

## THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Presented by Mrs A. T. Richards, J.P., at the  
Seventy-second Dominion Convention,  
Christchurch, 1959

Dear Co-workers,

As we look back over the past year we praise God, our heavenly Father, for the work that has been achieved. It is gratifying to be able to say, numerically, we are stronger since we last met in this manner, most Unions have made steady progress.

At this juncture I wish to express a big thank you to those who have had faith to hold the fort against such odds and discouragement.

We are made to realise more than ever the tremendous responsibility which we have been called to face, and face we must, with all our strength. This year has been a most interesting and eventful experience.

The achievements of yesterday are nothing in comparison with the challenge of tomorrow. In the kind of a world in which we live, with its frustrations, bewilderment, hatred and disillusionment, there must also be lifted the challenge of something greater than we have today.

Looking back over the 72 years of this organisation we can see many things that have been accomplished, but there is much yet to be done.

We need to pray that God will direct our hearts, thoughts and actions, that we may prove helpful to all who come within our influence. Two great evils confront us today; with a population of 2½ million, the drink bill has reached the appalling figure of £27,252,408, somewhere in the vicinity of £12/12/0 per capita, and an increase in gambling to £95,000,000 which must bring distress to many homes and divert money into unproductive channels. Let us seek to secure the co-operation of religious leaders in petitioning the Government to eliminate lotteries and T.A.B.

Just think for a moment, friends, what great youth movements could be fostered with this tremendous amount of money; let us come down to mother earth and do some really practical thinking. Liquor has many defenders, but no defence. We hang the murderer, jail the thief and drunkard and furnish the raw materials from our homes out of which the murderer and drunkards are made.

In N.Z. there are 44,000 alcoholics. If alcoholism is a disease, as some would have us believe, why should we permit the germs that cause it to be bottled and sold in every town? Beloved, no country can stay economically sound on such a rotten foundation. Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. Figures given by Mr J. D. O'Brien, Registrar of Auckland Magistrates' Court, as follows, should shock us all out of our apathy: **34,665 criminal cases** in 1958, **over 4,000 more than in 1957**. One would like the figures for the whole of N.Z. **DIVORCES number 764**, adultery continues as second most common ground. What a steep rise in criminal appearances!

In the year ended 31st March 1958 there were 4,366 before the Children's Court in Auckland; as a matter of interest you can compare this with **2,970** appearances in 1957. This is only a glimpse of evils which are increasingly responsible for much physical damage, moral corruption and spiritual tragedy in our midst and sexual crimes, some most disturbing. One feels very deeply whether the

penalties for certain sex crimes are sufficiently deterrent. The community must be protected and we must continually let our voices be heard on such outrageous acts. **SILENCE** gives consent must never be said of us. Let us protest and keep on protesting.

We are a militant body of women seeking to expose all evils which will demoralise the youth of our land. Perhaps the most difficult thing we face is our lack of confidence in the power of God to meet the problems of our day. Example is needed as well as precept. We have pledged to abstain from alcoholic drink and we appeal to others to declare their intention to do likewise, for such a lead cannot fail to influence for good, those young people who are growing up with the impression that to drink alcoholic liquor is the thing to do.

The menace of drinking drivers in such alarming proportions constitutes by far our greatest road traffic problem; perhaps the death and tragedy caused by these motorists will do more than anything else to stir public conscience.

Juvenile problems present a challenge to every adult to help to produce a remedy. **The average teenager is not a criminal** or on the way to becoming one. They want a standard set for them and would welcome intelligent adult guidance on how to live up to it. We must admit that they are pretty much what we have made them and nothing will be accomplished until we recognise delinquency in its true light—not as a mere juvenile problem, but as a product of adult failure. **Adult failure is not confined to the slums of the world; it permeates all society.**

Throughout the entire life of the present generation of young people the picture of crime has been so matter-of-fact, so common-place, that many young people seem willing to accept it as the normal way of life. Publications, movies and radio programmes have made every form of crime common knowledge. Since no child is born to be a criminal what causes so many youngsters to develop into criminals? He is the product of the environment in which he grew up. If he is ignorant, it is because we did not give him the incentive to better himself. If he cannot hold a job it is because we have not given him the vision of personal responsibility. If there is murder in his heart it is because we have not filled his heart with Christian love. The sacrifice of young people is not inevitable. There is much we can do to insure that every child receives the opportunity he richly deserves, to develop into a useful citizen.

Juvenile delinquency and juvenile crime will continue their tragic increase until adult citizens are shocked out of their complacency and begin to work as community units.

In this changing process, perhaps parents and civic leaders may develop into examples fit for youth to follow. Parents should feel that they owe their first responsibility to their children.

If there is one above all other characteristics of our young people today it is this, youth is on the march. They may not know where they are going, or why, but that they will soon be there should be obvious to all. Sisters, you can no more bottle up young people, pour them into a special mould, nor drive them down old worn paths than you can harness a streak of lightning. **There is one thing you can do, you can open up new worlds for them**