

GRADUATION 2013

Presentation speech for Sir Ivan Lawrence QC for the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws of the University *honoris causa*

Chancellor, in 1985, in the course of a debate on the Water Florigation Bill, our Honorand made what was probably the longest Parliamentary Speech of the 20th century. It lasted for four hours 23 minutes. If I were to do proper justice to the whole range and magnitude of Sir Ivan's qualities and achievements, I think I would have to speak even longer. Since that is not possible, I must limit myself to discussion of just a few aspects of what by any standards has been a remarkable career.

We confer Honorary degrees on people for a number of reasons. We like to honour people who are our friends and who have made significant contributions to the University. Since 2004, Sir Ivan has been a Visiting Professor in our Law School. In a subject like Law, it is absolutely vital to maintain close links with those who are actually practising in the profession. I know how much both staff and students in the Law appreciate all the help Sir Ivan gives them.

Sir Ivan also regularly takes the trouble to come to our degree ceremonies – a strong sign of his commitment to the University and of his realisation of just how central these ceremonies are to everyone at Buckingham. Of course, for many years, degree day were presided over

by the then Chancellor, Lady Thatcher. I suspect that another thing that brings Sir Ivan and Buckingham together is our appreciation of Margaret Thatcher's achievements. He says of her:

She was strong, not in the sense that she flung her handbag at people, but because when she came to power, nobody thought that it was possible to reverse the ratchet of socialism and to achieve anything other than 'ordered decline.' People said 'You can't do this, but she said, 'I can and I will' and she did.

Above all I see Sir Ivan as one of nature's independents. He was returned as member for Burton on Trent in 1974 but remained on the back benches. His Private Members Bill of 1991 instigated the National Lottery. Later, while on a cruise on the Queen Mary 2, he was thanked for this by someone who had won a great deal of money as a result of Sir Ivan's initiative. Sir Ivan lost his seat in 1997 and admits that he misses Parliament - but not that much:

The whole ethos has changed and there's less opportunity for the free thinking Member of Parliament to go his own way. Everybody seems to be more regimented, and that's a difficult atmosphere for a free-wheeling criminal lawyer.

Of course, it as a lawyer that Sir Ivan has made the greatest impact. Appropriately he calls his autobiography *My Life of Crime*. He has defended in over 85 murder trials and appeared in a number of very notable trials – including those of the Krays, Dennis Nilsen, the Brinks

Mat gold bullion case, and a mass murder war crime trial at the Hague. He sat regularly as a Recorder for London and was an elected member of the Bar Council from 2004 to 2010. In lectures – often given on Cruise ships - he reflects on the relationship between law and politics. He thinks it is a pity that modern demands on MPs' time no longer allow them to be practicing criminal lawyers:

Thus our laws are now badly drafted, hardly discussed in the House of Commons, and either unjust or impracticable.'

Sir Ivan has taken a leading role in successful campaigns that have done much to promote true fairness and justice. They include:

- Introduction of tape recorded interviews with suspects
- Introduction of the concept of Racially Aggravated Offences
- Abolition of the 'Year and a Day' rule for Murders
- Extending protection to battered wives
- Improving the treatment of juvenile offenders.

Sir Ivan was called to the Bar in 1962, so he is just at the start of his second half century as a practicing lawyer. Through his association with Buckingham, he has conferred great honour upon us – and so it is fitting that we should honour him.

Chancellor, I call upon you to confer upon Sir Ivan Lawrence QC the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.

Professor John Clarke, MA, DPhil

15 March 2013