

TOAST TO HONORARY GRADUATE AT LUNCHEON : SATURDAY 7 APRIL 1979

IF I START MY BRIEF ADDRESS THIS AFTERNOON BY RECOUNTING A SNATCH OF HISTORY, IT IS NOT, I ASSURE YOU, THE BEGINNING OF A QUEST ON MY PART FOR THE ULTIMATE ATTAINMENT OF AN LL.D. I REALISE TOO WELL THAT THAT DISTINCTION IS RESERVED FOR TRULY GREAT HISTORIANS OF THE CALIBRE OF PROFESSOR WINNIE MAXWELL.

IN BRITAIN, IN THE 18TH CENTURY THERE WAS, NEAR DUMFRIES ON THE RIVER NITH, A TOWN CALLED BRIDGEND. BUT IN THAT REGION THERE WERE MEMBERS OF THE MAXWELL FAMILY, AND, IN 1810, THE NAME OF BRIDGEND WAS CHANGED TO MAXWELLTOWN. OUR WINNIE, OF COURSE, ACQUIRED THAT SURNAME BY MARRIAGE, BUT WITH IT SHE MOST CERTAINLY INHERITED THE MAXWELL KNACK OF SETTING A DISTINCTIVE STAMP ON THE FIELD OF HER ACTIVITY AND BECOMING INDELIBLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEACHING OF HISTORY AT RHODES.

MANY PEOPLE, IN FACT, MAY WONDER WHY THE UNIVERSITY HAD TO WAIT FOR HER RETIREMENT TO CONFER A DOCTORATE ON PROFESSOR MAXWELL, BUT IT IS ONLY NOW, OF COURSE, THAT HER CAREER AT RHODES HAS BECOME A REALITY TO HER. FOR, TO THE HISTORIAN, ONLY THE FINITE FACTS OF THE PAST ARE REAL, WHILE THE PRESENT IS AS YET INCHOATE HISTORY STILL IN THE MAKING. AND SO, IF WE HAD ACTED SOONER, SHE MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT.

WHAT DOES SURPRISE ME, IS THE FACT THAT SHE WAS SO ENGROSSED IN THE TEACHING OF HISTORY THAT SHE SEEMED NOT TO REALISE THAT SHE WAS ALSO MAKING HISTORY, ADDING TO THE ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY A LEGEND OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE AND TOTAL DEDICATION. IT IS ALSO A SAGA OF ACADEMIC GENEROSITY, OF TOP-LEVEL SCHOLARSHIP

NEVER HOARDED FOR MISERLY SELF-AGGRANDISEMENT, OR TURNED TO MATERIAL ADVANTAGE, BUT INCESSANTLY PASSED ON TO HER FORTUNATE STUDENTS IN A CONSTANT FLOW OF ENRICHED KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

LET ME CONCLUDE BY RECORDING, FOR POSTERITY, TWO REMARKABLE FACTS ABOUT WINNIE MAXWELL: FIRSTLY, THAT SHE HAS PROVED THAT STUDENTS DO NOT MIND WORKING HARD FOR SOMEONE WHO WORKS HARD FOR THEM: SECONDLY, SHE CAN TRULY BOAST THAT, THROUGHOUT HER LONG UNIVERSITY CAREER, SHE WAS ALWAYS BETTER AT DATES THAN ANY OTHER GIRL AT RHODES.

WITH THAT THOUGHT, I ASK YOU TO RISE TO THE TOAST OF OUR HONORARY GRADUATE, WINNIE MAXWELL.