



The Vincentian  
Partnership for  
Social Justice

Working for  
social and  
economic change  
tackling poverty  
and exclusion

Members:  
The Society of  
Saint Vincent de  
Paul,  
The Vincentian  
Congregation,  
The Daughters of  
Charity  
and  
The Sisters of  
the Holy Faith

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# JUST.NOW

May - June 2004 Justice Briefing



## June Elections 2004

### *An Election Campaign with a Difference!*

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice election campaign began early - much earlier than those of the candidates hoping to be elected on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2004 either as Local Councillors or as members of the European Parliament. While most of the work takes place in Dublin, the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice has worked in 20 counties outside of Dublin.

Our slogan is '*Your Vote, Your Voice, Your Power, Use It!*' The focus of the work is with people in disadvantaged areas whose voices are not heard. They believe there is no point in voting. Politicians do not listen to them and a string of broken promises tells them that they do not count. They have no power in an Irish society with an ever widening gap between rich and poor.

As a result of our campaign many people will vote for the first time. They have come to realise that they must stand up for themselves, their children and their neighbourhood. They know that change will only come if they use their vote as their voice.

The challenge facing those of us who are comfortably off is to use our vote as our voice on behalf of people who are poor or excluded. This edition of Just.Now focuses on the June 11<sup>th</sup> Elections.

# Local Elections

**Local Authorities are responsible for 8 Programme Areas.** City Councils, County Councils and Borough Councils have the maximum number of responsibilities of all Irish local authorities. Since 1976 these functions have been classified into eight programme groups. In contrast, Town Commissioners have responsibility only for the maintenance of houses, allotments, meals for school children, parks, licensing cinemas and markets, etc. Each of these programmes impact on all our lives and especially on people with low incomes. *Candidates should be questioned about their position on housing, traveller accommodation, recreational facilities, waste collections etc.*

## EIGHT PROGRAMME GROUPS

### 1. Housing and Building

- management and provision of local authority housing
- assistance to persons housing themselves or improving their houses
- traveller accommodation
- enforcement of certain housing standards and controls, etc.

### 2. Road Transport / Safety

- road upkeep and improvement
- public lighting
- traffic management facilities
- safety education and information
- collection of motor taxation
- licensing of draws, etc.

### 3. Water Schemes/ Sewerage

- public water supply and sewerage schemes
- assistance towards the provision of piped water supply to existing dwellings
- sewerage facilities for same
- public toilets, etc.

### 4. Development Incentives and Controls

- physical planning policy
- control of new development and building
- promotion of industrial and other developments, etc.

### 5. Environmental Protection

- waste collection and disposal
- burial grounds
- safety of structures and spaces
- fire protection
- pollution control, etc.

### 6. Recreation and Amenities

- swimming pools
- libraries
- parks
- open spaces
- recreation centres
- art galleries
- museums
- theatres
- conservation
- improvement of all of the above.

### 7. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

- appointment/election of public representatives to county committees of agriculture, vocational education committees, regional health boards, regional tourism organisations, fisheries boards, harbour authorities
- joint drainage committees
- unemployment assistance
- rates/service charge waiver schemes.

### 8. Miscellaneous Services

- financial management
- rates/service charge collection
- elections
- courthouses
- coroners and inquests
- consumer protection measures
- markets, fairs and abattoirs
- gas works.

# European Union Elections

## The European Union - What is it for?

### Peace and Prosperity

For more than half a century countries in the E.U. have been living together in peace. Citizens move freely around the Union. Trade Barriers have been removed. The European Union is one of the most prosperous areas in the world.

### Working Together

Member States do things together. In order for the E.U. to be effective it has power to make laws and to adopt its own budget. Most new legislation in Ireland originates in E.U. decisions. European laws are becoming more and more important for everyday life in Ireland and throughout the Union.

### Key Values of E.U.

- Peace
- Prosperity
- Pluralist Democracy
- Human Rights
- Sustainability
- Cultural Diversity.

### Aims of the E.U.

#### *Economic Development*

- To be most dynamic economy in world.
- To maximise jobs.

#### *Social Development*

- To ensure social cohesion.
- To enforce the Charter of Social Rights.

### Keys Issues for the Future

- Build on what has been achieved.
- Greater emphasis on the social dimension.
- Elimination of poverty.
- Greater recognition of social, economic and cultural rights.
- Greater participation of E.U. citizens.
- More resources for Irish M.E.P.s

## The E.U. and European Elections – Key Dates and Facts:

*May 1<sup>st</sup>* Accession of 10 new countries to the European Union.

*3- 6<sup>th</sup>* Final plenary session of outgoing E.U. Parliament.

*17<sup>th</sup>* Candidate Registration closes (in Ireland).

*24<sup>th</sup>* Deadline for voter registration on supplementary elector registration.

*June 10-13<sup>th</sup>* European elections across all 25 Member States.

*11<sup>th</sup>* European and Local Elections in Ireland.

*13<sup>th</sup>* Announcement of results in Ireland.

*July 20-23<sup>rd</sup>* First plenary session of newly elected E.U. Parliament. Election of E.U. Parliament President and Vice Presidents. Allocation of committee memberships and chairpersons.

Ireland will have 13 seats in the new Parliament – 4 for Dublin and 3 in each of the following – North West, South, and East

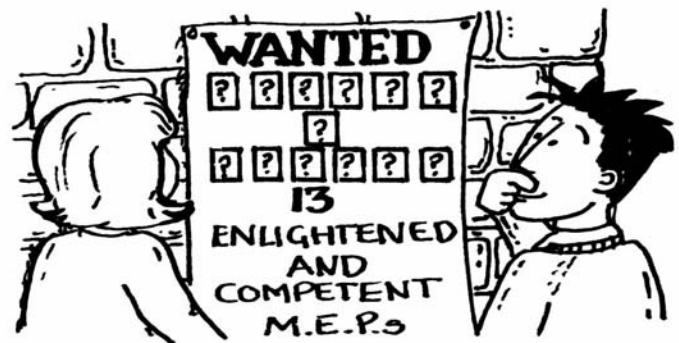
E.U. Parliament - 732 M.E.P.s will represent 455 million people. Irish M.E.P.s will belong to political groups based on values rather than nationality. They will work in parliamentary committees and take part in Plenary Sitings in Strasburg and Brussels.

### Choosing an Irish M.E.P.

The following is a composite portrait of an 'ideal' Irish M.E.P. and is the outcome of work with groups who participated in the Citizenship/Voter Education Programme.

*A Candidate who:*

- has a good track record in Irish politics.
- is committed to the E.U. vision of peace and prosperity.
- will work for the elimination of poverty and social cohesion. (there are 68 million E.U. citizens living in poverty)
- will keep the Irish people informed.
- will promote the interests of Irish Citizens while working for the good of all E.U. citizens.



"I agree Ireland needs enlightened M.E.P.s who share the E.U. vision of peace and prosperity".

"And I believe they must be competent if they are to make a difference for the 68 million E.U. citizens living in poverty".

# For Prayer and Reflection

## "Move lips, move minds and make new meaning flare"

### *A Wonderful Dream*

*Jean Monnet 1888-1979 - The Father of the European Union*

In the aftermath of two world wars in which 60 million Europeans lost their lives he had a vision of a Europe united by peace and prosperity. He worked tirelessly without self interest to help convert the dream into reality. As he once put it *'There is always a dream in all enterprise, but the dream if it lasts one day becomes reality'*.

Charlemagne, Napoleon and Hitler sought to unite Europe by war. Monnet with those who shared his dream transformed Europe "by the power of a constructive idea".

To Europeans who were accustomed to think of themselves as citizens of rival nation states, Monnet said in effect *'We are all Europeans and we must join together for the greater good'*. This means resolving conflicts by dialogue not war. It also means sharing wealth and opportunities instead of competing for limited resources.

For Monnet, "the objective was always the same; to persuade people to work together, to show them that beyond their differences of opinion and despite whatever frontiers divide them, they have a common interest".

The dream is still being realised. Because of the human reality there will be opportunities and challenges, successes and failures as the European Union strives to achieve its potential for lasting peace and prosperity.

The Spirit brings love, joy, peace,  
patience, kindness, goodness,  
trustfulness, gentleness and self  
control. *Gal. 5 22-23*

Father, may they be one in us as you are in  
me and I am in you so that the world may  
believe it was you who sent me.

*John 17.17.19*

### **Gestures of Peace**

Gestures of peace are possible when  
people appreciate fully the community  
dimension of their lives,  
so that they grasp the meaning and  
consequences of events  
in their own communities and in the  
world. Gestures of peace create a  
tradition and culture of peace.

*John Paul II*

### **Hello Europe.**

We are coming to live together,  
to work together to create together,  
yet to remain ourselves.

*The President of Lithuania*

### *Lord at a Time of Hope and Opportunity*

We thank you

- for the vision and work of one man – Jean Monnet– who dreamt of a Europe united in peace and prosperity.
- for the painstaking efforts of all who worked over the decades to help achieve the dream of a new Europe

We ask you

- to bless each of the 25 nations now part of the E.U. and help us to work together for the good of all
- to give eternal rest to the 60 million Europeans who died in two World Wars.
- for the wisdom, generosity and patience to overcome obstacles to the creation of an ever more peaceful and prosperous Europe.

### **From: *Beacons at Bealtaine***

So on a day when newcomers appear  
Let it be a homecoming and let us speak  
The unstrange word, as it behoves us here,  
Move lips, move minds and make new  
meanings flare.

Like ancient beacons signalling, peak to peak  
As phoenix flame upon fionn uisce here.

*Seamus Heaney*  
*Phoenix Park May Day 2004*

