

Emanuele Grimaldi slams IMO's 'ridiculous' emissions ruling

EMANUELE Grimaldi has never been shy about expressing some forthright opinions. In the past, he has spoken out on sensitive matters that others prefer to avoid, such as dockworkers' excessive wage packets, or state aid for shipping, writes Janet Porter.

Now he has taken on an even more powerful foe: the International Maritime Organization, which is imposing new rules on the sulphur content of marine fuels.

Dr Grimaldi, who is joint managing director of Grimaldi Group together with his brother, Gianluca, has no quarrel with proposals to reduce sulphur content to 0.5%, but is furious about specific rules for the emission control area covering the Baltic and North Sea, where shipowners will have to comply with a 0.1% requirement by 2015.

That directly impacts on subsidiary Finnlines, as well as other Grimaldi ships, and Dr Grimaldi has taken up the cause on behalf of all those who fear the regulation will drive freight back on to the roads.

With a good track record for cutting ship emissions, Dr Grimaldi says his credentials are as green as anyone's, but argues that there are better ways of protecting the environment than through expensive and inappropriate fuels.

In his opinion, the decision to reduce sulphur content to 0.1% in some areas is "ridiculous", since propulsion systems in most ships now in service have not been designed for such low levels, increasing the likelihood of technical faults and raising the risk of engine fires.

Scrapping elderly ships would have a far greater environmental benefit, he claims. Shipowners should be encouraged or ordered to dispose of over-aged vessels and invest in more modern tonnage, either new or secondhand.

The Grimaldi group has shown the way by recently selling a Russian-built ro-ro vessel, the 12,290 dwt *Commodore*, which was sent to the breakers in July despite being only 18 years old.

The company concluded that repair and maintenance would have been too expensive. Scrapping "made economic sense", says Dr Grimaldi, who is a former president of the European Community Shipowners' Association.

He is urging Brussels to set a 30-year age limit for ships calling at European ports and operating in European waters, with anything older to be compulsorily recycled. That would not only improve safety standards and benefit the environment, but also help improve the supply and demand balance by removing surplus tonnage, he maintains.

