

JAMES GORDON BROWN DCL

Mr Chancellor,

It is indeed an unique occasion on which I get to present to you *another* Chancellor: though in his case I should more correctly address him as *Dr* Chancellor. The Right Honourable Dr James Gordon Brown MP really needs no introduction, being the longest-serving Chancellor of the Exchequer in history, with an unrivalled record of prudent economic management. Yet it is not for his prowess in this regard that we seek to honour him today. Nor yet is it in recognition of his renowned academic achievements, which saw him become one of the youngest PhDs in recent UK history, and gain election by his fellow students to become Rector of Edinburgh University at only 21 years of age. No: today we seek to honour Gordon Brown's passion for social justice, and in particular the way he has harnessed this passion while in high office to champion the cause of the poorest people in the world.

It is commonplace these days – maybe it always has been? – for people to accuse our elected representatives of cynicism and self-centredness. Listen to any radio phone-in programme for a catalogue of jibes – many of them cheap, of course, albeit the less scrupulous members of our political classes at times deserve harsh criticism. For better or worse, it has become received wisdom that integrity never survives an ascent to the

corridors of power. This supposed wisdom totally breaks down in the case of Gordon Brown. He can truly be said to have lived up to a pledge first made by an earlier generation of Scottish Labour MPs in 1922, that they would “practice self-sacrifice to achieve international brotherhood”, and “abjure vanity and self-aggrandisement, recognising that they are the honoured servants of the people and that their only righteous purpose is to promote the welfare of their fellow citizens and the well-being of mankind”.

Gordon Brown has promoted the welfare of the most impoverished people on our planet by exploiting his influence with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and with the finance ministers of the G8, the European Union and the Commonwealth. This has been no mere exercise in rhetoric; it has involved vigorous activities in three key areas: debt relief, promotion of fair trade (not least through the Commission for Africa), and establishment of the International Finance Facility.

It is difficult to over-state the historic significance of the commitments on debt relief made at the Gleneagles Summit of the G8 in 2005. Since then, as Kofi Annan has said of him, Gordon Brown has “fought tirelessly – and sometimes single-handedly – for debt relief”. One year on, more than £100 billion in multilateral and bilateral debt has been written off. Yet Gordon Brown remains far from satisfied, raging against the

pusillanimous outcome of the December 2005 world trade talks in Hong Kong, for instance. The Commission for Africa, on which he serves alongside Bob Geldof, estimates an immediate need for £5 billion of investment in communications and energy infrastructure to unlock the economic potential of the continent's people. This will need to be followed up with at least £10 billion of further infrastructure investment in years to come. Gordon Brown has committed Britain to leading by example in this investment, and to trebling its annual aid donations to £100 million a year by 2010.

All the while, as he fights the good fight in the global corridors of power, Gordon Brown reserves much of his energy for work at the grass-roots. He has supported the successful campaigns of two local communities in his Constituency – Burntisland and Lochgelly – to become accredited as 'Fairtrade Towns'. He also finds time to indulge another of his lifelong passions on his home patch – the heroic cause of Raith Rovers Football Club, the pride of his native Kirkcaldy. Gordon helped to bring the Rovers into community ownership – a concept which would certainly have its appeal for many a frustrated Magpie. But nowadays he has to exercise a certain degree of diplomacy in relation to fiercely-fought derbies with Cowdenbeath FC, whose home also lies in his Constituency.

Mr Chancellor – sorry, not *you*, Dr Chancellor! – no less an authority than Nelson Mandela has commented that Gordon

Brown “has a vision of a better world for all, a vision to which he is deeply committed”. As Gordon Brown himself has said: “Vision without action is living in an ivory tower of abstractions, [while] action without vision is directionless travel that leads us nowhere; but vision and action together can change the world”. For demonstrating the veracity of his words by the unapologetic exploitation of the privileges of his high office for the benefit of the most needy of his fellow human beings, I now ask you to bestow upon the Right Honourable Gordon Brown MP the Degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

Citation by Professor Paul Younger