

FG pips FF to PP aid

A STORY of political intrigue involving a Fianna Fáil senator, a Fine Gael TD, a €25,000 cheque and a community centre has added spice to political life in Co Westmeath.

It all began when Senator Donie Cassidy, the Fianna Fáil leader in the Seanad who hopes to be elected to the Dáil next time out, called a meeting in his home town of Castlepollard as the first step in his election campaign.

He invited local people, county council officials and the parish priest to the meeting at which he announced a strategy to help the parish priest raise money for the community centre. Cassidy told the gathering that he had secured a pledge of €25,000

from Senator Edward Haughey, one of the country's leading businessmen, and another one of €20,000 from the Ireland fund, for the benefit of the community centre.

However, one of the people present told the local Fine Gael TD Paul McGrath of the pledges. He contacted Haughey to find out if it was true. Not only did Haughey confirm his pledge but he sent the money to the Fine Gael man. "I have the €25,000 cheque here. I have never seen a cheque this big in my life," McGrath told *The Sunday Tribune* yesterday before setting off for Castlepollard to present it to the parish priest.

Tony Quinn Continued from Page 1

Fordie said the company had changed a statement on the product so as to remove any suggestion of a medicinal claim. "We do not wish to make medicinal claims for any of our food supplements. We do not want any to be licensed as medicines," he said.

The IMB wrote to the Tony Quinn group last September about another item in its range, a 'mind alert' product, asking that it be either reformulated so it would no longer be deemed a medicine, or reclassified - a process that would require authorisation from the IMB.

Fordie said the "mind alert" product fell foul of the IMB because the product's old brochure, which made reference to St John's Wort, was now directed before the herb was reclassified as a prescription-only ingredient. Fordie said this was "entirely an oversight".

The third product, which the IMB considers to be a medicine is a 'life extension mix' which, like the others, is sold in Quinn's health stores and

advertised in his newspaper *Blueprint for Successful Living*. In its advertising, it quotes a BBC documentary on ageing in which "some experts in the field suggested it was the most advanced product of its kind available". The IMB believes this is a medicinal claim but would not elaborate any further to *The Sunday Tribune*.

Some of the products sold in Tony Quinn health stores are in the so-called "borderline" category: vitamins or mineral-containing products which occupy a position between medicines and food supplements.

Among the products sold is creatine, a food supplement currently sold without licence, but which may become subject to new directives on food supplements and traditional medicines which are currently being prepared by the EU.

Among the measures being explored are regulations on maximum allowances, labeling requirements and licensing requirements.

News Focus, Pages 14-15

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Corporation blocks traffic web pages to stop US sites stealing images

JUST when you thought Dublin Corporation couldn't have any more gridlock problems, they found out last week that cyberspace highway men have stolen our traffic.

The Corporation has been forced to close down its internet traffic-monitoring web pages after it found that the live feeds from cameras all around the city were being used on US sites promising a glimpse of the Emerald Isle. The Corporation's web team last week decided to stop the pictures of traffic being displayed or updated until they can find out which sites are involved and inform them that they want to be credited for the pictures.

Anyone logging on to the Corporation to check the city's traffic is now being met with a fixed image and a message that reads "Our images have been stolen!" It goes on to explain that the images on the site should be seen only on the official Corporation website and then appeals to internet users for help in tracking them down.

A spokesperson for the Corporation, Ailish Smyth of the web unit, explained that the decision to stop live pictures being relayed was taken when it became known that other sites were using the pictures. She said the Corporation wanted to find out exactly who is using the

images and whether or not they are crediting the Corporation as their source. She said the Corporation had gone to great expense to set up the system, and was now considering its future as a result of the activities of the other sites.

"We're not sure where we stand legally on this one. We would like other sites to at least credit us, but we don't know yet if they are obliged to do so. It is a bit of a grey area and we are currently trying to find out if there are any laws that apply to this. So far we know of a number of sites involved and we are hoping that we will find out what other ones are using the pictures soon," she said.

She added that the shutting off of the service was temporary and said the site would be operating again soon. There are in the region of 60 traffic cameras now operating in the Dublin area and they are used mainly to help the Corporation's Traffic Control Centre to monitor traffic and illegal parking.

The images, however, are also used by the public to help in route planning and have been available at the Corporation's site for some time.

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Ministers unhappy at spend limits

SOME senior ministers have expressed reservations in private about the plan to raise significantly the spending limits for candidates at the next election. *The Sunday Tribune* has learned. For the present, however, the decision stands, although one government source said the situation was still "fluid".

Shortly before Christmas the government approved a scheme to increase the amount that candidates will be allowed to spend during the next election campaign. The plan has aroused fierce criticism from the opposition parties who have accused Fianna Fáil of preparing the ground to buy the election.

Legislation to give effect to the new limits was introduced in the Seanad during the week by the minister for the environment Noel Dempsey as part of the Electoral Amendment Bill, which also provides a legal basis for the introduction of electronic voting.

Under the terms of the Bill, the spending limit for candidates in three-seat constituencies will be raised from €17,000 to €20,000, in a four-seater from €17,000 to €25,000 and in a five-seater from €20,000 to €30,000. The opposition parties have claimed that the changes will allow Fianna Fáil to spend an extra €1m in the next election.

In the Seanad, the minister defended the move saying it was important that expenditure limits be set at a level which would permit the running of an effective campaign without the need to engage an army of accountants and financial advisers to keep election unduly restrictive amounts.

"Following the next general election I do not want members of the Dáil from any side to be under investigation by the commission for moderate expenditure over the limits, which I am sure would happen if the present amounts to remain. The revised limits I am proposing are based on the principle that an effective election campaign is an essential element in the democratic process. The determination of appropriate limits is a matter of judgement. My judgement is that the proposed limits in the Bill are reasonable, balanced and workable and provide an appropriate framework for the regulation of election expenditure."

However, despite the defence put up by Dempsey, it is believed that some ministers are still unhappy at the decision, and there is a possibility that it could be modified if it provokes a very negative public response.

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