

IS RACISM ALL BUT EXTINCT IN LIMERICK?

THE LIMERICK LEADER welcomes to the Mid-West the thousands of non-Limerick students who are enrolling at local third-level colleges — especially those from overseas.

Limerick has always been somewhat cosmopolitan. It was founded by foreigners, the first of a series of exotic blood transfusions the area was to receive down through the centuries. In modern times Shannon Airport has helped intensify the old international trend.

Today Britain, continental Europe, America North and South, Asia and Africa are all well represented on the regional scene. Integration is not total: it is only natural that ethnic minorities should tend to stick together in a strange land, initially anyway. But relations between people of widely contrasting origins are generally harmonious.

Certainly there is little or no overt racism. Allegations of naked bigotry are so rare that whenever they are made they make big news. Does it follow, however, that racism is all but extinct in Limerick?

Limerick is a more tolerant place in most respects than many others. Consider the philosophical attitude of Limerick people towards the defamation of their city by ignorant journalists in Dublin. But no community is perfect.

Are racist jokes never told in Limerick? Admittedly they are told around the world but that is no excuse for what happens here. Nor is the fact — if it is a fact — that they are told without malice.

Are all Limerick landlords willing to accommodate applicants regardless of skin colour?

Successive generations of Irish emigrants have suffered discrimination in their adopted lands. We should be the last people in the world to indulge in racism. We should treat newcomers to our midst as we ourselves would wish to be treated.

In short we should continue Limerick's wonderful tradition of hospitality by extending to all students from overseas a sincere *cead mile failte*.

CUT FROM THE TOP

LIMERICK'S DEPUTY Desmond O'Malley would presumably claim — and not entirely without justification — to have set much of the current national agenda. Certainly he and his

John B



OUT IN THE

Lofty critic much ado about 'noth

LAST WEEK whilst walking along the cliffs of Doon which overlook Ballybunion Strand I met a man who posed me a most important question. From his appearance he could have been no more than forty and yet there was about him an ageless air which I am inclined to associate with regular visitors to Ballybunion.

Middle-aged men who walk along the cliffs of Doon are generally from one of two categories. There are those who are there for the sole purpose of building up an appetite for dinner and there are those who are endeavouring to walk off the calories acquired from such dinners.

My man happened to be one of the latter. I deduced this at once from the leisurely manner in which he perambulated. There was a wobblesome quality about his paunch which suggested that he might not be averse to a bottle of wine with his food. Add to this an air of satiety and it was easy to see that he had dined well and was casting about in search of likely targets for his ideas and observations.

Narrow

Said he as we met on the narrow pathway which skirts the cliffs: "Aren't you what's his name that writes the stories?"

I pleaded guilty at once and would have passed by if he had also done so. He stood stock still however and posed me the question to which I referred earlier.

"Why", said he, "can't you write something diffe-

rent in the *Leader* for a change?"

It was a fair question and one which begged an answer although I had been under the impression for years that I had been writing about something different every week. Still I was grateful. How's that Burns puts it!

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us To see ourselves as others see us!

It wad frae mony a blunder free us And foolish notion.

That extract by the way is from "To a Louse" and not "To a Mouse" as many people imagine.

Here, at any rate, was a man who saw me as I did not see myself and although his opening remark seemed to me to be somewhat chastening I would have to be honest with myself and say that, at least, the man had the courage to say what he felt. I have met many who have praised me who harboured other notions in their hearts.

For once

"Just for once!" he said aggressively, "And give us a bloody rest from the same thing all the time!"

Here was an outspoken man and if there was a fairly strong odour of whiskey off him itself he was standing on a cliff-top and, for all he knew, might well be taking his life in his hands. Nobody loves criticism which is not favourable and here was this man, not afraid to criticise when a single push could have sent him tumbling to his doom.

There are many writers who are short-tempered and even volatile who, on the spur of the moment, might draw a clout at anybody who tended to be unduly critical of their writings.

"I promise I will try", I informed him and was about to pass on about my business along what I believe to be one of the most beautiful if hazardous walks in the whole wide world when he stayed me with

another injunction. "Try to have a bit of contrast for God's sake", he said irritably, "and give us rest from the same old dose, day in and day out."

Seriously

Now these may not have been his exact words but they were near enough. He assured him that I would take his suggestions seriously and that he need have no further worries on the subject. Unfortunately he did not seem in the least mollified by my assurance.

"You have eaten your dinner", I suggested curtly. "Yes", he said, "I have eaten my dinner but I do not see what that has to do with it."

"You would", I informed him, "if, like me, you had not eaten your dinner."

"I'm not stopping you from eating your damn dinner", he announced somewhat truculently.

"Good!" I said with what I hoped was pronounced emphasis and made to go

MY LIFE AND TIMES

□ THEY WERE building a wynd of hay in the road field. The Dalt was forking at his usual rate, and Owey was fixing the hay in place. It was midday on a Saturday, and the sun was high overhead and the air was shimmering in the shadow of the hedge. A day for hay, and all round them they could hear the sounds of other men in the hayfields and the whirr of a mowing machine, where Connors was feverish trying to catch up and make the most of the weather.

Nearing the time when Owey would be shaping the head, he casually asked the Dalt what date it was. The fifteenth, Dalt said. Suddenly, Owey was slipping down the side of the almost completed wynd. The fifteenth, he was saying, I've got to go Dalt, finish it yourself. It was just unthinkable. No man ever leaped from an almost completed hay wynd; no man, unless he was strange in the head, left a meadow in the full swing of saving.

But Owey was going and next thing he was setting the Dalt up for a loan. It was this friend of his in college, you see. His father kept racehorses, he had warned him time and again that he would be in Killarney in late June and they would have a winner there. Not only that, but this friend knew other trappers and there was this chance that couldn't be left a begging.

The Dalt had a few quid stashed away. He made it from the sourcing he did for Owey, with the bags of potatoes and the parsnips and the carrots. There were occasions too, many of them in fact when he really considered it, when this farmer and that would want a few sleepers to make a fence or a few rails to build a hay barn.

The Dalt kept the kitty in the attic, away from the prying eyes of the family and especially away from Molly

whom, if she knew it existed, would have no hesitation in claiming it for herself.

What was the Dalt's in all things was her's by right. The father was at the other end of the field, tidying round the butt of the last wynd. Make an excuse, Owey was saying, say you had to go for coppers, say anything but get me a fiver. The Dalt had two problems. Here he was in cahoots with the son, who was the bane of the father's life.

The Dalt had a great regard for Owey's father, and some of it was tempered by the fact that the horse and cart was always available on a wet Saturday or a fine Sunday to bring home a load of sticks. There were other things, like the milk he gave them every day without a word, or like the bag of turf that would suddenly be left in the front yard, when the load of sticks

was running out. The fact that the Dalt would go into the garden, without asking, and get potatoes, a cabbage and turnips was acute in his mind as he made his way to the cottage where he lived.

If Owey's father ever found out that the Dalt was necessary to what was happening, that source might dry up. It was those things bothered him and not the fact that he was about to kiss a good-bye.

He liked Owey, and the a fiver was a great sight of money, it was worth it for the sake of the friendship. We fit for all the fun and the enjoyment that Owey has given him over the last few years, all the times he had his sides laughing at his escapades, whether they were simply by sitting down in front of the Dalt's fire or drinking pints in the Thatch.

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DRIVING along the road the other day and noting all the other cars on the road, it occurred to me

Reminiscing on th