



NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

CNTHA'S MESSAGE CLEAR AT MARI-TECH 2012

"SHOULD THE PAST GUIDE THE FUTURE?"

CNTHA News

Est. 1997

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Newsletter Production Editing Services by
Brightstar Communications
(Kanata, ON)
in association with
d2k Marketing Communications
(Gatineau, QC)

CNTHA News is the unofficial newsletter of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association.

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That was the question CNTHA Executive Director Tony Thatcher put to an audience of marine engineering industry professionals at the Mari-Tech 2012 conference in Ottawa in early April. The question might have been rhetorical, but with the fledgling National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy (NSPS) hot in everyone's mind, it was a gentle reminder that Canada's experience with naval technical procurement since the end of the Second World War has been a veritable primer of acquisition do's and don'ts.

The paper Thatcher was presenting – 'The Navy's Technical History: Should the Past Guide the Future?' (written by CNTHA member, Capt(N) (ret.) James G. Dean) – showed how successive procurement strategies over the years have evolved, and not always for the better.

"Lessons learned from past procurement strategies have been reflected in new project management and contracting approaches," Thatcher said. "Some of the changes can be considered improvements, whereas others have not necessarily improved the process, but have generated new types of problems that have resulted in overall higher cost to Canada.

"The CNTHA believes that as implementation contracts begin under NSPS, the lessons of the past in system technology development and ship acquisition management...must continue to guide the design, construction and project management of the new ships."

The annual Mari-Tech conference was the perfect venue to reach a focused group of engaged industry players. Co-hosted this year by the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, Eastern Canadian Section (Chair, Glenn Walters), and the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Institute of Marine Engineering (National Council Chair, Jeffrey Smith), Mari-Tech 2012 had as its theme, 'Re-birth of the Marine Technical Community.' The two-day conference program included a solid lineup of keynote speakers, panel discussions and paper presentations on topics that covered the spectrum of technical, business, and regulatory developments in marine technology.



James Dean, CNTHA Executive Director Tony Thatcher, Chairman Pat Barnhouse, and Webmaster Don Wilson.

A bustling hall of 50-plus international exhibitors offered a perfect counterbalance, with quality product demonstrations, focused one-on-one discussions, and the odd free pen. In the 'What were they thinking?' department, one exhibitor really had the sparks flying as brave volunteers stepped forward to don safety gear and grind away welds on a piece of steel. For a bunch of marine engineers, it just didn't get any better than this.

The conference wrapped up with a short, lively session from closing keynote speaker Tom Ring, the Assistant Deputy Minister (Acquisitions Branch) for Public Works and Government Services. Mr. Ring delivered a spirited and entertaining endorsement of the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. "We did an awful lot to get to the start line in good shape," he said. "We worked around the clock to get it right."



The *Maritime Engineering Journal* and *CNTHA News* gratefully acknowledge the full conference access afforded to us by Mari-Tech 2012.