

### **Lord Thomas' speech – 27.06.23**

Just before the pandemic, we celebrated 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LSLC. It was unfortunate that the pandemic made it impossible to celebrate the creation in 2011 of the Young Maritime Professionals on its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, but we are enjoying a magnificent celebration this evening and I do not want to keep you long from it.

Permit me a short reflection about the vision and achievement of Aleka in establishing the LSLC's YMP for it is difficult to underestimate the debt of gratitude owed to Aleka – the key to the centre's success and the principles on which it was founded and operates. May I highlight three:

- Those who develop shipping law should understand the business of shipping; you cannot develop the law without understanding the way the business works and particularly the way in which it changes. Those who argue cases and those who decide them must also understand the consequences for the business of shipping of their arguments and their decisions; for if we produce law that does not facilitate the business of shipping, we harm a business so fundamental to trade and we harm your future and the future of London.
- The common law is developed by looking outwards, keeping abreast of developments in other jurisdictions and where there are good ideas, moulding them into our law to enrich our law and to make it better. This is the way our common law has always developed. But we cannot do that successfully or show that London is a true international centre, unless we have a good understanding of and respect for the concepts in the laws of other nations. We are fortunate in London in having so many from other nations here to enrich that understanding.
- The development of the law must be coherent and principled.

So much has been done under Aleka's leadership, it may be difficult to believe there is more to do.

However, we cannot ignore the competition from other legal systems and centres. When I was your age, now some 50 years ago, the relaxed life that was then possible was reflected in the first arbitration I attended in 1971. A dispute that had arisen during the Korean War some 20 years before was heard with the help of a very leisurely lunch. We have certainly become more efficient, but what mattered then and what matters now is the quality of what we do and the law we make. Your generation has the huge advantage of the YMP and the leadership provided by the LSLC to meet today's worldwide competition.

One specific example of what we need to do is the development of Electronic Bills of Lading. The Law Commission has produced an excellent Parliamentary Bill which, having been

through the House of Lords, is progressing through the Commons. It enables English law (and, as a Welshman, I do mean English law) to develop compatibly with the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Trading Records, but in a way which leaves room for English law to develop the new regime and demonstrate its leadership of the law. Getting agreement on the principles, drafting the Bill and getting through Parliament is the easy bit. Ensuring that it is used and that we keep our traditional role of developing the law and other states follow our leadership on this are the difficult bit -but that is for you to engage in and to safeguard your future and the future of London. This is but one example – there are many, many more I could give. There is no room for complacency, as you know and as you show by your success as the YMP.

I am therefore confident that, with the strong and ever encouraging leadership given by Aleka and by the work of your chair, you can do it. I am sure that one of you who is here tonight will be able to say at the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the founding of the YMP that you have achieved and will continue to achieve the core ideals of the LSLC – ensuring our law develops in London to meet the needs of shipping worldwide by taking full account of the need to respect and take with us other legal systems.