

Master's Speech at Mansion House Banquet on 22 May 2014

Wardens, My Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Distinguished Guests, Liverymen, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a very great pleasure to welcome you all this evening.

Thank you, my Lord Mayor, for inviting us into your magnificent home, and even greater thanks for attending in person. We are well aware of the immense pressures on your diary. Thus it is a particular privilege that you, and the Sheriffs, are honouring us with your presence this evening.

This is in fact the second time you have honoured us in this way this year. The other occasion was the lunch in the Long Parlour for the Private Dispute Resolution Community back in March. At that lunch, you spoke enthusiastically about the mutual support we can give each other, and since then we are most grateful for your promotion of London as the international dispute resolution venue of choice. We are indeed very proud to have you as a Liveryman of our Worshipful Company, and an ambassador of our profession.

This Banquet is the high point of the Company's social calendar, and tonight is about having a good time, and feeling good about ourselves. Tonight we celebrate the second anniversary of the presentation of our Royal Charter, which I believe has given us a much better understanding of our role within the City. When I was admitted to our Company 14 years ago, I saw its role as largely social, for the private dispute resolution profession. I had little or no appreciation of how the Company fitted into the governance of the City, and I suspect many of my contemporaries didn't either.

The Royal Charter explains that the role of a Livery Company within the traditions of the City of London involves encouraging its members to participate in the governance of the City, and to support the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs and the Aldermen. The fact that you, my Lord Mayor, were already heavily involved in the

governance of the City when you became a Liveryman of our Company, highlights the point that we, as a Company, ought to be more actively encouraging our members to stand for Civic Office, and it would certainly gladden my heart to see our Liverymen standing for Civic Office. I fancy we don't quite see ourselves in that light, just yet. Perhaps it is high time we did.

The other aspect of Civic responsibility is support for the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs and the Aldermen. On this national polling day, I venture to suggest that the simplest method of support we can give is to participate in the election of the Sheriffs, each Mid-Summer's Day, and the Lord Mayor, each September. The fact that these elections are frequently uncontested, as they will be on twenty fourth June, is no answer to this suggestion. The Shrieval candidates, like Fiona Adler here, whom I am delighted to welcome here this evening, need to feel they have the full support of the Livery, despite their lack of electoral opponents. This is why it is important to cast our votes on twenty fourth June.

Support however does not end with election. There is a continuing need for us to support the functions, events and charitable campaigns organised by the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, and in particular to contribute to the Lord Mayor's Charity. This brings the charitable obligations of Livery Companies, and by extension their members, into sharper focus.

We in the Arbitrators' Company place particular emphasis on education, and trying to make life brighter for young people. We have a special relationship with Clara Grant Primary School in Hackney, and we provide volunteers to assist in the literacy and numeracy projects of the Livery Schools Link. I am particularly proud to say that the current and previous chairmen of Livery Schools Link, David Steward and Simon Underwood respectively, are Court Assistants of this Company.

We also support a deserving pupil at King Edward School Whitley, and through that have become Corporate Fellows of the Bridewell Trust. We are affiliated with, and sponsor motivational prizes for the personnel of, HMS Mersey and 13 Company Army Cadet Force. We support the St Mary Le Bow Young Homeless Project. We

are currently developing a young peacemaker programme, and forging closer links with the Gullion Youth Project, run by St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, Reconciliation within Society being the topic of Canon David Porter's thought-provoking Master's Lecture this year, now available for viewing on the Company's website.

I am also very proud of our mediation competitions for university students in each of the past four years, our pupillage scheme that gives practical experience to aspiring dispute resolvers, and the many prizes we give annually to undergraduates and school children, all of which is only possible through the generosity of you, our members. A very big thank you to all of you who contribute.

My Lord Mayor, we are also enthusiastic supporters of your chosen charities. Beating Bowel Cancer, of deep significance to me, and many others within this room. The Princess Alice Hospice, which provides palliative comfort to those whom modern medicine cannot cure. Working Chance, which gives hope of gainful employment to ladies who have been in trouble with the law, showing that no one is beyond forgiveness, and reintegration into Society. And finally, Rayleigh International, a sustainable development charity that gives young people adventure, inspiration, and self-esteem, by harnessing their energy on projects of life-changing value to disadvantaged communities at home and abroad.

My Lord Mayor, to show our support for you and your chosen charities, it gives me very great pleasure to present you with this cheque on behalf of the Arbitrator's Company, and its Charitable Trust.

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand, and join me in The Civic Toast - The Lord Mayor, the City of London Corporation, and the Sheriffs.

Derek Ross

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