

Encomium: Clare Short - 22 September 2015

Vice-Chancellor, I have the very great honour to present Clare Short on whom the Board of Governors and the Academic Board wish to confer an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

In three days' time the Heads of State and Government of the 193 member States of the United Nations, meet in New York (25-27 September 2015) to agree a set of new global goals for the sustainable development of humanity and of our planet. The UN members will pledge to end poverty and hunger once and for all; to combat inequalities; to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its resources; and to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth and shared prosperity.

This will be an historic agreement on a comprehensive and far-reaching set of universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If they are realized, they will transform for the better the world in which we all live. The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Clare Short was the British Secretary of State for International Development when the ground-breaking MDGs were established. Indeed, Clare established the Department for International Development (DFID) as a new Ministry after the 1997 general election, to promote policies for sustainable development and the elimination of poverty.

Myles Wickstead a senior civil servant worked in the newly created DFID worked closely with Clare on the White Paper 'Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century' which was published just six months into the new Government. Myles says that some described her as a breath of fresh air; those who knew her best would perhaps describe her as more of a whirlwind or hurricane, but one which generally navigated her way with considerable skill and dexterity around potential obstacles in her path. She is remembered by those who worked with her in DFID with huge admiration and affection.

Clare's alliances with a group of committed development Ministers - all of them as it happens, women, the "Utstein Group" - and with key figures like Jim Wolfensohn, then President of the World Bank, was crucial in moving the world towards the MDGs which have formed the template for international development for the past 15 years.

Her own recent reflections on her six years in DFID (1997 - 2003) are both insightful and modest¹. That time was a time of great optimism, passion and excitement for many working in international development. It was a time of real action which led to a series of massive achievements and long lasting changes including:

- Moving international development work away from the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) and thus defining DFID as a new autonomous Department. Since 1997 DFID has been recognised as a leading development assistance agency globally.
- Publishing two white papers – both were considered rather audacious at the time in wanting to “eliminate” poverty – both papers led the way to the UK Government helping define development assistance globally and then support the poverty focused MDGs.

¹ Dearden P.N. (2014) Clare Short: Reflections on Development – Past, Present and Future. Department for International Development (DFID) “Four Corners of the World” DFID, March 2014.

- Moving aid away from trade “untying” it and starting a movement for transparent procurement, reporting and a focus on development results.
- Setting out a route map for the UK Government to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) target on international development assistance. Spend in DFID has since increased dramatically and this target was achieved in 2013 and is now fully supported by law. The moral, social and economic case for international Development Assistance that Clare Short argued has been successfully maintained.
- Convincing both Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown that international development is important – it’s interesting to note that they are both still personally involved with international development work now.
- Moving DFID into Rwanda to support post genocide development efforts there. Indeed Vice Chancellor as you know, from your recent visit to Rwanda two months ago, CIDT has been heavily involved in a wide number of programmes in Rwanda for the past ten years. Much of our work, including that of the ground breaking Climate Change Fund for Rwanda – FONERWA – has been supported by DFID.

Just a few weeks ago I was in Rwanda discussing Clare Short’s international work with a group of senior Rwandans. One of them remarked “I knew of Clare Short when I lived in her Birmingham constituency. She was MP there for some 27 years. She was amazing – she personally helped me get an extension to my visa so I could finish my PhD at Birmingham University. I’m deeply indebted to her. She kindly helped me at a personal level in just the same way she has helped Rwanda at an international level. She bravely made DFID Rwanda’s biggest international development partner. All Rwandans are deeply indebted to her.”

In the past 15 years Clare Short has supported CIDT and the University of Wolverhampton on at least three occasions including:

1. Opening the CIDT DFID course designed and delivered for Young Associate Professional Officers (APOs) in 1998. She spoke inspirationally and passionately then on her vision for DFID and international spending on Development Assistance.
2. Supporting the LEAD Leadership Programme when she gave a speech on Women in Leadership to a packed lecture theatre of staff from across the University. During her LEAD lecture she introduced the concept of “followership” and her strong and brave stance on the Iraq war was carefully explained. At this time she had just published her book *“An Honourable Deception? New Labour, Iraq, and the Misuse of Power”*, later awarded Political Book of the Year by Channel 4. She was given a massive standing ovation.
3. Meeting a select group of high-flying international participants on CIDT’s Chevening Fellowship programme. At this meeting Clare articulated in the most plausible manner why Good Governance is needed to fight extremism. One of the participants from the Philippines recently wrote to me having again met Clare through her work as Chair of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). He waxed lyrical about originally meeting her in Birmingham and her current work with EITI.

Whether from London or abroad, Clare Short has always maintained strong links with her birthplace, just down the road from us in Birmingham. She was educated at St Paul’s Grammar School, Birmingham, and graduated with Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Political Science from the Universities of Keele and Leeds.

Clare worked as a Civil Servant at the Home Office, as a Director of Youth Aid and the Unemployment Unit and as a Director of AFFOR, a community-based organisation promoting racial

equality in Birmingham. She entered the House of Commons in 1983 as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Birmingham Ladywood, which is where she was born and grew up.

From 1996 until the 1997 General Election she was Opposition spokesperson on Overseas Development. She was Shadow Minister for Women from 1993 to 1995 and Shadow Secretary of State for Transport from 1995 to 1996. She has been Opposition spokesperson on Environment Protection, Social Security and Employment. She was a member of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) from 1988 to 1997 and Chair of the NEC Women's Committee from 1993 to 1996.

Clare Short stood down from Parliament in 2010, and is now active in various organisations working on slum upgrading in the developing world, transparency in oil, gas and mining, African-led humanitarian action, Trade Justice for the developing world and with destitute asylum-seekers in Birmingham.

Her personal commitment, determination and energy during her 6 years as Secretary for State played a huge part in establishing DFID as one of the pre-eminent development agencies in the world. Through her work Clare Short has had a global impact. Many of the world's poorest are deeply indebted to Clare Short and her strong legacy in DFID.

In the words of M Scott Peck in *"The Road Less Travelled"*, love and courage and wisdom cannot be certified by academic degrees. I would agree. However, I believe that it is these very qualities that have so clearly defined Clare Short in her career and work

So as the MDGs draw to a successful conclusion this year, it is fitting to recognise Clare Short's achievements as Secretary of State for International Development and her major contributions locally, regionally, nationally and internationally with this Honorary degree.

Vice-Chancellor, I am very proud and deeply honoured to present Clare Short, in recognition of her significant contribution to international development, for the conferment of an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters of the University of Wolverhampton.

Professor Philip N. Dearden
Head of Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT)
University of Wolverhampton