

## Chancellor

In 1959, Charles Percy Snow – better known as C P Snow - raised questions in a lecture at Senate House Cambridge about the differences between scientific and literary intellectuals and their apparent ignorance of each other's fields – the so-called 'Two Cultures' - which have influenced educational developments to the present day. It could be argued that such differences continue to exist, with many highly-educated science specialists unable to do more in a foreign language than order a beer, while experts in literature and the arts may be ignorant of the most basic of scientific principles.

George Walker, through his actions and words, personifies the view that such a situation is undesirable and, indeed, unnecessary: that many individuals are in fact capable of spanning the 'cultural divide'. Following research on organo-metallic chemistry at Exeter College Oxford, he was awarded a scholarship to 'do something different' and elected to pursue another of his passions - music. A year studying piano at the University of Cape Town was complemented with some chemistry teaching, also at UCT. Returning to the UK, he took up a chemistry teaching post at Watford Grammar School followed by a lectureship in science education at the University of York. Four years later George Walker made what was then, in many respects, an unusual move – from university lecturer to Deputy Head of Carisbrooke High School on the Isle of Wight, where he stayed until his first headship three years later at another state comprehensive, the Heathcote School in Stevenage.

His second headship, at the Cavendish School in Hemel Hempstead, coincided with his extensive involvement in the development of science education and comprehensive education, and in school-industry links. He was, for example, a founder member, Chair and Trustee of the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools and a member of the National Curriculum working group for science. He was also seconded to the then ICI to write a study of education and wealth creation, acted as an education consultant for that company, and was external examiner at a number of English universities – including the University of Bath - and Visiting Senior Fellow at the University of York. He wrote numerous articles for both the academic and the popular press, and was co-author of a successful sixth form and university chemistry textbook.

By 1991, George Walker was well-regarded in both school and university sectors nationally (which was formally acknowledged by his subsequently being appointed OBE in 1992), balancing a wide range of interests – including his ongoing passion for the piano. It was then that he decided to accept a new challenge by taking on the post of Director General of the International School of Geneva, one of the best respected international schools in the world. The challenge of directing this large and complex bilingual and multicultural school was one to which he responded with enthusiasm –

becoming sufficiently fluent in French to participate in French-medium meetings in record time. It is widely acknowledged within the international school sector that George Walker's eight year tenure brought stability and leadership of a kind not experienced by that institution for some years. Since the 1960s the school had been at the forefront of the creation and development of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, and George Walker's commitment to this increasingly popular pre-university qualification is entirely consistent with his own interests and aptitudes, requiring students as it does to engage in a broad and balanced programme of study. Such was the nature of his commitment to its ideals that in 1999 he accepted the role of Director General of the International Baccalaureate Organization, and he continues to lead from Geneva an organisation which now offers three programmes across the 3 to 19 age range to over 1400 schools in more than 100 countries, including around 50 in the UK.

Notwithstanding the demands of such a role, George Walker continues to find time to **write** (he is now publishing and editing articles and books relating to international education), to **read** extensively, to **play the piano** (he gives recitals in a number of European cities), to **speak** (he is much in demand at international conferences), to **teach** and to **research** (he has since 1997 been a Visiting Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Bath, attached to the Centre for the study of Education in an International Context, and was instrumental in the establishment of the International Baccalaureate worldwide Research Unit here in the Department of Education at Bath).

Here, Chancellor, is a person who, in academic, professional and personal aspects of his life, practises what he preaches – demonstrating the value of a rigorous and balanced education that challenges the 'two culture' divide in formal education terms, and promoting an international education designed to make an impact in bridging the divisions across cultures that continue to threaten world peace. It is only fitting that a university which values in its mission both the complementarity of scientific and artistic experience, and its own role in contributing to the promotion of international understanding, should today honour this outstanding international educator.

Chancellor, I present Professor George Walker as eminently worthy of the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.