



PARTY WITH MIDDLE-CLASS APPEAL: Fine Gael leader Leo Varadkar with former housing minister Eoghan Murphy

Dublin's Battle of the Barristers to be an interesting tussle

IT IS difficult not to envy historians at times, because their primary task is to write and lecture about what happened in the past whereas journalists are mainly supposed to report on what is happening in the present and, in the case of commentators at least, try to predict what will take place in the future.

One occasion when I did get it right was in a front-page article on August 25 1994 that was headed: "IRA to call indefinite ceasefire by end of month".

And so they did, but predictions don't always come true and it is quite a challenge to say how things are going to work out on the political scene south of the border (or indeed in the north) in the short-to-medium term.

A very interesting by-election to Dáil Éireann is looming in the constituency of Dublin Bay South, which includes middle-class areas such as Sandymount, Ranelagh and Rathmines as well as working-class Ringstead.

A vacancy has been caused by the resignation on April 27 of Eoghan Murphy, who was Minister for Housing in the previous Fine Gael-led government.

He didn't make it to Cabinet when the current Fine Gael-Fianna Fáil-Green Party coalition was formed but still seemed to have a promising future in politics.

However, he stepped down last month and has headed off to Armenia to act as an observer in that country's parliamentary election, which takes place on June 20.

In strict legal terms, the writ for the by-election doesn't have to be moved until October but the general expectation at time of writing is that it will be held much sooner, probably in the first half of July.

Fine Gael leader and Tánaiste Leo Varadkar has said: "I always

Deaglán
DE BRÉADÚN



prefer electioneering and campaigning in the summer, it's a much more pleasant experience."

Fine Gael, with its middle-class appeal, got the biggest share of first-preference votes in the constituency at 28 per cent in last year's general election and would be seen as favourites to win the by-election.

Councillor James Geoghegan is the party's candidate, although some believe FG should have asked Kate O'Connell, who lost her Dáil seat in the constituency last year, to run again.

O'Connell supported Simon Coveney in the contest against Varadkar for the party leadership in 2017 and at the time described Leo's supporters as "choirboys... singing for their supper".

She has a higher profile than Geoghegan but he is reported to be more popular with

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local branches of the party.

Sinn Féin's Chris Andrews won a seat in Dublin Bay South last year, getting 16 per cent of first preferences. At this time of writing it's not clear who the party's by-election contender will be, although the name is likely to be released very shortly.

Former Member of the European Parliament Lynn Boylan has been widely mentioned in speculation, along with Senator Fintan Warfield and Councillor Daniel Cúitinn.

Boylan, whose partner is Sinn Féin TD Eoin Ó Broin, has a high profile and would undoubtedly get a very significant vote.

But the party has been promoting her in Dublin South-West, a more working-class constituency where Sinn Féin got a massive 20,077 first preferences in last year's general election and could have had two TDs elected, but they ran only one candidate, Seán Crowe.

Senator Ivana Bacik is a high-profile contender from the Labour Party. She is also a lawyer and so too are James Geoghegan and the Fianna Fáil candidate, Councillor Deirdre Conroy. Small wonder that the by-election is being called "The Battle of the Barristers".

The Green Party, whose leader Eamon Ryan topped the poll last year, is due to choose between Dublin Lord Mayor Hazel Chu or city councillor Claire Byrne at a convention on June 4.

Senator Michael McDowell could possibly run as an independent candidate.

Sinn Féin could be Fine Gael's biggest obstacle to winning the seat, at least if Lynn Boylan is their candidate.

But it is unlikely the party could hold two seats in Dublin Bay South in the next general election and she would probably transfer back to Dublin South-West where the constituents might feel a little aggrieved at her temporary absence.

Politics involves difficult decisions.

ON THIS DAY

MAY 26 1921

'Reject Partition' – Dev

MR DE VALERA [President of Sinn Féin] has sent a telegraphic appeal to North East Ulster. In it he says: 'Politicians and statesmen declare the Irish problem insoluble, but you, the plain people, can solve it in a few hours tomorrow... Vote tomorrow against War with your fellow-countrymen; vote that brother's hand may not have to be raised against brother's; vote that there may be an end to boycott and retaliation, to Partition, disunion and ruin. ...Live in history as having created a truly united Irish nation. Orange and Green together can command the future. Ireland one is Ireland peaceful, prosperous and happy. Vote for it.'

Appeal to Nationalist Voters

PARTITION as planned by the authors of [1920 Act] means ruin for North East Ulster and an indefinite continuation of the ghastly struggle in Ireland. If the voters of NE Ulster reject Partition today, a great and permanent national peace will become possible within a month. The country's unity is at stake. Your vote may decide the issue....

This is the day for action. Vote early – at the earliest possible hour. Go to the booths. Drive if you can, walk if you must; and don't wait for conveyances. Liberty is not won by lethargy or dalliance. Make up your mind that you shall not and cannot be intimidated by anyone. It is your duty to act as resolutely and fearlessly as your fathers against greater odds than confront you today.

A Special's Sacrilege

ACCORDING to a report from Claudy, Co Derry, a party of Ulster Specials visited St Patrick's Church and tore down all bills dealing with the election. Shortly after Mass, members of the congregation were horrified to see an armed man in police uniform emerge from the sanctuary and ascend the Altar steps. He was smoking at the time and owing to his manner it was thought he was under the influence of drink. After a mock display on the altar, he proceeded to open the Tabernacle which he searched, disturbing the sacred vessels.

Sinn Féin Meetings in Co Antrim

AN important meeting was held at Feystown, Glenarn on Sunday on behalf of the Republican candidates, Louis Walsh and Joseph Connolly. Mr Patrick Mulvenna presided. Mr John Clarke [the Glens writer, 'Benmore'] said [Ulster's Irish vote must be cast solidly for the Republicans and Nationalists. (On the eve of the 'Partition' election, The Irish News used all its influence to deliver a record vote against partition and to remind voters to the need to observe the voting pact between Devlin and de Valera. Meanwhile, the Specials were active in intimidating nationalist voters.)

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