

Christer Olsson, who is to succeed Jacob Stolt-Nielsen as Chairman of Stolt-Nielsen S.A., is in fighting spirit. He talks about the qualities that have – and will – set the Company apart.

Strength, spirit and determination

My first contact with the Stolt-Nielsen Group was back in 1990 in connection with the formation of Stolt Partner, a spin-off from Stolt-Nielsen, introduced on the Oslo Stock Exchange.

I was an investor in the new Company and was asked by one of the emitting banks whether they could nominate me for membership of the Stolt Partner Board. I served on the Company's Board – the last couple of years as Chairman – until the Company was bought back by Stolt-Nielsen.

As a stock deal, it was not my best (fortunately not the worst, either). In a broader sense though, it was a good deal – as it got me engaged in something I have enjoyed tremendously. In 1993 I was asked by Jacob Stolt-Nielsen whether I wanted to join the main Board. I have remained there ever since.

So, after all these years I feel that I know the Company quite well.

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Has it been 16 years of plain sailing? No, it has not. It has been quite eventful, to say the least! But always, during its ups and downs, there has been a positive spirit and a determination to overcome whatever difficulties there were.

I don't think it will be just plain sailing going forward, either. Volatility is in the nature of shipping, fuelled by sometimes dramatic changes in supply/demand, currency developments and the general economic cycles and developments. Perhaps it is also the case that shipowners and their managements are more creative and risk-willing than the average businessman.

Our Chairman has from time to time indicated that at the right time and in the not-too-distant future he would step down

as chairman. It was with pride and great pleasure that I accepted the offer to become his successor.

I will step into my new shoes humbly. In my new function, I will organise and lead the work at corporate Board level and I will support the management team, whenever appropriate and possible, in their role of running the Company. Jacob Stolt-Nielsen will stay on the Board, where his inspiration, experience, knowledge and drive will continue to be in high demand.

I have so far spent every single day of my professional career in shipping. The past 25 years have been with Wallenius Lines – 15 of these as its President and CEO, and the past four years as Vice Chairman. I also serve as a board director with some other shipping companies. I consider myself fortunate and privileged to have been given the opportunity to spend my career in the shipping sector. There is nothing I would rather have done or would wish to do in the future!

Stolt-Nielsen is a great Company with great products, a great market position, dedicated and knowledgeable people on all levels, top-of-the-line assets and owners who give their uncompromising and full support. With all of this, there is no excuse for not succeeding. But there is also a need for continuous improvements in all facets of our operation. Higher quality, more cost efficiency. It is a process that never ends. The same applies to our customers. To continue to earn their support and confidence, we must continuously improve.

In the unprecedented financial and economic crisis we now suffer, it is important to remember that we are well positioned to ride out the storm and to benefit from what comes thereafter.

Of course there will be an upturn! I do



not think however, that it will be a quick fix this time. Yes, the total collapse of the financial markets and systems was avoided by massive government intervention. The economy continues, however, to be poor. We have not yet seen the full impact of unemployment. I am therefore somewhat pessimistic for the next two years. That I may be wrong is no problem. Positive surprises can always be handled – but we have to plan and be prepared for extended difficult trading conditions.

The operating result of the Stolt-Nielsen Group in this difficult market situation has been surprisingly strong! It speaks very well for all of you, who do the day-to-day work. It is in a bad market that the strength of an organisation is put to the test. Our results have also demonstrated the strength of the structure, with three strong legs in tankers, terminals and tank containers. Although they are in the same broad sector, they have

in this situation proved to be somewhat countercyclical to each other, which is another reason for good results.

Fish farming has clearly proved its ability to deliver good results. I have no operational experience of this sector but am fascinated by its combination of a very hands-on operation and the long and complicated processes for development of new species and expansion of facilities.

To complete the picture, I have high hopes for the development of our projects in gas and bitumen into important activities in the Group.

Finally, I must confess that I am a great believer in visibility and attention to detail. John DeLorean, the former top executive of General Motors, once wrote a book entitled *On A Clear Day You Can See General Motors*. And it did not end well.

Stolt-Nielsen must continue to be a visible Company whose objectives and

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operational activities can be understood by all involved. As to details, you have to know your stuff! To see and understand the so-called broader picture is also important – all the more so the higher up you find yourself in the organisation – but the pillars on which it all rests are hard work and supreme knowledge and understanding of the details. There are no short-cuts.

It is with great enthusiasm and expectation that I look forward to chairing the Board. I can, and will, devote the time required to do the job. I will be there to help and support.

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