

18/10/2017

## **Opening Remarks at the screening of “Hume in America” at the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive**

Good evening everyone, thank you for coming this evening,

My name is Helena Nolan and I am the new Ambassador of Ireland here in Belgium. I'm delighted to be co-hosting this documentary film screening, about the historic achievements of John Hume, together with our friends and colleagues in the Northern Ireland Executive Office here in Brussels. We have an excellent working relationship with Andrew and his team, including most recently collaborating on the wonderful Tradfest initiated by my predecessor, which I am sure many of you enjoyed.

Andrew was one of the first people I met here on my arrival and I look forward to continuing to work together in a positive spirit of cooperation. Indeed, when I first became aware of the opportunity to screen the film here, following its very successful premiers in America and in Ireland this summer, it seemed to me to be an ideal project on which we should collaborate with Andrew and his team.

We are especially grateful to him for allowing us to move the venue from our offices to his, given the wonderfully high level of interest in the film. We were actually over-subscribed by more than 100% which is a clear indication of the level of interest in John Hume's professional achievements and the respect and gratitude which his fundamental role in the peace process has generated. I hope that it may be possible to have a further screening of this film to meet the demand that is clearly there.

I am delighted that Jill Craig from Hume Brophy here in Brussels is able to join us here this evening, on behalf of John's son. Politics involves a huge personal

commitment and this often also involves a great deal of family commitment and sacrifice. There is no doubt that John's wife and children have made their own important contribution to peace, in sharing their husband and father with Ireland and the world and it seems only fitting that we should recognise this fact. Indeed, it is all too easy to take success and the process that led to that success, for granted, once success has been achieved. To have a peace process required vision, it required leadership to drive that vision and it required determination and political and personal selflessness in order to deliver it. This new documentary gives us the opportunity to hear directly from those involved how John Hume exemplifies these essential characteristics. It is also an opportunity for the younger generation to learn more about the foundations of the peace process and John's key role at its centre.

Before he was a politician, John was a teacher and what he teaches us is that there is nothing more important on the Ireland of Ireland than peace; from that all else flows – security, prosperity and hope for the future generations. John had the audacity to imagine that peaceful future and the courage to take the first step. His life's work and this film are a reminder to us all of what can be achieved through working together with honesty and integrity, overcoming division to move towards reconciliation, with important international cooperation and support.

Ireland's peace process benefited hugely from the support of Irish America, which is the main focus of this film. But as the film will show, John Hume was also an MEP and indeed the peace process and the border region has been the beneficiary of very significant support from the European Union, both financially and politically, and is an achievement of which the EU can be rightly proud. Since

arriving here in Belgium, I have been struck by the depth of the understanding of this amongst my Belgian and other European colleagues.

The Director of this film has spoken about “the redemptive power of politics and personal courage to overcome hatred and division”. Peace, for all of the people on the island of Ireland, is something that all of us here want to protect and something that we know must never be risked or taken for granted. That is the best and most fitting tribute to John Hume and to his life’s work. I hope that you all enjoy the film.