

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **PROFESSOR JOHN G. HUGHES**, President, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, on 2 December 2009 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*, on **TOM ARNOLD**

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

It is an honour to deliver this citation on why Tom Arnold is a most worthy recipient of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*. Mr Arnold is one of Ireland's truly global citizens and one of the most influential leaders in the area of international food security and nutrition policies. He is Chief Executive of Concern Worldwide, Ireland's largest NGO working in the field of international relief and development, with an operational budget of approximately €130 million, and over 3,000



employees in 30 countries, mainly in Africa and Asia. Tom is equally at home in Council Rooms of the United Nations in New York, the European Commission in Brussels and the OECD in Paris, or in the company of project workers in Africa or Asia implementing novel and innovative solutions to rural development and food crises. He is a team leader with extensive experience in management, policy development and administration in governmental and non-governmental organisations within multicultural contexts.

Born in the late 1940s, Tom grew up on the family farm in Lusk in north county Dublin in the company of his parents and four brothers and three sisters. After completing his Leaving Certificate, he became a full-time farmer, working in the family's market gardening business, but this did not last very long. Two years later, he went to UCD where he developed an interest in working in developing countries that was informed by a high level of intellectual curiosity which enabled him to graduate with a first class honours degree in Agricultural Economics in 1972. In later years, he acquired an MBA from the University of Louvain (1993), and a Masters in Strategic Management from Trinity College (2003). Tom is now domiciled in the south of the city with his wife Gillian, son Patrick and daughter Laura, who are all with him here today.

His entry into the field of development and food economics came with his first 'real job' in 1973 when he joined the European Commission in Brussels. On behalf of the Commission he worked in the Directorate General for Agriculture (1974-77), as an Agricultural Advisor to the EC Delegation to the Ivory Coast (1977-79), as Agricultural Advisor to the EC Delegation to Malawi (1979-80) and Administrator in the Food Policy and Projects division of the Directorate General for Development (1980-83).

The ten years with the European Commission was a hugely formative experience at a personal level. More importantly, for Ireland he was in the vanguard of a new generation of talented young Irish leaders intent on making the most of the opportunity to play a new role in the world following our membership of the EEC in 1973. Working for the Commission he saw at first hand the constructive role the European Community was playing in development aid, and he recognised that Ireland could become a key player in this broader international context. This was a challenging time for Ireland as a small, insular and relatively underdeveloped State lacking in self confidence. It was through the efforts of people like Tom Arnold, widely recognised for his expertise, style of interaction, and capacity to network and influence that the status of Ireland and the Irish people was raised at the European and global levels.

Fortunately, for Ireland Tom decided to return to his native land. He returned to take up the post of Chief Economist in the recently established national training and advisory authority for the agriculture sector, known as ACOT. Five years later in 1988 he joined the Department of Agriculture as Chief Economist and, in 1993, he was appointed Assistant Secretary General, with responsibility for the Department's finance and audit functions.

While he was undoubtedly very busy as Assistant Secretary General of one of the largest government departments he managed to find the time for other activities that sustained his interests in Europe and developing countries. Between 1991-1993 he was Chairman of the Irish Council of the European Movement, between 1992-1996 he was Chair of EuronAid, a network of European NGOs involved in distributing European food aid, and between 1995 and 1999 he took on the role of Chairman of the Council of Concern when David Begg was Chief Executive. Following David's appointment as General Secretary of ICTU, Tom applied for, and was appointed to, his current post as CEO of Concern Worldwide in 2001.

In his role as CEO of Concern, Tom Arnold has become a leading and tireless advocate for food security and nutrition issues. Drawing upon his vast experience and talents he has been very influential in steering official policy in a direction where Ireland can, and is seen to, make a difference. His talents and his passion for easing the plight of the world's hungry came to the notice of former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who appointed him in 2003 as a member of the highly influential Millenium Projects Hunger Task Force that was tasked with devising a strategy for halving world hunger by 2015.

Arnold is not only a formidable strategist, he is also an innovative problem solver. In 2001 he teamed up with Dr. Steve Collins from Valid International, an international humanitarian organisation that specialises in research and implementation of new techniques to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. With Collins he revolutionised the UN approach to tackling malnutrition. Together, they pioneered a new model, known as community therapeutic care (CTC) which shifts the focus of aid work away from 'bringing the hungry to food distribution centres' with access to clean water, to bringing 'the food to the hungry' in their dispersed communities. This innovative model was pioneered through Concern in Ethiopia, Sudan and Malawi with impressive results in terms of reduced mortality rates and much wider coverage of the population.

Over recent years Tom has taken on many influential roles while continuing as CEO of Concern Worldwide. Since 2006 he has been a member of a high-powered Advisory Board to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund. He is currently a member of the Washington based International Food Policy Research Institute's 2020 Advisory Council in Washington, and also Chairman of a network of European Non-Government Organisations working on food security issues. He is a driving force in the Irish governments Hunger Task Force, and through his extensive network of high ranking leaders across many fields he organised a hugely successful Hunger Conference in 2008 to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of Concern, partially in response to the Biafra crisis in west Africa.

Despite all the efforts over recent decades the scale of the world hunger problem is greater than ever before, and the resources to tackle this deepening crisis are dwindling as developed countries, including Ireland, are reducing their aid budgets. More than ever before the expertise of leadership of people like Tom Arnold is needed to address this major global challenge.

In recognition of his broad vision and capacity for lateral thinking Tom continues to be highly sought after for positions where his wisdom can be used to shape public opinion and the responsiveness of government. Thus, he has been appointed as a Trustee of the Irish Times and he was also a member of the Government's Commission on Taxation.

For relaxation, he is a passive follower of many sports and a voracious reader of mostly non-fiction literature on history, politics and biographies. He is reported to have said that he does not believe in retirement, he will just continue doing more new and challenging things. Long may he continue to do so.

In conferring the Degree of Doctor of Laws on Tom Arnold the National University of Ireland is giving public recognition to his outstanding analytical, political and networking skills that he applies with great effect at national, EU and global levels. He is a man of extraordinary energy, constructive restlessness, intense curiosity, passion and compassion, all of which he carries with great modesty. He is a model public servant and an outstanding ambassador for Ireland.

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 utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.