



GORDON RICHARD CONWAY

Mr. Chancellor,

*It is for me a great honour to present to you Gordon Richard Conway, President of the Rockefeller Foundation. Richard Conway is a son of the soil on which this campus rests, and a graduate of what was then the University College of the West Indies at St. Augustine. It was here that the germ for research was planted and it was here, in 1961, that he made his début into the world of publishing with an article, jointly undertaken with a former Supervisor from the staff of ICTA, Dr. Elwyn Iton, a Plant Pathologist, entitled 'Studies on a wilt disease at River Estate III. Some aspects of the Biology and habits of *Xyleborus*, spp. and their relation to disease transmission,' which appeared in Cocoa Research Report, Trinidad 1959-1960. In this article Conway and Iton reported the discovery of a species of beetle, new to science, which was later to carry the scientific name *Xyleborus Trinidadensis*. Thus began a collaborative project that took Iton to a doctorate and launched Conway on to a career in research. More recently Conway has published an important book *The Doubly Green Revolution: Food For All in the 21st Century* (Penguin).*

Dr. Iton recalls Conway as a very good research student with a clear mind, but above all a pleasant person with a promising sense of humour, someone whom he treasured as a colleague rather than as a student. He is not at all surprised by the meteoric nature of his career in academia and beyond.

And meteoric his rise has been; for between 1970 and 1976 he ran from Lecturer to Reader in Environmental Management and by 1980 was appointed Professor of Environmental Technology in The University of London, after which, as if by a law of nature one honour followed another. A Visiting Professorship in Thailand in 1981/82 was soon followed by appointment as Head, Agriculture and Environment Management Section, Department of Pure and Applied Biology, Imperial College, London, then Director, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development.

It is one of the perils of the able and efficient that they should be called upon to do even more. Conway was called upon and successfully supervised eight doctoral candidates as well as guided the research of seven post-doctoral researchers. It was to be expected that such a record of achievement would have brought a queue for his expertise. Conway accordingly became a consultant to organisations such as the Ford Foundation, World Health Organisation, The United Nations Environment Programme, The Shell Research Limited, Universities and the Australian Council for International Agricultural Research. With such a formidable reputation it is again but a logical development that he should have been asked to serve as a Director on bodies such as the Committee for International Cooperation in Higher Education, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton and Hove

Economic Development Company Limited and to chair The Runnymede Trust in the United Kingdom.

Such burdens would have reduced lesser men to the status of international bureaucrat. Conway however was able to resist the pressures and to carve quite respectable areas of research for himself in fields such as the behaviour of agroecosystems, participatory rural appraisal along with guidelines for agricultural development while urging planners and policy-makers alike to listen to all the voices coming from below; and like any academic at the height of their powers, Conway is now working on a review of the history of world agriculture from an ecological perspective focussing on the rise and fall of Roman agriculture. Conway's command of his field, his record as one who gets things done, his role and influence on the various agencies and committees on which he served led almost inexorably to appointment in 1992 as Vice-Chancellor, University of Sussex until 1997. In 1997 he was appointed President of the Rockefeller Foundation. In this capacity he made an important intervention in the raging debate over genetically modified foods. Speaking for the 'the poor and excluded' he called for full disclosure by Monsanto and his Directors, of the issues and risks involved in plant biotechnology. This intervention and a spirited meeting with them eventually led to a change and fundamental shift in policy by Monsanto's company on the issue of Terminator technology. Most professional men soar until they arrive at the summit of their intellectual powers and thereafter rest on their laurels. Looking at the career of Gordon Conway one sees only a continuous rise as if his curve would never peak. He has come back to us, Mr. Chancellor, not as the proverbial prodigal son, but as one laden with honours. We are proud to have played a part, however small, in that journey of achievement.

Mr. Chancellor, I request you by the authority of Senate and of Council, to admit Gordon Richard Conway to the degree Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa.