

Chairman's Speech—Dinner 10 Nov 2014

My Lords, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the annual dinner of the Bahrain Society.

I welcome particularly His Excellency Mr Nawaf al Mouwda the comparatively newly appointed Ombudsman of the Kingdom, the first holder of this important and challenging appointment. He will tell us in a minute about his responsibilities, and about the present situation in Bahrain. I had the good fortune to be briefed by Mr Nawaf last time I was in Bahrain and I am sure his appointment will do much to debunk the many anti-establishment stories which appear so often in the international media, and which do so much to discredit the excellent work undertaken for his people by His Majesty King Hamed and his Government.

We will also hear later from The Right Honourable The Lord Howard of Lympne, who I know to be a good friend of Bahrain. He held a number of cabinet appointments in both Margaret Thatcher's and John Major's governments and was Leader of the Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition from 2003 to 2005. His wide knowledge of international relationships will, I am sure, allow us all to learn from him and he will doubtless give us his views on the present state of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

For those many guests here who are not members of the Bahrain Society may I just say how pleased we are to have you with us. For you, I should tell you that the Society was formed in 1971 and is really an old boys (and girls !) club for those who have lived and worked in Bahrain, who love the Island and who like to keep in touch with old friends. We even have one or two members, now retired, and who are here this evening, who were born in Bahrain.

So for anyone who would like to join the Society, my excellent secretary, Mrs Laurel Winter, will I am sure have the necessary paperwork in her handbag. Laurel has worked tirelessly for the past few weeks for the success of this evening and I thank her most sincerely for that.

May I please also pay tribute to Her Excellency Alice Samaan, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain, who is always so kind to the Society, and whose staff have put so much effort into the smooth running of this dinner for us. In particular I must make mention of the Ambassador's private secretary, Mrs Maha Shihata, who must have been driven nearly out of her mind by all the organisational goings on and changes over the last few weeks. Thank you, Maha.

So now we come to the interesting part of the evening. May I please ask His Excellency Mr Nawaf al Mouwda, the Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Bahrain, to address us.