DONNACHADH O'BRIAIN, R.I.P.

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

"BH A chuid seirbhise fhada iomraiteach do shaol phoblatain na h-Eireann agus go specialaithe don teanga Gaeilge mar iompairid duinn uilig.

These words of Mr. Haughey, Uachtarain Fianna Fail, convey the sentiments of many people from the political, cultural and religious spheres who attended the funeral of Donnachadh O'Brien in Clonacagh last week.

Donnachadh was the eldest son of David O'Brien from Tulaneacastl, Conakil, creamery manager at Clonacagh C.D.S., and local lady Katherine Casey from Ballyculie. He was educated at Ahalin N.S. and the Redemptorist College, Limerick.

The Gaelic League was only a few years old when Donnachadh was born on 17th November, 1897. Inspired by the ideals of Dr. Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill, he took an active interest in the Irish language and national issues from a young age.

He was educated as a Tírmore Gaeilge - travelling teacher-organiser for Conraadh na Gaeilge, setting up branches and teaching Irish during a period when the language was at its height. He was also involved in setting up Irish colleges, such as Carraghall and the twenties to the thirties and for a period as general secretary of Conraadh.

Founders member

Having been a founder member of Fianna Fail, he was appointed general secretary of this organisation and was first nominated to stand for Fianna Fail in West Limerick in 1932. Elected to Dail Eireann in 1933, he was an active participant in Dail debates and contributed, again, for his contributions to debates in the Irish language. A friend of Eamon de Valera's from his Conraadh na Gaeltacht days, he later became his political confidante and served as chief whip of the Fianna Fail party for many years.

He became Parliamentary Secretary to Eamon de Valera in 1951 and also served for a time as parliamentary secretary to Sean Lemass. As chief whip he was respected by the political opposition for his honesty and fair play and in his own party for his integrity and discipline.

His interests and his work enabled him to get to know many people and he travelled abroad to Copenhagen, London and Tehran to inter-parliamentary meetings. He retired from public life in 1969 having served as a deputy for a continuous period of 36 years.

In June 1940, he married Eileen Liston of Lios na Uisce who was at that time nursing in Holles St. Hospital. Their lives together were very full and happy. They farmed on a number of years in Ardagh and in 1950 they came to live in Clonacagh.

Kind and gentle

Donnachadh O'Brien was a kind and gentle man whose helpfulness and generosity were appreciated by all who knew him. His political concern was largely for the issues of the country and the revival and strengthening of our native culture. He spoke the Irish language to anyone whom he thought had the slightest knowledge. He encouraged his colleagues in Dail Eireann to be loyal to the language and inspired many of them by his example. He read widely in Irish and English - biography, fiction, poetry and religious material. He was profoundly religious, and he travelled to Knock frequently in later years where he and his wife, Eileen were wardens.

There was a large and representative turnout for his removal from his home to Clonacagh Church. Bishop Eamon Casey of Galway - a cousin and friend of the O'Brien's, received the remains at the church. He spoke warmly of his friendship with Donnachadh and of his integrity and loyalty to religious and Irish culture.


Inspired

Thug an t-Athair Micheal Liston an araidh as Gaeilge mar sùn leithsin - Some people remember Donnachadh O'Brien as a colleague for 36 years. Some remember him as a parishioner and some as a member of the family. I remember him as an inspired. While my contemporaries were cynical about life, Donnachadh O'Brien was a man of integrity with strong loyalties to his religion and his native language.

"He believed. During his lifetime he nurtured the Irish culture, devoted to the spread of the Irish language. As a politician Donnachadh O'Brien was a man of his word, working the best years of his life for his constituents and his countrymen. Donnachadh O'Brien had his culture and his creed."

Among the attendance were Lt. Col. Patrick O'Keeley representing Chief Whip; Mr. James Tynan, Leas Ceann Comhairle, representing the Fianna Fail party; Deputies Collin, Noonan and O'Brien; Mr. Jim Gibbons, ex-Minister for Agriculture; Senators Rory Kavanagh, Michael Crannitch, Tresse Hanrath, C.C., Horan, Brian Carter, ex-T.D.; District Justice de Burca; ex-Leas Ceann Comhairle Denis Jones, and many local co. councillors and all the neighbours and friends from Clonacagh and Knockaderry and Dr. Halley generally.

Julian Vard's look for the autumn, incidentally, is a swaggering style, described as "halfway between Mexican and Rodeo cowboy". The fur coat image has certainly changed!