

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR RON KING, CHAIRMAN OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF MICHAEL THOMAS SOMARE TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 8 DECEMBER, 1989.

Chancellor, I present to you, The Right Honourable Michael Thomas Somare.

Mr Somare's life story parallels the story of modern Papua New Guinea. He was born in Rabaul in 1936. His father represented the cultural duality within Papua New Guinea in his roles as a Chieftain and a sergeant of police. Mr Somare attended primary school at Wewak and secondary school at Finschhafen. In 1956 he entered what was to be a training route for Papua New Guinea's indigenous leaders. He attended Teachers' College at Sogeri and, on graduation, taught in New Ireland, East Sepik and Madang.

During the 1960s, Mr Somare developed a sense of his country's potential to form a nation. In 1964, after the first national election, Mr Somare became a part-time interpreter for the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly. He helped launch school broadcasting in Port Moresby as a Broadcasts Officer with the Department of Information and Extension Services from 1963 to 1966. When a radio announcer and journalist with Radio Wewak, he became Vice-President of the Public Service Association and began to speak out on local wages and working conditions.

Attendance at the Administrative College in Port Moresby completed Michael Somare's pre-parliamentary training. In 1968 he entered the House of Assembly and succeeded to the leadership of the Pangu Pati which had been formed one year earlier with a platform for national independence.

In 1969 and 1970, the pace towards self-government quickened. After desultory progress under Australian colonial rule for half a century, a specific agenda for Papua New Guinea's self-government and independence was urged by the United Nations and by the Australian leaders John Gorton and Gough Whitlam.

Before the political advent of Michael Somare and his contemporaries, Papua New Guinea had been regarded as lacking any potential national leaders: the rise of any elite group had not been encouraged by the Administration. As the Australian government, under a good deal of international pressure, committed itself to the expansion of educational opportunities during the 1960s, the leaders emerged from the colonial chrysalis. During his visit to Papua New Guinea in 1969-70, the then leader of the Opposition in the Australian Parliament, Mr Gough Whitlam, found a Papua New Guinea that was '*already rich in leadership*' and '*a transformed political climate*'.

From 1969, Mr Somare came to exercise more fully his considerable powers as an organiser and negotiator. At an administrative level, he was a member of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development established in June to prepare a constitution for an independent nation. At a community level, he travelled to the Highlands and villages to talk directly to his more conservative countrymen. He walked then, as he did later, that difficult line between tradition and change, seeking to keep control over the external pressures for a hurried move to independence.

In 1972 Michael Somare became Chief Minister and led his country through self-government in 1973 and, finally, independence in 1975. On Independence Day, in September, 1975, the first Governor General, Sir John Guise, broadcast to the new nation: "*we have at this point in time broken with our colonial past and we now stand as an independent nation in our own right*". The Australian Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, remarked that in Prime Minister Michael Somare, Papua New Guinea had "*found a man whose time has come*".

Mr Somare has served as Prime Minister for two terms since independence. He has held ministerial portfolios in Government and was Leader of the Opposition from 1980 to 1982. Since 1988 he has been the country's Foreign Minister. He is a Privy Councillor and a Companion of Honour; his other awards include an honorary Doctor of Law degree from the Australian National University and the Pacific Man of the Year Award.

Independence was a prolonged rite of passage for the people of Papua New Guinea. Colonial rule had threatened and sometimes destroyed their culture and their individual dignity. Mr Somare and his government won a peaceful transition to self-rule. A bitter struggle, a violent release of frustration could have been the alternative.

After independence, Mr Somare encouraged the reaffirmation of his people's traditional way of life within the context of a modern Pacific nation. He sought to build a national spirit by restoring respect for the binding power of the village structure whilst encouraging the development of modern forms of national expression, particularly through the arts.

One of Mr Somare's early initiatives as Chief Minister was to request a special grant from the Australian Government for a national program of cultural development. This included a museum for presenting the history and culture of his people and a creative arts centre to foster the contemporary arts through experiment and innovation. Mr Somare remains today the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Papua and New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery.

Chancellor, Michael Somare is a man who was not content to move with the tides of history; rather, he sought to organize and direct the forces building around him twenty years ago and so achieve independence for his nation on its own terms. Under his leadership, his nation began to build on the strengths in its traditional culture and diversity rather than to dwell on the potential for division which the rest of the world unhelpfully highlighted at times. Mr Somare is an advocate of national unity based on a harnessing of creative and intellectual energies. The University honours him today for pursuing this objective with dramatic success and continuing conviction.

Chancellor, it is a pleasure and a privilege to present to you Michael Thomas Somare for the award of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa.