APPROACHES TO VEXILLOLOGICAL RESEARCH: PORT FLAGS IN AUSTRALIA AND CANADA A CASE STUDY

Kevin Harrington

SYNOPSIS
Flags for Port Authorities have followed in the heels of the movement towards more active government interest and involvement in the multifold activities of ports and harbours, a movement particularly pronounced in the past two decades, as technology and trade developments rapidly expanded.

PORT FLAGS
A STUDY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN PORTS

INTRODUCTION

Vexillological research into the flags of ports, harbour commissions and port authorities poses a number of problems. First of all, one could ask the question why should such research be done at all. Secondly how does one gather the data, i.e. - where is the information? Thirdly, where does one stop, what are the dimensions or framework for the research?

We have gathered the data by writing directly to port managers in both Australia and Canada. This paper will primarily describe the various flags and suggest some directions worthy of further consideration.

FLAGS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Visits to the Maritime Services Board (MSB) of New South Wales followed our correspondence (See **Appendix 1**). Three port flags were shown and discussed in an interview with Marketing Manager Robert Worsley. The official MSB flag, made by Harry West of East Balmain, Sydney, is a British blue ensign defaced by the MSB badge. This badge comprises a red disc bearing a representation of a sailing vessel, the *Sirius*. Surrounding the disc is a lifebuoy alternately blue and yellow, a symbol of maritime safety. A white ribbon with red backing where shown, bears in black lettering the words THE MARITIME SERVICES BOARD OF N.S.W. This very traditional flag may become obsolete as MSB intends to re-examine its images of corporate identity, and, as many corporations have already done, may opt for a logo that would have multifold uses.

There is a simple flag for the Port of Sydney (Fig.1) - on a white field appears the harbour bridge with an ocean-going vessel passing under it. The name PORT OF SYDNEY appears in blue beneath the ship and a MSB logo beneath the harbour tower closest to the hoist. This logo is blue with MSB on a blue wavy compartment.

The Port of Botany Bay in the late 1980s adopted a house flag, described as a pennant of the design of the Numeral Pennants of the International Code of Signals. Since the Port of Botany Bay is "the First Port in Australia" (Lt Cook arrived here 29 April 1770 and declared the area a British possession) the flag (Fig.2) chosen is a defaced international Numeral pennant Number One. This is a pennant with a white background with a red circle in the centre. The defacing comprises eleven anchors, one large and ten small, with the large anchor near the hoist and ten to the fly. The eleven anchors represent the number of ships anchored in the First Port under the command of Captain Phillip, 26 January 1788.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
THE FLAG OF FREMANTLE PORT AUTHORITY

As shown in an illustration sent to this writer by Marketing Manager Peter Greaves, the flag of the Fremantle Port Authority is the flag of the State of Western Australia, with the addition under the badge of the acronym in yellow, F.P. A. In essence this amounts to a British blue ensign defaced by the badge of Western Australia, a black swan on a yellow disc, and the letters in the same colour, F.P.A., the abbreviation of Fremantle Port Authority.

The Authority has, in addition to its flag, an achievement of arms that shows the attributes of a port. Sails and seahorses adorn the helmet and mantling of the crest. Mermen (Tritons) are the supporters. The compartment consists of seawalls, with rings, opening to reveal the wavey seal. Low provides this blazon of the arms: 'Argent, a Black Swan proper, on a Chief Azure a Packing Case between two rams heads caboshed Or, p.54.'

FLAGS IN QUEENSLAND PORTS

A response to our question came from Don Neal, Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services. He says:

Queensland ports are administered by various Port Authorities in the State and at present none of these Authorities have adopted their own flag. As far as my own Government ports are concerned, the Queensland Government flag is flown and I cannot foresee the adoption of individual port flags for these ports. (Letter 1 March 1989)

VICTORIA
FLAG OF THE PORT OF GEELONG AUTHORITY

On a white field appears a map of Australia in grey or silver (**Fig. 4**). Superimposed on the lower right half of the map is a stylized G in an ochre-orange colour outlined in black (outer) and white (a thinner inside fimbriation). Each arm of the G terminates in a broad arrow. The outer arm's arrow points to the Pacific Ocean; the interior arm's arrow to the Port of Geelong. The whole logo device is off-centre towards the upper fly. The G does not obscure the map's coastline which appears on the G as a white line. Tasmania remains intact as well, her coastline appearing in white where it transects the G.

The same device appears on letterhead and business cards, and it would seem that the logo, developed towards the end of 1981, is an all-purpose device. Hence, as is common in these circumstances, its positioning on a white field has no particular significance.

The black and orange are the Port of Geelong Authority's corporate colours.

The direction of the arrows signifies the port's role in exporting and importing cargo.

The information was provided by Val Campbell, Marketing Department, Port of Geelong Authority, in a letter to the writer dated February 24, 1989.

MELBOURNE HARBOUR TRUST

In general little has been published on Australian port flags with a few exceptions in **Crux Australis** and Barraclough's **Flags of the World**. Some information of the arms and flag of the Melbourne Harbour Trust .Commissioners appears in Ruhen's study of the Port of Melbourne. He also mentions the development in Melbourne of the use of signal flags to indicate ports of origin of incoming vessels.

Melburnians, on hearing that Sir George Gipps would be visiting the young colony, were anxious that he, through the Imperial Government, would bring improvements in

navigation and roads. This was in 1841, just a few short years before Melbourne received city status. They especially asked that a code of signals be installed to operate from Flagstaff Hill. The arrival of ships of any kind could only mean a better life for Melburnians - cargoes out, orders in, new emigrants, social intercourse. Flag signals would allow for better preparation and the joy of anticipation. Soon they were received and put to use. Ships arriving from other colonial ports were identified by triangular pennants on the hill. As Sydney's ships appeared on the horizon, the staff bore red and yellow; Hobart's were signalled by white and blue; Swan River's (Fremantle-Perth) by a blue signal.

It is likely that a flag for the port of Melbourne (**Fig. 5a**) was adopted (1880) before the city itself had a flag. Ruhen tells us that crossed anchors were featured on the flag of the Melbourne Harbor Trust Commission. He is otherwise silent on the details and colour of the flag. Fortunately the flag of the Melbourne Harbour Trust is one of the few port flags to be recorded in a major flag reference book. Barraclough in his 1965 edition of **Flags of the World** shows that vessels belonging to the Trust Commissioners wear the Blue Ensign bearing two conventional anchors in saltire, in white, centred in the fly. Barraclough believed that the flag was taken over in 1877 from the state government department which preceded the Trust. This flag probably influenced the decisions by a few other port authorities in Australia in their adoption of a blue ensign design. The coat of arms of the Commission (**Fig. 5b**) was granted by the College of Arms, London, in 1963. Ruhen who shows the arms in black and white, claims that Melbourne was the first Australian port authority to be armigerous. For a blazon of these arms we go to Charles Low, 'Arms: Azure, a representation of the constellation of the Southern Cross Argent, on a Chief enarched Or five Pallets of the first. Crest: Out of a Coronet composed of eight Masts each with sail set and upon a Rim Or in front of a Bollard proper two Anchors in saltire Azure. Supporters: On either side a Sea Horse Or collared and lined Gules in front of a representation of the Melbourne Harbour front proper.'

TASMANIA
FLAG OF THE PORT OF LAUNCESTON AUTHORITY

In a letter (13 June 1989) to the writer, Captain J.S.L. Brownbill, Harbour Master, informs us that 'the Marine Board of Launceston (Tasmania) adopted armorial bearings on 1 June 1967 in anticipation of the name change to Port of Launceston Authority, 1 March 1968.'

He adds 'the flag of the Authority is a British Blue Ensign defaced with the Authority's Shield and crest in Blue and Yellow on White background. The crest is a Lion and the Lion is the Tasmanian State Emblem'.

In the illustration sent the supporters and motto do not appear on the flag. The shield and the lion alone from the crest appears on a white oval.

The full achievement of arms reflects much of the sea and maritime activity. The pile barry wavy, the three-masted ship, lighthouses are charges on the green field of the shield; the red lion in the crest bears a fouled anchor; the seahorse and mythological Triton (holding a trident) are supporters. The crown on which the lion stands is a naval crown. Even the motto supports the theme, being *MARI CONFIDEMUS* (Let us have faith in the sea).

Joseph Low provides an explanation of the arms: 'The Arms represent a ship entering, with proper safeguards, the River Tamar in the green land of Tasmania', (p.56).

NORTHERN TERRITORY
FLAG OF DARWIN PORT AUTHORITY

This authority was formerly called the Northern Territory Port Authority. The new name and subsequently the current flag design were adopted on 1 January 1984. There had been previous flag designs involving the earlier name.

Essentially the flag design consists of a white field with a blue and white logo (**Fig.6**) in the centre.

The logo is made up of a white circle ringed in blue, with white ribbons above and below the circle. In the circle is a map of Australia in blue, with that part occupied by the Northern Territory in white; the map is superimposed on a blue anchor. On the blue ring appears at top the word DARWIN, at the bottom the words PORT AUTHORITY, all lettering is in white. However the words on the ribbons are in red, the upper ribbon reads DARWIN, the lower one bears the motto AUSTRALIA'S PORT OF THE NORTH.

FLAGS AND SYMBOLS OF CANADIAN PORTS

We'll start with the Pacific Coast in deference to our Pacific sister nation some of whose port flags we have now examined. First, however, the overall authority, the Canadian Ports Corporation / Societe canadienne des ports has adopted a logo, registered as a trade mark 30 November 1988. The logo is designed as an all-purpose mark, hence it also appears on a flag, the usual white field is presumed although this has not been documented yet. It consists of fouled anchor below which are three small maple leaves.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PORTS

The Port of North Fraser has a blue-white-blue flag of vertical panels bearing in the central panel (A Canadian pale) the crowned badge of the North Fraser Harbour Commission. The blue is a medium shade. The words in black PORT OF are above the badge, and NORTH FRASER below. The badge consists of a scene of industrial activity, a bridge, and river shipping, in natural colours, on a disc surrounded by a blue ring bearing the words in white NORTH FRASER HARBOUR COMMISSION. This port authority has its headquarters and operations in Richmond, B.C. The flag is believed to have been adopted early in the 1980s.

Fraserport, or the Fraser River Harbour Commission had not adopted a flag at the time of the survey in early 1986. It is located in New Westminster, B.C. Prince Rupert Port Corporation was also flagless but a letter from manager R.L. Nesbitt (4 December, 1985) did not rule out the eventual adoption of a port flag. Prince Rupert, a port city 500 miles north of Vancouver, is a western terminus of Canadian National railways.

Vancouver Port Corporation adopted a flag, (Fig. 7) in or shortly after 1979. On a white field appears a thick-stemmed red maple leaf on which lie three blue arrows radiating out from a small blue triangle near the base of the leaf. The arrows and triangle form one device fimbriated in white. On each side of the stem are the words constituting the authority's name PORT and OF/ DE (a necessary bilingual touch as ports are under Federal jurisdiction) with VANCOUVER appearing beneath, completing the identity. The lettering is in black. Mr .A.A Shaw, a director of the Terminal, writes that the blue arrows take the form of an anchor, and the radiating arrows signify the movement of cargo in all directions from the port.

ONTARIO

Some Port authorities indicated they did not possess port flags of their own, e.g. Hamilton and Windsor. However these ports sent, in answer to the survey, the pennant flown at their ports during the celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the St. Lawrence Seaway. This great international waterway for oceanic shipping was opened in 1959 connecting the Great Lakes with the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic. The pennant **(Fig. 10)** is a triangular flag of white, in the centre a blue star showing only three points joins with a red maple leaf showing only two segments to create one device combining the U.S. and Canadian symbols. A winding white stripe edged in blue on bottom and red on top forms a figure 25 in the middle of the device. An ore carrier, a silhouette in black, appears above the white stripe in the hoist; a cargo liner in the fly. This flag seems to have been the centre of a controversy in the past year inasmuch as the flying of this flag at a Mohawk Indian reservation (or an island in the upper St.Lawrence) was found objectionable by the Indians. The Mohawk warriors tried to replace the flag of the Seaway authority with their new red Akwesasne flag.

THUNDER BAY

Formed from the merger of the ports of Fort William and Port Arthur in 1970, the city of Thunder Bay is at the head of the Great Lakes, on Lake Superior. The Thunder Bay Harbour Commission, formerly called the Lakehead Harbour Commission is a joint Federal-Municipal commission. This Northwestern Ontario port is the largest handler of grain in the world. Both the municipal flag of Thunder Bay and the port authority **(Fig. 8)** include a representation of a major landform in the bay that is part of local Indian' legend. This is the island whose outline suggests a sleeping man, but so very large as to be dubbed a sleeping giant.

The Port's flag is medium blue in colour and carries the words PORT OF THUNDER BAY in two lines in while on the fly side of the flag. Towards the hoist appears in blue and while a depiction, on a white-ringed disc, of the lake, a grain carrier approaching the port, with the Sleeping Giant island in the background at right angles.

TORONTO

The Queen City's Toronto Harbour Commission had for many years since its founding in 1911 flown a dark blue flag bearing its badge in gold. This badge simply consists of an anchor in an oval formed by a belt bearing the words THE TORONTO HARBOUR COMMISSION, above the belt sat a crown. In 1986 Toronto Harbour Commission adopted a logo for its 75th anniversary. A flag (Fig. 9) bearing this new logo was raised for that year. This anniversary banner has a white field, the words in black THE TORONTO HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS 1911 - 1986 - form a ring around the red, white and blue logo, a stylized crown, anchor and the figure 75. The designer, Chris Yaneff, said that the logo is a break from the THC's traditional crown and anchor:

> We have used the traditional sailing colours of red and navy on a white background but basically it's a natural transition from the original symbol still in use. We simply took the crown and anchor and modernized them.

In an ambitious and successful campaign over the past decade, Toronto has reclaimed much of the waterfront for its people. In fact the harbour area is now a major tourist attraction in the metropolis. Harbourfront, as the area is called, also flies its own flag. On a white field, the word 'Harbourfront' in white is superimposed on a large red maple leaf, and a mirror image of the name, in blue, reflects the word immediately below.

PORTS IN QUEBEC PROVINCE

Montreal - As has happened in many parts of the maritime world, Boston, La Rochelle, San Francisco, Singapore, and Toronto (as cited above), Montreal has taken great pains to restore its old port area (le Vieux Port). Montreal has begun the task of allowing the people of Montreal and visitors to the city to have access to and rapport with the River St. Lawrence, possibilities that have been interrupted by two centuries of industrial progress. To identify and decorate the Old Port numerous flagpoles fly the flag representing the entity 'Le Vieux Port de Montreal'. The same flag (Fig. 11) design serves as a logo on letterhead, pins, jacket insignia, brochures, etc. It is a striking blue and white flag with a representation of the port's old clock tower, with the place of the clock face occupied by a green disc. A solid blue vertical panel occupies the hoist side, then the outline of the tower in white appears next, from top to bottom of the flag, then for the remaining two-thirds of the flag, i.e. the fly, appear 24 blue irregular lines across a white field. These lines simulate

the motion of waves reflecting the harbour's waters. The green disc on the tower suggests the park-like setting and renewal of the area. A sample of this flag has been provided through the kindness of Development Director Robert Simard.

THE PORT OF MONTREAL

The Port of Montreal joined the ranks of vexilliferous authorities in 1985. The port logo has been used as the device on the flag **(Fig.12)** but consideration was given to the choice and arrangements of colours on the flag *vis-a-vis* this device. The port's logo consists of the bow of a ship centred in a large white letter M. The port side of the vessel is white, the bridge and starboard gold. The logo is centred on a field of marine blue, a Canadian pale or square panel, with on each side a gold panel half the width of the blue. The gold is said to represent the great value to the Canadian economy of the commerce caried on at the Port of Montreal. The two gold panels also stand for the two oceans Atlantic and Pacific that border our country and over which the world's vessels sail to and from Montreal.

THE PORT OF QUEBEC CITY (LA VILLE DE QUEBEC)

The following information is taken from **Flagscan** (issue no. 11). The Port Authority of Quebec City also boasts a flag and 'arms'". The flag is white except for a blue panel in the hoist occupying 27% of the flag's width. The arms of the port, outlined in white, are located in the upper part of this hoist panel. Centred in the white field is a stylized "O", the half letter toward the fly in the same medium blue colour as the hoist panel. The other half of the letter is a sky blue.

The Port's armorial bearings were designed by heraldist Rev. Lucien Godbout. The shield is azure, a chevron Or and in base a moored ship Argent on a sea of the last. Blue evokes the peace and safety provided by the harbour, silver the worth of goods shipped through the port. The chevron is a badge of rank denoting the port of Quebec's long history. The two bars of the chevron symbolize the safe haven of the port. The vessel is Jacques Cartier's *La Grande Hermine.* The motto is *j'accueille et je veille'* (I welcome and keep watch).

THE ATLANTIC COAST

The only Atlantic Provinces' port flag on which we have received information is that of the Port of Saint John in New Brunswick, on the Bay of Fundy at the mouth of the St. John River. This port has actually had two flags - the earlier one is a tricouleur of equal horizontal stripes - light blue, gold, dark blue; each stripe is separated by white fimbriation. A shield-like device is centred on the flag extending from above and below the gold stripe. A three-rigged sailing vessel, a freight carrier in silhouette, and that part of the globe showing the northern hemisphere appear on the shield. The light blue indicated the sky, the gold the future of the port city, the dark blue the harbour waters. The sailing ship symbolized the 1604 arrival of Samuel de Champlain on 24 June, the feast day of St. John the Baptist. The modern container vessel and the globe show the port's contemporary world-wide service. This was the flag of the National Harbours Board, Saint John. The flag (**Fig. 13**) was abandoned on the formation of the Saint John Port Corporation in 1987.

The new corporation developed a logo from which the flag design (**Fig. 14**) was created. The logo expresses the corporation's purpose. Two elements of the logo are intended to summarize in great simplicity what the corporation is and what it does. Hence the first element is a Celtic cross - a testament to the Western European heritage and a reflection of the many spires seen from the sea as one approaches the port. The second element indicates the port function - signaled by the universal symbol, the anchor. The logo (Blue in colour) appears near the upper hoist on a white field crossed by a blue line, broken to admit the logo. A blue line appears along the bottom, and above it, separated by white of the field, is a thinner blue line. It is presumed that the two lower lines represent first the Saint John river, and then the Bay of Fundy.

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

In an examination of these Australian and Canadian port flags one may detect such elements as: universal themes for port flag designs (devices, colours, arrangements); local influences on design; the impact of graphic art; principles of good design; traditional influences (e.g. British Admiralty), political subtleties.

Do they suggest differences between Australian and Canadian identities? Perhaps the sampling is too small, but still the beholder will give some thought to this.

REFERENCES

Adams, George; **Organization of the British port transport industry,** London, 1973

Barraclough, E.M.C. **Flags of the World,** London, 1965

Canadian ports and Seaway Directory, Montreal, 1988

Harrington, Kevin; *Quebec City - flags of a capital,* **Flagscan** no. 1 1, Fall 1988,p 16.

Histoire du Vieux-Port, Montreal, 1984

Low, Charles; **A Roll of Australian Arms,** Sydney 1965

McGahan, Elizabeth W; **The Port of Saint John,** St. John, N.B., 1982

Port of Montreal flag, Port de/of Montreal, Spring, 1981

The Ports of New South Wales, Australia, Sydney, 1959 (and 1969 editions)

Ruben, Olaf; **Port of Melbourne 1835-1976,** Melbourne, 1976

Vaughan, John Christian; **Flags of Australia,** Rozelle NSW 1983

APPENDIX I:
The letter of enquiry sent by the writer to various Australian sources, 5 February 1989:

Australia,
To the Port Official Concerned:

Dear Sir,
In the past five or six years In Canada, the various port authorities and harbour commissions have adopted distinctive flags for their respective ports. Among these are Saint John (N.B.), Thunder Bay, Quebec City, Vancouver, the North Fraser, Montreal and Toronto. In addition, there have been special anniversary banners and celebration flags, for example, the St.Lawrence Seaway's 25th Anniversary, and Toronto Harbour Commission's 75th. Furthermore, I have noticed that   new port flags have recently been created in the United Kingdom, e.g. Port of Dover.

I am anxious to determine if the Australian port authorities and harbour commissions are doing the same, and if so, could each be so kind as to send me details on its port flag (a desk flag or colour illustration would be a great help, as would some information on choice of colours, devices, shape and proportions, date of adoption or first use).

Why Australia?   Well, this year the world's 13th Vexillological Congress will be held in Melbourne, Victoria, from Sept. 24 to 29th. I shall be there, God willing, to represent the Canadian Flag Association, and to present a paper.
It seemed to me that a good topic, one that combines Canadian and Australian information, would be the development of port flags in both countries.

Do you think that you could help me in this project?

Thanks for your consideration and best wishes,
sincerely,
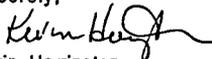
Kevin Harrington,
President and editor of Flagscan.

P.S. CFA's equivalent In Australia Is the Flag Society of Australia,
    Melbourne. FSA will publish the papers and proceedings of the
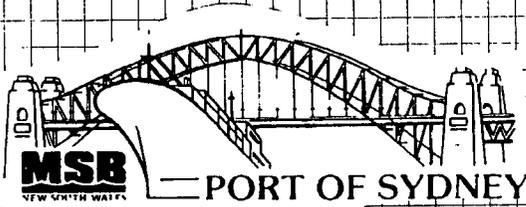   Congress, in their journal, **Crux Australis.** KH.

Fig. 1:
Emblem of Port of Sydney
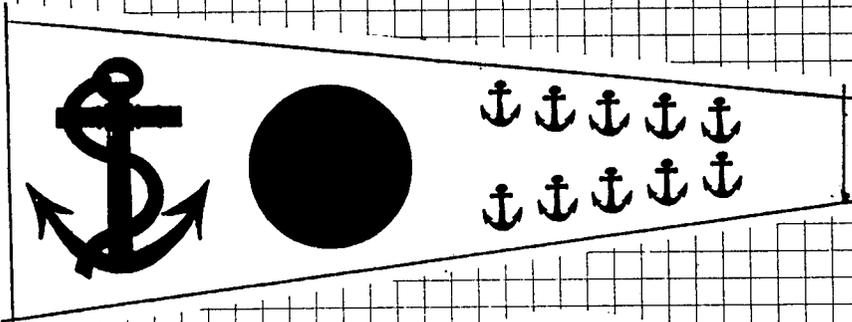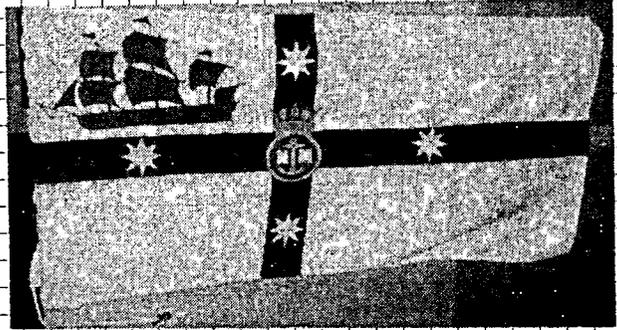A flag for the Port of Sydney,
after JohnVaughan

Fig. 2:
Emblem of
Port of
Botany Bay

Fig. 4:
Emblem of
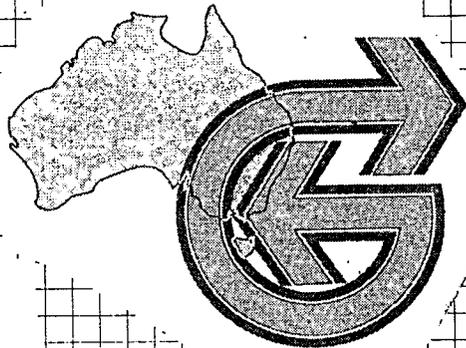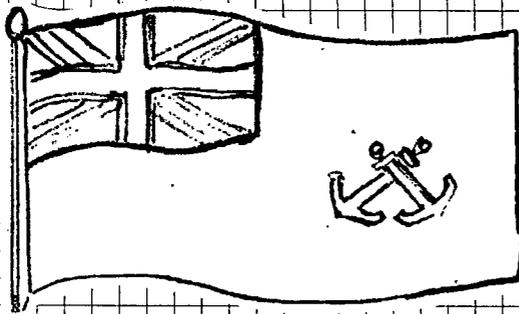Port of Geelong

Fig. 5a and b:
Emblems of Port of Melbourne

PROSPERITY THROUGH SERVICE

The Armorial Bearings of
THE MELBOURNE HARBOR
TRUST COMMISSIONERS

DARWIN
AUSTRALIA'S PORT OF THE NORTH
PORT AUTHORITY
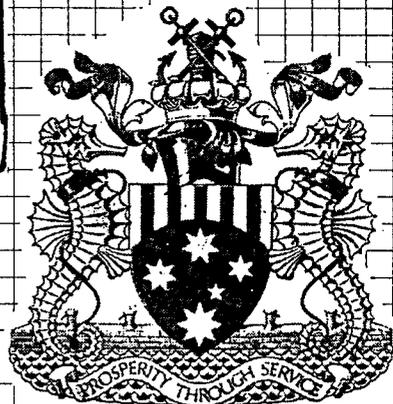
Fig. 6:
Darwin Port Authority

Fig. 7:
Vancouver Port
Corporation

PORT OF/DE
VANCOUVER

THE TORONTO HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS
75
1911 · 1986

Fig. 8:
Thunder Bay
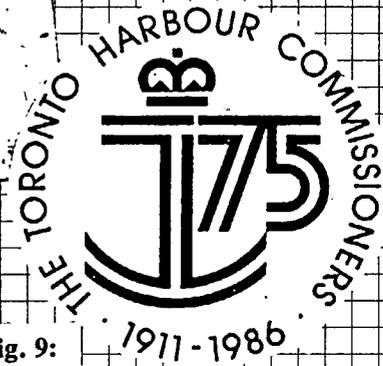
Fig. 9:
Toronto
Harbour
Commisison

Fig. 10:
St Lawrence Seaway
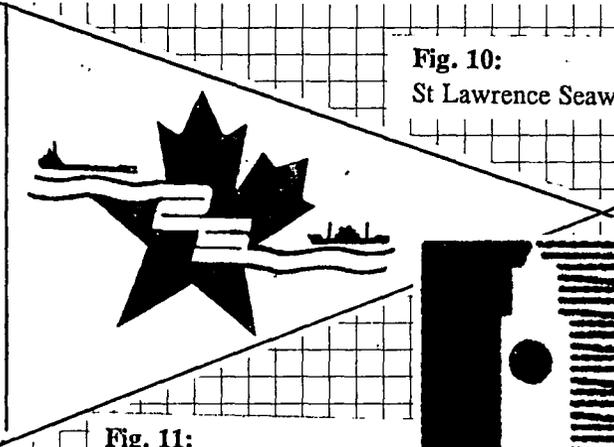
Fig. 11:
Old Port of Montreal/
Le Vieux Port de Montreal

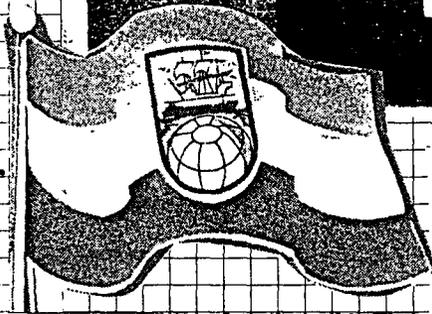Le Vieux-Port
de Montréal

Fig. 12:
Port of Montreal

Fig. 13 and 14:
National Harbours Board, St John
and St John Port Corporation