



The Bar Council

**SPEECH AT THE SWEARING IN OF THE NEW LORD CHANCELLOR,**

**ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP**

**RICHARD ATKINS QC, CHAIR OF THE BAR**

My Lord

I was beginning to feel a little unloved. I feared that I was in danger of becoming the first Chair of the Bar for some years not to have welcomed a new Lord Chancellor. Alistair MacDonald QC in 2015 welcomed Michael Gove, Chantal-Aimee Doerries QC in 2016 welcomed Liz Truss, Andrew Langdon QC in 2017 welcomed David Liddington and Andrew Walker QC in 2018 welcomed David Gauke. But at last I can join the party. And I am delighted for so many reasons to be able to welcome our new Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC.

It is though a sobering moment when you realise that not only are police officers looking young these days, so are Lords Chancellor.

My Lord, it is important that we have as Lord Chancellor a lawyer who has actually done the day job and who has worked his way up through the ranks. Who has done the bail applications, the violence, the sex cases and been put through his paces in the Court of Appeal. He is also a Lord Chancellor who has sat as a Recorder in the Crown Court. It is vital that we have a Lord Chancellor who understands what the job entails and who will I am sure take very seriously his oath of office and will protect and support our justice system and defend our judges, should they ever face the sort of headlines we saw only a few years ago. A Lord Chancellor who I hope will make the

case to the Treasury for a reversal of the cuts to the Ministry of Justice that we have seen for too long. Who will take up the cudgels for our legal aid system and the justice system generally and will fight for legal services to be championed during whatever sort of Brexit we find we are having to deal with and beyond. And it also gives me particular pleasure to welcome a Lord Chancellor who is properly attired in his full bottomed wig.

My Lord I first met the Lord Chancellor when I was Leader of the Midland Circuit and he had been appointed as Solicitor General. The Circuit Leaders arranged to meet the new SG and AG one evening but owing to some crisis in Parliament the Solicitor General and Attorney General were heavily delayed. As we all know, what goes on tour stays on tour, but a glass or two may have been taken by one or two of the Circuit Leaders whilst we awaited the, very late arrival, of the Law Officers. When they did arrive, they were welcomed perhaps a little more forcefully and in more forthright terms than they might otherwise have expected. And there were then some pretty frank exchanges of views. But they took it in good heart, and I have had considerable dealings with our new Lord Chancellor since then. Our paths have crossed many times over the last 5 years, not least because as Solicitor General he has assiduously attended at Bar Council meetings. But my favourite moment was when the Court of Appeal, presided over by your predecessor Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, sat in Birmingham and the Solicitor General as he then was, came to Birmingham to prosecute a number of AG references. I was there as Circuit leader to welcome the LCJ. As I was about to leave, I realised that the SG did not have a lectern to use and so I lent him mine, which he very kindly returned. I have been dining out on this story, that the SG used my lectern, for some time now. Although as you may imagine, with that being my top story the dinner invitations have been somewhat thin on the ground. Now I can tell people about the day the Lord Chancellor used my lectern, I am sure the invitations will come flooding in.

My Lord, news of the LCs appointment broke last week on the evening that the Wales and Chester Circuit were dining the Supreme Court in Cardiff at a splendid function at The Exchange Hotel, to which I had been invited. When the Leader of the Circuit, Paul Hopkins QC, interrupted proceedings to announce another Welsh Lord Chancellor, I suspect you might have heard the cheers here in London.

The new LC is a popular man and I know that his appointment has been widely welcomed at the Bar and amongst the legal profession generally. I am genuinely delighted to welcome him today and hope, given the alleged current political volatility that now I have joined the party to welcome a Lord Chancellor I am not the first Chair of the Bar to welcome two in a year. Stability at the MoJ would be a good thing and in any event, they are running out of wall space on the corridor to his office on which to put many more pictures of LCs. I look forward to working with you My Lord Chancellor in your new role and may I, on behalf of the Bar of England and Wales congratulate you on your appointment and wish you a long and successful tenure.

**RICHARD ATKINS QC, CHAIR OF THE BAR**

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