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- Where now for Ógra?
At a meeting of the Ógra National Youth Committee earlier this year, Fianna Fáil General Secretary, Sean Dorgan, challenged the committee to come up with a plan detailing the relevance of Ógra to the senior party. That plan was to examine the current role of Ógra and whether we, as an organisation are making the most of the resources we have available to us. It was to outline how Ógra operates and to list our various strengths and weaknesses.

Since that meeting the National Youth Committee has set about drawing up a discussion document with the help of a facilitator on the relevance of Ógra and that will shortly be distributed to all the various Ógra units. In the report are a number of significant questions and suggestions that will surely be the subject of major debate within Ógra over the coming months. The challenge now is to bring this debate to the grassroots membership of Ógra and ask them their views, so that whatever actions are necessary to strengthen our organisation can be taken ahead of the National Youth Conference in Clare next February.

Basically the whole operational structure of Ógra is open to discussion. We should use this period as an opportunity to take stock of what we are good at as well as recognising the areas where we fall down.

One of the most debated topics on the subject of Ógra is the issue of the age limitations. Many people argue that the current cut off point of 26 years is too young. There is certainly a case for saying that the current structures of Fianna Fáil make little room for people in the 26 to 30 age group. Others have suggested that an increase of the age limit to say 30 years would mean that Ógra would end up being controlled by people in their late 20s and that such an organisation would have no relevance to students in secondary school or third level education.

Of course there is also the question as to whether or not we should lower the upper age limit? Or perhaps even the lower age limit should be dropped from 16 to allow younger people to get involved in the party if they want to. Then there is the question of how Ógra is organised. Currently the most dominant parts of Ógra are our third level units. However, for all their strength in numbers and, for the most part, their regular activity, their actual function in the overall structure in Fianna Fáil has come under question. Some of the third level units exist in practically an autonomous state, having little if any practical involvement with the senior party. Most of the third level members are not involved with any local organisation and as a result are not utilised to best effect come election time.

The question must be asked is too much emphasis being place on third level?

If not how can we make better use of this particular party resource?

Of course the third level units are often in a far healthier state than the local Ógra CC or CDC. Why is this the case? Often we hear of Ógra units being quashed or controlled for specifically local political interests. Various political factors come into effect to ensure that convention votes are protected. Such control can be at the expense of the Ógra unit’s health and vibrancy.

With that in mind is it time to question the convention voting rights of local Ógra units? Are they needed? Are they in the best interests of Ógra?

Obviously one of the main ideals upon which everyone in Ógra concurs is that more young candidates should be selected. Such an ideal would surely be hampered by the removal of Ógra’s convention votes. But what if another mechanism for selecting young candidates was put in place instead? Would that be better for the overall health of Ógra and Fianna Fáil itself.

The issue of voting rights isn’t the only reason that the local units aren’t working. It can be very difficult to bring enough young people together in a central spot in order to organise a proper CC or CDC meeting. While some local Ógra units such as in Clare, Cavan, Donegal, Dublin Central, Dun Laoghaire and Tipperary have no problems getting organised, others are finding it particular tough going.

Perhaps we would be more effective if we were organised closer to the senior party’s cumann structure. Would we have more luck if we met on more of a local basis. The ‘local Ógra unit’ was set down at the last National Youth Conference but so far few, if any have been established. Perhaps we should move towards such an organisational system, or perhaps the current system just needs to be tweaked? Maybe the National Youth Committee itself needs to be addressed. Are there too many people on it? Is it achieving what it needs to? What is it there for?

There are also smaller questions to be asked. Should we change the Ógra website? Should we update the Ógra logo? Turning away from the internal Ógra machinations and there are other, outside factors that are having a great influence on our organisation. In particular we need to look at the role of the senior Fianna Fáil party and the Government itself.

Are they treating Ógra only as a mechanism to keep young people away from serious ‘adult’ politics? Are we being made to feel a valued part of the party? Are we being listened to? All of these are important questions that we should take this chance to address. I would urge all the Ógra units to start debating these topics and to come up with their own recommendations and solutions. Perhaps then we’ll all know what really is the best way forward for Ógra.

Jimmy Healy
Dates for the diary

**October 31st:** Deadline for Entries for the De Valera Debating and Public Speaking Competitions.

**November 18th:** Deadline for the Registration of New Ógra Units in order to be entitled to voting rights at the Ard Fheis

**December 2nd:** Cairde Fáil Taoiseach’s Dinner, City West Hotel Dublin

**January 9th 2006:** Final Date for Submission of Completed CDC and College Cumainn Membership lists for the Youth Conference.

**February 17th and 18th 2006:** National Youth Conference, West County Hotel Ennis Co. Clare

Over the months of September and October we saw excellent results from our third level recruitment campaign. A great tribute is due to all those involved in the campaign, and in particular the dedicated cumann members on the ground who can so often go unrecognised despite their hard work for the party. Third level institutions are a great recruiting ground for Fianna Fáil and the challenge now for the officers of those third level cumainn is to encourage their new membership to get involved in the political life, not just of that third level institution, but of their own communities and home constituencies as well.

As we celebrate 30 years of Ógra Fianna Fáil, and at a time when we need to reflect on our direction for the next 30 years, it is reassuring to know that we are continuing to recruit new members to our party in such huge numbers.

The past 30 years have seen dramatic changes in Ireland. The Ireland that we, the current young members of Fianna Fáil know, live, study and work in is one to which the young members that founded Ógra Fianna Fáil in 1975 dared to aspire and speak of out loud. They then went on to play their part in making Ireland what it is today and I have no doubt the many of those that joined Fianna Fáil in the past number of months will go on to do likewise.

Of course, over the past 30 years Ógra Fianna Fáil has played an important role within our party in continually challenging the status quo at both an organisational and policy level. Over the past number of years Ógra has been to the fore in pushing for our party to organise on a thirty-two county basis and I hope I have made a contribution to that debate, one with which Ógra must continue, later in this issue.

As a republican party we now need to start planning on an all-island basis and we will only be best equipped to do this, I believe, by having input from Fianna Fáil members on an all-island basis.

After the Ard Fheis we will begin the run in to our next National Youth Conference. As part of our challenging the status quo at this conference we must also challenge ourselves and the direction we are to take for the next 30 years. Our country has changed much and we must change to reflect that and see that we are making the most out of our Ógra resources to meet that challenge. Over the coming months I hope all units of Ógra debate and have an input to the report we plan on presenting to the next National Youth Conference in Ennis. As a start, some of the possible questions we may need to ask ourselves are highlighted in this edition.

Bain taithneamh as an 69ú Ard Fheis.
Michael Shovlin

STOP PRESS

Ógra Fianna Fáil are delighted to welcome the appointment of Dun Laoghaire TD Barry Andrews as Cathaoirleach of Ógra Fianna Fáil. We wish him every success in his leadership of Ógra and look forwarding to working with him over the coming years.

The next issue of Grassroots will be published before the Youth Conference. 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.

Jimmy Healy, Grassroots Editor

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Design and layout by
11 Sallymount Ave, Ranelagh, D6
P: 496 7270
Q&A with An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D.

Having been Uachtaráin Fianna Fáil for over 10 years now, An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D. is no stranger to Fianna Fáil Árd Fheiseann. In this special Árd Fheis edition of Grassroots he has kindly agreed to answer questions from the Ógra membership.

1. Will you try to do more to bring people resident in Northern Ireland into Fianna Fáil? Would you like to see an official cumann in the North? Can we expect Fianna Fáil to mount a proper recruitment campaign in the North in the near future?

David McCann, Belfast

The question of Fianna Fáil establishing in the North needs to be set out clearly.

The peace process was founded on a tri-partite relationship between Fianna Fáil in Government, the SDLP and Sinn Féin. Through this relationship we set out our clear goals; to bring all strands of nationalist Ireland to our peaceful republican analysis and to arrive at the implementation of an historic settlement with unionism and the British people.

As Taoiseach, and President of Fianna Fáil, there is a clear onus on me to lead that relationship towards these goals.

Part of that onus means ensuring it remains above party politics, focused on achievement of those goals for the benefit of the island as a whole, not simply on a particular political support-base.

At this time, the truth of the matter is, establishing Fianna Fáil in the North could destabilise that key relationship, split the nationalist vote and ultimately weaken progress towards our shared goals.

Until such time as these goals are delivered, and that relationship is no longer necessary, it would be premature to commit Fianna Fáil to electoral competition with other nationalist Parties in Northern Ireland.

In the Good Friday Agreement and the recent decommissioning of Provisional IRA weaponry we have partially delivered on these goals. But as you know, there are still many outstanding issues. In areas like the re-establishment of devolution, the policing and equality agendas there is still a lot of ground to be covered.

Once those issues are dealt with, and when I judge the conditions appropriate, I am prepared to put the question of our establishment in the North to the Fianna Fáil Árd Comhairle and ultimately to our Árd Fheis.

As you know we are already accepting individual members from the North. It is no secret that we have had considerable and serious interest from nationalists of all ages and backgrounds across Northern Ireland.

2. Ireland has experienced unprecedented growth and increasing living standards in recent years. This has no doubt brought many political highlights. However what was the lowest moment in your political career?

Emmet O’Halloran, Cork South Central

On a personal level, I will always remember coming within 12 hours of being Taoiseach. I still clearly remember picking up the phone at 2am on Tuesday December 6th 1994 and Dick Spring telling me that Labour were not going to go into government with Fianna Fáil. That was a big disappointment but I learned a lot during my period as leader of the opposition. I believe that that experience made me a much more capable Taoiseach when I finally got the job in 1997.

On a party level, the last local and European elections in June 2004 were a very disappointing day for Fianna Fáil.

On a national level, the Omagh Bombing would have to stand out as the lowest moment. Although the loss of life is always heart breaking, Omagh must be remembered in the context of a time when there was such great hope for peace at last on this island. The horrific events of that day shattered the hopes of so many people, but I am glad that since then we have been able to forge on and work towards a final and lasting peace on this island.

3. What issues do you see as being central to the next General Election?

Declan Harmon, Dublin South Central

In politics it is important to recognise that all of the issues are important. Different people have different priorities. It is Fianna Fáil’s aim in Government to ensure that progress is continued on all of them. Health, transport, crime, education, agriculture, the environment – these are all hugely important issues.

However, there are of course going to be particular issues which will gain specific focus. The economy, and the ability to manage it competently, will be a key issue. Without sound fiscal policies, there can be no resources to spend on vital services. The provision of childcare for young families will be another big issue, and I look forward to the Government bringing forward important developments in this area in the near future.

Another issue which Fianna Fáil will be putting particular focus is the area of community and the importance that this must play in modern Irish life.

4. What do you think of Pat Rabbitte’s “tax on wealth” proposal?

Pierce O’Leary, Dublin Mid West

Well I think Pat needs to clarify exactly what he means by a tax on wealth. I would be particularly concerned if Labour’s proposal is to apply to either privately owned land or homes. The impact of such a tax would mean that many hard-working families would be penalised. I also have grave reservations about a wealth tax because of the potential negative impact of this on jobs and investment.
Such a tax could be detrimental to Ireland’s long-term economic prospects.

The reason Fianna Fail has always stayed away from introducing a direct tax on wealth goes to the very heart of the unprecedented economic success that this country has enjoyed since we returned to government in 1997. Our policy sent a clear signal around the world that investment in Ireland was to be encouraged.

The fruits of economic success Ireland has enjoyed in this period has been rooted in a low tax and high investment strategy. This approach has generated unprecedented resources to further meet our social obligations. By keeping taxes low, we have year after year facilitated increased and expanded welfare entitlements and supports. Anything that damages Ireland’s strong economy would undoubtedly effect and fall first on the poor and more vulnerable in society. This is clearly a lesson the Labour Party have not yet taken on board.

I am of the view that any financial income accruing to the State from a wealth tax would be lost many times over by the negative impact such a dubious policy would have on investment and employment.

5. In your view how far away are we to getting the 'Good Friday Agreement' and from that Devolved Government back up and running; what will it take from all the Northern parties to make this happen; what will it take from the British and Irish governments to make this happen; and finally what can we in the South, if anything do to make the process move in a positive way?

Seán O’Reilly, Louth

We have had a very positive few months, with the IRA statement in July followed by the completion of IRA decommissioning in September. Decommissioning has been a huge obstacle to the peace process and it is great to have it removed, although of course there are still serious issues to be dealt with on the loyalist side.

We have made clear all along that we also need to see an end to all paramilitary and criminal activity. There will be a report from the Independent Monitoring Commission in October and again in January that will address these issues. If those reports are positive, I think we can get back into serious discussions with the parties in the North in the New Year. It will require a period of reflection by the Northern parties and it will require the rebuilding of trust and confidence. We have all come a long way but often it is the last short distance that can prove the most difficult. From the two Governments’ point of view, we will stick to the Good Friday Agreement and we will abide by all our commitments. We will work with the Northern parties to resolve the remaining issues.

Everybody in the South can help in the process of reconciliation. People need to understand the problems of the North and be sensitive to Northern perceptions and history. The same applies in reverse. There are many things we can achieve together, such as developing the competitiveness of the island economy, building tourism and transport links, improving services and combating poverty and deprivation. Perhaps the greatest task is to help in the process of reconciliation.

6. You have put a huge amount of work into the peace process? Do you think Fianna Fáil will benefit electorally or will this serve merely to bolster Sinn Fein’s support?

Louise Bolger, Limerick

That is looking at our republican agenda through the wrong end of the telescope. Giving leadership is about having principles and being prepared to take risks. Regardless of the political risks Fianna Fáil have always put the peace process first. I have given this issue more time, more thought and more commitment than any other. This is the single most important issue of my political life. It is the great opportunity of this generation. If we succeed, and we shall, then we will change life on this island for the better and forever.

7. Would you like to run for the Presidency of Ireland some day?

Karen Collins, Monaghan

We have a wonderful President and she is less than one year into a new seven-year term so I do think it’s very early to start speculating about Mary McAleese’s successor. If you are asking me do I see myself as a potential candidate for the Aras in 2011, the answer is no. But I don’t have a crystal ball and I am not even going to tempt fate by predicting what the political landscape will be in six years time or where I will be.

8. Who are your political heroes?

Avril O’Shea, Laois

My greatest political hero is Patrick Pearse. He was a teacher and what historians would now call a cultural nationalist. Through time and events he developed from being a thinker into being a doer. He believed that the repeated failure to introduce a measure of even limited Home Rule in Ireland was a frustration of democracy. To assert the will of the Irish people he planned and led a rebellion that changed Ireland forever. Patrick Pearse believed in leading by example, he was a patriot and a visionary. I believe that he is an inspiring figure.

In more modern times I look to Seán Lemass as a man who dealt with the practicality of Government in an admirable way. He inherited an economically depressed country and he turned it around, opened it up. He was not only an economic leader he led a change of culture in Ireland. People rightly praise the reforming Ministers of the 1960s like Charles Haughey, Patrick Hillery, Brian Lenihan and Donal O’Keeffe. But they were Lemass’ ministers who were appointed by him, worked under him and who without him would never have achieved nearly as much as they did.

In my own time, I greatly admire Charles Haughey. He will never cease to be a controversial figure but he was a man of outstanding ability who has left a legacy of reform and achievement.

9. You have said the next election will not take place until 2007. What is your single biggest goal for the remainder of the current Dáil term?

Ainee Milne, Offaly

My single biggest goal is this. I want to build upon the last decade of momentum and achievement in the peace process. I want to transform the process into positive results on the ground, North and South. The absence of violence is only the precondition not the realisation of the progress that people desperately need. Peace must be supported by reconciliation and progress must be underpinned by investment, by education and by equal opportunity.

Here in the Republic, I want Fianna Fáil to continue to be a leader of change and to be a party that does not accept the status quo. Continued prosperity will demand continuing and even more rapid change. Managing that change will demand continuing and strong political leadership. There are major challenges ahead if Ireland is to continue to achieve its potential as an economy and more importantly as a community.
The Challenges ahead for Fianna Fáil

Gregg O’Neill, A former chairman of UCD’s Kevin Barry Cumann gives his suggestions about how Fianna Fáil can approach the next general election campaign with confidence.

As we gather in Killarney once again for our Ard Fheis, we should not be under any illusion about the scale of the task that faces our party in the eighteen months before the next General Election. We face opinion polls that have consistently had us in the mid-30s since the last local elections, and indeed for a long while before that. We face a public level of dissatisfaction that has repeatedly been higher over the last three years than the level of support for the Government. The people of our country see us now as being incompetent, as being arrogant, as being ignorant of the problems they face in their everyday lives. If we want to win the next election, the task before us is huge.

But how can we turn around all this in just eighteen months? How can we change what seems to be an ingrained sense of disillusionment with our party? How do we get back the public trust and support that used to come so easy? how do we win in 2007?

Firstly, I think that the most important thing that we need to realise is that many of the problems that now face people are because of our success over the last eight years. The reason that congestion is an issue now is that we have created an economy that has meant that everyone can afford to own their own car and drive to work. The reason that we have a so-called childcare ‘crisis’ is that there are now enough jobs in the economy to allow mothers to work if they want to. Long waiting lists in hospitals are now thankfully a thing of the past thanks to the investment we’ve put into securing more treatment places but now we need to deal with the long waiting period in A&E.

Fianna Fáil is at its best when we are solving practical every day problems that confront people in their daily lives. One of our great strengths as a party is that we have never let ideology get in the way of doing what is necessary to make a difference in the real world. We have eighteen months to make just that kind of difference across a whole host of issues.

Take childcare for example. It is the most topical of the new range of quality of life issues that have arisen of the last few years. It is primarily because we no longer have a tax system that punishes women who go out to work after they get married, as well as an economy that can provide employment for them, that has led to the increased use of outside the home childcare in recent years. It was, apparently, quite a large issue in the Kildare North and Meath by-elections.

The importance of early childhood development is impossible to quantify in the development of children. It is from this perspective, “What’s in the best interests of the child?”, that we should be approaching this issue. Whatever decision the Government makes, be it 12 months paid parental leave or a massive increase in childcare or a tax break for childcare costs, we have to ensure that it makes a practical contribution to dealing with the long term needs of early childhood development not something that looks like a political quick fix or a cynical vote grab.

We won’t gain back trust and support by pretending that Labour and Fine Gael will turn this country into the economic basket case that it was in the 1980s the moment they get into power. Pat Rabbitte is not Joe Higgins in a better suit and we don’t look credible by pretending otherwise. Nor will we do it by constantly harping on every time we get on media about the fact that Fine Gael and Labour haven’t produced any policies yet. That just makes us look silly, especially when it’s pointed out that the only joint Fianna Fail/PD document in 1997 was the joint tax plan published the day before the election.

We won’t win by resting on our laurels either and hoping the economic success that we have created over the last eight and half years will carry us through the election. The people have grown to take a basic level of economic competency for granted, especially as a huge part of our economic policies since 1997 have been to create a stable, long term, sustainable boom and to carry out the necessary structural reforms within the system that were necessary to “Fine Gael and Labour”-proof the economy and protect it from some of their more “creative” policies.

In some ways, we need to approach the 2007 election as if we were in opposition. We need to put the time and effort into developing new and exciting policies that will appeal to the entire electorate. We can be certain of two things about the next election. Firstly, unlike in 2002, Labour and Fine Gael will be well prepared and will run well-organised and co-ordinated campaigns. Secondly, our record since 1997 will not be enough to get us back to power on its own. Yes we should be proud of what we’ve achieved over the last eight and half years but we will be expected to offer the people a new set of policies, a new collection of ideas, a new vision for a prosperous, peaceful, 21st century Ireland. The question we will be asked is not so much “What have you done for me lately?” but rather “What will you do for me tomorrow?”. By May 2007, we need to have come up with an answer. We have a lot of work to do.

An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, with Minister Mary Hanafin, Minister Mary Coughlan and Misister Brian Cowen

Gregg O’Neill
Fianna Fáil in the North

The comments by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern T.D., at the recent “North/South Makes Sense” conference in Derry must be welcomed. In his speech Minister Ahern dispensed with the rhetoric of others and highlighted what we as republicans all know and believe to be the case – that 32 counties working together on issues, leads to greater prosperity and progress for all the people of this island. The Minister went on to say that “North/South is not just about co-operation in the border areas. It is about cooperating across the island for the benefit of all the people of the island. ……. We know that we are a small country with limited resources – financial and otherwise – and a key challenge we face now is to use what we have to gain maximum advantage.” Putting these words into effect is pragmatic, constructive, constitutional republicanism in action.

The North/South elements of the Good Friday Agreement and the bodies created by it are key in this regard, however a Fianna Fáil led Irish Government must now go further and do more. They must do so for reasons obvious to any visitor travelling from the South to the North. The Republic, under Fianna Fáil, has over the past decade and a half seen a phenomenal turn around in its economy and standard of living. Through insightful and progressive policies and wise management of the economy and our own resources, millions are invested in our communities, in job creation and the development of infrastructure, be it transport, communications or social. The contrast with parts of Northern Ireland is stark.

During a recent visit to Derry to meet Fianna Fáil supporters, this contrast was not only highlighted for me, but was obvious for all to see. For example, to stand on the city walls and “count the cranes” was not easy to do. Why? Because there were no cranes to be counted. In contrast, across the border in my own native Donegal, drive into the town of Letterkenny and a dozen cranes can be seen. A large shopping centre café in Derry of ten years standing is having to close its doors due to the ongoing decline in business. Whole classes are graduating from the University of Ulster Magee campus in Derry and are unable to find work in the city. The deterioration of infrastructure is also evident when compared with the other side of the border.

So, why should this be of concern to us in Fianna Fáil? These issues must be our concern as it is not good enough and we must focus on the bigger picture and have an all island perspective. Initiatives such as the redevelopment, in association with the British Government, of the City of Derry Airport and the ESB investment in the Coolkeeragh Power Station must be welcomed. The current North/South bodies have in certain cases that the all-island approach works. But once off projects are not enough and we must focus on the bigger picture and have an all island strategic approach. The opportunity presented by the next National Development Plan in particular must be used.

In order to progress such an initiative effectively and to allow all of the people on this island the opportunity to gain that maximum advantage that Minister Ahern talked of, one key element is missing. Irishmen and women in Northern Ireland do not have the opportunity to vote for the political party that has brought the current levels of prosperity and success to the Republic of Ireland. As a result that party does not have the chance to deliver the same future for the people of Northern Ireland.

Fianna Fáil, as the only political party capable of delivering such wide scale social and economic progress on this island, must now begin to organise in the remaining four months of this election period. The focus on both sides of the border have changed the island of Ireland dramatically over the past decade and a half and the time is now right for Fianna Fáil to provide the option of an equal level of opportunity on both sides of the border. We can only really start to do this by having Fianna Fáil active and working, just as the Government should be planning, on an all island basis. This long time aspiration of many in our party has, in my view, now become a necessity.

We in Ógra Fianna Fáil have been to the fore on this issue for some time now, and our party has listened. Individual membership, introduced within the last year, now permits people living in Northern Ireland to join the party, something that was not previously possible. The next step after achieving a certain level of membership in the North will have to be the formation of that membership into an organisation. This will have to be a grass roots movement and while it will not happen overnight. Ógra Fianna Fáil must continue to push the boundaries and press for this development within the party, as the argument for retaining the status quo has weakened considerably. We plan on rolling out a series of information meetings in the various universities and other third level institutions up North. If there is interest from those meetings further actions can be taken.

The message from those we spoke with in Derry and elsewhere is clear – the people of Northern Ireland quite rightly want the opportunity to share in and contribute to what Fianna Fáil can deliver socially and economically for this island as a whole. I, and I hope you, would argue that this is a message that we as a republican party must not ignore.
National Youth Conference 2006, Clare

All roads lead to Clare for the 2006 Youth Conference.
Clare Ógra will be hosting the Fianna Fáil National Youth Conference in the West County Hotel Ennis on February 17th and 18th 2006. It promises to be a brilliant occasion and no effort will be spared to ensure it is the biggest and best ever.

It’s vital that the full potential of the youth conference is exploited in order to raise issues of importance to young people throughout the country. Many senior cabinet Ministers and Politicians will be attending the Conference and we should ensure that there is a large attendance of young people to highlight our ideas directly to our Government.

The National Youth Conference is an unforgettable unmissable weekend and everyone is welcome to experience this unique occasion. Further details about the conference will be distributed to all units over the coming month. All Ógra units should ensure that their membership details are up to date and that their units are registered in order to be entitled to vote at the conference. If anyone has any ideas for improving the format of the conference or would like more information about it, please contact Aidan O’Gorman in Fianna Fáil HQ as soon as possible.

Ógra 3rd Level Recruitment

Ógra Fianna Fáil has enjoyed another excellent third level recruitment campaign, bringing the total membership of the organisation to over 6000. Amongst the various highlights of the campaign were an increase of 33% in NUI, Galway membership to 260 (a new record) and recruitment for the first time in Blanchardstown Institute of Technology.

Speaking about the campaign, Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach, Michael Shovlin paid tribute to the hard work of all those involved. “This has been a very good recruitment campaign for Ógra Fianna Fáil and we have managed to hold our own in terms of recruitment. This is only possible due to the dedication and effort of all those who were involved in the campaign and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work,” he said.

“Once again we are the largest youth political grouping in the country and we have run a campaign that everyone involved can rightly be proud of. It has been an inspiring achievement that proves that interest in constructive politics and Fianna Fáil in general is very much alive in our third level institutions.”

“Feedback from the various recruitment stands was very positive and it is a reflection of the confidence that young people in Ireland today have in Fianna Fáil. We are seen as a party for the future as well as a party of the present. This being the 30th year of Ógra we have seen some brilliant young people pass through our ranks and go on to higher office. Let’s hope that some of this year’s recruits make as lasting a contribution to the country as some of their Ógra predecessors,” he concluded.

Ógra Fianna Fáil Debating and Public Speaking Competitions

Once again this year, Ógra has organised a national Debating and Public Speaking Competition for members of Ógra CDC and Third Level Cumainn. In the past the competition was won by people such as Minister for Education Mary Hanafin T. D. and Minister for Children Brian Lenihan T.D. The competition has three elements: a Debating section for teams of two, a Public Speaking section for novice speakers and the Comórtas Óráid Poiblí, an Irish language competition for individual speakers.

The finals of the 2004 competitions took place at the youth Conference in Cavan. They were very entertaining and full of high quality debate. The 2004 winners were:
- DeValera Cup - Cumann De Barra NUI Galway (Lorcan Price and Steven Nolan)
- Public Speaking - Caroline Young Tipperary North Ógra CDC
- Commortas Óráid Poiblí – Séin O’Muineachain, Cumann Wolfe Tone, Coláiste na Tríonóide

Previous winner Michael Clark is the convener for this year’s competition. Entry forms and the competition rules are available from Aidan O’Gorman or Maeve Donlon in Fianna Fáil Head Quarters. Entries for this year’s competition close on Monday October 31st 2005.