all of SIRC's projects, these crewing data have considerable interest to all shipping industry parties and SIRC is therefore planning to publish it commercially in a partnership with a leading provider of statistical information. It is expected that in future and after a substantial initial investment, the sale of the annual survey will recoup outlay and cover continuing costs.

*Research Team: Lane, Obando-Rojas, Wu, Zhao.*

Fatigue, Health and Injury

This joint project with Cardiff University's Centre for Occupational and Health Psychology is supported by the MCA, HSE and NUMAST and also receives support from SIRC's core budget. The first phase of this continuing project has concentrated on an analysis of patterns of fatigue and ill health in the North Sea, among both rigworkers and seafarers. It has involved: a literature survey (published as a SIRC Technical Report), secondary analysis of two existing datasets on reported injuries, a postal survey of self-reported fatigue among NUMAST members, and the collection of direct measures of task performance, reaction time, attentiveness and a physiological stress measure (salivary cortisol). The latter work has involved the innovative use of research techniques usually confined to the laboratory in a range of North Sea shipboard settings (at time of writing: dive support vessels, supply vessels, pipe layers and shuttle tankers). Future work will involve data collection on rigs and platforms and a broadening of
the study beyond the North Sea to embrace a range of ship types and voyage cycles. Some early findings from the study will be presented at the Symposium.

*Research team: Bloor, Boerne, Ellis, Lane, McNamara, Smith.*

**Seafaring and Family Life**

Pilot work began in early 2000 involving in-depth interviews with UK-based seafarers and their partners, with parallel work being conducted with seafarers’ partners in China. The study explores the impact of seafaring work patterns on family life and especially the stresses and strains associated with a continuous cycle of arrivals and departures potentially leading to stress-related health problems, relationship deterioration and eventual breakdown. In addition to impacting on individual well-being, problems at home may also have safety implications within the work environment. The importance of the spouse as a social support system and in enabling the pilot to cope with stress has already been acknowledged by the aviation industry. The report of the findings of this research will be available from May 2001.

*Research team: Thomas, Zhao.*

**Health and Safety**

Some aspects of SIRC’s developing health and safety programme (the Fatigue Study and the Seafaring and Family Life Study) are reported elsewhere in this report, but they do not comprise the total of SIRC’s research effort in this area. In addition, the following studies have been undertaken in 2000 or are currently in progress:

- An initial feasibility report was commissioned for a possible future international cohort study of seafarers' health and safety. The report (published in the SIRC Technical Report Series) was undertaken by Russell Ecob, a research statistician with previous
experience of the conduct of such studies for the Medical Research Council. Cohort studies allow the collection of data on the future health effects of current working conditions by following up the same group of individuals over time. The report suggests collecting initial data from a sample of 35,000 seafarers contacted via 100 different missions and 15 different union lists worldwide, who would then be followed up for five years. Such a project, while yielding uniquely valuable data, would require substantial resources. So further feasibility and pilot work will be undertaken before a decision to proceed is made.

• SIRC is collaborating with the Danish Research Unit in Maritime Medicine, and researchers in eight other countries worldwide, in the collection of data on seafarers’ occupational injuries. It is expected that the project will yield much fuller data than are currently available, via official accident reporting schemes, on the prevalence of non-fatal injuries. Pilot work was undertaken in 2000 and the main study data will be collected in 2001.

Research team: Bloor, Thomas.

Cruise Shipping

This project examines the working and social relations of women seafarers employed on cruise ships, especially those placed in the hotel and catering departments. Large numbers of interviews have been conducted with crew members of ships visiting some major European and N American ports, with crewing agents in Asia and E Europe and with shipping company managers, trade union leaders and port/sailing chaplains in various parts of the world. A database is being constructed containing information on seafarers’ age, sex, nationality and rank drawn from over 90 cruise ships (35% of world fleet). Data entry and analysis are expected to be finished by mid-March. A report on the final findings is expected to be available from October 2001.

Researcher: Zhao.
Training and Supply of Ratings

There is a growing debate in the shipping industry as to how far there is a real global surplus of ratings. This study, commissioned by the ITF, is looking at manning practices in the world fleet, the quality and provision of ratings training and certification in N, S and E Europe, N America, Latin America, Africa, S and SE Asia and considering how far it might be possible and desirable to increase the skill content of ratings of all designations. The final report is due in September, 2001.

Research Team: Lane, Obando-Rojas, Veiga.

LOOKING FORWARD

Subject to funding, SIRC staff are considering possible future research projects in the following areas: recruitment and retention of new entrants; seafarers' sexual risk behaviour; social isolation; nutrition; the impact of new management practices and new technology; industrial relations and trade unionism; international regulation; changing welfare needs; risk behaviour and collision-avoidance.

DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Centre has always placed great emphasis on making its work known to anyone and everyone with an interest in seafarers social and economic well-being. SIRC’s biennial symposium, for example, draws together an international audience of leading figures from right across the industry. This is a private event open only to invited people but it is effectively a public occasion because of the numbers attending and media reporting. Elsewhere and more often, SIRC staff have become
regular speakers at *Lloyd’s Ship Manager* and ISF manning and training conferences, at trade union conferences, at meetings of the International Committee for Seafarers Welfare and occasions organised by the Missions to Seafarers, the Apostleship of the Sea and ICMA. The Centre has a regular column in the Missions to Seafarers bi-monthly, *The Sea*, and staff make frequent contributions to shipping industry periodicals. They are also increasingly consulted by journalists, maritime administrators, shipowners, trade unions and welfare agencies in search of up to date information.

In 2000 the Centre decided to take a more organised approach to disseminating research findings and work in progress by setting up a programme of one-day seminars tailored to the interests of users. The first of these brought virtually the entire staff of the UK’s Marine Accident Investigation Branch to Cardiff for a day-long discussion of safety and mixed nationality crews. In September of 2001 the team working on the transnational communities project will be travelling to Glasgow, the Isle of Man and Singapore to pass on research findings to shipmanagers and trade unions. Other interest groups among regulators and welfare agencies are in the process of having specific interests identified with a view to being visited by travelling SIRC teams. Although cost limitations make it difficult to regularly travel over long distances, we hope to visit at least one major, non-UK shipping centre every year.

While communication to shipping industry constituencies is basic and essential, SIRC staff have equally demanding commitments to the academic scientific community. It has of course always been fashionable to gently deride academic work as if it was a version of inward looking ‘art-for-art’s-sake’. This may sometimes be almost true - but not that often and most definitely not in the case of SIRC staff. Their role is demanding, precisely because they do need to talk to two communities. This requirement is unusual among professionals of any
description. Academics mostly speak to academics in the same way as crew managers talk to crew managers. SIRC staff, however, are expected to be as much at home with shipping industry professionals as they are with their scientific peers and be able to write for both groups. That they are able to do this with such facility is a compliment to their skills and commitment.

GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS

SIRC has a useful core budget element earmarked for collaborative projects and principally used to encourage researchers in other parts of the world to work on projects of mutual interest. On one of our projects transnational collaboration has actually been built-in: our study of outreach welfare schemes is co-ordinated by the Centre but much of the fieldwork is being carried out in Finland, Germany, China and France (Dr McDaid in Finland and Germany, Professor Shi in China and Dr Berger in France). Elsewhere we have continuing joint projects based in Turkey, China, Spain and South Africa. These are focused on questions associated with labour supply and each of them is nearing completion. We do not have any firm forward plans for further joint projects but we are actively considering co-operative possibilities in E Europe, SE Asia and Latin America.

STAFFING

The Centre’s staff complement has on balance grown considerably in the last year. Vidu Badigannavar who was specially recruited for the fraudulent certification project, has returned to India to a post as Assistant Professor in the Business School, the University of Goa. Dr Bin Wu, a PRC citizen, has been appointed to take a leading role in the Centre’s labour market research. He has recently completed a PhD in
social and economic geography in the Centre for SE Asian Studies, University of Hull and has had a previous university career in China in physics and the philosophy of science. Phillip Belcher, Master Mariner, an experienced seafarer and recent graduate in maritime studies, has been appointed as a research assistant. Geoff Boerne, Rachel McNamara and Neil Ellis have been appointed as research associates to work on the fatigue project jointly with Cardiff University’s Centre for Occupational and Health Psychology. Dr Jaime Veiga, Master Mariner, has been appointed research associate on the ratings project. The Centre has also appointed a new administrative assistant - Louise Deeley - to work alongside Maria Goldoni whose workload has become excessive during the expansion in the range of SIRC activities.

**MANAGEMENT BOARD AND ADVISORY PANEL**

The Management Board lost two members during the year. Mark Dickinson, on moving to NUMAST from the ITF, was replaced by David Cockroft, the ITF General Secretary. Captain Tom Crookall resigned on retirement from his post with P&O-Nedlloyd. The following were elected as new members to widen the Board’s expertise: Captain Pradeep Chawla of Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Ltd., Hong Kong; Lt Cdr Andrew Elliot, Secretary, International Committee for Seafarers’ Welfare; Commander Nicholas Iliopoulos, Centrofin Management Inc., Piraeus and Captain Jack Isbester, a Director in Eagle Lyon Pope Ltd.

The collective expertise of the Advisory Panel was enlarged by the appointment of James McConachie of Carisbrooke Shipping. Professor Nigel Harris retired and Mr Ioannis Terezakis moved to a new post, both are no longer on the Advisory Panel.
PUBLICATIONS


**CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, LECTURES**


Kahveci E., *The work of Seafarers International Research Centre*, Observatory on Seafarers’ and Fishermens’ Rights, University of Nantes, France, 22 January 2000.


Lane A.D., *Bad Times and Better Times? Seafarers’ Lives in the Recent Past and in the Near Future*, University of Nantes, 10-11 April 2000.


Sampson H., *Comparative Perspectives Transnational Filipino Seafaring Communities Afloat and Ashore*, Economic and Social Research Council/University of Singapore, International Conference on Transnational Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region, 7-8 August 2000.


**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

HSE: Health & Safety Executive

ICMA: International Christian Maritime Association

ICSW: International Committee for Seafarers’ Welfare

ILO: International Labour Office

IMO: International Maritime Organisation

ISF: International Shipping Federation

ITF: International Transport Workers’ Federation

LSM: Lloyd’s Ship Management

MAIB: Maritime Accident Investigation Branch

MCA: Maritime and Coastguard Agency

NUMAST: National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport

PRC: People’s Republic of China

RMT: National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

STCW: International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers
SIRC Advisory Panel

**Dr Simon Deakin**
Centre for Business Research, Cambridge University

**Professor Paul Edwards**
Warwick Business School, University of Warwick

**Professor Miriam Glucksmann**
Department of Sociology, Essex University

**Dr Henrik Hansen**
Danish Maritime Medical Service

**Revd Sakari Lehmuskallio**
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**Mr James McConachie**
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**Captain Andrew Winbow**
Head, STCW and Human Element Section, International Maritime Organisation, (IMO)