



LETTERS

Thank you, Michael, for your dreams

Friday, September 06, 2013

Recently, as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech and the march to Washington which precipitated the successful campaign for civil rights, I was reminded of TP O'Mahony's recent analysis of Michael Collins and his conclusion: 'Let the Big Fellow rest in peace... because I'm convinced there is nothing left to say.' (Irish Examiner Aug 26).

Our 50th anniversary celebration re-ignites Americans to embrace the spirit and vision of a man whose words and dream led his people and all of us further toward the freedom promised by our founding fathers when we gained our independence from Britain.

What utter poverty of spirit and narrowness of mind causes O'Mahony to focus solely on the women Collins might have spent the night with? When was the last time he read the Dáil Éireann Debates on the Irish Treaty, 19 December 1921, and absorbed Collins' passion and vision that the creation of the Irish Free State "gives us freedom, not the ultimate freedom that all nations desire and develop to, but the freedom to achieve it"? And has he ever read from Frank O'Connor's *The Big Fellow*: "The countryside Michael had seen in dreams, the people he had loved, the tradition which had been his inspiration — they had risen in the falling light and struck him dead". Is that not enough for any Irish man or woman or child to find the inspiration and challenge to continue the quest for complete freedom for all on the island of Ireland?

When my wife and I lived in Cork over the past decade, we took every one of our visiting American relatives and friends to Béal na Bláth, Ireland's shrine to freedom, just as in the same spirit we take every Irish visitor to Concord Bridge where the "shot heard 'round the world" started a chain of events that ultimately led to the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the creation of a new nation.

It may be true that much of "the seemingly unending stream of speculation is utterly pointless" on what Collins might do today, but an annual commemoration of the man without whom modern day Ireland would not exist is a small price to pay after hundreds of years without such freedom. His vision and passion and energy are all the more needed today for Ireland to be completely free and independent. If Mr TP O'Mahony ever visits my land of freedom (albeit imperfect) I highly recommend that he visit our memorials to freedom and perhaps takes in the fireworks display on Jul 4 as the Boston Pops celebrate our independence once again by playing the 1812 Overture.

I have a dream that my own country will continue to take steps to insure freedom for all its citizens and that the land of my ancestors might be reinvigorated by the dream and spirit displayed by that big fellow from Cork. Thank you, Martin and thank you, Michael, for such dreams provide the space to imagine the impossible!

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