Dr. Grace MacInnis

Mr. Chancellor:

Last year, the Paris magazine Marie Claire set itself the task of selecting the fifty most important women of the world, basing its choice on the influence these women have had on the lives of their contemporaries, and on their advance-ment of women's rights by success in a field traditionally dominated by men. Along with Margaret Mead and Indira Ghandi, the list included Grace MacInnis, a choice that did not surprise Canadians who know Dr. MacInnis both for her lifelong commitment to enlightened social and political action, and as their only woman in Parliament.

Dr. MacInnis, for whom politics has been a way of life, has always insisted that she is not primarily a spokesman for women. Human values are her first concern, especially those values which require the support of society as a whole. This, she believes, is the function of government: in her words, "to enable people -- all the people -- to do for themselves collectively what, in our modern society, they cannot do for themselves as individuals."

This vibrant, dedicated woman advocates such measures as the establishment of a human research council which would study urban dislocation and related problems. Her speeches in Parliament have called for better housing and a guaranteed annual income for all Canadians. As her party's spokesman for consumer prices, she is concerned about rising costs of living and misleading advertising.

On the subject of women's rights, Dr. MacInnis has declared that no one can
give women equality. Women must assert it by doing things themselves. She herself has pressed for the widening of grounds for therapeutic abortions, for compulsory maternity leave for working mothers, and for better nurseries and day-care centres for children. She believes, furthermore, that all women need help with the care of their children, and the necessary opportunities to become whole persons in their own right.

Grace MacInnis gained her first parliamentary experience in her teens, when she was secretary to her father, James Shaver Woodsworth, the founder and first chairman of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, whose life she was to record many years later under the title, J.S. Woodsworth: a Man to Remember, a work of such distinction that it was awarded the 1954 Governor General's Award for popular biography. A delegate to the first National Convention of the CCF in 1933, she has worked ceaselessly for her party in capacities ranging from committee member to president. While her husband, Angus MacInnis, was serving his long stint in the House of Commons, she also served in the B.C. legislature from 1941 to 1945. She has represented Vancouver-Kingsway in the House of Commons since 1965.

Honors are not new to Dr. MacInnis, and they are a source of gratification to all who know her strong desire to share with others those things she values most. She describes them as "pleasant and happy surroundings, a full education, the opportunities for art and travel and world culture..." Mr. Chancellor, for her efforts on behalf of a better Canadian society, and for her personal qualities of humanity, wisdom, and dedication, I present to you for the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, Grace MacInnis.