



British Institute of
International and
Comparative Law



Advancing legal
knowledge in global
affairs for 60 years

Lord Denning



In 1958 Baron Alfred Tom Denning, OM, PC, DL was a key part of the group of initial signatories who set up BIICL. A staunch internationalist, he believed that BIICL's role should be moving **"freely over the boundaries that divide these fields of law and bringing out the underlying unities."**

He was a former president of one of BIICL's predecessor organisations, the Society of Comparative Legislation and chair of BIICL from its beginning until 1986 when he became the first president of the institute, supporting BIICL until his death in 1999.

Baron Alfred Tom Denning, OM, PC, DL (23 January 1899 – 5 March 1999) was a British barrister and judge. A graduate of both Mathematics and Law from Magdalen College, Oxford, he is remembered for his extraordinarily passionate judicial advocacy and for crafting judgments that put social justice at the heart of jurisprudence.

Beginning his career as a civil barrister, Baron Denning quickly distinguished himself as a formidable advocate and was appointed to the High Court very early in his career, at the impressively young age of 45. Promotion to the Court of Appeal followed swiftly on from this post, and he was raised to the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords at the age of 58. Though he operated at the very apex of the judicial system, he is best remembered for the two decades that he spent as Master of The Rolls between 1962 and 1982.

Aside from his work as a judge, Baron Denning presided over key moments in British history, such as the 1963 Report into the Profumo Affair. His robust advocacy for the rule of law has left a number of key maxims that are immortalised in the minds of English and Welsh undergraduate students, such as his restatement of the rule of law in the case *Gouriet v Union of Post Office Workers*. "Be ye ever so high, the law is higher than ye."

His enduring legacy is perhaps best summed up by Lord Bingham, who described Lord Denning as "the best-known and best-loved judge of this, or perhaps any, generation..."

cherished by his countless friends on the Bench, at the Bar and among the wider public throughout the Commonwealth."

To this day, aspiring barristers continue to benefit from Baron Denning's legacy through two initiatives of his Inn of Court. The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn provides promising bar students with the Lord Denning Scholarship, a package of significant financial assistance, to assist them in becoming leading advocates. The Inn also convenes a 'Denning Society' of its scholars to provide students and distinguished senior barristers with an opportunity to discuss the most pressing contemporary legal issues.

References:

The First International Conference on the Application of the Death Penalty in Commonwealth Africa 2004

https://www.biicl.org/files/835_a2_death_penalty_brochure.pdf

A Brief History of BIICL

https://www.biicl.org/documents/12_a_brief_history_of_biicl.pdf?showdocument=1

Lincoln's Inn Denning Society: <https://www.lincolnsinn.org.uk/index.php/members-area/denning-society>

Lincoln's Inn Denning Fund supporting talented bar school applicants

<http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1102414&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

Image : National Portrait Gallery under creative commons licence