



The Thomas More Society of America

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

4/86

We Have A Dream...

The Board of Directors has dreamed for several years of a scholarship fund by which to achieve its primary goal, to make Sir Thomas More and his ideals widely known. In 1984 Ralph Brown, one of our Directors, drew up a plan to translate the dream into reality by the end of 1986. His plan calls for leadership from those who serve as directors and participation by a majority of the membership.

The purpose of this article is to discuss our Society's primary goal, undertaking the work of the Scholarship Fund, and some of the hurdles to be overcome in order to succeed. We plan to publish several articles on the progress of the Scholarship Fund in the President's Report. We count on the full support and interest of our members as we go forward. In succeeding issues we will comment on the many ways members can give their support.

What inspired the Society to undertake such an ambitious project? A Scholarship Fund involves managing financial contributions, planning with school principals and teachers, running an essay contest for students, arranging for the judging and awarding processes and many other details. Why not be satisfied with having

a program of speakers and conferences on "the man for all seasons"?

Reasons for the Society's Thomas More commitment fall into three categories: First, love of an extraordinary lay person who inspires action as well as reflection; second, a mature desire to make his heroic example known; and, third, concern about the apparent vacuum of teaching of moral values in many American schools because of fear of controversy.

Involving high school students in a contest about More provides a stimulus for learning about his life and times, his intelligent wit, humor, balance and compassion as well as his vision of right and wrong. In the Board's judgment this project is worthy of the time and effort of members of a group that meets in Sir Thomas' name. In view of the eroding influence of our culture's moral relativism and moral ambiguity the Scholarship Fund is a small but shining contribution to lasting influence of moral value, even moral heroism.

(Responses to this article are welcome. Please direct them to the attention of Ralph Brown. Thank you.)

Irish Ambassador

On December 6, 1985 the Thomas More Society sponsored a luncheon at the Cosmos Club with the Ambassador of Ireland, His Excellency Padraic MacKernan. He explained the significance of the Anglo-Irish agreement signed in November in Northern Ireland. The agreement is an attempt to assuage the basic problem of human rights violations by applying diplomatic and legal supports.

One concrete result of the agreement is an inter-governmental conference and permanent secretariat in Belfast. Both Britain and Ireland intend to generate employment through economic assistance to areas affected by fighting in Northern Ireland and also in the Republic. Both governments hope that more jobs, better roads, and improved communications facilities will create a better climate for political dialogue.

The Ambassador emphasized that Ireland has been heartened by the economic and political support of the United States. The Irish government pledge themselves to work toward making this fragile agreement a long-term success.

Renaissance Scholar

On February 26 at the Cosmos Club, Dr. O.B. Hardison spoke to a group of Society members on "Humanism and Its Discontents". Dr. Hardison, an expert in Renaissance literature and former head of the Folger Library, discussed the achievements of three well-known Renaissance humanists, Petrarch, Erasmus and Thomas More. He showed how the humanist movement began with Petrarch and excitement over the rediscovery of the classics. The ancient classics had much to

offer Christianity. By the Sixteenth Century, humanists could be divided into two categories: Those who sought knowledge and those who sought power. Thomas More in **Utopia** satirized those who like the trappings of power but will not accept its responsibilities. This trait of human nature is still with us. Following his excellent, witty lecture, the group enjoyed a reception and buffet supper.

Next Event

On Tuesday, May 20 and Wednesday, May 21, The Thomas More Society and the C.S. Lewis Institute of Arlington will co-sponsor an evening course on "The Theology of C.S. Lewis' **Chronicles of Narnia**". The lectures will be given by Father Owen Bennett O.F.M., Conv., who some will remember gave an excellent presentation last year on "Thomas More and Communism". The C.S. Lewis lectures will summarize the highlights of a course he has taught for several years to the Franciscan seminarians in Rensselaer, New York. The talks will be given in Hess Auditorium of Our Lady of Victory Parish, 4835 MacArthur Blvd., Washington, D.C. beginning at 7:30 p.m. A registration form is enclosed. Please send checks and registration forms to the C.S. Lewis Institute. Extra registration forms are also available from Sarah MacLeod at 457-0260.

For those who would like to prepare for the talks, Father Bennett has made some recommendations. Of the seven **Chronicles of Narnia**, the first, the sixth and the seventh would be directly related to his presentation. The titles are, **The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe**,

The Magician's Nephew, and The Last Battle, respectively. They are available individually or in a set published by Collier Books, a division of Macmillan, 1978.

Two commentaries on Lewis he will refer to are: **Past Watchful Dragons** by Walter Hooper, Collier Books, 1979 (paperback) and **The Longing for a Form** edited by Peter J. Schakel, Kent State University Press, 1977 (hardcover). If you have a little time he suggests the book by Walter Hooper.

ATTENTION, PLEASE

Alarm is being sounded on Capitol Hill at the swarm of historic monuments proposed for the Capital City. A bill has been introduced in the House to limit commemorative works within the National Capital Region. Hearings are being held in the Senate. The D.C. Government has a task force at work on the issue.

The controversy should interest members of the Thomas More Society of America in their discussions of a possible monument for More. Currently, there are 111 monuments in D.C., 12 of which were proposed this year. (Further information available from Mr. Crumlish upon request.)