

# The *Inform*er

**COLLINS**  
AND FINE  
GAEL TODAY



**WALK  
TALK  
FOR**

**PLUS**

*Decentralisation deconstructed ++ A study of  
private education ++ Policy Manifesto Update*

*The Official Ezine of Young Fine Gael  
September 2005*

## Editorial

**S**o the summer passed away as

***quickly as it came, and Christmas is only 15 weeks away, so before we start the Christmas shopping, let me congratulate all those who passed their exams and are back for another year, commiserate with those who passed and are now finished and pass my deepest sympathies to those who have long since finished college. Let me also welcome any new members reading their first edition of the 'YFG Informer' especially the thousands of freshers enrolling in colleges around the country, may your year be successful as it is long, and may YFG be there to help you along the way.***

Welcome to the fourth edition of the 'YFG Informer'. Inside, Michael Collins and what he means to Fine Gael, 'The Intruder' investigates President Pa O' Driscoll. Decentralisation, Private Education, Blogging and reports from the President, Vice President and all around the country among others.

But first let us reflect on the summer. Firstly to Summer school, which this year was hosted in the South East, namely, the Talbot Hotel, Wexford Town. Noted how the word 'sunny' was omitted. Well apart from the rain this was another tremendous success, hats off to Susie O' Connor once again for this. Secondly, the Talk campaign continued to pick up momentum, as this was rolled out in major urban areas across the country and 'memorably' a sponsored walk from Galway to Limerick. Finally, one of the most important developments laid down in YFG this summer were the foundations of the YFG Manifesto and 'Ideas Day'

In the last edition of the 'YFG Informer' I highlighted the need for YFG to realize its role and potential in policy creation, especially with a general election around the corner. Since then at a special policy meeting of the National Executive held in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, the Exec put in place plans to create a YFG Manifesto in time for the Fine Gael Ard Fheis next April. This will be produced over the next two to three months so please get you and your branch involved in committees and the many areas YFG has targeted in providing policy for Fine Gael to take under consideration. In my opinion it this role where Young Fine Gael can make its greatest impact in the world of Fine Gael, politics and current affairs in general.

Finally the next edition of the informer will be the bumper Christmas edition, so if you have any articles, please don't hesitate to send them to me at any time at [johnfitz1@gmail.com](mailto:johnfitz1@gmail.com). It is important that new faces start contributing to the e-zine. Between then keep watch for the all-new directory of contacts, the YFG Newsletter and any other major developments. Remember keep posted to [www.yfg.ie](http://www.yfg.ie) for all the latest news and never forget to hassle your branch officer-board for all the latest events and happenings. Also if anyone has any opinions on how communication within YFG can be improved, your suggestions are more than welcome.

***So with that, may the next few months be filled with study and hard work, as college and work get back into full swing after a summer of rich enjoyment, hot weather and great aspirations.***

**John Fitzpatrick**  
YFG Communications Officer



### Presidential Report



Well the Summer is over, the leaves are falling, I'm back in school, some are leaving college, some returning and some starting. That unfortunately means the unpleasant experience of house hunting, eating crap food and attending lectures that are as boring as the title suggests. The good side is the social life, the independence, meeting new friends and trying new things. My four years in UCC were fantastic; I hope those who are starting their college life have as good a time.

The Summer has been eventful for Young Fine Gael. Wexford was the venue for Summer School and it turned out to be a great weekend, leaving aside the weather and postponed soccer game. Sarah Moore was awarded for her work in Limerick and Wexford with a copy of Tim Pat Coogan's 'Michael Collins'. The next lucky winner of YFG "Member of the Month" (that term is not to be used literally) will receive another lovely biography of the Big Fella, a great incentive to get working for the party.

The 'Talk' campaign continued to spread across the country with events in all provinces. The highlight had to be the 'Walk for Talk', an effort to raise funds for AWARE. All those who took part in the trek from Galway to Limerick had a fantastic time, ending with a display of musical brilliance in the South Court Hotel, with Barry Walsh's rendition of "The Killers" topping the bill.

As we move into another Fresher's campaign the pressure will be on to recruit high numbers into the organisation. Along with the traditional colleges, a number of new colleges and ITs have been highlighted for branches. With an election only 18 or so months away we need to have a presence on every campus. YFG will also be holding a series of meetings over the coming months to prepare the ground for a manifesto to be presented to the senior party for inclusion in the election manifesto. The dates are included in this edition of 'The Informer' and are available on the website ([www.yfg.ie](http://www.yfg.ie)). The onus is on all of you who are interested in policy to attend and get involved.

Success in the election is the goal for YFG and the senior party. Over the coming months members affiliated before April 2005 will have a say in who their local candidate will be. There will be a lot of young people seeking a nomination and they deserve our support. I wish all present and former members of YFG the best in their endeavour. Enda Kenny has also taken a giant step towards presenting an alternative to the present shower of hypocrites by launching a joint policy paper with Pat Rabbitte. Things are hotting up in the world of politics. YFG and FG will be ready for the fight and with your active support the job ahead will be tackled head on.



**Patrick O' Driscoll**  
**President Young Fine Gael**

Pa with the first YFG "Member of the Month,  
Sarah Moore.

### Summer '05



*all Donegal.*

A busy summer, politically and socially, has just come to an end for us YFGers. College exams wrapped up around the end of May for most and there certainly was no rest for the wicked. June began with the Donegal branches hosting a weekend away in Donegal town. Education committee and International committee joined forces there with local Deputy Dinny McGinley and the then “free man” Senator Joe McHugh addressing the crowd. The Donegal YFG newsletter was launched (a most impressive piece of work) before the locals treated us to a table quiz, with spot prizes for all, before heading to the local nightclub to see what really happens behind that *wall ‘round*

Not to be outdone, Munster hosted the next YFG weekend away in Mallow, Co.Cork. Social affairs were on the agenda to accompany the summer meeting of the Munster Regional Council.

The Leinster Regional Council held their first meeting since their AGM in Ashbourne, Co. Meath. The Agriculture Committee met here also discussing the impact on young farmers of the phasing out of payments from Europe. Meath East’s young were introduced to YFG with a launch scheduled for later in the summer.

Behind the scenes plans were put in place for the Annual YFG Summer School in the sunny south east. On the forth weekend in July all headed to Wexford town; no pikes were needed in Wexford for this invasion!! Paul Kehoe T.D opened the event and led us into a discussion on Rip Off Ireland – now we know where Eddie Hobbs got all his ideas and material for his show!!! This was followed by the presentation of a discussion paper on Youth Facilities which, somehow, managed to uproot the whole topic of ASBO’s. Dr Liam Twomey T.D, no longer FG’s newest recruit but still as innovative as his first day seated in the FG benches, discussed with delegates his Health Screening Proposal which all agreed was a most progressive and well detailed document. With formalities over for our first day all returned to their respective accommodation to prepare for the night’s activities.

BBQ over and a few beverages consumed, delegates from right throughout the country braved the elements (it bucketed rain all Saturday night) for Wexford’s newest nightclub – The Colony. As I’ve said before, what goes on tour stays on tour – donkey holds all the secrets!!! Never let it be said that YFG members are not full on enthusiasm. Sunday morning saw delegates back in the hotel for a lively discussion on the merits or not of ID cards and whether or not we should follow suit if the UK successfully implements them. Sunday afternoon saw YFGers depart for their respective parts of the country after YFG biggest summer school to date.

Now, one would think that this was more than enough for a youth political organisation to undertake for one summer – not so in YFG!

The Dublin Day was next on the cards. August 13<sup>th</sup> was the day and the Hilton Hotel was the venue. Here Gay Mitchell spoke on his work in Europe and raised the interesting issue of prisoners been given the right to vote! Cllr’s Therese Ridge, Leo Varadkar, Lucinda Creighton, Terence Flanagan and Marie Baker were also there to here what their local YFG members had to say before the Dublin delegates retired to the Mansion House for a drinks reception.

The month of August ended up with the greatest endurance test of the year, the YFG Walk for Talk from Galway to Limerick. The brave set out from Galway on Friday morning,

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September 2005

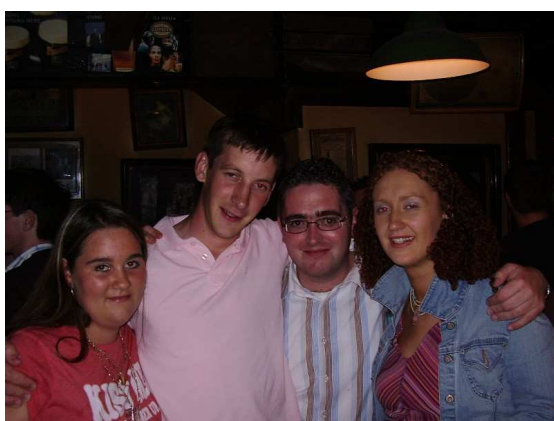
26<sup>th</sup> August with spirits high...15 miles later, blisters began to bubble, second pairs of socks were been rooted out of gear bags, the stone walls of the N17 didn't seem quite so endearing as the song makes them out to be. With new recruits joining as the day progresses and the buckets became heavier with donations, the troops kept going and relief was the overwhelming emotion when walkers landed at the West County Hotel in Ennis. Fresh feet had arrived for the Saturday morning and onwards to Limerick the walkers headed. A feeling of sheer exhaustion yet extreme satisfaction was present in the South Court Hotel in Limerick on the Saturday night and members managed to struggle on in the residents bar until the early morning.

In and out between these national event, YFG saw other events keeping its members busy over the summer, launch of the Meath East YFG Branch, branches taking the Talk Suicide Awareness Campaign to the streets in their own areas (a big thank you to all of you who have helped in this in any way whatsoever) YFG National Exec Policy meeting with party leader Enda Kenny T.D, the first ever meeting of the YFG Policy Council, annual YFG trip to Beal na Blath, the list goes on...

Here's to an equally busy and eventful autumn for YFG delegates throughout the country. Remember, the General Election could be around the next corner!!!



**Lizzie Munnelly**  
YFG Vice President



PICTURES  
FROM  
SUMMER  
SCHOOL

## From Collins to Kenny

### **| So how does Michael Collins associate with modern day Fine Gael?**

So if Michael Collins were still alive today, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October he would be turning 115; but hold on a minute, what would the man himself think of modern day Ireland, and more importantly modern day Fine Gael? It is in answering this question that uncovers the truth to a question that keeps historians, Fine Gaelers and all side of the political divide curious just over 80 years after Beal na mBlath; would Michael Collins be a card carrying member of Fine Gael?

Or would Collins still be in Sinn Fein, Still fighting for a United Ireland with the ballot box in one hand and the bayonet in the other. The answer is Collins is an absolute Republican to the marrow in his bones, and in the process believes in the republican values of democracy, consent and peace. The Republican movement of the early Twentieth Century and in particular, The Treaty, highlight Collin's attachment to these Republican values where the people's will is paramount to the actions of its leaders. These same views are not, and never were, aspired to by the provisional movement of the previous forty years; hence it is only Fine Gael that can lay claim to be the holders of such a long and profound heritage that professes such a command of true republican values. Yes, dare I say it, Fine Gael, a Republican party? While other parties profess their republicanism only as a token to collect the green vote at election time, it is the history of Fine Gael which authenticates the claim that Fine Gael are a true Republican party. From our very inception as Cumann na nGaedhael, or pro-treaty Sinn Fein, we put personal opinions second to what the national consensus was. It was us who defended the state, a state ratified by the majority of its citizens, against Eamon De Valera and anti-treaty Sinn Fein/IRA. It was John A. Costello as Taoiseach who abandoned the link with the British Commonwealth and established the Irish republic.

It was Fine Gael that recognized the principle of consent, 20 years before everyone else, that was needed in Northern Ireland before a United Ireland will ever be established; the very same principal of consent that was only fully recognized through the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 and Framework document a few years later. Unlike other parties, Fine Gael's history clearly identifies itself as a party that promotes democracy, peace and consent.

Hence it is with consummate ease and great pride that I say: yes if Michael Collins was still alive and well at 114 today, apart from hopping along the highways and byways of West Cork, he would still be a proud card carrying member of Fine Gael and no doubt helping Enda Kenny prepare for government in 2007. ~ **John Fitzpatrick**

Michael Collins is an inspirational figure for many Fine Gaelers, but has some blots on his copy. While he was an excellent military leader, courageous politician and promising Minister for Finance, aspects of his life have been ignored, most notably his role in the assassination of Henry Wilson in 1922. Collins lived an extraordinary life in extraordinary times and has found a central place in Irish history, a place he deserves. ~ **Pa O'Driscoll.**

Michael Collins, a former Finance Minister for this state, would surely be appalled at the level of mismanagement of public funds. Collins, as Finance Minister, achieved so much for this state with so little financial resources. I believe this effective management of public funds is what is missing in the running of this country today and an example of exactly what Fine Gael means by "value for money". We owe it to Collins and we owe it to his legacy to restore fiscal rectitude to our country and our public finances.

~**Simon Harris**



### Gen. Michael Collins 1890 - 1922



Michael Collins was a soldier, politician, sportsman, social thinker, Gaelic revivalist and patriot. He is regarded by many as the father of Irish Democracy; He paid the ultimate price for his belief in the will of the people; his legacy was continued by his political comrades after his death in August 1922 who went on to found Cumann na Gaedhael (now known as Fine Gael).

#### Early Years

Michael Collins was born in Woodfield, Sam's Cross, near Clonakilty on October 16<sup>th</sup> 1890. He received his primary education in Lissavaird National School where he was influenced by the schoolmaster Denis Lyons, who was an Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) sympathiser. At the age of fourteen he moved to live with his sister in Clonakilty and studied for the Post Office Examinations. At age fifteen he emigrated to London and worked in the West Kensington Post Office Savings Bank. He subsequently moved to work for the Board of Trade and eventually the London office of the Guaranty Trust Company of New York. His London years were spent immersed in the Gaelic Revival Movement, where he served as Secretary to the Geraldines GAA club and was active in Conradh na Gaeilge.

#### 1916 and its aftermath.

On 15th January, 1916 he crossed the Irish Sea to Dublin and took a job with the accountants, Craig Gardner, in Dawson Street. He became a member of the Gaelic League where he was friendly with Richard Mulcahy and Gearoid O'Sullivan (who were both later to become Fine Gael TDs.). During the Rising in Easter Week, 1916, Collins acted as aide de camp within the GPO for the wounded Joseph Plunkett, who was one of the leaders of the Rising. After the Rising, Collins was interned at Frongoch Camp in North Wales, where he began to organize the prisoners to prepare for a future conflict. When Collins and the other prisoners arrived home to Dublin on Christmas morning, 1916, they received a tumultuous welcome. Although the Rising had been a military failure, the executions of its leaders had made them national heroes.

#### War of Independence 1919-1921

On 21st January 1919, twenty-eight of the elected Sinn Féin MPs convened as Dáil Éireann for the first time. Thirty six were in prison, four were out of the country and five were otherwise unable to attend. The Unionists and the Irish Parliamentary Party ignored the new Dáil. A Declaration of Independence was read out and on that very same day in Soloheadbeg, West Tipperary, the first shots of the Irish War of Independence were fired. Early in February, Michael Collins, engineered the daring escape of Eamon de Valera from Lincoln Jail. Collins went on to be appointed Minister of Finance, raising the first ever National Loan of four hundred thousand pounds and succeeded in giving an official Dáil Éireann receipt for each of the subscriptions received. Throughout the War of Independence, the sheer scale of Collins' workload and his achievements was incredible; from running the IRA to effectively running the government when de Valera travelled to and remained in the United States for an extended period of time; and managing an unprecedented counter-intelligence operation. Collins nearly became a one-man revolution.

### The Treaty and Civil War

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1921 Britain signed a truce with Collins' forces in Ireland. Collins was sent (with great reluctance on his part) by De Valera to London to negotiate with a team of plenipotentiaries for the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty with David Lloyd George. The Treaty was accepted by Dáil Éireann by 64 votes to 57. Two days later, de Valera resigned his presidency and Arthur Griffith was elected in his place. A provisional government was formed in January 1922. Michael Collins was elected Chairman. Dublin Castle was in turn surrendered to Michael Collins. In June 1922 there was a general election in Ireland. The election, based on proportional representation, was a massive defeat for the anti-Treaty group. The pro-Treaty panel of candidates won 58 out of 125 seats while the anti-Treaty group won 36 seats. Civil War raged throughout the country in 1922, after hostilities commenced following the occupation of the Four Courts by Anti-Treaty forces. In August 1922, following the death of Arthur Griffith, Collins became the Head of the Provisional Government and whilst on a tour of duty in West Cork, was killed by an Anti-Treaty ambush party in Beal na mBlath not far from his family home in West Cork.

### Epilogue

Cumann na nGaedheal (Later Fine Gael) led by W.T Cosgrave (*Following the deaths of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins*) formed the government to take over authority from the British. This government set up the institutions of State, which has given us the democracy we enjoy today.

**Gerry O'Connell**  
Vice President, Fine Gael

'In the ancient days of Gaelic civilisation, the people were prosperous and they were not materialists. They were one of the most spiritual and intellectual peoples in Europe. We want such widely diffused prosperity that the Irish people will not be cursed by destitution into living practically the 'lives of the beasts' '

~ Michael Collins



# **"Michael Collins Remembered"**

(October 16<sup>th</sup> 1890 – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1922)

**A National Rally in his honour**

**Mansion House, Dublin.**

on

**Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1.30pm.**

Hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor **Catherine Byrne**

Welcoming Remarks From

**Nora Owen**

"Society Patron, Minister for Justice 1994-1997, Grand niece of General Collins

Master of Ceremonies

**Gerry O'Connell**

"Society Secretary, Vice President, Fine Gael

Debate Moderator

**Senator Noel Coonan**

"Society President"

Panel of Speakers

**Tim Pat Coogan**

"Author– Michael Collins"

**Professor Mary Daly**

"Department of Modern History, UCD"

**Mairead McGuinness M.E.P**

"Journalist, Broadcaster and MEP for Ireland East

**Michael Doran**

"Orator at the 2005 Griffith Collins Commemoration, Glasnevin"

**Jim Higgins M.E.P**

MEP for Ireland North West, Orator at the 2005 Beal na Blath Commemoration"

Admission: €10

## YFG Walk for "TALK"

TALK

Young Fine Gael, as part of their 'Talk' campaign aimed at raising suicide awareness in this country, undertook to walk from Galway to Limerick to raise funds for AWARE, and raise awareness.

In what turned out to be a great adventure for some and a great endurance for others, the walk kicked off on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August in Galway. By that evening the walk had reached Ennis. The next morning, buoyed by the arrival of some new faces, the entourage set on foot for the walls of Limerick, and by 6.30pm that evening all were fit and well, sore feet aside in the Southcourt Hotel. Well done to all those who travelled from every corner of the country to take part.

YFG have raised €1593.40 to date with more sponsorship to be sent back.

YFG would like to thank the following for their support and sponsorship

Lynch Hotel Group who supplied accommodation and meals to our walkers in Galway, Ennis and Limerick

JJ Fleming for supplying the safety car

Red Bull

Value Centre Sligo...

... if any one wishes to donate to this good cause:

Contact Conor Cresham 086 3988180



### Weekend DART protest

Wicklow Young Fine Gael have launched a campaign protesting at the closure of the DART service at weekends and are campaigning for the provision of an improved bus service during this closure.

Speaking about the campaign, Wicklow YFG Chairperson, Simon F. Harris said "It is utterly unacceptable that the people of North Wicklow have been left stranded at weekends without a DART service and with no visible improvement in the level of bus services. This is simply not good enough".

"Buses are overcrowded at the weekend due to the lack of DART trains. We have made representations to Dublin Bus asking them to provide the high speed 84X Bus service at weekend during the DART closure but they are refusing to do so" Harris stated.

"We live in the Garden of Ireland yet this closure is having an adverse effect on our tourist season and causing great difficulties for people who would normally come out to Wicklow at the weekend to enjoy some recreational activities", said Harris.

Wicklow YFG have launched a campaign in the local media and on the streets of Bray and Greystones to seek a commitment from CIE that this will be the last period of DART closures and that extra bus services will be provided in the meantime.

### Time to Blog?

It is very much a truism of Irish politics that what is seen and believed to have worked in the US will soon be tried out over here. Recent campaigns by ourselves and Fianna Fáil have seen strong US influence, in not only style but also in content. Politics, following the US model, is increasingly leader and personality oriented with leaders tours, Hello-style interviews and the like. Politicians and political parties are increasingly reliant on public advertising, direct mailings and non-traditional means of communications (e.g. our own ripoff.ie campaign) to reach an electorate following the examples of US politics. Although many people sneer at these styles of politics, and naturally they can never do more than compliment grass roots activity by the party faithful, these new methods are only ever tried over here because they have worked in communicating political messages to an increasingly suburban population, who are not at home when the canvassers come knocking.

The one criticism however that can be made of this US influence in Irish politics, is that it is almost exclusively only ever seen at the top levels of the political parties.

It is the leadership of the political parties and their advisors who are adopting these US trends and implementing them over there. This need not be the only level at which Irish politics follows the US model. The US also shows new ways and means for greater grass roots involvement in politics, developing more efficient means of best utilising the talents of party supporters, for allowing greater scope for party members to have policy input through single-issue caucuses within the political parties, and so on. Unfortunately many of these leads have yet to be fully adopted in Irish political life as of yet.

One example of grassroots involvement, that has been shown to work in the US, and which can be led and implemented by the grassroots members here in Ireland, is the area of political blogging. This was best seen in the recent US presidential campaign, firstly and more obviously in the Democratic primaries in support of the candidacy of Howard Dean, but also in both of the presidential campaigns that utilised blogs in the run-off. In the early of days of the Howard Dean campaign, political blogging and the on-line political communities that developed around them were heavily praised and in reality overly praised.



In the aftermath of the Dean campaign and its spectacular collapse, political blogging was overly damned and dismissed by many. However, subsequent research has shown that blogging, while not making an impact as large as original imagined, was influential in parts.

Good "A-list" political blogs that were regularly updated, had fresh content and their own style of commentary proved successful in developing strong readership amongst other bloggers and amongst the media. While having relatively little influence as a means of directly influencing the general public, they were able to influence the media, and create a "buzz" around issues, indirectly reaching the general public through the media, but also reaching the aspects of an increasingly computer literate and on-line public.

Political blogging has yet to really take off in Ireland. While some blogs exist, such as those like Slugger O'Toole, the Freedom Institute's or Back Street Drivers, there have been no serious attempts by any stalwarts of any of the Irish political parties to get together and put out a blog from their own political perspective.

This is an area where Fine Gael supporters can take the lead. A group of Fine Gaelers, at first four or five, getting together and producing their own blog could have a definite impact in this area. What is needed is that for group of at least four or five Fine Gaelers together and set up their own blog. While there is a role for an official Fine Gael blog, this blog would not carry or seek to carry a Fine Gael seal of approval. Rather it would seek to represent the voice of the individual bloggers, who would all be from a Fine Gael perspective. Provided such a blog was regularly updated (on at least a daily basis) with fresh content and reacting to the news of the day, and giving the perspective of Fine Gael members, it would get an online readership. Such a blog would serve the interests of Fine Gael as it would help to put a Fine Gael perspective on breaking news, and provided this was done quickly could develop an impact on how other bloggers at first, but also how elements of the media and the public react to such news. It would also help to highlight news stories that are of benefit or interest to Fine Gael but which, for ever reason, are lost in the general media.

The other aspect of this would be to act as an FG news service highlighting news within FG (e.g. conventions, good work local councillors are doing, what YFG is up to and so on) that often are missed out on.

While there would need to be a team of bloggers, blogging on a very regular basis, there would also be a space for more detailed submissions for members of the party to contribute detailed policy proposals, ideas and so on. Currently, there is no real forum within the Fine Gael party for ideas to be discussed, proposed and dissected beyond party meetings and so on. This would give a place for people to put forward cogent and well argued ideas, which for various reasons are left behind at meetings or don't make the meeting at all, which maybe of interest to the leadership of the party and could have an influence on the party's policies. It could also be used as a place to float ideas, to gauge reaction before putting them out to the public.

If people out there think there is any potential to this proposal, please get in touch with myself at [john.joe.carroll@gmail.com](mailto:john.joe.carroll@gmail.com), with proposals, suggestions for a name, the type of content and so on. What is needed for such a blog to get off the ground at first are at least four people willing to commit themselves to getting involved in the daily blogging required to make the site a success. Ideally these people would come from a wide mix of people within Fine Gael, neither clustered by age, geography or gender. The wider the mix of people, the more relevant it can be to Fine Gael and to its readership.

**John Carroll**

[http://www.pewinternet.org/ppt/BUZZ\\_BLOGS\\_BEYOND\\_Final05-16-05.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/ppt/BUZZ_BLOGS_BEYOND_Final05-16-05.pdf)

Also:

Freedom Institute Blog:

<http://www.freedominst.org/forum>

Planet of the Blogs:

<http://www.planetoftheblogs.com>

Irish Blogs: <http://www.irishblogs.com>

Slugger O'Toole:

<http://www.sluggerotoole.ie>

Back Seat Drivers:

<http://backseatdrivers.blogspot.com/>

### **SEAN McKIERNAN TO SEEK FG NOMINATION IN CAVAN/MONAGHAN.**

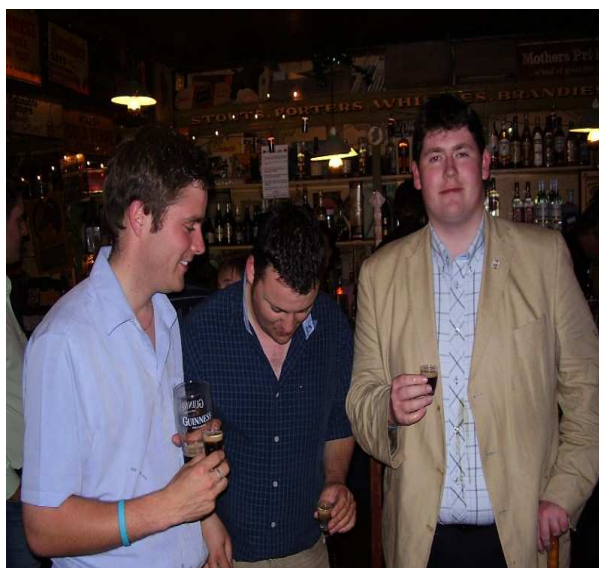
Sean McKiernan, a member of Young Fine Gael, the Fine Gael National Executive and prominent party and community activist in Cavan/Monaghan, has announced that he is to seek the Fine Gael party nomination to contest the next General Election in the constituency. His intentions were made known to party members in the constituency by way of a personal letter asking for their support and giving his reasons for seeking the Fine Gael nomination.



In his letter to all party members in Cavan/Monaghan, McKiernan states "I have been encouraged by a broad spectrum of Fine Gael members and many people outside the party to seek this nomination. I am determined to win back the Cavan Fine Gael seat sadly lost at the last General Election. Many party members believe that my presence as a Fine Gael candidate at the next General Election will give the party it's best chance of having two sitting TDs from this constituency in Dail Eireann."

A tireless party worker and activist for voluntary and community groups in Co. Cavan, McKiernan who will be 24 next week, is a native of Bailieborough and must be the youngest person to seek election in Co. Cavan since Peter Paul Galligan won a seat in West Cavan for Sinn Fein at the 1918 General Election.

Educated at Bailieborough Community School, Dundalk I.T. and the Institute of Public Administration, McKiernan was elected to the Fine Gael National Executive in 2002 as its youngest member and re-elected in 2004. He was selected as a Fine Gael Substitute MEP for Ireland North West in 2004. He represented the party as a guest speaker at the 2004 Glencree Peace and Reconciliation Centre Summer School and was also a representative at Northern Ireland political dialogue workshops there. He is employed as a Development Officer with Mental Health Ireland as well as being involved in his family business McKiernan Memorials Ltd.



### **A Defence of PRIVATE EDUCATION**

Private education has been the target for criticism in Ireland since Donagh O'Malley's brave decision to eradicate fees in the 1960s. However recent times have seen this debate accelerate with many calling for an end to capital grants to private schools and also the removal of state subsidies to private schools through the payment by the state of teacher's salaries. For me these arguments fail to acknowledge the contributions made to Irish society by the private education system and the fact that such proposals could lead to further inequality as well as an increase in the numbers of Grind schools, schools that do not have to subscribe to the Department of Education's guidelines.

It is clear that private education in Ireland is quite affordable when Irish schools are compared to the public schools in Great Britain and the prep schools in North America. In Ireland, fees for most private schools are on average about €3,000 a year for a day pupil. This compared to Britain where a term in Eton, arguably the most exclusive secondary school on these islands, costs £7,460 whilst a year in Upper Canada College, Ontario's premier High School costs \$23,745, Indeed a year as a day pupil in Gonzaga College in Washington DC costs a similarly large \$12,000. Private schools are also increasingly attractive for large sectors of the Irish emigrant community who would prefer to see their children attend boarding school in Ireland. Such a preference is understandable given the high standards of the Irish education system as well as the cost of international schools in places such as Brussels, Saudi Arabia and Dubai.

Forcing private schools in Ireland to pay teachers salaries internally would lead to an astronomic escalation of fees. This would then lead to the closure of many of these schools and those that would remain open would become the domain of Ireland's super-rich, thus leading to further inequality.

Forcing private schools to pay teaching staff internally would also remove high levels of regulation. Such an occurrence could lead to private schools paying teachers above the national level and would see no role played by the teachers' unions in these schools. A decision by the state to stop paying teachers wages could also lead to private schools poaching the most qualified teachers or indeed private schools could employ people that are not properly qualified to teach. Under this system private schools would be absolved of proper state scrutiny whilst class sizes would also be subject to the preferences of the individual institution.

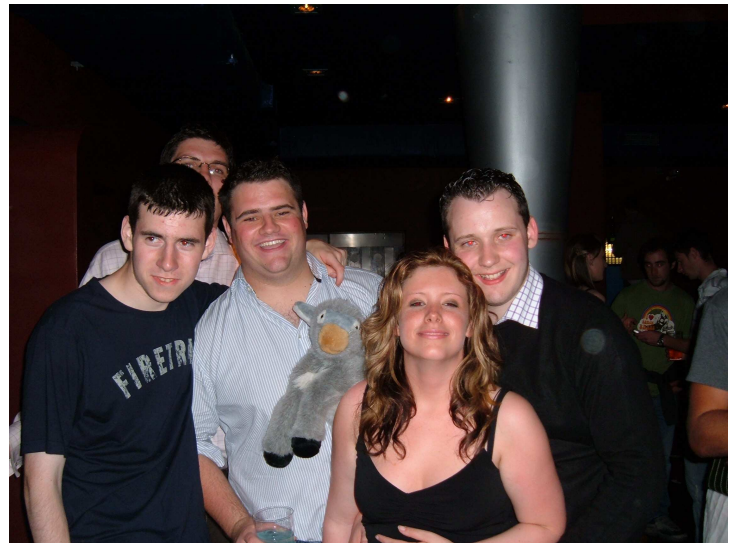
University feeder lists and school league tables have become hot topics nearly on an annual basis but one must remember that a parent's decision to send a child to a certain school is not solely motivated by the number of students a school sends to University. Factors such as extra-curricular facilities and alternative education opportunities are becoming equally prominent reasons for the selection of a certain school by parents. Many private schools pride themselves on offering a total education and are often better equipped to deal with the needs of certain children in pastoral and spiritual terms. For children who are not naturally academic the opportunity to play a diverse range of sports, begin a love of music or to express themselves through art can often only be achieved in certain schools. The facilities in many private schools can also allow children to succeed in areas not available in many other schools. Indeed private education can often provide proper boundaries and challenges for those often describes as problem children, children that could be left behind in other schools.

An aspect often forgotten is that Irish private schools often cater for certain members of society. In the Republic of Ireland there is currently only one school each for children of Jewish, Methodist or Presbyterian background. All three of these schools happen to be private. If these schools were forced to pay teachers internally, the fees for these schools would subsequently sky rocket and perhaps rob children of a minority religious background of a specific education.



In relation to the provision of capital grants to private schools many observers fail to acknowledge that these grants often are for the benefit of the entire area rather than just for use by the school in question. Blackrock College perhaps Ireland's most famous private school was recently awarded a grant to assist in the renovation of their swimming pool. Whilst the college did contribute large amounts of funds to this project, the pool is used by other schools, clubs and individuals in the area.

Many parents may not favour a private education for the child. But a removal of state aid through capital grants and teachers' salaries would rob many parents of the possibility to send their child to the school of their choice regardless of the motivation behind selecting such a school.



**Neale Richmond**

Dublin Regional Council Chair

### Decentralisation Deconstructed

The thing about economics, as the man once said, is that you learn two things, one; something about lines and graphs, and two; boredom can't kill you, but sometimes you do wish that it might. The following piece I'm afraid, relates to both of these 'truisms'. The following article deals with decentralization, government regional policy and economics. Now to spice up these already enticing topics I'm going to start off with the man of the moment, the man who recently turned two years of undergraduate economics into the four hour hit series of the summer on RTE, Mr. Eddie Hobbs, and his depiction of public sector employees.

Now if we are to believe what Eddie Hobbs has to say, the public sector is loaded with the completely useless and the just above completely useless among other people. Also, it is these employees which have the greatest job security, a fully paid pension, fewer hours, less stress and more holidays - and who says an arts degree isn't a stepping stone to a great job. But has Eddie hit the nail on the head when describing the productivity levels and the efficiency of this sector. Well one does only have to look at the performance of various government departments to quickly realize that maybe the quaint Corkonian's assessment may be right. So how does this view of the public sector fit into the grand scheme of decentralisation and balanced regional development, an operation that promises to bring ten thousand of these productive jobs from the capital to indifferent locations across the country?

At a glance decentralisation looks like a grand old stroke by a government to give backbenchers a photo shoot delivering jobs to their region, and even a less cynical look at the proposal would suggest that this idea would bring about rural regeneration and free up gridlock in Dublin; however the effects of such an operation has a much more profound effect under economic analysis. Assuming the proposal will go ahead as planned, without any efficiency loss in the delivery of public services how will this effect (i) the other regions receiving the jobs, (ii) Dublin, and (iii) on the stated objective of balanced regional development?

### (i) *Other Regions*

In the short term regional employment and income will increase due to the influx of new jobs. These new jobs will also create demand for more services; therefore this will also increase employment and income to the region. These jobs will only increase living standards in the short term though, as after the civil servants settle in the area no new boost will stimulate employment or increase income thereafter. In the long run it must be remembered that sustained growth in living standards are likely to be fuelled by internationally competitive industries based in that area. Positively, the influx of civil servants may facilitate improvements in local infrastructure making foreign investment more enticing, however increased demand for local services might also increase the costs, therefore reducing the attractiveness for FDI. As Eddie Hobbs also leads us to believe, the productivity growth from these new public sector jobs is traditionally low and could be below the regional average, which in the long run would reduce the potential for that region to grow in terms of productivity and living standards. Overall for the regions involved, in the short term, decentralisation might bring gains, but in the long run, it is possible that perhaps productivity growth and living standards might decline.

### (ii) *Dublin*

Effects in the short term will be the opposite of the other regions, direct and in-direct job losses will result in a decline of living standards. However in the long run, lessened congestion and the freeing up of office space in prime locations in Dublin may create opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment, thus by lessening the public sector share of GDP in Dublin, and replacing it with internationally competitive industries, growth, in terms of productivity and living standards, might increase in Dublin.

### (iii) *Balanced Regional Development*

So where does this relate to the government goal of balanced regional development, In the short term, growth in the regions, created through these ten thousand extra jobs, will mean that regional divergence or inequality might lessen, thus giving decentralisation the appearance of a successful policy initiative and implementation. However in the long run, placing these low productivity public sector jobs, and we all know about these type of jobs from our hero Eddie, in areas that demand and need internationally competitive industries to sustain real growth, will not benefit the regions in the long run, in fact it can only help Dublin.

This is so because the jobs Dublin would inevitably get to replace the public sector jobs, would have a far greater productivity rate, this would increase employment and income in Dublin at a faster rate than those of the regions. Hence the irony is that while it was the government's goal to reduce the gap between the regions and Dublin, Decentralisation, in the long run, would only help increase this gap.

**John Fitzpatrick**  
**Ref: Eoin O'Leary**

**Branch  
Profiles**

## DUBLIN SOUTH

Dublin South Young Fine Gael re-emerged from a couple of years of inactivity to relaunch in December 2004. The branch's membership is nearly 100% indigenous to the area with the membership made up of either recent University graduates, young professionals or Leaving Certificate students. The branch relaunched with a meeting on Europe addressed by former party leader Alan Dukes last December in Goatstown followed by a Christmas party. Since then our ever eager membership has been pounding the pavement distributing the Mitchell report for our own TD Olivia Mitchell before taking time out to join the YFG task forces in Meath and North Kildare during the by-elections.

Last March, Dublin South became the first YFG branch to organise and host a rally for the Collins 22 society. Over 250 people gathered in Stillorgan to hear the star-studded lineup of speakers. RTE & Newstalk 106's George Hook acted as compere whilst Mary Banotti, Bill Martin, Gerry O'Connell and Olivia all entertained the predominantly young crowd.

Taking a lead role in the actions of Fine Gael in our area has been a key priority for the branch; this has seen us focus on recruitment, voter registration and constant media submissions. The Constituency AGM provided YFG with a further boost as John Kennedy was elected Vice-Chair, Graham Price was returned as Youth Officer and Simon McDonnell continues as the constituency PRO. Asides from that the branch has a nearly too prevalent social element with football matches, nights out, parties and trips away (*nearly –ED*) being as important to us as leaflet drops and canvassing.

Less than 20 years ago Fine Gael held 3 seats out of 5 in Dublin South, whilst Olivia Mitchell continues as a great TD for the area and a top notch spokesperson for Transport, it is clear that she is lonely and needs some more company from Dublin South in the houses of the Oireachtas. With the General Election just around the corner, YFG will be stepping up their activities another notch, as this is an area where Fine Gael must make a breakthrough if we are to be returned to government with our allies in Labour.

[www.freewebs.com/dublinsouth](http://www.freewebs.com/dublinsouth)

## WICKLOW YFG NEWS

In April Wicklow YFG held a number of events in Bray, Co. Wicklow.

- Deputy Olwyn Enright, Fine Gael Spokesperson on Education and Science began the day by hosting a public meeting on education in the Royal Hotel. The meeting was attended by members of YFG, Fine Gael and the general public.
- The Education Committee of YFG then held a meeting at which a number of Working Groups were established to examine areas such as reforming the Leaving Certificate, the CAO system, the teaching of sex education and special needs education.
- In the afternoon, Damien English T.D, Deputy Spokesperson on Justice and Community Affairs addressed a meeting of YFG's Social Affairs Committee on the topic of alcohol. A very lively debate ensued.
- The Leinster Regional Council of YFG held their AGM in the evening chaired by the Council Leader of Wicklow Fine Gael, Cllr. George Jones. A Committee was elected.
- The day concluded with a Michael Collins Rally held by the Collins 22 Society. Speakers included Deputy Billy Timmins, Spokesperson on Defence, Mr. Gerry O'Connell, Vice President of Fine Gael and Mr Bill Martin, Organiser of the Collins 22 Society. The rally was chaired by Simon Harris, Chairperson of Wicklow Young Fine Gael.

As night fell, the Young Fine Gaelers headed to the bar and then paid a visit to Bray's "The Tube" nightclub. A good night was had by all.

Wicklow Young Fine Gael would like to thank Ms.Ciara Delaney, Leinster Regional Organiser and Ms. Susie O'Connor, National Youth Officer, for their help in organising the day.

We look forward to hosting many more events into the future.



## Regional Reports

### Connacht/Ulster

#### 1. Galway Policy weekend

A number of policy committee meetings will take place on Saturday Oct 1st in Bailieborough, Co.Cavan. Meetings include Agriculture and Social affairs policy committees. Further details: Sean Finan (087) 4146480 or Dave Mc Donagh (087) 2921353

#### 2. Talk Campaign

The role out of the "TALK" suicide awareness campaign has continued over the summer months in the region. Many branches have taken to the streets over the last few weeks to highlight the issue including Galway, Sligo, Donegal and Roscommon. Also many members from the region took part in the walk for "AWARE" from Galway to Limerick, which commenced just outside Oranmore.

#### 3. Regional Development Policy Document.

The Regional Council are currently working on a Regional Policy Document which is aimed at identifying some of the key issues which would facilitate "Balanced Regional Development" It is hoped that this document will be unveiled at a Connacht/Ulster Weekend in late October/November. It is envisaged that this policy paper may form part of the YFG general election manifesto.



Conor Cresham and Lizzie Munnelly with members of the Mayo Senior Football Team endorsing the TALK campaign.

### Munster

It has been a very busy few weeks for YFG in Munster of late. There was a large attendance from all branches across the region at summer school in Wexford and thanks to all who travelled; I think all would agree it was worth the trip. The Talk campaign continues with information days held in Macroom, Tralee and Cork respectively and the "Walk for Talk" coming to an end in Limerick. Well done to all involved in these events and we are planning to have more such events in the near future in other areas down South. We also had the annual Michael Collins Commemoration in Beal na Blath where the YFGers were out in force as usual. YFG President Pa O'Driscoll laid a wreath on behalf of YFG and Sen Jim Higgins M.E.P reflected on the life of 'the Big Fella'. There was a meeting of the YFG policy council held in Cork. The National Ploughing Championships will be taking part near Middleton this year, if you are interested in helping out with recruitment etc, please contact Maurice @ [maurfitz@gmail.com](mailto:maurfitz@gmail.com) or 087 7612061. There are plans for a YFG trip to the European Parliament with Simon Coveney this coming November 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> again if interested contact Maurice.

With the start of school/college term almost upon us again we look forward to an influx of new members and the next few weeks will be very important for all branches, particularly the college ones; if any one wants help with organising events contact Maurice or Susie or any other member of the exec.

### Leinster

The Offaly AGM takes place on 23/09 at 8pm in the Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre. The Leinster Regional Council Meeting and Policy Weekend Sept 24th O Loughlin's Hotel Portlaoise, followed by a dinner and social event on the Saturday night, accommodation available, details to be confirmed (will be advertised on website).

Kildare YFG are getting out on the streets of Newbridge this weekend to promote the Talk campaign and the Kildare North and New Ross branches will be joining the campaign over the coming weeks.

### Dublin

Dublin YFG experienced an eventful summer. There was a highly successful branch launch in Dublin South Central where Caitríona Gaffney became Chair.

There was a good presence from YFG for the MakePovertyHistory march organised in Dublin, which complimented the Fine Gael turnout of Enda Kenny, Nora Owen, John Connor, Bernard Allen and the newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Catherine Byrne. The UCD and TCD branches were especially evident in activity. Among those who marched were Eimear Monaghan, William Quill, Brendan Searson, Elizabeth Bowen, Caitríona Gaffney, Lizzie Munnelly, William Lavelle, Matthew Bruton and Simon Harris.



Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Catherine Byrne, with members of YFG at the Dublin MakePovertyHistory march

I warned in the last *Informer* about the "YFG Weekend" franchise coming to Dublin. Instead, to avoid licensing issues, we started the "YFG Day" franchise with the first Dublin Day being held in the Hilton Hotel on August 13th. The Guest Speaker for the afternoon was Gay Mitchell TD MEP, who spoke eloquently about Third World Aid, a particularly informed speech given that he is a Vice-Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union. He also expressed the idea of giving prisoners the right to vote. The first Dublin YFG Newsletter was then officially launched.

A Policy brainstorming session was also held in the afternoon, with President Pa O'Driscoll presiding. No less than 21 ideas were produced within an hour and a half session. The highlight was the active debate over Jack Tchrakian's Flat Tax Proposal. Whilst many in the room felt the idea was ludicrous, the fact that ontological Flat Tax proposals are something of a fashionable trend across Europe means this debate could run and run. Angela Merkel and her CDU colleagues have brought it up as a platform proposal for the contentious German General Elections.

The evening concluded with a reception in the Mansion House attended by many YFGers and elected representatives alike.





## The *Intruder*

***This edition we spoke to YFG President Patrick O' Driscoll about YFG, Politics and Kayaking!!***

**Who is your political idol?**

I don't have a political idol, but have great respect for respect Dr Noel Browne and WT Cosgrave.

**What is your favourite T.V. Programme?**

The Sopranos, Primetime

**Where is your favourite Haunt in Cork/Dublin?**

Barry's Bar, Rathcormac/Kehoes, off Grafton St.

**What music do you listen to?**

Johnny Cash, Bruce Springsteen and U2 top the list

**What character in 'The Simpsons' best represents who you are?**

Lisa (I won't explain why!)

**If you were leader of the Fine Gael, which former leaders legacy would you most aspire to?**

WT Cosgrave

**Why did you seek the position of President of YFG?**

The opportunity arose; I had finished my term in UCC and was living in Dublin.

**Apart from politics what else in life gets you excited?**

Who said politics excites me? A good GAA match or kayaking trip in Kerry usually does the job.

**And finally, what is/are your remaining goal/s as YFG President?**

To get a manifesto together to allow YFG have a say in the next general election.

## The ~~YFG~~ I.C. Update

The Young Fine Gael International Committee recently held its AGM in Dublin on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August at a well attended Dublin Day. Gay Mitchell MEP gave an inspiring speech on what Fine Gael can and should do in international affairs if we get into government, which would be mainly to make an impact on global poverty and to contribute to making poverty history. He highlighted his recent work in this area at European Parliament level, and his recent trip to central Africa where he was deeply impacted by the suffering of the ordinary people of those countries, and the strong efforts being made by the people of that region to improve their lot.

After that, the Young Fine Gael International Committee elected a new committee, with the out-going International Secretary, John Carroll being re-elected. Neale Richmond was elected Deputy International Secretary, Alan O'Kelly Embassy Liaison Officer, James Lawless Brussels Officer and Paul O'Brien NGO Liaison Officer. There are four areas that the YFG International Committee will be focusing on over the coming months, creating strong and cogent policy documents for presentation to the Senior Party and the YFG National Conference in the New Year. Those areas are:

- 1) The European Constitution
- 2) UN Reform
- 3) Aspects of European Common Defence and Security
- 4) Ethics and Openness in Irish Foreign Policy

The current intention is to hold at least one meeting on each of those areas over the coming months. The YFG IC are always eager to go to any branch that is willing to host a meeting, so if anyone wants the IC to host a meeting, or wishes to get involved in drawing up policy in those areas please get in touch with the International Secretary at [internationalsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:internationalsecretary@gmail.com).

The next edition of the Vulcan, the magazine of the YFG International Committee will contain details of recent events attended by the IC, documents produced and so on. Opinion articles are being sought for the next edition with a deadline of the end of September. If people wish to contribute articles, please get in touch with the International Secretary before the end of the month. The last edition of the Vulcan can be seen on the YFG website at <http://www.yfg.ie/downloads/VulcanIII.pdf>

**John Carroll**  
International Secretary

Young Fine Gael's sister party in Malta, MZPN, hosted a summer university in July. Delegates from the European Union's "small states" gathered in Malta for a seminar entitled Small States in an Enlarged Europe.

As usual Young Fine Gael sent a star delegation. On a British Airways flight faster than YFGers to the free bar at the Christmas party were Councillors Leo Varadkar and Lucinda Creighton; John Carroll, YFG International Secretary; Paul O'Brien, our token Southsider, and myself, the token pretty face.

While four days in Malta in mid July does not sound entirely taxing, extremely important issues were discussed. At the discussion session on youth, "Mobility across the EU", it was decided that an EU wide youth card that would be acceptable on all forms of transport etc across the union would improve youth mobility.

Delegates also discussed how to make Europe an attractive place to live and work and how to place knowledge and innovation at the heart of EU growth while working within the Lisbon Agenda.

While all this was very enlightening, it was, of course, essential that all eager political animals explore the country at hand. And that we did. Political exploration, of a sort, was always going to be a priority and I think we were all mesmerised when we were taken on a tour of the Partit Nazzjonalista (Maltese Christian Democrats) Headquarters by the Deputy Prime Minister.

A continent away from our humble abode at Mount Street lies an expanse of granite and marble that houses a full time television and radio station, a daily and Sunday newspaper as well as the manpower that runs a well oiled political machine. The Fine Gael *Branchlines* in my folder crumpled under the pressure to measure up.

Next stop was the parliament. Anton Tabone, Speaker of the House, greeted us at this magnificent colonial palace that smells of brown leather satchels and Panama hats. Such was our importance that we were let roam freely in the chamber of the House of Representatives. The Southsider O'Brien and myself very proudly took up our seats and yearned for a Panama hat, (the Southsider O'Brien later purchased one) only to be told we were sitting on the opposition benches. We felt strangely at home!

There were fears that we would become politicked out. And every good politician knows to ignore culture is a terrible sin. So, off we set to explore Malta's other sites. The ancient city of Medina lies at the heart of Malta. From the walls of the old capitol one can see the whole island. While having her photograph taken, it was remarked that Cllr. Creighton looked like a movie



star. She can take pride at such a comment in these glory days of the celebrity candidate!

With the temperature at a scorching 35 degrees Celsius, a ferry to the smaller island of Gozo was essential to cool off. Gozo is about twenty years behind Malta as regards development. We found it a fantastic place full of quaint towns and friendly people. We even found time, but not enough, to take a dip in the island's red sand beach. Faces were a little strained when the Maltese announced that 45 minutes should be ample time to take a dip. Us pasty Irish needed time to fry!

This summer Fine Gael has been focusing on Ireland's anti-social behaviour problem, especially regarding alcohol. We decided that headquarters would never forgive us unless we did a little investigation into the Maltese drinking culture. It was an extremely pleasant experience. Their oceanfront bars, large measures and great local wine ensure that we had no complaints.

With our little free time at the end, Cllr. Varadkar, the Southsider O'Brien and myself hired three jet skies and to get jiggy with the Mediterranean ocean. It was a thrilling experience that revived all heads after the farewell dinner the previous night. Although speeds of up to 60mph could be reached, the Councillor was happy to sit back, relax and think of his favourite film, "Driving Miss Daisy".

We debated, we partied and we explored Malta for what was a fabulous four days in a beautiful country that is dealing with European accession extremely well.



**Stephen O'Shea**



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**Founding Editor:** Stephen O'Shea



## **Policy Development Roll Out for Manifesto**

4th September: Venue, Portlaoise to discuss; Education, Transportation and Voting/Local Government.

1st October: Venue, Galway to discuss; Agriculture, Rural housing-Planning, Social Affairs-Civil Unions.

15th October: Venue, Dublin to discuss; Irish language, International Committee, and Education Committee.

29th October: Venue, Sligo, to discuss Agriculture, Transport and Social Affairs.

13th November: Venue, Cork. This has been billed as an open slot, which may be used to speed up progress in certain areas. This date may be altered to the 20th.

3rd December: Venue, Cavan. Social Affairs and also a slot left vacant.

17th December: Venue, Limerick, to discuss Agriculture, the Irish language and Education.

This agenda is of course provisional and subject to the availability of the various committees on the aforementioned dates.