

Summary and Papers  
of  
**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR**  
on the theme  
**LOCAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Organised by

**MUINTIR NA TIRE**

Ireland's National Community Development Organisation

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Edited by Thomas Roseingrave

*This Report is dedicated to the late Dr. Tom Walsh*

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## **PREFACE**

Our sincere thanks are due to all the contributors to the Golden Jubilee International Seminar. Many of them came from afar from the United States, Britain and the Continent of Europe. All gave us of their invaluable experience and expertise.

They challenged in many ways our basic assumptions on the process of Community Development and in the many discussions we could test our own methods and structures against their experience gained elsewhere and in different circumstances. We had much to learn from them; they too had the opportunity to learn from Muintir's experience, especially as it had to develop in Ireland against an undue and highly centralised system of national administration.

When the papers and discussions are analysed what emerges as the core elements of the Seminar are the importance of the assertion of the rights of the human person to self-development and the essential and strategic role of the local community or neighbourhood in building the edifice of the nation's political, economic and social structures and systems.

Canon Hayes would have agreed with those conclusions; they were at the heart of the philosophy which inspired him to found Muintir na Tire.

Tomas Roseingrave

## **OFFICIAL OPENING OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR BY**

Most Rev. Thomas Morris, D.D., Archbishop of Cashel and Emly

I am happy to be with you. I must confess it is the first time in my life that I have been at a gathering of Muintir na Tire, where I only know a handful of the people there, and when each person that I met is becoming more distinguished than another.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to perform an official opening like this and it is also for me something of a poignant occasion. Let me tell you something that might form a footnote to your records since so many of you are specialists of one kind or another.

On Sunday, March 2nd, 1958, four people had lunch in a Limerick Hotel Patrick J. Meghen, Limerick Co. Manager, Frank Lyddy, the Honorary National Secretary of Muintir na Tire, an Irishman resident in America, Monsignor John O'Grady of Washington, D.C., and myself. I am the survivor. By a curious coincidence, tomorrow, please God, I hope to officiate at the wedding of Frank Lyddy's youngest daughter, so time marches on. So far as I am aware, that was the first occasion on which Community Development was mentioned and discussed by name in Ireland.

It came about in a curious way. Mgr. O'Grady, Secretary-Coordinator of Catholic Charities in the United States, who was a Clare man and had retained a lot of his interest in the old country, was telling us of a project that Catholic Charities were sponsoring at that particular time. This involved the training some missionaries were receiving in a new social process called 'Community Development'. The missionaries were to work in Ghana where community spirit was strong and where development, health education and general education could make progress through being harnessed to the community spirit.

It was a strange experience for the three of us. We had worked with John Canon Hayes for many years, had shared his vision and tried to promote modest parish embodiments of that vision. The methods were important, we knew, but the motivation came first: 'community spirit', 'neighbourliness', 'muinteras'.

But was he on to something real? This is a conviction that has grown with me over the years the realism, the common sense, the soundness of that vision of Canon Hayes. We met Social Scientists from abroad later on and they authenticated the work of Muintir na Tire as Community Development. In 1962, we took part in the work of a European Study Group in Gormanston College, Co Meath on the theme: 'Organising Resources for Community Development'. The poignancy of which I spoke arose from the fact that Canon Hayes had died before he could have savoured this vindication of his life's work.

I welcome this seminar on the theme "Local Employment Initiatives through Community Development". Indeed, we have sore need of local employment initiatives, sorer need of the motivation of that dynamic priest who loved his God and his neighbours so earnestly. I have pleasure in declaring this Seminar to have begun. Gur a mile maith agat.

## **ADDRESS OF WELCOME**

From

Michael J. Lynch, National President of Muintir na Tire

My pleasant duty is to welcome you all here on behalf of Muintir na Tire. I know we are dealing with a very serious subject but really I hope you are all going to enjoy your stay amongst us in the heartland of Tipperary.

The objectives of the Seminar are to examine the role and function of local communities in the creation of employment opportunities through the process of Community Development. We in Muintir na Tire decided that on this, our Golden Jubilee year, we would have to do something special - and this is it - our Seminar on job creation. We will look at the role of communities and the role of Community Development in the whole process.

You have a tremendous job in front of you in the next few days and I hope that at the end of it we will be able to say yes – these are the guidelines we will be able to work through in the future.

We have many problems here in Ireland in regard to the process of Community Development at local level. I quote from a recent O.E.C.D. Report: 'The sense of co-operation in small Irish communities is one of the most favourable features of Irish culture and should be built upon to develop policies of innovation and enterprise'. I should also add that the report goes on to say that Ireland's economy and State apparatus is over centralised and that there should be a policy of decentralisation involving local communities and authorities in the development process. Those quotes are extremely interesting in the context of this Seminar.

Again, Ladies and Gentlemen, may you have a very successful Seminar, may you really enjoy your stay in Dundrum House and God bless you and your work.