

A FRIEND OF THE COURT

Amicus Curiae editorials have provided information and opinions on a wide variety of topics over the nine years since the first issue of the journal appeared. This editorial looks back at what the journal itself has achieved in that time.

The year 1997 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, and the formation of the Society for Advanced Legal Studies. *Amicus Curiae* was launched in October of that year as the official journal of both organisations. The journal's name – friend of the court – was chosen to emphasise the desire of the IALS and SALS to promote legal research and scholarship relevant to and supportive of the administration of justice.

A look over previous issues reveals how *Amicus Curiae* has established itself as a lively and informative vehicle for raising and exploring legal issues. This has been achieved because a large number of practitioners, academics, members of the judiciary and others involved with the legal process have made time in their busy lives to contribute. In many cases the authors of articles have delivered public lectures or assisted IALS/SALS in other ways. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved with the journal, and also to members of SALS for their enduring support.

Two of the greatest strengths of *Amicus Curiae* are the quality of its contributors and the breadth of coverage. All the SALS Annual Lectures have been published, and these have included presentations from such eminent figures as the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, and Cherie Booth QC. In the 2004 lecture Lord Justice Brooke, Vice President of the Court of Appeal (Civil Division), spoke on “Court modernisation and the crisis facing our civil courts.” His trenchant criticisms of the failure by the Lord Chancellor's Department to make funds available for the use of technology in the civil courts were widely reported.

Influential and informative articles on many legal issues have appeared in *Amicus Curiae*. After the Human Rights Act 1998 reached the statute book, Jonathan Cooper, Human Rights Project Director of JUSTICE, was on hand to explain the implications of the new legislation in issue 15 (March 1999). When the Competition Commission replaced the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on April 1, 1999, the changeover was reviewed in that month's issue of *Amicus Curiae* (number 16) by the late Dan Goyder, a former Deputy Chairman of the MMC. Lord McNally, the current leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords, considered the Freedom of Information Bill (issue 26, April 2000), and Sir Ivan Lawrence QC asked whether Slobodan Milosevic was

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getting a fair trial at The Hague (issue 40, March/April 2002).

A number of authors have debated issues which remain topical and in many cases have assumed even greater significance with the passage of time. Professor Peter Luxton of Sheffield University provided an insight (issue 52, March/April 2004) into the issues that the forthcoming proposals for the reform of charity law would need to address. Charity law has recently become topical once again: the Charities Bill was “timed out” by the general election of May 2005, but received royal assent on November 8, 2006.

In June 2000 (issue 28) Martin Polden, President of the Environmental Law Foundation, argued the case for legislative action to aid and support environmental sustainability. Judge David Pearl, then President of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal, posed the question “Asylum appeals: is there a better way?” in an article published in February 2000 (issue 24): changes followed in 2005 when a reformed system for appeals and applications was put in place around the newly-created Asylum and Immigration Tribunal.

The IALS has an international reputation, and *Amicus Curiae* has sought to reflect this. In April 1998 (issue 6) Professor J H Dalhuisen of King's College, London wrote on the repercussions for the Western banking system of the Asian banking crisis and Dr Klint Alexander, an international lawyer with Wyatt, Tarrant and Cams LLP in the US, (issue 49, September/October 2003) explained the US Patriot Act. There are many more such examples – not least in the current issue, where Nick Foster of SOAS writes on Islamic commercial law.

Next year *Amicus Curiae* is changing frequency and will be published quarterly. The journal will continue to act as a forum for debate, and keep subscribers in touch with developments at Charles Clore House.

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