



Mr. Chancellor, I present to you, Cyril Lionel Robert JAMES.

Mr. Chancellor, I ask you on behalf of our University to receive into our company of scholars Cyril Lionel Robert James.

I use the word scholar deliberately, to mark that quality of Mr. James that has singled him out from his earliest days, that has permeated his life and his thoughts, and that has made his name a byword among men of letters everywhere. We give him the title doctor — a teacher, though he would deny it, and say merely that he is a lifelong student; and of letters, an art and a discipline that for him finds its origin in island territories like ours, the isles of ancient Greece.

Our isles have been thought primitive, Mr. Chancellor, and our peoples rude and barbaric. Did we not recognise scholarship, or pay scant respect to learning, then those mockeries would be true. But in all our lands, and wherever our people are, men and women of all walks know, respect, admire and love "C.L.R." He is one o' we, and in that we refute the defamations.

Amongst distinguished men of letters that the Caribbean has produced, "C.L.R." knows no peer. He was the first of our West Indian writers to receive international recognition in the 1930's with his novel "Minty Alley" and his study, sociological as well as historical, of the revolution which began in 1791 in San Domingo and which gave rise finally to the state of Haiti in 1803.

It is a long way in time and place from Tunapuna in Trinidad in the early 1900's to Mona in Jamaica in 1971. But in a house in Tunapuna began that extraordinary activity of mind that receives its accolade tonight in Mona. There began the three streams of consciousness that have activated "C.L.R." ever since—the social consciousness of his surroundings, of his own people, their work, their play, their dignity and their powers; the consciousness of cricket, which became more than a game, a code of morality, a personal skill, an abiding passion and a continual source of observation and comment; and the consciousness of learning in its truest sense, more than the offerings of a school curriculum, a voracious reading of other men's experiences and ideas.

His own life is typical of the kaleidoscope of the West Indies. His grandfathers, skilled men both, the one a pan-boiler on a sugar estate, the other an engine-driver, came from the smaller islands, if one may be permitted to number Barbados, the home of his maternal grandfather, as such. The streams met and commingled with the vigour and variety of Trinidad. It is

easy to say that the young James loved scholarship because his father was a teacher, his godfather and his sister's godfather were teachers, and because his mother kept books all over the house. He went to Queen's Royal College, winning the coveted scholarship that has imprinted its endeavours and its agonies on whole generations of Trinidad boys. He was taught by Oxonians and Cantabrigians. Yet it is fair to add that his education was largely in spite of what he was taught, and brought him into serious conflict with the accepted norms. He played cricket as if his life depended on it, and read—devoured is the word—everything he could: Virgil, Caesar and Horace, Euripides and Thucydides, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, it is impossible to name them all. Nowadays we would recognise that his insubordinations stemmed from an extraordinarily high I.Q.

Many a chapter could be written of the life of C. L. R. James. This occasion is a poor substitute for the tale that will be told at some time. He has blazed a trail that other novelists have followed. His historical researches and writings have been major landmarks in the studies of West Indians and others. He has been cricket correspondent of the Manchester "Guardian" and the London "Observer", a contemporary, a protege and an intimate of our own Learie Constantine, the late Lord Constantine. As a lecturer and broadcaster in the West Indies, in England, in Canada, in the United States, in Nigeria and Uganda, he has few equals, and none surpasses him. He was one of the earliest and most articulate proponents of self-government for the West Indies colonial territories, and his pamphlet "The Case for West Indian Self-Government" presented cogent arguments for the maturity of judgment, the competence and the ability to rule themselves of our peoples. He has been a nationalist politician, editor and political analyst of great stature, has inspired nationalist movements all over the West Indies and in Africa, and has contributed to the development of the labour movement in the United States.

His political writings, and historical evaluations of Soviet Communism are imbued with the same accuracy of observation and disciplined thought that characterize all his work and all his actions. He has himself been a teacher, in his own Queen's Royal College, at the Government Training College in Port-of-Spain, in the United States at Federal City College, at Northwestern, Howard and recently at Harvard University. Oakland University, Michigan, has honoured him with the title of Doctor of Humanities, but we must emphasize to you that this giant of learning has not followed any University course of study to a degree.

It is as true of him as he himself says of his own people, the Caribbean people, "a people in my opinion unique in the modern world". He has preached of freedom to those whom servitude could not break, whose spirits always were free. He exemplifies George Lamming's words "Free is how you is from the start, an' when it look different you have to move, an' when you movin' say it is a natural freedom that make you move".

This then is the man we seek to add to our roll of scholars, to bring lustre to our University.

I request you, Mr. Chancellor, by the authority of the Senate and the Council to admit Cyril Lionel Robert JAMES to the degree of Doctor of Letters, **honoris causa**.