

NATIONAL WELSH—AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Incorporated Washington D.C., 1980

Opening Address

P. Howard Patrick Ph.D., Founder

I would first like to begin on a personal note. Eleven years ago when I was on a three—month visit to Princeton University on a Welsh Arts Council bursary and I was informed by the University that I had been awarded a four—year Ph.D. scholarship, I vowed to do my utmost to make scholarship programs between the United States and Wales a more common occurrence. Five years ago, in the lounge of this hotel, I talked to Aneurin Thomas, Director of the Welsh Arts Council, who is with us today, in abstract terms about a Welsh- American Foundation. I did not expect that abstract hope to turn into concrete reality until I was in my sixties. I thank you all for your help in bringing about the creation of the National Welsh—American Foundation (NAAF) some thirty years sooner than I dreamed.

Now to the NAAF. It would be interesting to speculate Why the birth of the NAAF has taken over 800 years since Prince Madoc Ap Owain Gwynedd first stepped on the shores of this country, but we're not here for a discussion of past Welsh-American activities but to formulate criteria to help develop activities for the future. At least the 800—year delay provides us with an incentive to make up for lost time.

But what is it that has lead to the birth of the NAAF in 1980? Over the last nine months or so of the NAAF's creation three facets of the American scene have coalesced: the Common Dream; the Roots phenomena; and the Washington factor.

Because you are all here today is evidence of the Common Dream that an NAAF-type organization should be in existence to meet the needs and potential of the Welsh—American community. In the past these demands have lead to the organization of local St. David's Welsh-American Societies; the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association, which last year celebrated its 50th Anniversary; Welsh—American newspapers, the latest being Ninnau; and more recently the Welsh—language courses which seem to be spawning over this country like mushrooms. Obviously the NAAF is not intended to be a competitor of any of these organizations, but rather as a complement. How the NAAF will operate in this complementary role is the job of us as Directors of the NAAF to determine.

The second facet, the Roots phenomena, is a peculiar feature of the American scene at this time. The celebration in 1976 of the 200th birthday of the United States and especially the preparations leading up to it, gave the American people an inner confidence to look behind the immigrant "melting pot" image of this country and to seek out and trace ancestral and ethnic roots without in any way demeaning their sense of American citizenship. Capitalizing on this phenomena at this time will hopefully provide enough momentum to carry the NAAF through the years to come even if the national mood should swing the other way.

The final facet, the Washington factor, is a mixture of large-scale social influences and the resolve of some of the people living in this area. The large—scale social influence is that because of government largesse the people in the United States are forced to look more and more to Washington - while they're looking, hopefully they'll also notice the NAAF and support it as you. Of the people in the Washington

area who have had a major influence in the creation of the NWF two of them John (Jack) K. Evans and Hywel M. Davies must be mentioned at this time. Jack Evans, President of the Washington St. David's Society 1977 — 1979 is perhaps one of the most energetic men that I know. Prior to his presidency the Society had existed as an informal, unincorporated association, but Jack is a promoter and he promoted the incorporation of the Society (which was accomplished in March 1978) and the seeking of the Society's tax—exempt status (which was achieved in January 1980). In the plans for the incorporation of the Society one of the features was a special Charitable and Educational Trust, but because of possible I.R.S. problems it was decided that if such a trust were to exist it should be a separate entity, and the proposed trust was dropped from the newly incorporated Society. While Jack was promoting, Hywel Davies, present President of the Washington St. David's Society, was continuously preparing and filing all the relevant forms for the incorporation and the application for tax—exempt status.

I became involved in the charitable endeavours of these two men in June 1979. At that time I was a second-year law student and Jack paid me to research the legal and tax issues involved in setting up the charitable trust that had been dropped from the Society. After a month of part-time research I wrote a preliminary report for him; at least I thought it was for him. When I began to discuss that report with Jack, I saw a strange glint in his eye and I realized that I'd been tricked, the report was not for him but for me! Jack is a great believer in "seed" money, he'd planted the seed in me for that trust and it was up to my conscience whether to cultivate it or leave it fallow. My conscience won and in July and August of 1979, now at my own expense, I carried on my research.

Finally, in September 1979 I drafted the first set of Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for a proposed National Welsh—American Foundation and I started seeking support from people throughout the United States. I decided not to Seek support from Wales at that time until there was enough demonstrated support from people on this side of the Atlantic.

So much for how the NWF came into existence. Now that it exists, what can the NWF provide? As I stated in a previous communication to everyone I see three major purposes: co-ordination and continuity, professional resources, and the tax economics of charitable giving. I will not discuss the professional resources and tax purposes at this time since they both fit more into the immediately following presentation of Thomas Roha, Esq., of Williams, Myers and Quiggle, the NWF's counsel. The co—ordination and continuity purpose, though, needs some elaboration.

Initially, I only perceived the co-ordination and continuity purpose to be limited within the United States. However, in creating the NWF I have already experienced how this functions at the international level, between ' the United States and Wales at least, as well. Last December, when I was wondering if the time was ripe to start asking people in Wales, I received a Christmas card from a person in Wales who I was keeping posted on the events over this side. That card came from Sir William Crawshay and at the bottom it stated:

"I note that there will be empty coffers for initial expenses, but that does not deter me from coming to Washington if I can be of any service."

That initiative, without any request from me, gave a boost to my morale that no words can describe. I hope that someday the NWF can be a similar morale- booster to people and organizations in the United States and Wales.

As I stated in a letter to the Directors who have come over from Wales their presence here today is invaluable for what they can bring from and take back to Wales. Welsh-Americans tend to have a time—softened, nostalgic picture of the Wales of their ancestors — they can bring the realities of Wales today (the "grimmer" side as Sir Julian Hodge called it in one of his speeches). Similarly, many Welsh people still retain the pre-inflation image of the wealth of Americans — they can take back to Wales a realistic picture of the funding potential of the NAAF. This latter point is very important so as to minimize the possibility of credibility problems. Funds from the NAAF will not parallel the Marshall Plan, but every dollar that does get over to Wales, will be a dollar more than if the NAAF was not in existence.

Finally I would like to close with a phrase that President Carter used in one of his recent speeches:

“It is not what you have that is important, but what you do.”

At the moment the NAAF, like most of the Welsh immigrants to this country, has little material wealth, but it can do much to nurture and strengthen the spirit of Welsh—American endeavour.