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Letter from Ireland, 1963

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Letter From Ireland, 1969

In this country we like to think that we are a little behind the times, and indeed use this as part of our tourist attraction. While this may be true in some respects of the 'ould country', we have not escaped some of the less comforting attitudes of the post-war world. This year we have had our ration of student unrest, strikes, 'sit-ins' and demonstrations of various kinds with demands for student voice in management. No serious interruptions of work have, as yet, occurred because of good Management and of a realization by the students that their studies are heavily State subsidised. Small groups of students can be very vociferous but perhaps a little dissemination of Maoist writings may bring us up to date with world thinking in this country.

The merger of the two Universities (National University of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin), whilst logical on paper, has not yet progressed beyond the discussion stage. It is no doubt inevitable that Dublin should have one large University, and that Cork and Galway Colleges should prepare for autonomy. This of course brought renewed demands from Limerick (third largest city) for a University also. The latter demands may well be met by the proposed School of Technology. Our population can hardly support another University, but education is more lacking at the Vocational level, and much time and money is being spent on improving this latter.

Ireland no less than any other country suffered much heart searching following the publication of the Papal Encyclical "de Humanae Vitae". Contraceptives had never been on sale in this country, but the 'anovulants' were being prescribed fairly

freely by doctors in anticipation of a relaxation of the traditional laws of the Church on family planning. However, the statement of the Irish Archbishops was directly in line with the Papal pronouncement, and was given to us as a Lenten Pastoral. Whilst medical men may have had some problems in dealing with hard cases, the solution came in a way which was predictable for this country. The patient either accepted the Encyclical and did not ask for the pill, or because the side effects were so well discussed in the Press refused the treatment. We await the Synod of Bishops in the Autumn of this year, in the hope that some consideration will be given to the fact that the ideals of the Encyclical are very hard to live up to, even by those in good conscience.

One cannot close without mentioning the latest situation in the Health Services. Recently the Ministry of Health has offered an annual capitation fee to all practitioners for patient attendance. This is to replace the mixed private practice and State dispensary system. Neither the Medical Association nor the Medical Union accept this plan, but press for a fee per item of service. How agreement will come is not yet evident, but what is very plain to see is that we are hard put to pay for the services as they are, and a great increase in the cost will be almost too much for us. We have a Voluntary Health Insurance, rather like the Blue Cross, and this does help considerably for the middle income group.

Robert F. O'Donoghue
Master-General
Irish Guild of St. Luke, SS. Cosmas
& Damion

Cork May 1969