

MASTER CUTLER'S SPEECH AT THE CUTLERS' FEAST ON THURSDAY 13 MAY 2010

Lord Lieutenant, High Sherriff, Lord Mayor, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you Gavyn for your toast and for identifying for us some of the key economic issues we all face and for proposing, so sincerely, the good health of manufacturing in Hallamshire.

Well, what a week it has been - a General Election, a hung Parliament, the first proper Coalition Government since the War and the youngest Prime Minister since the 1830's. On top of that we have had volatile currency, bond and stock markets. So it seems fitting, that after all this excitement, we should all deserve some relaxation and enjoyment, so welcome to you all to this year's Cutlers' Feast, the **best** business dinner in the north.

I have already said all I want to on business and manufacturing issues, so the main purpose of this toast is to welcome our many guests here this evening on behalf of the Company. I hope you enjoyed the meal – it was not chosen, I might add, by me, but by the Mistress, my resident culinary advisor. I did, however, chose the wines so **I** can only be blamed for your hangovers not your weight gain.

After last year, I was doubtful as to whether I wanted to ask another economist to come and speak at our Feast. However, Gavyn has had much more success with the charity monies I have given him to invest, than last year's speaker had with the economy, so I thought we could all benefit from his wisdom and knowledge.

Apart from being a successful banker and world renowned economist, he has changed political horses more times than Nick Clegg and has advised the last six Prime Ministers as well as having a successful four years as Chairman of the BBC. His words this evening brought, **to me** at least, some clarity on the current economic situation.

At this point, I was going to tell you a joke about an economist. Having just bought a new iPhone, I bought an APP with 18000 jokes on it. I duly put in a search for jokes about economists. The result was a message that no jokes available but I should try accountants or bankers, where there would seem to be plenty!!

I also understand there are plenty of Nick Clegg jokes as well.

I am also delighted to welcome as our guests over 30 Livery Masters, Prime Wardens and Governors together, in some cases, with their wives and their Clerks. This Company is uniquely

privileged to have close ties with so many Livery Companies in London and elsewhere and the Mistress and I have enjoyed so much excellent hospitality and have made some really good friends on our trips out of Sheffield.

With manufacturing again back on the political agenda, I have been able to discuss and lobby for support from many Masters and their companies, who represent manufacturing and metal industries, both old and new. The key message that manufacturing is important to the economy is fully appreciated and I am sure the Livery movement will use its substantial influence in Government circles to ensure our voice is heard where it matters.

I obviously cannot mention all the Masters by name but would like to single out the other Master Cutler, Michael Pocock, for his friendship and not getting too upset at all the Sheffield cutlery there is in London!

Also to a dear friend of this Company, Jurg Guggisberg, the Zunftmeister, Zunft zur Schmiden aus Zurich, the Blacksmiths to you and me. Welcome to you, Jurg and Ursula and I am delighted that the volcanic ash did not prevent you from being here as it did the Mistress and me last month from visiting you in Zurich. We shall fix another date to visit, I am sure.

Also a special welcome to the Governor of the Merchant Adventurers of York, Richard Haynes, with whom we have a close relationship as well as the Master of the Merchants of Edinburgh, Ken Dalton and, dare I say in the same breadth, the Deacon Convenor of the Trades House in Glasgow. Last but not least, my good friend from the water industry, Colin Skellet, the Master of the Merchant Venturers in Bristol.

We also have with us from London, our very good friend Master Steven Whittaker, the Queen's Remembrancer, who spoke at this Feast last year and whom we see on a regular basis in London or up here in Sheffield. Steven, it is always a pleasure to have you and your wife with us.

Likewise, a special welcome to the Mayor and Mayoress Colchester, who hosted the Mistress and I to probably one of the best lunches we have had all year at the Oyster Feast.

Ladies, I can tell you that after 12 oysters, I felt like George Clooney but it was to no avail as unfortunately I had to drive home afterwards and felt like George Roper, of George and Mildred fame, by the time we arrived back in Yorkshire.

To you and all the other Masters and guests from the Livery Companies, a very warm welcome and I hope you enjoy the visits we have planned for you tomorrow.

This Company has always been at the heart of what happens in this region and has the history and status to be involved in most civic as well as virtually all business activities. So we are always delighted to welcome our good friends the Lord Lieutenant, David Moody, the High Sherriff, Anthony Cooper as well as last year's High Sheriff, Helena Muller and the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Sheffield, Graham and Irene Oxley.

The Mistress and I have valued all your company as we have travelled around the region to so many functions together. A familiar face amongst a sea of strangers always helped to break the ice, especially during such a snowy winter and knowing my place in society, I was always glad to see at least one of you at each function as it generally meant someone else was going to have to make the speech!!

With the political vacuum caused by the Election, there are not any current politicians here tonight. There are some retired ones, from the two main parties – am I still allowed to say that now?

Anyway, I would like to mention just one – Richard Caborn, who retired this week after a long and distinguished career as a Minister and Sheffield MP. I mention Richard specifically as he has always been a great supporter of manufacturing and this Company and has always tried to ensure that this region's manufacturing voice has been heard in London and has fought hard for investment into the sector.

There are many other business guests here tonight representing virtually every professional and business organisation in the region, the two wonderful Universities we have, the hospitals, trade associations and the 4 South Yorkshire Councils as well as Yorkshire Forward.

From the civic perspective, we are always pleased to see members of the Judiciary and Police and the 4th Estate, the Press and media, who some might say have had a certain influence on the goings on over the last few weeks.

The Church is also well represented especially by my Chaplain, Rabbi Golomb and at his first Cutlers' Feast, the new Bishop of Sheffield, Stephen Croft. Stephen, welcome to Sheffield and I hope this will be the first of many Feasts you will attend.

I am also particularly proud to welcome as our guests, a number of Officers from the Armed Forces, with whom this Company has such close ties. It is an honour to have you here and for us to demonstrate our collective support for all your colleagues' efforts on our behalf. I would especially like to thank the 4th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment, who provided such a splendid Guard of Honour when you all arrived here this evening.

Whilst on this subject of support, I would also like to thank the South Yorkshire Police Fanfare Trumpeters and the Palm Court String Quartet for their music and harmony.

Finally, I would like to welcome all my personal guests. As someone who has had, by any measure, a large number of jobs in my career, I am so pleased to see many past and current work and advisor colleagues here this evening to support me and finally find out what has been keeping me away from Board meetings this year. Thankfully they have not threatened, BA style, to sack me or dock my pay but I am very grateful for their support and perseverance. In October, normal service will be resumed, which, for some of you, may be a good or not as the case may be!

There are also many friends and colleagues here from Sheffield Hallam University, the RMBI Charity and from Freemasonry, an Organisation that has taught me so much over the years and has given me so many friends all over the country. Welcome to you all.

The Mistress and I are also delighted that the Ladies have been able to join us this evening and as I look down this table, I see the Junior Warden, who in less than 16 months time will be our first Lady Master, which will be a historic moment in the great Company's history.

And my final welcome goes to the very few of our family that have been able to make it tonight - Lesley's parents and my mother. My Father is I am sure looking down and will be enjoying the moment.

Before I close, I would like to mention our Clerk, Peter Gardner. Peter has been Clerk to this Company for 16 years. He has, over that time, changed and modernised so much within the Company and has gained such tremendous respect both in this City and in London, amongst his fellow Clerks. This has undoubtedly rubbed off onto the Company and our reputation as a Company has been enhanced as a result of Peter being our Clerk.

Peter retires in a few weeks time and we are delighted that he has accepted our offer of becoming Clerk Emeritus. I know I speak for all my predecessors, in thanking Peter for his wise advice and counsel, as well as his friendship, over the last 15 years. The Company has appointed George Kilburn to succeed Peter and we welcome you George and wish you a long and happy stay with us.

Before I propose the toast to our guests, I would like to break with tradition on this occasion only and ask all of you to stand and drink a toast to Peter, wishing him and Pauline a very long, happy and healthy retirement.

I would now like to introduce you to other Principal Guest, Lord Robert Winston. I have been honoured to know Robert for almost 7 years through his Chancellorship of Sheffield Hallam University. However, being Chancellor is only one tiny part of Robert's life, which is only revealed when you go on his website. Scientist, doctor, University Professor, researcher, author, charity supporter, TV star are just a few of the ways to describe him. However, the one I like best is 'Peer of the Year', which he was voted in 2008.

His pioneering work in the field of human fertilisation and genetic diagnosis is world renowned and acclaimed and his TV programmes to educate us all on this subject were a revelation when they first appeared. He has also written a number of books, the latest being called 'Bad Ideas', which takes a fresh look at mankind's inventions and discoveries and asks whether these have actually been good for us or not. However, my own favourite title of one of his books is 'Making Babies' but I suspect it is not what I think it is.

Robert has been an inspirational Chancellor at Hallam, often surprising us at Graduation Dinners with his impromptu speeches and marrow saxophone playing. I am not sure what he has in store for us tonight but **it will** be different.

So, I would now like to ask all the Members and Freeman of the Company to be upstanding and drink a toast to our GUESTS.