

**CITATION FOR
DR CHENG HON-KWAN, OBE, JP**

Mr Chancellor:

Fortitude. Determination. The drive to excel. These are the qualities that we have been reminded of in this Olympic year. We may recall the example of Eric Liddell, immortalised in the film 'Chariots of Fire', who refused to compete in one of the events at the 1924 Olympics when he discovered it had been scheduled for a Sunday.

As a pupil in a missionary school in Tianjin in the late 1930s, Dr CHENG HON-KWAN, whom we honour here today, was educated in an atmosphere which attempted to imbue such qualities, whilst all around was strife and chaos. During the summer following his graduation in Civil Engineering from the University of Tianjin, he travelled to southern China to visit his ancestral home. He fell ill in Hong Kong, and was unable to return to Tianjin in time to take up the university position that was awaiting him. Forty-eight years later, he is still here.

He joined the former Public Works Department of the Hong Kong Government, in which he served for 24 years as a Government Structural Engineer. In 1977, at the age of 50, he took premature retirement, and in the highly competitive environment of Hong Kong, he set up his own engineering consultancy, H. K. Cheng & Partners Ltd, of which he remains Director. It was a bold, but successful, move.

Since his retirement, Cheng Hon-kwan has engaged himself widely in professional and public service. In 1978, he was elected President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, and from 1985 to 1991 he served as a functional constituency representative on the Legislative Council. From 1988 to 1991, he was a member of the Executive Council.

Cheng Hon-kwan has an abiding interest in education, and his contributions in this area have been significant. He was Chairman of the Planning Committee and Founding Chairman of the Council of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong from 1989 to 1992; and Chairman of the Council of the erstwhile City Polytechnic of Hong Kong from 1988 to 1991. More recently, he has been appointed Chairman of the Curriculum Development Council.

His work in the field of education, as well as community service, has been recognised by the awards of a Fellowship of London's Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, and honorary doctorates from the Open Learning Institute and the City University of Hong Kong, and the Open University in the United Kingdom.

In 1986, he was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee for our own University. In the summer of that year, he went to Ireland for a quiet golfing holiday. His golfing partners have something to thank us for: one day he received a telephone call to the effect that the Chairman of the Planning Committee had been taken ill, and that on his return, as Deputy Chairman, he would have to chair the inaugural meeting. He was so nervous that he was not able to win even one game for the next two days!

In the event, he carried out his engagement with diligence and dedication. And until this year, he served as Vice-Chairman of our Council, to which he brought not only his technical expertise and professional interest, but also a determination that our University should excel.

The spirit of Eric Liddell lives on. For although he is famous for his principled stand, as well as for his Olympic achievements, it is perhaps less widely appreciated that he was, later in life, a missionary and a teacher of Science at a school in Tianjin. And Cheng Hon-kwan was one of his pupils.

Mr Chancellor, it is my honour to recommend, on behalf of the University, Dr Cheng Hon-kwan, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Director of H. K. Cheng & Partners Ltd, for the degree of Doctor of Engineering *honoris causa*.