Francis Reginald Scott is a man of law and a man of letters who has combined in his heritage and career the polarities of his native land. He was born in Quebec of English parentage, is aristocratic in bearing, socialistic in politics, and has brought law to poetry and a sense of poetry to law.

His long and distinguished career as Professor and later Dean of Law at McGill did not prevent him from entering into the hubbub of the law courts, where he made legal history as a defender of the common man against the unjust exercise of government power; he also served the cause of good government in many respects. Out of the despair of the Great Depression he was one of those who most helped in generating hope in the founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the fore-runner of the New Democratic Party. As a member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism he helped draft the recommendations which strengthened the language and culture of Quebec in the rest of Canada. He also served the United Nations as a technical advisor and worked on many committees on international relations.

On the one side there is the smiling public man; on the other the laughing poet. In several volumes he displays the wit, intelligence and passion of his poetic self and, as anthologist and editor, he published and encouraged the work of many other poets. Equally at home in French and English, he made translations of Quebecois poetry that have broken through the silence of the other solitude. In 1978 his twin achievements as poet and as man of law were recognized through the Canada Council’s award for his collected translations of French-Canadian poetry and by the Governor General’s Award for his collected essays on Constitutional Law.

By his work he managed to damage the credibility of two old and respected saws: firstly that the law is an ass and secondly that the poet is a lunatic. In his long career he has shown us how it is possible to humanize an increasingly technological society by making of law an instrument of intelligent change, and making of poetry an instrument of wise and witty discourse. Above all he has been the great articulator, wielding the weapon of the word in courts and caucuses, whilst dissolving bunkum and sham with the cutting edge of his resounding laugh in classrooms and clubs. Simon Fraser University is indeed pleased and proud to add to his many honours.

Mr. Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you, for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa, Francis Reginald Scott.