

MALCOLM MEARNS

CITATION FOR AN HONORARY DEGREE

Mr Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you for a degree of the University, Mr Malcolm Mearns.

Malcolm Mearns is equally a businessman and a scholar. He is the Principal and Founder of the Canberra Survey Research Firm, Datacol, which provides a nationwide research service to universities, government departments, statutory authorities, media and private industry. The opinion polls he conducts are familiar to all of us through the pages of *The Canberra Times* when ACT elections are looming.

In presenting this honorary degree, we wish to pay tribute especially to Malcolm Mearns contribution to the research and teaching programs of The Australian National University. That association spans 18 years. Mr Mearns has assisted in the design of surveys, he has managed field work and he has prepared data for many of the most significant and large scale pieces of social research undertaken by this University. Over an extended period of time, he has offered invaluable advice and provided substantial support to researchers from the Research School of Social Sciences, the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, and the Departments of Sociology, Psychology and Commerce. Hundreds of ANU students have obtained casual employment working as Datacol interviewers.

Mr Mearns has provided service to this University which has been much more than a commercial service. It has been given with a generosity that goes far beyond what makes sense in terms of commercial goodwill. No where has this been more apparent than in the assistance he has provided to masters and doctoral students. He has given generously of his time and knowledge to contribute to their educational and professional training in the field of survey research.

Mr Mearns has also been an intellectual partner with senior scholars of this University in cutting edge social survey research. His ideas, his methodological rigour, his experience and his boundless enthusiasm have enriched countless projects. One of his most recent commitments has been to the Re-integrative Shaming Experiment in the Research School of Social Sciences. This project has dealt with highly sensitive issues and has generated complex data sets that have demanded professionalism and excellence of the highest standards. Mr Mearns has never failed to put in the extra hours, effort and creativity to make sure that this project delivers all that it has promised to the University and to the community.

Mr Mearns' reasons for doing this are best captured in his own words. On being informed of this award, Mr Mearns replied:

The people of this University with whom I have worked have always provided me with something that I believe marks a university... the spirit of creative curiosity, of searching enquiry that transcends personality and personal opinion, a spirit of enquiry not easily satisfied, a spirit capable of turning back from a blind alley, from a badly formed judgement, without rancour, without wounded pride, and with an urge to press on. This spirit that delights in discovery and in sharing new found knowledge is something that I hold very dear and is not readily found in the outside world.

All this bespeaks a deep commitment to truth and a decidedly uncommercial one, a commitment that has been valued over the years by our students and faculty.

Mr Chancellor, it is with great pleasure that I present to you Malcolm Mearns, that you may confer on him the degree of Masters of Arts, *honoris causa*, on the ground of his achievement and outstanding service to scholarship.

Professor Frank Jackson
Chairperson, Board of the Institute of Advanced Studies
The Australian National University

1 October 1999