

OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR J. BROWNE, Registrar, National University of Ireland, Galway on 23 June 2006, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, on **RONAN LAMBE**

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

In setting out its future strategy, Enterprise Ireland suggests, and I quote, ‘Irish industry is at a crucial point in its economic development. What is now needed are knowledge-intensive activities that can support high-value jobs The companies that provide these jobs are intensely market-focused and innovative firms, providing new and sophisticated products and services at competitive international rates.....’ This strategy emerged as a response to the analysis carried out and documented in the report of the Enterprise Strategy Group that reported last year.

Interestingly this strategy had been adapted 15 years earlier by Dr Ronan Lambe, who in cooperation with a colleague mortgaged his house to establish a business based on this thinking. At a time when Irish industrial policy was concerned largely with the creation of a labour intensive manufacturing base through a strong focus on attracting foreign direct investment, Ronan Lambe foresaw the possibility of developing a successful export led business out of Ireland based on knowledge intensive and science based services. *Truly he is a man of whom it can be said that he was ahead of his time.*

Born in Sligo, Ronan Lambe graduated with B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees from NUI Galway. Ronan’s master’s research thesis was directed by Dr Colm O hEocha, iar Uachtarán na hOllscoile, go ndéana Dia trócaire air. While a student of NUI Galway in the late 1950s, he played with the University soccer team and in fact was club captain in 1959 – 1960. He subsequently completed a Ph.D. degree in Pharmacology in University College Dublin in 1976. Between 1968 and 1990, Dr. Lambe held a number of senior positions at the Institute of Clinical Pharmacology in Dublin where he ultimately held the position of Chief Operating Officer (Europe). During this time he published many highly cited scientific papers in journals such as Psychopharmacology, Nature and the European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology.

In all he has published over 60 peer-reviewed scientific research papers. His major interests are in translational research, that is the translation of the results of scientific and laboratory research into clinical application for patients. In this context he has been very supportive of the efforts of this University and of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Furthermore he serves on the board of AGI Therapeutics, a speciality pharmaceutical company that is engaged in the development and commercialisation of differentiated therapeutic drug products to treat a variety of *gastrointestinal* ('GI') diseases and disorders.

In 1990, Dr. Lambe along with a colleague founded a start-up enterprise, ICON plc, a contract research organisation, which today has its primary listing on the US Nasdaq exchange, and is a global provider of outsourced developmental and clinical trials services to the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device industries. When originally launched the company had just five staff, all of whom were based in Dublin. Today ICON employs approximately 3000 staff operating from 41 offices across 27 countries. This spectacular success has been achieved mainly by organic growth in the early years; in more recent years the company has supplemented its core clinical trials business by acquisitions of companies in appropriate complementary services areas; companies such as Medeval in the UK and Beacon Bioscience Inc in the US.

Dr. Ronan Lambe served as Chairman of the Board of Icon plc from the beginning until November 2002 and guided the company through its growth and successful flotation on the NASDAQ stock exchange in 1998. He continues as a director of ICON, working on an agreed time basis and helping in particular to coordinate and develop ICON's many business and scientific relationships with major global pharmaceutical companies.

Dr. Ronan Lambe has developed a market leading business in a highly competitive market place. He is recognised as a pioneer of the industry sector in which his company is now the market leader. In a highly regulated industry he foresaw the possibility of major pharmaceutical companies outsourcing the management and operation of clinical trials. Under his guidance the company developed world class and mission critical quality controlled services for very demanding clients in what is arguably the most regulated industry in the world. ICON consolidated its lead position when it became the first international clinical research organisation to be awarded ISO9001 quality certification across all of its divisions and functions. In 2004 the NUI Galway Alumni Association presented Dr Lambe with the Bank of Ireland Award for business and commerce, in recognition of his outstanding achievements in business.

Outside his professional and business life, Ronan has a keen interest in horseracing and I understand has had some success at the Galway Races in recent years. Furthermore he is a very understated and low - key supporter of a wide range of charitable causes. He has a particular interest in third-world development, including a strong family connection and involvement in development projects in Ethiopia.

Ronan Lambe is unusual in Ireland and indeed in Europe in that he combines a very accomplished scientific background with a keen eye for business, innovation and opportunity. Driven by his interest and expertise in translating the fruits of scientific research into clinical applications he saw the opportunity to create a successful high value added services business; more importantly perhaps, he had the courage to establish the business and the tenacity and commitment to develop and grow it into a truly global business.

A Sheánsailéir, cúis mhór áthais agus i ndairíre cúis onóir dom Ronan Lambe a chur chun cinn don gradam seo. Eolaí, nuálaí agus fear gnó den scoth é agus tá mé cinnte go bhfuil an onóir agus an gradam seo tuillte go maith aige.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIES, TOTAQUEN UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis hunc menum filium, quem socio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittature, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Scientiae, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.
