

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS delivered by **PROFESSOR PÁDRAIC O'DONOGHUE**, NUI, Galway on 26 June, 2009 on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **LIAM CONNELLAN**

A Uachtaráin, a Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle:

I am delighted to have the opportunity this morning to welcome to NUI, Galway a native son of the West of Ireland. I am referring to Liam Connellan, a man who has more than distinguished himself in business and engineering circles for more than 50 years.

Liam is most recognised for two highly influential roles that he held in Ireland during his career; he was Director General of the Confederation of Irish Industry for a 20 year period and he was Chairman of the National Roads Authority from 1994 to 2001. I will return to his pivotal role in these organisations shortly and highlight their importance in the development of the Ireland that we know today.

Liam Connellan grew up in Strokestown, Co Roscommon, and graduated in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering from UCD in 1957. After graduation, he received further training in both Sweden and England. He joined the staff of the Irish Management Institute in 1965 where he lectured on production management and small business development.

He was subsequently appointed Director General of the Confederation of Irish Industry in 1972. This was a major national role that was fitting of someone with the talent and ability of Liam Connellan. You must remember at the time, Ireland was just joining the European Union and the survival and growth of the Irish industrial sector was a major concern. The CII, which later merged with the Federation of Irish Employers to form IBEC, played a major role in representing business and industry on economic and trade and industry matters and Liam did this with distinction during his period in office. Liam would have steered it through difficult times in the seventies and eighties and helped lay the foundation for the economic success that began in the nineties.

Liam had an international vision for Irish industry and sought to develop links both in Europe and the US. This was to be reflected in some of his other activities and indeed awards that he received. For example, he has been a member of the Board of the Irish American Partnership since its establishment and was elected President of the German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce for a three-year term in 1995. He was a member of the Board of the Irish College in Paris for many years. He was conferred with the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, and also as a Chevalier of the Order of Merit of the Republic of France.

Liam then became the first Chairman of the National Roads Authority when it was established in 1994. As Chairman, he had a strategic role in advising on and influencing the transport infrastructure policies such as in the National Development Plan 2000-2006. Prior to the NRA, road enhancements had taken the form of poorly connected by-passes and small elements of road widening. The new NRA policies, developed no doubt under the direction of visionaries such as Liam, saw completely new motorway developments linking the cities. It is fair to say that the primary roads network in Ireland has been transformed over the last 10 years as journey times have been shortened and congestion reduced.

Liam has also been a member of many major national bodies associated with policy and strategy going back to his time on the Central Review Committee of the first two National Recovery Programmes. To be honest, there are too many of these groups to mention. It has often been the case that he has been one of the first appointees to some new strategic advisory board and frequently he has been Chairman of that Board. Liam served as President of the Royal Dublin Society from 1995-1998. He has been Chairman of the companies within the Veolia Environment Group in Ireland from 1994 to date. He is an active member of the Board of the Peter McVerry Trust which assists homeless young people. Having myself been on a number of Boards with Liam, I have seen at first hand his ability and his vision and it does not surprise me that he has been in such demand over the years in key strategic and policy making bodies. Liam has impressed me as a person who is always looking to the future and is always trying to identify opportunities and strategies that will put Ireland in a leadership position or give it a competitive advantage.

He has maintained a deep involvement in the engineering profession throughout his career. He served as President of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland in 2001 (an organisation now known as Engineers Ireland). He was a founding member of the Irish Academy of Engineering in 1997 and was elected as President of the Academy in 2004.

Liam is married to Marie and they have four sons and a daughter. We are especially delighted to welcome Marie here today along with many other family members.

Liam is a member of Charlesland Golf Club and I gather that he regularly plays with a group known as the Legends. I do not know if his golfing ability is of legendary status, but I certainly say that he does have this legendary status in contemporary industrial and engineering sectors in Ireland. Ladies and gentlemen, NUI, Galway is delighted to confer an honorary doctorate on Liam Connellan here today.

Praehonorabilis cancellarie, totaque universitas:

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