DAVID BARRETT

Mr. Chancellor, I present to you David Barrett, an individual known to all British Columbians. It has been said that there are at least three of every man: that which he is, that which he thinks he is, and that which he earnestly intended to become. David Barrett’s life-long dedication to the cause of social justice gives proof that he has integrated these three selves in one.

Born a native son of Vancouver in 1930, he took his early education locally before going south in the 1950’s to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree at Seattle University and a Master of Social Work from St. Louis University, Missouri. After a year as Probation Officer with the St. Louis County Juvenile Court, David Barrett returned to our Province, directing his deep compassion to the service of young offenders in the Haney Correctional Institution. Moved by his concern for reform, he left the employ of government and served five years with the John Howard Society of British Columbia before becoming Executive Director of the Jewish Family Service Agency.

Always passionately articulate and possessing one of the greatest oratorical talents ever displayed on the provincial stage, his zeal in defence of the socially disenfranchised found natural expression through political action. Joining the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1959, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly the following year as the Member for Dewdney Electoral District. On three successive occasions thereafter, he won a seat for the New Democratic Party. First becoming House Leader and then Provincial Leader of the NDP, in the general election of 1972, David Barrett became the man which he had earnestly intended to become - the Premier of British Columbia.

The tenure of his government was marked by the stamp of his personal convictions. His broad and sympathetic interest in all our public institutions, and most particularly, his defence of our democratic tradition and the dignity of the individual, deserves our recognition and respect.

With his government defeated in 1975, David Barrett continued to lead his party with that impassioned style which arises from deeply held principles. Once again, he admirably performed the fundamental role a vigorous opposition must play if the health of a parliamentary democracy is to be sustained. Resigning as Leader of the Opposition and as Leader of the provincial NDP in 1984, he now makes his eloquence and his social concern known as a broadcaster in Vancouver.

Mr. Chancellor, it is my distinct honour, on behalf of the Senate of this University, to present David Barrett for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.