



COMITE MARITIME INTERNATIONAL

SECRETARY – GENERAL

DR. ROSALIE BALKIN AO

BENT NIELSEN

IN MEMORIUM

CMI is sad to report the recent passing on February 2026 of Bent Nielsen, CMI Member Honoris Causa.

Bent was a highly esteemed maritime lawyer for many years with the legal firm Kromann Reumert, where he became a partner in 1975. He also served for many years on the Board of the Danish Maritime Law Association and was Legal Counsel to the Danish Shippers' Council.

From the 1970s he regularly attended meetings of the CMI and was, notably, Rapporteur to the International Sub-Committee on the Salvage Convention, the CMI draft text of which was finalized at the 1981 CMI Conference in Montreal. This text formed the basis of the 1989 Salvage Convention which was subsequently adopted under the aegis of the IMO.

Bent was a member of the IWG on General Average (one of his specialist topics) under the Chairmanship of David Taylor which produced the 1990 York/Antwerp (Sydney) Rules. He thereafter chaired a newly appointed IWG to further review the Rules which were approved by the CMI Assembly in Vancouver in 2004. As these were not widely adopted, he chaired a further IWG which worked from the time of the Beijing Conference in 2012 and which successfully concluded its work at the CMI New York Conference in 2016, when the final text of the current York/Antwerp Rules were agreed.

The CMI Assembly paid special tribute to Bent at its meeting in September 2017, where he was unanimously elected to membership Honoris Causa for his exceptional service to CMI over many years, particularly in the area of the York/Antwerp Rules reform but also as Chairman of the CMI Nominating Committee. As stated by former CMI President Patrick Griggs, in proposing Bent for Membership Honoris Causa at that Assembly Meeting, the successful adoption of the reform of the York/Antwerp Rules was largely the result of the huge effort and the exercise of considerable diplomatic skills by Bent in reconciling the interests of the shipping, cargo and insurance industries.

In 1994, the IMO Legal Committee considered a proposal submitted by Germany, the Netherlands and the UK calling for a convention to deal with the situation created by shipwrecks situated outside a State's territorial waters. Bent was appointed as Rapporteur on behalf of CMI to the IMO Legal Committee on the subject of wreck removal and, in this capacity, was invited to

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Ernest van Dijckkaai 8, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

consult CMI Member States on their domestic laws relating to wreck removal. His report, which was submitted to the Legal Committee in 1996, concluded that national laws relating to wreck removal were already so similar that this was a perfect opportunity to create a convention which would deal with the problems of wrecks situated not only outside but also inside territorial waters. This advice was not at that time acted upon by the Legal Committee. However, in 2007 on the eve of the IMO Nairobi Diplomatic Conference, his advice was acted upon and the resulting Nairobi Wreck Removal Convention, which was then adopted, was extended in this way.

Between 2004 and 2013 Bent was Chair of the CMI Nominating Committee, a position in which his diplomatic skills again proved useful and which required a considerable degree of tact and good sense.

Bent was a great supporter of the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) and its academic initiatives. He joined the Distinguished Visiting Fellows Programme in the academic year 2005-2006, following which he visited IMLI on a yearly basis lecturing students on the intricacies of maritime law, until his retirement in 2023.

As a leading expert in the subject, he taught extensively on the law of General Average including the latest developments in the area. He would explain in detail the York/Antwerp Rules, as amended and would delve onto meaningful discussions on the difference between general average and particular average, as well as the relationship between the Law of General Average and Salvage Law.

In addition, as a firm believer in the importance of adequate implementation of international instruments in national legislation-the core mission of IMLI-he also lectured on "Implementation of Maritime Law Conventions-A Scandinavian Model".

As a seasoned author, Bent contributed a chapter on the Law of General Average in The IMLI Manual on International Maritime Law, volume II of which is dedicated to shipping law. His contribution continues to be a source of reference for IMLI students.

Bent was a valued member of the CMI community and he will surely be sorely missed. CMI reaches out to his family to express their sorrow on his passing.

On a personal note Patrick Griggs writes: "Bent and I had several cases on opposite sides in the days when we were both practicing lawyers. As an opponent he was always firm but fair and it was a pleasure dealing with him. We always managed to settle our cases without resort to litigation which we saw as a duty owed to our clients. We marked our retirements from practice in 1996 by undertaking with Stuart Beare and Richard Shaw (long-time friends of CMI) and our wives a 100 mile section of the 630 mile South West Coastal Path which follows the English coast from Minehead in Somerset to Poole in Dorset.

Reference has been made to his frequent visits to deliver lectures at IMLI in Malta. I joined him on those visits and we shared the lecturing duties and cemented our close friendship. We also shared the Visiting Lecturers Suite at IMLI and took the opportunity to explore on foot the coastal footpaths on Malta a Gozo. I have lost a good friend and colleague."

Rosalie Balkin

CMI Secretary-General