

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR NICHOLAS CANNY**, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, on 17 May 2002, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa*, on **PROFESSOR LOUIS CULLEN**

Chancellor, members of the University, I can recommend Louis Michael Cullen for the highest honour that this university can award because he has been both the most prolific, most wide-ranging, and the most enterprising historian of his generation in Ireland. Furthermore, he has given a lifetime of dedicated service to Trinity College, Dublin, and especially to its Department of Modern History, where he has been Professor of Irish History, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Fellow, and latterly Senior Fellow, of the College, and also a member of the Board. In the public sphere he fought valiantly in less promising days for the better care of Ireland's archival and museum heritage and he was the prime mover to have Irish business records salvaged and preserved in the National Archives. Moreover he has always communicated his interest in History, particularly in its economic aspects, to a wider public through print, broadcasting, and the school-room; and he has had no equal in promoting the economic history of Ireland at the highest academic level in the universities of this island and those abroad, especially in Scotland, France and Japan.

Speaking personally, I am privileged to be the proposer of Louis Cullen because he took his first two degrees at University College, Galway, (now NUI, Galway) where he matriculated after an outstanding school performance in his native Wexford for which he was awarded an Aiken scholarship. Ba é aidhm na scoláireachtaí sin, a raibh an-tóir orthu, obair acadúil d'ardchaighdeán sa Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, agus chruthaigh Louis Cullen go raibh sé inniúil don dúshlán sin nuair a bronnadh céim céadonóracha san Eacnamaíocht agus sa Stair air tar éis dó a bheith ag staidéar le Liam Ó Buachalla agus Síle Ní Chinnéide, beirt de na chéad cheannródaithe agus na daoine ba dhíograisí a chur oideachas tríú leibhéal trí Ghaeilge chun cinn. Ba é uasphointe a shaothair acadúil i nGaillimh gur éirigh leis céim Mháistreacht tré thaighde sa Stair a bhaint amach le céadonóracha, agus ina dhiaidh sin gur bhuaigh sé an scoláireacht taistil san Eacnamaíocht ó Ollscoil na hÉireann i 1956 don tráchtas céanna dar teideal '*An Ceangal Tradála idir Éire agus an Fhrainc, 1660-1793*'. Bhí na spéiseanna (fiú amháin spéis sa smuigleáil) agus an saineolas a cothaíodh trí mheán na hoibre sin mar dhlúthchuid dá shaol acadúil ina dhiaidh sin. I measc na scileanna siúd do bhí a cumas foinsí Gaeilge a úsáid mar fhianaise stairiúil. Ba é an toradh ba shuntasaí air sin ná *The Hidden Ireland: reassessment of a concept*, a foilsíodh i dtús ama i

bhfoirm ailt i *Studia Hibernica*, agus a cuireadh amach mar fhoilseachán ann féin i 1988. Tar éis a thréimhse ama i nGaillimh, chothaigh Louis Cullen an tsuim a bhí aige cuid dá shaothair scoláireachta a fhoilsiú i nGaeilge. I measc na saothar ab fhearr acu sin bhí *An Saol in Éirinn* (1976) agus *Sé ghlúin Éireannacha 1790-1970* (1981).

With the support of the Travelling Studentship, Louis Cullen proceeded to the London School of Economics where he sharpened his economic expertise and undertook fresh research under the direction of Professor A.H. John, this time on *Anglo-Irish trade, 1660-1800* which appeared, in 1968, as his first book. Louis Cullen's first employment was in the Irish Diplomatic corps, and an assignment to the Paris embassy provided him with the opportunity both to engage in further archival research on Hiberno-French trade and to establish connections and friendships within the French academic community that were to endure throughout his career. Then, in October 1963, he abandoned diplomacy in favour of a lecturing position in Economic History (then the first position of its kind in any university in the Republic of Ireland) at Trinity College, which was to lead to the rapid career progression already described.

At the moment of his first academic appointment, Louis Cullen had settled upon the principal interests that would sustain his research and publication for several decades. These were: a fascination with trade and with the trading networks that European merchants forged during the eighteenth century; a curiosity about the banking methods and credit instruments that were then employed to lubricate international trade; and a concern to identify the strategies that rural, no less than urban people, in the past devised to conserve, and enhance, the wealth and social positions of their families. Also from the moment of his first appointment –principally in association with Ken Connell, Rodney Greene and Austin Bourke- he promoted an interest in the economic history of Ireland through the Economic and Social History Society of Ireland and its associated journal *Irish Economic and Social History* which has appeared annually since 1974. In 1968, Louis Cullen introduced the educated Irish public to the revisionist possibilities of economic history in the Thomas Davis lecture series that he edited under the title *The Formation of the Irish Economy*; he enhanced the possibility of teaching economic history at undergraduate level with the publication in 1972 of *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660*, and in 1981 he presented his mature reflections on how the received version of Irish History needed to be revised in the light of economic evidence in his volume *The Emergence of Modern Ireland, 1600-1900*.

At the same time Louis Cullen situated his research findings on Ireland in a broader context through the series of conferences he promoted comparing Irish economic performance through the centuries initially with Scotland and subsequently with France. The resulting series of volumes not only familiarized foreign academic audiences with some of the best work being done in Ireland, and *vice versa*, but they ultimately converted Louis Cullen into becoming a historian also of foreign countries; initially of France on which in 1998 he published the definitive study on *The Brandy Trade under the Ancien Régime: Regional Specialisation in the Charente*. More recently his interest has shifted to Japan to which country he was introduced by Taro Matsuo, a former student, and whose language he has mastered to the point where his next book will be a work on the history of Japan based on archival research in that country.

This brief appraisal will give but an impression of the varied, fruitful and multi-talented career that Louis Cullen has pursued. His achievements have already been recognized by Membership of the Royal Irish Academy; by External Fellowship of the British Academy, by a Visting Fellowship at All Souls'; and by honorary doctorates from Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Strathclyde. It is right and fitting that Louis Cullen should now be conferred also with an honorary doctorate from this , his original university.

*PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:*

*Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Litteris, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.*