EDITORIAL

The Origin of the Term 'Maritime Economics'

Although studies and papers in the field of maritime economics have appeared for many years, the term itself seems to have been coined in the mid-1960s. Before then, British discussions on the subject had been dominated by spokesmen for the UK Chamber of Shipping whose approaches had generally been legal rather than economic and naturally self-interested. The only place for systematic academic studies was at Bergen, where the term was not used.

The publication of Dr. Sturmey's book *British Shipping and World Competition* in 1962 and of Professor Thorburn's *Supply and Demand of Water Transport*, in the same year, showed that sound professional work could be done in this new and interesting field. The fifties had seen substantial developments in tankers, as vertically-integrated companies minimised total system costs and enterprising individuals built ever-larger ships for charter. Economies of scale were also exploited in dry bulk carriers, though the transport of general cargoes was fragmented, with daunting difficulties -largely concerned with cargo-handling. Ships often queued outside ports, lorries queued at dock gates and restrictive practices were common amongst dock-workers, shipowners and agents, in Europe and overseas. Some of these were derived from state intervention.

In the sixties, therefore, it was appropriate to move towards a rational economic approach to the whole subject. In Britain this seems to have been appreciated mostly by public sector bodies such as the British Transport Docks Board, the Port of London Authority, the Ministry of Transport and the National Ports Council, all of whom appointed professional, full-time economists -though sometimes without any clear ideas of what they might be likely to do.

It was then thought that it would be useful to have a forum for the informal exchange of ideas. In 1965, therefore, a discussion group was formed, based in London. It was called *The Maritime Economists' Group* and included people from public and private sectors. The meetings leading up to this involved Ken Glover, from the National Ports Council, Eric Pollock, from the British Transport Docks Board, the late Gilbert Ponsonby, then Reader in Transport Economics at the London School of Economics, Eric Price, from the Port of London Authority and myself. At first, 'The Shipping Economists' Group' was suggested for the Group's title. Eric Price, however, proposed 'Maritime' rather than 'Shipping' so as to include seaports with their many problems and the more comprehensive name was agreed.

The group has maintained a useful existence ever since. It is run by Eric Pollock and currently meets in London. The usual format is that invited speakers address the Group and a discussion is followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant. Members contribute in their personal capacities and not as representatives; both papers and discussions are 'off the record' except where a speaker permits. Over the years the Group has widened its scope. It has moved from largely comprising professionally-trained economists to one

including those interested in the subject or who are affected by it. This exposes the economists in the Group to the views of other professions and to problems of the real world.

This small-scale origin of the term 'Maritime Economics' has, therefore, grown to indicate a respected profession, with books, a journal, university lecture courses and an international association all using the name.

Richard O. Goss

Professor Emeritus, Cardiff University