MURIEL DUCKWORTH

Mr. Chancellor, I present to you Muriel Helena Duckworth whose life exemplifies one of the enduring images of our age — the image of a courageous woman engaged in the struggle for peace and equality. Adding force to these two great ventures and binding them together, Muriel Duckworth also is rightly and widely known for her contributions to education.

She completed her degree in Arts from McGill University before continuing her studies in New York at the Union Theological Seminary. Her belief in the value of life-long learning flowered in full achievement over the almost twenty years from 1948 to 1967 when she made a lasting contribution to Nova Scotia as an advisor on Adult and Parent Education and as President of the Nova Scotia Education Association.

But before we honour her many achievements, let us first recognize that Muriel Duckworth’s professional career did not formally begin until she had spent seventeen years pursuing the equally esteemed career of wife to her husband Jack and mother to her three children. It was during these years that her dedication to civic activity made itself known, starting when she co-chaired a citizen’s committee to gain the right for Jewish teachers to instruct in Protestant schools.

Moved by a keen social conscience, Muriel Duckworth gained prominence through her work to improve the status of women in Canada. As a leader in the struggle for equality, her accomplishments are legion. To recall but a few: she was a founding member of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Voice of Women Canada, the Canadian Conference on the Family, and most recently, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport. In just recognition of these and other contributions on behalf of Canadian women, Muriel was chosen a delegate to the International Women’s Year Tribune in Mexico City, the United Nations Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen and many other world congresses of similar stature and relevance.

In the 1960’s, the fledgling peace movement received the benefit of Muriel Duckworth’s energy and humanitarian drive. Once again, her accomplishments have been manifold. Through her diligence as a founding member of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation; as President of the Voice of Women as a delegate to the International Conference of Women for Peace in Moscow, Paris and Montreal; and through her service on the executives of OXFAM and UNICEF Canada, all Canadians owe her gratitude for her efforts to serve the citizens of the world.

For a life so profoundly deserving honour, Muriel Duckworth received the Order of Canada in 1983. So that we too may honour her, Mr. Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate of this University, I have the privilege to ask that you confer on Muriel Helena Duckworth — educator, feminist and peace activist — the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.