

## Honorary Fellow A Citation



### **Dr the Honourable Li Ka Cheung, Eric, OBE, JP, FHKSA, FCA LLD, DSocSc, FCPA, AIA(Hon), HKAAT, FCIS**

As convenor of a group of independent lawmakers in the Legislative Council, Dr Li Ka Cheung, Eric is one of the best-known political figures in Hong Kong. As Chair of the Public Accounts Committee of Legco and with Accountancy as his functional constituency, Dr Li is also one of the best-known accountants in Hong Kong. The list of his community and public involvements is too extensive to be itemised here, but it is characteristic of Dr Li's energy and availability that he finds time to be an Adjunct Professor in the School of Accountancy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and to share his expertise and wisdom with staff and students.

Above Dr Li's desk in his office at Li, Tang, Chen & Co. Certified Public Accountants in Wanchai hangs a portrait of his father, who was an accountant himself and a model for Dr Li. He emphasized the importance of character and enthusiastic commitment to public service. Dr Li was educated at St Paul's Co-educational College and the Warwick School in England, where he learned greater independence and self-reliance. He then took a degree in Economics at Manchester University. This had the advantage of providing him with a solid professional background in accountancy while at the same time giving him a broad education in philosophy and other humanities disciplines that taught him to think analytically – a resource he constantly draws on in his current roles as practising accountant, legislator and politician.

He spent three years working with Coopers and Lybrand in the UK, pursuing further professional qualifications, before returning in 1978 to practice in Hong Kong. It was not long before Dr Li had been singled out for appointment to various government and non-government advisory committees and boards in a variety of areas such as youth and education, public finance and business, and social welfare. At the same time, he rapidly gained high esteem in his profession through his efforts in building up the firm, his service on a variety of accountancy bodies and his community work for various non-government organizations. In 1993 he was honoured by his professional peers in the Hong Kong Society of Accountants with the accolade of "Accountant of the Year". In the following year he was elected President of the Society. He was able to achieve two significant things in this role: getting in place an accreditation system that has given Hong Kong accountants international recognition; and developing a memorandum of co-operation with the Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Dr Li, however, was apparently not destined for a quiet "back-room" life as a practising accountant. In 1991, at the tender age of 37, he was appointed to the Legislative Council and began his present career as a legislator and politician. For a start his main focus was not on accounts but on youth affairs. In 1991 he was appointed Chairman of the Commission on Youth. He found this position very rewarding as in 1993 he was able to help promulgate the first



Charter of Youth, which defines the rights and responsibilities of young people. Dr Li regards this as one of the most significant things he has achieved in public life. As well as his work on youth affairs, Dr Li was Chairman of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee and the Hong Kong Council of Social Services.

After he was first elected to the Legislative Council in 1995, this time to a functional constituency, Dr Li's focus began to change. He became more involved in economic and financial matters and his role has become more political. In the run-up to the change of sovereignty and afterwards he has been aligned with a moderate group of independent legislators. His moderate voice is one that is widely respected in Hong Kong public life for its impartiality and practical common sense. As he said in his speech in response to the recent Budget, as an accountant he always tries to take the "true and fair view" of things, which means to see them in a balanced, non-partisan way. The esteem in which he is held by his Legco colleagues is reflected in the fact that since 1998 he has been entrusted with the pivotal role of Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Among the numerous associations Dr Li has with organizations outside of politics are several with Hong Kong universities and universities elsewhere. He has been a member of the University Council, and of the University Court, as well as chairman of the advisory committees of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University; the former treasurer of the Open University of Hong Kong (formerly Open Learning Institute); a Member of the School of Business Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Baptist University; and Chairman of the Advisory Board on Accounting Studies at Chinese University – as well as being for many years the Independent Trustee of the Staff Superannuation Schemes of this University. He sees the role of universities as a kind of buffer zone between school and the competitive, impersonal world of work in which it is critical that, as well as subject knowledge, students develop three things – independent, analytical minds; good communication skills; and an understanding of the key importance of ethics.

At the centre of all Dr Li's activities is belief that peace between people achieves more than confrontation. His motto is: "Whatever you do be at peace with God and man." He believes that such an approach is critical in Hong Kong where we have only human resources and we cannot afford to be wasting them in unnecessary bickering.

Dr Li's achievements in many spheres of Hong Kong life have been recognized with several honours and awards: he is an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire and a Justice of the Peace; he has been awarded Honorary Doctorates from the University of Manchester and the Hong Kong Baptist University. He is an Honorary Alumnus of the London Business School and an Honorary Fellow of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Dr Li Ka Cheung, Eric is a distinguished accountant, legislator and community leader in Hong Kong and it is my privilege, Mr Vice-Chancellor, to present him to you for the award of an Honorary Fellowship.