

**Speech by Professor Manuel Eisner at Thank You Dinner for Professors
Lorraine Gelsthorpe, Lawrence Sherman and Per-Olof Wikstroem
23 February 2023**

Dear Colleagues

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this dinner in honour of the amazing achievements of our three colleagues and friends Lorraine Gelsthorpe, Per-Olof Wikstroem and Larry Sherman. We are all here to celebrate and recognise the roles that they have played and continue to play as extraordinary scholars, the contributions they have made to the Institute and its success, and the impact they have had and continue to have on our discipline and the wider policy fields of crime prevention, law enforcement, and the functioning of the justice system

I would like to particularly welcome our guests tonight. Prof Michele Burman from the University of Glasgow, Prof Anthea Hucklesby from the University of Birmingham, Dr Neema Trivedi-Bateman from the University of Loughborough, Prof Paul Rock, emeritus professor at the London School of Economics, and Prof Barry Goldson from the University of Liverpool. It is very good indeed to have you here.

I would also like to express my delight that two of the previous directors of the Institute are joining us tonight, namely Tony Bottoms, who was director from 1984 to 1999, and Friedrich Lösel, the director of the Institute from 2005 to 2012.

Honouring three amazing colleagues with such an outstanding academic record but very different ways in which they contributed is no easy task. I hence recruited the help of well-known criminologist. 30 years ago, he gave a speech at another dinner, describing himself as having a “reputation for being [...] forthright, if not ‘difficult’”. The figure was, of course, the founder of this Institute, Sir Leon Radzinowicz, who received standing ovations for his wide-ranging reflections on the state of Criminology. Today, I will not stretch your patience. But I will use a few quotes to highlight some of the goals that shaped the brand of Cambridge Criminology, and to which Lorraine, Per-Olof and Larry have so generously contributed.

Good science

In his speech, Sir Leon Radzinowicz emphasized the importance of good science. He said: “My advice, respectfully submitted to you, is to have the courage and determination to stick to real scholarship: that is where the intellectual advance of our subject lies [...] providing, of course, we all take the utmost care to write clearly, precisely, succinctly, and unpretentiously.”

The three colleagues that we celebrate today are beacons of really good scholarship. And good scholarship I don't mean just standard good scholarship. I mean mindbogglingly ambitious – think out of the box--- how can we make sense of this mess --- kind of outstanding scholarship.

When I started at the Institute 23 years ago, for example, we all tended to think about crime in a confused way. There were risk factors, correlates, causal risk factors and other ways that somehow connected to crime in some way. Today, I believe it is fair to say that it is hard for anybody in the Institute to avoid reflecting on what it means to think about causes, mechanisms, causes of causes, etc. This is a huge transformation, and largely one thanks to Per-Olof and his committed, curious, stubborn focus on being precise and analytic. For all of us --- well, I should be cautious here, “for many” might be a better estimate of the truth --- Per-Olof's reminders about causal mechanisms and the importance of analytic theory have become part of our criminological super-ego. His Situational Action Theory, developed together with Kyle Treiber and tested with a team of collaborators in the Peterborough Adolescent Development Study, is surely among the most ground-breaking developments in general criminological theory in this century.

Larry, too, has made exceptional contributions to general theory in criminology that have become foundations for empirical research programmes. Personally, I am great admirer of the 1993 paper on “Defiance, deterrence, and irrelevance”, in which Larry developed defiance theory. Not least, it a great example of clear, precise, succinct and unpretentious writing. It is a major lasting contribution to knowledge and theory. And it hardly comes as a surprise that, in the conclusions, Larry recommends randomised controlled experiments.

Lorraine, finally, has role such an exceptionally important role in reminding us and the discipline that criminal justice is but one type of justice, and that there exist complex but hugely important links to wider issues of social justice, especially when considering race, gender and social exclusion. Her work on female offenders, for example, has consistently emphasised that the penal

system cannot just be about punishment. For it to be humane, we must understand how the needs of people differ, and what is needed to better meet these needs. And her pioneering work on the role of probation has laid the grounds for a now wide-ranging field of research, pursued by colleagues here at the institute and in other universities across the country, on all aspects of the justice process and how the needs of disadvantaged groups can be better met. The fact that we have four outstanding colleagues from Glasgow, Birmingham, and LSE with us is testament to her intellectual influence in the UK and far beyond.

Public Criminologists

At some point of his speech, Radzinowicz reflected on the role of criminologists in public life. “I would like to see criminologists taking a public stand on controversial and important issues of the moment more often than they do at present, particularly when views are expressed which rest upon an erroneous or distorted impression of what criminology has to say about them.” I don’t know, of course, whether this is a ‘difficult’ character sniping at some others who may, in Sir Leon’s view, have had erroneous views of some kind. But what I can say with a very high degree of confidence is that every one of the colleagues we celebrate and honour today has taken on the mission to engage with the public, to take a stand on controversial issues, and make all they can to move policy debates forward.

An example is Larry’s life-long mission to use high-quality academic research to inform and shape public policies. There is no point in trying to list his achievements through his work on evidence-based crime prevention, hot spots policing, evidence-based policing, restorative justice experiments etc. But I would like to highlight his extraordinary achievements in transforming police training and the way we think about the MSt programmes. Of course, the MSt programme has older roots. In fact, in some ways it originates in initiatives launched by Sir Leon Radzinowicz in the early 1960s and then energetically taken forward by our colleagues Tony Bottoms, Michael Tonry, and Friedrich Loesel.

But in 2008 Larry gave the notion of academic training for practitioners an entirely new twist when he boldly declared that police officers should not *learn* how proper scientists conduct randomized controlled trials, they should understand the principles of evidence-based policing and *conduct* the experiments themselves. He did this, of course, together with his wife and partner in crime experiments Heather Strang, whom I would like to include in

our celebrations today as this is the last day of her involvement in the MSt programme. Since then hundreds of police officers in the UK have learned how to the Cambridge Randomiser, how to implement interventions, and how to get research published. This is an extraordinary feat.

While different in some ways, Loraine also has an exceptional commitment to engaging with practitioners, front-line workers, patiently and attentively listening to what they have to say, and advancing a dialogue in search of better, fairer, and more sustainable solutions. Over more than 20 years, for example, she has coordinated the annual Bill McWilliam Lectures, passionate about bringing researcher and practitioners in the field of probation together. But in much wider sense, throughout her research career, compassion and a genuine understanding of the needs of others has been a major driver of her work and public engagement.

May be slightly less known to many, Per-Olof also has a long history of public engagement with prevention and justice. In fact, my first encounter with him was when he was director of the Swedish Crime Prevention Council, frustrated, at times, about the unprincipled ways in which prevention was developed and implemented without knowing what the causal mechanisms are. What looks like, at first sight, as a 'mere' interest in basic science, is hence driven by the conviction that there is no effective prevention with a good understanding of causal mechanisms.

Leadership and citizenship

Sir Leon Radzinowicz was a charismatic leader and a giant that gave this Institute and British criminology so much. But there is evidence that he could, at times, be rather difficult and demanding. In contrast, I can say with certainty that the three people we honour today are exceptionally kind, generous, and committed persons who have made such a big contribution to the institute. Of course, both Larry and Loraine have directed this institute for many years, through sometimes very challenging times. And I am sure I express the feelings of everybody when I express my thanks for all the work that they have done to further develop this unique place, its varied teaching programmes and the diversity of its research, to listen to colleagues, to support our uniquely diverse students with their different cultural and professional, to steer us through some very difficult times, to manage the increasingly complex bureaucratic routines, and to represent the interests of the Institute at all levels of the University.

Please join me in a raising the glasses to our colleagues and friends Loraine Gelsthorpe, Larry Sherman and Per-Olof Wikstroem.

Radzinowicz, L. (1994). REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF CRIMINOLOGY: Speech Made at the Dinner to Mark the British Criminology Conference Held in Cardiff 28—31 July 1993. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 34(2), 99-104.