

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS delivered by **DR MAURICE MANNING**, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Dublin on 13 June, 2003, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **CATHERINE DAY**

A Sheánsailéar, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle:

Catherine Day is a distinguished graduate of the old Group IX degree of the UCD Arts Faculty- Economics and Politics. Today Group IX no longer exists, or if it does it goes under the name of Mode One. In its time Group IX was taught by some of the University's most illustrious economists- Paddy Lynch, James Meenan, John O'Donovan and Garret FitzGerald, and it had amongst its alumni some of the most accomplished graduates of the past half-century. Catherine Day was in the front rank of such graduates.

Today she is the top ranking Irishwoman in the European Commission, and is one of only three women to hold the rank of Director General in the Commission. And it should be added she is still only in mid-career.

Catherine is, in many respects, a child of this parish. Brought up in Mount Merrion, educated at Mount Anville Convent she moved down the road to the new and still bleak Belfield Campus in 1971, taking a first honours BA in 1974 and a first honours MA a year later.

Her first job- while she was doing her MA - was with the Investment Bank of Ireland and then in 1975 she began her European apprenticeship when she became EC information officer with the Confederation of Irish Industry. It was an exciting but uncertain time for this new member state of the EEC, the first enlargement of what up to then was called the Common Market. There was no guarantee the European experiment would work; we faced change as we never had before and the people who would lead that change had little previous experience. For all it was an adventure, for some a traumatic one, but fortunately for all of us the leadership did emerge and, fortunately too, young people of real ability and vision proved themselves capable of competing and working with the best, both at home and within the Commission.

Catherine Day was one such. She joined the Commission in 1979, not through political appointment, but through open competition. When Richard Burke became Commissioner for the second time in 1982 he immediately invited her to join his Cabinet. Two years later when the roller-coaster that is Peter Sutherland became Commissioner for Competition she joined his Cabinet and was given responsibility in two of the most politically fraught and sensitive areas- state aids and infringements. The question of the dismantling of state aids with the inevitable attack on old and well-vested interests and the infliction of real economic pain is enough to send even the strongest politicians into the trenches and into fearsome resistance. And so it did. It was a time of turmoil and strife, but the aids were dismantled and the markets opened up at a pace and to an extent that few could have envisaged and which can be seen as one of the defining moments in the evolution of the European Union.

By now Catherine Day was an established Commission player and this was recognised when the UK Commissioner Sir Leon Brittain appointed her to his Cabinet in 1989. Under Sir Leon she

continued to have responsibility for state aids and to this in 1993 was added responsibility for relations with Central and Eastern Europe, including development of the pre- accession process, and relations with the new Russian Federation. Again, the groundwork was complicated by language, history, ethnic memories and distrust. But we can see today, on the eve of the biggest ever enlargement that the groundwork was done, and done successfully.

In 1995 she became Deputy *Chef de Cabinet* to Sir Leon where one of her tasks involved working on the development of a New Transatlantic Agenda. And as we know US/EU relations rarely run smoothly. But perhaps more significantly while still a member of the Cabinet she was given responsibility for relations with the Balkans, Turkey and Cyprus.

By this stage she was at the centre of some of the most pressing EU issues especially those focused on relations with the Balkans, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta and later played a major role in relation to the current enlargement process.

In February 2000 she became Deputy Director General for relations with the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean and then just a year ago she took up her present position as Director General in DG Environment.

Catherine Day is being honoured today not just because of her personal attainments- though as we can see from the evidence they are substantial and they are indeed part of the reason. But over and above her attainments she epitomises the success and the contribution of so many of the first generation of young Irish people in helping build, expand and sustain the development of the European Union. She brought with her to Europe a family tradition of honest public service, a broad and well-grounded academic training and an idealism, enthusiasm and integrity which informed everything she did in her varied and still thriving career. UCD has every reason to be proud of the career and contribution of Catherine Day.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS,

Praesento vobis, hanc meam filiam quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testur ac spondeo totique