

Sir Hermann Black AC

The degree of Doctor of the University was conferred upon Sir Hermann Black AC by Deputy Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE at a graduation ceremony held on 20 December 1989. He died on 28 February 1990.



Sir Hermann Black with the Deputy Chancellor, *photo G77_1_992, University of Sydney Archives.*



Sir Hermann Black with the Deputy Chancellor, *photo, University of Sydney Archives.*

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor J M Ward

Deputy Chancellor

I have the great honour to present to you the Chancellor, Sir Hermann Black, AC, for admission to the degree of Doctor of the University. Possibly no other graduate of this University has ever been so well-known in it and outside and throughout the academic world as is Sir Hermann Black. Our Chancellor since 1970, he has admitted to their degrees half of all the graduates of The University of Sydney. To the public, that knows him for his eloquence and his devotion to the University, he epitomises the virtues of the academic world and its connections with the public at large.

Hermann Black was educated at the famous Fort Street Boys' High School and graduated here as Bachelor of Economics in 1927 with First Class Honours and the University Medal. In the same year he was awarded the Jones Medal as the best graduate becoming a teacher and was attached to Professor Alexander Mackie the then Principal of the Teachers' College. He gained his Master of Economics degree in 1937, again with First Class Honours.

In 1933 he was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Economics; two years later became a Lecturer. From 1936 to 1938 he was in the United States of America as a Rockefeller Research Fellow in the Social Sciences. He worked mainly at Harvard University, concentrating on the nature of economic analysis and the theory of monopolistic competition.

When the then Premier of New South Wales, Bertram Stevens, sought in a pioneering way to appoint an economic adviser, the choice fell on Hermann Black. Senate allowed him to be Economic Adviser to the New South Wales Treasury while still carrying on his work as Lecturer. Throughout the War he remained as Economic Adviser, reporting on such matters as uniform taxation, loan raising for post-war graduates and matters relevant to loan council meetings. He participated in preparing the report that led to the raising of the school leaving age to 15. His recommendation that the Treasury should have a regularly established economic advisory service was later adopted. He carried out many other important duties for Government in areas as diverse as country rice milling, mining at Captain's Flat and the establishment of Boral.

In November 1949 Hermann Black was elected a Fellow of Senate and I venture to recall that I was one of those who nominated him. By then Hermann Black was a very considerable public figure, who had earned tremendous public applause for his commentaries over the radio on public affairs. A whole generation of Australians had learned to recognise his distinctive voice, his lucid style and his eloquent analysis.

In 1951 he visited the United States of America under the auspices of the State Department to study the formation of American Foreign and Economic Policy. He was there for four months. This visit gave him an extraordinary opportunity to meet the leaders of American Government, business and education.

Throughout the next two decades he served Australia and the World unflinchingly. The late Sir Robert Madgwick, who had been a fellow student, commented on his phenomenal memory and ability to master difficult theoretical concepts easily. He devoted his talents to the work of the Department of Economics to international affairs, to music and the arts, to the University's work in current affairs and Adult Education and to management and training. There seemed to be almost no limit to the range of his interests.

When he retired at the end of 1969, he had already been elected by Senate to be Deputy Chancellor. Six years before he had married the lady whom we know as Lady Black, whose services to the University have been recognised by making her an Honorary Fellow.

In 1970 Hermann Black was appointed a Senior Fellow of the Department of Economics and was elected as Chancellor of the University. He has held both offices ever since. A year later the University of Newcastle conferred upon him the title of Honorary Doctor of Letters. Three years later he was created Knight Bachelor.

The Chancellorship of Sir Hermann Black is one of the golden strands in the history of The University of Sydney. He presided over the governing body, the Senate, in times of great change. His wisdom and experience and his unerring judgements of academic propriety and good sense have always been available to Senate, to the Vice-Chancellor and for those who have had good reason to seek them. In troubled times and in easy times, Hermann Black has been the embodiment of the best traditions of the University. He has been rewarded with the respect and affection of staff, students, graduates, the public at large and the academic world.

In this Great Hall 12 days ago I declared in his presence that I had regarded it as a pleasure as well as an honour and a privilege to have served the University as Vice-Chancellor while he was Chancellor. I repeat

these words, knowing that so many people who work in this place would apply them to themselves.

Deputy Chancellor, I present to you our Chancellor, Sir Hermann Black, AC, Honorary Doctor of Letters of the University of Newcastle, Honorary Doctor of the University of New England, for admission to the degree of Doctor of the University.