

**"Changes in my time"**  
**McGlinchey Summer School**  
**Clonmany, Co. Donegal**  
**Patrick Kavanagh Memorial Lecture**  
**Address by John Hume MP MEP**  
**Thursday June 26 2003**

Members of the Summer School Organising Committee,  
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for your invitation to be with you here at the McGlinchey Summer School and for granting me the honour of delivering the Patrick Kavanagh Memorial Lecture this June evening.

This is my third year attending this summer school and it has always proven to be a thoughtful, rooted and stimulating experience which I have always left provided with new thoughts and ideas about the topics discussed.

It is with great interest that I learned that the theme of this year's gathering was '*Changed times - the transformation of life and landscape*'. It has occurred to me that it is not just an honour to have been asked to speak with you this evening, but no small responsibility. In having been requested to speak on the topic of 'Changes in my time', I am aware that in some small way I will help to set the tone of the later contributions over the weekend. I certainly hope that I will not disappoint you to that end.



I am aware that while there are many old friends gathered here, so too there will be those who are visitors to Inishowen, to Clonmany or indeed who may be first time participants in the McGlinchey Summer School. In this context, it may be useful for me to make some initial observations about the relevance of the topic on which I have been asked to speak for this summer school and for this area.

Most of us will be familiar with the inspiration behind this summer school, the life, learning, observation and art of Charles McGlinchey, the humble weaver from Cluainte who provided so much knowledge of persons, place and tribe from his inherited knowledge and his own musing on life in this part of the world. In so many ways, the inspiration for this summer school was the change that he saw within *his* lifetime.

Of course, it is unlikely that we would ever have been gifted with the social history of this part of Inishowen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that Charles McGlinchey endowed unto us were it not for the insight, passion and perseverance of that local headmaster who served this community in Gaddyduff National School, Patrick Kavanagh.

Here was a man with an acute sense of both place and time, of past and future, and who recognised the importance of saving the wisdom held in the mind and uttering of a man such as Charles McGlinchey. Patrick Kavanagh appreciated the significant change which Charles McGlinchey had witnessed in terms of its impact on the ways of the people of Inishowen relative to the generations that had gone



beforehand. At the same time, he clearly foresaw the rapidly increasing pace of change in the wider world and had an astute sense of the impact that such developments would have on the agrarian, gaelic culture in which Charles McGlinchey was raised. Patrick Kavanagh helped to put a part of that oral tradition to paper, and we and future generations are and will become the beneficiaries of his vision.

We who gather here, at an Oireachtas such as this, help to maintain and honour the tradition of which Patrick Kavanagh was part. He was a man who clearly contemplated issues of place, people and events and in gathering here each summer this school does likewise. Indeed, it has struck me that the growth in and strength of summer schools of various hues across Ireland in recent years are in many ways both a reflection of the change which our country has witnessed and of the strength of our traditions and values which have endured such change in the past.

As our country, our continent and our world experience transformation, we are drawn together to reflect on these developments, on their potential effects and on how we might shape their progress into the future. In doing this, we remain true to the Irish traditions of strong community, social conscience and the discussion of ideas.

And, just as Charles McGlinchey once carried on the craft of a weaver like his forefathers, so this evening we might attempt to weave together the intricate patterns of tradition, politics, society and



landscape that have shaped my lifetime and the world around all of us.

As I stand here before you this evening in Clonmany, I am reminded of events earlier this week in which I was a participant. On Friday past, I had the privilege of sharing in the celebration of the conferral of an honorary doctorate upon the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

There will be no one present who would need an introduction to that great man and his achievements, not least presiding over the peaceful transition to democracy and the establishment of the new multi-racial South Africa which acts as a beacon to that whole continent, and to the world. In speaking to such a gathering of people, I felt compelled to draw certain parallels between the life history of Nelson Mandela and the history of the west of Ireland. He came to symbolise a movement for freedom and human rights which spread across the world, bringing irrefutable moral pressure on to a tyrannical and racist regime, a movement which of course included people in Ireland.

In so many ways it was apt that a figure who spearheaded that internationalist anti-apartheid movement should be honoured by a university on Ireland's western seaboard, a part of Europe which has contributed so much to the world through culture, Christianity, civilisation and the genius of her sons and daughters who left for other shores. It might be said that Nelson Mandela is an heir to St. Colmcille and St. Brendan the Navigator, all three were visionaries



who spread the message that drove their spirit across oceans in an endeavour to bring hope to others.

In many ways there are similarities between the life of Nelson Mandela and those of us who gather here in Clonmany for this summer school. Indeed, the fact that we assemble in a place like Clonmany was commended by Mandela when he said:

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered"

Of course, Mandela was referring to his birthplace of Mvezo (**as "UM-VE-ZO"**) in the Transkei. And of course Clonmany has seen change, just as I am sure has Mvezo. But while there has been little visible change of topographical landscape, each place has seen change in events, in history and in people. I suspect that Mandela was alluding to the seeming permanence of rural landscape, and its apparent contrast with the perpetual change in human experience, when he made that observation.

He highlights the value, in the midst of our lives in political, social, work, sport or other spheres of activity, of coming back to a place of solidity, of reference, of rudimentary beauty, of rugged honesty and of complexity. Through that complexity we can relate the change we see, experience and drive to a point of comfort and comprehension.

People are complex beings, with various desires, motivations, wants and expectations. Politics is about managing relationships between



people, and is as such a complex business field. Wherever there are people, from the nursery playground to the summit of state leaders, there is the potential for conflict where those relationships are not properly managed. The job of politicians, first and foremost, is to prevent conflict through the management of difference.

While this may at first seem an intractable task, there is one essential principle on which we must proceed. We must recognise that all conflict is about difference. The logical corollary to this is that we need to create a culture of respect for difference and diversity and establish institutions which recognise, respect and promote that difference. Through those institutions we can work in our common interests, breaking down mistrust and building confidence. As I have often said, we must spill our sweat and not our blood. This is the principle which has guided me throughout my political life.

The year of my birth, 1937, saw a significant historical event in Ireland, that being the drafting of *Bunreacht na h-Éireann*. That document was drawn up at a time when political culture in the South of Ireland was strongly moulded on the lines of the schism that had been created by the Civil War. Notwithstanding an active diplomatic engagement at international level that had begun with Ireland's accession to the League of Nations in 1930, the domestic polity was still intensely introverted and largely insular.

National political identity south of the border was largely dictated by two influencing factors, the aftermath of the colonial relationship with Britain and the role of the Catholic Church. Indeed, these factors



largely influenced the national identity generally, not just political affairs, and these influences were of course significant too north of the border for different reasons.

The failings of the Northern state have been well documented. The unionist forces in the North of Ireland had engineered a partition designed to best allow for the maintenance of Protestant domination, the 'Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'.

The majority had designed a system of government which provided for the exclusion of the nationalist minority from decision-making, where the human rights of nationalists were arbitrarily and regularly denied, where the culture and identity of the minority community was excluded, where there was no integrity in the electoral system due to gerrymandering and the absence of one person one vote, and where discrimination in investment, housing and employment was rife.

So here we had a situation where we had a country that had been artificially divided only 17 years earlier by the Government of Ireland Act, where the two emerging states reflected the fundamental premises of the political doctrines that guided their dominant numbers. On the one hand, we had a nationalist tradition with its irredentist perspective. That dictated that 'this land is ours, all of it, and no external power or internal group has the right to prevent us from controlling all of that land'. In the year of my birth, that doctrine was codified in the new constitution as Article 2 of *Bunreacht na h-Éireann*. This placed territory before people.

People not Territory

Aminet  
this is our land



On the other hand, we had a situation north of the border where the majority unionist community adopted a position of 'what we have we will hold by whatever means'. The majority community set about, from the very creation of the northern entity with the abolition of Proportional Representation in 1922, creating a state which would hold all power in the hands of the unionist bloc to the disadvantage and exclusion of the minority. *afu an nach*

It was inevitable that neither system could hold indefinitely. The parallels between the cultural and political struggles that raged in Ireland and in South Africa will be clear to us all. Change would come slowly, but it would come eventually. For those of us who would become involved in trying to bring about peaceful transformation in Ireland, the words of a seanfhocal are relevant:

*'Ní bhéinn rath ach mar a mbíonn an smacht'.*

***(There is no success without discipline)***

That perseverance, that belief that our analysis was right and that non-violence was the way to achieve it, did bring its reward.

The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 represented the exfoliation of an historical burden of conflict and inequality that had been weighed down upon the people of Ireland, North and South. The Good Friday Agreement is the contractual manifestation of the recognition of diversity in Ireland; within Northern Ireland, between North and South and indeed between these islands. It signifies a shift



from the past, no longer can Irish nationalism look to progress its aims by a simplistic notion of reclaiming 'the fourth green field', while unionism can no longer seek to hold control from nationalists within the North. Both traditions have agreed to work democratic institutions which respect difference and the multitude of identities in order to co-operate on matters of common concern.

*institutions  
work together  
nearly*

It is about shifting our energies from conflict to creating positive relationships that will foster trust and will be of mutual advantage. It places the people of Ireland above territory. After all, without its people, even Ireland is nothing but jungle.

Notwithstanding the current difficulties being faced with the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Executive, that shift has been made and a rubicon has been crossed. Unionism can not derecognise the right of nationalists to share power together with unionists in Northern Ireland nor can the need for institutions that reflect the all-Ireland aspirations of nationalists again be denied.

The Agreement is not open for renegotiation. It is incumbent now upon all parties and groups to uphold the democratic will of the people of Ireland, North and South, and fulfil their obligations so that that will is respected. The Republican Movement must put an end to all paramilitary activity as outlined in the Joint Declaration by the two governments. On the other hand, unionism must commit itself wholeheartedly and full to full participation in all the institutions set up under the Agreement. The people have mandated them to do no less.



Europe, too, has seen enormous change in that time. The Second World War began just two and a half years after my birth. It represented the final descent towards a nadir in human history, which would see killing on our continent on an unprecedented and industrial scale and would see the unleashing of the murderous potential of the atomic bomb. A war which saw the deaths of 40 million people.

That war represented the third major conflict between the peoples of France and Germany in the preceding century. At the end of that awful war, nobody would have believed that the future direction of Europe would change to such a degree that over half a century later, there would not have been another such conflict between two historic enemies.

That is the basis of the European Union. The process of European Integration sought to bring an end to conflict on our continent by the creation of common institutions through which we could work on areas of common interest. Those institutions, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Commission, are the embodiment of that spirit of integration which has seen unprecedented prosperity

*Example of Europe Best in hist of world*

The current phase of development of the European Union is a particularly exciting and challenging one. The process of enlargement into central and eastern Europe that has begun represents a natural and proper fulfilment of the European vision. For



the greatest part of my life, Europe has been artificially divided. This will be brought to its deserved end when the accession states join the Union in 2004. They can then take their place again at the heart of the European family.

post national world | nation state

It is worth considering, at this point, the importance of the European Union to Ireland. Unfortunately, too many people in Ireland as a whole have for too long viewed the European Union as something of a 'cash cow'. This was to some extent realised during the debate on the Nice Treaty referendum, when some questioned the usefulness of continuing and increasing engagement with Europe on the basis that financial transfers would only decrease with enlargement. This is very much to miss the point.

It is true that the European Union has been financially beneficial to Ireland, both North and South. However, while they have been very welcome and important, direct financial transfers such as through the structural funds, the regional development funds and indeed our own PEACE monies here in the north of the island have only represented one aspect of that benefit. As important, for example, has been the support given to agriculture under the Common Agricultural Policy for farmers and rural communities throughout our island.

Critically important, also, has been membership of the largest single market in the world, the Single European Market. This has been particularly important in attracting non-European investors to Ireland. It is one of the reasons we have been able to attract foreign investment to Derry in the past, for example, and it is very doubtful if



the 'Celtic Tiger' phenomenon would ever have occurred without access to that huge market. That market is set to increase to one of over 500 million people following enlargement.

Equally important dividends have derived from EU membership in areas other than economics. Membership of the EU has been vital in strengthening protection for workers' rights, for women and for eliminating other forms of discrimination. Our environment is cleaner and safer due to the high standards expected under European safeguards. Ireland as a whole is more confident and outward looking, and we have discarded much of the post-colonial inferiority which affected Irish society in the earlier part of the last century. Many of our young people speak more than one language, and consider themselves as much at ease in Barcelona or Budapest as in Dublin or Derry.

Just as the end of the Second World War saw the start of a process of European Integration designed to end war on this continent, that process was reflected on a global level by the establishment of the United Nations. While the United Nations was and remains a very different type of organisation to even the initial European Economic Community set up by the Treaty of Rome, it remains the case that the UN was, like the EEC, set up with a view to eliminating violent conflict based upon the principles of international law.

Unfortunately, for much of its existence the United Nations has been subject to the effects of a battle for global geopolitical and ideological domination which we came to refer to as the Cold War.



With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, many had hoped that the United Nations would develop a role as guardian of international law and promoter of peace in a more multi-polar world.

Regardless of the inadequacies, progress had been made to this end under the US presidency of Bill Clinton, a man who was a good friend to Ireland. Unfortunately, much of the good work done during the previous decade has been undermined, such as the refusal of the United States administration to honour the Kyoto protocol on controlling climate change (***note - the Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement signed in Japan in 1998 to reduce air pollution so that global warming can be reduced - the George W. Bush administration has decided not to honour that agreement which Clinton signed - the US is the world's largest producer of air pollution***).

More recently, we have seen the usurpation of international law with the invasion of Iraq by the United States and the UK without United Nations approval. When one considers these developments alongside the failure of the United States to give proper status to prisoners captured during the war in Afghanistan, the moral weight of the international community is undermined (***note - these prisoners are being held by the US military at their Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba - they are not being afforded due process either as criminals or prisoners of war - this is against the Geneva convention - essentially the same as indefinite internment without trial***).



At a time when, for example, international pressure is mounting on the Burmese military regime to release Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from imprisonment, such failings on the part of major international powers are most unhelpful. This moral ambivalence does nothing either to help in the international campaign for democracy and the guaranteeing of human rights in Zimbabwe.

I have spoken of the importance of co-operation in the political field within these islands, within Europe and at a global level. Such co-operation is so important because we are living in the middle of the greatest transformation in the history of the world, the global technological, transport and telecommunications revolution.

The world is a smaller place now than it has ever been. These advances put us in a stronger position than anyone in history to shape the future of that world. Our aim should be to build a world of peace and justice, where there is no more conflict. Our method should be the sending the philosophy of conflict resolution of the European Union.

We understand that Charles McGlinchey, inspiration for this summer school, only twice left this district in his entire lifetime, once to work a season as an agricultural labourer in the north of England and once to attend the 1932 Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. So much has changed.

Following the massive technological and economic changes that have occurred during my lifetime, it is not unusual for people from



the Northwest of Ireland to have visited other continents, nevermind other counties within these islands.

This transformation has fundamentally altered the way that society operates, and politics has had to and must continue to adopt to this in order to remain relevant and to both prevent and resolve problems which society may face arising out of this new social and economic order.

That need to address problems across boundaries is apparent in many areas and on many levels. The jobs crisis which is currently affecting the Northwest, with our region for example having seen massive job losses at UNIFI and at Desmonds, demands an integrated response from government and statutory agencies on both sides of the border which we are pursuing.

The Foot & Mouth crisis, so well handled by Bríd Rodgers as Northern Minister for Agriculture, demonstrated the effectiveness of an all-island approach to animal welfare. Chernobyl and the massive industrial pollution that developed in the former eastern bloc convinced Europe of the need for transnational environmental safeguards to protect our air and land environments.

The current injustice in world trade, where developing countries are not allowed fair access to first world markets, has convinced many of the need for a global response to this problem through the international trade frameworks and related governmental and commercial initiatives.



In very many ways, the societal changes that I have witnessed are similar in Derry and Dijon, and indeed largely the same in Clonmany as in Claudy. We have witnessed a shift from a predominantly agrarian and agricultural economy in Ireland to one that is predominantly industrial, most recently with the development of knowledge based industry such as we can see on Derry's Buncrana Road or Greater Dublin's Liffey Valley.

Not unrelated to that has been the shift from education for the privileged few to a system of education for the masses. I myself was amongst those who sat the '11 + ' in its first year, and so many of the opportunities that have been given to me would not have come my way were it not for that event.

The fact that our young people are now educated almost universally at second level and that a significant majority of them have further or higher education or high levels of manual craft training allows us to attract knowledge based industry. Recent events have shown that we must use our brains as much as our brawn if we are to create, attract and secure employment for our people.

A priority for all of us, whether we live north or south of the border, is that we should never again allow such a tragic drain of our best resource, our people, as occurred in the past through forced emigration from our island. At the same time, the choice must not be one of 'go abroad or live in Dublin or Belfast'. Young people from this region, or from elsewhere, must have the opportunity to live here



in the Northwest and to fulfil their potential here in this part of Ireland.

This is an ongoing concern of many here and it must be addressed by government, north and south. I would draw attention to the fact that Derry and Letterkenny are both designated as growth centres in the Republic of Ireland's National Spatial Strategy and in Northern Ireland's Regional Development Strategy. That in itself represents progress in that the need for balanced regional development to rectify decades of neglect and under-investment has been recognised. Now these plans must be met with action.

It is certainly arguable that the rate of social change in Ireland is now exponential, and the change that has been witnessed both North and South has been unprecedented. For many, two words come to mind when one thinks of Ireland in the 1990s: 'Celtic Tiger'. While it was essentially a southern, or arguably a south-eastern phenomenon, its effects were undoubtedly felt in Northern Ireland.

One often overlooked fact is that the economic growth pattern that became known as the 'Celtic Tiger' coincided with the period of economic readjustment on the island that followed the announcement of the ceasefires. While the rate of growth in the North has not been as impressive as has been witnessed in the South, it remains the case that economic growth has increased significantly and that Northern Ireland has benefited both from the ceasefires and from the South's economic boom.



One unfortunate consequence of the economic growth of the past decade has been an increase in focus on the materialistic in life to the neglect of other aspects. Family life has too often suffered as parents focus on work to the detriment of enjoying their families. In some instances there has also been a lessening of community spirit. Perhaps most disappointingly has been the failure to lift every boat on the rising tide, as poverty and social exclusion is still all too common on both sides of the border.

Our society has also had to face a new challenge, that of reconciling itself with becoming multi-cultural in character. It is indisputable that the economic boom attracted people to Ireland who, for various reasons, would not have chosen to come to Ireland previously, not least because of 'The Troubles'. Irish people for centuries have been forced to leave these shores, for both reasons of economic desperation and of political and religious persecution. We hold in our folk memory a deep sense of injustice, persecution and suffering, particularly on our western seaboard.

It is all the more pressing, for these reasons, that we should welcome those who come here to seek refuge or asylum. Wherever one looks in the world, economics alone tell us that those who immigrate into a country add much more to it than they receive. Besides, those who seek shelter here add a richness and diversity to our country which we should all embrace. The scourge of racism, which has raised its ugly head, should be rejected by all Irish people who have suffered so much at the bigotry of others. Racism is the antithesis of the values of true republicanism and equality for which we should all stand.



I would like to make two observations now, at the risk of neglecting to mention other worthwhile initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Executive's focus on targeting social need while it was in office. The first of these is an institution which, like both the European ideal and the United Nations, was a product of the imagination of the post-war period. That is the National Health Service.

Possibly more than any other single governmental initiative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that had an enormous effect on the lives of people right across the social spectrum in the North. Nationalists and unionists benefited, the impoverished as well as the wealthy. Particularly during that period when nationalists in the North experienced widespread abject poverty, it was a source of considerable assistance and comfort.

Regardless of whatever increase in materialism that the past decades have witnessed, and the imperfections in the current service, there certainly remains in the North an almost universal support for the National Health Service as an expression of common interest and social justice.

The second matter that I would like to consider is in fact the proceedings of this current week. I am one of those who believes that the hosting of the Special Olympics World Games represents a defining moment for contemporary Ireland. I was present at the opening ceremony in Croke Park, and nobody could fail to have



been impressed and inspired both by the professionalism of the organisation or the passion of the participants.

However, the real story of the Games has not been the awe of VIPs at an opening ceremony, but the sense of shared purpose between North and South, the renewal of community spirit in communities across Ireland and the exchange of warmth and emotion between all involved, volunteers, hosts, visitors and athletes alike.

We may look back on these days as a time when not only did Ireland say goodbye to the Celtic Tiger, but Ireland reclaimed some of those best traditions and values, of generosity, of compassion and of belief in the primacy of the human spirit which were sometimes washed out to sea during the days of the boom.

I have spoken already of the relevance of a gathering such as this, in a place such as Clonmany, as a useful and rooted place to take stock of the past, to consider the present and to plan for the future. I am drawn now to think of the contrast between the temporal and the permanent, the physical and the cultural elements of our landscape.

While we gather here, we may be forgiven for thinking that nothing has changed of the landscape of this place, that any change brought about has been forged by people and the paths they take in their lives, in this village, or beyond. It may be easy to forget that, while we come here for a fulcrum, a reference point and a sense of place, the landscape itself is in a state of greater change than any other force we know. I am reminded of the words of Heraclitus, who said;



*"You can never step into the same river,  
for new waters are always flowing over you".*

In some way, these words describe the very essence of change. The force of change in nature is permanent, and is greater than the change enacted upon it by humankind. Long after each of us is gone, the Foyle will still flow into the Atlantic, Lough Swilly will crash against Dunaff Head and Inishowen will protrude proudly into the ocean. All the while changing in motion, form and shape and yet few of these effects so stark as to merit the attention of the human eye.

Perhaps here I might make one point about change. My lifetime has seen momentous events; the Second World War, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the end of the Cold War, the defeat of state racism in South Africa and the fear of the destabilising of the civilian world after September 11<sup>th</sup>. But behind each of these events lay myriad smaller efforts and actions, where people go about their lives and improve those of others in little ways.

Our own peace process in Ireland was not alone about the force of political argument and negotiations, it was and continues to be about individuals and communities reaching out the hand of friendship and co-operation with others and working together. The incremental change demonstrated by the force of argument and of politics, like that of the river, is a more determined, certain and lasting force than the revolutionary charge of the sword.



In many ways this is the legacy of Charles McGlinchey, and was the offspring of Patrick Kavanagh. In being gathered here we recognise the force of that incremental, determined and irrefutable change.

Perhaps I could share with you one thought before I conclude. We gather here in part to celebrate the gift bestowed upon us all by Charles McGlinchey and Patrick Kavanagh that we call 'The last of the name'. If I might borrow a metaphor that was used in relation to the Good Friday Agreement, McGlinchey was the architect, but Kavanagh was the engineer. Without either the edifice would never have been constructed. Just as the change which called them to forge such a work was complex and multi-faceted, so too was their response to it.

Thank you again for inviting me here to speak with you this evening. I hope you find the rest of the school fruitful, insightful and enjoyable. Having spent some time considering the 'Changes in my time', I may share with you one thought about how they may be made of some use as you prepare to continue with the remainder of the summer school, as put by John F. Kennedy:

*"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."*

When we look to the past we must always be mindful to learn for the future.

Thank you.