



MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Graduation Ceremony 21 March 1990

Honorary Degree Citation

Jack Frederick Loneragan

In the short space of sixteen years Murdoch University has earned an enviable reputation in the biological sciences, and though many academic staff across two schools helped establish it, there can be no doubt that tonight's honorary graduand has earned us more distinction than most. Furthermore, the senior academic statesman whom we honour here did not allow a flair and enthusiasm for research to deflect him from acceptance of administrative chores across a broad spectrum of activity.

Jack Frederick Loneragan is a thorough-going Western Australian. He was born in Guildford in 1926, received his secondary schooling at Wesley College, and in the latter phase of World War II, on reaching the eligible age, served with the RAAF.

Loneragan entered the University of W.A. on a returned serviceman's scholarship in 1946, when total university enrolments numbered 1401. (UWA would not have been eligible even for membership of John Dawkins' unified national system, far less a comprehensive research profile!) He took two prizes before graduating with First Class Honours in Botany in 1950 and proceeded on a coveted Hackett Studentship to the University of California at Berkeley, where he embarked on a PhD in plant physiology.

It was partly because he also received a CSIRO Studentship while at Berkeley that Loneragan was persuaded to join CSIRO on his return to Australia in 1953. For seven years he worked as a research officer, subsequently senior research officer, in the Plant Nutrition Section of the Division of Plant Industry in Canberra.

By 1961 he could no longer resist the temptation to return to Perth, and accepted appointment as Senior Lecturer in Soil Sciences at the University of W.A. For the next twelve years he played a leadership role in both faculty management and active research within the Institute of Agriculture at Nedlands.

At the time of his appointment as Murdoch's Foundation Professor of Biology in 1974, he was in fact Dean of Agriculture at UWA, and although his allegiance to the new university was total, he left behind him enough goodwill to ensure that amiable and productive collaboration would develop between plant biologists on the two campuses.



During his sixteen years of professorial leadership at Murdoch, terminated by his retirement only one month ago, Jack Loneragan served two terms as school dean, one term each as chairman of the Board of Research and Postgraduate Studies, chairman of the Academic Staff Promotions Committee, as elected member of Senate, and finally as the first elected chairman of Academic Council and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). In the last year of his Murdoch service he became Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and for 3½ months Acting Vice-Chancellor.

Jack Loneragan's research work has centred on the function of mineral nutrients in plant nutrition, notably how to recognize nutrient deficiencies. He has consistently maintained a strong research group around him, attracting sizeable research grants, invitations to lecture abroad, and formal accolades from professional peer groups. He was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in 1977 and a few years later a Fellow of both the Institute of Biology and the Australian Institute of Biology. To crown it all, he was last year elected President of the International Council on Plant Nutrition and will host the next international colloquium in Perth.

Jack Loneragan has been a shrewd, low-key, conciliatory academic leader in the councils, committees and corridor diplomacy of this university. He has displayed and promoted loyalty to the wider campus interests of Murdoch, and in the social setting has been ably supported in these efforts by his wife Mona.

It is possibly worth mentioning that in recent years Professor Loneragan has been directing a major international research project on legume production which is based in Thailand and funded by the Australian Council for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). This project requires Jack to travel regularly to the north-western Thai city of Chiangmai, and it has been reported to me that on at least one occasion Professor Loneragan has been detected by Australian customs officials carrying a suspicious looking white powder in a small plastic bag. I am nevertheless able to reassure you, Chancellor, that Professor Loneragan has not become a Murdoch agent in the lucrative opium trade channelled through Chiangmai, notwithstanding the university's eager entrepreneurial search for alternative sources of external funds.

Chancellor, I present to you Jack Frederick Loneragan, Bachelor of Science with First Class Honours of the University of Western Australia, Doctor of Philosophy of the University of California, Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, Fellow of the Institute of Biology and Fellow of the Australian Institute of Biology, for award of the degree of Doctor of the University, *honoris causa*.

