

# LETTERS

## O'MALLEY INTERVIEW

IT'S A pity that the Minister for Industry, Commerce and Tourism spoilt an otherwise interesting interview (capably handled by Billy Kelly), by his petty and ungenerous references to the City Council of which he was a brief and, at times, troublesome member.

Having trailed into the Council from Ward 2, after Mick Lipper, Jim Kemmy and Gus O'Driscoll, Des O'Malley gave the impression that, notwithstanding his undoubted ability, he had no real interest in "messing around in local politics," which he obviously felt was intended for lesser men than he.

Always the first to depart from Council Meetings, Des O'Malley used them cleverly—and frequently in a disorderly manner—as a platform to berate the then Government for their alleged inadequacies. Two pet subjects of his, raised at successive meetings, were the outrageous price of gas and the uncalculated refusal of the then Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton, to grant the City Abattoir a meat export licence. Mr. O'Malley has been Minister now for more than two and half years, during which the price of gas has increased from 63p (nett) to 110p (nett) per therm, i.e., by 73 per cent and the abattoir is still without the export licence which would mean so much in cutting its costs and, thereby, its charges.

His suggestion that one Manager should take charge of both City and County while new (a somewhat similar proposal, in the context of merging the two areas, was put forward some years ago by the then Minister for Local Government, Mr. R. Molloy, at a meeting in Limerick and duly turned down flat by the representatives of both Councils) is presumably put forward as an alternative to an extension of the City Boundary. Personally, I would support an extension of the boundary with separate Managers and in agreement with the County Council (as has happened in Waterford) to bring its population up to 75 or 80,000 people. This would not prejudice co-operation between City and County, on the lines of the Joint Health Board, which operated for a period of ten years. It worked remarkably well and in general harmony under the chairmanship of Cllr. Jim Barrett, County Council.

For no good reason, it, and similar Health Boards, were abolished by the late Erskine Childers, then Minister for Health and instead, nine Regional Health Boards were inflicted on the country. Having a member of both bodies it is my considered opinion that the smaller body was more efficient, cheaper to operate and more intimately concerned with the patients receiving care and treatment in the various institutions under its control.

From his short experience as a member of the City Council, and with no experience of the County Council, Mr. O'Malley finds the latter body "more workmanlike in every sense of the word" with

"none of the silly acrimony which goes on in the Corporation." While he is entitled to what can only be regarded as an ill-informed opinion, I think he is being unfair to the City Council of which I had the honour of being a member for 37 years, being re-elected by my constituents as six successive Local Elections. I am sure I was "unworkmanlike" and "acrimonious" on many occasions during that long period. Notwithstanding these departures from the high standards bespoke by Mr. O'Malley, I would like to think that, generally speaking, I gave a worthwhile service to our old city and to its people in every walk of life.

Indeed, it has been my experience over the years, that the great majority of City Councillors are good, decent men—and women—anxious to serve their constituents and to advance the progress and prosperity of their city. They get little credit, and no material reward, for the time they give from work and family to attend to the many problems of their people. All of them are members of various committees which meet between Council Meetings and do excellent and unpublicised work. In addition, they attend meetings of residents and other associations, make numerous weekly calls to houses needing repairs and attend to other matters such as road repairs and lights (not to mention wandering horses). They have to deal with personal calls and handle daily correspondence. And when these chores are completed, they must make representations to the City Manager and his officials, to ensure that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible.

In this age of creeping and centralising bureaucracy, it is vitally necessary to recognise the importance of the democratically elected public representative in our system of local government. With all his faults and failings he—and she—truly represent the great body politic with a statutory right to speak on behalf of his or her constituents and to challenge "the system" in their interests. To denigrate the public representative is to denigrate the people who elected him and—in most cases—re-elected him again and again.

Like Des O'Malley, it was never my practice to cultivate the Press during my years in public life. Nevertheless, my experience has been that the great majority of pressmen are fair and objective in their reporting, having regard to the job they have to do and the public they have to serve.

In conclusion, I would wish continued "embarrassment" to Des O'Malley in his efforts to bring new industries to Limerick (we still need many more) and to say a word of appreciation to the Industrial Development Authority and Shannon Development for the vital part both bodies have played in the industrial progress of Limerick and the Mid-West.

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The Wings Golfing Society recently held their annual p society also donated over £3,000 to various charities. F Ireland, Shannon Airport, fourth from left, presenting sponsorship cheque. Also in the picture are (from left to right) Dr. William Flynn, President of Shannon Golf Club, Limerick; Mr. Larry Walsh, organising comm

## Scarcity affects

A SCARCITY of fuel has affected charter traffic here, it was disclosed at a meeting on Monday, at which the formation on an action committee to promote Shannon's interests was discussed.

It was agreed to launch the committee, at the next meeting which will be held on Tuesday week when officers will be elected.

Airport branch union president, Mr. John Murray, who presided at Monday's meeting told me: "We have been informed that Shannon has been losing charter flights because of a scarcity of fuel. This problem does not seem to exist at Paris or London airports and we are going to seek an immediate investigation. 'Shannon,' he pointed out, "cannot afford to lose this type of business particularly at a time when all the airlines are economising."

### Confirmed

Mr. Murray, also confirmed that they were going all out to get the Government to build an additional runway. The committee will also press to have repair work on the existing runways carried out immediately.

And in Bann on Monday at the Clare Co. Council meeting, Cllr. Donal Carey, urged that Shannon should be declared an autonomous airport. Cllr. Carey, supporting a motion by Cllr. Sean Lillis, a West Clare Travel Agent, requesting the Minister for Transport, to see that all transatlantic flights to and from



Getting ready for the Shannon Fashion Show, Mrs. Kathleen Ryan, traders, model, and Mrs. Peg the Shannon Association for Children, organisers of the by Vogue 2, to be held in

from Vogue 2 and the shoes from J & S, also in the Shannon Town Centre, plus jewellery by Alice Shimmers, of Tramore Court, Shannon, and sports wear by Dresser, of the Shannon Town Centre.

The Shannon Association for Mentally Handicapped children provides an information service for

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