

**Mr. Keane has
no time for
Irish**

Dear Sir,—Mr. Keane is at pains to clear his patriotic reputation, and even says that "no real Irishman wants to see the abolition of Irish," but he makes it clear in a number of references that he has no time for Irish and, if he would not abolish it, he would certainly allow it a quiet death.

Perhaps the main contention of the article is that all this Irish—I meet mighty little of it myself—though I am on the look-out for it—is foisted on a long-suffering people by a small group of fanatics (I wonder who they are?) and that the people should be given a chance by referendum to voice their real views, which are, of course, anti-Irish, dar le J. B. Keane.

Surely such a vote was taken last October when this very issue was practically the only one before the people in the general election? I don't see any point in pursuing that matter any further.

I submit that the expression "Compulsory Irish" is a loaded term disingenuously used by those who oppose the basic object of the restoration of Irish as a spoken language in this country. All school subjects are compulsory as far as the children are concerned, and we are all obliged to speak compulsory English every day, whether we like it or not!

Given that Irish is an official language of the State—and no language can survive long without official recognition—then, naturally, public officials are supposed to know it and, personally, my experience has been that requirements in this matter are reduced in many cases to a vestigial minimum, and I fear that the tear-jerking pen-pictures of brilliant men (gan Ghaeilge) being hounded onto the emigrant ship while the job they should have had is given to a basthoon from the Gaeltacht, are about as remote from the truth as—well—a People's Democracy.

The question "what use is Irish," really betrays a person, for it means that he has never got beyond thinking in commercial terms, important though these may be in the matter of foreign languages. In fact, our men in the Congo (they seem to come into everything) did find Irish useful—as an unbreakable military code—and quite recently I noticed it used to good effect during negotiations between some Irish people and some Germans: the latter had their secret code, German, but so had we! But these are details.

The founding fathers of the Irish State did not set down the revival of Irish as one of their chief objectives for small reasons but for great ones, and these can be found in many publications of the Gaelic League and elsewhere.

Finally, I fear I must offend against Mr. Keane's dictum by signing my name in Irish, even though it is in English on my birth certificate. I have been doing this for many years, ever since I became convinced, after giving the matter some thought, that Irish was of the utmost importance in our national life. I must confess that so far this procedure has not yielded any profit!

Yours,

SEAN DE BHULBH

An Neidin.

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