

The Hon Wong Yan-lung *GBM, SC*

DOCTOR OF LAWS *honoris causa*

Citation

Mr Wong Yan-lung was born in Hong Kong in 1963 and grew up in the Wanchai District. As a boy, Mr Wong already excelled at his studies. He attended Queen's College where he distinguished himself for his all-around performance. His outstanding academic record at secondary school qualified him for a Prince Phillip Scholarship to the University of Cambridge, where he matriculated in 1983. At Magdalene College, Mr Wong was taught by many of the great minds of English jurisprudence, including one truly memorable mentor—R W M Dias.

Mr Wong graduated from Cambridge in 1986 with a BA in Law, and was later conferred an MA in Law. In 1987, he was called to the Bar in England & Wales. In that same year, he was also called to the Hong Kong Bar. He was appointed Senior Counsel in 2002 and then a Justice of the Peace in 2005. He was elected a Master of the Bench of Middle Temple in October 2007, and was conferred an Honorary Fellowship by Magdalene College in 2009.

Mr Wong sat as a Deputy High Court Judge of the Court of First Instance in July and August 2003, and served as a Council member of the Hong Kong Bar Association from 1989 to 1990, from 1997 to 2002 and from 2003 to 2005. He was Chairman of the Special Committee on Legal Education of the Association from 2003 to 2005.

Mr Wong has also served as Chairman of the Buildings Appeal Tribunal, the Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Boards, and the Non-local Higher and Professional Education Appeal Board. He has also served as Vice Chairman of the CEDAR Fund and a member of the Steering Committee and volunteer of the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association in Hong Kong.

In October 2005, Mr Wong was appointed Secretary for Justice and served in that position until 30 June 2012. Throughout his life and career, he has demonstrated great

integrity, as evidenced both in his professional and personal life. As only the second Secretary for Justice to serve in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Wong has a keen understanding of his role in upholding the rule of law in Hong Kong.

In the most recent address to newly appointed Senior Counsel, Mr Wong stated, “What makes Hong Kong unique as a city in China and in the world, what enables Hong Kong not to be marginalised against the massive economic growth in the mainland, is the law and the uncompromising standards of the law.” He further emphasised the importance of the integrity of the law: the role of any lawyer was not just about winning cases or advancing one’s career, but rather “to signify the continuation of the Common Law tradition, the adherence to the rule of law and proper administration of justice, despite rapid changes in the macro-political and economic landscape, and rising above different political beliefs or personal ambitions.”

This basic principle of the rule of law as expressed by A V Dicey is simply that law serves to bind all persons equally. In Dicey’s words, the rule of law carries “the absolute supremacy or predominance of regular as opposed to the influence of arbitrary power, and excludes the existence of arbitrariness, of prerogative, or even of wide discretionary authority on the part of government.”

During his tenure as Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong consistently recognised the need and worked to preserve Hong Kong’s unique constitutional arrangement based upon the principle of “one country, two systems.” In addition, he has sought to further enhance Hong Kong’s position as a centre for international dispute resolution by revamping the Arbitration Ordinance and attracting top overseas international arbitration bodies to establish a presence here. He has also worked tirelessly to promote the use of mediation in Hong Kong, including chairing a cross-sector task force and enacting the Mediation Ordinance.

A corresponding attribute of deep personal integrity is also evident in Mr Wong’s personal life, as shown through his on-going commitment to charitable organisations such as the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association (which is very much in keeping with Lingnan’s motto of “Education for Service”). The Association displays

genuine concern for homeless people by responding to their physical, psychological and spiritual needs. These efforts were further demonstrated by his lead in establishing a cross-bureau task force to tackle the problem of youth drug abuse. As a result of this initiative, the community has become better informed about this issue, and young people today are better protected.

Mr Chairman, for his distinguished service to the Hong Kong SAR Government and to the wider community, may I present Mr Wong Yan-lung to you for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.

English citation written and delivered by Mr James Rice