

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **PROFESSOR DES FITZGERALD**, UCD Vice-President for Research, on 3 December 2012 in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*, on **JOHN TRAVERS**

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

John Travers has worked in the Irish public sector for more than fifty years: as a University demonstrator, teacher, town-planner, economic advisor and senior administrator. As a young public servant in the 1960s he cut his teeth on the physical and regional plans prepared as part of the national planning process initiated by Government through Dr T.K. Whitaker and his colleagues. He was a member of the Government team, based



in the Department of the Taoiseach, which negotiated and wrote the Programme for National Recovery in 1987 in consultation with the employer bodies and trade unions to address the economic crisis of the time. As Chief Economic Advisor in the Department of Industry & Commerce he was a member of the team established by the Government in 1988 to prepare and negotiate with the European Union the set of operational programmes required to draw down the substantial increase in structural funds allocated to Ireland under the Single Market process.

He was subsequently appointed, jointly by the Government and the EU, as Chairman of the Implementation/Monitoring Group for the largest of the Operational Programmes, *i.e.* that for Industry & Training. At that time also he led the Government programme established to help business prepare for the Single European Act and had administrative responsibility for the extension of the 10% rate of corporation tax for industry for a further period of years up to the time that it was replaced by the 12.5% rate of corporation tax proposed by Forfás in its *Shaping our Future Report* in 1996 and announced in the Government budget in 1998.

In 1993 he was appointed as the founding CEO of Forfás, the industrial and science policy advisory body to Government and the “holding company” for the other industrial development agencies (initially the Industrial Development Agency & Forbairt/ Enterprise Ireland, and later Science Foundation Ireland). He was also founding Chief Executive, in 2000-2001, of SFI, which he was appointed by the Government to establish. In his various roles he was centrally involved in the preparation and publication of almost every industrial policy report issued by Government between 1972 and 2002 and of the first Government White Paper on science, technology and innovation policy in 1996, and the Technology Foresight Report published by Forfás in 1999. He was appointed Chairman of the group appointed to help Irish business prepare for the changeover to the euro (1999-2001).

He retired from Forfás in 2002 and since then has been involved in economic and business consultancy in Ireland and overseas as well as sitting on a number of Boards in the private and public sectors. In 2004 he was appointed by Government as the Chairman of the interim Board of the National Tourism Development Authority with responsibility for the

establishment of the Authority and the rationalisation of the then tourism promotional body, Bord Fáilte, and the then tourism training body, CERT, into a single effective development agency. He has also been appointed to undertake a number of administrative audits and inquiries in Government Departments and acted as Director of the Global Finance Academy at UCD (2006-2009), where he is a long-term member of the Advisory Board of the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business. He was reappointed as Director-General of Science Foundation Ireland (2010-2011) to lead the Foundation at an important period in its evolution.

A graduate of UCC, he won a scholarship to take a Master's degree in economic and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania (1969-1971), where he subsequently won and took up a fellowship. He also holds an MBA from UCD and a postgraduate qualification in town planning from the Dublin Institute of Technology.

In sport he holds minor and junior Cork county championship medals in gaelic football won with Nemo Rangers - both in 1957 - and a number of Cork county titles in athletics and sprinting won with UCC in the early 1960s.

John's *alter ego* is his wife, Mary, who has been his constant and irreplaceable soul-mate, wise counsellor and ever-constant champion for more than fifty years, and mother of their five wonderful and most loved children: Sharon, John-James, Penny, Fiona and Rosalind. We are delighted that they are all here today together with grandson Jason Marrow, John's sister, Rosemary, his brothers Jim and Ray, his extended family - including Ken Byrne, Gavin Marrow, Joe Phelan, Margaret and Patricia Travers, Jim O'Dwyer - and a number of John's colleagues and friends.

John Travers's distinguished career in public service has been characterised by dynamism, foresight and a spirit of constant ambition for Ireland. Further afield, his international standing is underlined by the fact that countries as diverse as Croatia, Jordan, Israel, Taiwan and Costa Rica have sought his advice on their economic development policies. In doing so they reflect a fitting tribute, not just to his expertise and wisdom, but to a lifetime of outstanding public service.

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.