



HONORARY CONFERRING ADDRESS
CONFERRING OF HONORARY DOCTORATES ON
DAVID TRIMBLE AND SEAMUS MALLON

October 8, 2013

Speech by Professor Brian MacCraith, President of DCU.

A Sheansiléir, a aíonna ghradamúla, a chomhleacaithe, agus a dhaoine uaisle go léir, ba mhaith liom buíochas o chroí a ghabháil romhaibh as ucht teacht anseo inniú chun bheith páirteach ins an searmanas stairiúil seo.

Chancellor, Distinguished guests, colleagues and special friends, on behalf of Dublin City University, I want to thank you for joining us today for this special and historically significant ceremony.

For many people here, it may be the first time that you have heard about Dublin City University

So, it is appropriate that I give you a brief flavour of the University that has conferred these honours today.

Some facts about DCU

- We are a young university – we admitted our first students here in 1980 and were given the title DCU in 1989.
- We now have just over 12,000 students, from 115 different nations.
- And, earlier this year, we learned that we have been ranked **#40 in the world** among the thousand or so universities that have been established since 1963 – that is the prestigious QS Top 50 under 50 World University Rankings.

In September last year, we launched a new Strategic Plan for DCU – entitled **‘Transforming Lives & Societies’**.

At DCU we aim to transform the lives of our students by providing an excellent learning experience.

Equally we aim to transform societies through the impact of our graduates and by translating the knowledge created through our research into societal benefits.

David & Seamus, that is simply what you have done – you have **transformed the lives** of so **many** individuals directly and, through your actions, you have also transformed our society here on this island.

We have listened to the wonderful citations for both of you – citations that attempt to capture both your outstanding achievements and your impact.

It would be futile for me to try to improve on these but, before I finish, let me make these brief observations ...

The Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*) is the highest award that this University can bestow.

The award of an Honorary Doctorate by DCU is **not only** a recognition of **outstanding achievements** in a particular field, but is also a public statement of the values that this University cherishes. In fact, it is the combination of **excellence** and shared **values** that enables us to identify suitable candidates to receive a DCU Honorary Degree.

In its short history, DCU has not conferred many honorary doctorates. Today, David and Seamus, you join a distinguished but short list of our Honorary Graduates.

Today you join a list that includes a number of Nobel Laureates:

- **ETS Walton**, winner of the **Nobel Prize for Physics**,
- **Mother Teresa**, winner of the **Nobel Peace Prize**,
- And our good friend, recently deceased and much missed, **Seamus Heaney**, winner of the **Nobel Prize for Literature**.

We are now pleased to add another Nobel Laureate to the list!

Seamus, in examining **your** distinguished career and **your** various awards, I came across an interesting fact.

Seamus holds a Rannafast Cup winner's medal which he won when playing for the Abbey CBS! When I researched this on the website of your Alma Mater, it provided some intriguing information ...

“Seamus played on the Cup-winning 1952 team at left back but only on wet days ..! On the dry days Kevin O'Neill took his place.”

Evidently, the tenacity that you displayed in your political career was used to good effect on mucky pitches in the 50's!

Apart from recognising excellence and projecting our values, there is a second important reason for us to award honorary doctorates.

These are particularly challenging times on this island.

What we need most of all now (and I'm thinking especially of our young people) is a regeneration in spirit, a lifting of morale.

And, in this regard, positive role models are critically important.

At a time of significant challenges to this nation, David and Seamus have demonstrated what can be achieved through courage, dedication and a lifetime commitment to the service of others.

I want to finish now with two quotations that capture better than I can the essence of today and, in particular, the distinguishing qualities of our two honourees.

The first is from Ralph Waldo Emerson (the 19th century American essayist, lecturer, and poet):

'Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same **courage** that a soldier needs. ***Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.***' (Repeat)

The second quotation, and my final words, comes appropriately from David Trimble's Nobel Lecture, Oslo, December 10, 1998 (almost 15 years ago):

"There are **two** traditions in Northern Ireland. There are **two** main religious denominations. But there is **only one** true moral denomination. And it wants peace."

Dr Mallon and Dr Trimble, Congratulations and Thank You!

Go raibh maith agaibh.