



St. Thomas University bestowed honorary degrees on Marshall Button and Michael Enright on Sunday afternoon.

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From left are STU honorary degree recipients playwright, actor and director Marshall Button and broadcaster, journalist and writer Michael Enright. They are shown with St. Thomas University president and vice-chancellor Michael Higgins and faculty award presenter William Sweet.

Button, the esteemed New Brunswick playwright, actor and director, said he was proud to accept the honorary degree.

At a Saturday evening dinner, he took the stage to thank his new colleagues in the guise of his best-known character: Dalhousie mill worker Lucien.

By all accounts, he had the crowd howling with laughter.

"The award has been given to Marshall Button, but it's no secret that it's also given a little bit to the alter-ego Lucien," said the Moncton resident.

"So the thinking was, what if they called Lucien and offered him (the honour)? First of all, would he know what Phd stood for, or who Saint Thomas was and such, so I had my thoughts and words to say so I wrote a little monologue."

Button said everyone took his jokes about this year's labour dispute in stride.

"Being a political satirist, you could not avoid a little jab at the labour dispute," he said. "Being a labour boy as Lucien was over the years, he thought that the president was calling him to come and be the mediator for the dispute."

Enright, who is a broadcaster, journalist and writer, also accepted an honorary doctor of letters degree from STU.

He said the recognition has forced him to take a look at the road he's taken in his life as a journalist.

"It's more than an honour - it's a complete shock," he said.

"I'm a high school dropout. I never finished high school and I've always regretted it. I always wanted to go to university and I never in my wildest imagination thought I'd get a doctorate."

Enright said he's enjoyed watching the more than 500 young graduates take part in the convocation process.

"What bothers me is that we in the media tend to say that young people are not engaged, are apathetic, are apolitical and that's rubbish," he said.

"The young people I meet are as engaged, as involved and alert and hard-working as anybody in my generation. So I think we're giving them a pretty crappy world to deal with and I think they're our only hope."

University officials also announced the co-chairs for the university's centenary celebration.

STU president Michael Higgins said Justice Carolyn Layden-Stevenson and author David Adams Richards have agreed to serve as co-chairs for the celebration in 2010.

Higgins said a lot has been accomplished since St. Thomas University was founded in 1910, and he looks forward to a promising future.

"It's been an interesting century," he said.

"I suspect there will be other challenges that we'll be facing in the years to come, but to be able to achieve a century of existence as an institution of higher education in this country, that's pretty good."