



Lean machine

HMCS Algonquin leans precariously toward her jetty at HMC Dockyard in Halifax yesterday after a routine list-trial went

awry. Crew members and dock workers scrambled to right the newly-refitted destroyer after she started taking on water.

Endangered destroyer saved after list-test tip

By RICHARD FOOT
The Daily News

Crew members of HMCS Algonquin scrambled to save their ship from sinking at its berth yesterday afternoon at HMC Dockyard in Halifax.

The Tribal-class destroyer, only recently back from a \$300-million refit, started taking on water during a routine incline experiment, or list-trial, to test the ship's reaction to added weight, such as that of a helicopter, being placed on one side of its deck.

The trial was intended to heel the ship to a 20-degree angle. But at 19 degrees, seawater began pouring through the hull and the Algonquin began listing precariously on its port side at 25 degrees.

"I've never seen anything like this before, only in the movies," said Leading Seaman Dean Partridge, of HMCS Terra Nova.

Dockyard and Halifax fire crews and crew members from the Algonquin and other warships gathered at dockside to help as navy tugs worked to right the ship. As the test weights were shifted and water pumped out of the bilges the ship gradually regained an even keel.

Destroyers such as the Algonquin type can list without capsizing as much as 57 degrees on sharp, fast turns at sea and Tribals are by design somewhat top-heavy. Although there were seamen living on board at the time, there were no injuries or structural damage, navy spokesmen said.

Rumors blame shipyard

"We still have to sort out what the exact problem was," spokesman Capt. (N) Allan Dunlop said. "It's not an embarrassment... there was water in the basement of the house where there shouldn't have been."

Rumors circulated among the crowd of watching civilian dockyard workers that MIL Davie Inc. of Lauzon, Que., which recently completed a four-year refit and modernization of the Algonquin, was to blame. Workers said the Quebec shipyard is not used to working to navy specifications.

Divers looked for leak

"I was told they took the side out to replace the engines in it, and they didn't shore the keel up enough," said David Adams, a dockyard electrician. He explained if the keel had not been supported firmly in dry dock, it may have warped, allowing in water.

While navy divers were looking for a leak in the keel, Dunlop said he didn't know if the accident was a result of the refit, but he defended the Quebec shipyard.

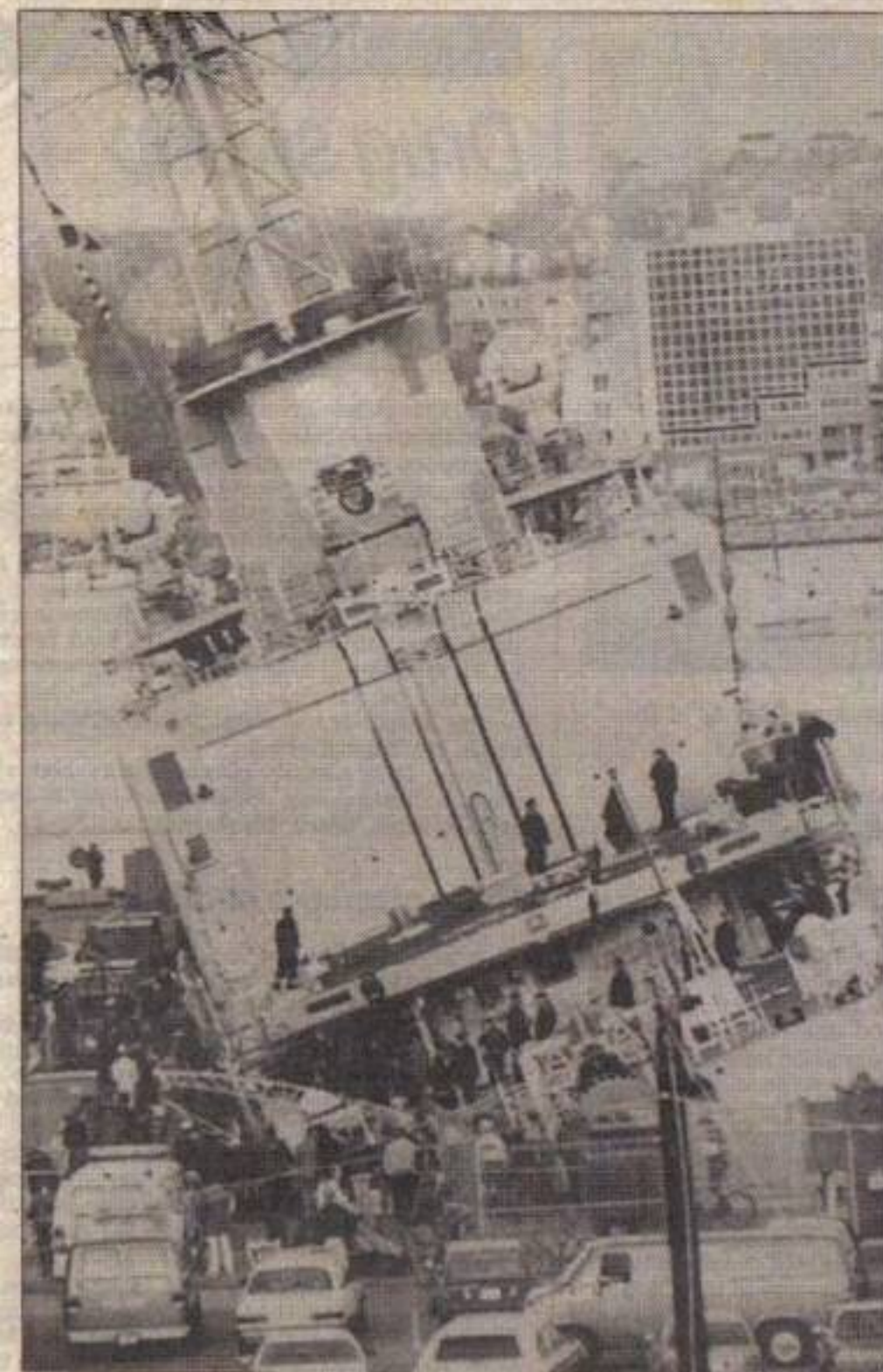
"The workmanship at MIL Davie has been just great. It's like any other yard: it's a very complicated job, some things are great, other things, hey, sorry, we need to check this out, or redo that part," Dunlop said.

One of the changes to the Algonquin is its fuel tanks, which now fill up with water as the fuel is burned. Before the refit, the tanks would remain empty, allowing water to be pumped into one side as a way of controlling the ship's balance.

"It would have been easier to deal with the problem with the old system, but we don't have an empty tank to move water ballast into, to get her upright," he said.

MIL Davie is also scheduled to refit Canada's three other 1970s Tribal destroyers, with new engines, weapons, and sensor equipment, as part of a \$1.2-billion update.

The navy isn't sure what additional costs there might be, or how long it will be before the Algonquin is operational again, Dunlop said.



Ships' crews work to right the navy destroyer Algonquin yesterday.

CANADIAN PRESS