



## The University of the West Indies

# Herbert Fitzgerald Sewell

Chancellor, there are scientists, good scientists and great scientists. What sets the great scientists apart from the rest is that they are also humanists. Professor Herbert Fitzgerald Sewell is a humanist.

Born in 1949 in Spanish Town and taken by his parents in the wave of migration to England in the early 1950s, Herbert Sewell is today Professor and Consultant Head of Immunology, University of Nottingham; Deputy Head of the School of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, University of Nottingham and Clinical Director of Pathology Services for the Queens Medical Centre, University Hospital NHS Trust, Nottingham.

In the twilight years of the colonial dispensation the impending demise of Empire uprooted many of our citizens as it did many of the traditions of the old order.

As a youngster, Herb Sewell whose sense of self was fashioned by the values of a Garveyite father, had little difficulty adapting to the new and strange environment of 1950s England. He was bright; very bright and he possessed a strong sense of community that gave direction and purpose to his pursuits academically, socially and politically. "...that I will not allow my achievements to separate me from my community is something about which I feel strongly. Some of the black people who have made it often forget their roots and that I find to be a very regrettable thing". That quotation from professor Sewell in an interview with a British newspaper chronicling his scientific and intellectual achievements, needs no embellishment.

In his late teens, it was that philosophy which led him, together with some friends, to start the first "Saturday school" in Birmingham to rescue many marginalized youth of the community from denigration and permanent ostracism. The school taught the basic academic skills and imbued participants with a philosophy of living based on the idea of community and individual self-worth. Many of the beneficiaries of that initiative are today professionals making their own contributions to the welfare of the community. The contribution of this great scientist to transforming a once homogeneous Britain to a multicultural society is equal to his contribution to the advancement of science in his chosen academic field. And in the latter, his contribution has been gargantuan.

Graduating from the University of Birmingham in 1973 with a Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree which was but a springboard to a PhD in Immunology in 1978, Dr Sewell proceeded to study medicine at the University of Leicester from which he gained his MB ChB degrees in 1983. Today, his internationally acknowledged expertise is well earned compensation for focused, disciplined and sustained application of his intellect to matters of moment in the field of Immunology.

His over 200 scientific publications is but one way by which he shares his knowledge and expertise with the scientific fraternity. That expertise is also made available to a wider audience through editorial and advisory duties that he performs for such household names in the world of scientific publications as, Nature, The British Medical Journal, Lancet, among others. Equally important are the duties he performs as external examiner in Immunology for numerous universities including, London, Birmingham, Newcastle, Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow. Our own university, as well as the Universities of Zimbabwe and Pittsburgh, benefit from his wisdom as external assessor on appointments and promotions.

Outside the academic community, Professor Sewell's remarkable expertise has been sought after by UK Parliamentary and Scientific Committees, the Nuffield Council, the World Health Organisation and various other international agencies and Foundations.

Chancellor, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of The University of the West Indies it is with the greatest pleasure that I ask you to confer on one of our own, Professor Herbert Fitzgerald Sewell, Bachelor of Dental Surgery; MB ChB; MSc; PhD; FRCP (Lond.); FRCP (Glasgow) FRCPath, FMedSci, scientist and humanist, in short Chancellor — a great scientist — the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.

*At the Mona Campus  
November 8, 2003*