

# International Police Association National Council

## National Council 2008 (50<sup>th</sup>)

The great annual Clan Rally in Section Ireland is National Council when delegates and observers assemble from all points of the compass to record progress and plan for the future. From 25<sup>th</sup> April to 27<sup>th</sup> April the venue was the four star Bettystown Court Hotel in Region 7.

Bettystown has a magnificent motorway and splendid railway services with direct access to Dublin and Belfast; nevertheless it is at a slight remove from the noise and activity affording a quiet retreat beside the sea. The remarkable shoreline, stretching from Laytown to Mornington, is firm and flat and it boasts the only place in Europe where horse racing takes place on the beach; a claim disputed by the annual Béal Bán Races at Ballyferriter, Dingle, Co Kerry. These curiosities may be unique based on the Latin *Unus meaning one & Equus meaning horse*.

Next stop on the railway is Drogheda, a truly historic place, which got its charter from King John in 1194. It is a pleasant place to walk about, visit the historic sites, enjoy the fine restaurants, shopping in the malls, select boutiques or antiquarian



Piper, Paddy Martin, Inniskeen, who heralded the arrival of Mr Dermot Ahern TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs

shops. If churches or museums appeal to you this is where you want to be.

Number seven Region proudly carries the title of 'Cuchulainn' and for those who appreciate this title it conjures up tales of bravery, drama, and the saga of the *Táin* which is the earliest vernacular epic in western literature – more than 12 centuries old. Well done Region 7, you may rate this event highly amongst your many achievements. National Council was held in Region 7 in 2003.

### OFFICIAL OPENING

The official opening was performed by Dermot Ahern TD, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs who returned from Nairobi shortly before performing this task. He did not display any fatigue, was most affable and seemed to enjoy meeting the guests, Irish and foreign, who were anxious to exchange pleasantries. His dramatic entry was heralded by a kilted piper who playing a regional air.

### Introduction by President Billy Saunderson

I'm extremely honoured to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs here tonight to open our conference; I also wish to welcome ladies and gentlemen delegates and spouses and friends. Our special guest here tonight is the Minister for Foreign Affairs, so Minister we appreciate you taking the time as we know you are a very busy man. As Donie says I heard you on the radio from Nairobi yesterday morning so I think it was you that saved the day. Without further ado I would ask you to address the gathering and to officially open our National Conference 2008.

### Address of Mr Ahern TD Minister for Foreign Affairs

A Uachtaráin thank you for the invitation to come and officially open your conference. It's not in my constituency, just about on the border, but it is part of the lovely north-east



Mr Ahern at the lectern

coast. For those of you visiting I hope that the weather is good and allows you to get out and see some of our beautiful scenery from here all the way up to Drogheda and beyond.

I am just back from Kenya; I left Ireland on Tuesday evening, flew through the night, arrived at 6 am and then did a day's work and then the following day I worked again meeting the President and that evening I got on the plane, it was yesterday evening on a night flight to Ireland. So if I begin to fall asleep as I'm making this speech you can understand.

When I received the request to attend your conference many months ago, I couldn't refuse someone like PJ Galvin who was always a good colleague to me in Dundalk; as were all the Gardai there. So it is an honour for me to be here this evening and I offer my best wishes to the International Police Association. It is quite amazing that Arthur Troop back in 1950 came to form this Association. It's astonishing to think that now there are 300,000 individual members and the Irish Section is probably one of the strongest in the world.

First I wish you well and welcome you to this part of the country. I just want to say a few words concerning my own area which might be of some relevance to the Police Association here in Ireland and it's in the context of what happened in the 9/11 disaster where quite clearly police from all over the world rallied to their colleagues who were injured and killed in that awful event. The camaraderie that police have around the world is second to none; no other profession or employment gives such co-operation and assistance across borders. If some are in difficulty in one part of the world, policemen from other countries will rally around and provide assistance.

This brings me to what I was saying about my own area because during my time as Foreign Minister I tried to change the whole aspect of our

department to promote what I regard as active neutrality. We are regarded sometimes cynically by some nations over the last number of decades for our policy of military neutrality and that's something that is very dearly held by the Irish people because of our history. But we have tended to use that neutrality from the point of view of being able to speak on the world stage in a very independent and an objective way. It allows us to punch above our weight internationally, whether it's the EU or the UN. From that point of view I believe our neutrality has worked in our favour in on the world stage.

It's not widely known that our 'overseas development aid' which goes to developing countries like Kenya where I came from just this morning is increasing dramatically. This year you the Irish taxpayer will spend somewhere in the region of 900 million Euro on overseas development aid mainly on the continent of Africa. Sometimes people say why should we spend all this money? We have a commitment under the UN millennium development goals to reach 0.7%, not even 1%, of our gross national income. At present we are at 0.54%. The government has guaranteed that we will go up to 0.7% by 2012. That will mean in today's money the equivalent of 1.5 billion Euro annually will be paid by the Irish to developing countries. I have come from a country where the per capita income is approximately €450 a year whereas our per capita income is €41,500 a year. I think when you see the poverty that you have to deal with in places like Kenya, it's not the worst in Africa.

Coming back to the point I believe that Ireland should again raise it's game in relation to this and with active neutrality we will now be able to promote in these countries good governance which is nearly as important as providing them with food, or with shelter, or with health and education facilities. One of



Pat Trehy presents Mr Ahern with a picture of Blackrock in the presence of the artist, Christine Brodigan



Entente cordiale: exchange of pleasantries between Minister Dermot Ahern with Mark Kernohan & Stephen Crockard N.I



Guest, Stephen Crockard, V/P Paul Mangan, President Billy Saunderson, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern, V/P Denis Dunne, Guest, Mark Kernohan, Treasurer, Joe McKeown



Despite the persistent responsibility to ensure the success of National Council a cheery vigilance was maintained by P J Galvin Chairman of Cuchulainn Region & Pat Trehy, Secretary of Oriel Branch

the aspects that I have considered is a 'rapid response corps' as part of our active neutrality; I have set it up as a result of my visit to the East where I saw in the aftermath of the tsunami the response of the international community wasn't as good as it should be. When I came home and I said to my assistants we need a rapid response corps to fit into the international community, because the Irish people have this huge urge to help in these type of disasters.

So with some of this extra funding that we've got from overseas development aid we set up the rapid response corps and we put out our first call. We have now 60 people who work their normal lives. They are public officials or in private industry - there could be a few Gardai involved. They have guaranteed that at the drop of a hat where an emergency happens somewhere in the world, that they will drop everything. We will obviously fund them to go out and assist in the international response to that disaster. I met two people from our new rapid response corps out in Kenya. They went out there as a result of the extreme violence that happened in January and continued into February. They are there in order to help the international community response to the Kenyan people in order to prevent them from falling back into conflict.

The reason I am telling you this is because I would encourage the

Irish section of the IPA to perhaps look at the template of this rapid response corps and perhaps offer some of the expertise that people like yourselves have in these type of situations where there is a disaster and where literally they have to rebuild from scratch. It is something that I believe is very important and what better organisation than yourselves, in order to provide some of the assistance that these countries need. One other aspect that we are trying to promote is that of conflict resolution and it's something again that the government has made a significant investment in trying to impart some of the experience that we have acquired over 20 years. I don't know if you saw that I recently appointed Nuala O Loan who is the former police Ombudsman in northern Ireland, as the roving ambassador in relation to our conflict resolution programme. There are significant issues in relation to the



IPA Office Staff & Spouses. John & Noeleen O'Neill; Rory & Joan Homan; Noel & Rose Kelleher. Guíimid saol fada agus maoin mór air Siobhán dhílis

security area, particularly in the aspects of the ordinary people in having the confidence in their police force. I know there are a number of people here tonight and I very much welcome them to this side of the border. But the resonance is that the same issues that we discussed for 20 years about trying to get both sides of the community to accept the police service in Northern Ireland – the exact same issue prevails in certain parts of Kenya where I came from just last night. I would very much encourage your Association to look to see if there is any way that you can be of assistance not just in the whole area of responding to emergencies as I said through the rapid response corps, but equally so in the context of the contact resolution issue. What better people than yourselves to try and help in those situations where one of this most significant issues that has to be dealt with where there is a conflict, is the confidence in the security services.

I know this occasion provides a few days of pleasure for each of you and I want to wish you well, particularly all the spouses that are here. I hope you enjoy your time in what I regard as one of the most beautiful parts of the country. You also have important work to do and therefore I formally declare the 2008 conference of the IPA to be open.

Thank you all very much indeed.

At the end of Mr Ahern's address there was sustained applause

### **Reply of Donal Sweeney, Social Secretary**

Thank you very much for that Minister Ahern

I often wonder where my taxes are going and now I'm absolutely

delighted to know that it is going to such a very good cause, anything to do with Africa I'd always put my hand up and say that it is a very worthwhile charity. Thank you very much for taking the time to come here tonight despite your fatigue.

*The Editor of IPA Journal wishes to thank Mr Dermot Ahern for his courtesy and co-operation at the Official Opening of the IPA Conference in Bettystown Co Meath. I hasten to offer my congratulations to Mr Ahern on his appointment as Minister for Justice in the new Dáil Cabinet announced today.*

There was a wine & refreshment reception in the assembly room for the opening of the conference; to add to the ambience there was also an exhibition of oil paintings by Christine Brodigan, 31 Willow Grove, Dundalk. The work of this gifted artist ranged through still life, children and landscapes. The Minister, Mr Ahern, accepted a picture of Blackrock, his home area, as a souvenir of the occasion.

Mr Ahern was most affable and remained at the reception for a short while to converse with the guests including Stephen Crockard & Mark Kernohan, Region 2 British Section as well as Hugh Brien, a long time friend of our Section and at present the USA Secretary/Correspondent for Ireland. The evening concluded with a banquet; here I must report that everyone praised the hotel staff for their courtesy, cheeriness, service and excellent cuisine. This was succeeded by music, social exchanges, formal gifts and in particular with tributes to Joan Homan, heroine of IPA Office administration for 17 years. With genuine regret I report that dear Joan retires from IPA service on the 14th May 2008.