

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR RUTH CURTIS**, NUI Galway on 25 June, 2010 on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **BERNARD COLLINS**.

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

Today we honour, Bernard Collins, an experienced international businessman, a champion of industry, creator of high quality jobs, consummate strategist and champion of people affected by cancer.

Born in Cork in 1948, the middle child of Ted and Myrette Collins, he was raised in Gardiner's Hill with his two sisters Margot and Colette and was educated by the Christian brothers, North Monastery, another notable luminary being the former Taoiseach and renowned sportsman, the late Jack Lynch. Bernard attended University College Cork where he was a strong member of the Student Council remembered as a 'doer rather than a talker'. He



was awarded an honours BA in Applied Psychology and Business by University College Cork and subsequently was awarded a Diploma in Business Administration from North Western University, Chicago in 1981 and a Diploma in Strategic Manufacturing Management from Insead, the prestigious business school in France in 1985. This educational base prepared him well for the exciting business life that would unfold. He married Elizabeth Slane, a Dubliner, in 1974 and they have 3 children Gareth, Susan & Ben. We warmly welcome all his family and friends here today.

Having garnered extensive experience in human resources, finance and production, Bernard Collins was appointed in the 1980's, Head of Human Resources and subsequently General Manager, at Baxter Multinational Healthcare Company in Castlebar, Co Mayo. His masterful intervention, against all the odds, in rescinding their decision to close the Irish operation, is now the stuff of legend and to this day the company remains a major employer in the West.

It is widely recognised that Bernard Collins played a crucial role in the decision of Boston Scientific to come to Galway in 1994. From a shortlist of 4 countries including Scotland,

England and Switzerland, Ireland was chosen and Bernard Collins was appointed Managing Director and Vice President of International Operations at Boston Scientific, a position he held for 8 years. These decisions as we shall see had a cascading effect on the development of the biomedical industry in the West. In 1997 after a visit to the plant Peter Nicholas, Chairman and CEO of Boston Scientific Corporation wrote to Bernard and I quote

*"Our partnership with the Irish people is a real and deepening one of which we can all be proud, and it certainly would not have happened without your personal leadership, the excellence of your team and the high quality calibre and productivity of our employees there"*

In six years Bernard Collins grew the international business, from \$100m to \$1.0bn, developed products with annualised first year sales of \$300m+ and drove the strategy, start up and growth of Boston Scientific Corporation's two facilities in Ireland to 3000+. From an initial start up promise of 500 jobs, this, by any standards, was a remarkable achievement.

Today Galway is the largest manufacturing site within the corporation with over 3,000 staff involved in research, development and manufacture of cardiology and peripheral vascular products with another 2,000 staff employed elsewhere in Ireland. A recent study carried out by the Centre for Innovation and Structural Change in this University describes the local biomedical industrial hub as vibrant and dynamic with the important clustering effect a result of university/industry linkages, development of a pool of skilled labour, knowledge transfers in the form of start up companies, growth of supplier firms and most significant of all regional and international reputation through the presence of Boston Scientific and other multinationals.

Bernard Collins' foresight in identifying the critical synergies of manufacturing, health care sector, third level institutions together with government support in development of this hub, is now well recognised and his contribution is highly respected in business, university and government circles. His wide corporate experience and strategic knowledge of the industry gained in Europe, USA and Asia, his key strengths in organisation development and management of change are now channelled through LifeMed Consultancy which he set up to promote growth and partnership in Life Science Companies. Furthermore, demonstrating the

high regard in which he is held nationally and internationally his expertise and energy are focussed on his involvement as Chairman of numerous companies, for example Aerogen Ireland and HeartSine Inc. Bernard was reappointed to a second five year term as Chairman of VHI in 2008, by Minister Harney; he is a long serving non executive director of the IDA and this year was appointed as non executive director to Irish Life and Permanent Ltd.

In tandem with this exceptional work load, in 2003, he became Chairman of Cancer Care West a not-for-profit organisation and expanded the role of the Charity from one of research only focus to include patient care services. He has been the driving and inspirational force behind the development of a strategic plan for the charity resulting in the establishment of Inis Aoibhinn in the grounds of Galway University Hospital in 2007 - a 30 bedroom home from home residence for people outside Galway receiving radiotherapy here and the opening of a state-of-the-art Cancer Support Centre at Seamus Quirke Road in 2009, providing evidence based psychological therapy, group work and complementary therapies for patients, their families and carers. His deeply held commitment to those affected by cancer has resulted in over 900 patients to date staying in the residence for an average of five weeks and the different services in the Support Centre being accessed more than 7,500 times in the past year. All these services, both residential and day care are provided free of charge. At critical times of decision making in both the construction of the residence and the development of the Support Services Centre, (in a time of recession), Bernard Collins as Chairman, demonstrated great courage, leadership, crystal clear vision and sound judgement.

The level of involvement and achievement in business and voluntary service of Bernard Collins to date needed not only intellectual prowess and unique skill sets but strong personal family support which Bernard is fortunate in having with Liz, his wife of 36 years by his side. Family and friends are very important to Bernard and indeed, I understand, that he lives by the quotation from Hilaire Belloc

*"From quiet homes and first beginnings,  
Out to the undiscovered ends,  
There's nothing worth the wear of winning.  
But laughter and the love of friends"*

In preparing this citation I spoke to a number of people from different aspects of Bernard's life and the profile that emerged was that of a serious man with deeply held convictions and clear vision, larger than life, a human dynamo with extraordinary energy, highly competitive in business with an outstanding ability to master a brief, tough but fair, passionate about standards, world class, best in category, best international practice. A good listener, a man of personal charm who enjoys socialising and playing golf off a single figure handicap.

For his extraordinary contribution both to the development of the biomedical industry in the West of Ireland and its associated spinoffs and to the support and care of families affected by cancer throughout the West Region, it is an honour for me, President, to present this quintessential Irishman, Bernard Collins, to you for the award of honorary degree.

*PRAEHONORABILIS PRAESES, 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.*