

**Deloitte.**The Cambridge Union Society
9A Bridge Street
Cambridge, CB2 1UBEmail : pressofficer@cus.org**PRESS RELEASE – 21.01.15****Lord Hope**

On Monday the 21st of January 2015, the Cambridge Union Society featured a Q&A style event featuring Lord Hope, who graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1962 and practiced at the Scottish Bar before becoming a Queen's Counsel in 1978. He then became the first Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in 2009. Amy Gregg, President for Lent 2015, led the session and facilitated questions from the amassed students, the majority of them Law students.

Lord Hope spoke about the changes he has experienced in the world of law, primarily the rising prominence of female lawyers and judges. He described the presence of three female Scottish judges as an “immense change” and attributed this to wider education in legal professions becoming available.

When asked which case he found most testing during his time at the Supreme Court, he cited the case of General Pinochet, who was protected by diplomatic immunity from UN torture conventions while he was president. Pinochet came to England for medical treatment after he had left the presidency, was arrested and put on trial for torture. The case revolved around whether Pinochet still retained his diplomatic immunity, despite being a former president. Pinochet was declared to not be protected by diplomatic immunity and was extradited to Spain; yet one of the judges, Lord Hoffman, was discovered to have a conflict of interest through his links to Amnesty International, calling the ruling into question. Although the ruling still stood after being re-examined, Lord Hope described how he felt “distressed” when looking over other cases which had been quashed on similar grounds, which were not likely to be re-examined.

On the subject of cuts to legal aid, Lord Hope acknowledged that it was “inevitable” that government services would be cut in a time of austerity and that the style of the UK legal aid system is becoming “more difficult” to implement. He described the effects of the cuts, however, as “disastrous”, adding that the situation is “very difficult” and pondering what might change with a possible Labour government.

A member of the audience asked Lord Hope for his opinion on the idea of removing prisoners’ right to vote. He emphasised that, although some prisoners have been committed of serious crimes, others may only be incarcerated for more trivial crimes, for whom it would be “a bit of a nonsense” to politically disenfranchise.

He also described one of his cases in which a two disabled care nurses were barred from adopting a disabled child on the basis of their homosexuality, before being granted the right to adopt on an appeal; Lord Hope described it as “difficult” in terms of legislating against the contemporary social norm.

The event provided a compelling insight into Lord Hope’s considerable legal experience balancing attention to detail on the specificities of cases with an accessible and engaging speaker.

By Sarah Sheard
Deputy Head of Press, Lent 2015