



## **Digby Jones selected Speaker of the Year**

### **UK's premier public speaking body honours the British 'Voice of Business'**

Lord Jones of Birmingham – still generally known as Digby Jones – has been selected by the Association of Speakers Clubs as the 2008 Speaker of the Year.

Digby became widely known when serving as Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry, the British 'Voice of Business', from 2000 through 2006.

In this role he regularly visited businesses in the United Kingdom and worldwide, taking the British business message to 70 different countries and meeting on regular bases political, business and media figures in this country and abroad.

Digby Jones is recognised as a powerful public speaker with definite – often controversial – opinions. For example, when with the CBI he expressed unorthodox views on climate change, noting that "...the next Bill Gates will be the deliverer of a highly technological solution to some of our climate

change challenges; I want them to be British." He also regarded trades unions as "... risking becoming an irrelevance if they didn't get on today's agenda".

In December 2006, Digby was appointed by then Chancellor Gordon Brown to be the UK's Skills Envoy, and he has also held several advisory positions in the private sector, including Barclays Capital, Ford, Deloitte and J. C. Bamford (JCB).

Since June 2007, Lord Jones has been Minister of State for UK Trade and Investment at the newly created Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, as well as at the Foreign Office. On appointment, he made clear that, although he had criticised the government in the past, it would be wrong to pass up the opportunity of helping put business at the heart of a new administration: "I am absolutely delighted to get the chance to just put business, wealth and job creation right in the middle of decision-making."

He has been created a life peer as Baron Jones of Birmingham, of Alvechurch and of Bromsgrove in the County of Worcestershire: he styles himself Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham. He has taken up the Labour whip in the House of Lords but has not joined the Labour Party.

Lord Jones is a Corporate Ambassador for Cancer Research UK and a Fellow of UNICEF. He is President of the Diversity Works initiative – a programme led by the disability organisation Scope - and a Diamond

Ambassador for Mencap's WorkRight initiative, designed to spread the message of equality for disabled people. He is also a Vice-President of Birmingham Hospice, Chairman of the Redrow Foundation, a Patron of Lifecycle UK, a Director of Leicester Rugby Football Club and a fan of Aston Villa FC.

He was educated at Bromsgrove School where he was Head Boy, and read Law at University College London. After a spell in the Royal Navy, Digby worked for 20 years in corporate law, before joining consultants KPMG in 1998. He is now a Fellow of the University College London Campaign, a visiting professor at the University of Hull Business School, Chairman of the Birmingham University Business School Advisory Board, and has received honorary doctorates from many universities.

The Association of Speakers Clubs is the UK's largest organisation of its kind, with more than 30 years of sound achievement in the world of effective communication. Former Speakers of the Year have included Sir Peter Ustinov, Edwina Currie, Sir John Harvey Jones, Esther Rantzen, Terry Waite, Tony Benn, Baroness Betty Boothroyd and Simon Weston. The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu was the 2007 Speaker of the Year.

ASC's National President, Joe James, observes that "Digby Jones is an accomplished and effective speaker, who sets a public example of the high standards of speaking which our Association's members and aspiring speakers everywhere should take as a model. We are honoured that he has accepted our invitation to be the 2008 Speaker of the Year".

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November ASC members from all over the UK will attend a dinner in Digby Jones' honour at which he will speak. Further details may be obtained from Joe James, National President, Association of Speakers Clubs on 0191 251 3740 or at: [jjames9241@aol.com](mailto:jjames9241@aol.com) or from the ASC's website: <http://www.the-asc.org.uk>. Lord Jones can be contacted on 07836 586677.