

HOUSE OF LORDS HOSTS 'RULE OF LAW IN CHINA' SYMPOSIUM

PHIL DINES REPORTS

ON MONDAY 27 OCTOBER 2008, The Foundation for Law, Justice and Society (FLJS), a socio-legal think tank affiliated with Oxford University's Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, held a symposium at the House of Lords to bring to an auspicious conclusion their 'Rule of Law in China: Chinese Law and Business' programme.

The programme, launched in 2005, aimed to study the ways in which Chinese law and legal institutions encounter and interact with the social environment, including economic and political factors, at local, regional, national, and international levels. October's seminar at the House of Lords brought together 50 respected figures from business, government, law, academia and the media to review the achievements of the programme, and to discuss some of the areas of study that it focused upon, which included regulatory reform, the socio-political transition, dispute resolution, and the judicial system.

The symposium was opened by John W. Adams, the Chairman of the Foundation for Law, Justice and Society, and Lord Plant of Highfield, who sits on the Foundation's board of directors. Randall Peerenboom, the Rule of Law in China Programme Director and Professor of Law at La Trobe University, Melbourne, provided an overview of the three-year programme, describing its international and interdisciplinary approach, reflected in the fact that conferences were held in locations as disparate as Beijing, Washington, Paris, and Oxford. He also outlined possible areas of further study, identifying such issues as environmental degradation and health and safety regulation.

Tom Ginsberg, Professor of Law at Chicago University, then analysed the policy briefs, reports, and working papers produced throughout the course of the programme. He commented on the effectiveness of both the content and the presentation of the publications, which aim to deliver expert analysis in an easily accessible manner.

Denis Galligan, Professor of Socio-Legal Studies



Professors Peerenboom and Galligan fielding questions

at Oxford University concluded the presentations by commenting on the programme from a broader socio-legal perspective, speculating on what future reforms and trends may be expected in the Chinese legal system.

The panel then took questions from delegates, which included Lord Howe, former Chancellor of the Exchequer and President of the Great Britain-China Centre. Lord Howe remarked that the programme's policy briefs and reports showed a 'sophistication of analysis that is immensely impressive'. Other organisations represented at the event included the Foreign Office, BBC World service, the China-Britain Business Council and Chatham House. Further details are available at www.fljs.org/pastevents. All of the publications relating to this programme are also available to download from www.fljs.org/Chinapublications.

Phil Dines is Publications and Communications Manager at the Foundation for Law, Justice and Society



John Adams, Lord Plant and Tom Ginsberg