NORTH LEITRIM DEVELOPMENT GROUP (DUBLIN)

Action the Keynote!

Captain Seamus Fox, M.P.S.I.
Chairman

The North Leitrim Development Group (Dublin) was established for the express purpose of seeking ways and means for the development of North Leitrim which, with a high rate of emigration and unemployment, is the least industrialised and the most underdeveloped part of our county.

Just twelve months have now elapsed since our formal establishment. Our Group had only been born when the cry went out—enough meetings, action is wanted. We felt this to be a little illogical then as it *does* take meetings and time to build an organisation to the pitch where it *can* take action. We agree that at the present point of time it is not *now* an unfair question to pose as to what action has been taken.

The Group at the outset took two important decisions:

(1) To elect representatives from every area of North Leitrim in order to keep in touch with our people and to become involved in their work.

During the coming year we hope to promote even greater liason.

(2) The setting up of the following sub-committees: (a) Agricultural; (b) Industrial; (c) Tourism, and (d) Organisational.

All these committees functioned with a degree of success but the Industrial Sub-Committee was the most active and was most in the public eye because of our recent Small Industry Idea Competition. The response to them was tremendous and the 129 entries from all over Leitrim, from the rest of Ireland and from abroad are regarded by the Group as "The Breffni Heroes of 1970". The adjudication by a panel of professional adjudicators, produced six viable ideas and a further batch of excellent ideas from schools.

Thus phase one of the competition was brought to a most successful conclusion and phase two—to get the many ideas for small industry off the ground—has already begun. We can only state that we shall make every effort in our power to put these industries into operation in North Leitrim and already there is every indication that one of them will be established before long.

FUTURE PLANS

What of our future plans? They can be summarised as follows:

(1) We shall continue to reject the outrageous idea of complete and mass afforestation of Leitrim as an answer to our economic problems. Rather shall we press for concentration of afforestation in suitable areas combined with the active promotion of tourism and the establishing of small industries in every area.

(2) We are convinced that there are areas in North Leitrim where agriculture can be successfully carried on and we shall strive to render such assistance as lies within our power in this regard.

(3) We hope to concentrate on tourism this year — in a region in which the Almighty has bestowed many attractions but which are poorly publicised. We shall especially request the appointment of a Tourist Officer in Leitrim itself, and we are very hopeful that this will be done in the coming season by the N.W.R.T.O.

(4) We propose to continue to act as a liason body with the various Government Departments, I.D.A., Tourist, Agriculture etc.

(5) We intend to contact development groups in other areas to ascertain and assess their methods of successful development.

(6) We wish to act as a Citizen's Bureau for the people at home and to work closely (with the assistance of our area representatives) with the various organisations there.

(7) We will maintain our close and friendly links already established with Leitrim's senior and respected organisation in Dublin.

The Leitrim People's Association were most generous in sponsoring a prize for the Small Industry Ideas Competition and we in turn were happy in they winning a trophy in the St. Patrick's Day parade and having one of our members participate in retaining the All-Ireland Counties Debating Cup. We also have established links with the L.P.A. in Sligo who kindly donated a prize in the schools section of the forementioned competition.

Finally, at all times we are anxious to focus attention on North Leitrim and to counteract the erronious idea that there is no hope for Leitrim, to demonstrate that its people still have the spirit for which it was famed down through many periods of Irish history and to proclaim loud and clear that we believe Leitrim has a future and that we are determined to fight to maintain our separate identity.

Officer of the North Leitrim Development Group (Dublin) photographed at Stephen's Green by John Keaney. Left to Right: Dermott Layden, Pat Fox, Capt. Seamus Fox, M.P.S.I. (chairman), Padraic White, Michael Sheridan. Regrettably the group's efficient secretary, Miss Emer Flynn, was not available for this picture.

