COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION FASHION PARADES MUST END

The country is in a mess, not one created by ordinary people, the people who pay their taxes, but as a direct result of appalling management of our economy by highly-paid people, with the co-operation of many of the elected representatives who looked after their own interests and those of the wealthy who supported them, allied to bad planning and poor decisions. They should have looked after the interests of the people by and for whom they were elected and provided a much higher level of skills in managing national affairs. If the Government had made even a half- decent effort it would not now be necessary to savage the poor in an effort to raise extra funds by taking in more in tax.

However, we are now faced with doing what we can to help ourselves and there are many ways in which we can do this during the current economic crisis. For a start it would seem obvious that we must live within our means, of course many do.

First Communions and Confirmations are coming shortly and it would be helpful if a school/church smock or gown could be worn over everyday clothes for the occasion. This smock or gown could then be passed on each year by the school to the next class, reducing the cost for families.

The Sacraments are after all free to families. What costs families dear is what amounts to a fashion parade, which is grand for those who can afford it but crippling for families on the minimum wage or Social Welfare. Paradoxically, it is those who can least afford it, who spend most.

It is time to call a halt to this situation. It has been discussed for several years. There is no justification for this system, which causes so much stress, strain, upset, family difficulties and financial problems. Why is it continuing, who is benefiting most from it? Certainly not the families who are subjected to the pressures from it which they cannot bear.

No matter what I say, it is likely that some families will approach moneylenders and pay high rates of interest rates on a loan taken out for these events. I have met mothers paying back 30%, 35% and 40% interest, but some moneylenders can charge as much as 187% legally. The Society of St.Vincent De Paul can help! If you must get a loan, use the Credit Union where we can help guarantee a loan for you. They charge under 10%. Do get involved with your Credit Union. Those who are in difficulties, who need a loan, will save a lot of money in the long run. Do not get involved with moneylenders.

There is much that is wrong with and in our country at the moment.

It seems to me that our country is badly served by some of our elected representatives, who appear to get drunk with power and display very little knowledge of poverty or sympathy for families losing their homes. It would be very interesting to know exactly what advice top civil servants provided the Government with and what in turn the Government did with this. Past Governments have negotiated us into a position in Europe where our farmers are paid not to farm some land. Our fishing industry is sinking into an abyss and we seem to have a very unhealthy dependence on multi- nationals. Multi-nationals are great as long as you spoon feed them but we all know what happens when they get a better deal in some other country. Some of them just simply leave Ireland.

We can all help ourselves, our country, our children and the generations to come by buying Irish made goods. It is within our grasp to do away with a lot of the unemployment even if some of the money spent importing goods into this country was spent on our own produce there would be little enough unemployment here.

We must all of us support local business - buy Irish. You will tell me that buying Irish costs more! Yes it does, but it provides jobs. You give to charity willingly, well perhaps you could think of this as a sort of charity. You are after all helping our own people with employment. Think of those who have lost their homes or are in danger of doing so. Think of our children growing up, where will they find work? We can all of us help. There is hope, a lot of hope, if we stand together.