

# Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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# Leadership challenge is political suicide

I have been broadcasting and commenting on politics locally and nationally for 20 years and I have to say that I have never seen anything like the events that have happened in Fine Gael over the past few days.

I have always held the view that Enda Kenny was not the greatest leader in the world, but the way the political situation has been in the country over the past two years or so, I was expecting him to become Taoiseach despite his flaws. In my view it would surely have been good for Roscommon if Enda Kenny was appointed Taoiseach. With two FG TDs in Roscommon and with John O'Mahony just over the border in Ballaghaderreen, it was my judgement that Roscommon could have done well out of it all. A West of Ireland Taoiseach.

However, and despite whatever happens in the vote being held on Thursday, it will make no difference now who wins, because Enda Kenny's leadership is either over or close to it. He cannot survive without nine members of his front bench and it is as simple as that. I would also say that despite Richard Bruton being a very impressive performer, the timing of this heave against Enda Kenny could not be worse. In my judgement this leadership



KEY FIGURES ... Richard Bruton, Enda Kenny and Denis Naughten.

challenge is political suicide for Fine Gael as a party.

Regardless of what happens in this confidence vote, the Fine Gael party is going to be split down the middle and

it will take many years for that rift to be healed, if ever. I have heard the bitterness locally already.

Fine Gael could not have been in a better position. Fi-

anna Fáil and the Government are under terrible pressure. The public are raging with them and Fine Gael would certainly have led the next government whenever that may have come

about. This heave against Enda Kenny came on the same day that the FG party had put down a motion of no confidence in Brian Cowen. They could have put further pressure on the Government in the debate. The spat over the leadership took all the heat off that issue and the real story this week is the row in Fine Gael. I would say that Brian Cowen and the senior members of the Fianna Fail party cannot believe their luck.

It is certain that Fianna Fail and the Greens will now get to the end of June unscathed which means that there will be no change at least until the end of October. Talk about shooting themselves in the foot.

I fully realise that politics is all about numbers but it is also about timing and the timing of this stinks to high heaven. There was far too much of a knee jerk reaction to last week's opinion poll, which saw Labour pass Fine Gael. Remember too that while Richard Bruton has been a very impressive spokesman on Finance, there is very little known about what kind of a leader he might be, never mind Taoiseach. I have my doubts about him I must say, but time will tell.

The events of the past few days shows just what a dirty game politics is. Here we had

two men who had worked together for 25 years tearing strips off each other in the national media in the space of a few days. I listened to the News at One on Tuesday when Denis Naughten sat side by side with Tom Sheahan who is a colleague of his and Deputy Sheahan accused Dennis and his colleagues of a grab for power. "It's all about Mercs" he accused them, savage stuff and remember that these people are all in the same party!

Even locally I have heard ordinary members express their anger and exasperation at this huge public spat in the party and there is going to be a rift there after it is over that will not be easy to heal. Even on Morning Ireland on Wednesday we heard two Roscommon councillors, Larry Fallon and Michael McGreal in totally opposite camps. I have been in Mid West Radio in Mayo this week and the reaction to the Bruton challenge and his followers is very, very strong.

Now it is likely that this government will limp on for another two years and that as a result of this row there will not be any credible cohesive opposition to replace them even when there is an election in 2011 or 2012. Anyone taking bets on the next government to be a Labour/ FF coalition?

## Predictions on hospital are coming to pass

I am afraid that what I wrote about the county hospital here in this newspaper two weeks ago is quickly going to come to pass.

As I said there would be no announcement, no plan and no big deal. The hospital would be run down by stealth and this week we have the announcement that the lack of junior doctors and the reduction in training places will mean that most A&E units at the smaller hospitals throughout the country will be forced to close from 6 pm until 8 am. I hope that it does not apply to Roscommon County Hospital but I cannot see how we can get away without suffering too.



## Mick Quigley – a remarkable man

I was very sorry to learn at the weekend that my old buddy Mick Quigley had passed away. I had known Mick over many years. He and his family had lived just out the road in Creevy but it was in latter years that I really got to know Mick and he was one of the most remarkable people I have ever met.

He worked in Roscommon and in many other places as a butcher and he was renowned for his skill and hard work. However it was over 11 years ago that he first got sick and for him to have survived as long as he did required strength that many of us do not have as human beings. Mick loved shooting, fishing and outdoor pursuits. But he was also a man who cared deeply for the environment.

Many times over the years he rang me on the radio to highlight one thing or another. Whether it was developments on the Hind River, litter in Mote Park, the ducks in the town park, or the quality of

the water in our lakes and rivers, Mick always had something to say. Despite being in bad health for well over a decade it did not prevent him living a very full life.

He had to travel to Galway for dialysis three days every week. He was always in good form and many a great laugh we had during the time I spent with him. He was also a very deserving winner of a People of the Year award at one stage and his bravery and courage in the face of such a serious illness over the years was truly heroic. He had the support of his fantastic wife Marion who looked after him so well over the years and who was such a brilliant support to him. He fought his illness as hard as I have ever seen anyone fighting anything. To Marion and to all Mick's brothers and sisters and to his many friends I want to extend my deepest sympathy.

Ní bheidh a leithead ann arís. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

## Finally, justice for Bloody Sunday victims

It has taken 38 years but the families of those who lost their lives in the Bloody Sunday atrocity have finally got justice as a result of The Saville enquiry.



It is refreshing that a major enquiry like this ended with a positive result and that the families are happy. It was one of the major events that sparked off the huge problems and the litany of terrible killings that we had in Northern Ireland for over 30 years. Even the new British Prime Minister David Cameron (pictured left) apologised on The Commons on Tuesday for the behaviour of the British Army on the day. I know it's 38 years too late but at least it is some consolation for the families. One of the news quotes of the year came from one of the relatives on Tuesday. She said, "We buried our brother 38 years ago. Today we laid him to rest." That about sums it up.