

ANDRÉ BESSON

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André Besson died just before Xmas within a few days of achieving his 85th birthday. The doyen of insurance jurists, he produced in 1982 the fifth edition of his massive work *Le Contrat d'Assurance* in its first volume entitled *Les Assurances Terrestres*, a much neater name than our clumsy "non-marine insurance". He was already 80 years old and the tome, 870 pages long, rests in front of me as I write this brief tribute as is the AIDA "Hommage à Andre Besson", rather sadly published the very day of his death.

Just as the French Impressionist painters had their group "Les Six", so Prof. Besson was a leading light in the group of sixteen insurance lawyers who met in Luxembourg, as the AIDA President reminds us, on the 28 April 1960 of whom our own BILA Founder President Denis Browne, Queen Victoria Professor of Law at Liverpool University and the then author of *Macgillivray*, was one. That meeting saw the birth of AIDA with national chapters in all those 16 countries, the British chapter a little later emerging as BILA which followed the route of itself forming the AIDA chapter here.

Prof. Besson held high office in the Légion d'Honneur and his chef d'oeuvre *Le Contrat d'Assurance/Les Assurances Terrestres* (which he wrote in earlier editions with his learned senior, the late Prof. Maurice Picard who died in 1967) received its crowning honour when the Academy of Moral and Political Science honoured the work with the *Prix Leon-Julliot-de-la-Morandière* in 1975.

My most vivid memories of André included a long meeting at his apartment in 1969/70. Following the great success of the third quadrennial World Congress of AIDA in Paris 1968 which Prof. Besson master-minded in his capacity of President of the French Chapter of AIDA (he was, literally, Life President) BILA joined with some Paris members of that chapter in planning a small colloque on Motor Insurance. There, in his modest apartment over 1, Carrefour de la Croix Rouge, we met at about 9 one winter night and thrashed out the details of the colloque over a litre bottle of good Scotch. We became and remained good friends, "Mon Père" and "Mon Fils" and we enjoyed that.

He was quiet, modest in his demeanour yet of a proud bearing, very conscious of the influence and standing of La Belle France. Those of us who knew him will sadly miss a fine lawyer, distinguished author, teacher and scholar, a true gentilhomme of the old, the best school.

G.W.S.