

OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
DR W.J. SMYTH, Vice-Chancellor, President, National University of Ireland
Maynooth, on 22nd April, 1999, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of
Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **DR DANIEL O'HARE**

A Sheansailéir agus a mhuintir na hOllscoile

Daniel O'Hare was born on the northern edge of Dundalk in 1942 and grew up with the omnipresent prospect of the Cooley Peninsula as his north eastern horizon - those legendary frontier hills which rise out of the north Leinster plain, cradling slí na Tána and pairing with the Mourne over the dark Carlingford Lough. From the time of Cuchulainn this has been a zone of contact and separation, of clash and *modus vivendi*, of political and economic reciprocity. It is an epic contact zone where Ulster and Leinster meet, where Anglo-Norman settlement petered out and where the Irish political border has for three quarters of a century injected its own realities. Within this environment there has persisted the legacy and challenges of a distinct social environment and skills and attributes have been honed by a border culture which includes pragmatism, awareness of difference, an eye for opportunity and the willingness to innovate and improvise if existing solutions fail to meet the needs of current or developing circumstances. Adaptability is a central skill and almost a feature of the gene pool of the population.

It would perhaps be overly deterministic to read the career of Daniel O'Hare as being the outcome of the environment of his early years but yet one does recognise within his many personal qualities elements which were perhaps encouraged by family, friends and landscape and environment in those formative times.

Following his education at the C.B.S. in Dundalk the young Daniel O'Hare headed to Galway where he took his B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Chemistry at U.C.G. His doctoral studies in physical chemistry were completed in St. Andrews University, Scotland, following which he undertook postdoctoral work in Michigan State University and the

University of Southampton. It was at this point that Danny decided to return to Ireland and opted to pursue a career in senior level administration in the Third Level sector.

In 1971 he was appointed as the founder Principal of Letterkenny Regional Technical College ñ a task which he pursued with considerable success and much relish for three years before transferring to the post of Principal in Waterford Regional Technical College, now the Waterford Institute of Technology. A three-year period in the southeast was followed by his appointment in 1977 as Director, later President, of the National Institute of Higher Education Dublin. Twelve years later, and under his presidency, that Institute became the first new university to be created in the Dublin area since the foundation of the State.

The establishment of a national network of R.T.Cs followed by the creation of two N.I.H.E.s reflected the growing awareness of Government that the industrial and regional development policies of the 1960s needed to be supported by the creation of a well-trained technological workforce. Ultimately, also, it was recognised that further success could be attained only if graduates, equipped to deal effectively within the knowledge revolution, were educated in increasing numbers in the Irish university system. Consequently, the elevation of the N.I.H.E.s in Dublin and Limerick to university status and developments within the other five universities may now be seen as significant directional changes whose effects extended beyond the campus boundaries to lay the foundations of what is now internationally recognised as an Irish economic miracle.

Danny O'Hare has played a formative role in what might be described as the Irish educational transformation. He has literally laid the foundations of third level institutions and has helped shape their curriculum, and pedagogical offerings. With an eye to the applied he has always perceived a partnership with employers as a synergistic aid to educational development. Flexibility in degree combinations, student placements within industry and graduate internships were all encouraged by him. However, his view of Third Level Education was not narrowly technological. Management and Media Studies, Languages and the Humanities were all fostered by him and this has been especially so since the institutional linkage between St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dublin City University was formally established in 1993.

His educational leadership was accompanied also by a strong sense of social responsibility and he was a pioneer in creating an initiative which would allow for greater

interaction between his university and the communities which formed part of its immediate hinterland. D.C.U.'s B.I.T.E. programme in Ballymun has become a model for other university Access programmes and has been internationally recognised.

His success and attainments have been recognised especially in the academic world and he holds honorary degrees from the University of Ulster, Trinity College Dublin and The Queen's University of Belfast.

When Daniel O'Hare took up his job as Director of N.I.H.E. Dublin in 1977 he was confined to a rented office in the centre of Dublin. It was a Third Level institute devoid of students, property and had only a handful of staff. Twenty-two years later he leaves the Presidency of Dublin City University with its burgeoning student numbers and a campus that reveals an infrastructural investment programme which has combined State funding with very significant private investment. Much of that private investment has been garnered as a direct consequence of Dr O'Hare's personal energy and effort. D.C.U. is a success story. So also is its pragmatic President who now leaves office at a youthful age of 56. No doubt other challenges will be ably met by him in the years ahead. We wish him, and his wife Sheelagh, every success and happiness as they commence the next chapter in their lives.

As a graduate of the National University of Ireland he has distinguished himself at home and abroad. It is fitting that this university now accord him its highest honour LLD *honoris causa* in recognition of all his achievements.

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.