

Dearth of influence at cabinet table

As Waterford struggles on so many fronts at present, can I just repeat, once again, something I have been saying for many years. There is no agenda against Waterford. Nobody hates us and nobody is constantly trying to do us down. But what everybody else is doing is looking after themselves and because we don't have people at the cabinet table we have nobody batting for Waterford at the highest political level where all major decisions are made.



Former Waterford TD and Government Minister Austin Deasy

Of course, the government is meant to look after the country in its entirety but all politics is local and senior politicians of the day have always, always, always looked after their own patch and their own home vote. It is simply the way things work. Almost since the inception of the State, Cork, Galway and Limerick have elected a succession of people who went on to be government ministers. They weren't always from the same party but most of the time down the years those three cities had a succession of people sitting at the cabinet table where and when all the big decisions were made.

In modern times, Waterford had Austin Deasy in the 1980s and Martin Cullen who had to resign in 2010 due to ill health. But they were exceptions to the rule when what we desperately needed was for them to be the norm. Incidentally, every time you drive up the M9 motorway to Dublin, give thanks to Martin Cullen. It's a long story but it wouldn't be there without him and the support he got from the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. If Waterford had been home to a succession of senior ministers over the years, Ardkeen Hospital wouldn't be without 24/7 cardiac care and other services.

There would be a university for the South East in Waterford with campuses in Kilkenny and Wexford and almost certainly there would be a thriving airport at Killowen just as there is in Kerry and Mayo where even jumbo jets can land and take off. What we've got to remember is that a major hospital, university and airport in Waterford would mean less business for similar services in other cities. There is only so much money available and everybody is chasing it. Where the money goes is decided by those at the cabinet table and if you are not at that top table you are always playing catch-up. Of the five major population cities, Waterford is the only one almost constantly absent from that vital place of decision.

As we used to put at the end of our geometry work back in the day, Quod Erat Demonstrandum which, loosely translated, means 'it has been demonstrated'