

Annual Report for 2003-2004

By Peter Stanford Director of the Trust

At the drinks' reception after our first lecture and prize-giving in 2002, more than one guest walked up to me and asked 'how are you going to top that?' I hope that in the past 12 months we have come up with a suitable answer. Not once but twice. Our 2003 event took place in Church House again, in July again, and to headlines and media attention - again.

Bishop John Sentamu, the Ugandan-born Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, drew on his experience working on the enquiries into the deaths of first Stephen Lawrence and then Damilola Taylor to argue for the advance of principles of restorative justice. He cast his net wide - taking in the looming war in Iraq to argue that force, punishment and threats were not the only way to make our world a more just place. At the dinner after the event, the ebullient bishop was delighted to learn that Home Secretary, David Blunkett, had that evening put out a press release to challenge one of the key assertions he had made in the Longford Lecture. There was a certain delight in the bishop's voice the next morning when he appeared on Radio 4's flagship news programme, Today, to reiterate his plea for a new approach to criminal justice in Britain.

Soon after our second lecture, we were approached by our sponsors, the Independent, with a suggestion for the third Longford Lecturer - Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and an extraordinary force for good on the world stage. The archbishop was to visit London in February 2004 to undertake some teaching at his alma mater, King's College. It would mean moving the lecture from our July slot, but it was a small price to pay to hear such an outstanding man. Our invitation to Archbishop Tutu to speak was accepted and within days all the tickets had gone. We squashed and squeezed as many people as we could into the Assembly Hall, alongside rows of television cameras. We even ended up with an overspill room where people came to watch the event by a live video link from next door.

The archbishop was spellbinding, as Antonia Fraser recounts in her introduction to his lecture, published on this web site. We were hugely grateful that in addition to our faithful and generous regular sponsors, the Independent newspaper, we were also supported for this lecture by

Investec Asset Management, a respected financial institution with close links to South Africa.

The Longford Lecture is one part of our work. Another is the Longford Prize and I am pleased to report that the numbers of nominations for this award continues to grow. The judges have been able, by their choices, to send out clear messages about the importance of the often unsung work of the probation service, of restorative justice campaigners, and in 2003 of those who promote education in prisons and - a particularly sensitive one - those who work to rehabilitate sex offenders into the community. All are subjects about which Frank Longford felt passionately.

In November 2003, our first lecturer, Cherie Booth QC, showed her support once again when she hosted a reception at 10 Downing Street to celebrate the work of the trust and to launch two new initiatives - our support for the only national newspaper for prisoners, Inside Time as it expands to become a monthly publication, and our scheme to award Longford Scholarships to young ex-offenders to enable them to continue their rehabilitation once outside through higher education.

Cherie's evident commitment and her eloquence moved some of those present to dig deep into their pockets. Special mention must be made here to Putnam Lovell NBF Securities, the Lisbet Rausing Trust, to the Northern Dairies' Education Trust and to several of Frank Longford's old pupils at Christ Church, Oxford. In the spring of 2004 we were able to advertise for applications to be our first Longford Scholars.

Two young ex-offenders have been chosen, both starting at university in September 2004 on degree courses. Both impressed with their commitment to use their degrees to forge careers helping youngsters like themselves to break away from crime and recidivism. We wish them every success in their studies. We will support them financially and with individual mentors to give them the best chance of achieving their goals. We have also been able this year to launch the Longford Trust's website, which you are now reading. Particular thanks in this must go to Frank Longford's grandson, Nat Billington, who designed and updated the site and who is also sponsoring it. The commitment of the Longford clan to ensuring that Frank's work continues in the years ahead is one of the greatest strengths of the trust.

On behalf of the trustees and the family I would like to thank the following individuals, trusts and companies who have supported our

work: Bronwen Astor, The Avenue Trust, Diana and Nicholas Baring, Nat Billington, Lord Black of Crossharbour, Shirley Conran, The Earl of Dartmouth, Guy and Ruth East, The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, The Forte Charitable Trust, Lady Antonia Fraser, Benjie Fraser, Damian Fraser, The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Lord Haskins, The Independent (Independent News and Media UK), Investec Asset Management, Nigel McNair Scott, Richard I Morris Jr, Northern Dairies' Educational Trust, Northern Rock Foundation, Thomas Pakenham, Putnam Lovell NBF Securities, the Lisbet Rausing Trust, Jon Snow, Peter Soros, Sir James Spooner, Lady Juliet Townsend and Lord Weidenfeld.

A special word of thanks too to the Prison Reform Trust, and its inspiring director, Juliet Lyon, for all their hard work over the past two years in ensuring that the launch of the Longford Trust has been such a success.

There are times when the loss of Frank, a man I had grown to believe was immortal, surfaces as a profound sadness in my life. I will never see his like again, I know. Nor Elizabeth's. They were an inspiration. But whenever those melancholy thoughts mass, I have only to look at the development of the Longford Trust to know that Frank is still very much with us, albeit on another plane, and to hope, as I said last year, that he is smiling down on us.