

## Graduation 2012

### Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Charles Garraway

Chancellor, distinguished guests and, most importantly, fellow graduates:

“Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon”!

Some years ago when I was editor of the UK Manual on the Law of Armed Conflict for the first time, I was given a Fellowship at the Lauterpacht Centre in Cambridge, my old *alma mater*, to do some writing. I met my old tutor who, being told that I had been made a Fellow, fell off his bike! If today's events are relayed across the Fens then there will be vacancies on the High Table at Trinity, and the Coronary Unit at Addenbrookes will be overworked.

So how has this come to pass? I think for two reasons. Firstly, in the law of armed conflict, I have found a subject that I have come to love. Whilst of increasing interest to academics, it is also intensely practical. I have had the opportunity during my career, both within public service and outside, to work on the creation and interpretation of the law and also to apply it in the cauldron of conflict. I feel privileged to have had that double opportunity. I would like to pay tribute here also to my own family, particularly my wife who gave up her own career to “follow the flag”.

Secondly, I found in the University of Essex, an academic institution that shared my views on the interweaving of theory and practice. After leaving the Army, I was fortunate enough to be appointed the Stockton Professor of International Law at the United States Naval War College. You have heard something of that Chair from Professor Hampson. The first Stockton Professor was Manley O Hudson, after whom the Chair of International Law at Harvard is named. The second was Hans Kelsen, another giant in the field. In modern times, many of the leading academics in the law of armed conflict have held the Chair. It was another great privilege.

But when I returned to UK, academia for the most part turned its back on me. I had not got the standard academic profile and though I was put up for a number of academic positions, nothing came of them. The exception was this University which made me a Fellow of the Human Rights Centre and was happy to give me an academic base. I have remained a Fellow ever since and proudly hand out my Essex business cards around the world.

Why was this? Again I think that there are two reasons. First Essex, unlike many other institutions, realized very early on that there is an inextricable link between human rights law and the law of armed conflict – but that they are different parts of international law, different in history, development and philosophy. For three decades now, the Human Rights Centre has sought to ensure that the two systems can live together without one seeking to strangle the other.

Secondly, Essex is unusual in its attitude to the subject matter. One distinguished Professor, present here today and to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude over many years, stated that within the academics dealing with the law of armed conflict, there are two types. First, there are the Moses of this world, who come down from the mountain with the law inscribed on tablets of stone and to whom the law becomes the be all and end all. How often I have heard the phrase “But it's the law!” There are also academic plumbers, those who realize that the law itself is worthless unless it can be applied practically within conflict itself. Telling a non-State actor that they have no entitlement to capture and hold prisoners because only a State can, by law, deprive of liberty is hardly conducive to reducing casualties.

Chancellor, you may not like the analogy but Essex produces plumbers – and should be proud of that fact. Everywhere I go, I come across Essex alumni filling key positions in organisations actively involved in working to improve the lot of those caught up in conflict and violations of human rights. These are intelligent but pragmatic people who make a difference. They are intensely proud of Essex and Essex in turn can be proud of them.

As someone who looks upon himself as a plumber, I accept this honour with humility and gratitude and I hope that I can now join the ranks of Essex alumni plumbers and in doing so contribute to the fine and deserved reputation that this University has throughout the world.

Thank you.