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Dear Marco,

Dabelstein & Passehl Scholarship 2007

I can't believe it's already over a month since the end of the scholarship. I'm extremely grateful to all at Da-Pa for the hard work and planning that were so clearly involved in arranging this year's scheme. I can only imagine the logistical nightmare that you must have had in trying to coordinate such a packed schedule for five people who were unable to speak German and who were previously uninitiated in the complexities of the Hamburg public transport system. However, you managed it: all worked very smoothly, nobody got lost, we made it to all of the meetings and everyone survived, so congratulations!

When you asked me to write a brief report on the 2007 Scholarship, I had a look at what previous years' scholars had written in their own reports. The general theme of all of the past scholars is that they had a great time, learned a great deal and met a lot of great people. I would agree with this entirely and I hope you keep up the programme for the benefit of any future young shipping lawyers who are lucky enough to be selected for the programme.

As for the programme itself, I was greatly impressed by the amount that we managed to squeeze into the 2 week schedule. There was an excellent balance between the programme of legal lectures, the introduction to the insurance and re-insurance industries and other maritime professions and also the site visits. Hamburg is a great town for shipping professionals to get the sort of experience that, in London at least, you simply can't get from behind a desk.

I found the academic part of the scholarship very well structured and I think it covered a good breadth of the sort of law that is useful to a P&I claims handler. The quality of the lectures was high from all of the Da-Pa staff. I was confident with each subject that what was being delivered was a solid statement of the law and that the professionals delivering the information were all suitably experienced in their fields.

One highly interesting aspect of the academic side of the course was the opportunity to discuss the various aspects of German law and then to compare this with the system/law in place in each of the different jurisdictions of the five lawyers – UK, Norway, Spain, Argentina and the Netherlands. The debates were always interesting and useful to get a picture of the divergence of the global laws.

We had the opportunity to meet and hear from various members of the marine insurance profession, from hull and machinery insurance to P&I claims handling services, via brokers and also re-insurers. This helped build up a picture of the insurance market as a whole and put the industry into context. I am grateful to those who gave their time to talk to us and introduce us to their companies as well as explaining their markets and industry practice. I was impressed by the calibre of companies that Da-Pa was able to arrange for us to meet – AON, Swiss Re, etc. As well as insurers, we were also introduced to Shipowners/Charterers (Alpha Ship/Oceanwide/Rigel) and GA adjusters.

For me, the most interesting parts of the scheme were the site visits to various parts of the Hamburg port infrastructure. Apart from simply being able to sit in the Da-Pa offices and watch the car carriers, container ships, etc, etc, passing the window, which was pretty special, we were taken to the pilot station, the ship model basin, the Blohm & Voss shipyard, a large container terminal and on board a 8500 teu Cosco ship... I hope I'm not forgetting something. This kind of experience is difficult to come by and I think it's invaluable to a shipping professional to be able to understand some of the physical side of the industry. The fact that there was always a queue of Da-Pa people who wanted to come along with us is evidence of how valuable and interesting these visits were!

Apart from the formal course itself, I have to thank all at Da-Pa for being such excellent hosts. I am quite sure that, without everyone's guidance, I would not have seen as much of Hamburg nor been able to appreciate what a great city it is for the visitor. To say we were well entertained is an understatement – it took me weeks to fully recover and after visiting the Reeperbahn, my life will never be the same.

Finally, I would like to say that it was a great pleasure to spend two weeks in the company of all of my fellow scholars. Whatever the mysteries of the selection process for the scholarship, Marco did a great job in bringing together five very interesting and friendly people. I am sure we will all maintain the links that have been created on this course and I look forward to seeing both my fellow scholars and all at Da-Pa in future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

James Ingham