



The Rt Hon The Lord Nolan

Lord Nolan of Brasted

The Rt Hon The Lord Nolan took over from Lord Woolf as Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies some six years ago and is due to finish his term of office on 31 August.

The year 1994 when Lord Nolan took over as Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies marked a key point in his career. During the same period he became a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary and was appointed by the then Prime Minister, John Major, as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Standards in Public Life, following the ‘cash for questions’ scandal and the resulting concern over allegations of sleaze in public life.

This high-profile appointment brought to public attention a lawyer whose senior judicial career developed from the early 1980s and rose sharply in the early 1990s, when it progressed with unusual speed. Lord Nolan was appointed to the High Court Bench in 1982 after a 14-year career as a leading tax silk, during which he was involved in the *Rosminster* and *Vestey* cases. While on the High Court Bench he was involved with a number of prominent decisions, granting the National Coal Board injunctions against the illegal use of ‘flying pickets’ by strikers and also giving Moslem leaders the right to challenge a refusal by magistrates to issue a blasphemy summons against Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*.

In 1991 he became a Lord Justice of Appeal, and was a member of the Appeal Court which released Judith Ward and strongly criticised those responsible for her imprisonment. He was elevated to

the House of Lords very quickly indeed after little more than two years in the Court of Appeal. Lord Nolan retired from full-time sitting there some 18 months ago, but has been on call since then because the Law Lords have become short handed as a result, for example, of Lord Saville being compelled to devote so much time to the ongoing Bloody Sunday inquiry, and the demands of the BSE inquiry in the recent past.

The Standing Committee on Standards in Public Life has attracted a good deal of international attention, and Lord Nolan has been in demand as a lecturer all over the world as a result of the period he spent as chairman from 1994–97. Among the countries to invite him have been Poland, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Australia; he also visited the European Parliament, where he was impressed with the quality of the MEPs he met and sympathetic with the difficulties they were experiencing in starting a form of register of members’ interests (something which is now in operation).

IALS INVOLVEMENT

He regarded the invitation to become chairman of the Consultative Board at the IALS as a great compliment, being a regular library user and someone with many friends in the University of London. Lord Nolan feels that the development planned at Charles Clore House – which includes expansion of the

library – will enable the Institute to build on progress made over the last few years by using its national standing and its international contacts to host major events and widen its sphere of activities.

One important part of Lord Nolan’s later career has been his position as Commissioner under the Interception of Communications Act – a role he has just relinquished. The Act allows the Home Secretary to intercept letters and telephone calls in the interests of national security, to prevent or detect serious crime, or to safeguard the UK’s economic wellbeing. The role of the Commissioner, who is appointed by the Prime Minister, is to oversee the Secretary of State’s power to issue warrants by inspecting the relevant intercepting agencies and government departments to ensure that they are complying with the Act.

Lord Nolan continues to serve as Chancellor of Essex University – a role he took on in 1997 – but his main remaining ambition does not involve the pressures of office. What really attracts him is the prospect of taking a gap year, which would give him the opportunity to spend more time with his family and friends and to write his memoirs. 

Julian Harris

Senior Information Officer, IALS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Michael Patrick Nolan was educated at Ampleforth and Wadham College, Oxford, where he read law. He was called to the Bar (Middle Temple) in 1953, becoming a QC in 1968. He served as a High Court Judge (Queen’s Bench Division) 1982–91, Presiding Judge, Western Circuit, 1985–88, a Lord Justice of Appeal 1991–93, and a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary 1994–98. He was a member of the Sandilands Committee on Inflation Accounting from 1973–75 and chairman of the Standing Committee on Standards in Public Life 1994–97. His experience with education includes being a member of the governing body of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Woldingham, and serving as Chancellor, Essex University, from 1997. He was awarded an LLD by Warwick University in 1998.