

**WILLIAM R. MILLER OBE, CHAIRMAN
THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION OF THE UNITED STATES
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**THE MARGARET THATCHER LECTURE SERIES
MAY 30, 2007**

I am delighted to welcome you tonight to this fourth presentation in the English-Speaking Union Margaret Thatcher Lecture Series. I am especially pleased to recognize some special guests:

Ambassador Frank G. Wisner, Jr.

Mr. Wisner is Vice Chairman American International Group and former U.S. Ambassador to India, the Philippines, Egypt and Zambia;

Ambassador and Mrs. Bruce S. Gelb.

Mr. Gelb is former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium and a former Vice Chairman of Bristol-Myers Squibb;

With us tonight in spirit is The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Thatcher, L.G., O.M., F.R.S. who sends us the following message: "I am delighted that Martin Sullivan is Guest of Honour at this evening's dinner. From his roots in Essex his career has propelled him to the very pinnacle of his profession. Hugely respected and acknowledged as at the very top of his field, I am sure that he will bring a lively insight to this year's Margaret Thatcher Lecture. I send Mr. Sullivan, and you all, my very best wishes." Margaret Thatcher.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I ask you to be upstanding as I propose a toast. To The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven.

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Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin the evening's program, I would like to tell you a little about The English-Speaking Union. I promise to be brief, for many of you in the audience tonight are good friends of the ESU. But for those who don't know what we do, we contribute to the creation of global understanding through English. We go about accomplishing that through a variety of English-language based programs that support appreciation and improved command of English among native English speakers and mastery of colloquial English for non-native English speakers.

Our educational outreach includes international exchanges and scholarships for students and teachers; language and literature programs; book exchanges; and English conversation practice for newcomers to the States. The ESU also offers continuing education programs that include workshops for teachers that provide practical ideas and approaches for teaching Shakespeare; and our National Speaker Program, through which lecturers address our 10,000 members across the country on current affairs, world politics, art and literature.

For the most part, these programs are carried on in our 73 domestic Branches. But, recognizing the meteoric increase in the number of English-speakers around the world in the last decade – a

billion at last count – we have taken advantage of a global network that includes some 50 international ESUs, and are partnering with them in exciting new ventures that support the learning and use of English.

The globalization of the ESU has taken us well beyond our original boundaries. When we were founded in 1920, the English-speaking world consisted of the United States and the Commonwealth nations. In 2007, you can travel to the most exotic corners of the world and still find someone who speaks English. Today, one out of four of the world's population speaks English to some level of competence, and very soon the number of people speaking English as a second language will exceed the number of native English speakers.¹

In our headquarters building, we've recently re-hung one of our great art treasures, a mural world map, commissioned in the 1930s to depict the locations where English was the first language. It's fascinating to look at the map today and see that there are relatively few places where English is *not* routinely spoken, publicly accessible in varying degrees and a part of the nation's recent or present identity. Today, spoken English is the primary tool of international communication and most widely practiced by the business, scientific, political and academic communities.²

This explosion of English is reflected in our programs: our Branches annually send sets of award-winning books about American life and culture to ESUs in Katmandu, Moldova, Chile and Tokyo, among others; we have expanded our visiting scholars program to include educators from South America, New Zealand and Europe; we collaborate regularly with ESUs in Russia and Mexico on Shakespeare initiatives for teenagers; our current English in Action conversation students include people from Poland, Turkey, Japan, Colombia, Indonesia, Bolivia, China, Korea, Brazil, Viet Nam and Laos. In these politically unsettling times, our work to enhance communications both at home and abroad is more important than ever. Our goal is common understanding. Our common tool is English.

We wanted you to meet some of the individuals who have engaged in our programs, and have invited alumni and current participants in several of our programs to be with us tonight. They represent our Treadwell British University Summer School Scholarships for American teachers; our English in Action program, which provides conversational English practice to newcomers to the country; our Luard scholarships, which provide a junior year in the U.K. for students from United Negro College Fund schools; our National Shakespeare Competition for American high school students; and our Secondary School Exchange program, which allows British and American teenagers to spend a post-high school year in each others' country. Could I ask these scholars to stand up now?

Even native English speakers need to be reminded of the diversity and breadth of our language's capabilities. And with that in mind, we created this lecture series to explore its many aspects.

¹ AskOxford.com, *Oxford Dictionaries* online, Oxford University Press 2007

² David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Lady Thatcher's inaugural presentation focused on the political benefits of a shared language and shared values; in prior lectures, Sir John Bond talked about English as the common thread in international finance and business and Sir Martin Sorrell spoke on communication from his perspective as a leader in advertising, marketing and public relations. Tonight, Martin J. Sullivan will take us on an exploration of "The Language of Prosperity: English and World Commerce."

As President and Chief Executive Officer of American International Group, Inc., the leading global insurance and financial services organization, Mr. Sullivan is eminently qualified to lead us on this exploration. His personal journey, from humble beginnings in London's East End to the leadership position of a company operating in 130 countries and jurisdictions worldwide, is an inspiring story in and of itself.

From his vantage point and intimate knowledge of AIG's diverse businesses at many levels and in many countries, with different cultures and languages, Mr. Sullivan sees first hand everyday the common bond that ties them all together. It's English, a tongue they all speak, a language they all communicate in to insure lives and property, manage financial and retirement assets, and provide financial services to millions of customers around the world.

The English language is our patrimony, but in a 24/7 interconnected world, it's a universal inheritance for all to share.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite Martin Sullivan to take us along on this fascinating exploration of English as the language of prosperity.

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