

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES



Leton Thomas

Chancellor, Mr. Leton Thomas's contribution to Education has been multidimensional – embracing academic and vocational training, school supervision, teacher training, education and curriculum planning as well as development and strengthening of regional accreditation.

Sir Walter Scott remarked that, "all men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education." Leton Thomas was born into humble circumstances in St. Lucia in 1926 and was, initially, self-taught. After diligently acquiring certificates in education, he achieved his B.Sc. and then his M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, in 1965.

In the workforce, his has been a multidisciplinary thrust. In serving as Programme Technical Representative to the Peace Corps he guided the technical assistance in the Eastern Caribbean. He has served too as Inspector of schools and as Chief Education Officer. In various capacities for UNESCO, including Vice-Chairmanship of the Executive Board he has significantly contributed to work in

Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. In coordinating CARNEID, he promoted indigenous scholarship in Caribbean education to improve practice, inspire innovation and promote excellence. As Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture, St. Lucia, and as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, he has been described as launching "the most far reaching reform initiatives ever undertaken in the St. Lucian Public Service." As Principal of Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Mr. Leton Thomas demonstrated leadership in a centre of excellence.

Leton Thomas has participated in, and conducted, teaching workshops in several Caribbean territories as well as in France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States; and he has served on committees of the Caribbean Examinations Council. His contribution to Caribbean education includes assistance in the development of a Caricom Regional Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training and a Vice-Presidency of the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions. He has advised on guidelines for accreditation and strategic reforms in Caribbean education projected up to the year 2010.

His writing addresses such crucial areas as in-service teacher training, educational organisation, role and leadership of the primary school principal, micro-teaching in the Caribbean, media in education, competences of Teachers College Graduates. A recent presentation, at the Conference of the National Association of School Principals, St. Lucia, November, 1991, was on "Education for the Twenty First Century: Integrating the System for Improved Performance."

Extra curricular interests include comparative education and music. Indeed he has been Choral Director and Organist for the Roman Catholic Cathedral, Castries, St. Lucia, and Vice-President of the St. Lucia School of Music. Leton Thomas composed the music of the St. Lucia

National Anthem.

This dedication to both national and regional development has been internationally recognized. He has been awarded the O. B. E. by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth in 1969, and the C. B. E. in 1992; awarded a Knighthood of the Order of St. Sylvester by His Holiness, the Pope, in 1991; and had conferred on him Honorary Membership of the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions, in 1997.

Leton Thomas is widely recognized as committed to the development of regional identity, conceived in a pan-Caribbean vision. "Education," says Herbert Spencer, "has for its object the formation of character." Leton Thomas is a model of personal integrity, of professionalism, statesmanship and dedicated service in teaching and education.

Chancellor, I present Mr. Leton Thomas, and ask that by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of The University of the West Indies, you confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.

*St. Augustine campus
Saturday 1 November, 2003*