businesses that act ethically tend to believe they will fail in the market. According to Bindman, we now have a battle to defend the legal profession from becoming no more than a ‘cynical business’.

Although the relentless attacks by successive governments on legal aid mean that there are now fewer opportunities for young lawyers to practise as he did, Bindman is keen not to discourage anyone from working outside of the corporate world of the big City firms. ‘However hard it is,’ he says, ‘it is rewarding in a way that corporate law never will be.’

Perhaps the greatest mark of Geoffrey Bindman’s achievements in his long and distinguished career was becoming one of only a handful of solicitors to have been appointed as honorary QC’s. However, at the Haldane AGM held just after his lecture, the Society sought to recognise his achievements in our own way, by inviting him to become a Vice President of the Society.

As well as appointing Geoffrey Bindman as a Vice President, the AGM also appointed Phil Shiner of Public Interest Lawyers to join him as another of our Vice Presidents. Shiner has previously worked closely with The Haldane Society and was one of our speakers during last year’s lecture series, with a talk on human rights violations by UK forces in Iraq.

The well attended AGM also reappointed the President and other Vice Presidents of the Society. The meeting then went on to pass policy supporting the Middle East and North Africa Solidarity Network and mandating the Society to campaign against the British Government’s continuing attacks on civil liberties. It also saw the election of 2012’s Executive Committee and the discussion of a new constitution for the Society.

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reformed innocent people will continue to be let down by the body that Parliament set up to assist them.

The reforms proposed, aimed at making the CCRC a more adequate body to assist the innocent, would also potentially save millions of pounds from the public purse by shortening the length of time that those wrongly incarcerated might otherwise spend in prison. The average costs to taxpayers for each year a male prisoner spends wrongly incarcerated are as follows, Category A (dispersal prison): £64,397, Category B: £34,359, Category C: £32,109.

Caroline Clancy

Don’t miss your chance to attend the Annual General Meeting. The next Executive Committee election of 2012’s Executive Committee and the discussion of a new constitution for the Society. The meeting also agreed that ELDH will sponsor Haldane’s Defending Human Rights Defenders conference.

The next Executive Committee of ELDH will take place on Saturday 25th February 2012 at Garden Court Chambers. All Haldane members are cordially invited to attend.

Bill Bowring

23: The UK president of the European Court of Human Rights, Sir Nicholas Bratza, condemns the behaviour of senior members of the UK Government who stoke hostility towards the European Convention on Human Rights. Sir Nicholas described criticism of the judges of the court as ‘vitiolic’ and ‘xenophobic’.

1: The Justice Secretary Ken Clarke announces a six-month delay to his programme of legal aid cuts. The plans had begun to encounter stout opposition in the House of Lords but Clarke blamed the delay on the need to reschedule contracts.

Ken Clarke: delaying tactics...

14: The Lord Chief Justice issues guidance on tweeting from the courtroom. Journalists and legal commentators will now be allowed to post updates and snippets on Twitter during hearings unless directed otherwise by judges.

ELDH: 2011 was active and productive, 2012 will be too...

The European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH), of which Haldane is a founder member, continues to go from strength to strength. The latest Executive Committee meeting took place on 26th November 2011 in Berlin at the headquarters of the trade union ver.di – Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkshaft or United Services Union, which has 2.2 million members.

The meeting was attended by representatives and members of progressive lawyers’ associations from the Basque Country, Bulgaria, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Switzerland. ELDH has members in 16 European countries.

A number of guests also attended, including Johannes Honecker and Conrad Zimmer of the RAV (Republican Lawyers, German legal activists) and Wolfgang Kalebek of the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR).

I delivered a political report on the nature of the economic and political crisis of European and world capital, which included looking at the tasks of lawyers in combating nationalism and xenophobia and uniting with trade unions. All colleagues present joined in the liveliest political discussion in ELDH’s history.

We reviewed a very active and productive year, including:

• 9th February 2011, observing the registration of the Basque political party Sortu in Madrid;
• 21st May 2011, a conference in Athens on The Impact of the European ‘Debt’ Crisis, organised by the Alternative Intervention of Athens Lawyers;
• 22nd July 2011, a conference hosted in Genoa on Ten Years of attacks on Fundamental Rights – The Role of Lawyers;
• 9th to 7th October 2011, attending an international conference on human rights violations organised by Bahrain Human Rights organisations in Beirut;
• 29th and 30th October 2011, attending the international conference in Algiers on the Right of Peoples to Resistance – the Case of the Saharawi people.

There is a busy year ahead. Future events on the ELDH calendar include:

• A conference and meeting of the European Lawyers on 2nd and 3rd March 2012 in Berlin on The right to strike in Europe; and
• A conference on the Criminalisation of Migrants on 16th March 2012 in Brussels.

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News & Comment