

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS delivered by **DR IOGNÁID G. Ó MUIRCHEARTAIGH**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, National University of Ireland, Galway on 27 June, 2003 on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **RICHARD M. DALEY**

A Sheansailéir, agus a mhuintir na hOllscoile:

Onóir mhór don Ollscoil seo céim oinigh dochtúireachta a bhronnadh inniú ar dhuine de mhór-fhigiúirí polaitiúla na Stáit Aontaithe, fear go bhfuil éacht déanta aige ó thaobh oideachais, mí-bhuntaíste agus na timpeallachta ina chathair féin – Chicago.

The formidable Richard J. Daley ruled America’s third-largest city for 21 years until his death in 1976. Earlier this year, his son, Richard M. Daley, was re-elected for a fifth term as mayor, in a landslide electoral victory, receiving almost 80% of the popular vote.

Richard Michael Daley was born in Chicago on April 24, 1942, the fourth of seven children and the eldest son of the Mayor Richard J. and his wife Eleanor. Following undergraduate and law degrees from de Paul University, he began his public service career in 1969 when he was elected to the Illinois Constitutional Convention. From 1972 to 1980 he served in the Illinois Senate, where he led the fight to remove the sales tax on food and medicine, sponsored landmark mental health legislation, and established rights for nursing home residents.

Daley was elected State’s Attorney of Cook County in 1980. He pushed successfully for tougher state narcotics laws, and raised the conviction rate dramatically. He helped overhaul Illinois’ antiquated rape laws to obtain more convictions, and developed programmes to combat drunk driving, domestic violence and child support delinquencies.

Under the leadership of Mayor Richard M. Daley, who was first elected Mayor on April 4, 1989 - and re-elected subsequently in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003 by overwhelming margins - Chicago has become, according to the New York Times “a prosperous, well-governed model for the rest of the country”. Best known for improving the Chicago Public Schools, Mayor Daley also has developed innovative programmes to improve city neighbourhoods, reduce crime through community policing, remove illegal guns from the streets, build new libraries, beautify the city and attract high-technology industry. These innovations have become models for cities across the United States, and beyond, and have earned Mayor Daley many national honours.

In 1997 he was named Municipal Leader of the Year by *American City and County*

Year by *Library Journal*. Given that he has been the recipient of so many of these “of the Year” awards, I hope he realises that the honour being conferred on him today is being conferred by the Irish University of the Year!

In 1996 he headed the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In 1999, he received the Education Excellence Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice, the Public Service Leadership Award from the National Council for Urban Economic Development, the J. Sterling Morton Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation, the Keystone Award from the American Architectural Foundation and the Martin Luther King/Robert F. Kennedy Award from the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence /Education Fund to end Handgun Violence.

Mayor Daley is married to Maggie, who unfortunately was unable to be here on this occasion. They are the parents of four children, Kevin who died aged three in 1981, Nora, Patrick and Lally, who is with us today and to whom we extend a *céad míle fáilte*. We also send our warm best wishes to Maggie, because she too is a key member of the Mayoral team with a particular and admirable commitment to the socially disadvantaged and to minority groups. During a visit last Summer to Chicago by a delegation from Galway City under the auspices of the Chicago Galway Sister Cities committee, Maggie led the delegation on a tour of Block 37 in Chicago, where a highly successful programme of Arts activities for disadvantaged young people had been established. This programme has now been extended into the schools, and currently operates in some thirty schools.

The Galway Chicago Sister Cities agreement unites the most dynamic cities in each of our two countries in a unique and special way. We welcome here today particularly the large delegation from the Chicago committee, as we honour their Mayor, and through him the wonderful city from which they hail. A major area of mutual interest and of particular excellence is commitment to the Arts, and I know that the city of Galway would wish to build on these commonalities.

As you will have heard earlier from the Professor Curtin, we also honoured another Chicagoan here today – Fr. Andrew Greeley. While this honour was conferred on Father Greeley entirely on the basis of his outstanding academic contributions, a side-benefit was the fact that in doing so we were ensuring a balance between our recognition of supporters of both baseball teams in Chicago. It appears that the Mayor (and most south-side Irish in Chicago) supports the White Sox, while Fr. Greeley (and his west- and north-side Irish colleagues) support the Cubs. My own knowledge of baseball is somewhat limited, but when I suggested yesterday to Father Greeley that the Cubs might be perceived as under-performers, and had not won any significant titles, he quickly retorted that they had won the World Series in 1904! For

football is probably a good analogy. Although, in all fairness it must be conceded that Mayo have won an All-Ireland title more recently than 1904! But not much!

Ever since his first election as Mayor in 1989, Richard M. Daley has focused on making the city of Chicago a better place to live in. As he is driven round Chicago, he makes lists: abandoned cars to be towed away, rubbish skips to be moved, fences to be mended. His “graffiti blasters” programme has attracted attention as far away as Milan. Spray paint is banned in the city; there is a 24-hour anti-graffiti hotline; city crews have the legal right to remove graffiti from private property. The Mayor’s positive passion is greenery: the city has planted over 200,000 trees. Pavements have been widened and street lights replaced. There is widespread agreement that Chicago, already an architectural gem, is a far more attractive city thanks to Mayor Daley’s green thumb and fastidious housekeeping.

As Mayor, nothing is more important to Richard Daley than the quality of children’s education. He is repeatedly on record as saying that success or failure of his administration should be assessed by the performance of the public school system, and when asked how he would want to be remembered responds “education Mayor”.

When, after repeated requests, the state’s Republican-dominated legislature finally turned control of the Chicago school system to the Mayor’s office in 1995, many of those legislators believed he would fail miserably.

However, since 1995 his management team have closed a \$1.8billion budget deficit in the public school system; consistently raised performance standards, greatly expanded summer school, after-school and early childhood education programmes, and invested \$3.6billion in capital improvements.

Given this almost obsessive belief in and commitment to the importance of education on the part of Mayor Daley, it is therefore highly appropriate that National University of Ireland Galway should honour him today by conferring on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

*PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:*

*Prasesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribusquam doctrina habilem ed idoneum ess qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam canonico, idque tibi fide mea testur ac spondeo totique Academiae.*