

## **BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY**

Pro-Chancellor,

Baroness Cox is a highly distinguished human rights campaigner and advocate whose international work has been recognised by numerous awards. A former nurse and academic, she was created a peer in 1982 and served as a Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords for twenty years. Baroness Cox was founding Chancellor of Bournemouth University from 1992 to 2001.

Caroline Cox grew up in the world of health-care. Her father was the internationally renowned surgeon Robert McNeill Love, co-author of the standard textbook known as 'Bailey and Love' which is still used around the world today. She went to Channing School and trained as a nurse at London Hospital. After working as a staff nurse at Edgware General Hospital she took a University of London degree (a First, in sociology) and then a Masters in economics as a research associate at Newcastle. Caroline then taught sociology at the Polytechnic of North London and soon became Head of Sociology. Later she moved to become Director of the Nursing Education Research Unit at Chelsea College of the University of London. Her publications in sociology were followed by others on academic freedom and political aspects of education, which brought her to the attention of the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. She was created a life peer in 1982 and remains an active and influential cross-bench member of the House of Lords.

But notwithstanding her work and influence in education, Lady Cox is known mainly for action on behalf of 'peoples off the radar screen of the large aid organisations' (as she puts it). Moved by a strong Christian faith and commitment, she is aptly described in the title of a recent biography as *A Voice for the Voiceless* who crosses frontiers of religion, politics and culture to bring aid and advocacy for marginalised, persecuted and vulnerable peoples of all faiths and none.

For many years Lady Cox's name was particularly associated with the organisation Christian Solidarity Worldwide, and she remains a patron and supporter of this and many other health and aid-related bodies around the world. But she now works mainly for Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (or HART), which she founded and leads as Chief Executive. HART's object is to support 'the forgotten people of Europe, Africa and Asia: the oppressed and the persecuted, and often those neglected by other organisations, largely out of sight of the world's media'. It distinctively combines aid with advocacy, and promotes 'sustainable community development and local ownership and empowerment', working in partnership with local communities to support them and celebrate their achievements.

HART's reports make deeply compelling reading; they record a wide range of campaigns, meetings with national leaders and opinion-formers, and aid achievements which seem remarkable for a low-budget organisation. WE can highlight only a few examples today. So we hear, for instance, about community health centres staffed by trained health-care workers in NW

Burma; a centre in N Uganda for children who are HIV positive; and a rehabilitation centre for people with physical and mental disabilities in Nagorno Karabakh. In 2009 HART took the lead in co-ordinating action by humanitarian organisations in response to the crisis of suffering in war-torn Sudan. Other campaigns have included support for democratic movements and religious minorities.

Characteristically, Lady Cox has always insisted on visiting what she calls 'unreached and unheard' peoples to learn at first hand about them and their needs. Her courageous travels have often taken her to remote places in arduous and dangerous conditions, and sometimes to war zones; but these visits bring encouragement and hope to isolated and suffering communities, and they have provided an immense body of eye-witness evidence and experience, not to mention a huge archive of photographs. This evidence gives authenticity and weight to her writing and speaking about the needs of forgotten peoples, wars, persecutions and famines, not only in the House of Lords, but in her vivid and passionate addresses at conferences, universities and schools in the UK and overseas.

Lady Cox's achievements have been recognised by many and varied honours across the world, from the Commander's Cross of the Polish Order of Merit and the Mkhitar Gosh Medal of the Republic of Armenia to the International Mother Teresa Award and the Wilberforce Award. She has honorary degrees of nine universities in the UK, America, Europe and Asia. In 1996 she received an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, and she is a Vice-President of the Royal College of Nursing. Her commitment to higher education is still as powerful as ever, and she is now Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University.

At the heart of Lady Cox's work is the simple philosophy of respecting others and enabling them to realise their potential, and a sense of the privilege involved in making a difference to their lives. Today Bournemouth University is delighted to identify with these values as we warmly welcome the return of our founding Chancellor and celebrate one of the great humanitarians of our time.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Baroness Cox of Queensbury, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.