



Ard Fheis Special

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Chairman's address

Firstly I would like to welcome you all here to Citywest, for Fianna Fáil's 70th Ard Fheis. This Ard Fheis comes at a critical moment in the life of the Government. It is also a critical moment for individual Ógra members.

With election time bearing down hard, members will have an opportunity to make a substantial contribution. This can be done very soon and will make a significant impact. I know as a candidate myself that Ógra members are central to my own plans. So I would urge all of you to give serious consideration to the assistance you can give.

One of the main themes of the next year will be that of Active Citizenship. Ógra members are well aware of An Taoiseach's great interest in this topical subject. In an effort to increase understanding of this issue the National Youth Committee has decided to focus some attention on the whole area of Active Citizenship. We look forward to canvassing members views on various ways to foster civic responsibility and volunteerism.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally praise every Ógra member who was involved in this year's hugely successful 3rd level recruitment campaign. The record numbers that have been recruited are an example to the rest of Fianna Fáil. You have shown how a well organised, professional, focused campaign can have tremendous success if it is backed up by the hard work of Ógra members.

I would now like to wish you all a great Ard Fheis and I look forward to meeting some of you over the weekend.

Is mise le meas,
Barry Andrews TD



Barry Andrews TD

Leas Cathaoirleach's address



Anthony Kelly

Ar dtús, ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh gach éinne in Ógra go dtí an 70ú Ard Fheis. Ard Fheis rí-thábhachtach gan aon dabht agus is léir go mba chóir dúinn díospóireacht dáiríre a bheith again.

Welcome to CitiWest to the 70th Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis. This is a very important Ard Fheis, particularly from an Ógra viewpoint.

We have had, this past number of weeks, our most successful third level recruitment to date. This is attributable to a number of factors, but none more so than the hard work of Ógra members in campuses throughout the country. It is important now, that all Ógra members play a major role in their communities. "Together, We're Better" is a phrase that Fine Gael and Labour might use, if only it were true. This, however, is the slogan for the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, set up by An Taoiseach and Úachtarán Fhianna Fáil, Bertie Ahern TD to ensure that the wealth of civic spirit and active participation already present in Ireland continues to grow and develop. We in Ógra must be at the helm in ensuring a stronger fairer Ireland. The gathering of Ógra members at this landmark Ard Fheis will be to discuss how we as an organization can become more involved with the community and play our part. I invite all members to an open discussion, which will take place at 8pm on Friday in the Rathcoole Suite.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to Fianna Fáil's former TD, MEP and Minister of State, Niall Andrews. Niall was ahead of his time in calling for increases in Overseas Aid. On behalf of Ógra, I wish to pass on our condolences to his wife Bernadette, his son, Fianna Fáil candidate in Dublin South East Chris, his brother David and his nephew, Cathaoirleach Ógra Barry Andrews TD.

Wishing you all an enjoyable Ard Fheis.

Is mise le meas,
Anthony Kelly

Carlow Ogra calls on young people to 'Register to Vote'

Ógra Fianna Fáil have launched a register to vote campaign entitled 'No Vote- No Voice' along with a website www.registertovote.ie. It is vital that young people get themselves on the electoral register as soon as they are eligible to vote according to local Ogra Fianna Fail spokesperson Brian Nolan. "We in Ogra believe that young people should register to vote as soon as they are entitled to".

"Our campaign, along with a brand new website called www.registertovote.ie, seeks to get more young people registered to vote. It will demonstrate to the public how important it is to become involved in the democratic process. It will also let young people know how to get their name on the electoral register and to check the register in areas where the register is available on line."

"The website includes an introduction from An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern and answers various questions people might have about voting. These questions include 'Who can vote?', 'Where to register?' and 'How to vote?'. This website will increase participation in future elections, thereby guaranteeing a more representative legislature to pass the laws that shape our nation" said Brian.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, Brian said he would encourage all young people to check out this new website and to register to vote in an effort to ensure that the voice of young people across the country is heard.



Minister Dick Roche helps launch the register to vote campaign

Also at the launch was The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dick Roche TD who said it is the responsibility of every citizen to make sure they are registered to vote. He added that 'Voting is extremely important because you are given the power to help decide the direction of your country. You may not always get the results that you want,

Dates for the diary

November 4th 70th Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis, City West Conference Centre, Dublin

November 17th-19th Deireadh Seachtaine sa Gaeltacht, Daingean, Co Ciarrai

December 1st Cairde Fáil Taoiseach's Dinner, City West Hotel. Dublin

February 16-18 2007 Fianna Fáil National Youth Conference, Galway

Thanks to all those who helped put this issue of Grassroots together. Special thanks to Aidan O'Gorman, Maeve Donlon, Roibeárd Ó Ruanaidh, Michael Shovlin, James O'Sullivan, Brian Jordan, Colman Byrne & Foresight Communications, Fianna Fáil Headquarters, the Fianna Fáil Press & Research Offices and the Ógra National Youth Committee.

As usual if you have any suggestions for stories please drop an email to communications@ogra.ie. Grassroots is always looking for photographs from Ógra events so if you do have any Ógra related pictures please do send them to us. The Ógra website can also be used for articles, notices or photos so feel free to in send any material that you would like added. Don't forget to keep an eye on www.ogra.ie for further information or send an email to ogra@fiannafail.ie if you would like to receive our regular Ógra E-Zine.

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Ógra Fianna Fáil's 'Pimp my Party' campaign captures the imagination of students



Members of the Kevin Barry Cumman at their campaign launch

Thanks to an innovative recruitment drive, Ógra Fianna Fáil has had its most successful 3rd level recruitment campaign in history. Ógra recruited more than 2,400 people through a national campaign which asked new members to 'Pimp my Party'.

This figure includes record levels of membership in University College Galway and University College Dublin, as well as new members in 27 other college campuses throughout the country.

In the past, senior party members such as Ministers Michael Martin and Seamus Brennan have first joined Fianna Fáil when in college. This trend has continued with a new generation of general election candidates such as Michael McGrath (Cork South Central and UCC) Thomas Byrne (Meath East and TCD), Lisa McDonald (Wexford and UCD) and Dara Calleary (Mayo

and TCD) first coming to prominence as members of Ógra Fianna Fáil 3rd level Cumann.

This successful campaign underlines the importance of 3rd level recruitment to Irish political parties as a source of new members and potential future candidates. Maintaining a vibrant and active youth wing has enabled young members to contribute their ideas and aid Fianna Fáil implement the policies that have been so instrumental in the country's growth over the past decade.

Let us hope that these new members can follow in the footsteps of those that have gone before them and cement Ógra's position as the party of preference for Ireland's future leaders and opinion makers. We might even have a future Taoiseach among the new 'Class of 2006'!

Fianna Fáil 5 a side Football Tournament

The Dublin Mid West team under the inspired captaincy of Pierce O'Leary won this year's 5-a-side Soccer Tournament in UCD on Saturday, 9th September. Organised by Dublin South's John Pollock this event has grown in popularity over the past few years and is now a firmly established part of the Fianna Fáil Calendar.

Post competition refreshments and a perpetual trophy for the winning team were provided thanks to the generous sponsorship of the German Irish Chamber of Commerce and celebrations carried on late into the night.

The tournament will be organised again next summer when it is hoped that this event will grow even bigger with many more teams participating.



To the victors the spoils!

Ógra presents Policy Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Child Protection

This summer the Supreme Court decision in the case of *C. v. Ireland* held the Irish laws on statutory rape were unconstitutional. While the Government introduced emergency legislation to fill the gap created by this decision, a Joint Oireachtas Committee was also established to examine the entire area of child protection. As the largest youth political movement in the country, the National Youth Committee felt that it was very important that Ógra make a substantial submission to this committee.

As demonstrated by the outpouring of feeling in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling, this is a highly sensitive area that cuts to the very core of Irish society. There are various related but competing interests where the State attempts to set down an age where it is acceptably for young people to engage in sexual relations but it was with this difficulty in mind that we made our submission.

Under the current regime two different ages of consent exist. If the young person is between 15 and 17, a maximum sentence of 5 years can be imposed on the accused, while if the young person is under 15 a maximum life sentence can be availed of by the courts.

We proposed that a single age of consent of 16 be introduced in any new legislation for two reasons. First, if this law is to be respected it is important that it reflect the sensibilities of modern Irish young people. After the age of 16 many begin to engage in sexual activities and an attempt to criminalise such behaviour is neither sensible nor enforceable, however it is correct for the State to set a minimum age at which society does not deem it objectionable. The reason why we felt it appropriate to allow a maximum life sentence be imposed in all cases is to give the judiciary the necessary flexibility to deal with hard cases, such as where a person over 15 is in an abusive relationship.

Throughout our submission we argued that only the small minority of statutory rape cases should ever appear in the courts.



Steven Dixon with Brian Lenihan T.D

Where two people below the age of consent engage in sexual relations, this should usually be a matter for the families and possibly the social services rather than the courts in the vast majority of cases. Where there is a large age gap between the parties or an abusive relationship exists, the sentencing guidelines should encourage the accused to plead guilty at an early stage so that the child does not have to appear in the intimidating surrounding of a court. When such cases do end up in court it is important that the victim be given every support while ensuring that miscarriages of justice do not occur. We also proposed that the use of video evidence be expanded such that any traumatic impact of the case is lessened.

These are some of the many issues that we dealt with in our submissions to the committee. It is important that Ógra continues to make its voice heard on all issues that affect Irish society so that our organisation has a real and substantial impact and the NYC would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Ógra units to work on any policy ideas they may have.

Editor's Note

The future is looking bright for Fianna Fail. After a number few weeks of ups and downs, the political climate has begun to stabilise. We are now facing an election stronger, better organised and more confident than we've ever been. In difficult times, our leader has continued to outshine the opposition and will enter next year's election as one of the most popular Taoisigh ever to face an electorate.

And what about Ogra? Well, with a record 2400 new members enlisted during the recent third level recruitment campaign, we continue to lead the way in youth politics. Along with the 'No Vote- No Voice' campaign, the 'Road Safety' campaign and various policy documents, it's an exciting time to be involved in Ogra Fianna Fail.

I hope you will enjoy this special Ard Fheis edition of Grassroots. Thanks to all those that have contributed including, Steven Dixon, Anthony Kelly, Robert Rooney, Peter Doris, all at foresight communication and Aidan and Maeve in HQ. Please don't hesitate in contacting me if you have any articles, photos or ideas for the next edition

Le gach dea-ghuí,
Brian Nolan

Should Irish be Compulsory for the Leaving Certificate?

By Brian Nolan

As many Ogra members prepare for the inaugural 'Cruinniú Eamon de Valera', a topic that will be widely discussed is whether or not Irish should be compulsory in school.

This question provokes widespread debate- mostly among the young people who study the language and the passionate members of the Irish language movement. The discussion usually involves misguided opinions about how best to promote, revive and reinvigorate one of the world's most romantic languages. However, one aspect on which all groups can agree on is that the language is in need of rejuvenation.

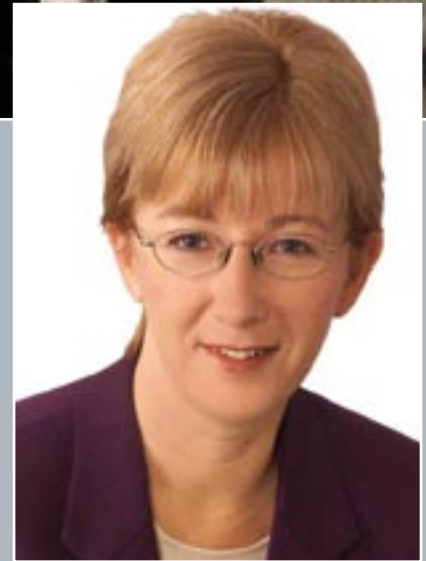
At a time when globalisation in the 21st century is making it difficult for local languages throughout the world to survive- how do we achieve this rejuvenation? There have been many laudable suggestions on how to breathe new life into Irish, the most controversial of which is the scrapping of compulsory Irish for the Leaving Certificate.

Nowadays studying Irish for the Leaving Certificate plays a significant role in keeping the language alive amongst the youth of today. Scrapping it would undoubtedly spell the death knell for our native tongue.

It is a common belief that doing away with compulsory Irish will lead to a sudden increase in the use of Irish among young people. It would be naïve to assume that this would happen. If it was decided that English should be dropped as one of the compulsory subjects for the Leaving Certificate, would it lead to a sudden passion for Shakespeare among Leaving Certificate students? It is highly unlikely.

Instead of talking about omitting compulsory Irish from the Leaving Certificate curriculum, we should be focussing on finding new ways to help students enjoy the experience of learning our national language. Focussing on inventive and innovative ways to increase a student's love of the language would be far more beneficial than doing the unthinkable and scrapping compulsory Irish for the Leaving Certificate. There is a misconception about what young people themselves think of compulsory Irish.

Enda Kenny was evidently under this false impression when he declared that compulsory Irish should be dropped for the Leaving Certificate. Kenny, and his misinformed advisors, were obviously surprised when public opinion turned against the plan, as



**Minister for Education
Mary Hannafin T.D**

indicated by large march on the Gael Headquarters and the subsequent opinion which showed two thirds young people favoured compulsory Irish.

It is time to engage logical debate on best to advance cause of our official language. Department Education needs re-evaluate how Irish is being taught schools throughout the state. We need a complete reappraisal of where we want our language to be in twenty, fifty and one hundred years time.

Until we have formulated a long term plan on the future of Irish in the education system, we can be sure that compulsory Irish is unquestionably beneficial to the teaching of the language and it will ensure that another generation of Irish citizens can enjoy the distinctive dialects and onomatopoeic vocabulary that make the language so wonderful.

Mar a deirtear- "Tír gan teanga, Tír gan anam"

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Active Citizenship in Ogra Fianna Fáil

By Robert Rooney

Charlie Haughey, our former leader, rarely described Fianna Fáil as a 'political party'. In keeping with the ideal of the leaders before him, he saw Fianna Fáil as a 'national movement'. It was a subtle but important difference. To our detractors, it was hubris. But it pointed to an important truth. Fianna Fáil possesses a vision for the country.

While we acknowledge that it is primarily through political action that we will solidify that vision, we must never think that politics by itself will build the Ireland that we seek. Politics can help build a community, but we need citizens to become active if we wish to build the Ireland our forefather's dreamt of.

The current situation in Ógra, however, seems to encourage a focus on internal party politics instead of an outward concentration on the community around us. Too often, the success or otherwise of individuals is determined by their performance in internal party elections, when in reality the criteria deployed by the electorate on such occasions is extraordinarily removed from the real world.

The ability to 'control' units of the organisation is infinitely more important than any policy difference. But we really seem to have lost sight of community leadership in our approach to local politics. When the founding fathers used the word "movement" instead of "party" they wanted to convey their aspirations of Fianna Fáil being more than just another 'political party'. I believe that the aims of Fianna Fáil were to be achieved not just in the local council chamber but also in development groups, boards of management and parish committees of various kinds.

For example, promotion of Irish language and culture, our second aim, is not just to be achieved by means of national legislation or the policies of local government, but also by community based activities.

Clearly, the most effective example of the promotion of Irish culture is the activities of the GAA. Conradh na Gaeilge and the many heritage groups up and down the country also spring to mind as examples of organisations in which Fianna Fáil



Charlie Haughey : rarely described Fianna Fáil as a 'political party'

members should naturally find themselves (and not just six months before an election!).

And while it is trite to say that there is a problem of apathy among young people towards the political process, we should be aware of the possibilities that active and sincere involvement in our community will bring with it.

When we come across other young people who are involved in their community and whose attitudes coincide with the vision that Fianna Fáil offers, we should not be afraid to invite them to join our movement.

As we move into the ninth decade, we would do well to remember the Taoiseach's oft-quoted message that the single greatest problem facing our country at the moment is a lack of community. We should take his lead and guard against self-obsession and ensure that we are doing our bit in our own communities.

Gaeltacht Weekend

Is amlaidh go mbeidh an chéad Cruinniú Eamon de Valera ar siúl ón 17ú go dtí an 19ú de Samhain sa Daingean i nGaeltacht Chiarraí. Beidh ar bhur gcumas ticéidí a cheannach ag an Ard Fheis i gceann cúpla seachtaine.

Níl aon dabht ach go mba chóir dúinn i bhfad Éireann níos mó béim a chur ar an Ghaeilge agus ar ár gcultúr agus beidh seans iontach againn é sin a dhéanamh ag an chruinniú. Beidh cainteanna agus díospóireacht againn as Gaeilge agus i mBéarla maidir lenár gcultúr, ár dteanga agus traidisiúin na tíre.

Dá bharr, beidh gach mac máthar ábalta taitneamh a fháil as an gCruinniú. Is léir go mbeidh craic iontach againn, seisiúiní agus bhféidir céilí chomh maith!

photo gallery



To join Ógra Fianna Fáil ring 1850 40 40 45, Email ogra@fiannafail.ie or log onto www.ogra.ie