



President of The Supreme Court,
The Right Hon. the Lord Neuberger of
Abbotsbury
The Supreme Court
Parliament Square
London SW1P 3BD

25 Red Lion Square
London WC1R 4RL

lawyerssecularsociety.wordpress.com
lawsecsoc@yahoo.co.uk
Twitter: @LawSecSoc

24 September 2014

Judges' Service

We refer to our letter dated 10 July 2014 to you. Identically worded letters were also sent to the other Justices of the Supreme Court. Our letter was personal to you and related to an invitation that you were expected to receive personally from the Lord Chancellor to attend the annual Judges' Service in Westminster Abbey on 1 October.

The reply dated 29 July 2014 which we received was however from the Chief Executive of the Supreme Court, Ms Rowe, and it was in the form of a letter which advanced no legal justification for the continuation of the Judges' Services or for judges' attendance. No statute, common law or constitutional precedent was cited, nor did it attempt to rebut any of the legal arguments in our letter. It did not deal with the serious issues we raised concerning the fears of criminal defendants, civil parties or witnesses.

The most surprising thing about Ms Rowe's letter is that it justifies your continued attendance at these services on the grounds that your judicial impartiality would not thus be compromised because of your Judicial Oath. We have no doubt that you would scrupulously adhere to that oath, but that is surely not the point. The paramount issue here is that your attendance creates the **impression** of apparent bias; the letter also overlooks the fact that, even if judges comply fully with their Judicial Oath, they still have a duty to avoid doing anything to compromise (or appear to compromise) their impartiality and independence. Why else would it be necessary for there to be a *Guide to Judicial Conduct*?

In the letter Ms Rowe quoted the requirement in the Code of Conduct to:

“... strive to ensure that his or her conduct, both in and out of Court, maintains and enhances the confidence of the public, the legal profession and litigants in the impartiality of the individual Justice and of the Court.”

but she did not explain how your attendance at the Judges' Service does anything other than undermine this requirement.

In her letter Ms Rowe cited no other activity in which judges collectively and officially participate where there is any possibility of their impartiality being compromised – this implicitly shows that religion is alone in this regard.

We urge you to consider this matter once more, personally and individually, and to refrain from attending the 2014 Service. Attendance is, as Ms Rowe mentioned, voluntary.

John V C Butcher (LSS)

18 Bramble Rise
Cobham
Surrey KT11 2HP

tel. 01932 867511 and 07899 891685
e-mail: jvcbutcher@btinternet.com

Peter J Fisher (LSS)

183 Central Park Road
London E6 3AE

tel. 020 8472 7873 and 07504 306379
e-mail: peterfisher183@virginmedia.com

Please reply to the above address