

Soccer star enjoys his transfer to Dail

By JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

AFTER twelve months in Dail Eireann, Alderman Michael Lipper, T.D., hasn't changed his lifestyle very much. He says that the most significant change has been in his work-load.

His early months in the Dail were viewed with mixed feelings, but he soon adjusted to his new surroundings and now looks upon himself as a "seasoned campaigner."

Though these are early days yet, Limerick's newest T.D. feels that on the strength of his performance to date he would seem to have a good political future and in that context he is looking forward to the next General Election when he hopes to improve upon the 5,000 first preferences he gained on his first venture into politics.

Constituents

Yet one detected in his voice that he was fully aware he was at the mercy of his constituents. "While I feel that I am getting due recognition for my work, at the same time I realise the real test will come about three years hence when the ballot boxes are opened again."

The pressures of being a T.D., he said, were enormous. On average, he has about 100 personal callers to his home in Garryowen each week, and in an effort to make matters more convenient for his constituents and himself, he is now contemplating opening an office in the city centre area.

The nature of the calls, he added, could be divided into three sections—housing, re-construction grants and medical cards—with the latter just about shading the other two. Then there are those seeking financial assistance, a problem which appears to be growing in Limerick.

Soccer

The one thing which according to Mick Lipper has helped him in his new career is his ability to meet and mix with people. When asked to relate how he built up his popular image, he replied that he was the same Mick Lipper to-day as he was when he played League of Ireland football with Limerick, Sligo Rvs. and Transport.

And those who can recall that era will no doubt confirm that he was the "pin-up" boy of the time.

When it was put to him that he wasn't getting the same press pub-

LIPPER LOOKS BACK ON HIS FIRST YEAR AT LEINSTER HOUSE



Deputy Lipper: "seasoned campaigner."

licity as some of his colleagues, his answer was that it was not his wish to build his image on the misfortunes of others.

Rather does he prefer to do his work quietly and with the minimum of fuss. It is also his policy to remind his constituents when they attend his "clinics" that he will do his personal best for them but that he cannot perform miracles.

"The public seem to accept that and I can truthfully say that of the 5,000 problems which have been presented to me in 12 months, I have a 100 per cent. record in pursuing them all the way," he stated.

Mick Lipper, very much a family man, is conscious of the social ills in our midst. Limerick, he admits, has its problems at the present time, particularly in the absence of new industries coming into the area, but argues it is no worse off than anywhere else.

Salary

Because he was a Dail Deputy, he added, some people had the idea that he was a man of great power and wealth.

On the second point he stressed that he was better off financially when he worked as a locomotive driver with CIE. His salary as a Dail Deputy is £6,200—"at that we are very much underpaid for our work"—and he gets 12p per mile expenses for travelling to and from Dail sessions.

"But when you take into consideration that I have to subscribe to sporting organisations, charities, etc., and put a certain amount aside for 'tappers', there is just enough left for my family to live on."

On the subject of power, there was only a certain amount a TD could do, he said, but those who persevered most seemed to get most done. He classified himself in that category.

Although he has been in public

life for years as a member of Limerick Corporation, he is adamant that there is a vast difference between being a councillor and a T.D. "When I went forward last year as an independent Labour candidate, I had some knowledge of what I was letting myself in for and I can honestly say that I am really enjoying the experience and hope to be able to continue to do so."

Challenges

He claims to have endless energy and thrives on challenges. "You could say they are the secrets behind my work-rate."

He has tremendous admiration for Mr. Frank Cluskey, leader of the Labour Party, and during our interview he was deeply moved when the news came through that Mr. Cluskey's wife, Eileen, had died.

Mick Lipper does not like to be drawn into controversy over personalities and this was illustrated when reference was made to the 1977 General Election when he stood as an independent Labour candidate. "Let's just say the matter was resolved when the administrative council of the Labour Party recommended I be brought back into the fold," he told me.

He also expressed his concern for the high rate of unemployment in Limerick and said that the Ferenka closure was perhaps the greatest disaster of our time.

He expressed himself as being satisfied with his contributions to Dail debates.

It is his intention to go forward again next year for the municipal elections. Neither would he turn down because I felt there were Mayor. At this juncture he revealed that he could have been made Mayor this year had he agreed to take part in a pact with Fianna Fail. "I turned the offer

sown because I felt there were people more deserving of it than myself."

Limerick A.F.C.

Mick Lipper has few pastimes other than sport and he was delighted last week to be made vice-chairman of Limerick A.F.C., a club he served with distinction in the 'fifties. He is president of Fairview Rangers, and when possible likes to attend their games. Deputy Lipper, who is on leave of absence from CIE, is chairman of the locomotive section.

He has a full and active life—and, as he said himself, wouldn't change it for the world.

LAND PROBLEM CAUSES DELAYS

DIFFICULTY being encountered by Limerick County Council in acquiring land is holding up water and sewerage schemes.

And county manager, Mr. Dick Haslam, told the monthly meeting of the council that in some cases it was not a question of money but a lack of goodwill on the part of landowners.

He said that some schemes were held up for as long as two years while they waited to acquire the land. He felt that the public did not fully appreciate the various stages through which they had to go before a scheme could get under way.

Delays in such schemes were more serious than in the housing sector.

If a housing project was delayed they could transfer the money elsewhere in the county, but in the case of sanitary services the money was lost to the county if there was a hold-up.

The taking of a compulsory purchase order proceeding was a very serious and elaborate step. It was a long drawn out process, he said, and could delay a project by two years and upwards.

They were finding it more difficult to acquire land in some areas of the county than in others.

Cllr. Con Daly asked if, after a CPO proceeding had been commenced, could the land owner do a deal with the council. Mr. Haslam replied that they were prepared to meet at any time. He was satisfied that the council would make fair offers for what they sought, but the very last drop was negotiated from the council.

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