

Vote of Thanks

Sir Anthony Colman—LSLC Council Chairman----delivered a vote of thanks to speakers, contributors, supporters and organisers

Everyone will agree that this evening has been a really memorable occasion. In this symposium, the contrasting views and points of emphasis of Dr Payne and Admiral Lang have highlighted some very real differences in the approaches of the shipping industry and national governments to major passenger and commercial vessel disasters. Those of us involved in maritime law for a long time will know that these tensions have existed for decades. Some of us here were involved in the terrible loss of the Laconia, 50 years ago. I was closely involved following the loss of the Derbyshire.

In this connection, we might feel that one of the great advantages of public enquiries in this country is that, given the right terms of reference, they can both point the finger of blame; and identify what has gone wrong and make recommendations about putting things right.

These two facilities of public enquiries seem to have a great advantage over all other forms of investigation. As we all know, however, on the one hand there is the determination of governments to bring to book people who the media, the public and those who have lost dear ones in the disaster may want to see punished. On the other, there are the interests of the shipping industry and future generations of seafarers concerned with recommendations for improvements in safety and practice. These things are constantly in tension. They present a real problem, not only in shipping but wherever the public becomes concerned about major disasters, for example in financial collapse and even the conduct of the media.

This evening has highlighted the sort of problems to which those tensions give rise. I would like to thank our guests for their extremely enthusiastic support. The Q & A session has been extremely stimulating. Perhaps the most unforgettable feature of the evening has been the presence of Lord Mustill, my master and very close friend for nearly 50 years, who has made such an immense contribution to English shipping law. To have weaned him away from Nidderdale marks a great success by the Centre.

I would like to thank very much the organising committee for setting up this excellent evening and that tiny but absolutely indispensable group at the heart of the Centre who have done so much of the leg work behind

the scenes: Gerard Matthews, Martin Rowland and Julia Costea. They have done great works. So too the LSLC – Young Maritime Professionals and volunteers led by Menelaus Kouzoupis are to be commended.

There is one person without whom this Centre would never have existed and this evening would never have occurred. That is, of course, Aleka Sheppard. She, by her absolutely enormous drive, focus and determination, has built this Centre into a tremendous educational institution. To all those who have made this evening so enjoyable and stimulating, let us show our very real appreciation.