

(The following is a verbatim report of the address of John Hume, President, Credit Union League of Ireland, given at the Convention in Cork, 1968, transcribed from a tape recording of the address in reply to the speech of An Taoiseach, Mr. Jack Lynch)

**A**N TAOISEACH, Mrs. Lynch, and fellow Credit Unionists, may I say again that we are very glad to have An Taoiseach and Mrs. Lynch with us this evening, particularly here in the City of Cork. And as I look around me here I find myself with Cork men, and women, to the right of me and to the left of me. We are very glad to be tonight in the City of Cork, and to have with us an Taoiseach and Mrs. Lynch in their native city. And I would say that we are particularly proud on this occasion, which is our largest national gathering to date, that he has conferred upon this occasion a sense of national importance by his coming amongst us. May I also take this opportunity, on the first public occasion that we in this movement had had, of expressing our appreciation directly to Mr. Lynch for the part which he played in ensuring the passage of the Credit Union Bill in 1966. We are very grateful for that as well. But this occasion of our National Convention is one in which we come together to talk, to discuss, to debate, and to argue, but more important for us, it is also an occasion on which we settle down and have a look at what we are doing, an occasion on which we recharge our batteries so to speak, in which we have a fresh look at the basic ideals which guide our movement. And if we look around the world today, and it must be the world that we look around, for it is a small place, we must all be very concerned at what we see. For we see unrest, we see youth revolting in all the Capitals of the western world, we see hunger and poverty, we see violence, and we see peaceful men being shot down in the streets. And all this causes uneasiness and unrest, and the world wonders why, and the world asks why? But really to my mind, the answer and the reason for it all is very simple, and the answer is as old as Christianity itself. The answer is simply that man's spiritual and material development have grown and developed apart, so we have nations in the world of great material strength, but they have developed materially at the expense of the spirit. And no less wrong have been the countries of the world that have concentrated too much on the spirit, to the neglect of the material. In short, the material nations of the world today thirst for the spirit, while the poor nations hunger for bread. And it is this clash that is brought together in the mass communications of the 20th century, where one sees the other clearly on the television screens that has brought this hunger and this thirst, that has brought this terrible unrest in the world, and which has brought a great rethinking, particularly among all the people who are concerned with a Christian way of solving the

problems of the world. This unrest has reflected itself in a thirsting quest, social concern, concern for hunger, for poverty, for suffering, and it has of course expressed itself in a search for a middle way, in a search for the realisation that man is body and soul. In short, the world is looking for a return to the loaves and fishes, for a return to the sharing of things in life, and the search for this return has created a new thinking among all people who are concerned, and the Christian Churches have not been behind.

This little country of ours which is often accused of being behind the times is well ahead in this concern. Because this new Christian approach, this fundamental change in our thinking, this feeling that the Christian must get up off his knees and go out into the market place, that he must be concerned not just on one day of the week, but he must be concerned with all the problems, with the man who hasn't got a job, the man who hasn't got a house, the man who is hungry. He must be concerned with all these things. This is the new Christianity that is emerging, and I think that our movement, starting at the beginning of the sixties, was an expression in its own small way of the realisation of this in Ireland. For surely the Credit Union movement is an ideal example of concern for man's body and his spirit, and in my view an example of this basic cry, and to me, the basic sentence of all the documents of Vatican 2: "That it is the function of the Christian in the world today to Christianise the social milieu, that is, to inspire a Christian spirit into the structure, the laws, and the mentalities of our society." In other words, we should create a nation and a people that reflect our basic Christian beliefs, a place where people help people, and this is after all the basic idealism of our movement. It is a Christian approach as well which has particular relevance to my native North, where people have been, strangely enough, divided by Christianity in a sense. But here we are finding the common ground, the things that unite people, the realisation that it is by our common sweat that we will really find and get to know each other. And our movement is crossing the barriers in that part of Ireland, and for that we are very delighted to be involved.

In short then, what I am really saying is that today our basic ideals of life and living must invade all that we have to do and say. And in a country like Ireland it must change our approach to many things, it must change our whole approach to patriotism. It is time

date?

in a sense that we stopped playing "the patriot game" in Ireland, and started to consider what patriotism is all about. There are many people who talk of Ireland, but very few who think about what Ireland really is, and there's a question! What is Ireland? Is Ireland a piece of rock? Is it a flag? Is it green fields? And the answer I know, since you are involved, will spring to your minds, Ireland is people, because people are the basic wealth of the world. Without people we have nothing, we have a jungle, and it is the problems of people, and the tackling of these problems that create a basic patriotic approach. And in the Ireland of today, the true patriotism is that which builds, which sweats, rather than bleeds, and which tries to build up a country, which concerns itself with all the problems, the total problems, social, economic, cultural, trying to create this society which reflects our basic ideals. And through the medium of our ideals of self help, we believe that we are making a contribution towards this type of society in Ireland today. Because we believe that, as I said, people are the real wealth of the world, and people have ability, and people have work to give, and if we can encourage them to involve this ability and to involve this work in the community, then something can be creat-

ed. And we approach it in our movement at individual level, by helping the individual with his personal problems. We approach it in the local community by bringing together and developing the local leadership and a concern for the local community. At national level, and in this gathering we have firm evidence and proof, we have gathered together from every corner of this little island, people who are involved at the grass roots, people who are directly concerned with the people of Ireland in trying to urge them to involve themselves and to create a basic foundation of self help in the country, which as an Taoiseach has urged us, we may be able to build upon at a later date, having created this spirit of self help. X

In short then, as I have said, our movement is an example of concern for body and soul, and my final word this evening to you, is that when you go back to the corners of the country, that we take up the call made by an Taoiseach this evening, to urge our people at the grass roots, at every level, to get involved in all the problems, to tackle the problems, to GIVE, for remember—it was Edmund Burke who said—"all that is required for the triumph of evil, is that good men do nothing." Thank you.



An Taoiseach, Mr. Jack Lynch, and Mr. John Hume, President of the Credit Union League of Ireland, photographed at the Annual Convention of the Credit Union League of Ireland in Cork.

[Photo by courtesy of "Cork Examiner"]