

ni APL RHAE 01.05.54
1

N.I. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY DINNER

18 October 1990 : Culloden Hotel, Co Down

N.B. Embargo : 18 October 1990 - 9.30 p.m.

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF THE MOST REVEREND DR ROBIN EAMES, ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH AND PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND.

"When business men ask me 'What can I do to help the Province to a more peaceful future' I usually reply in two ways.

First, make your business as successful as you can. This is not just a matter of employment for the greatest number of people. It has as much to say about public confidence, public stability and public hope for the future. A successful and thriving business economy can be and must be the most concrete basis for public confidence. That confidence will thrive on healthy commercial investment and competition. I cannot speak too highly in that connection of the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to provide that stability over the past few years. Ordinary people are aware of trends in business fortunes and wherever I go in the world people want to know about community relations - but they also want to know how stable business activity can be here in the face of all our difficulties. There is a confidence in healthy competition. Let us be honest about it - the future welfare of Northern Ireland depends on so many inter-acting forces and interests. High on that list must remain the stability that comes from business and commerce in healthy competition.

Second, I wonder how conscious the business community is of the many voluntary agencies which are striving to bring their own degree of stability to the Province? Support financial and

/2...

otherwise for the voluntary sector is essential for the future. Training schemes for young people, community projects for recreation and part-time courses in deprived areas and the whole field of education deserves the support of commerce. When the business community is asked for support through such means as sponsorship I appeal for a sympathetic understanding and for what support it can give.

When future historians take a long hard look at the events in Northern Ireland of the past twenty years or so I am convinced that the resilience, faith and indeed courage of the business community will rank high on their list of achievements of worth. I cannot speak too highly of the evidence I have seen of the ability of our business community not only to survive but to prosper in the face of difficulties which are so much more pronounced than in other parts of the United Kingdom. The coming of 1992 will bring new pressures - but also new opportunities. Are we taking those conditions as seriously as we ought?

May I refer to one aspect of national interest in commercial and business life which I believe from time to time raises issues of public confidence and indeed, public morality. Occasionally the national media conveys to the general public details of what the press ususally terms "public scandal" in business dealings.

No one can underestimate the effect on public confidence or stability of so called scandals in places of high business. The morality of commerce and the morality of business dealing is its own culture picture. Much of that is a matter for the business community itself. I can only comment that whether the business community realises it or not when ordinary people learn of excessive greed, excessive malpractice or underhand dealing at high level of industry or commerce they become cynical about those who

3.

use power for its own ends. As a society Britain needs to take a long hard look at what degrees of morality it believes it should see in the public and private sectors of commerce. Business success and competition is one thing. But to produce a philosophy of commercial dealing where the ultimate criteria depends on "not being found out" - then I believe society needs to ask itself very serious questions indeed.