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Vice – President (Honoris Causa) of the Comité Maritime International (CMI) :

“One of the largest advantages for IMLI students is their encounter with the Visiting Fellows...”

The 17th generation of IMLI lawyers recently had the opportunity to be lectured by Professor Frank Wiswall, a member of the Institute’s Governing Board and also a former Chairman of the IMO Legal Committee.



*Prof. and Mrs. Wiswall with Ms. Cherie Booth, Q.C.
(British Prime Minister's wife) at IMLI.*

Prof. Wiswall is currently Vice-President *honoris causa* of the Comité Maritime International (CMI), Honorary Professor of International Maritime Law (IMLI), Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and was the 1969 Yorke Prizeman of the University of Cambridge. He is the author of several published works to be found in the IMLI Library.

Prof. Wiswall, what are the most important highlights of your lectures at IMLI ?

I began with a set of lectures on Maritime Legal History. This study is important because it “ties” everything else together. In other words, it gives to the students an understanding of how maritime law has developed and why it has developed in particular ways. One of the problems that everyone faces in teaching any history is that you can only present it from the surviving historical record, which in the case of maritime law is very largely Eastern Mediterranean and European until the 19th Century. I make this clear to the students at the outset so that those coming from countries and cultures not historically within the Western ‘sphere of influence’ will not assume that the history of their own country is being overlooked.

During the second week of my stay I lectured on “Maritime Legislative Drafting”, and in this course I particularly emphasized the process by which international maritime legislation is developed in IMO.

In April 2006 I will deliver another IMLI Course: “*The Law of Collisions and other Maritime Casualties*”. The main reason for the inclusion of this course in the IMLI syllabus is that IMLI students may find themselves confronted in the future with the need for urgent action in the wake of a serious maritime casualty involving part of their coastline or a port, or involving a ship flying the flag of their country.

What are the advantages of IMLI in comparison with other academic institutions ?

One of the largest advantages for IMLI students is their encounter with the Visiting Fellows, who are either well-known professors or experienced practitioners and leading experts on particular subjects covered by the IMLI syllabus. The opportunity for the students to interact with them – all of whom are volunteers who donate their time and expertise to IMLI – is an advantage that could not possibly be gained in any other way, given the geographical distribution of both the students and the Fellows. It has now been more than 30 years since the IMO began to send delegations of expert lecturers to developing countries to conduct seminars on various matters of maritime importance. I myself lectured in such seminars over 20 years ago, and that IMO practice provided a useful model for the concept of our Visiting Fellows, which has proved so successful at IMLI.

Of course the excellence of the IMLI Library, which in fact contains many works written by IMLI visiting lecturers, is another important advantage. In its field, the IMLI Library is now comparable with the library of any research University in the world.

What is your opinion about the new programmes at the Institute – the Ph.D. and the Advanced Diploma ?

The Ph.D. programme was a natural next step in IMLI’s evolution. The IMLI Library now offers to the Ph.D. candidates a fine resource for advanced research, while the appointment of highly qualified supervisors, who usually maintain their contacts with the candidates over great distances by electronic means, shows that IMLI is taking full advantage of the most modern technology. Lastly, the requirement of both internal and external examiners, following the supervisor’s

approval of a doctoral thesis, ensures a standard of excellence for IMLI's Ph.D. graduates.

The Advanced Diploma in International Maritime Law, on the other hand, is an innovation that fills an existing void in maritime education. It will enable persons – most especially non-lawyers – who work in areas affected by international maritime law to obtain a practical knowledge of that law which they can then apply to their particular professional activities. This Programme has just begun, and it will be most interesting to look back in a few years' time to see what should prove to be a clear and positive effect on the maritime industry.

What are your general impressions about IMLI (students, visiting lectures, library, premises...)

The quality of the student body appears to me to improve with each successive year. The high achievements of many past LL.M. graduates are now well known and one looks forward to following the careers of today's students. The newly-expanded premises of the Institute are both impressive and practical. For me, the ability to utilize the facilities of the new lecture hall to incorporate PowerPoint presentations in two of my courses has proven invaluable.

Finally I must add that the quality of the current Ph.D. candidates is extremely good; I believe that these first Ph.D. theses will give rise to publishable works of very considerable importance in dealing with real problems confronting both the maritime industry and government authorities.

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