

Mention of squeezed margins and high purchasing prices were mere asides at the latest BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division meeting. Discussion focused instead on sometimes unfathomable government actions and on the now-familiar theme of counter-ing metals theft and fraud, particularly from shipping containers.

Non-Ferrous



Fanfare for Electronic Scrap Committee

Some of the foundations for the BIR's new Electronic Scrap Committee were laid at a workshop in Shanghai.

The committee will be chaired by Phär Oscár of Stena Metall in Sweden who has more than 20 years' experience in this field. He told delegates that the new body will raise the BIR profile of e-scrap, which he described as a 'rather complicated' mix of metals, plastics, glass and even wood, as well as some hazardous materials. Although he already has members in mind for the new committee, he also asked others to contact him if they were interested in participating. BIR's environmental & technical director Ross



The new committee 'will raise the BIR profile of e-scrap', stated Phär Oscár.

Bartley suggested the new committee might 'add value' by identifying best practice and policies 'that actually work' with regard to e-scrap, as well as by comparing the various certification standards and programmes such as R2/RIOS, e-Stewards and WEEELabex. Robin Wiener, president of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), agreed that the committee could play an important role in educating the industry about the various standards relating to e-scrap.

The Electronic Scrap Committee will operate under the auspices of the Non-Ferrous Metals Division whose president, Robert Stein of Alter Trading in the USA, has commented: 'Electronic scrap, evident in so many different forms, is a rapidly growing sector of our industry. It is at once dynamic and very different from the more mainstream and less complex metals so common in our industry. Along with that dynamism comes a very different nuance in the grades of material; the way they are treated; and the myriad of regulations that pertain to their recycling. It is for these reasons that we chose to establish a committee to keep our members informed about this rapidly-changing sector of the industry.'

A more detailed review of the e-scrap workshop in Shanghai will be published in the August issue of 'Recycling International'.

Salvo fired

It is not known whether BIR's Non-Ferrous Metals Division president Robert Stein of Alter Trading in the USA had always intended to put government 'meddling' at the core of his presentation in Shanghai. However, the decision by India in early May to increase its duties on certain forms of non-ferrous scrap provided the perfect spark for a renewed attack on government interventions that create 'obstacles to the natural flow of metals around the world'. The Indian government has raised the basic customs duty on aluminium scrap imports from 0% to 2.5% and has re-imposed the 4% special additional duty of customs (SAD) on brass scrap imports. According to Stein, these actions have been taken 'for reasons that perhaps only that country and that government can explain', and coincided with increased scrutiny of non-ferrous scrap entering China. 'We again are faced with government meddling in our business that has bans or other restrictions on the export of non-ferrous scrap, influ-

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enced by consumers who falsely believe that scrap processed within their borders by us is inherently theirs to consume, regardless of its origin,' he said. 'Whatever the impediments put forth by governments, the markets are the best at determining where our scrap is shipped.'

And he warned that 'the more barriers to free trade, the higher the costs to the processing community who will seek alternative markets'.

'Polar opposite'

Stein's surprise at India's recent move was echoed by Paul Coyte of Hayes Metals in New Zealand in his summary of world market reports submitted to the most recent BIR Non-Ferrous Metals World Mirror. Five years ago, he mused, the Indian government had responded to unrelenting steel price increases by withdrawing import duties on steel.

at 'meddling' governments

But today, at a time of global uncertainty and slowing sales of semi-finished and finished products, it has done 'the polar opposite'.

In many parts of the world, including North America, Latin America and the Middle East, maintaining scrap flows remains 'a paramount challenge', he added.

Fighting crime

Other problems currently confronting the non-ferrous sector include 'difficult margins' and 'scrap that is expensive for us to obtain', Stein continued. And he also highlighted ongoing thefts of metal from containers, welcoming BIR's decision to join forces with the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) - a crime-fighting unit of the International Chamber of Commerce - to help it to build a more comprehensive database so as to be able to 'apprise our members of risks around the world'. Stein urged victims of such crimes to approach BIR and the IMB with details, commenting: 'By reporting losses, you are not only helping our

industry, but you're helping yourselves as well. All reports are strictly confidential. If you were robbed on the street, you would call the police - and this is not too much different.'

The chairman of BIR's International Trade Council, Robert Voss of UK-based Voss International, also called on members to come forward with details of any theft or fraud. The more information to be contributed, 'the more we are protected as an industry', he insisted.

Award-winning technology

Guest speaker C. S. Huang, chairman and ceo of China-based Ye Chiu Taicang (Aluminium), argued that huge demand from the automotive sector is likely to encourage further development of the aluminium alloy industry in his country. He also suggested that the 'Green Fence' policy implemented by China in February this year has deprived many factories in Guangdong of sufficient secondary raw materials to meet their production requirements.

Another guest presentation from Xun Min Guo, executive vice-president of China-based Dongying Fangyuan (Copper), outlined the company's award-winning oxygen bottom blowing technology which, he claimed, has delivered an improvement in recovery rates as well as low operating costs and a one-third reduction in energy usage, while also resolving the issue of dioxins in copper smelting. His business imported some 200 000 tonnes of scrap copper last year, he noted. □




Robert Stein said the markets are best at determining just where scrap is shipped.



According to Paul Coyte, maintaining steady scrap flows remains problematic for most countries.

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