

Former Dail deputies join race for Seanad election

Gene McKenna
Political Correspondent

A NUMBER of TDs who lost out in the general election are standing for the Seanad elections which take place next month and campaigning is already in full swing.

Fianna Fail has the largest representation of candidates, with 16 on the panel nominated by the parliamentary party and a further 45 being nominated by outside bodies.

The biggest surprise on the Fine Gael list is the exclusion of outgoing Leader of the Seanad Maurice Manning by the party's Seanad Commission, after he was nominated by the parliamentary party.

Among those nominated by the Fianna Fail parliamentary party are former Minister of State Tom Mofatt of Mayo and former TDs Brendan Kennedy of Waterford, Michael Kitt of Galway East,

Brendan Daly of Clare and Eddie Wade of Limerick East.

Also on this main list are outgoing Senators Margaret Cox (Galway West), Liam Fitzgerald (Dublin North East), Don Lydon (Dublin South), Enda Bonner (Donegal South West), Joe Walsh (Wexford) and Frank Chambers (Mayo), together with Frank Maher (Louth), Paul Kelly (Kildare North), Diarmuid Wilson (Cavan), Eamon Scanlon (Sligo) and Chris Andrews (Dublin South East).

Included on the outside panel nominees are the Taoiseach's special adviser Dr Martin Mansergh, and outgoing senators Dan Kieley, Roy Kieley, Labhras O'Riordan, Ann O'Rourke, Franca O'Brien, Eddie Bohan, Camillus Glynn, Tony Kett and Peter Callanan.

Fine Gael has nominated 12 candidates including four former TDs: Jim Higgins, Brian Hayes, Ulick

Burke and Michael Finucane.

The others nominated are Noel Coonan (Tipp North), John Bailey (Dun Laoghaire), Fergal Browne (Carlow-Kilkenny), Sheila Terry (Dublin West), John Mullins (Dublin North West), Jim Reilly (Kildare South), Joe McHugh (Donegal North-East) and Nicky McFadden (Westmeath).

Among those nominated by outside bodies are former TDs Frances Fitzgerald, Paul Bradford, Deirdre Clune and Andrew Boylan, as well as outgoing senators such as Madeleine Taylor-Quinn, Therese Ridge, Paul Coughlan, John Connor, Helen Keogh, Mary Jackman, Paddy Burke, Ernie Caffrey, Denis (Dino) O'Regan and Fintan Coogan.

The FDs are not running any candidates but are likely to have four seats in the Upper House from Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's 11 nominees as part of the agreement for

the formation of the Government.

The labour will have five candidates in the field, including SIFU general president Des Geraghty, who has received an ICTU nomination and will also run as an official party candidate on the Labour panel.

Also on that panel will be Cllr Michael McCarthy who, as Labour's youngest candidate, stood in the Cork South West constituency in the general election.

Outgoing Senator Kathleen O'Meara from Tipperary North will contest the Agriculture panel, former TD Derek McDowell from Dublin North Central is nominated on the Industrial and Commercial panel, while Cllr Joanna Tuohy from Dublin Mid-West will be on the Administrative panel.

The Green Party is putting forward just one candidate, its deputy leader Mary White on the Industrial and Commercial panel.



Fighting for seats: Brian Hayes and Michael Kitt

Genial Kenny will find being Mr Nice is a sure winner with voters

HARD men say nice guys come last.

But experience has shown that affable blokes are usually winners, particularly in public life.

And since his election as leader of Fine Gael, Enda Kenny's personal likeability has been the focus of intense debate among image mongers.

His good-natured grin says a lot about Mr Kenny, and, more importantly, impresses more voters than any notions he may still harbour about obtaining a PhD in Quantum Physics.

Although the meek may not inherit the earth, an agreeable plodder is more likely to win elections than a workaholic tyrant.

Which is not to categorise Mr Kenny, but to nail the lie about nice guys always getting the wooden spoon.

Modern media consultants use old battle-axes like Margaret Thatcher to frighten children and contrast them with sensitive new men like Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The hottest political debate currently weighs the advantages of geniality on television against the pro-step amiability.

And they don't come more amiable than Bertie Ahern, the most successful Irish politician for a generation.

Or take Tony Blair, the most successful politician in Europe and one of the most influential in the world, the very embodiment of geniality?

With the Fianna Fail leader unshamedly agreeable, and the Fine Gael boss undeniably good-natured, internal arguments about the leadership of the Labour Party have turned decidedly ugly.

This cosmetic consensus is unfair to Ruairi Quinn who has protested that he can't help how he looks... and that he is often engaged in himself when he appears miserable to others.

And, indeed, his arch-critic Robin Shortall is said to suffer from a similar condition, which means that even when she wishes someone Happy Christmas or Good Luck it sounds like



Sam SMYTH

she's making a complaint.

Michael Noonan made his reputation as a curmudgeon.

This created a makeover problem in future political life.

When PR types told him to look genial, he was internally wrestling with nature and appeared untrustworthy to the world.

His predecessor, John Bruton, was more intellectually than socially, and Alan Dukes, who went before him, was too cerebral to be agreeable.

On the other hand, Dr Garret FitzGerald - who took Fine Gael to the metaphorical moon with 72 seats - was sold as an intellectual powerhouse but was commonly loved as a nutty professor.

His habit of wearing odd socks endeared Dr FitzGerald to the public much more than his memorising of the entire Aesop's fables.

It wasn't Tony Blair's tax policies, but his easy smile and intuitive gift for popular culture that had him name Diana, the People's Princess.

That definitive gesture made him, and New Labour, the natural government of modern Britain, while Tory leaders seem out of touch.

Bertie Ahern won more votes when he spoke about doing his "shopping baskets" on Sunday mornings than he ever did by quoting economic statistics in his head-to-head debates with Michael Noonan.

And Enda Kenny will score more points telling jokes and being his likeable self than competing to be leader of the Righteously Indignant opposition.

Campaigner Kathy to run for a seat in the Seanad

CAMPAIGNER Kathy Sinnott, who lost a Dail seat in Cork South Central by a narrow margin, is making a bid for the Seanad.

Nominated by four independent TDs yesterday, she hopes to break the strange hold that the major political parties have on the Upper House.

She is standing on the Labour Panel and hopes to pick up votes from independents and smaller parties in the Dail.

She is also standing on the Seanad as well as county councils and four city councils which, between them, have around 970 votes and elect 43 members of the Seanad.

The Taoiseach nominates 11 other senators and the remaining six are elected by graduates of the National University of Ireland and the University of Dublin (NUJ).

Ms Sinnott was initially declared elected in Cork by six votes but then lost the seat on a recount by three votes to Fianna Fail's John Denny.

She said yesterday she thought the Labour Panel was the most important panel on which to stand for the Seanad as there was a lot of unrecognised and forgotten labour in this country, particularly in the home.

"People are what's important and they are too often forgotten about in legislation," she added.



The Budweiser billboard ad which has provoked a series of complaints on the grounds it is derogatory to French people. Picture: Jim O'Kelly

Frog ad spawns racism complaints

Graine Cunningham

A BILLBOARD campaign for Budweiser which refers to frogs has provoked a series of complaints on the grounds that it is derogatory to French people.

The posters which feature a World Cup trophy and urge people: "The Frogs won last time. Please, not again" have prompted a stream of complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland.

ASA chief executive Edward McCumiskey confirmed that the poster campaign had been

referred to the Authority's Complaints Committee for assessment.

He said those objecting to the campaign had believed it was "bordering on racist".

Some had argued that the advertisement was doubly wrong in including a derogatory term that was used in Britain but was not commonly used here.

The complaints were generally from Irish people although, in at least one case, the complainant said his French friends had found the campaign offensive.

Mr McCumiskey said almost a

dozen official complaints had been received which was a "reasonably high number".

He explained that callers who are told that formal complaints have already been received about a particular advertisement do not always pursue their own objection formally.

The battle of the frogs and the lizards is a long-running feature of advertisements for Budweiser beer. The lizards persistently try to outdo the frogs as the Budweiser mascots.

It is understood that the current poster campaign was due to

end at the beginning of this month and that most of the advertisements have already been taken down.

A spokesman for Guinness UDV Ireland, which brews Budweiser here, said that the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland had asked that all parties to complaints remain silent until the Complaints Committee had reached a decision.

The spokesman said that the company would be bound by any decision of the ASA and would implement any recommendations in full.

Sellafield sabotage 'potential disaster'

Treacy Hogan
Environment Correspondent

A SUCCESSFUL sabotage attack on a nuclear facility such as Sellafield could cause widespread radioactive contamination and loss of life, an official UK investigation has warned.

The UK Office for Civil Nuclear Safety also warned in its first report that the theft of nuclear material

could also have serious consequences. But it concluded that stringent security precautions were in place to protect nuclear facilities, and material from any potential terrorist threat.

The report revealed that inspections of facilities, suspended after the September 11 attacks in the US to allow inspectors to advise on extra security measures, were not expected to

resume fully until next month at the earliest because of staff shortages and other pressure.

The report is getting is carried out to prevent terrorist groups from planning attacks or attempting to recruit affected or compromised individuals working in the nuclear industry.

The office also reported that security clearance for guards at nuclear power

stations including the BNFL Magnox reactors was increased two years ago, following an incident in which a terrorist tried to compromise a station's access control system.

No further details of the sabotage attempt were given in the report, which comes as environmental groups threaten legal action to stop nuclear shipments sailing into the Irish Sea from Japan, bound for the new Sellafield MOX plant.

Green Party president Trevor Sargent said the decision to give nuclear installations in Britain a security all clear was "a whitewash".

A spokesperson for the Department of Public Enterprise said the report was being studied by the Radioactive Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII).

Savage sex attack 'sparked by Tony Quinn seminar'

Michael Doyle

A MAN violently attacked a teenage girl on the NiteLink bus during an extremely psychiatric episode following a breakdown suffered at a Tony Quinn seminar, a court has heard.

John Hussain made eye contact with the 16-year-old girl who was travelling on the bus with a male friend in October 2000 and turned when he heard a commotion behind her.

Hussain lunged at her, tipped open her blouse and bit her on the other stomach before attempting to open the buttons on her jeans with his teeth.

He remained eventually restrained and the girl managed to escape his grasp.

Hussain (36) of Grattan Street, Dublin, admitted at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court to sexually assaulting the now 18-year-old girl on

October 1, 2000. He has no previous convictions.

Judge Elizabeth Dunne adjourned the case until October 10 for a probation report because of Hussain's history of mental illness and because he had no previous convictions.

"There is no doubt that this was a barbaric attack and the effects on the victim are quite clear," she said.

Judge Dunne said it was a difficult case to deal with because on the one hand there was a most appalling attack and on the other there was someone who was suffering from a serious mental illness at the time.

He remained Hussain on bail.

Hussain apologised to his victim, who attended court with her father, and said he would never have done it if he was in his right mind.

"I am deeply ashamed

and very sorry for what I did to you. I only pray the girl can forgive me. I would never have done it if I was in my right mind."

Marie Torrens BL, for Hussain, said her client attended the seminar in the Bahamas the previous May. While he was there he suffered a nervous breakdown and began to suffer serious paranoia.

Mrs Torrens added that the seminar was not entirely to blame for his psychiatric difficulties because according to a doctor's report his condition was already developing at the time. The course may just have expedited it.

Mrs Torrens pleaded for leniency because it was a one-off incident and her client had serious mental problems at the time. Thankfully, he had greatly improved in the two years since, she added.

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IN BRIEF

Heroin use 'has risen by 200pc

UP TO 1,000 people in the North are using heroin, according to a report published yesterday, with only two-thirds of them receiving any treatment for their addiction.

And in the Republic, a new report in the Mid-Western Health Board region reveals the number of heroin users receiving treatment increased by just over 200pc between 1996 to 2000.

Murder trial jury resumes today

AMURDER trial jury was last night sent to a hotel for the second night after failing to reach a verdict in the case of a man accused of murdering a young deaf man.

Michael Sage (26) of Glenacree, Killoake, Co Clare, denies murder but admits the manslaughter of John Carroll (22) of Cappamore, Co Limerick on December 6, 1998 at Ballinahinch, Co Tipperary. The jury will resume today.

Drinks industry sets up firm to fight alcohol abuse

Ellish O'Regan

A NEW limited company aimed at encouraging Irish people to drink more responsibly is to be set up - funded by the drinks industry.

MEAS (Managing the Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society) is seeking a chief executive for the company to put it on a proper financial footing.

The new organisation comes at a time when there is a growing awareness of the extent to which alcohol abuse is having serious effects on our health and behaviour.

Pat Barry, spokesman for Guinness said yesterday the company's main aim would be to develop programmes and strategies to reduce the abuse of alcohol.

It will not have a lobbying role but it will focus on the positive aspects of moderate drinking.

"It may also take the drinks industry to task over various issues. The Drinks Industry Group is already involved in training barmen and this is evolving from that."

A spokesperson said the organisation has been in planning for several months but long-term campaigners noted yesterday that the new government will inevitably have to introduce stronger curbs if the country's alcohol abuse problem, particularly among young people, is to be tackled.

The current report of the Government-appointed task force on alcohol showed how alcohol consumption has risen here by over 40pc in the past decade and is linked to a range of problems, including public order offences. It criticised the drinks industry for its glamorous promotion of alcohol.

ROBINSONS

RECALL OF PROMOTIONAL BEAKER

Robinsons Soft Drinks Limited has become aware that the Promotional Beaker offered as a Free item with the purchase of any two 1 litre bottles of Robinsons products does not meet our normal quality standards. Under some circumstances, the material may become detached and the beaker may become damaged.

As a precautionary measure, Robinsons is withdrawing the promotion immediately and is asking all customers who have already been sent the promotion to return the top of the beaker with their name and address to: Robinsons, 79 Broomfield Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24. A return of 42 will be given for each beaker top returned.

Robinsons apologises to its customers for this problem.

Any queries on this issue other than the return should be addressed to:

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