



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

LORD DYSON MASTER OF THE ROLLS

Valedictory Address, 26 July 2016

Thank you

This is a very emotional moment in my life. There has been little time for reflection as I have rushed around doing one thing and another. But I have thought how lucky I have been to live in this great country. I wonder what my father's parents would have made of today. They came from Lithuania at the turn of the 20th century. They were both 19 years of age. They had had little education and little money. They were hoping to go to the US, but could not afford to get any further than Leeds. And my mother came from Bulgaria in 1939 at a time when most people in this country had probably not even heard of the place. Her mother spent 6 months in Bergen Belsen in 1944. Something that she could hardly ever bring herself to talk about. I wonder what she would have made of today too. I keenly regret that my parents are not here today. Even at my age, I would have liked to bring them my achievements for their approval.

It is on an occasion like this that I feel a deep gratitude to this tolerant country for allowing my forebears to settle here and giving me and my family the opportunity to flourish here. I fervently hope that the events of recent weeks have not put that tolerance at risk. I am fearful that it is being put under strain by the xenophobia and dangerous forces of hate that have been unleashed in some quarters. But I have great faith in the fair-mindedness of the British people and believe that their tolerance will continue to shine through. As a fall back position (and it is always good to have a fall back position) I may have an escape route. It's a bit of a long shot. I think that, thanks to my mother, I may be entitled to apply for a Bulgarian passport.



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I can still think of no better place to live than in this country. I am proud to have been able to give something back to it. Maintaining the Rule of Law is as important as it has ever been. Perhaps even more so today, as the Executive arrogates to itself more and more powers. I hope that I have been able to make a modest contribution to maintaining the Rule of Law in my 23 years as a judge. I have been hugely privileged to have had a wonderful career.

There is so much that I shall miss about the RCJ. I confess that I shall not miss the endless meetings. We are in the grip of an epidemic of meetings to which there appears to be no known antidote. But I shall greatly miss the people who work here. Everyone is so friendly and helpful. I wondered what it would be like to be in charge of the Court of Appeal. I confess that I had a certain sense of foreboding when I faced the serried ranks of 38 colleagues at my first plenary meeting some 4 years ago. I had been warned that they were independent-minded and could be difficult. I need not have worried. I could not have wished for a more supportive and collegiate group of people. The work is hard and there has been the odd complaint. But overall, it has been a great and happy experience.

I cannot possibly mention all the people whom I would like to thank, including the staff who have worked so hard to support me and make the place function and all the clerks who have looked after me. But I must mention Peter Farr, my private secretary. He is the embodiment of wisdom and good judgment. He has become a good friend in whom I confide everything, well almost everything. Inevitably, there have been times when the going has been a little rough. Peter has



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always been there to calm me down and keep the show on the road. He is one of the kindest persons I have ever met.

Of my judicial colleagues, I must mention Martin Moore-Bick who has been a wonderful Vice-President of the Court of Appeal Civil Division. I have been able to delegate so much to him in the knowledge that he has an unerring feel for the right answer. He has taken a great weight off my shoulders. Michael Briggs has been my Deputy Head of Civil Justice and done great work to alleviate the pressures facing the Court of Appeal. He is a man of vision and drive who has helped me enormously in so many ways. And my thanks also go to their predecessors Maurice Kay and Stephen Richards for all their work.

I must also thank David Neuberger, who is a wonderful President of the Supreme Ct. He has encouraged and supported me over the past few years in more ways than I can say. And I am grateful to him for many hours of delectable gossip, which is very necessary to keep one sane.

Finally, of the currently serving judges, John Thomas. We have worked together very closely for the last 3 years. I can say without fear of contradiction that he is a great Chief Justice. A reformer of real vision and a man of terrifying energy who keeps telling me that he is slowing down and like the rest of us not getting any younger. He has given me tremendous support in all that I have tried to do since becoming MR. For this I shall always be grateful.

I would also like to thank Igor Judge who was LCJ during my first year as MR. It was Igor who first suggested that I should apply to be



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MR. I thought he must be joking. I told him that, apart from anything else, I was far too old. He brushed that objection aside with that combination of charm and firmness with which many of us are familiar and which brooks no opposition. Of course, he said, I was of exactly the right age. I am grateful to him for planting the idea in my mind.

I have left the hardest bit to the end. I have made many decisions in my life, but far and away the best and most important was to ask Jackie to marry me all those years ago. I knew she was the girl for me almost immediately and we were engaged within a few weeks. My professional life has been very exciting and stimulating. But I have been happiest when in her company, just doing the simplest of things. She has been my rock of support and my life mate. I have been so fortunate. And so fortunate to have a wonderful family, all here today. One of my grandsons has said that Grandpa has an interesting job and Grandma just tags along. How cruel children can be. Anyway, it's not true: I mean the bit about tagging along.

I do not intend to retire to cultivate my garden. I plan to be quite busy. But I do hope to be able to spend more time with her.

I am astonished and humbled by how many have come to say good bye today. I thank you all so much.