

## Non-Ferrous

# Stein: info exchange vital to countering container theft

After more than seven years in the post, the Paris meeting of the BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division represented the swansong of Robert Stein as its president. And in time-honoured style, he left delegates in no doubt as to his opinions on a range of topics – including metal theft from containers and ill-considered government policies.

**D**espite entreaties from the highest levels within BIR, scrap traders appear unwilling to share details of their experiences when it comes to the spiralling problem of container security violations. Outgoing BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division president Robert Stein of Alter Trading in the USA confirmed to the meeting in Paris: 'There seems reluctance among many shippers to divulge this information, even with the understanding that it is held in the strictest of confidence.'

Stein said that around 10% of the BIR membership had come forward with details of such crimes but that 'the theft rate is certainly higher than that'. He described the silence maintained by many victims of theft as 'a mystery', adding: 'This information helps to determine patterns of theft and ports where it is occurring, and helps the international bodies develop a method of putting an end to the plague. Without the

necessary information, there is nothing that BIR can do to aid its members.'

## Theft 'more organised'

Stein reminded delegates of BIR's close links with the crime-fighting International Maritime Bureau, which maintains a huge database relating to trading problems and issues. 'It is urgent that our members freely report such thefts,' he said, 'so that we can work with international police agencies, transport companies and others so that our products can be protected.' And traders who had experienced problems could also help themselves, such as by 'putting commercial pressure on the steamship lines to step in and help mitigate the problem'. Other options under consideration for tackling container theft included opening up a greater dialogue with shipping lines and other stakeholders, commented BIR's International Trade Council chairman Robert Voss CBE of UK-based

Voss International. Describing theft of this type as 'more organised' and 'one area of business that seems to be doing very well', he revealed BIR is planning another survey of members' scrap theft experiences and urged

everyone to participate in order to obtain 'as thorough statistics as we can'.

## Governments 'too easily swayed'

The outgoing divisional president, who has been succeeded on an interim basis until May next year by David Chiao of Uni-All Group, returned to another familiar theme in Paris. Having complained that decision-makers often ignored the environmental and economic benefits accrued from scrap, Stein added: 'Governments too easily are swayed by political concerns when establishing policies that are often poorly thought out or are influenced by groups that are more interested in their own agenda.' In its role as an educator of governments and others as to the value of non-ferrous scrap, he said the BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division would shortly

publish another study into movements of copper and aluminium scrap around the world, compiled by the World Bureau of Metal Statistics. Last year, BIR published 'Global non-ferrous scrap flows 2000-2011' - a report prepared for BIR by CRU Strategies which also focused on aluminium and copper. As regards latest market conditions, most scrap processing companies had been complaining of a lack of material availability and of 'compression of margins', according to Stein. Summarising reports to the latest BIR Non-Ferrous Metals World Mirror, divisional board member Alexandra Weibel-Natan of France-based Manco also acknowledged a 'tightening' market as well as 'more and more challenging' trading conditions. The US market represented one of the few positives, with 'robust' demand for most scrap grades. □

## Eurozone set for near-zero growth

The Eurozone is likely to record GDP growth of a mere 0.5% for 2014/15, with Germany registering an 'utterly disappointing' increase of 1.2%, it was stated at the BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division meeting by Philippe Chalmin, professor of economic history at Paris-Dauphine University and founder of Circle Cyclope. Moderating a Europe-focused panel session featuring experts from industry, finance and academia, he identified the UK as the continent's 'shining star' with projected GDP growth of 2.5%.

Chalmin pointed to 'a lack of clear governance' as a key problem for Europe while Alessandro Giraudo, world group chief economist of the international Group Tradition-Viel, forecast possible further weakness in the Euro.

Patrick Verschelde, president and ceo of METAL-LUM, noted predictions that the copper market would return to deficit in 2018 and that the red metal's price would climb 8% by that year.

Philippe Chalmin: 'a lack of clear governance' is a key problem for Europe.



Outgoing Non-Ferrous Metals Division president Robert Stein.



Alexandra Weibel-Natan: 'tightening' markets and 'more and more challenging' trading conditions.

