

Conferral of Honorary LL.D.
by the University of Queensland and
Graduation Ceremony in the Faculty of Arts
Mayne Hall University of Queensland

Monday 18 December 2000 6.15pm

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Members of the Senate, Your Honours of the Supreme Court Justice Moynihan and Justice White, distinguished guests, graduates, ladies and gentlemen:

I recently saw an interesting aerial photograph of the University, taken looking east, from behind the Great Court over the Forgan Smith Building, across the river and Highgate Hill, via South Bank and the City to Moreton Bay. The appreciation of a student facing exams would have been marred somewhat by the presence of countless jacarandas in full bloom, those foreboding symbols which unfailingly flower in September. The "otherwise" brilliant picture included, however, in rather dim and distant form, the Supreme Courthouse, and even in that rather indistinct presentation, its uninspiring modernity was all too evident. I wondered for a moment about my own personal progression, from the elegant grandeur of Forgan Smith to my ultimate professional home, that fairly bland and characterless city building by the river. But of course the hesitation was but momentary.

This wonderful University instrumentally helped inspire me into a position of utmost public significance, a situation where material surroundings plainly cannot diminish the real achievement, or obscure any real contribution to the public interest. I hope, graduates, that your experience may be similar.

I am immensely pleased this evening to receive the recognition of this honorary degree from "my own" university. I do so with great respect for the office I am privileged to hold, and with great admiration for the bands of volunteers I have been privileged to lead in two important areas of human endeavour. I also do so with warm congratulations to this fine centre of unabashed, and undoubted, academic excellence.

In *my* accepting this honour, I sense this fine institution's esteem also for those I lead. With turbulence the current hallmark of *other* parts of government, the people may be reassured of the enduring stability of their *judicial* arm of government. Meeting that imperative requires attention to matters I regrettably need to raise too often: maintaining the quality of judicial appointments, and properly resourcing the court system. I am pleased to note by the way Vice Chancellor, that all your light bulbs appear to be functioning! For this eminent university, of such acclaimed excellence, to honour the State Chief Justice in this way, will serve to encourage

all Judges in their important work: and for that, Chancellor, I sincerely thank you.

And now to the graduates. First, you have my warm congratulations on your fine achievements. I expect I am *additionally* expected to offer some advice. I certainly will not presume to do so at length. The last of these addresses I experienced at an Arts graduation in this Hall was delivered, at *some* length, I might say, by the Rt Honourable the Lord Mayor. All nevertheless went swimmingly until our venerable civic leader was challenged from the floor: "What about the bus fares?" I will say at once that I have absolutely no influence over the level of the bus fares. I assure you however that I will kick against any suggestion that three late library returns in a row, and the student should mandatorily be imprisoned for a month!

Which brings me to my humble advice to you: remain interested and interesting human beings. Don't let the weight of the responsibility of life outside these cloisters stifle your creative imaginations. Think expansively, and not in any straightened or pinched way. The Faculty of Arts by tradition harbours people of great inspiration and excitement, and I am sure you warrant that description. Remain so!

One very good piece of advice is to continue to read widely. Voracious readers of catholic tastes are generally by definition therefore interesting people, diverting conversationalists, lateral thinkers. My wife is a good example. So is the Vice Chancellor. I regret that my own reading capacity has diminished since my days in this faculty. A former Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Anthony Mason, said that every lawyer should read at least 40 non-legal books a year. I continue to strive!

Read widely, and don't be afraid of embracing varying experiences though strictly confined of course to the lawful! There is frankly good reason for thinking that an *interesting* person is much more likely to lead a happy and fulfilling life, than a professional high achiever who is nevertheless *uninteresting*.

Your lecturers and tutors have fired your imaginations. In future moments of unduly responsible gloom, recall their inspiration. The eccentricities of some university lecturers can, as we know, fuel a lifetime's amusing dinner party conversation. But don't limit their enduring influence to that!

Don't let the demands of careers, earning incomes, supporting those you love, confine you to *overbearing* responsibility. Be flexible and forthcoming. When asked how he bore the weight of war-time responsibility, the leonine Winston Churchill responded that he drank a glass of champagne each night then slept like a kitten. Well, it's said he drank more than a glass, probably more than a bottle; and for the record, I am not encouraging you to the nightly consumption of substantial quantities of champagne! But do be candid human beings, and don't be shy about enjoying varied experiences.

Read, think, enjoy the many offerings of contemporary life, and never forget the inspiration which this University experience has engendered: let it encourage you to even greater, even *more* exciting achievement.

So when in 30 years time you may stand here as I am tonight, you also may be proud to affirm publicly your enduring affection for this truly great institution of light and learning.

My very best wishes to you all!