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REMAINING RELEVANT

That the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies is uniquely placed to foster co-operation and mutual support between legal scholars and those more directly involved in the administration and practice of the law has been long recognised. Having said this, however, there is always the danger that short term considerations, in particular those more relevant to the future of other institutions with rather different agendas, might, if given undue weight, inhibit if not undermine the central role foreseen and advocated by its promoters. In a world where resources are always tight and are in practice fought over, the tendency for scholars to look inwards, and for practitioners to remain preoccupied, is a very real danger. While the Institute is part of the University of London and has a very important role to play in supporting scholarship within our great University, it has always been regarded as having a much wider role both nationally and internationally. I for one am certain that, unless the Institute maintains and strengthens this wider profile and continues to service a broader constituency, it will contract into being little more than a library, albeit an excellent one!

It was primarily to ensure that the Institute continued to fulfil the role its founders envisaged that the Society for Advanced Legal Studies was founded. Readers of *Amicus Curiae* will be well aware of what this equally unique learned society has achieved in the last 18 months. In my view, however, the most exciting initiative has been the establishment of a number of expert working groups consisting of judges, officials, practitioners and academics supported by the Institute and in particular its own research staff and students. Mention has been made elsewhere of the report recently published by the Society on planning obligations under the auspices of the working group on planning and environmental law, sitting under Mr Justice Keene. The group, under George Staple QC, which is considering the legal and other issues that arise in the case of parallel proceedings, has already prepared a number of reports and is well on its way to completing a substantial general report. Excellent progress is also being made by the group, under the Official Solicitor, Peter Harris, on the legal issues pertaining to the cross border movement of children. The Society has also recently set up a group under Richard Southwell QC on legal ethics and lawyers' fee arrangements and is delighted to be able to report that two further groups are in the process of being constituted. One will examine the present debate on company law reform and will sit under Lord Hope. The other, which will be jointly chaired by The Rt Hon Clare Short MP, Secretary of State for International Development, and Vice Chancellor Scott, will focus on the issues that arise when British banks and other intermediaries find themselves in receipt of the proceeds of corrupt payment from overseas.

The Society is also in the process of formulating plans for two further groups. The first will examine the impact of human rights legislation on alternative dispute resolution and the second the constitutional position of the Financial Services Authority, together with the issues that arise in regard to the new enforcement-regime that is anticipated in the Draft Financial Services and Markets Bill. The Executive Committee is very eager to consider other suggestions for suitable topics and in particular receive offers of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Ms Juliet Fussell at the Institute, in this regard.

Professor Barry Rider