

P. J. Martin, of Ballinamore, is County Development Officer for Leitrim. Here he is interviewed by Eamonn Daly on the role and success of the County Development Team and how the county is bearing up to the recession.

When was the Co. Development Team formed?

County Development Teams for Western Development were first established in 1963 following a special study of farming difficulties of the West of Ireland by a select committee.

County Development Teams were reconstituted in 1965 in their present form — County Manager (Chairman), County Council Chairman, County Agricultural Officer, County Engineer, County Educational Officer, and the I.D.A. Regional Officers.

All Western Teams are co-ordinated by a Central Development Committee of the Department of Finance.

The Team Secretary/County Development Officer is a higher civil servant in the Department of Finance on secondment to the County Development Team. The Team acts as agent for I.D.A. and has responsibility for the initiation, promotion and development of small industrial enterprises. It also has responsibility for after-care service to small industry (defined as employing not more than 50 operatives excluding directors and written down value of whose fixed assets does not exceed £500,000). The Development Team operates a discretionary grant fund and the Team secretary has access to a special fund in the Industrial Credit Company. It has responsibility for co-ordination of all agencies such as AnCO, Manpower, Tourism outside and within the county. In short, the Team seeks to foster the economic development of the county in every shape and form and ensures that the county gets its share of whatever is going.

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What has it achieved in the County?

Since the beginning of the Team's real involvement in the late 'sixties, twelve large advance factories have been established with seven cluster-type smaller factories. The Local Authority, assisted by the Team, has provided smaller workshops for service-type industry on a pilot basis.

In order to fulfil its wider role, the Team has a full-time officer servicing Communities, Co-operatives, Group Water Schemes, Co-operative Credit Unions, Community Centre Committees and Youth Employment Schemes.

What incentives can the Co. Leitrim Development Team offer to a prospective manufacturer which may make the county more attractive than other counties as a business proposition to investors?

Closeness to Dublin by road and rail. Suitable locations for industry. Vast quantities of raw water. Many raw materials, including milk, beef, mutton, timber, coal and peat available within the county. A young educated work force.

Under the Small Industries Programme, cash grants are negotiable, up to 60%. Training grants, feasibility grants, research and development grants, etc., are readily available. The Team assists on every stage of development and to help set up in a manufacturing enterprise. The Local Authority may consider a rates remission on buildings.

I feel that it's worthy of note that six manufacturing enterprises already established within the county are promoted by people from outside the



P. J. Martin, County Development Officer.

country. I feel that this is proof enough that the county must have attractions and something to offer.

What has been the success rate in terms of staying in business of those companies which have been helped to become established by the Co. Development Team?

For a county which is supposed to have many problems it has one of the lowest failure rates in manufacturing and where the few failures occurred alternative projects were found to fill the void.

Can you give a break-down on numbers employed in industry, services and agriculture in Co. Leitrim?

The county has almost 1500 engaged in manufacturing industry and a steady growth is predicted but our towns and villages will have to grow if we are to accommodate such growth. Apart from the ordinary commercial services, there is no growth in other services or, at least, it is insignificant. In addition to the fifteen hundred engaged in manufacturing about one thousand leave the county each day for work elsewhere in adjoining counties.

How many are unemployed? How many in each age group?

There is an average of about one thousand on the Live Register and it appears that the majority of these are small farmers. As you know, dole to farmers in the West of Ireland is only an attempt at equalisation to help bring farmers' income in line or somewhat in line with farmers in the better counties.

Numbers on the dole?

From memory, I feel that it

averages at about one thousand over the year.

Why are small industries considered to be the life-line to survival for the Leitrim industrial scene?

I do not know where you got the impression that small industry is considered to be the life-line to survival! I admit that it is one of the aids among many others but agriculture is still our most important industry. Small industry and other forms of economic activity such as

tourism and specialised forms of tourism such as angling and cruising, play very important roles. Small industry appears to suit a county like Leitrim where communities are small and urban structures are weak. It is accepted now that fairly substantial manufacturing units can be set up successfully in a rural situation even with limited infrastructure such as three-phase power. Where small industrial projects are introduced, they are likely to arouse interest and help to activate communities. Their high survival rate, even in a recession, is remarkable!

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Drumshanbo Mart

One of the ironies of the current economic crisis is that of the thriving cattle trade. The revival in trade began about two years ago, and now most marts in the West of Ireland are doing well. Mike Joe Moran, manager of Drumshanbo Mart, thinks that the present prosperity in the mart business is based mainly on the buoyant export trade in live cattle to North Africa and Third World countries. Purcells of Waterford, one of the country's leading livestock exporters, takes delivery every week of some cattle which have been sold at Drumshanbo Mart. Another boost to the Drumshanbo Mart has

been its proximity to the North. This has resulted in a regular influx of Northern dealers, particularly in March. This, in addition to the continuing support of the farmers of Leitrim, North Roscommon, North Sligo and parts of Cavan and Donegal has meant that Drumshanbo, like all Leitrim marts, has had a consistently good market this year. Drumshanbo Mart which commenced business in March 1978 and now has 500 shareholders, has had 800 to 1,000 cattle at every sale in the last three months.

Mike Joe Moran, manager of Drumshanbo Mart.



Drumkeerin Credit Union



If a Credit Union's finances are a thermometer of community well-being, then Drumkeerin might be one of the first patients to be discharged from the recession-ward. The local Credit Union started in Nov. 1979 with 51 members and a share capital of £3007.23. Now, four years later, it has 128 members and a share capital of £30,000. Nineteen new members joined this year, an increase on their 1982 new member rate. The share capital for 1983 has grown by £8,000, double that of last year, a fine achievement for a district with a population of 500. Tina Duignan, treasurer of the Credit Union, attributes these increases in membership and share

Mary Woods, treasurer, and Tina Duignan, secretary.

capital to a thriftiness in people which is peculiar to hard times. The Union is not complacent about its success in increasing its savings, Tina says. "To be solely concerned with savings is against the spirit of the Credit Union. We would like to see more people joining the Credit Union because there is no shortage of money to be loaned. Out of a total share capital of £30,000, we can loan £25,000. At present, £19,000 is out on loan, roughly the same figure as this time last year". In the last three years they have loaned out £45,000 to £50,000. Their maximum loan is £2,000 per member.