

# The End of Two Eras?

Dear Reader,

Having produced the solutions for upcoming IMO legislation, it looked as though the large engine sector and its supplier industries had gone a little quiet. But it is now clear that they were just drawing breath for their next phase of progression.

The announcement that the aims of the EU-supported Hercules-2 large engine R&D project are to go beyond legislation, and adopt an holistic approach to creating more efficient shipping, marks the first time for many years that the engine development horizon has not been dominated by a coming round of regulations.

Undoubtedly, the first goal reflects the widely-held view that while IMO Tier III is a significant milestone in environmentally-sustainable maritime transport, there are still many more miles to go between the limits imposed on large engines and on their series-produced high speed siblings.

Just as certainly, this Hercules-2 objective also mirrors a feeling of confidence in the large engine industry. The intense efforts to meet IMO's prescriptions has resulted in the greatest ever accumulation of new findings and extension to the engine builders' fund of knowledge. The industry has technologies which are not only making their mark on the newest products, but which also have the potential to improve the performance and – critically – the total cost of ownership of several engine generations to come. So why wait for legislation?

For its part, the second aim takes account of the need to take a total systems approach to reducing both noxious and greenhouse gas emissions. And total system means not only the ship, power station, locomotive or other vehicle in their broadest sense, but also all the emissions and pollution-creating processes which

impinge on its manufacture and, importantly, its running costs. Or what we might call the “total cost of the environment’s ownership of engines”, from the standpoint of the global population.

Fittingly, another recent event with industry-milestone status is the announcement of a new medium speed four-stroke engine which both incorporates findings from the first Hercules programme and produces a level of engine efficiency that challenges the two-stroke’s traditional pre-eminence in this area. This is an exciting, game-changing development which typifies the industry’s current confidence and is sure to increase competition.

But it also reminds us that, over 20 years ago, a member of the four-stroke community spoke of hastening the extinction of two-stroke “dinosaurs” when launching a new, very large bore medium speed engine. As Copenhagen, Winterthur and Kobe might point out, dinosaurs ruled unchallenged for 135 million years and, as the inhabitants of Florida and the Northern Territory will confirm, some of their kind are still with us, 66 million years later.

*Jonathan Walker*

**Jonathan Walker**  
Chief Correspondent, MTZindustrial

