

## Lord Woolf lays down the law for Norwood

20 June 2007

Lord Woolf, ex-Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and one of the most high-profile figures in the British legal profession, was the star attraction at last night's YN Lawyers Reception – **An Audience with Lord Woolf**. The event, sponsored by **Brecher Abram**, was held at **Goldman Sachs** in Central London on **Tuesday 19 June 2007**. More than **180 young lawyers attended**, helping to raise over **£21,000** for the UK's leading Jewish charity for children and families.

The evening began with a drinks and canapés reception, after which Lord Woolf was interviewed by **Simon Israel, home affairs correspondent for Channel 4 News**, who has reported extensively on such matters as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the war on terrorism in the UK and government policies on immigration. Lord Woolf began by answering questions on a subject with which he has become synonymous – prison reform. He said that politicians, the judiciary and the media had to share responsibility for the chronic problem of prison overcrowding:

“Prison should be the last resort, but we are sending people to prison for longer and for more offences...Unfortunately, a significant proportion of the media act hysterically on the issue of crime, and politicians fear that they would lose popular support if they were seen to be going soft on the subject. The judiciary hand out sentences that reflect the guidelines they are given. However, judges are human beings and it is hard not to be influenced in some small way by external pressures.”

When asked about the relationship between government ministers and the judiciary, he said: “I felt that I had a good relationship with ministers during my time as Lord Chief Justice, although I repeatedly felt that they let me down. The ministers and I would agree guidelines on sentencing policy and I would brief my judges accordingly, after which those same ministers would criticise my judges in the media following an unpopular ruling. Conflict between the judiciary and the government remains a major issue.”

Following his interview, Lord Woolf took questions from the floor on a range of subjects, including the topical issue of business practices in the arms industry: BAE Systems allegedly behaved improperly by making substantial payments to a Saudi Arabian prince in order to secure a contract. Lord Woolf, who has been chosen to head an independent review on the matter, refused to comment on what had gone on because he did not know the full facts. He did, however, pledge to carry out a thorough and independent enquiry into present and future business practices, with the aim of setting out a blueprint to ensure that arms traders conduct their business in an honest and ethical way.

Addressing the young lawyers at the event, **Lord Woolf indicated that Norwood is a charity close to his heart**. He said: “I think Norwood is a marvellous cause. It is uplifting to see such a substantial audience of young lawyers here tonight to support this charity. If there is one cause in this country that justifies your support, it's Norwood. My generation did much to support this charity and there are so many ways in which the younger generation can do the same.”

**Guy Davis, YN Lawyers co-chair**, said: “We are delighted to have such an esteemed speaker and a fantastic turnout for our second YN Lawyers event. Thanks to the generosity all our sponsors and guests, the money raised will go towards supporting children and families in our community”.

For further information please contact David Wosner, Public Relations Officer at Norwood on 020 8420 6942 or email [david.wosner@norwood.org.uk](mailto:david.wosner@norwood.org.uk)

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