

Text of the introductory address delivered by: **PROFESSOR ELEANOR O'LEARY**, on 7 April, 2006, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **JOHN McCARTHY**



A Sheansailéir, a bhaill de sheanaid na hOllscoile agus a cháirde,

Chancellor, members of the NUI Senate and friends,

From his early youth, the scholar whom it is my privilege to introduce to you today learnt the importance of the Arts and the Sciences. At his father's knee, John McCarthy knew the joy of mathematics while his mother instilled in him a love of English. This initial mentoring stood John in good stead as evidenced in his success in the matriculation examination a month after his sixteenth birthday, an achievement that heralded further academic pursuits. He obtained his BA Degree in History and Latin, a Higher Diploma in Education, a postgraduate Diploma in Career Guidance and an MA Degree in Applied Psychology.

John's career as a secondary teacher quickly developed into specialisation in Guidance Counselling at Douglas, Cork and West Clondalkin, Dublin. He served for ten years as Deputy Director of the postgraduate Higher Diploma in Guidance and Counselling at University College Cork. Little did he then realise that he would one day become a major figure in this field in Europe. As first Director of the National Centre for Guidance in Education, an agency of the Department of Education and Science, John oversaw several national and European projects, pioneering new educational guidance services for adults and disadvantaged youth. In a recent ten-year review of its work, the Chairperson of the National Centre described him as an inspired choice as Director.

John's contribution to the development of educational organisations in Ireland has been extensive. He contributed nationally to the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) through its Central Executive Committee, and as Chairperson of its Education Committee. John also enjoyed a central position in the National Executive of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC). As Public Relations Officer during a time of governmental cutbacks in the area of Guidance Counselling, he wrote in international, national and local fora on the negative impact of such a retrograde step.

November 2001 witnessed John's departure to Brussels where he was invited to become an EU policy developer for guidance within the context of lifelong learning at the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. As Chairperson

of the European Commission's Expert Group on lifelong guidance, he played a key role in drafting the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance of the Council of Ministers of Education in 2004. But his work did not stop at EU level. John succeeded in marrying the lifelong guidance initiatives of the European Commission and its agencies with those of the OECD and World Bank leading to the first joint EC-OECD publication entitled *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers* which he co-edited. This book has been translated into twelve languages. A second outcome of such international institutional cooperation was the establishment of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, based in Brussels. On the recommendation of the OECD and the World Bank - and with the support of the Irish Department of Education and Science and the ministries of other countries - John became its first Director, a post he currently holds.

The greatest influences on John's professional life to date have been: the late Professor Peter Dempsey of UCC for Occupational Psychology; Pádraig O'Riordain, former principal of Douglas Community School, for Irish education management; Margaret Kelly of the Department of Education and Science for policy development in education at national level and Gordon Clark of the European Commission for policy development in education at an EU level. I was delighted that he included me (Eleanor O'Leary of UCC) in this impressive list for Counselling Psychology.

Apart from the formal academic and professional dimensions of his life, there is a latent historian in John as is evidenced by his frequent reading of history books such as Walter MacDonald's *Reminiscences of a Maynooth Professor*. Summers spent in the Gaeltachts of Corca Dhuibhne and Oileán Cléire ensured his love of the Irish language although he waited to go to Brussels to learn set dancing! He can even lay claim to thirty seconds of glory in the film *The First Great Train Robbery!*

As a true Corkman, the *camán* held its place in John's youth as he played with Sarsfields, Brian Dillons, and Farranferris. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no contest nowadays when it comes to his favourite pastime, namely, enjoying and spending time with his four children - Barra, Laura, Odile and Sorcadh!

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie, totaque universitas. Presento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.