



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. John Ralston Saul Thursday, October 5, 2000

Mr. Chancellor, in an age when all too often information is taken for knowledge, and sound bites pass for insight, we look to intellectual leaders for antidotes to the superficial, the quick, and the self-sewing. It is a privilege to present one such leader, His Excellency Dr. John Ralston Saul, whose autonomous voice is committed to reason, passion, and truth. In his words, "The writer's job is to attempt to show how things work and to put the process in simple, understandable terms." We honour him today for his many courageous attempts to do just that.

His is an extraordinary career. At various times he has been correspondent to numerous leading newspapers, including The Financial Post, The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, and Le Monde. He is a novelist of international stature. As a writer of non-fiction, he has produced several works of political and philosophical significance, each of which has fuelled countless debates in this country and abroad. His writing is informed by unique experience, and by remarkable erudition used in the service of clarity. Educated in Canada, England, and France, he has worked in European investments, was Special Assistant to Maurice Strong at Petro Canada, and has travelled with guerrillas in North Africa and with Shan rebel warlords in Burma. He also has seen the jungles of Thailand and visited our Northwest Territories.

In his works of fiction we see these experiences as he explores the relationship of the individual in conflict with the power elite of the West. His non-fiction, too examines this central idea in the most challenging ways. In Voltaire's Bastards, for example, he explores the perversion of the idea of reason. The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense presents a witty but profound dissection of concepts whose meanings have been corrupted by those in power.

While many writers would have been content to author just these two books, John Ralston Saul has followed them with some of the most provocative political writing of our time-The Unconscious Civilization, which

Mr. Chancellor, our honoured guest is a formidable author and philosopher; a challenging thinker who doubts the absolute truths of others; and an accessible writer who aims to reach the common reader. He has done so with style, grace, and wit. On behalf of the Senate of this University, I ask that you confer upon His Excellency, Dr. John Ralston Saul, the degree Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.