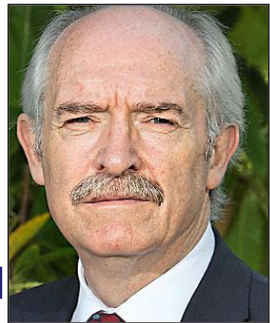


Ger Colleran



Martin dithering on presidency is an insult to party and voters

LIKE some kind of stubborn toddler Taoiseach Micheál Martin needs to do his business or get off the pot. For months he has resisted the urge within Fianna Fáil to produce a credible party candidate for November's presidential election.

His ultra-cautious approach, a distinguishing characteristic that has served him well since becoming leader of a busted-flush, rag tag, band of survivors more than 14 years ago, could now be his undoing.

Martin's reluctance so far to engage with the upcoming election can only be interpreted as an insult to the Office of President which, despite its very limited functions, is still regarded as playing a somewhat significant role in our constitutional set-up. It appears as if Martin couldn't care less.

And now his carelessly casual approach to the upcoming election has allowed dissent to grow within his own ranks, with suggestions that Bertie Ahern, warts and all, could emerge as the Fianna Fáil candidate. If that happens it's anybody's guess how long Martin could survive as leader, given that Ahern resigned from Fianna Fáil in 2012 following Martin's decision to expel him in the wake of Mahon Tribunal.

Ahern returned to the fold in 2023 in a move regarded by the public as a salute to his crucial role in the Good Friday Agreement 25 years earlier rather than as any prelude to a return to public office.

It is worth recalling that the Mahon Tribunal focussed, amongst other matters, on 'dig-outs' that Ahern received and found that he had not truthfully accounted for payments of IRE165,000 made to accounts connected to him. However, it now appears that an increasing number within Fianna Fáil believe that voters have the memory of a goldfish and that such matters, as those examined by Mahon, wouldn't feature to any significant degree in the upcoming election. They'd have another think coming.

Such ridiculousness as Ahern's possible nomination is produced by the vacuum that now exists as a direct consequence of Martin's dithering, which could so easily have been avoided. Instead of act-

ing as if the Office of President was a matter of no importance whatsoever to Fianna Fáil, he should have recognised that the very opposite is, in fact, the case.

Since 1938 there has been nine presidents of Ireland and SIX of those have been nominated by Fianna Fáil, the latest, in 1997,

being Mary McAleese who went on to serve two terms to 2011. And the best president of all was former Fianna Fáil Minister Paddy Hillery, a man who helped transform Ireland through the most radical overhaul of education in the history of this country.

Rank-and-file members of

example of how liberal, woke lecturing self-maims, turns in on itself and implodes, like it has done in the United States, with blowback that's now reflected in a clear and present danger to the entire world.

Because the reality is that such liberal fundamentalism – by pushing its agenda to cartoonish, unrecognisable proportions – has lost the audience, literally, as on average 424,000 viewers watched the Rose shows on RTE television on both Monday and Tuesday night, with over 532,000 tuned in the night Katelyn won.

RTE needs to move from 'woke up' to wake up... and it needs to smell the coffee.

» RTE just couldn't resist having another go at the Rose of Tralee on Wednesday's Morning Ireland, just minutes after this year's winner, apprentice electrician Katelyn Cummins, had been interviewed on the show.

It was hard to imagine a more calculated insult to the new Rose, first to be interviewed about her success and then a debate which included an assault on the Rose Festival as anachronistic, old fashioned, still 'a lovely girls competition' that undervalues the worth of women, an event for the delectation of others, where one notices that women taking part actually do all have lovely bottoms.

This was another distasteful and shocking



DEFEND: A Mo Chara supporter outside court this week

THE best thing the British could do now is forget all about that terror charge they've brought against Kneecap member Mo Chara (Liam Óg Ó hAinle) and just pretend the whole thing never happened.

One thing's for sure, Mo Chara is no friend to the British criminal justice system that has him in the dock in London for allegedly displaying support for the Palestinian terror group Hezbollah.

And he's certainly no pal either to the broader UK political establishment.

The longer this prosecution goes on the more damage is being done to Britain's reputation generally, and to Prime Minister Keir Starmer's credibility in particular with respect to the ongoing genocide by Israel in Gaza.

Despite Starmer's crawl-thumping over

Starmer must hope Mo Chara case goes away

the appalling massacre of over 60,000 Palestinians, Britain is still sanctioning arms sales to Israel. Since 2015 Britain has sold military equipment worth €580m to Israel and while this is tiny relative to arms sales of over €17bn from America in 2024 alone, it's still the case that Starmer has, metaphorically, blood on his hands.

Germany, by contrast, has halted arms sales.

The decision to prosecute Mo Chara presents Keir Starmer with an impossible, no-win situation.

Even if Mo Chara is eventually convicted

it's inconceivable that he'll face anything other than a fine, which in that event would merely act as a prop to wave at the thousands of supporters waiting for him outside the courthouse when he emerges. At Westminster Magistrate's Court in London on Wednesday Mo Chara's lawyers argued that the case should be thrown out on a technicality in relation to when exactly the charges were brought.

Keir Starmer must be hoping that the magistrate will take the opportunity presented and end this embarrassment.

Fianna Fáil take great pride in all that, from the clear historic linkages the party has enjoyed with the presidency which has been occupied mainly by one of their own. This makes Micheál Martin's clear reluctance so far to engage with the upcoming election all the more difficult to explain.

Apart from demoralising and annoying his internal base, including MEP Billy Kelleher who wants an early meeting of Fianna Fáil TDs, Senators and MEPs to discuss the presidential election, Micheál Martin's standoffishness represents a clear insult to the 481,414 people who voted for the party in last November's general election. What are they to think of a party they supported now being so meek in the run-in to another electoral fight?

The likelihood is that Micheál Martin already has a candidate in mind and he plans to reveal his hand five or six weeks out from

the election. So it'll be the middle of next month, at least, before we know what's going on in the Taoiseach's head.

Martin has his work cut out for him, judging by the putative list of candidates at his disposal. Bertie Ahern and Mary Hanafin hold out no prospect at all of a Fianna Fáil success while Derry-based university professor Deirdre Heenan will only give rise to head-scratching by virtue of a complete lack of name-recognition. That leaves recently minted MEP Cynthia Ní Mhurchú who would relish the notion of becoming our First Citizen, an assertive ambition that jars with Taoiseach Martin's assessment of the qualities required of his chosen candidate.

Martin has prevaricated for too long on whether Fianna Fáil will even tog out in this election.

The time is coming when he'll have to come off the fence, or be knocked off it.