The efforts of Syd Thompson on behalf of working men and women began in Alberta during the early days of the depression, and from there he took a leading role in organizing the workers’ march to Ottawa in 1935.

After serving Canada for five years with the Royal Canadian Engineers in Europe, he returned to the work to which he has dedicated his life.

In 1950 he moved to Vancouver, becoming a member of the International Woodworkers of America, beginning his career there as shop steward, later becoming plant chairman. In 1956 he was elected a vice-president of the largest IWA local union in North America.

Whenever it seemed just he challenged conventional wisdom, and did so both outside and within the union organization. This trait was evidenced most dramatically in 1958 when he successfully challenged to become president of the Vancouver local of the IWA — a position he has held for the past twenty-one years. In that position he has worked tirelessly towards the improvement of the political, economic and human conditions of those in the lumbering industry.

He also worked for those beyond that industry, first becoming vice-president then in 1969 president of the Vancouver & District Labour Council — a position which he still holds.

Within the broader community he has served on commissions investigating housing needs, and assumed a leading role in establishing innovative housing programs; he served as well on the Provincial Tax Commission, and has played an important part in promoting equality and justice for all ethnic and social groups within the Province.

He has contributed to effective and mature labour relations within British Columbia’s primary industry, demonstrating negotiating and arbitrating skill, and gaining the respect of both labour and employers. He has always been a leader. In his pursuit of improvement in the quality of life for thousands of British Columbians, he has without question earned the title of “Labour Statesman.”

Mr. Chancellor, it is with genuine regard I present to you for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa, SYD THOMPSON.