

Admissions Ceremony

Monday 25 September 2000

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey

Ladies and Gentlemen

Congratulations on your substantial achievements. You have all demonstrated a capacity to do very well indeed. We Judges sincerely trust you may!

Like much worthwhile human endeavour, your achievements are likely not the product of just your own application. Parents, brothers and sisters, partners, friends: their support is usually instrumental to high performance, and I know you would wish me warmly to acknowledge that today. You have all achieved to a very high standard. But you will understand my particularly mentioning the outstanding performance of the honours graduates, and our affectionate regard for those of you who are or have been judge's associates.

You now enter a profession which depends, for acceptance, on a clear focus on public service. You ultimately serve the public, as members of the legal profession, by protecting the rule of law: honestly driven, you will uphold the law, whatever the idiosyncratic direction of the particular client; you will fulfil a clear overriding duty to the court, however strong the temptation to promote a particular client's perhaps doubtful contrary interest.

We sometimes rather coyly say the law has nothing to do with morality. While it is of course true that judges are absolutely constrained by the law, the reality is that the law does generally reflect orthodox perceptions of morality. The jurisprudential study of the law is fulfilling: the morality which bases it, and the mental rigour necessary to pursue it, will always benefit you – even if you do not enter into legal practice as such.

The successful practice of the law can be enlivening, inspiring, fulfilling. It can also, however, with some, consume their lives to the point where they become tediously one-sided and narrow. A challenge is to remain interested, and interesting, human beings. You will be much more effective lawyers if you take a broad approach to human affairs, especially if you read widely, participate in community affairs, and value and look after your family and friends.

The enduring character of the courts of law, the legal profession, the law itself, is immutable. The institutions and the philosophy are directed towards elevating the human condition. There is a uniting thread of predictability which is important to that. But that does not exclude subtle, creative development. The law continually changes. So does the approach of the courts and the profession. Just as you passed hallowed old furniture and regalia, and invaluable rare books, in the public corridor outside this courtroom, so also you may have noted startlingly innovative architecture, inviting modern accessibility. You all may now become part of the richly complex machinery which seeks to deliver justice according to law to all people, and that is our immutable goal; but we increasingly seek to deliver it in a

modern, comprehensible and more accessible fashion. As lawyers of the modern age, you will, I know, appreciate that.

May I finally urge you to spare more than a thought for the members of our society who lack your substantial advantages. Do what you can, and in no merely token way, to assist the poor, the marginalised, the friendless; and also do your creative best to help address the law's persisting overwhelming deficiency – limited accessibility to justice.

And now, as you go forward, know that you do so with the confidence and warm good wishes of the judiciary.
