

Devoted to Leitrim and its People . . .

THE LEITRIM GUARDIAN

. . . Leitrim's Christmas Magazine

Editorial

Just over sixty years ago, Charles J. Dolan opened the pages of a weekly penny newspaper entitled *The Leitrim Guardian*—his aim, to enlighten the people of Leitrim on the policy of Sinn Fein: Ireland was then in need.

This Christmas we hurl back the pages of history to unfold the chapters of our new annual magazine, entitled *The Leitrim Guardian*—our aim, to enlighten the people of Ireland on the beauty and glory of our county: Leitrim is now in need.

And what are the needs of Leitrim in 1968? Our needs are great and urgent.

We need recognition: recognition as an old and separate entity which gave transfusions to Mother Ireland whenever she lay bleeding, and seek now to have her bestow in return some of the affection afforded adopted sons. The sores of emigration and unemployment continue within our boundaries to an extent which threatens our ultimate existence. It would appear that national thinking rejoices at such a prospect and is pondering, even now, at achieving the subjugation by deprivation, which Cromwell failed to achieve by the sword. Leitrim men who stood staunch and true to welcome O'Sullivan Beare, will stand firm and faithful again to welcome a more earnest approach to their salvation.

The elimination of the county boundary of

Leitrim, rendering its occupants refugees in their own land, cannot be countenanced. Based on pecuniary or administrative grounds it would be shameful to remove the allegiance one owes to one's county in the chain of traditional loyalties. The allegiance we owe to Ireland springs from that which is nurtured in the home, the parish and the county. To expect that same allegiance when deprived of either of these nurseries would be a reversal of Irish traditions as we understand them.

We are a rural county with rural traditions, Urbanization would be out of place in Leitrim. We need, therefore, a revitalization of the county's economy through its three main sources—Small Industries, Tourism and Afforestation. Neither source has been exploited to anywhere near its full potential—were they to be fully exploited, Leitrim people would enjoy not just frugal comfort but prosperity.

If we can be assured of a top priority rating for Leitrim in the Small Industries Programme, the policy of the Government, in this matter, could then be described as the greatest boost to the county by any of our native Governments, all of whom have sorely neglected us in the past. The Small Industries Programme is Mr. Colley's brainchild and his contribution to our pages is not necessarily a tribute to our efforts, but to the sincerity with which he is pursuing every opportunity

destined to render that programme a success. Such earnestness is commendable.

It would be an error to have Leitrim's tourist potential developed along the lines now accepted as conventional in this country. Ultra-modernism would be in conflict with what we have to offer. A deep-rooted preservation of all that's traditional is essential. Yet we cannot stand still: we must commercialize. We could have the establishing of dual-purpose folk villages throughout the county, somewhat along the lines of a similar village at Bunratty. Dual-purpose—creating an attraction for our tourists and providing an enlivenment of rural living for our own people. A fraternity of rural dwellers, living and working in harmony, would eliminate the loneliness which is driving our people afar. If the decadence of our rural communities is not arrested, urban development is futile.

With the most phenomenal afforestation growth in western Europe, Leitrim's forests are being harnessed solely for national development, with no thought or plan to have the people of the county share in this bonanza. Here there must be a plan devised to change mass Department planting to involve the inhabitants of the county and incite their active participation, ensuring continued ownership of their holdings.

Our Government can show further their faith in the future of Leitrim by decentralizing to the county their next Department. Space, property and a readily available labour force can render such a change less difficult than might be experienced elsewhere, and Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton, Ballinamore, Drumshanbo or Mohill provide a more pleasant environment, socially

and otherwise, than most outsiders care to admit.

To achieve a revival in the county, Leitrim people themselves must realize that there is no place here for parochial nationalism in itself, there must be unselfish co-operation from parish to parish, from town to town, from north to south. No marking time either by those amongst us who feel that their destinies lie elsewhere. Perhaps living and working in Leitrim is not everybody's piece of cake, but then Dr. Adenauer counselled those who are ambitious, "that they can best get ahead by making themselves important in the job at hand. Then they will not have to look for the next higher job—it will be offered to them." We can all benefit by this philosophy. Leaders are needed and everyone who can provide leadership must be prevailed upon to do so. There are those, too, who chide with the thoughts of a revitalized Leitrim for fear of the competition it could bring, thus catapulting some from their lofty pedestals, where they extract from those whom they purport to serve, an existence suitable to themselves alone. These have no regard to their failure to inspire, and how deplorable when the providing of inspiration is their medium.

"I refuse to accept that man is the flotsam and jetsam on the river of life which surrounds him," said Martin Luther King. Neither must Leitrim people accept such a dictum, but placing their inherent faith in their omnipotent Creator, realize that if their soil is dauby and their environment lonely, they have been endowed too with courage, intelligence and talent, with which to mould the flotsam and jetsam of their existence into an Ark of all-conquering fruitfulness.

*When shadows fall on a lonesome floor,
And night air stir in the big ash tree,
I sit with myself at the open door,
And cry for the childer that's gone from me.*

—Teresa Brayton.