



Sir Charles Williams, K.A.

Chancellor, Sir Charles Othneale Williams is a proud son of Bajan soil. He is widely regarded as one of our rags to riches legends, for he was not born to wealthy parents and is almost a legend in his own lifetime as a self-made man. He was the second son and fourth of the nine children of the late Elliott and Lily Williams - not quite a cricket team. He first attended Combermere before going on to the Lodge School, where he finished his formal education. The Lodge merely prepared him for what was to come, as he has pointed out many times that his university education was received, not at the University of the West Indies but at the other UWI - the University of Work and Industry.

Today many Bajans think only of his current success, without any thought of the rigorous apprenticeship he served as an overseer at places like Bulkeley Dairy in St. George. There he worked in the dairy industry, from before fore-day morning until long past sunset, seven days a week including Sundays - while cows to the left of him and cows to the right of him volleyed and thundered. Incidentally, this had nothing to do with his lifelong nickname "Cow", but it is a fitting analogy, as he gained vast experience from those cunning cows about running a business, and about this most productive animal - for the taming and herding of the cow in the middle eastern cradle of civilization was one of the chief factors in the rapid social development of mankind, and Sir Charles could claim a similar key role in Barbados' recent rapid physical development.

It did not take him long to see that he should be working for himself, because his energy and workaholic personality alone dictates that he must make his own decisions, and always in the shortest possible time. He does not like fuss and red tape, which tie up his ideas and slow down their progress. In 1960 he purchased a second-hand truck and started CO Williams Construction Limited - now the leading construction

company. By 1961 he was levelling the Deep Water Harbour for the main contractor, Costain, and in 1965 he did his first job for Cable and Wireless. In 1977 came the building of the Hess Oil Storage Facility in St. Lucia. Airport contracts followed, bigger and better highways, a hydroelectric dam in Dominica and the Millennium Tunnel Highway in St. Lucia, completed on target in 2000.

He is truly an indigenous Barbadian, putting country first, and thinking of how his ideas will benefit BOTH his companies and his country. He firmly believes the two must go hand in hand. He would prefer to leave a legacy as the man who “moved the earth to please,” yes, but also to make the quality of people’s lives better. He enjoys the pleasure of seeing communities provided with a new road, and schoolchildren provided with new hard courts, and he takes special pride in major projects like the magnificent Port St. Charles Marina, the Sandy Lane Golf course, Millennium Heights and the Millennium Highway.

The work of this high energy, human dynamo will never be complete. He lives the motto “Greatest happiness is in the journey, not the destination,” and so on his door is the sign, “The road to success is always under construction.” Chancellor, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development of modern Barbados. I invite you, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of this University, to honour Sir Charles Othneale Williams, Knight of St. Andrew, with the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.