

LIMERICK IN FOCUS



BY TOM TOBIN

Limerick needs a University

NO one can deny it—Limerick is in urgent need of a University. This is a fact known to most of us for many years. It is a fact which has been clearly evident to many others also, yet our Government authorities have been slow to make any move that would give the people of Limerick a definite hope.

Certainly, a Commission on Higher Education was set up to investigate the position of Limerick's education generally throughout the country, including the City and County of Limerick, and last week-end they visited the area and were greatly impressed by both the reception they received and the wealth of evidence that was placed before them in support of Limerick's claim. But the question remains: Will Limerick get the University it needs so much?

It was many years ago (in 1911, to be exact) the Commission set up to investigate the position of Limerick's education in Limerick, but this failed to arrive.

In 1911, in recognition of its geographic position and economic standing, it was decided to give the first University in Ireland situated outside Dublin in Limerick City. However, the support by the City of South-O'Brien and the County of Limerick was so miserably placed in Budget, that it failed to arrive.

At the time the 1908 Act was being drafted, the British Government there was considerable support for university education in Limerick, but the Parliament was not prepared to devote money to establish a completely new centre in both Limerick and Dublin and, so the needs of Limerick were ignored, or rather the demand of Dublin was granted priority.

It was not until the 1930s that Limerick, which had very small student bodies at that time, could absorb all the potential graduates in the area and that sufficient and adequate scholarships would be available to enable people in Limerick to attend these colleges, and that, if necessary, a college once it was established in Limerick might get recognition from University College Dublin.

About the year 1945 a committee was set up, under the chairmanship of the late Most Rev. Dr. O'Neill, Bishop of Limerick, to attempt to solve the problems of higher education and, in particular, to provide adequate university opportunities for students residing in or near Limerick.

That committee, which had much support in the district, was met, like its predecessors and successors, by lack of co-operation from the National University of Ireland and by refusal of the Government to provide finance.

In 1957, at the request of the Limerick Corporation, the then Mayor of Limerick, Ald. G. E. Russell, T.D., established a committee for the purpose of again pressing the claims of Limerick into a constituent college. The committee was representative of all the secondary and vocational educational establishments in Limerick and presented its report in November, 1959.

Before the committee (called the "Mayor's Committee") had finished its deliberations the present committee (i.e., the Limerick University Project Committee) was established, principally at the instigation of the past pupils' unions of the schools in the Limerick area, to aid the Mayor's Committee and to continue its work by explaining and stressing the demands for university education in Limerick.

Impressive and considerable support, both in the form of resolutions and subscriptions, have been received and the organisations who have supported and who are supporting the committee are listed in the first schedule to this submission.

MUST NOT FAIL

The organising committee have the full support of all the public bodies in the neighbouring counties and a very noticeable aspect is the vigorous and extensive co-operation by the farming community in Limerick's drive for higher educational facilities. All this is voluntary. The work is being done so that Irish people may live for Ireland and be capable and fully qualified supporters of western civilisation and, by being better educated, become better citizens and better Christians.

The committee does not want or envisage a fantastic or extravagant outlay of money for the purpose of building a university. We only demand what is just and due to us as trustees

for the parents and children of the Limerick area.

Various suggestions have been mooted such as the establishment of a new independent university, but for obvious reasons the people of Limerick would prefer that they should have a college integrated with and forming part of the National University of Ireland, which had done so much to educate the Irish people since its foundation, but which has as yet failed to provide adequately for the people in the Limerick area.

This submission proposes to state the arguments in favour of the establishment of a constituent college of the National University in Limerick, said a member of the committee.

The demand for a University College in Limerick and the need for one are not new but to-day the need is greater than ever and so is the demand. The National University of Ireland must not fail the people in this area, for if the University fails Limerick it fails to justify its own title and claim to be National and will leave the citizens of Limerick and the surrounding country bereft of university education and equipped only for the emigrant ship. A University College in Limerick will result in additional industry and greater prosperity for all the people of the area.

SOURCES OF BRAIN-POWER

To serve the nation as a whole we must set up new colleges at suitable centres like Limerick, where we can draw on the hitherto untapped resources of brain-power to provide the material for our future leaders, professional men, engineers and scientists, men of vision, integrity and high professional skill.

Every country with an eye to the future is expanding its facilities for university education. The challenge to the West is not in the fields of arms and technology alone; these are only the adjuncts of an ideological struggle for which we must equip the coming generation mentally, morally and intellectually. The provision made for

higher education in Ireland in 1908 will not suffice to-day. The extension of the present Universities will not solve the problem. In the first place it would perpetuate a great injustice to thousands of tax-paying parents who cannot afford to send their children, or some of them, to any of these colleges. In the second place it is educationally unsound.

PERSONAL CONTACT Speaking to Mr. Patrick J. McCarthy, B.A., H.Dip.Ed., well-known secondary teacher in Doon, I learned that beneficial teaching can best be achieved in the small institution where the opportunities of personal contact between teacher and student are greater.

Further, the quality of the teaching depends largely on the maintenance of a reasonable ratio between staff and students. It is not more costly to maintain this ratio in the smaller institution and the result is likely to be much more beneficial.

"The contention that a technological college here and there will serve the needs of the rest of the country is not only preposterous but selfish shortsighted and unrealistic," said Mr. McCarthy. "With industrial development, we will need technological colleges and we will need technological faculties in our universities, but technological colleges are not a substitute for a university. It will cater for one type of student only and its presence or absence in a particular area is irrelevant to the needs of higher education in that area."

Mr. McCarthy further told me, in the course of our lengthy interview, that members of the Limerick University Project Committee are determined in their efforts to bring about the realisation of the dream of so many down through the years.

Every other country in the world was doing everything possible to develop their conditions in all professions and in industry generally.

Nations like England, Russia and the U.S.A. have faced up to the fact that they have to produce highly educated men and women and they are well aware of the fact that they can do so only through the extension and the greater availability of higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION AN INVESTMENT

"Higher education is an investment that we must face up to from the point of view of future economic and material development. Unless we wish to attempt to put the clock back we must develop greater facilities for higher education and, since Limerick has the greater student potential and in view of its tremendous expansion, we hold that Limerick should be the first claim in any future development in this sphere."

"In our secondary schools to-day we are wasting what has been called our human capital," said Mr. McCarthy. "I have been teaching for 15 years and some of the best university potential among the students who have passed through my hands has been wasted because their parents could not afford to send them to a university away from home... even with the aid of a scholarship. The parents of Ireland invest the lion's share in contrast to the expenditure incurred by their children in bringing their children to senior leaving standard."

The people of Limerick have incurred precisely the same expenditure as people elsewhere. They have spent to the maximum in achieving what they have achieved in the education of their children.

The low attendance representing the Limerick area at Universities indicates that most parents just cannot financially commit themselves beyond secondary education for their children.

It is not the parents who are to provide the necessary extension of education in this area; to bring to full fruition the education of their children, they can only achieve through the establishment of a university in Limerick."

"ONE OF THE TRAGIC THINGS"

Mr. McCarthy was hard-hitting in his references to the established Universities of this country. This is how he put it: "One of the tragic things about the intermittent controversy on University education which has been going on since the initiation of the Beifield Project is the lack of forward thinking or any thinking except one-track thinking from within Universities themselves. This was the one quarter from which we had expected some deep thought and reasoned assessment on the higher educational needs of the country as a whole. I do not know of one statement on the higher by any Irish University Professor which has tackled the problem from this angle, which would provide anything but the needs of his own college and particular faculty. We have been told that Limerick's problem could be solved by the provision of more scholarships. This suggestion is completely unrealistic for a number of reasons. To give Limerick proportionate representation within the University would involve a fantastic high number of schol-

arships for this area alone, and if the idea was extended to the rest of the country it would be impossible to house the students in the already overcrowded three constituent colleges—this apart from the fantastic cost of the scholarships."

THREE FOR ONE

Mr. McCarthy made a very interesting point when he told me that the ratepayers of Limerick and, indeed, in every other area also, are contributing a sum of 1800 for university scholarships, covering a four-year period. This works out at 180 per year per student. With a university in Limerick this 180 would, in fact, provide three scholarships at the rate of 60 each—what it would cost a student living in a university town—thereby giving three students four years' university education as against just one, as is the case under present circumstances. It is also of interest to note that should Limerick get a university, and I have every reason to believe it will, it seems certain that the Trade Union movement in the city will contribute one or more scholarships annually.

"The contention that a scholarship student is the best or the only student suitable for university education is illogical," said Mr. McCarthy when I questioned him on this long-standing issue of controversy. "Let me make it very clear that university scholarships in this country have led to intensive cramming in the sciences. They are sometimes gained by as little as one mark. This type of cramming has created an artificial all-round standard and the student who did not get high all-round honours has little hope of a scholarship. Thus, a student who might be brilliant in a mathematical group of subjects, or weak at literary subjects, or vice versa, may be excluded from university education. And don't overlook the fact that this is possible even though that student may have the potentiality of getting an honours degree in his own chosen group of subjects."

A FAIR CHANCE

Mr. McCarthy went on to say that there was also the problem of the student who is slow to develop. "I have had students who went to University with Pass Leaving Certificates and came out with Honours degrees. Certainly, it was hard work on their part but they clearly showed just what could be done."

He also referred to the four years period of the scholarships stating that they did not cover the longer courses such as medicine, and went on to say: "People whose profession or position enables them to migrate tend to do so when their children come to university age. Farmers, shopkeepers, rural workers and many others have no such option. All the facilities in our Universities are not open to these categories of holders (e.g. medicine). It is inconsistent to speak of developing and progressing in rural Ireland if we do not extend the words to embrace education and especially higher education. The country must get its fair chance in the development of the nation. There is no monopoly of brains in the privileged semi-circle round Dublin. Cork and Galway are not the only areas where there is the growth of a middle class who, due to the rise in the national income, are able and willing to pay a reasonable amount for a University education. The question of higher education should be approached from the point of view of the needs of the whole country, not from the point of view of the present Universities alone. In this context, Limerick, with its higher student potential and its proximity to an area of industrial development, merits first consideration."

WILL NOT DIE

Mr. Dermot Hurley, one of Limerick's most prominent businessmen, who is Vice-Chairman of Limerick University Project Committee, told me in the course of an exclusive interview that up to recently many people were wondering "why such a long silence?"

The fact of the matter is that they were respecting the standing of the Commission on Higher Education and their investigations into Limerick's claim. He made it quite clear that his committee members were determined to maintain their drive for a successful conclusion to their campaign... and may I say that it will not die if the Commission fails to return a favourable report. But there is a strong feeling of optimism among all members of the Limerick committee at present.

THE LOGICAL PLACE

Mr. Hurley said that he would like to make it clear that people in and around Limerick should not become confused in the matter of providing a school of technology and the need for a university. The Limerick University Project Committee are fully in favour of all efforts to improve technical education, but he wanted it made perfectly clear that any developments that have taken place in that connection would in no way return a part of their demands to the Commission on Higher Edu-

cation. In other words, a university was demanded—needed was a long-established fact and not one member of the L.U.P.C. would give an inch until such time as the doors of that university were thrown open to the youth of Limerick City and County and the surrounding areas.

"We feel that the needs of this country and the rest of the western hemisphere will require the setting up of other universities in Ireland and there is no doubt whatever Limerick is the logical place for one. We also claim that Limerick's demand is a just one and we will be carrying that demand until we get the opportunities for our youth, which have been denied for far too long. However, at last there is every reason to hope... But the campaign must go on until that hope becomes a reality."

And may it happen even in principle, to-day before to-morrow.

Don't miss another instalment into Limerick's claim for a University in next week's Limerick Leader.

Rathkeale man heads N.Y. Ball Committee

WILLIAM V. DOWLING, the president, has appointed Sean Glittenane (V.P.) as chairman of the 74th St. Patrick's Grand Ball of the Limerick Men's Benevolent and Social Association Inc. 1890, to be held on Tuesday, March 17, 1964, in the Manhattan Centre 34th St. and 8th Avenue, N.Y.

The chairman is a native of Rathkeale, a competent, hard-working and personable. He knows that a successful affair—socially and financially—is necessary for the well-being of the Association and, therefore, he lost no time in calling the first meeting of the committee at which sub-chairmen were appointed. Telephone reservations for Boxes may be made by calling Patrick Conway (WNY) Transportation, Attention: Pat Conway at Ravenwood 6-7855.

LANDS POISONED

Take notice that the lands of Bawnacoma, Kippacora, Co. Limerick, are laid with poison for the protection of domestic fowl. Signed: MRS. MARY O'CONNOR (1963-200)

Agricultural Society

At Show grounds (On Wed. and Thurs. Next)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11

Show open from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm. Judging from 12.00 pm to 4.00 pm. (In the afternoon)

12.00 pm—Judging of...
1.00 pm—Judging of...
2.00 pm—Judging of...
3.00 pm—Judging of...

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12

10.00 am—Auction of... with Premium... Catalogue.
10.45 am—Short... will be sold...
12 noon—Priest... will be sold.
LIFE HALL: 10.00 am—Auction... 11 am—Herald... Auction Sale of... the Hereford.
12.45 pm—Abbe... Champion will be...
3.30 pm—Auction...
Auctioneers: Messrs. Wm. Marsh (Contact No. 2, from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm)

FOR SPEED AND STAMINA

HACK UP JOI

FOURTH OF JULY

DERBY THRILLER OF 1961 One of Ireland's first Puppies to win Irish Cup with his Derby win—would have made history had he won.

JOKER'S FA

GLITTERING LOOK

From his first matings he has produced best pups on the course. He is a true Country FATE, semi-finalist in O'Donoghue's Derby, breaking a long record. Bitches at owners' risk. V.F. Certificate with all bitches.

P. HANLY, Spital-land, Cork I

PHONE 4791

Family Flaggon

Red Coat

Taylor

* SOF DUBL

Please remember they are

Is this the most expensive cigarette made?

W.D. & H.O. WILLS

Gold Flake VIRGINIA

No. It just tastes as if it were. That's why:

Gold Flake satisfy!

67E 150

Good Mornin' with Progress Porridge oatlets

What better start to any day than a plate of warm, creamy, nourishing Flahavan's Progress Porridge Oatlets. All the family will love Progress... it has a delicious 'Oatlet' flavour... and they'll feel the better of it for the rest of the day!

Enjoy more Everyc

Gift Co in every

E. Flahavan & Sons, Ltd., KilmacThomas, Co. Waterford