

## Tribute made at the Installation Ceremony

*Professor Emeritus Sir Woodville Marshall*

Chancellor, our new Vice-Chancellor can be described as a man of many parts, but by no stretch of the imagination can he be regarded as a player of bit parts. If, as befits this occasion, we set aside his active role as public intellectual, his strenuous activity on the cricket field and in the cricket board rooms and even as a commentator on film, and his brave excursions into the field of drama, if we set aside those roles without daring to trivialize any of them, then we can easily recognize that Sir Hilary has played starring roles in nearly all of the scenes that constitute our University story.

Let me quickly illustrate. First, it took Sir Hilary a mere 11 years to move through the academic ranks, from temporary assistant lecturer to professor. This, I am reliably informed, was a record for rapid promotion in The University during the 1980s and early 1990s, that is, before the rank of Reader was abolished. Second, his distinguished activity as a scholar, which explains the rapid promotion, ensured that in 1994 he won the **inaugural** Vice-Chancellor's award for excellence in the field of research. Third, by 1992, his superb qualities as an academic leader had become so evident that in a mere six years, he moved into the headship of department of history, then to the deanship in the Faculty of Humanities, and inevitably to the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor. Fourth, so highly regarded is he internationally that among his many awards are **four** Honorary degrees, from universities in Britain, Ghana and Canada.

I can offer a little story as additional illustration of the third point. Sometime around 1995/1996, the then Vice-Chancellor told me that, in his view, Beckles was worthy of appointment as a Pro Vice-Chancellor. When he said this, he looked so meaningfully at me that I concluded that there was a subtext in his remark. That subtext seemed to read that the Vice-Chancellor was so impressed with Beckles's performance during his brief exposure to senior management that he (the Vice-Chancellor) was prepared to consider replacing one of the long-serving PVCs with Beckles! In the event, Beckles's elevation did not take place until two years later (and, I might add, that this apparent delay had nothing to do with any response that I may have made to the Vice-Chancellor).

All this serves to exemplify Sir Hilary's notion and practice of academic leadership. He, unlike several of our colleagues, recognizes no sharp distinction between active scholarly pursuits and leadership roles in academic administration. I am aware that several academic colleagues, on assuming posts in academic administration, seem to regard their own scholarly activity as a secondary responsibility or as of little account. Sir Hilary, on the contrary, has recognized and demonstrated that, because the desired objectives in both areas are broadly similar, the skill sets of rigorous analysis, focus, and imagination are transferable, and that, therefore, with the application of a disciplined intellect and a little effort, both sets of responsibilities can be simultaneously and efficiently discharged.

This notion of academic leadership is obviously a product of Sir Hilary's own restless intellectual energy. But it probably owes at least a little to the examples that were set by at least two of his earliest colleagues. I refer to the late Douglas Hall, his first Head of Department at Mona, and to Roy Augier, also an early colleague at Mona. Both men in their different ways did

ensure that their discipline (history) would be enriched and/or nurtured, even as they discharged onerous responsibilities in academic administration.

Therefore, Chancellor, we can expect to see Sir Hilary, in his new role as Vice-Chancellor, performing like two of his predecessors, like scholar-academic administrators Sir Arthur Lewis and Sir Roy Marshall, or, to go further afield, like Lord Asa Briggs, pre-eminent historian and a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex.

However, Chancellor, I am sure that you will agree that mere assertion of the existence of starring quality is neither a sufficient nor compelling argument. What is also required is clear demonstration of the existence in Sir Hilary of that quality; and this can only be done through an assessment, however brief, of the content of his academic leadership. I shall limit that assessment to his Principalship at Cave Hill and to his achievement as a historian of the Caribbean.

The evidence of his transformative leadership here at Cave Hill during his tenure of 12-13 years is abundant. It can be seen in the physical expansion of the campus, in the upgrade and upkeep of its facilities, in the increase of its programmes at undergraduate and graduate levels, in the campus's deepening involvement with its host community, and, until last year, in the rapid growth in student numbers. Therefore, it can be said that his regime of restless innovation and expansion has had the effect of burning The University and campus into the consciousness of the local community to an extent that could not have been imagined thirty or forty years ago.

What the evidence also suggests is that Sir Hilary has not been engaged in building monuments to himself. Whether or not one accepts 'a graduate in every household' as a feasible possibility, or whether one has doubts about The University's role as 'the path to prosperity', it is evident that the policy of rapid expansion was and is intimately linked to a particular vision of social development, and that this vision has impressive historical and sociological underpinnings.

A clear basis for that policy can be found in statements made by national hero Errol Barrow, and the content of those statements has been endorsed by some of his successors as leaders of government. Equally important, the policy does resonate with all those thousands who want equal opportunity and who now perceive the acquisition of a university education as a means of ensuring upward social mobility.

Sir Hilary's achievements as a historian are equally impressive but less contentious. First of all, his output is prolific, unmatched by any active historian of the Caribbean: 21 books/monographs; 9 edited works; over 70 articles in journals and books; numerous book reviews and seminar/conference presentations. Second, his range of interests is commendably wide. While his primary focus is slavery and the slave trade, he has produced stimulating work on cricket and also on gender issues as well as a general history of Barbados.

Third, and most important, his work is marked by conceptual innovation. This is particularly evident in his work in labour history of Barbados, where he has argued powerfully and often persuasively that resistance by the enslaved and their descendants was a strong and persisting factor in the island's historical experience, and that this theme has generally been ignored or overlooked by most of the historians of the island.

Sir Hilary, therefore, because of the reviewers' acclaim for his scholarship and because of the volume of his production, is now generally acknowledged as one of the premier historians of the English Caribbean and also as the leading historian of Barbados. More than that, he can be regarded as the founder of a small school of historians, which I have dubbed **the resistance school**. This school is composed of Sir Hilary himself and some of his former graduate students, principally Henderson Carter and David Browne, and those two men are now significantly contributing to the historical literature on resistance in Barbados. I can think of no greater acclaim for a scholar than to have followers/disciples and collaborators who, while sharing a particular theoretical perspective with their leader, are intellectually capable of hewing their own paths.

Chancellor, permit me therefore to echo your own remarks by saying in closing that it is entirely fitting, perhaps necessary, at this critical juncture in the life of The University, to recognize that such a high quality of academic leadership does reside in the individual who holds the top leadership post in our University.



