

Mr Phillip Noel Hartley Smith

The degree of Doctor of Engineering (honoris causa) was conferred upon Phillip Noel Hartley Smith at the ceremony held on 18 December 1997.

Citation

Chancellor,

We honour today Phillip Noel Hartley Smith, a University of Sydney graduate in Engineering in 1950 and a graduate of Metallurgy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1952.

His education prior to University was unusual. He left school aged 14, became a cadet officer in the Australian Merchant Marine at 15 and a cadet officer in the Royal Australian Fleet Auxiliary at 16. However, he spent his 17th year in preparing to matriculate and enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering in 1945, aged 18. That he started slowly in school subjects such as Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics was not surprising, but he soon gathered speed, and in 1949 completed his exams at the head of the year and was awarded first-class honours and a high distinction in metallurgy.

In 1949 he was a Nuffield Scholar and in 1950, as a Fullbright Fellow, he enrolled at MIT and graduated in 1952 with metallurgy as his major subject and industrial management as the minor. He stayed in the United States after graduation and became an American citizen in 1960. He has, however, maintained close links with Australia, and with his alma mater. He has supported the Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering, and recently established the USA-University of Sydney Foundation to facilitate giving to the University by our graduates and others living in the USA.

At MIT, his thesis was on steelmaking, and upon graduation he joined the Inland Steel Company in Chicago as a metallurgical engineer. While there, he and Professor Elliott of MIT were awarded the National Steel Award for an outstanding technical paper. He also published papers on blast furnace production, the alloying of steel, and the manufacture of free-machining steel in which field he patented inventions.

After four years, he moved to LaSalle Steel Company and was successively research engineer, Director of Purchasing and Director of Planning, and while there earned a Diploma in Industrial Relations at the University of Chicago. After 8 years at LaSalle he joined the Copperweld Corporation at its steel plant in Ohio and two years later was elected Vice-President of Development. A year after that, in 1967, he became President and Chief Executive Officer and, in 1974, Chairman of the Board. During the ten years of his leadership, Copper weld thrived, and the Financial World magazine named him as one of the three outstanding chief executives in the steel and metal working industries. He was then persuaded to become President of the North American operations of the Bekaert Group of Belgium, a manufacturer of wire and wire products. After three years of record earnings he resigned in 1982 and formed his own consulting company.

This company advises on strategic planning for major banks, government bodies and corporations in the US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Peoples Republic of China. It publishes the American Economic Commentary which in the last issue began refreshingly: "Early Fall west of the Allegheny Mountains has been beautiful and tranquil."

His record as engineer and manager has been outstanding, and his contributions to metallurgy and materials science were formally recognized by the American Society of Metals and the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

Through his period of intense activity in the business sector he remained close to Universities. He published in management science and strategic planning, and lectured at the Universities of Purdue, Carnegie-Mellon, Pittsburgh and the MIT. For several years he has lectured in management discipline and growth strategies at the Dalian University of Technology in Manchuria, and served as Dean of their Senior Executives Programme. He has been Adjunct Professor at Grove City College, which in 1975 awarded him an LLD.

Mr Smith has been and is a Director of many companies and has been much in demand to serve on Audit Committees. He is one of those rare people who reverse Parkinson's Law that work expands to fill the time available by making time expand to accommodate a great number of worthwhile activities. He has a great concern for the welfare of society and ethical activities.

For good causes he gives generously of his time and skills in raising funds. He has been on the Boards of the YMCA in Pittsburgh and the Gordon Conwell, and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminaries, he is a Trustee of the Wheeling Jesuit College, has served on the Fox Chapel School Board, is a member of the Pittsburgh Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, and serves on the Finance Committee of the Lake Erie Meeting.

He was also Chairman of Inroads Inc, a national organization established to assist minority groups in business and engineering.

Chancellor, I present Phillip Noel Hartley Smith for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Engineering, honoris causa.