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**DUBLIN OPINIONS: DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS
AND THE CRISIS OF THE FIFTIES**

Tom Garvin

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ABSTRACT

DUBLIN OPINIONS: DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS AND THE CRISIS OF THE FIFTIES

Dublin journalism was well served by three national newspapers and a coterie of weeklies and irregular publications during the period 1948-1962. In this paper, the different “takes” on the perceived crisis in the Irish economy and polity of the mid-fifties are analysed. It is concluded that the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* adhered to almost identical positions of agrarian fundamentalism until very late on during this crucial decade in Ireland’s political and economic development. It is also argued that the case for non-farm employment as Ireland’s true future was most consistently and energetically made by the *Irish Press*, essentially the mouthpiece of Sean Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce from 1945 to 1948, 1951 to 1954, 1957 to 1959 and Taoiseach thereafter. The awareness that Ireland had to diversify economically was behind the foundation in 1949-50 of the Industrial Development Authority under the auspices of Daniel Morrissey of Fine Gael. All major parties were deeply divided on the issue of economic development. It is also concluded that the sense of a real social and cultural crisis was intense at the time, and the awareness that an old Ireland had to die that a new one might be born was strong.

Publication information

Chapter One of a forthcoming book, provisionally entitled *Dublin Opinions: Dublin Newspapers and the Crisis of the Fifties*, it was the keynote paper at the conference “Politics, Economy and Society: Irish Developmentalism, 1958-2008”, held at University College Dublin on 12 March 2009. This was a joint IBIS-School of Politics and International Relations event to mark the contribution of Professor Tom Garvin to UCD and to the political science community.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Tom Garvin is Emeritus Professor of Politics at UCD. He has published extensively on Irish politics, and is the author of *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Gill and Macmillan, 1981), *Nationalist revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Clarendon Press, 1987) and *1922: the birth of Irish democracy* (Gill and Macmillan, 1996). His *Preventing the future: why was Ireland so poor for so long?* was published by Gill and Macmillan in 2004. His forthcoming biography of Sean Lemass is to be published by the Royal Irish Academy in late 2009. He is at present finishing a book on newspapers and public opinion in 1950s Ireland.

DUBLIN OPINIONS: DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS AND THE CRISIS OF THE FIFTIES

Tom Garvin

DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS IN THE POST-WAR WORLD 1948-1962

Dublin daily journalism, in the effective absence of radio and TV, was well served by three national newspapers, the *Irish Press*, *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* during the era 1945-1962. While the *Irish Press* was obviously and explicitly the mouthpiece of Fianna Fáil and echo of Sean Lemass, theoretically the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* were non-partisan. In reality the *Independent* was Fine Gael. As a middle-class newspaper that was more popular than its political ally the *Indo* had to moderate its leanings and be respectful to Fianna Fáil opinion, a stance which the *Press* did not reciprocate in its attitudes to Fine Gael. The *Irish Times* was the heir to the unionist tradition in the Republic. It was already in the process of transforming itself into a liberal nationalist paper, but had not quite got there yet. Even in the fifties, the *Times* had clearly developed a loyalty to the Dublin state, and was beginning to develop cautiously a liberal line on Partition and the Catholic Church. The *Independent* had by far the largest circulation, followed by the *Press*, while the *Times* circulation was tiny. The *Independent* was also by far the richest paper. The *Press* group was the youngest of the three, the *Irish Press* dating only from 1931. There was, and still is, a niche for a gadfly press in Dublin, chief among these at that time were the *Bell*, founded by Sean O'Faoláin, the *Leader*, a survivor from the pre-revolutionary period, the impoverished monthly national communist *Irish Democrat* of London and the weekly *Standard*, a paper which reflected most completely the confused ideological currents of the Irish Catholicism of the time.

FARMING AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

One immediate and evident contrast between the three Dublin dailies was their attitude to farming. Both the *Times* and the *Independent* assumed that the economic future of the Republic was agrarian. Articles on agriculture, the reluctance of the young to go into farming and the need for agricultural education were commonplace. Both papers had large-farm readership; the old thirties argument about the cow versus the plough had already been settled in the former's favour. In stark contrast the *Press*, on the other hand, was determinedly pro-industry, while remaining equally determinedly nostalgic about the small-farm ancestry of its readers; generally it ignored farming in favour of industry and vocational training. It never discussed farming as a serious career choice. Behind the *Press* there lurked the strong views of Sean Lemass, who knew little about farming and cared less.

Lemass argued that urban and rural interests were not opposed, but complementary, but he argued that until the system of land use was changed so as to generate more employment and industries started up to absorb the rural surplus population,

depression was likely to be endemic. In practice he acted during his years in office as Minister for Industry and Commerce and later Taoiseach as though the long-term stagnating effects of the Land Acts meant that farming would have to be bypassed by industrial development. In January 1948, Lemass remarked in the pages of the *Press* that Fianna Fáil was not a class party, but a “workers’ party.”¹ By this he seems to have meant a pretty inclusive sense of the term “worker”, including in the term members of the nascent Irish national business class. He saw the *Press* as the voice of an emergent cross-class patriotic alliance that transcended sectional interests. All three papers published articles on agriculture, but the *Independent* and the *Times* were far more likely to publish articles of interest to more commercial farmers who wished to use “scientific methods”. This is not to say that the two papers neglected industry, but rather to note that they did not share the *Press* view that industrialisation was the only real way out of the trap of stagnation. Lemass wanted to bypass completely what he saw as the morass of Irish agriculture.

In March 1948 the *Independent* carried an editorial commenting on an official report on the condition of Irish land. It had huge potential for pasture production, but much of it lay unused.² By way of illustration in May 1949 the paper pointed out that the pig industry had fed the country in 1931 and had provided pig products and live pigs for export. According to the *Indo*, the Government had subsequently virtually regulated the pig industry to death.³ Rural life was commonly seen as superior to urban life but the young disagreed, and expressed that disagreement with their feet. Despite that verdict, agriculture was seen as so central that nearly all of Marshall Aid funds were sunk in it. The *Times* commented in 1950 that the Inter-Party Government also had a strong agrarian bias, despite the fact that farmers used primitive methods. Later it noted that much agricultural land was falling into waste.⁴ Not many educational scholarships were offered young people, and those that were offered were highly skewed toward agriculture, despite the fact that student demand was for off-farm skills. In July 1951 the new Fianna Fáil Minister for Agriculture commented on the low educational attainments of Irish farmers:

The farmers in the past paid very little attention to a boy who was going to occupy the farm, immediately he was able to take a fork in his hand he was put out on the land. The money the farmer had saved was spent on the education of other members of the family and that was why they had not had the progress in agriculture that they should have had in this country—because the farmers were being denied the education to which they were entitled.⁵

In one of his rare references to farming, Lemass suggested in January 1952 that Irish agriculture was old-fashioned. He thought that eventually a Darwinian process

¹ *Irish Press*, January 10, 1948.

² *Irish Independent*, March 11, 1949.

³ *Irish Independent*, May 21, 1949.

⁴ *Irish Times*, May 18, September 26, 1950.

⁵ *Irish Times*, July 23, 1951.

of the elimination of the unfit would lead to a modern agriculture.⁶ Later in the month the *Times* wailed "On almost every side of agricultural life there is the same melancholy story of decay; but there is no sign that the decline will be arrested."⁷ In July 1953 the *Press* editorialised to the effect that all the efforts at industrialisation behind tariff and quota protection had just about managed to absorb the surplus population leaving the land. As agriculture mechanised, rural employment would shrink and rural productivity would grow.⁸ A now vicariously frightening letter was published in the *Irish Times* in September 1952: "During the last hundred years we have been living on our capital of phosphorus in the soil, which is now in a great many areas almost exhausted." Other vital minerals were also disappearing. The cattle were starving amid apparent plenty. In February 1953 the London *Economist* commented on the Irish political paralysis in the face of certain obviously necessary decisions which were being avoided. Irish agricultural production had been stagnant for a century, it claimed.⁹ In February 1954 the OECD observed that Ireland's agricultural output had not yet recovered to the level of 1929.¹⁰ But Cardinal D'Alton intoned:

Those who laboured on the land were more closely in touch than others with nature in its various moods, and could be more in touch with God, Whose providence was clearly discernible in the yearly round of the seasons.¹¹

A thoughtful editorial in the *Times* in July noted that skilled workers and professionals were emigrating, and were uninterested in leading the nation:

[The power of the Big House] like its shattered stones passed into the hands of farmers and smallholders, who are only now, slowly and warily, beginning to come together out of the barren isolation which they enjoyed for so long. With a static agricultural production and a dwindling supply of labour, one wonders how unmixed a blessing the Land Acts really were.¹²

The *Times* referred to Ireland as "a nation marking time" some months later.¹³ As early as May 1954 the *Independent* noted that industry was developing faster than was agriculture.¹⁴ In June it reported a big slump even in processed agricultural products.¹⁵ The *Independent* also reported in the same month that agricultural scholarships were not being taken up, but the under-equipped vocational education

⁶ *Irish Times*, January 8, 1952.

⁷ *Irish Times*, January 22, 1952.

⁸ *Irish Press*, July 29, 1953.

⁹ *Irish Times*, February 10, 1953.

¹⁰ *Irish Independent*, February 13, 1954.

¹¹ *Irish Times*, February 16, 1954.

¹² *Irish Times*, July 7, 1954.

¹³ *Irish Times*, October 1, 1954.

¹⁴ *Irish Independent*, May 14, 1954.

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, June 15, 1954.

system could not keep up with the demand. Despite all these obvious straws in the wind, the paper announced in an extraordinarily defensive editorial a few days later that industrial development in Ireland had actually “reached its limit”, and more money would have to be poured into agriculture.¹⁶ In October, however, the *Indo* headlined a “Big Jump in Industry”, and a “Marked Industrial Expansion” of eight percent in 1953 as compared with 1952.¹⁷ The paper was suffering from intellectual schizophrenia. Alternatively, the paper was echoing a national condition of indecision. In March 1954 the *Press*, always more single-minded than the *Independent*, rebuked James Dillon, sometime Minister for Agriculture, for his ridiculing the prospects for industrialisation.¹⁸

The *Press* suggested in 1954 that the Land Acts lay behind the pathologies of Irish agriculture. It concluded by arguing that Irish agriculture would have to learn to compete.¹⁹ At almost the same time Bishop Lucey of Cork announced that it would be a mistake to raise the school leaving age from fourteen to fifteen or even older. It would have the very undesirable effect of making young men not want to be farmers.²⁰ Despite this kind of thinking, a slow earthquake was underway and the OEEC said in late 1954 that the country had experienced a “striking increase” in industrial output:

Ireland’s longstanding urban unemployment, which was aggravated by the minor recession of 1952, has been reduced to more accustomed proportions by a striking increase of industrial production. But the unemployment figures do not measure the full extent to which the Irish economy is at present unable to absorb the natural increase of the population since one person out of three emigrates. Some countries, because of overpopulation, look upon emigration as being in itself beneficial, but in the case of Ireland where the density of population has the effect of removing people early in their working lives, [it] now constitutes a serious obstacle to the development of the economy.²¹

The report added that Ireland had much unrealised industrial potential, particularly in the making of specialised products using local material content. In October 1955 the *Indo* published six articles on rural life that drew a rather pessimistic picture. In the first, it reported that there was no Irish tradition of peasant prosperity, there was a great wish for security, and, it claimed in a fascinating aside, there was a real fear of envy.²²

Fianna Fáil scepticism about Irish agriculture was articulated by Sean Moylan in May 1955 in his off-the-cuff remark to the effect that “many people who praise the

¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, June 25, 29, 1954.

¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, October 1, 1954.

¹⁸ *Irish Press*, March 9, 1954.

¹⁹ *Irish Press*, November 27, 1954.

²⁰ *Irish Times*, June 16, 1954.

²¹ *Irish Independent*, December 7, 1954.

²² *Irish Independent*, October 13, 1955.

dual purpose cow did not realise that in many herds we had a no-purpose cow if the profits had to be fed back in concentrates.”²³ In August 1956 the Catholic newspaper, the *Standard*, lamented:

Now the Irish, bitter and grumbling, leave Ireland to work in Britain because the farm-yards are too muddy, the villages too depressing, local transport too bad, wages too low, food prices too high, houses too few, work too scarce—under the Government they themselves elected freely, unhampered by any man, uninfluenced except by the common techniques which are the stock in trade of politicians everywhere—the mixture of promises and prejudices which by nature seems to succeed the highest ideas on all sides in the rigid and paralysing framework of the party system.²⁴

Hibernia, then the organ of the Knights of Columbanus, ran a revealing piece a little later in the year by Father Michael O’Carroll, a well-known Holy Ghost Fathers priest. The census had just indicated a new wave of emigration, and O’Carroll voiced an echo of an old fear of race death:

[In England Irish emigrants] are well-paid, they enjoy amenities they cannot have at home, they have larger opportunities for self-improvement and self-advancement. They are not hopelessly held back by barriers thrown up around certain classes and groups.

Irish society was unattractive and young people simply wanted to escape from it.²⁵

In November 1956 Martin Smyth wrote in the *Times* that many farmers were lazy and did the minimum of work on the land. Anticipating Raymond Crotty by a generation, he proposed a land tax that would be inversely related to productivity:

As long as these men control a large proportion of Ireland’s best land, and believe in this policy, they can effectively block the progress of the whole country, and this is exactly what they are doing at present.²⁶

Cyril McShane responded a week later in a brilliantly argued and empirically informed piece, arguing that farm output varied wildly, and a land tax was not politically feasible. The dual purpose cow existed because meat was only a secondary product. On small farms more cattle were reared than could ever be brought to maturity, so they had to be sold on to larger farms. These half-starved animals were the only ones the larger farmer could buy. Intensive feeding would be wasted on such animals, and they had to be got rid of at three or four years old. In such a market, efficient modern farming was pointless, was the devastating conclusion.²⁷ In March 1957, Martin Smyth pointed out that half of Irish farmers had no title deeds to their land, and it was difficult to get credit against Irish landholdings, partly because

²³ *Irish Press*, May 12, 1955.

²⁴ *Standard*, August 31, 1956.

²⁵ *Hibernia*, September 1956.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, November 1, 1956.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, November 8, 1956.

of this legal lacuna.²⁸ Jack Lynch, now Minister for Education, asserted that education had been seen for too long as irrelevant to farm life.

Even as late as 1959, the *Independent* stuck to its agrarian guns, editorialising "... the land is, and must long remain, the chief source of livelihood for our people."²⁹ Dillon defended the farmer valiantly in July, 1959, claiming that Irish farmers could double their output if incentives to do so existed. He also revived the old plough versus the cow or farmer versus rancher division that had underlain the Fianna Fáil versus Fine Gael cleavage in the 1930s. The *Irish Times* finally changed sides, specifically rejecting the view that agriculture was the necessary basis for Irish economic progress, in 1959. On May 9, 1960 The *Independent* finally accepted openly for the first time that Ireland's industrial development would have to be given priority over agriculture in Government policy and economic leadership.³⁰

THE SLOW ACCEPTANCE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

Back in 1948, the idea that Ireland would have to become a successful exporting country, and that such success would mean far more than exporting cattle and food to Britain was only beginning to dawn on policy makers, journalists and the general public. In January 1949, Daniel Morrissey, in Lemass's traditional ministerial seat, declared the economy to be in good shape, with no external debt. "Our greatest need in relation to industry was the shortage of skilled technicians and trained executives."³¹ The new industrialists seem to have occasionally felt themselves to be unpopular. The national communist paper, the *Irish Democrat* spotted this weakness in the new and superficially successful Ireland of 1951.³² The new bourgeois Ireland was built on shaky psychological and material foundations:

To the superficial observer Éire today may seem more prosperous than at any time since the Treaty [of 1922]. Wealth in its *nouveau riche* form may be seen in many Irish towns; and Dublin particularly with its smart restaurants, chromium-plated pubs, shining American cars and well-filled luxury shops shows all the signs of solid bourgeois affluence (so long as you keep to the main streets and middle-class residential areas). To watch the smartly tweeded farmers' wives at Leopardstown Races or to observe a well-to-do Dublin businessman eating steaks in Jury's Hotel [in Dame Street] is to realise how triumphantly the Catholic middle class has arrived in Éire.

In reality Irish farm productivity had scarcely changed, the gap between rich and poor was widening and "the whole rickety structure of prices and luxury living for the middle class" was built on very shaky foundations. The *Irish Press* argued gen-

²⁸ *Irish Times*, March 28, 1957.

²⁹ *Irish Independent*, May 20, 1959.

³⁰ *Irish Independent*, May 9, 1960.

³¹ *Irish Independent*, January 19, 1949.

³² *Irish Democrat*, July 1951.

erally over the years for a wager on the strong: big farming, industry, the new and growing skilled working class and the new capitalist entrepreneurs. However, Irish industry remained solidly protectionist in the early fifties, and the Government was vacillating.

In opposition in 1949, de Valera obediently expressed in public his private doubts about the entire system of controls, tariffs and quota that his own party had built up. He put this in the context of the American drive toward freeing up European trade and spoke, not in Ireland, but in Strasbourg.³³ However, a fear of damaging the protected industries often surfaced. William Norton and Frank Aiken of Labour and Fianna Fáil voiced their unease in late 1949, opposing the idea of a European customs union.³⁴ Norton was a convinced industrialiser and protectionist. Having shelved the transatlantic air service as a waste of money in 1949, the Inter-Party Government proceeded in 1950 to close down the CIE heavy engineering project, another brainchild of Lemass. Lemass, a brilliant propagandist, reported some months later:

CIE fitters had tears in their eyes, at the sight of the finest machinery in the world going to loss. Must we always be satisfied with assembling here parts from Britain? Were we not going to get on to the manufacturing process some time?³⁵

In March 1950 Morrissey announced in effect that the new Industrial Development Authority (IDA) was to plan future industrialisation.³⁶ There was some vague sense in the papers of the potential of this new agency. However, Lemass took time to grasp its importance; he distrusted its Fine Gael provenance. The man who seems to have really understood its significance was Morrissey; he pointed out that there was very little information about Irish industry available even to industrialists themselves, and the first job of the IDA would be to collect such information and make it available. Lemass changed his tune when he returned to Government in 1951.³⁷ Back in office for more than a year in late 1952, Lemass remarked that the country was indeed running down its external assets and they would be all gone in a few years. Then there would be a crisis. However, the Fianna Fáil government would be ready for it. It was increasing investment in cement, sugar, shipping and electrical plant. Half of the capital was being provided from private sources.³⁸ In early 1952 the *Times* feared a reversion to protectionism and self-sufficiency, arguing that the country would have to brave the risks of modern international trade if it were ever to escape poverty.³⁹

³³ *Irish Press*, September 3, 1949.

³⁴ *Irish Times*, September 3, 1949.

³⁵ *Irish Press*, May 31, 1950.

³⁶ *Irish Times*, March 10, 1950.

³⁷ Brian Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991, 82-83.

³⁸ *Irish Press*, November 8, 1952.

³⁹ *Irish Times*, January 18, 1952.

In June 1953 Lemass was positively gung-ho about Irish developmental prospects; he spoke about investment in infrastructure: electricity, land improvement, housing, health, and education.⁴⁰ Repeatedly he gave the public ideological pep talks, in an almost single-handed attempt to change the psychology of the people from one of passivity to one that encouraged energy and optimism.⁴¹ More soberly, a *Press* editorial noted that industrial development since 1932 had only just about absorbed the surplus labour leaving agriculture as agriculture mechanised and increased production while shrinking employment.⁴² Despite all the bad news, something was indeed changing in an almost underground way in the Republic of Ireland. As early as 1953, Aknefton (Smyllie) of the *Times* wrote:

[The business pages of newspapers] reflect the state of growth of Irish industry and latterly have shown, beyond all doubt, a development which is new in so far as this country is concerned—the emergence into full prominence of a managerial class as the leaders of Irish trade, industry and commerce.

However, Irish industry was still intellectually backward, and Irish managers continued to be reluctant to discuss innovative changes with their workers.⁴³ The *Indo* relieved itself of the strange opinion in June 1954 that Irish industry had developed to its absolute limit and therefore future investment should be in agriculture.⁴⁴ The cacophony and disunity were extraordinary; in July 1954 Norton lamented the lack of technical skills necessary for the new industrial ventures.⁴⁵ Erskine Childers remarked that greater productivity required a change of attitude on the part of three fourths of the population, changes in the educational system and a campaign of instilling confidence in the future.⁴⁶

The *Independent*, in December 1954, reported that France had moved away from the “strangle” of protective tariffs.⁴⁷ There was a general, if rather confused, sense of new possibilities, although not yet a consensus as to what the general lines of policy should be; nor did the will quite yet exist for a genuine new departure. People were evidently hunting around for new ideas. In July 1955, a well-known economist opined that an adventurous minority of industrial concerns were already moving cautiously but bravely into the export markets.⁴⁸ Lemass, in opposition in 1955, outlined his own thinking. The *Press* headlined his speech and reported that his plan was to create 100,000 jobs in five years by means of state-led private enterprise:

⁴⁰ *Irish Press*, June 27, 1953.

⁴¹ *Irish Press*, June 27, 1953.

⁴² *Irish Press*, July 20, 1953.

⁴³ *Irish Times*, October 10, 1953.

⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, June 29, 1954.

⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, July 23, 1954.

⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, September 14, 1954.

⁴⁷ *Irish Independent*, December 15, 1954.

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, July 13, 1955.

In other words our view is that the Government must carry the main burden in the first instance, but must so arrange its programme that it can gradually fade out of the picture leaving private economic activity the main basis of national prosperity. It is clear that the scale of the public expenditure which will be required to bring national outlay to full employment within five years will be very considerable. Fianna Fáil reject the view, which is sometimes propagated in the press and elsewhere, that the sole object of Government policy should be to keep public expenditure at the lowest possible level.⁴⁹

The second Inter-Party Government's Morrissey was attempting to tiptoe around the protectionist mentality of some senior civil servants and many, but not all, of the manufacturers. In this he had the sympathetic hearing of Gerard Sweetman, who had a background in economics and who listened also to Whitaker, Lynch and others.⁵⁰ Morrissey went on to remark, rather alarmingly, that Britain and Northern Ireland were attracting plenty of American investment, while the Republic was not. The fancy-free Americans merely took one look at the apparent hostility to capital in the Republic and went elsewhere. Government-imposed price controls, survivals of wartime, were another turn-off. There was a general air of entrepreneurial frustration in the country, despite Lemass's boosterism. In the same month, Joseph Griffin, a well-known Dublin businessman, published a well-publicised paper on the significance of the price structure in the economy of the country. He had an early version of Cathal Guiomar's "designer economy" in mind. He argued that Irish economic success, such as it was, occurred despite the economic and political framework in which it had to operate. The Irish had an "underdeveloped country and the potential for an expanding economy and population." "Only an ideal was lacking."⁵¹

In January 1955 Norton was in the United States wooing American investment. He expressed willingness to offer tax concessions to foreign investors and the old protectionist psychology, together with the classic republican distrust of foreign capital and "big business" was visibly fading away.⁵² In February 1956 Costello urged encouragement of foreign investment, but only for export industries, a proposition that Lemass was to echo faithfully a year later.⁵³ The economic crash of 1956 was now on its way and the population was shrinking as emigration reached record levels and even the middle class were leaving. The *Press* announced "Emigration of Professional Groups Deplored."⁵⁴ There was now a slowly growing consensus between all the political leaders that something would have to be done, involving foreign investment, serious cultural change and educational development. Education was not really highlighted; hindsight wisdom tells us that this was part of a general pattern that was characteristic of the decade; education could only expand through private

⁴⁹ *Irish Press*, October 12, 1955.

⁵⁰ *Irish Press*, November 3, 1955.

⁵¹ *Irish Press*, November 16, 1955.

⁵² *Irish Times*, January 10, 13, 17, 1956.

⁵³ *Irish Press*, February 8, 1956.

⁵⁴ *Irish Press*, June 18, 1956.

effort and by stealth.⁵⁵ In December, the *Times* announced that 1956 had been “one of the worst years which this State has experienced.”⁵⁶

NEW DEPARTURES

Common Europe was coming and the long Irish love affair with Europe was beginning. In 1957, a businessman said that Ireland could not afford to stay out of the coming Common Market. People who had been protected in their industries and who had never exported were getting “too loudmouthed”.⁵⁷ Fianna Fáil swept back into power in March 1957. In April it was reported that Hungarian refugees, horrified by Irish poverty, were going back to tyranny in Hungary. Lemass growled again: “Those who are still pulling long faces and making gloomy forecasts about the future, will look just as foolish, when the future arrives, as the Jeremiahs of the past.”⁵⁸ He then announced that the once sacred Control of Manufactures Acts were to be amended and, in a silent tribute to the power of vested interests in post-war Ireland, an incredible twelve years after the end of the Second World War, war-time price controls were to be abolished. James Ryan admitted that abolition had been opposed by many in Fianna Fáil; for electoral purposes controls could be represented as protecting the poor against the rich.⁵⁹ John Conroy of the ITGWU, argued noisily that controls didn’t work.⁶⁰ As usual, a step had been blocked for years by what amounted to a conspiracy between backbenchers, employers and unions against the public interest. In August, Lemass claimed that foreign firms were beginning to wake up to the productive potential of Ireland.⁶¹ He began to emphasise a new theme in 1957, that of efficiency in production.⁶²

A few weeks later, almost as if on cue, the OECD recommended that the Irish go in for more private and less public productive investment while being more supportive of business. Government should also afford the maximum scope to make profits and boost production. Secondly, public funds should be directed less at social investment. Dependence on the British market should be lessened by active search for other foreign markets.⁶³ In February 1958, the *Press* observed that industrialists were reluctant to hire technicians. Jack Lynch commented that Irish people saw no connection between education and the capacity to earn a living.⁶⁴ The president of

⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, October 2, 1956.

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, December 14, 1956.

⁵⁷ *Irish Press*, February 22, 1957.

⁵⁸ *Irish Press*, May 27, 1957.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Irish Press*, May 31, 1957.

⁶¹ *Irish Times*, August 22, 1957.

⁶² *Irish Press*, October 23, 1957. See also, *Irish Press*, September 25, 1957.

⁶³ *Irish Press*, December 23, 1957.

⁶⁴ *Irish Press*, February 11, 1958.

the FII pointed out that Irish output of technically trained people per head of population was one-quarter of Britain's, one-tenth of America's and one eighteenth that of the Soviet Union.⁶⁵

In March 1958 Lemass said that whatever free trade regime emerged from the negotiations going on in Europe, the Irish would have to get used to the idea of working in an internationalised economy.⁶⁶ Whitaker's *Economic Development* was saying what a very large proportion of the population wanted to hear from Government: that a new departure was overdue; in his case, the people were hearing it from a source they trusted; the politicians were forced to hide behind the civil servants. The newspapers had gradually converged on a similar position regardless of their traditional allegiances or, in the cases of the *Times* and *Indo*, their deep-rooted commitment to agrarianism. There was a general sense of change occurring and being inevitable and the overwhelming necessity of cultural change in particular to cope with the economic shifts that were about to happen. Joseph Griffin said with an air of new hope in November 1958, with reference to Whitaker's team and their White Paper outlining a four year plan for economic expansion:

We in Ireland are beginning—only beginning—to throw off the pall of gloom that has been darkening our days, confusing our minds and our policies, and distracting our intelligence and our energies. I sense it in many walks of life... The doctrine of our poverty in material resources continues to plague and debilitate our people like a dark and brooding mediaeval superstition. Our educational system has not done enough to dispel it. It is not merely among workers or small farmers or the little people of the country that this doctrine survives, but among the educated in business and commerce in industry and agriculture, in public administration and, alas, in our educational institutions. This doctrine of poverty destroys hope and where there is no hope there is no courage. Instead there is a sort of counter superstition. This myth of our [inevitable] poverty must at all costs be destroyed.⁶⁷

In July 1959, the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, with exquisite timing, announced:

We have now the element of an accepted national economic policy. The fact that organisations representative of every economic interest accepted and supported the Government's economic programme is a splendid beginning.⁶⁸

The economy began to grow in 1957-58, and by 1959 it was becoming obvious that a benign syndrome of economic improvement and growing public optimism was occurring. The *Times* editorialised in November that Irish industry's resistance to free trade was now finally fading. However, the paper also emphasised that such resistance would have been very determined in 1949, and would very likely have been successful; protection would itself have been politically protected ten years earlier.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Irish Press*, February 14, 1958.

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, March 24, 1958.

⁶⁷ *Irish Press*, November 12, 1958.

⁶⁸ *Irish Press*, July 13, 1959, direct speech restored.

⁶⁹ *Irish Times*, November 7, 1959.

The Third Report of the Capital Advisory Committee under Leydon reported at the same time and listed three serious weaknesses: poor education, a lack of enterprise, and a tendency to substitute subsidies for effort. Most capital investment was in effect redistributive and only very partly productive: “standards of consumption are pushed up toward the British level, but real income per head is little more than half that in Britain; private savings are low.”⁷⁰

In January 1960, Lemass declared it to be a critical year. The Irish would have to learn new markets and become internationally competitive.⁷¹ DA Hegarty of Dublin Port and Docks Board made a similar point at about the same time. The Irish were far too insular. Irish management techniques were utterly obsolete and self-defeating. Employer/worker relationships, the training of managers and work study were non-existent or extremely primitive. Europe had developed a “new industrial thinking” and this had resulted in an “unparalleled prosperity.”⁷² There was a general sense that Ireland’s problems were psychological and cultural rather than material or structural. An inherited sense of second-rate status, inherited from the days of empire, reinforced a strong tendency to be content with mediocre performance. Things were, however changing; by 1960 Ireland was waking up from what many contemporary commentators saw as being a very long sleep.

⁷⁰ *Irish Independent*, November 26, 1958.

⁷¹ *Irish Independent*, January 15, 1960.

⁷² *Irish Independent*, January 28, 1960.