

ANTONY EDWARD JONES

Mr Chancellor

Every time that you type in a PIN number when buying an item on credit card – from plants at Peter Barratt, to hoses at Homebase - there is a good chance that Mr Antony Edward Jones has, indirectly, something to do with it. Antony is Chief Executive Officer of the Logistics Group – a large international company intimately involved in the design and delivery of Information Technology to major enterprises throughout the world. The efficient and secure handling of credit card transactions is just one aspect of the company's activity. He now lives in two countries and his company operates on live global scene – but the seeds of his success began when he travelled to Newcastle upon Tyne in the mid-1970s.

Unlike some esteemed members of our congregation, Antony turned down a place at the University of Oxford, leaving the leafy London commuter town of Dorking to take up his place as an Undergraduate at Newcastle University. Leaving his rather stunned parents behind, his migration “up north” demonstrated that his foresight, vision and independent thought were present from a very early age – attributes which have served him well and have stood the test of time.

Unlike most local lads, he actually arrived in the North East with an ABO. Was this some form of anti-social behaviour order

imported from the south? Fortunately not it was the registration number of his company Rover, having already started working for the family firm. It intrigues me to think how it must have looked, as Antony turned up to the Union Society in his luxury motor, parking along side leather clad “Hells Angels” on their Harley Davisons, and mixing with the Communist core that underpinned student politics at the time. I am sure that he would have offered his keys to any deserving comrade who might put the vehicle to good use.

Antony came to Newcastle to study Politics – and what better place to do so. His political leanings were towards the Left, something that attracted him (and other leading figures) to our region at that time. Initially driven by a political ambition, he stood, and won his place in the local history books as President of the Union Society – taking a year out from the family business and his studies to serve the student body of our institution. At that time, the Presidential stipend was strategically split between the Union Society and the Students Representative Council (or SRC), to maintain some balance and control in the political direction of both organisations but this was not going to last long. Secure in the family business, Antony resigned from the SRC position, causing a constitutional crisis in Newcastle, and introducing a change that remains in place to the present day. Antony’s colleagues tell me that “shaking things up a bit” is an approach he has used to good effect many times during his career.

In what way has Antony influenced politics over the years? Through the NUS he mingled with bearded political animals from all sides, including Trevor Philips and Charles Clarke. It is intriguing to speculate how he might have influenced future Labour policy over a bottle or two of “Broon Ale” in the now demolished Haymarket pub, shrouded in smoke (of various kinds) just 100 yards from this spot. Perhaps this was the kindling which led to the fire of New Labour and the northern domination of Westminster politics spanning this last decade? Clearly Antony has a lot to answer for.

After leaving University, Antony focussed his energies on the business, but he still managed to influence and shape the political scene. This was at a time when the Personal Computer was just becoming a technical viability, and his company, Data Recall, developed an advanced word processor which became popular with Government Departments, including the Cabinet Office. This application uniquely highlighted any revisions made to policy documents in bold red letters. This software has subsequently been developed extensively but as far as Government policy documents goes, there is apparently no further need to draw attention to any revisions.

When the company was sold, Antony moved to ICL where he had responsibility for all marketing activity, including exhibitions. Each year, on the first morning of the main industry show, he would barge into the organiser’s office, demanding the best stand at the best price for the following year. I have it on good authority that Antony

was a very demanding client, and a very difficult man to negotiate with. His style clearly had a profound influence on one Director of the conference organising team, who decided “if you cannot beat him, then join him” that director went on to marry him, and his wife Janice is here with us here this evening. Antony, you will be pleased to know that she has been a useful source of information for the rest of this citation.

As their wedding day approached it became clear that the hotel caterers could not guarantee the freshness of the fish that the couple had chosen for the menu. Never a one to compromise, Antony decided to drive to Billingsgate Fish market at 5am on the happy day, where he bought the fish (presumably negotiating a good price), before delivering them to the hotel kitchen just in time to get married at 10:30. Janice omitted to clarify whether Antony changed and showered after his hands-on haggling on the fish quay – perhaps we can discuss this later. Antony, Janice and their two daughters live in Madrid, along with the true head of the household, their weimaraner whom they all look up to, as he stands 6ft 6 on his hind legs.

Antony has a long history of good relationships with the Spanish and particularly the Spanish authorities. Having spent part of his youth in Spain, his friends remember playing on the beach as teenagers in an area where ball games were not permitted. The rabble was eventually rounded up by the Civil Guard. Now, his Spanish friends knew that it was most unwise even to look at Franco’s Policemen in the eye, but the young Mr Jones refused to

leave his swing, arguing his basic human rights. Only his British Nationality saved him from arrest something of which he is proud and to this day his closest Spanish friends call him “el ingles” or sometimes “el infidel” which gives us a little clue about Antony’s views on authority.

Antony has always had a passion for nurturing young people and talent, whether it involves the construction of a new sales and management team, or supporting young sportsmen (providing it is golf). This is also reflected in his tireless support of our University. He vigorously supports our Business School and the wider University, including his early hunting ground of the Students Union. He is exceedingly generous, and is a major donor to the annual fund. He sits on the Development Council, thereby providing direct financial support to students, and contributing to the Library and Academic facilities. He is also willing to support us, as and when needed, on an ad hoc basis. Central to this, is his ability to network, which is legendary – even if it means that he is the first to arrive and the last to leave the party, joining in with every dance!

Antony is well known for his ability to exploit situations and never people. This is a remarkable characteristic for one in such a senior position, and it has been the key to his success. It is something that comes through in all aspects of his professional and personal life. To illustrate this, I have the following quote from people that know him well:

“[We] know that he is always there to listen to our problems or support us in all we do, and he has continuously taught us in all aspects about the values of life, be it how to seize an opportunity, or how to learn to enjoy the precious moments life gives us. He is without doubt an inspiration for us, and his hard work sets an example for us to achieve and aim higher. We could not be any prouder to be the daughters of such an outstanding character and father.”

What better way Mr Chancellor, to begin my duty as Public Orator Designate, than to present to you Mr Antony Jones. Ex-Politician, business-man, visionary, infidel, and Alumnus-extraordinaire. In recognition of the major contribution that he has made to our institution and its alumni, I ask you to bestow upon him an Honorary Fellowship of Newcastle University.

Citation by Professor Patrick Chinnery