

FIFTY YEARS AGO...

Discussions leading to the introduction of GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System) have included debate on the promulgation of world wide navigational warnings by radio and satellite systems. Discussions on the introduction of the electronic chart and its updating have also taken place. It therefore may be of interest to note that 50 years ago (in *The Hydrographic Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, May 1939, p. 64) these same problems were being discussed by Hydrographic Offices.

“URGENT NOTICES TO MARINERS BY WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

‘Form — Code — Zones and Broadcasting Stations — Reprint — Numbering.

‘By Circular Letter No. 3H of 1937, States Members were invited to submit remarks on a study undertaken by the International Hydrographic Bureau concerning Urgent Notices to Mariners by W/T and on the proposals made by the Brazilian Administration of Navigation.

‘The results of the International Hydrographic Bureau’s examination of this question were published in *The Hydrographic Review*, Volume XIII, No. 2, November 1936. Details of this article (pp. 66-68 of the volume mentioned) are not repeated here, but in it a plan was developed for introducing into the International Code, if and when opportunity occurred, a series of coded lettergroups for use in broadcasting the most urgent Notices to be brought to the knowledge of navigators.

‘On the other hand, the proposals of the Director General of Navigation of Brazil were set out in I.H.B. Circular Letter No. 7-H/10-R of 30th November 1936. They bear upon the following points:

- (a) Adoption of a *Special Numbering* of the Notices followed by the letter R (Radio), and of a *Standard Form* either *en clair* or by code.
- (b) Adoption of a uniform rule to determine which of the W/T Notices should be repeated in the printed Notices to Mariners.
- (c) Division of the Oceans and Seas into zones and the assignment of the stations which should broadcast the Urgent Notices to Mariners in each zone.
- (d) Publication in the weekly or fortnightly editions of the printed Notices to Mariners of a list of the W/T Notices still in force, as is already done by the Brazilian Hydrographic Service. (See: Avisos aos Navegantes N° XXI/97-99, Rio de Janeiro, 16th November 1936).

The publication of a list of Urgent Notices by W/T still in force in the printed sheets of Notices to Mariners has great economic advantages for, when this is done, the number of Temporary Notices to be printed is largely reduced and also it makes it easier for the seaman to check the W/T Notices still in force.

'I.H.B. Circular Letter No. 3-H/1937 requested the opinion of the States on these questions. At the moment (1938), the Bureau has received replies from the following countries:

'Brazil; Denmark; France; Great Britain (and Australia); Japan; Portugal; Spain; Uruguay; U.S. Hydrographic Office; Argentina.'

