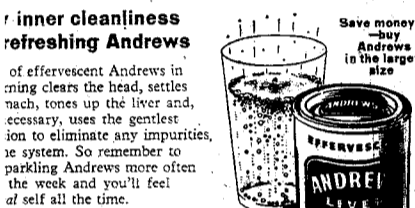




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Gerald O'Connor explains why the University for Limerick Campaign project committee insist that . . .

IRELAND NEEDS A FACULTY OF MEDICINE IN LIMERICK . . .

VERY many of the friends, and of those who are not friends, of the University for Limerick campaign fail to understand the insistence of the Project Committee on the faculty of medicine as a sine qua non in any university to be set up here.

The objections may be stated as these:

- (1) Our universities are crammed. We can absorb only a fraction of our medical graduates. The large majority must seek a living abroad.
- (2) We could never attract lecturers of sufficient standing and academic distinction to ensure the success of a medical school and the recognition of its degree.
- (3) Our medical institutions are not adequate. The cost of building and equipment would be enormous.
- (4) There is no background or tradition of the study of medicine. The required number of students would, accordingly, not be forthcoming.
- (5) Why not wait until the university has established itself with faculties of Arts, Commerce, Science and perhaps Engineering? Then it could develop towards medicine. It is proposed to deal with these objections in order.

The terms offered are greatly improved; in many cases more favourable than those offered in Britain. For the first time in our history we have had to depend on Afro-Asians to supply our needs. As we have had over a thousand years start on those peoples, it is clear that a serious problem of supply exists. In this year's June conferring at U.C.C. there were only 12 graduate doctors. The President of the College, voicing his alarm, pointed out that they were not producing enough doctors for Cork's own needs. So much for Cork's pretensions to supply graduates for all Munster! This would be enough to deflate that claim even without pointing out that Limerick never had, as many as one-third of its medical practitioners graduates of Cork College.

when there are six additional years without a job? The attendances at Cork and Galway must flatten out to about 100 to 120 drawn mostly from the catchment areas of these Colleges. In Galway the catchment area is very poor, owing to its hopeless geographic position. Cork's bad position is compensated for by having a large Urban population to draw from. Limerick is in much better case, as will be seen.

MAHOMET'S COFFIN
 The second objection is surprisingly easily disposed of. There is no need to attract men of the highest academic distinction. We have them here in residence in the city already. If anyone wishes to verify this statement, he should consult the Irish Medical Directory. A very interesting and enlightening hour spent in comparing the qualifications of our medical men here with their opposite numbers in the Medical Faculties of any of the Colleges.

NOT ENOUGH DOCTORS
 The figures in the tables which follow are taken, in the main, from the data supplied by the University Colleges to the Commission on the Accommodation Needs of the N.U.I.

University College	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958
Dublin	3,194	3,409	3,537	3,609	3,363
Cork	1,061	1,124	1,214	1,246	1,242
Galway	839	898	878	893	876
Totals	5,134	5,476	5,627	5,648	5,580

University College	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958
Dublin	626	626	626	626	626
Cork	182	177	167	141	116
Galway	209	189	169	187	138
Totals	947	891	867	785	706

Year	1956	1961 (Provisional)
Numbers of Medical Practitioners in the State	2,674	3,020

It is clear that little help can be expected from T.C.D. As Anthony Kerr in "Universities of Europe" remarks, "Trinity shares with Zurich and Innsbruck the distinction of having a majority of foreigners (including such as the Irish, the English and Commonwealth contingents). Whether this is good or bad is not our concern. It is sufficient to know that Trinity contributes little to the pool of Irish doctors. In the 1960 crop of 31 graduates, only three at any time intended to take up practice in Ireland. Much the same could be said of the Royal College of Surgeons. The Colleges of the N.U.I. have a fair proportion of foreigners. In the main, medical students. These more than make up for the numbers we draw from Trinity and the College of Surgeons.

The decline of Irish attendances is inevitable. To quote Anthony Kerr again, "There are not enough young Irishmen available (within the residential areas) who can afford (a) the quite considerable fees, (b) three additional years without a job." The writer has inserted the words in brackets. How many fewer then

For a full Medical Faculty, the following are needed: Professors of Anatomy, Bio-chemistry, Medicine, Mental Diseases, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology, Paediatrics, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Surgery and Therapeutics.

For the pre-medical course we would require lecturers of Chemistry, Physics, Botany and Zoology and perhaps, as in Cork, a lecturer in Introductory Philosophy.

With the exception of the lecturers for the pre-medical course, who are drawn in all the colleges from the Faculty of Science, we need several outside for scarcely one of the professional staff. To have men of such outstanding ability here, without a medical training school, is indeed a sad waste of talent.

It is not surprising, although it seems anomalous, that post-graduate medical courses are conducted in the Regional Specialist Hospitals, Limerick, those of the D.C.H. and the F.R.C.S. itself. Thus, we have the Primary, Secondary, NO. UNI. VERTS. but post graduate courses being conducted outside the void can be filled. We cannot allow our post-university courses and, perhaps, further courses in the suspended like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and heaven.

OUR OWN MEDICAL BLOCK

Before tackling the third objection, it is better to be definite as to what we want and the probable expense. Our aim is a medical school of 100 to 120 students. The pre-medical course would be taken in the Science Department. Although Surgery, next to Arts, is the oldest of the faculties, and Science is an offshoot of Medicine, a Faculty of Science in the modern age is essential to a university. This must, of its nature, embrace Physics, Chemistry and the Biology courses of Botany and Zoology.

For the rest of the course the pre-clinical years and the clinical years, that is three years from the end of the second year onwards, which require constant attendance at the hospital, a separate and commodious medical block must be provided. The Regional Hospital, but convenient enough to the social facility of the college proper, is the first requirement. All the departments should be under one roof. The Department of Anatomy with a lecture theatre, projection room and main Dissection Room, together with a lecture theatre for Medicine and Obstetrics, should be on the upper floor. The ground floor caters for the Departments of Physiology and Bio-chemistry. This ground floor should also provide for a lecture theatre for Materia Medica, Surgery and Pharmacology. The Departments of Pathology, Microbiology and Museum should occupy the remainder of the space.

An aerial view of the Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle, Limerick.

The area of the medical building should be about 15,000 sq. ft. This should cost about £70,000. Lecture hall space is calculated at 44 sq. ft. Laboratory space, £8 to £10 a sq. ft.

The staff required for the pre-clinical years would be: Professor of Experimental Medicine and Pharmacology (whole-time), £1,500 p.a.; Lecturer, £500 p.a.; Lecturer in Physiology, £1,300; Lecturer in Anatomy, £1,300; Lecturer in Surgery, £1,300; Lecturer in Pathology, £1,300; Lecturer in Microbiology, £1,300; Lecturer in Clinical Medicine, Paediatrics, Ophthalmology and Psychiatry.

One additional Staff Surgeon and three additional Physicians would be required. All these men would have their own consultant and hospital practices. During the building-up stage, lesser fees would be accepted. The clinical years, our hospitals are second to none in the country. Our Regional General Hospital, divided into Medical, Pathology, Paediatrics, Ophthalmology, ENT Departments has 816 beds. Our City Home and Hospital has Tuberculosis (97), Fever (84), Mental (230) total, 494 beds. Limerick Regional Maternity has 95 beds; Mental Hospital, 90.

All these are within two miles of each other and of the proposed University. Only the Specialist Orthopaedic Unit at Crook is outside (roughly six miles from the Regional Hospital). Contrast the position in Galway, where the Mental Hospital is 3 1/2 miles away and the Regional Hospital is 14 miles distant. We have also our voluntary hospitals of Barrington's (90 beds) and St. John's (95 beds), with excellent Departments of Pathology and Medicine in the heart of the old city. All in all, we have the men and institutions in abundance.

The cost of the provision of a Medical Block is not prohibitive and may well be provided as a gift by the State. The Royal County Councils. This is merely a suggestion, but could we not easily postpone our non-productive plans for the hospitals and along the hand of the Government by a generous offer such as this?

of the old Gaelic culture. However, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1586, the Armada in 1588, and the refusal of the burghers of Limerick to accept the new state religion put an end to these schemes. The debate ended in 1591 with the foundation of Trinity College, Dublin, for the purpose of securing an English Protestant Ascendancy in this state policy succeeded.

The defeat of the Catholic Confederation, in 1649, ended the hope of the Dominican University established in Limerick. The eighteenth century was as disastrous for Limerick as elsewhere with the eclipse of her trade and industry. However, we find built on the ruins of St. Francis Abbey in 1745 Limerick County Infirmary, with its principal Surgeon Dr. Sylvester O'Halloran, a Catholic educated at Montpellier and Paris. This had 40 beds.

A temporary hospital, founded by the Franciscans in 1690, in the New Island, had a Doctor James Nihil, of Leiden University, as its Master. These were the "Lying-in" Hospital in 1811 and Barrington's Hospital in 1829. St. John's Hospital replaced an old fever hospital in the same historic situation. All these were built and financed by public subscription. In them zealous doctors (most of them educated abroad) attended to the poor free of charge. Limerick cannot be denied a tradition in the service of medicine.

Limerick catchment area of secondary school students consists of Limerick City and County, most of Tipperary, Clare, North Kerry and portions of North Cork. Of the number of secondary school students in proportion to the population, Limerick is in the first place in the State, followed by Clare, Tipperary, Kerry and Cork. In that order, Limerick City, is a concentration of 80,000, is a dead centre. Its geographical position could not be better.

Anthony Kerr in "Universities of Europe" says "Limerick well situated Universities include Oxford and Cambridge, Leiden, Louvain, Upsala, Basel and Innsbruck." Limerick has a circular catchment area. All our colleges are badly sited. Galway by far the worst. We in Limerick could not fail to attract the best of the material from our total of a sixth of the entire secondary school-going population.

Pass and Honours student alike. There is a good deal of falling in the first two years or so, but once a student has reached the clinical stage of the course he is pretty sure of qualifying provided he has the stamina, perseverance and other qualities of mind required for the profession.

All experience points that a University with a properly ordered Faculty of Medicine is bound to thrive. Scholarship has an extraordinary principle of survival. The University Faculty in Munster College is a case in point. This was extinguished by the N.U.I. Act of 1908. Yet its spirit survives in the 2-years post-secondary philosophy course taken by some students preparing for the priesthood.

If we get a Faculty of Medicine started here, with our incomparable advantage of site and material, its success will be assured. Why, then, wait and perhaps lose ever getting? There is always the danger that jealous intrigue may take our specialist services from us. Centralisation has done our country great harm. And it is again in the air.

This is the time of year when so many of our students find themselves with the Leaving Certificate in their hands and the future in question mark. What a splendid thing it would be for them if they had the chance of entering the Medical Faculty of any other Faculty of a university here. Very few of their parents can afford the cost of university education away from home. As time goes on, the number will be fewer still. Of those who go away, very many fail who would succeed easily at home. There is no reason for this. With our incomparable advantage of site and material, of teachers, students and institutions, if we all doubled and redoubled our efforts we could not fail to raise this city and area and add immeasurably to its importance and prestige.

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