

# Brown's university honour 'prematuring'

A POLITICAL row broke out last night over Gordon Brown's honorary degree as Liberal Democrats claimed it was "too early" to celebrate his success in tackling world poverty.

The Chancellor was among five people honoured by Newcastle University yesterday in a ceremony to mark the Make Poverty History Campaign.

Mr Brown's degree was in recognition of proposals he made on debt relief, fairer trade agreements and doubling aid to third world countries, which were agreed at the G8 summit at Gleneagles in July 2005.

However, Lib Dems in the North-East said that many of his pledges would be only "partially met".

Ron Beadle, the party's candidate for Newcastle North at the next general election, said: "Gleneagles should have been the beginning of a process in which the richest countries tackled the challenge of world poverty."

## Degree sparks debate over world poverty

**By Ross Smith and Robert Brooks**

Gordon Brown is now standing on a podium to receive an honorary degree recognising his contribution to tackling world poverty. Instead, many of the promises made at Gleneagles look as though they will only be partially met, at best. Her should remember that he will be judged not by the promises made at G8 but by the promises he keeps.

The Gateshead councillor insisted he was not criticising the university for making the award to Mr Brown, along with singer Bob Geldof and three more leading campaigners.

But he said people from Tyneside who had travelled to the G8 summit as part of the Make Poverty History campaign "are not uncritical of the Government".

Newcastle University registrar John Hogan said: "There is no doubt that the contribution made by all five recipients of our honorary degrees have had a huge impact in raising the profile of the campaign against world poverty. "On this occasion, which crosses the political

divide and recognises the passionate commitment of those leaders in the campaign, it's disappointing that not everyone feels able to join us in celebrating their achievements."

The Treasury did not issue a defence of Mr Brown's record on poverty last night.

But Live Aid founder Bob Geldof insisted developing nations would be worse off without the efforts of the Chancellor and Tony Blair.

He said: "Without question Blair and Brown have completely altered the possibility of this issue of world poverty being celebrated today."

He warned any broken promises by governments would spell "catastrophic failure".

Political economist Susan George, former president of Tanzania Benjamin William Mkapa and David Golding, of Make Poverty History North-East, were also honoured at the ceremony.

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# Too early to judge

**R**ON Beadle couldn't resist taking a pop at Chancellor Gordon Brown when he was awarded an honorary degree in Newcastle yesterday.

But it feels rather churlish to target one of the main drivers of the Make Poverty History campaign for failing to deliver on targets agreed at Gleneagles just two years ago.

Mr Beadle was right to say that the man expected to be the next Prime Minister will be judged not by the promises he makes, but the promises he keeps.

It is too early to deliver a verdict in this instance, though, especially when the successful delivery of the various pledges requires other world leaders to act as well.

Once Mr Brown is resident in No 10 Downing Street, of course, the pressure and the expectation will change. After that, Ron Beadle will not be alone in making judgments.

By then, however, Mr Brown's plate will be full of problems and the timescale for keeping his promises will be much shorter too.

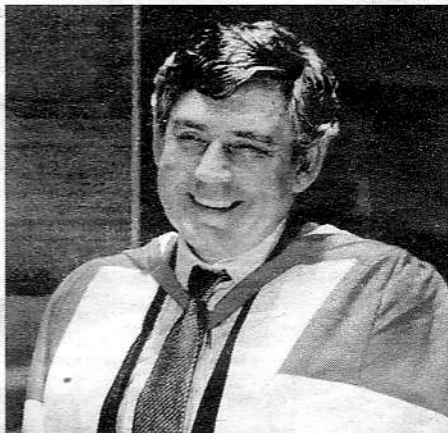
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## Sorry to hear sour note over degree

**I** WAS surprised and sorry to hear the sour note struck by Ron Beadle regarding the "premature" award of an honorary degree to Gordon Brown by Newcastle University ("Brown's university honour 'premature'", *The Journal*, January 9) and wonder to what extent Mr Beadle's views represent those of his party, the Liberal Democrats.

What a contrast to the message the university received from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize: "Now that is making history! God bless you." Similarly, David Cameron, Leader of the Opposition, generously wrote that "I congratulate Newcastle University for holding this special Honorary Degree Ceremony and pay tribute to those who will be recognised today for their work and efforts towards making poverty history".

Academic staff who instigated the proposal to honour the Chancellor were not implying that he has done everything he could and should have done in the fight against global poverty. On the contrary, like "Dr" Sir Bob Geldof and the aid agencies, we have often been sharply critical of him. However, we believe in giving credit where it's due and recognise that the Chancellor does have outstanding achievements to his name, particularly in relation to debt relief and increased aid. Mr Beadle seems unaware that the university had more than mere promises on which to base its decision. Mr Brown was the architect of the first major debt deal, agreed at the Cologne G8 in 1999, which has already benefited about 30 poor countries, and in 2000 he announced the 100% cancellation of the



**GORDON BROWN:** Dr David Golding has praised the honour bestowed on the Chancellor by Newcastle University.

debts owed to Britain by many of them. Newcastle University is to be congratulated for the imagination and moral courage it has shown in championing what originally seemed like an obscure and impossible cause. Its globally unique stance is viewed with astonishment and admiration elsewhere.

Ron Beadle is certainly right in saying that many of the G8's promises remain unfulfilled and that the Chancellor "will be judged by the promises he keeps".

We hope Monday's honour will encourage Mr Brown to keep not just the promises he made to us, but those he has made to the millions who live in abject and agonising poverty.

**DR DAVID GOLDING**, Honorary Chaplain,  
University of Newcastle and Development Co-ordinator, Make Poverty History NE, Newcastle