

SEANAD ÉIREANN

—
Dé Máirt, 12 Aibreán 2005.
Tuesday, 12 April 2005.
 —

Chuaigh an Cathaoirleach i gceannas ar 2.30 p.m.

—
Paidir.
Prayer
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Business of Seanad.

An Cathaoirleach: I have received notice from Senator Ulick Burke that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House today, he proposes to raise the following matter:

The need for the Minister for Health and Children to indicate if, following her recent visit to St. Brendan's Hospital, Loughrea, County Galway, she is in a position to allow the plans submitted to her Department to advance to the next stage in order that overcrowding and health and safety issues are complied with at this hospital for the elderly.

I have also received notice from Senator Henry of the following matter:

The need for the Minister for Health and Children to initiate a screening programme for colorectal cancer, as recommended by the EU; colorectal cancer being the leading cause of mortality from cancer in Europe.

I have also received notice from Senator Leyden of the following matter:

The need for the Minister for Health and Children to outline the arrangements proposed in regard to the regional health fora and advisory panels provided for in the Health Act 2004, with particular reference to size and composition, date of appointment and the rules or procedures that will apply.

I regard the matters raised by the Senators as suitable for discussion on the Adjournment and they will be taken at the conclusion of business.

Order of Business.

Ms O'Rourke: The Order of Business is No. 1, motion re expressions of sympathy on the death of Pope John Paul II, to be taken on the conclusion of the Order of Business with the contribution of spokespersons not to exceed ten minutes and all other Senators five minutes.

Mr. B. Hayes: We agree with today's Order of Business and welcome the opportunity to make statements in the House concerning the recent death of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. There are some matters I would like to raise on the Order of Business with the permission of the Cathaoirleach.

Will the Leader ascertain from the Revenue Commissioners and specifically the Minister for Finance why, in regard to Revenue's investigation into another form of tax evasion by persons who had investments in insurance and unit-linked products over a period of time, there is no investigation into the insurance industry, specifically into insurance companies that were aiding and abetting this practice and were putting forward to investors the opportunity to evade tax? If the culture was as rotten as it appears to have been over a period of decades, insurance companies, the banks and the big agencies have a great responsibility for the way in which they sold these products. Up to 200,000 people, many of them small-time investors, will be hung out to dry while the insurance industry gets off scot-free. We need an explanation from the Revenue Commissioners and from the Government as to why there is no initial investigation into the insurance industry at this stage. I ask the Leader to take that matter up with the relevant Minister.

I pay tribute to the off-duty garda who yesterday, not far from where I live in my constituency, acted in a brave and heroic way which we rarely see when faced with a most violent situation. The garda tackled someone who was brandishing a knife and was about to rob a substantial sum of money from a post office. The way in which officers put their lives on the line is an example of the daily commitment of the Garda Síochána to this country. Perhaps the Leader would pass on my comments, and those of all colleagues, to the Garda Commissioner.

Mr. Norris: Hear, hear.

Mr. O'Toole: There has been a demonstration today outside the gates of the House regarding an issue concerning workers at Gama, of which we are well aware. It is appalling that only those on the left side of politics appear to have taken an interest in this matter. Is it that we cannot add, count or read? Workers, builders and the Irish economy have lost an opportunity because these unscrupulous people, as well as exploiting their workers, were also able to undercut fair-minded, compliant and honest contractors in making a bid for the work which Gama has robbed. This is not just an issue for trade unions and workers, but also for IBEC, the employers' body. IBEC should be out there today. This is one of those issues in which the importance of national wage agreements is well reflected. It is of equal importance to people in all strands of Irish life, on all sides

[Mr. O'Toole.]

of the economy and the political spectrum. I would like the House to make its position very clear on this. It suits a great many if the matter is just hived off to a group of people who are clearly identified with left wing politics, fair play to them. I conclude by asking the House to pass on its congratulations to Deputy Joe Higgins, who, despite being called a liar and the inference that he was totally daft, stuck with this issue and proved himself to be right. He has done us all a favour, because if this matter were not uncovered at this point, we would all be losers in the future.

This is an important European issue. We are considering a constitution for Europe, about which we have previously fought. People such as I have stood before groups of workers and argued that one of the important aspects of a constitution for a broader Europe is that it will bring fairness and compliance — health and safety regulations that apply in Ireland will cover all who work in this country or within the European Community. Gama flouted that, undermined the European idyll and what we stand for. It is a fundamental issue of crucial importance to all of us. I know the House will discuss aspects of the way migrant workers are treated in this country later this week but this is an economic issue of importance to Government at all levels. It should be made absolutely clear that these people will be routed out of Ireland, to ensure they no longer cause damage, not just to Turkish workers, but also Irish workers and the economy.

Ms O'Meara: I agree that the treatment of the Gama workers and everything to do with this case is a matter for us all. We will debate the issue of migrant workers tomorrow, which I welcome because it reflects badly on the country that this should be allowed to happen. It is time a line was drawn in the sand, not only as regards this, but also because of what has happened recently to Filipino workers. My impression is that people are shocked and horrified and will not tolerate the fact that our status as a prosperous nation is being maintained at the expense of the rights of poor workers from Third World countries. I welcome tomorrow's debate and look forward to contributing to it.

I want to raise the issue of the country's environmental standards. Once more Ireland has been shown up by the European Commission as the "dirty man" of Europe. It appears that we are simply not able or willing to raise our standards to a level that is acceptable right across Europe. This has gone on for far too long and I ask the Leader to request the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to tell the Seanad what we are failing to do and what is needed to bring our environmental standards up to the required level. Finally, as I am sure the Leader has noted, the issue of child care is finally

on the agenda of political party conferences. I hope this does not mean that discussion will end because there is much to talk about. I ask, in particular, that the Leader takes out the OECD report, published a few months ago, on child care in Ireland and that this be used as the basis for a debate in the future.

Ms White: Last Wednesday, in the final hours before the Westminster Parliament was dissolved, the British Government passed the inquiries Bill. This legislation neuters the promised independent inquiry into the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane, preventing all evidence being heard and the full inquiry being held in public. The Canadian judge, Mr. Cory, who first recommended an independent inquiry, said that he cannot contemplate any self-respecting Canadian judge accepting an appointment to an inquiry constituted under the proposed Act. The proposed inquiry has now lost the confidence of Judge Cory—

Mr. Norris: Did I hear a question?

Ms White: —the Finucane family, the Irish Government—

An Cathaoirleach: Is the Senator seeking a debate?

Ms White: Yes.

Mr. B. Hayes: She is conducting it.

An Cathaoirleach: We cannot have a debate on this matter on the Order of Business.

Ms White: Judge Cory has recommended that no Canadian judge should participate in the inquiry. No legal representative in the Republic of Ireland should co-operate with this inquiry—

An Cathaoirleach: The Senator is debating the matter.

Ms White: I ask the Leader to request the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Deputy McDowell, to make a statement to the House on how Tony Blair has let us down by not delivering his promise of a full and proper inquiry. The proposed inquiry is now neutered.

Mr. Finucane: I support Senator O'Toole's comments on Deputy Joe Higgins who deserves to be complimented on highlighting the issue of the Gama workers. I heard Deputy Joe Higgins's defence on a radio broadcast when he was contradicted by the Irish spokesperson for the company who claimed his allegations were wrong. He has been vindicated by what has subsequently emerged. In recent times many people from the new EU member states have emigrated to

Ireland. There are now approximately 50,000 Polish people living here. In every small town, there is a growing population from the new EU member states who are contributing to the economy.

It behoves the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to recognise the changed dimension of work patterns in the State. The inspectorate must be beefed up to conduct proper inspections and to ensure that what emerged in Gama is not happening with smaller firms. As many of these workers have little English, they are vulnerable. They have come to Ireland with the intent to make money, the same as those Irish people who emigrated in the past. There is an onus on us to ensure these workers are not exploited.

Mr. B. Hayes: Hear, hear.

Dr. M. Hayes: While I am not sure by what route this can be pursued, I ask the Leader to facilitate a debate on the issue raised by Senator White. What is proposed can by no means be regarded as a satisfactory means of looking into the issues that are concerned.

Mr. Norris: I agree with Senators Maurice Hayes and White. At the beginning of Senator White's contribution, it seemed from a technical point of view there was a lack of a question. However, she is quite right. I do not approve of the suppression of facts and material. This has happened in the case of the inquiry into the murder of the solicitor, Pat Finucane, and the Dublin-Monaghan bombings. It is simply not good enough. There is a reluctance to face what Lord Denning called the appalling prospect of governmental and official intervention in Ireland. Everything we know about life shows that with appalling prospects, one must face them or they will continue to repeat themselves. If uncomfortable truths are dug up, so much the better because we will not have to face them again. I support the calls for a debate on this issue.

I support the comments made on the Gama workers. I did not intend to speak on this issue. It may have been better if we did not have an Order of Business today. It would have lent more solemnity to the occasion if we simply proceeded to statements on the death of the Pope. However, it is astonishing that the Gama company has the nerve to go to the courts again to seek the suppression of a report.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes.

Mr. Norris: This is not the way we in Ireland want to run our democracy. The sooner the Turks are told this, the better. I concur with Senator O'Meara's view that as we have become more prosperous, we have become less caring, as evidenced by the recent case in Irish Ferries. To my

shame, I heard of the case on the BBC World Service when I was abroad. The report stated an Irish company had been found in breach of human rights, with a beautician being paid a penny or some such derisory figure per hour. I am told that this is true of many ferries and that many of the crew are engaged from other countries, where they can be manipulated. Few Irish crew are involved. We must watch this case.

Mr. Leyden: I am glad the Leader has put a debate on Gama on the agenda for tomorrow. Deputy Joe Higgins does not have a monopoly on concern for workers in this country.

Mr. Norris: He was not helped by you.

Mr. Leyden: What is involved here is the exploitation of Turkish workers by Turkish firms, not by Irish employers. Furthermore, the permits should be given to the applicants, not the employers. This is where the difficulty arises. I hope the Department will publish the report tomorrow with the support of this House and that the courts will not suppress the truth. The courts are interfering with the rights of the Oireachtas by granting injunctions to prevent the publication of this report. The Minister should have the courage of his convictions and publish it tomorrow in the House. We can have a worthwhile debate on the Gama workers and other workers who are being exploited.

Ms Terry: There was another murder in west Dublin this morning. A man was gunned down in cold blood. The incidence of murder in west Dublin is a cause of great concern for people living in the area and should be a matter of concern for everybody. Will the Leader invite the Minister to the House for a debate on this type of crime? We do not know if it was a gangland shooting. The reasons for such murders, whether they relate to drugs, gangs or the number of illegally held weapons in the country, must be addressed. This issue should be dealt with urgently. We must also examine the resources available to the Garda to tackle this type of crime.

The Ongar area where the shooting occurred is not covered by the local Garda station in Blanchardstown but by Lucan gardaí, which is ludicrous. The Minister and the Garda Commissioner must reconsider where Garda stations are operating and the areas they cover. This must be addressed urgently so the gardaí are equipped to tackle this type of heinous crime.

Mr. Morrissey: Like my party, I condemn the Gama construction company for the way it has treated its workers. I hope that when the Minister comes to the Seanad tomorrow he will clearly outline where the Department stands on this issue. I am an employer and have employed migrant labour. There is a section in the appli-

[Mr. Morrissey.]

cation form for work permits which deals with the number of hours per week and the rate of payment per hour. The payment must be at or above the minimum wage.

How did these people get permits? What type of inspections are carried out on our behalf by the Department? I want answers to these questions.

Mr. Browne: It is time we invited the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to the House to discuss Garda numbers and recent media reports which indicate huge variations throughout the country in the ratio of gardaí to local population. This is worrying. In the Carlow-Kildare division, the ratio is one garda per 600 people while in Cork the ratio is one garda per 200 people. The Minister should come to the Seanad to explain why there is such a huge variation.

Will the Leader congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs on his new appointment as UN envoy to the EU? He will be the eyes and ears of Kofi Annan. Hopefully, the Minister will have more success with that task than he had when he was sent to look up trees in north County Dublin. He might have learned lessons from that.

An Cathaoirleach: That matter does not arise on the Order of Business. I call on the Leader to reply.

Ms O'Rourke: Senator Brian Hayes, the Leader of the Opposition, spoke about the new investigation to be undertaken by the Revenue Commissioners. He asked that the Revenue Commissioners and the Minister for Finance disclose whether the insurance industry will be investigated for supplying these products to investors who will, of course, be called to account. That is a fair point and I will contact the Revenue Commissioners on the matter.

The Senator also paid tribute to the off-duty garda who acted heroically and suffered a grievous stab wound as a result. He did not have to intervene. We should convey our commendation to the Garda Commissioner.

Senator O'Toole spoke about the Gama workers and how compliant employers do not get contracts as they cannot compete on price. As the Senator pointed out, this is a European issue. When we debate the European Constitution, we will be trying to sell the idea that Europe has a properly regulated market. Even though we congratulate Deputy Joe Higgins, this is not just an issue for one party or one man. It is an issue for everyone who is interested in the employment rights of people.

Senator O'Meara also raised the issue of migrant workers. We will have a chance to debate that issue tomorrow. We are inclined to concentrate on the Gama issue, but there are many other examples which this issue highlights. The Senator

also asked that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government appear before the House to give an explanation on the environmental standards to which we are not adhering.

Senator O'Meara also raised the issue of child care, which has been debated many times in this House. Senators White, O'Meara and others have spoken strongly on it before. If it is now being discussed as an issue, we should be glad that others have seen the light.

Senator White pointed out that one of the final issues to be decided in Westminster before the dissolution of the Parliament was the format of the inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane, about which Judge Peter Cory was scathing. The Senator claimed that the debate was being neutered and she called for a debate here with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Senator Finucane also raised the issue of the Gama workers. He called for the strengthening of the labour inspectorate in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The inspectorate issued a startling report which was highlighted in the newspapers. It could not perform its duties as there was not enough inspectors to check up on employers that employ migrants. It is a huge area of activity.

Senators Maurice Hayes and Norris also requested a debate on the inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane. Senator Norris also raised the human rights issue surrounding Irish Ferries. Senator Leyden also raised the issue of employment rights and wondered why the report on Gama was not being published. Apparently, Gama sought a court injunction to prevent publication. The Senator wondered how the company could do that when this House wishes to read it. He requested me to ask the Minister to release the report to the House, but the Minister is under a court order not to do so.

Senator Terry spoke about another murder in west Dublin and demanded that the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform explain why the proper resources are not being
3 o'clock deployed in that area. Senator Morrissey, speaking as an employer, requested the view of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on the issue of work permits for migrants. I would like to know how the permits can be issued if the forms are being completed incorrectly. I presume Gama will maintain it arranged that so much money in the name of the workers would go to some other country. However, I am puzzled as to how that arrangement could have been entered into.

Senator Browne referred to the Garda Síochána report and the variance in the numbers of gardaí around the country. I suppose some areas are better at coping than others. The Senator also wanted the House to pay tribute to the Minister

for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Dermot Ahern, and I will do so on behalf of Members.

Order of Business agreed to.

Expressions of Sympathy on the Death of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II: Motion.

Ms O'Rourke: I move:

That, as a tribute of respect to the memory of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Seanad Éireann will send an expression of its profound sadness and sympathy on the death of the Holy Father to His Eminence, Cardinal Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals.

I wish to thank you, a Chathaoirligh, and the staff of the Seanad Office for their guidance on how the House should go about dealing with this motion. We have operated on the basis of precedent.

After all that has been broadcast and written about the death of the Pope, it is difficult to find fresh words to say about the passing of the Holy Father, but I wish to convey the sympathy of the House in this regard. Of all the admirable traits of the late Pope John Paul II, it was a happy coincidence that even at a time of acceleration in the growth of communications, he was himself the great communicator. His accession to the papacy coincided with a growth in international communications and his ability to communicate on a global scale with so many people was one of his wonderful traits. His late Holiness was originally an actor by profession, a fact that appealed to so many people in the communications field. We have only to think of the day he landed in Ireland when he knelt to kiss the ground with his red cloak swirling around him. That gesture had a dramatic impact then and still does today when one reflects upon it in retrospect. It was a striking gesture and I am sure he thought of that himself. I am also sure nobody in the Vatican told him to kneel and kiss the ground. It was a wonderful gesture.

In addition, his humility was the trait of which we all stood in awe. Looking at the television last week, I was struck by what appeared to be the humble origins of many of the people in St. Peter's Square in Rome. They were very ordinary people, including the Polish with their flags, the Italians and others. Wherever they came from they were not dressed up in pomp and ceremony. We had that on the day of the funeral, which was right. After all, he was the pope who stopped a royal wedding, if only for a day. There was a wonderful display of emotion and affection by ordinary people who were genuinely saddened by the loss of a man they saw as their friend. People do not garner that kind of universal sympathy without evoking it through their own deeds.

As we all know, there were some matters concerning Pope John Paul II's papacy with which we

did not all agree. However, that is not the point in commenting generally on his papacy which transcended all of that. He was the figurehead of the church and while there are many who will comment on various aspects of his papacy, he will be remembered for his humility and his determination to travel the world and meet people. He was also determined to get close to people, a fact that is supported by endless anecdotes. It would be wrong of me, however, to go into any of them in detail. There were endless stories of how he wished to express his views to people as well as listening to their views. He exuded great warmth. People have told me that when he entered a room it lit up almost immediately. I saw that myself at close quarters. He had clever eyes. I remember the first time I saw him, when he kissed the ground. When one approached him he had those very intelligent bright eyes which, sadly, illness dimmed and dulled as time went on. Of all the actions in his life, the most telling and stark is how he met his death, which he did with courage and bravery. That conveyed a lesson. It was also notable that the windows of his apartment were left open, with the light on, so that people could see he was still alive. When he passed away, the light was turned off and the windows were closed.

The Pope taught so many things. Young people adored him. His comment in Galway — "Young people of Ireland, I love you" — was a dramatic way of expressing why he came and what he wanted to do.

I pay tribute to the media, to RTE and the other stations, and to all the newspapers. We received on the spot, vivid accounts of what was happening and did not miss a beat. That was wonderful because once again it was global communication brought into our sitting-rooms or kitchens or wherever our televisions were. We were able to see, hear, listen and absorb. Friday morning's funeral was a wonderful spectacle. One did not need to be a highly religious person to be almost overcome by what was happening.

Mr. B. Hayes: On behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House, I second the motion. It is a mark of a republic that both Houses of the Oireachtas are today reflecting on the recent death of Pope John Paul II and are using time in Parliament without any disagreement from other faiths or denominations. It is a tremendous mark of the maturity of this republic, and the new dialogue between different faiths, that such a debate and expressions of sympathy should occur without any disagreement or disenchantment.

As the Leader said, much has been said and written about the Pope over the past week. I was struck by the image of the dying Pope on the Easter Sunday before his death, when he tried to speak. Clearly frustrated and exasperated, he struck the podium in a strong and strident manner. That was an example of his vocation to his

[Mr. B. Hayes.]

church throughout his life, but also an example of how he handled his suffering, which was so intense and real in recent years. That is the image I retain of the Pope before his death.

Like many people in 1979, I was in the Phoenix Park. I am glad to inform the House that I was an altar server on the occasion.

Ms White: Very fitting.

Mr. B. Hayes: I was one of 5,000 altar servers. I remember vividly that great occasion when I was ten years old and the great pomp which surrounded the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in September 1979. In many ways, his visit was supposed to re-evangelise the Roman Catholic Church in this country and it was in many respects the high point of an era. What followed was a very difficult and turbulent period for the church. Many would argue that it was a better and more honest period, when its problems and its authoritarianism had to be confronted, and a much more honest debate occurred. That debate has been good for the Roman Catholic Church and for the country in general.

I agree with the Leader on the role of public service broadcasters. I was very struck by the extent of the coverage on RTE in particular. I was struck by its sensitivity and reverence during the whole week which allowed so many older people to see the ceremonies in Rome and be part of the grief.

In a sense there is international grief following the death of Pope John Paul II because he was Pope for 26 years. He travelled to some 140 countries and was Pope during the explosion of a media age. In many respects it was that internationalisation of the church that allowed him to be such a striking force for so many people of faith and non-faith throughout the world that everyone was struck by his death and the circumstances of the past week.

Arising from the historical problems that have confronted Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, if there is a country in the world that needs ecumenism and a much stronger inter-faith dialogue, it is ours. I watched the mass in the Pro-Cathedral at home as I could not be there. I was struck by the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop Neill, when he spoke at the end of mass of his sense of loss following the death of Pope John Paul II. His was a personal and real account that clearly showed the respect he had for the dead pontiff. I was struck by the spontaneous applause following his comments on behalf of Church of Ireland members throughout the country, particularly Dublin where the mass took place. I wonder if that would have happened 15 or 20 years ago.

Pope John Paul II's great legacy was his ecumenism. I think of the time he went to Israel and

apologised to the Jewish faith for the way in which the Roman Catholic Church had conducted itself in the course of the Second World War. In his last testimony he recalled the strong relationship he had with the Chief Rabbi in Rome. He also reached out to the Orthodox Church in Greece and there has been some healing of the wounds between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. I think of the time Pope John Paul II went to Canterbury when Archbishop Robert Runcie was archbishop. Archbishop Runcie said at the time "Holy Father, we welcome you". As a person from a background of a Protestant father and a Roman Catholic mother, this was an abiding memory for me growing up. Pope John Paul II's legacy in the area of ecumenism is very strong.

It was very important that he was a Polish Pope. The curse of central and eastern Europe is anti-semitism, as can be seen vividly from the Holocaust and the Second World War. There has been a significant anti-semitism problem in Poland. It is significant that this Polish Pope reached out in a sensitive and honest way to those of the Jewish faith. He was also the first Pope to visit a mosque. He will be remembered for this inter-church dialogue.

There is great satisfaction for many old and young Roman Catholics who watched the events of the past week here at the way in which this country and the world remembered the life, times and work of Pope John Paul II because many of them had felt that the church had been badly let down internally and externally and that their faith was not recognised because of the new all-encompassing consumerism of our society. There is a great sense of encouragement for many Catholics from the response of others to these events. We must all be encouraged by that and learn from the example of Pope John Paul II. We must hope that his great vocation can be upheld in the memory of all people of faith and no faith throughout the world.

Mr. Dardis: It is correct that we should pause to mourn the death of Pope John Paul II and to reflect on his life and the message it gave us. The high emotion that touched us all during his final great struggle for life, his death and his funeral has subsided since he was buried last Friday and, therefore, we now approach his life in a more reflective and detached way. Perhaps it is good that we should do so.

On Friday evening last, delegates to the Progressive Democrats annual conference assembled in large numbers to commemorate and celebrate the life of the late pontiff and to reflect on it in the company of the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Bishops of Cork. On her return from the funeral in Rome, the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, described Pope John Paul II as one of the great-

est figures of Europe and of the 20th century. Few, if any, will disagree with that assessment.

Pope John Paul II was, by any objective standard, one of the great leaders of our time and a spiritual, intellectual and human colossus. He inspired us, moved us and loved each one of us. The love of humanity that radiated from him brought the leaders of 150 countries, many ordinary people and many young people, in particular, to Rome for his funeral. He probably touched more lives than anyone in living memory and more than most in recorded history.

Our country was touched by him. Like Senator Brian Hayes, I was in the throng in the Phoenix Park on that beautiful autumn day in 1979 and my abiding memory and that of many others was the sight of the Aer Lingus jumbo jet carrying the Pope banking and flying in low over the large crowd on its way to Dublin Airport. It is difficult to comprehend now but at the time it was almost unbelievable to think that the Pope would visit us because it was not the practice of Popes to leave Rome. However, we take it for granted nowadays following the late Pope's visits to more than 100 countries.

At the time, people of my parent's generation never thought they would see it happen. During the Pope's visit to Ireland, we experienced his love for all of us but we learned of his burning commitment to peace when he appealed on his knees to the men and women of violence to go down the road of peace. We learned of his love of youth, as the Leader stated, when he told the young people of Ireland in Galway that he loved them. We also learned of his uncompromising enunciation of the teachings of the church. These were recurring themes throughout his papacy.

Sometimes the message was not always what we wanted to hear but there was no denying the fearlessness or the immense faith that underpinned his preaching of the truth. As well as his love, Pope John Paul II's faith shone through at all times. He was an unyielding witness to that faith and steadfast to the truth and for that he must be admired. It made him a champion of human rights, peace, the world's poor, debt relief and freedom. Pro-life meant more than an abhorrence of abortion and euthanasia; it included the abolition of the death penalty, opposition to wars of the great powers and a rejection of the proposition that there could be such a thing as a just war in our modern world.

Much of this must have been shaped by his Polish background and his experience of the tyranny of both Nazism and communism. The Poles feel themselves orphaned by his passing. They and we saw him play a central role in bringing an end to communism in Poland and elsewhere in Europe. The Europe we have today, based on democratic principles and with human rights at its heart, owes much to the character of Pope John Paul II. The Tánaiste stated in Cork, "Europe has been

enormously shaped by the actions and the influence of Pope John Paul II. We and successive generations will reap the benefits of the peace, unity and freedom he did so much to bring to our continent."

Growing up in Poland at the centre of a vibrant Jewish community and witnessing its destruction must have been a major influence on Pope John Paul II's affection and regard for Judaism and on extending the hand of friendship to the Jews and other great religions of the world. I suppose it underlined the word "pontiff" that the Pope acted as a bridge. It was remarkable that he apologised to the Jews for past wrongs, and that apology was necessary. Assuredly, the spirit must have been at work when the cardinals chose a Polish pope. Jesus charged his disciples to go out and preach the Gospel to all the nations of the world, and Pope John Paul II was the living embodiment of that instruction, bringing the message to more than 100 countries and changing fundamentally how the faith was communicated. He understood more than most — and before his time — the significance of the global village. At the end, during his decline and suffering, when we saw that towering intellectual struggle to escape the prison of a failing body, we learned much and were inspired regarding how we should face death as Christians. Once again, it demonstrated that colossal faith was at the core of the message.

We politicians must respond to the messages we were given by the late pontiff regarding how we treat the underprivileged, how we deal with death and starvation in the Third World, how we look after the poor and marginalised at home and how we bring lasting peace to our island. We were inspired by this poet, actor, athlete, author, priest and teacher. He exerted worldwide authority through moral strength, without guns or an army. John Paul the Great left a lasting legacy to history and in the lives of countless people.

Ní fheicimid a leithéid sin arís. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam dílis. May the spirit walk again with those charged with trying to fill the shoes of the fisherman.

Mr. Norris: I will not dissent from the terms of this motion, although I regret that it was changed and that the message will be sent not to the Camerlengo but to Cardinal Ratzinger, about whom I must say, in the words of an English parliamentarian, I feel there is something of the night. Nevertheless, it is important that we mark this event. I also understand that the motions were placed simultaneously on the Order Papers of both Houses without any consultation — at least in the case of the other House — with the Whips.

Be that as it may. There is no question or doubt that this event is very remarkable. I was abroad and listened to the service. When I heard the sol-

[Mr. Norris.]

mn bell tolling to mark the funeral of the Pope, I thought of a great piece by the Anglican divine, John Donne, “Devotions upon Emergent Occasions”.

XVII. NUNC LENTO SONITU DICUNT,
MORIERIS.

Now, this bell tolling softly for another, says to me: Thou must die.

Meditation.

PERCHANCE he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. [...]

Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world?

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were: any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Those were my thoughts when I heard of the death of John Paul II, who was undoubtedly a very remarkable man and a charismatic figure. I recall the day of his election, when I was in the city of Coventry writing one of three papers which led, ironically, to the foundation of the International Gay Association, which is still vibrant today. I thought how wonderful it was, but I have been saddened since at the lack of fulfilment of what I saw as the promise of greater liberation, freedom, understanding and humanity. He was a positive, creative and courageous man on some issues. He was opposed to the death penalty and the war in Iraq, for example. I also remember his poignant appeal to the IRA, when he was on his knees in Drogheda. He was largely unsuccessful on such issues.

I feel much less happy about the record of Pope John Paul II in respect of some areas in which he thought he was successful. I regret that he committed himself to authority, rather than honest inquiry, and to the suppression of honest dissent. When I raise such matters I am told that the church is a club, rather than a democracy, and that one has to accept the club’s rules when one enters it. Perhaps that is true but, like many

people throughout the world, I have not entered the club in question. It is wrong that we are all expected to bend the knee on issues such as those I have mentioned without discussion, honest inquiry or debate, because of the Vatican’s political perspective. It is incorrect to try to enforce such rules. There are numerous instances — I refer for example to the issue of AIDS and the recognition of relationships outside marriage — of parliamentarians receiving clear political instructions from Rome on how they should vote. Such interventions are extraordinary.

The papacy of the recently deceased Pope was characterised by an extraordinary facility with the media. A lack of proportion within the Vatican was sometimes exposed by media-driven events. The fact that the Pope, who was a great man, created more saints than any of his predecessors suggests to me a lack of proportion, particularly when I consider the exclusion so far from the list of saints of the late Pope John XXIII, who was one of the most remarkable spiritual leaders of the 20th century. It worries me that he has not been made a saint——

Ms White: Opus Dei.

Mr. Norris: ——even though many other people, some of whom are obscure and of questionable background, are now standing in the serried ranks of the saints. Pope John XXIII was universally loved and revered for his humility, which was not one of the qualities of the recently deceased Pope John Paul II.

The intellectual powerhouse of Catholicism, the Jesuit Order, was marginalised and sidelined under the papacy of Pope John Paul II while Opus Dei was promoted and elevated. That is a problem because the church “belongs to all”, as John Donne said at the start of the passage from which I quoted. I certainly feel that the church belongs to me — in my ancestry I have a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church during the penal period. It is my church — in my genes there are those who fought for the church when it was not popular. Perhaps the Jesuit Order was marginalised because of its honesty, which was evident during the recent period of the Pope’s dying and death. I heard a Jesuit saying it was a pity to distort the emphasis on Easter by focussing on the deathbed of the Pope, rather than on the passion and agony of Jesus Christ on the cross. That was a courageous comment to make.

Many people have been implicated in cases of clerical sexual abuse, an issue that has troubled this country. It is a pity that Cardinal Law was given such a prominent role in Rome in recent days. The lead is often given from the top in matters of this nature. The Pope sent a letter of sympathy to Cardinal Groer of Vienna when the cardinal had to leave his position following sustained allegations of sexual interference with

young priests. It is a pity that the letter did not mention the victims of abuse. I am not sure why that was the case but it happened and I regret it.

The Pope's decision to forbid the priesthood from becoming involved in politics affected some priests who had wonderfully and courageously defended the poor in Latin America. He had no such inhibitions in his native land, Poland, where he endorsed Solidarnosc and Lech Walesa. He ruthlessly sought to stamp out liberation theology in Latin America. The list of the victims of Cardinal Ratzinger's office is a roll-call of the most profound spiritual thinkers of the Catholic Church in the 20th century. I refer to people like Leonardo Boff, Hans Kng, Charles Curran, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen and Professor Dr. John McNeill. Today's edition of *The Irish Times* has reported that Hans Kng has suggested that Cardinal Ratzinger is attempting to manipulate the papal election in his own favour.

I could give a list of other people who have been silenced, such as Oscar Romero, who was initially conservative but had to learn from experience. He faced life with honesty and committed himself to the poor of his own country, but he was hung out by the Vatican not to dry, but to die. When his assassins came, he died silently. The people of Latin America, however, have made him a saint and they do not require the Vatican stamp of approval. When Oscar Romero appealed for protection from the Vatican, it reminded me of Imre Nagy appealing from Budapest over a crackling radio wave for help from those whom he had expected to help, but they denied him. I am on the side of Archbishop Romero.

I did not see humility, I saw hubris. I remember some striking visual images. When Sr. Theresa Kane in Chicago, at the opening of his papacy, courageously made a strong plea for the recognition of the position of women in the church, the Pope did not reply, he just put on an angry expression and pushed his hands down as if to say that she must sit down and not speak in his presence, a Pauline view of things.

Another image was that of him shaking his fist in the face of Miguel Descoto, the Foreign Minister who was also a Jesuit, in Nicaragua. Former President Bush and the Pope succeeded in destabilising that noble experiment. When Miguel Descoto was Foreign Minister, Nicaragua had the highest rate of literacy in South America and it now has the lowest. Its wealth has gone back to the *rancheros* and those others who hoarded it before.

I regret that this papacy appeared to be characterised by *una duce, una voce*, enforced by Cardinal Ratzinger. There were wonderful titles to so many papal encyclicals. Pope Paul VI issued *Gaudium et Spes* — *Joy and Hope* — and that is what young people need. Pope John Paul II issued *Veritatis Splendor* — *The Splendour of Truth* — but

the truth was often denied. I recently attended a remarkable performance of Brecht's *Galileo* in which this great dramatist showed both sides and how troubling and difficult it was for the establishment and ordinary people to accommodate themselves in the complex world that was emerging where man and the earth were not the centre of the universe. It was challenging and shocking but there were people in the Vatican at that stage who knew he was right but they turned their faces against the truth. That is a great pity.

Young people need inspiration, love and the rights of women to be addressed. There are so many problems to be addressed: global warming, population control, AIDS and human sexuality. Everyone says they felt loved by this Pope but I did not. Any Pope who presided over a Vatican where the language of hatred was spewed forth and words such as “virus”, “objectively evil” and “intrinsically immoral” were used was not using the language of love, not to me. On AIDS, the absolute refusal to accept international advice that condoms are essential in the fight against HIV condemns beautiful young, heterosexual men and women in Africa to a horrible death.

I could say much more but I will conclude by saying that I wish the soul of this Pope something that he did not give people like me during the time we shared on this planet — peace. I very much hope that the Holy Spirit, that moves in a mysterious way, will move through the appointment of so many deeply conservative people within the church and find, as it did in the case of that wonderful man Pope John XXIII, a truly Christ-like figure who will lead the church into this challenging century and will find for complex and difficult questions not the simplistic, dogmatic and biblically based answers that we were given under this papacy but, instead, answers that are humane, clear and practical.

Ms O'Meara: On behalf of the Labour Party, I join today's tribute to an outstanding world leader who passed away a short time ago. As others have said, Pope John Paul II was a truly great leader of the 20th century and at his most inspiring in the way he faced the illness he endured in recent years and in his passing. Any of us who saw his expression on Easter Sunday as he tried to speak to his flock could not have been anything other than moved by his frustration and sense of what appeared to be uselessness but was most certainly not. We have known for some weeks that the Pope was going to pass from us. His humanity and sanctity lived side by side in his endurance in the weeks before his death.

I remember 1979, I was at university in Galway, one of the young people of Ireland. At a certain level I resisted being there but the whole country was mobilised in an extraordinary fashion and there was no way than that my mother in part-

[Ms O'Meara.]

icular would have it any other way than my being on the bus to Galway from our parish at 5 a.m. like everyone else. It was an amazing event to be part of because so few were not part of it.

I agree with Senator Brian Hayes. Thinking about it since, particularly in the last few days, the Pope's visit was the high point of Irish Catholicism. One could not help noting in the reviews of the era how Bishop Casey and Fr. Michael Cleary were prominent in Galway. We saw what happened afterwards, with the crashing sense of disappointment that so many people felt, particularly the older generation, as the fault lines in the church were starkly revealed, some of which have not yet been resolved. Be that as it may, however, it was an inspiring time and it came back to us clearly last week.

It was an extraordinary thing to see the many millions of people who went to Rome to pay their respects to Pope John Paul II. It was an indication of the life he led in an era of mass communications. He was an outstanding communicator and used the media in a powerful way that allowed his greatness to show. He had the ability to be with many thousands of people in a stadium while reaching across the globe and acting as a truly global leader. That was evident in the manner of the tribute paid to him by many millions of people last week.

I pay tribute to the Irish media for the wonderful coverage of events, particularly the requiem mass on Friday. I listened to "Liveline" and to the many people who phoned in spontaneously to say that they had been at services and gatherings throughout the day to mark the passing of this great man. Despite the fact that we had no day of mourning, and quite a squabble over it, people were willing to join together to mark the Pope's legacy and note how this great man had touched their lives.

On Friday evening, we were joined in the church in Nenagh by 50 members of the Polish community who were invited to take part in the ceremonies. It was deeply touching to see them participate in a simple but profound way in our parish. It is one of the outstanding memories I will have of this leader.

I will not rehearse as other speakers have successfully done the many achievements of Pope John Paul II. The stand he made for the people of Poland marked a turning of the tide in world events, especially in Europe where the fall of communism resulted in a changed vista. There is no doubt that the Berlin Wall came down as a direct result and that the expansion of the European Union has formed part of the legacy. Pope John Paul II played an outstanding role in European events and will prove a very hard act to follow for whoever succeeds him.

As a female member of the Catholic Church, I have noted with some sadness and disappoint-

ment that the expression of women's ministry has not been allowed to develop under the last papacy. I hope the new millennium will be an era in which a new Pope will allow the expression of women's ministry to fully play out. In saying as much, I do not wish to detract from the greatness of Pope John Paul II. While sadness and disappointment at some aspects of his papacy do not undermine the tribute I pay to him, I cannot allow the occasion to pass without noting them.

The blight of clerical child abuse here and elsewhere has severely undermined the ministry of the Catholic Church and created a negative dynamic which has yet to be resolved. Having family members in the priesthood as, probably, do many other Members, I am aware of the level of personal hurt caused them as outstanding pastors by the horrendous actions of a number of people within the church. We have yet to reach the point at which the church stands forgiven by the victims of clerical child abuse as was evident from the reaction to Cardinal Law in Rome yesterday. I imagine the reaction was echoed in certain quarters here. Many expected a different type of leadership to be shown from the papacy which has just ended on Aids in Africa and the alienation of the gay community internationally. Many will hope for a different type of leadership from the papacy going forward.

I do not want my comments to undermine a tribute to the extraordinary legacy and outstanding, inspirational leadership of one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. As Mark Hederman noted on RTE radio last Friday, the passing of Pope John Paul II marks in many ways the passing of the 20th century. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Ms Ormonde: I record like other Members my small tribute to the significant loss of one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. I began to think about the loss as I watched the compelling television programmes of the last week. As I witnessed the Pope's suffering, I was led to conclude that there was a message in it despite the lack of words. I was struck that his message to older people was that they should have hope. He seemed to communicate that he was old and ready for his life in this world to end. It was beautiful. While I am not a great church person, I feel and reflect and what I saw made me reflect about the man.

I bought *Time* magazine to read about the Pope's career as I wanted to know about the substance of the man. By age 14, he was orphaned and had no family left and I wondered how many of us could approach in such circumstances his success in creating a way of life. He had to shape it for himself and having begun to work in a quarry, his leadership qualities started to become obvious. Those leadership skills developed further as he worked as an actor to fund his stud-

ies. Reading the article in *Time*, I began to think about how to define “leadership” and concluded that if I ever have to give a lecture on the subject, I will refer to the character and traits of this magnificent man. He did not speak many words, but demonstrated leadership through the strong values of truth, suffering and caring which are no longer held in contemporary Ireland or, indeed, the world. What we have lost with Pope John Paul II is an answer as to how to reach out and bring back a sense of caring.

The Pope reached out when he spoke to the youth though he did not use many words to do so and while few young people go to mass nowadays, they can all talk about Pope John Paul II. I do not remember the previous popes very well, but I know the last one will be remembered long after all of us are no longer here. It is a significant tribute to him. Pope John Paul II gave me an opportunity to reflect on my life, where I stand with my God and where we are all going into the future. He sent us a strong message. While I am saddened by his loss, I am glad he existed to give me the power to reflect on and discuss his values of love, truth and caring in which we so lack today. If he has succeeded in this respect, he will be remembered for centuries.

Mr. J. Phelan: I take the opportunity to join Senators who have expressed their views on the death of Pope John Paul II. As the House was not sitting last week, I took the opportunity to travel to Rome on Thursday and Friday to attend the funeral. As someone who, like thousands in Ireland and elsewhere bears the Pope’s name, I felt it was fitting to follow the very Irish tradition of attending a funeral. I was struck by the number of Irish people I met in Rome and could hardly get over the fact that most of those in St. Peter’s Basilica when I went to view the remains were young. They were around my own age give or take a few years. It was a remarkable tribute to the man that he appealed so greatly to young people.

When I entered the St. Peter’s Basilica on Thursday at approximately 8 p.m., the majority of those in attendance were Polish. The Poles have a particular feeling of loss which is shared in Ireland by those who are Catholic and those who are not. Attending a political meeting in Carlow a number of weeks before he died, it did not strike me as unusual to hear a party member propose that delegates remember the Pope in their prayers until I learned he was the son of a local Church of Ireland rector. The Pope had a tremendous impact on people of other faiths, whether Christian or otherwise. I did not realise the depth of feeling towards him in Judaism and among members of the Islamic community.

Pope John Paul II was the only occupant of the papacy that I have known. Many thousands of people in this country and throughout the

world have never known anybody else in this role. One of his greatest attributes was his steadfastness and the fact that he was the one constant in terms of world leadership. We have had five or six American presidents, five or six taoisigh and five or six British prime ministers in that 27 year period yet John Paul II was constantly there. He was a figure that was instantly recognisable throughout the world.

I read the commemorative issue of *Time* magazine in Gatwick Airport on my way to Rome. The Pope appeared on the cover of that magazine 16 times in 27 years. That was a remarkable achievement for a man who was a spiritual leader. However, he was much more than that; he was also a political leader.

Other Senators have commented on his significant role in the ultimate destruction of communism in eastern Europe. It may have come about in the end but it would not have happened when it did were it not for his influence.

I will remember a number of images and stories of Pope John Paul II. When I got into a taxi in Rome on Thursday evening the taxi driver relayed one story in broken English. About seven or eight hours before the Pope died he summoned the man who had been his photographer for the 27 years he had spent in the Vatican. This man was very upset, as anybody would be in that situation, but the Pope, as the press releases stated, was very serene and told him not to be upset as he was ready and it should be an occasion of joy. That was one thing that struck me in my time in Rome; it was an occasion of joy. I do not think it ever happened before that a homily at a Pope’s funeral was continuously interrupted by rounds of applause. It was a fitting tribute to John Paul II.

As I already said, he was probably the most instantly recognisable face in the world, especially in recent years. I will always remember that his first act in every country he visited, which became difficult in later years, was to kneel down and kiss the ground. He became famous for that gesture. I also remember the images of him on the balcony in the last few days before his death when he could not speak. He gave the sign of the cross in an almost frantic manner to the people congregated there.

An image which will particularly stick with me was one which took place on the day of the funeral. It was a very windy day and the pages of a bible which had been placed on his coffin fanned out in the breeze. It was a moment when the hair stood on the back of my neck.

The Pope is a great loss and I wish whoever will take up the baton the very best. John Paul II was the right man in the right place at the right time. I know for sure that he rests in peace.

Dr. Mansergh: I wish to express my deep sympathy and sorrow, not just to the Dean of the

[Dr. Mansergh.]

College of Cardinals but to members of the Catholic Church in Ireland and elsewhere. Pope John Paul II was a great Christian leader but also a great world religious leader. It is a paradox that in an age which is generally regarded as much more secular than preceding ages, this Pope had more impact on the world than almost any of his predecessors I can think of going back many centuries.

He was a catalyst in the fall of communism. The election of a Polish Pope and the founding of Solidarity, were the first breach in the Iron Curtain. That breach steadily widened over the 1980s. That was an enormous service the Pope rendered, not just to the church but to mankind. It should be noted in passing that because of his experience in Poland he was always, unlike perhaps some of his followers, an enthusiastic supporter of European unity, regardless of any particular difficulties or quarrels about certain issues that might have existed at the time.

I will remember the papal visit to Ireland in 1979 which made an extraordinary impact on the country. I only saw it on television but I was glued to it. This was during the first year of John Paul II's papacy. It was the only time a serving Pope ever visited Ireland. I was looking at the text of what I consider his most important speaking engagement, which was in Drogheda. First, one notes the very marked ecumenical tone where he spoke of meeting with "our fellow Christians". He spoke about this truly fraternal and ecumenical act on the part of representatives of the churches who had come to meet him. At later periods perhaps more rigid doctrines were enunciated in his name but I prefer to think of that one or of his meeting which has already been mentioned with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Pope came from Poland where it was very difficult to find any effective way to struggle against the evils of communist oppression. He knew that violence was not an option. He made a very strong appeal to the IRA to stop its campaign. He did not, as has been stated by some well-known republican columnists, side with the oppressor. I find that an appalling remark. He spoke about the importance of equality and of the importance of the State respecting the rule of law. What he said when he came here will live on in the memory of this country for a long time to come.

All leaders leave problems. Problems are eternal. I wish his successor every success. It may be necessary to look at some problems anew. As far as any criticisms of matters religious, I prefer to concentrate on the beam in my own eye rather than the mote in other people's eyes. It is a matter for the members of each church to exercise influence in whatever way they see proper.

Mr. Quinn: I thank the House for giving us the opportunity to debate this motion. I regard this occasion as one of celebration of Pope John Paul II's life rather than one of sadness on his death. The memories we have heard expressed today are great reminders of so many of the things he achieved, but not all of them because we cannot do that.

There is a Latin phrase, "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*", which means, "If you seek a monument, look about you". If we seek the monument of Pope John Paul II, we only have to look at his funeral to see his achievement in the recognition of the world.

I was in France in 1958 when Pope Pius XII died and I made my way to Rome for the coronation of Pope John XXIII. I cannot recall ever witnessing the degree of emotion I experienced last week despite the wonderful achievements of Pope John XXIII, the successful Pope Pius XII and the other Popes since. What differentiated him from Popes of the past for people right around the world was the sense of love he engendered, as I heard and saw last week. One has just to think of that funeral to realise the scale of the monument left by Pope John Paul II. As Senator Mansergh said, I do not know whether any Pope has ever made such an impact, as witnessed by so many world and religious leaders coming together to recognise this man.

One of the monuments to his memory is the whole question of bringing churches together. Senator Brian Hayes and others have already referred to the Jewish religion and the Pope's visit to the synagogue. We have also heard of how he managed to open the doors to Islam, which probably represents a far greater challenge for the future. It was significant that world leaders with whom the Pope had strong differences were present in Rome. He had come out strongly against the war in Iraq, for example, yet those leaders who felt obliged to go to war with Iraq also attended the funeral.

Pope John Paul II did not succeed in everything, such as the arguments he made against those who were not supportive of his views on world poverty. However, on the question of abolishing debt he was an inspiration to so many others. That word, "inspiration", was highly visible last week right around the world in terms of the response of young people. The Pope faced many challenges during his difficult 26 years in office and he had some wonderful successes. He was one of the fomenters of the movement to abolish the communist dictatorship that had existed in Europe since the early part of the last century. We applaud this man and what he achieved, as well as the manner in which he achieved it. Every time a leader changes, whether on a football field, in politics or business, the impact of the new leader may be seen. When

4 o'clock

Pope John Paul II took office we did not know what to expect of a Polish Pope.

This is a day for celebration. I am disappointed by the contribution of Senator Norris, for whom I have great respect and I know he speaks sincerely. However, today is not a time to use words such as “simplistic”, “dogmatic” and “hatred”, as he did. I am disappointed he did that because I am sure everyone may be criticised when they die for the many things at which they were not successful. Pope John Paul II achieved a great deal, nonetheless. He did not achieve everything, neither did he set out with the belief that he could I am sure. He worked in a manner which could not be criticised as being ambivalent. If we recall his words in Drogheda in 1979, there was great clarity and sincerity in what he said. I was in the Pro-Cathedral last week when Archbishop Neill finished speaking and the congregation burst into applause. I detected the same type of spontaneity when the words *santo subito*, a saint soon, were called out in St. Peter’s Square last week. I am not sure whether Pope John Paul II will be a saint soon, but I know the emotion and enthusiasm for this exists and the inspiration the Pope engendered assures he will be one at some point in the future.

Mr. Glynn: I am greatly privileged to have lived during the lifetime of a great Pope and great Christian such as Pope John Paul II. I recall 1979, not long after the local elections in which I was successful, going with my wife and eldest daughter, then aged four, to see the Pope at Knock. My daughter remembers that with great pride and, despite her age at the time, can recall the sense of motivation to identify with what he espoused in his lifetime, not alone as the leader of the church, but as a priest. No chasm was too wide for Pope John Paul II to extend his hand across. He was a unifying force, as the champion of the underprivileged, the downtrodden, the marginalised. Those attributes were displayed not least in the championing of the freedom of his own people. The Polish people were very proud of him, and rightly so. So were the Irish people. As one of them I am very proud of him.

The words Pope John Paul II uttered to the young people of Ireland were not lost. As a number of speakers have said this was borne out in the numbers that turned up to pay him tribute. He did not follow a populist line and I regret my colleague, Senator Norris, made some of the comments he did. If that is how he feels, so be it. I certainly do not agree. I believe the Pope was a most courageous man. He was on the side of right and was not afraid to call a spade a spade. He exuded a great sense of magnetism when he came into a room, like a diamond reflecting the sunlight. There is no other way to describe him. He had a great capacity to relate to people and to take on board and say what should be said in the

face of opposition. Much of that opposition came from strong international leaders. The stamina of those who turned up to pay their last tributes to one of the greatest people we shall ever witness was testament to the fact they would miss a man who had brought about so much change and was such a beacon of hope for the marginalised.

One of the great pains of Pope John Paul II’s papacy was the question of clerical abuse. He carried his mission, service and duty as a priest right to the end. The frustration he felt when he was unable to speak in carrying out his pastoral duty before his death, as seen on television, was testament to the man’s motivation. In many ways he was a simple man. This was a simplicity not in the sense that he was simple; he was simple in a great way. It could be said that his greatness lay in his simplicity and that his simplicity was his greatness. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.*

Mr. Cummins: I join with my colleagues in these tributes to Pope John Paul II. When one thinks of his predecessors, the image that comes to mind is of a Pope being carried on his throne through the Vatican. It was Pope John Paul II who dispensed with this practice. By doing so, he showed himself for what he always was — a man of the people. Throughout his papacy, he showed himself as a humble and prayerful man, who touched the hearts of many. He took the gospel’s words “go forth among the nations of the world” to heart by travelling to some 140 nations, touching people’s hearts. His ecumenicism came into play on these visits when he reached out to other churches, other faiths and non-believers. He will be remembered by this, as evidenced through the numbers from other faiths who attended his funeral.

Limerick has not yet been mentioned in the tributes of his visit to Ireland. In 1979, as a newly elected councillor, I remember going with the other members of the city council to meet the Pope in Limerick. Like all the other venues on the visit, it was an absolutely wonderful occasion, one that will live on in the hearts and minds of those who were there. Galway was another wonderful venue for the youth and some Members referred to Bishop Casey and Father Cleary being there. Pope John Paul II would be the first to forgive anyone their transgressions. Did he not forgive the man who attempted to assassinate him?

Last week people chanted “*santo subito*”. Whether sooner or later, it makes no difference because I believe Pope John Paul II will always be a saint in the minds and hearts of the many people who came in contact with him. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.*

Ms K. Walsh: On the day Pope John Paul II visited Maynooth in 1979, my husband was on duty and we had the privilege of meeting him.

[Ms K. Walsh.]

When he saw my husband in uniform, he told him he was a guardian of the peace. I will always remember those words. The Pope realised and appreciated the role of the Garda in protecting us, our society and our values. His words show how much he thought of Ireland and Irish values. It is fitting that we honour his achievements in life on a global scale and his influence on individuals and their personal lives.

The Roman Catholic Church and the entire world has lost a great friend and leader. The Pope's dedication to championing the ideas of human values, human dignity and the needs of the world's poorest must not be forgotten. All politicians and leaders must consider these ideals when they make decisions that shape society. Pope John Paul II prayed for us and our leaders and urged them to take the practical steps to help those suffering. Not everyone agreed with the late Pope but Catholics and non-Catholics have expressed a genuine sense of loss in his passing, a testament to his greatness. Slán go fóill.

Mr. Coghlan: I too wish to be associated with these warm tributes. It is lovely to be reminded of the many significant events in the life of Pope John Paul II as recounted by Members. I was struck by the manner in which he approached people of other faiths. He had a way of dealing affectionately with those with whom he disagreed, often very fundamentally. However, no one left with any feeling of bitterness. If Senator Norris and Pope John Paul II had met, they would have got on fine and certainly would not have had any rows. They might have found they had more in common than having any differences. As all Members know well, Senator Norris is a great actor.

The Holy Father was a remarkable and wonderful man, a great leader, a colossus of the 20th century. Henry Kissinger described him as the greatest man of the last century. He was also recognised as one of the great Popes. His teachings and communications skills were absolutely superb and he rightly made a great impact. His great faith underlined his very being.

To many Karol Wojtyła was always a theatrical type. As a young man he wrote plays and worked in theatre. He never lost his touch and when he became Pope it was commented that he knew how to make them gasp in the stalls. Senator Norris would very much admire this. When arriving in a country for the first time, the Pope made a habit of kissing the ground. He kissed and held up babies better than any politician.

In 1979 he told his fellow countrymen not to be afraid, to be strong with love which is stronger than death. Ten years later communism collapsed, its rotten foundations exposed largely due to this great man. Stalin mockingly asked once of a previous Pope how many divisions he had. Pope

John Paul II was the man who contributed to bringing down the Iron Curtain without any bloodshed. He helped and facilitated the emergence of the democratic, united Europe we have now.

His funeral was probably the largest ever seen, with 4 million passing his body while it lay in state and attending Friday's funeral mass. Like Senator Cummins, I remember being in Limerick when the Pope visited. At the time I was not involved in politics. Like so many people, we travelled early in the morning to be at the Limerick racecourse for that remarkable occasion.

It is time for a final and definitive answer to the Pope's plea in Drogheda to those engaged in paramilitarism to lay down their arms. The Pope was one the greats who changed the political map of Europe. I hope all Members will subscribe to the chant "*santo subito*".

Ms Feeney: I am delighted to remember the wonderful week of celebration we had for the life of his Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I could not get enough of radio and television during last week. I was touched by the display of respect shown at the Pope's death. Little matters, such as the music played between broadcast programmes, the way different presenters dressed, their voices serene and peaceful, were respectful and dignified the mournful week we were going through. I congratulate all involved, particularly RTE, our national broadcaster. I watched and listened to more RTE broadcasts last week than ever before. It was as if something had overtaken the country; one could not get enough of what was being said about His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. It is sad that he is no longer with us but there is also a sense of joy that he is now at peace. He went to his death with great courage.

Almost all Members have referred to 1979. Although I was not an altar server like Senator Brian Hayes, I was a bride of three weeks. I well remember Saturday, 29 September that year. I had come from Sligo on the train the previous night. Being 21 years old and newly married, we had no car. My late husband was from Terenure and that morning we walked from there to Rathfarnham with my father-in-law. There was a special air that morning. It was almost as if the world had stopped. People were nice and kind; everybody was happy. Travel on the buses was free and there were long bus queues. If there was not enough room on a bus people were happy to wait for the next one. There was a great sense that it was a special day.

I remember looking at people in the Phoenix Park waving their flags and crying as His Holiness arrived by helicopter. I remember thinking: "Am I really here?" At 21 years of age, and even today, I was not a terribly religious person but I had a faith and I was delighted to have that faith. I belonged to a church and I got a lump in my

throat with pride to be part of that church. I was particularly proud of the special visit being made by this man. I knew little about him and, to my shame, I did not find out a great deal about him in his 26-year pontificate. It was only after he died that I realised what a wonderful, special, meaningful man he was.

There is a petition to have Pope John Paul II canonised. I do not doubt that it will happen but regardless of whether it does, he will always be my saint. He is the man I will look to in future when I need somebody to look after me. I remember when he travelled around the Phoenix Park in the "Popemobile". One was ten yards away from him but one felt his eyes were only looking at oneself and that he had picked one out of the crowd. He is the person who comes to mind when people talk about a person who has a real presence. The same thing is said about Nelson Mandela. I have never met Mr. Mandela but, for me, Pope John Paul II had that special presence.

This is a time to remember the church and to reflect on what it is. It is also a time to think of the Vatican and the important job the cardinals will now undertake on Monday, 18 April, when the conclave begins. It is not an easy job; it will not be easy to fill the shoes of Pope John Paul II. This is also a time to think of the Polish people, particularly those living in Ireland.

Last Sunday week, the day after Pope John Paul II died, I had a special need to return to the papal cross in the Phoenix Park. I could see, miles from the cross, where I might have been located that day in 1979. I smiled and thought: "Imagine I thought he could see me down there." However, I also remembered that wherever he is now, it is a better place than where he has been, given his health, for the last five years. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís.

Mr. Moylan: It is great to speak on this motion of sympathy. I thank the Leader for affording all Members of the House an opportunity to put on record their tribute to the late Pope John Paul II. There is no time limit on this discussion.

I remember the visit of Pope John Paul II to this country. It was a crowded schedule and he visited many parts of the country. He was in the Phoenix Park, Limerick, Galway, Dundalk, Maynooth, Knock and Clonmacnoise in my native county. It was a great honour to be present that morning in Clonmacnoise with one's family to meet the Pope on his first visit to this country. Clonmacnoise, as the Pope acknowledged, is a holy place of learning and its monastery produced many missionaries to spread the Catholic faith around the world.

I watched television on Easter Sunday, when His Holiness came to the window of his apartment. It was moving that he was unable to speak, even to say goodbye. The television and radio coverage of his death was outstanding. Great cre-

dit is due to our national broadcaster for its coverage. It gave the elderly and the housebound an opportunity to see the funeral of Pope John Paul II.

The Pope was leader of our church for 26 years. He was probably the greatest leader of all time of any state or church. That was recognised by the attendance of world leaders at the funeral to pay their last respects. The television coverage described his life in Poland. He lived during troubled times. He came from a humble background and had to work hard as a young man. He had many brushes with death during the difficult war years. He also survived an attempt on his life. He certainly must have had the guiding hand of the Lord to survive that attempt and to get through the dangerous times in Poland.

As one watched the television coverage, it was hard to imagine the difficult times in Poland. However, things were also difficult in this country 26 years ago. The Pope showed great leadership in the church. He achieved many changes. There was great involvement of lay people in the church during his pontificate. I accept that he was let down by a small percentage of people during his time as leader of our great church but nobody was more disappointed than he. I thank the Leader for affording us the opportunity to express our sympathy on the death of our Holy Father.

Mr. O'Toole: I would like to be associated with the sentiments expressed about the Pope. In Ireland, we have a long tradition of not speaking ill of the dead and of celebrating their lives. In my personal response to the Pope's death, I thought of the things that inspired me, annoyed me and entertained me. An occasion like this is like an Irish funeral, which we do very well. We think back on someone's life and we think of those things that pleased us, those things about which we argued and those things which fell between the two. In celebrating someone's life, we must recognise that there are many great people with whom we have disagreed over the years. The fact that Shakespeare may have been great does not mean that one agreed with every word he wrote. There were many great philosophers with whom I would disagree completely on some issues. However, I would still recognise their ability and their contribution to debate.

The situation is similar with Pope John Paul II. He was squeezed out of oppression and the most difficult background imaginable. He lived through that and maintained dignity and respect at all times. It is true that there were issues on which I felt let down. I felt let down on his attitudes towards women, especially the ordination of women priests. As far as I recall, he was opposed at one stage to altar girls. On the other hand, I got a great lift from his extraordinary

[Mr. O'Toole.]

commitment to peace in the world. That is something he learned in his youth. He had the courage to take on one of those fights which he knew he could not win, when he publicly took on the might of the US and the UK in both wars in the Middle East in the past 15 years. That is where people like me saw the other side of him.

I regret that he did not buy into the liberation theology of South America. At the same time, we should not be surprised to find that the Pope was a Catholic, nor should we be surprised to find that there were different views within the broader church. He created strong debate and he reached out to groups around the globe that had never previously felt connected. He gave a space to other groups and people, through the number of saints created and the number of cardinals appointed from parts of the world that never previously had a cardinal. He was also the first media Pope. When he came down those steps in 1979 to kiss the ground of Ireland, we were all stunned. When he reached out in Ballybrit in County Galway and said, "Young people of Ireland, I love you", we were stunned by the words. He had the ability to bring us into the general debate and that is where is greatness lies.

Pope John Paul II will be remembered for the challenges he threw down. He will be remembered as a Pope who created a discussion on issues that were never discussed previously and as someone who had a great commitment to peace. To me, he will always be the great peacemaker. One of his defining qualities was the way he reached out to people who were not part of the church. He took a stand for peace, even when he knew he could not win. He was clearly committed to a more inclusive, global society. The fact that he did not move quickly enough for me is my problem, not his. It does not take from his contribution. I recognise a great statesman and leader, with whom I disagreed in many ways. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Leyden: We all should feel inadequate when speaking about this great man. Pope John Paul II was a real spiritual leader who had a most spiritual death. I went to the Phoenix Park to that great event in 1979 where I met Seán McBride. I also saw Oliver J. Flanagan in all his finery. He went on to Knock to meet the Pope there, which was the centre of his visit to Ireland.

John Paul II was born on 18 May 1920 and died on 3 April 2005. He had a wonderful life and made a wonderful contribution to the world. On his election, the then head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, warned his leader that there could be trouble ahead. How far-seeing he was. The Pope heralded the beginning of the end of communism following his election.

There was a famous film released in 1968 called "The Shoes of the Fisherman", which was based

on a novel by Morris West. The author predicted that there would be a Russian Pope. Mr. West wrote an article in 1999 which was to be published after the Pope's death and which was published last week in *The New York Times*. The article gives an analysis of the papacy from his research for the novel.

I also had the great honour of meeting the Pope in a private audience on 22 March 1989 with my wife and children. It was a wonderful experience. When he entered the room on that day, it was lit up by his spirituality. He was a deeply spiritual man and that was the most impressive aspect of what he stood for. It came from his whole approach to life. He served so well for so long, but in his death he also gave great example to everyone in the world. He served and made a contribution to the very end. He showed the worth of someone from conception to death. He showed that he was pro-life in every sense of the word. By his very approach to his own death, he showed that he was pro-life to the very end.

There was an attempt made to assassinate the Pope in 1981. He met the man who shot him, he offered his hand and he forgave him for what he did. The man is still serving a prison sentence in Turkey, but the Pope still offered him a hand of friendship.

John Paul II's approach to the Jewish religion was extraordinary. There were 2,000 Jews in his home town, along with 8,000 Catholics. He supported the Jews there and he later apologised in Jerusalem for any wrongs done to the Jews by any Catholic. That was a courageous thing to do. He deplored anti-Semitism and was truly great in that regard. He also tried to reunite the eastern churches, such as the Russian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. He tried to support them regarding the one true religion that is shared throughout the world.

The coverage on television of his death and his funeral was extraordinary. We now have satellite television covering the globe and the coverage was unreal. The Pope's contribution to this world was quite extraordinary.

I express my thanks to the Leader for having given us an opportunity to express our sympathy to the church on the death of this great pontiff. This debate is the sole item of business today. It is a special, historic and remarkable day for all of us in this House to be able to share in the expressions of sympathy on the death of a great pontiff.

Dr. Henry: I thank the Leader for having given us the opportunity to speak to this motion and express our sympathy on the death of the Pope. We must remember, however, that there is also an element of celebration involved. Pope John Paul II was an elderly man who obviously believed in the life everlasting and, therefore, I would have thought that, for him, death rep-

resented a moment of moving on to a higher plane, rather than just leaving this life.

Pope John Paul II was an extraordinary man in that he was improved by adversity. He had experienced a tragic life both in childhood and as a young man, losing his mother and brother before his 12th birthday and then his father, whom he deeply loved and admired, before his 20th birthday. His courage seemed to have been increased by the terrible times he experienced under the Nazi occupation of Poland and later under communism.

I was in Poland when the late Pope was Archbishop of Krakow. On that occasion I attended mass and went to the Lutheran Church on the same morning. Both services were packed. I said to my guide afterwards that I believed 95% of people in Poland went to church. He replied, "It's a lie, 100% go".

Ms O'Rourke: Yes.

Dr. Henry: I saw the power that he and fellow Christian leaders like him had in shaping Poland then. Many European political leaders were extremely lucky that Karol Wojtila had a priestly vocation. One can imagine what he could have done on the European political stage with his wonderful linguistic skills. He would have put everyone in the shade had he been a member of the European Parliament, perhaps even its President.

It distressed me to see Senator Quinn, who has received a papal honour, so upset by what Senator Norris had to say. I suppose Senator Norris feels very excluded. I must say, however, that Pope John XXIII had a marvellous method of making everyone feel included but we must remember that people bring forward their missions in different ways. Like Senator Norris, I am a great admirer of Archbishop Oscar Romero who, after all, gave his life on the altar of his cathedral for his belief in what should be done for the poor. It is odd to see his statue outside Westminster Abbey, a Protestant location. It would be nice to think that the late archbishop will shortly be honoured.

I particularly want to mention, as did Senator Ormonde, the way in which Pope John Paul II bore himself approaching death. Parkinson's disease is not a funny matter, it is a tough disease, and the Pope bore it so bravely right to the end. He kept trying to communicate despite having to deal with a laryngectomy. It was incredible that he was still able to communicate despite his physical ailments.

We must all remember that during his last illness his wishes were respected by those around him. When he said that he would not return to hospital this, too, was respected. This is an important point because there are many of us, even in my own profession, who are far too likely

to be interventionist. It is important to remember also that for those of us who believe in the life everlasting, death is, after all, only moving from one stage to another. I respect the way in which Pope John Paul II approached his death. What an example he gave to all of us in the way he did so.

Mr. Wilson: I am glad of the opportunity to join with my colleagues in paying tribute to the life of the great John Paul II, our Pope. The theme of his papacy was "Be not afraid". He was an inspiration to us all — the young, the old and especially in recent years the very sick. I had the privilege of studying in Maynooth with a number of young men who went on to become priests around the country. Thankfully, I have maintained contact with them over the years. Having spoken to them recently, I know that they were saddened by the Pope's passing. As Catholics and Christians, we are sad at the death of our leader but they are sad at the death of their father. His death has had that kind of impact on those priests who are still relatively young men.

Senator Quinn used a Latin quotation but I will use the English form: "If you seek his monument, look around you." I would say, "If you seek his monuments, look around you". Those monuments included the millions of people who flocked to Rome to pay their respects, as well as the leaders of different world religions who attended the papal funeral. Another monument could be seen in the fact that world leaders — some of whose countries are currently at war — sat side by side at last Friday's funeral in Rome.

The physical monuments include the Papal Cross in the Phoenix Park, which marks John Paul II's visit here in 1979, and the John Paul II Library in Maynooth — the seat of ecclesiastical learning in this country for centuries. During his visit to Ireland in 1979, the Pope blessed the foundation stone of that library. Many housing estates throughout the country bear the name of Pope John Paul II. I recall, in particular, the John Paul Avenue estate in Cavan, where a monument will be erected in his memory by the local authority in the coming weeks. In addition, many hundreds of young men——

Ms O'Rourke: John Pauls.

Mr. Wilson: ——one of whom is a Member of this House, were named John Paul in honour of the Pope. There could be no more fitting tribute than to be called after that great man.

On his visit to this country in 1979, the Pope spoke many thousands of words, some of which I can still recall. I was a young person at the time, so it meant so much to me too when the Pope said, "Young people of Ireland, I love you". That phrase will always remain in my mind until my dying day. We can all remember the Pope's other statement when, addressing the men of violence, he said, "On my knees, I beg you, turn away from

[Mr. Wilson.]

the path of violence". Thankfully, we have lived to see the path to peace being extended and hopefully we will have everlasting peace here before very long.

I wish to re-express my deepest sympathy to the Dean of the College of Cardinals in Rome, as well as to Cardinal Connell, Archbishop Seán Brady and all the priests and religious in Ireland. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dhílis.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Beidh an comhbhrón agus an ceiliúradh i gcónaí i dteannta a chéile nuair a bheas trácht ar an Phápa Naofa seo — comhbhrón toisc go bhfuil ceannaire agus cara imithe uainn, agus ceiliúradh toisc gur mhaireamar sa tréimhse ghlórmhar seo. Is féidir linn i gcónaí a rá go pearsanta gur thug sé misneach dúinn ar shlí amháin nó slí eile seasamh ar son na spioradáltachta agus é sin a léiriú go misniúil. Ag an am céanna, sheas sé linn, agus sheas sé an fód in am an ghátair, rud a bhí thar a bheith tábhachtach go minic, mar níl aon amhras faoi go raibh dúshlán ann gach lá don Phápa seo.

The outpouring of grief and admiration we have experienced in recent times and in the House today underlines in a special way for all of us how privileged we have been to have lived in this era. I read the Pope's biography a few years ago and was struck by how simplicity and complexity could live so comfortably together in the character of one person. The simplicity was evident in the faith he inherited and practised in his own environment while the complexity was embodied in the manner in which he endeavoured to come to grips with responsibilities from the time when he was a priest and a bishop, right up to when he became the supreme pontiff. Love of neighbour and of country were in many ways the foundation of the Christianity practised by the Pope.

In an ironic way, Senator Norris paid his own tribute to the Pope. It was important to say what he felt and to feel the freedom to say it. The Pope must have been hurt so often during his term as the supreme pontiff when he was trying to preach the Gospel without compromise, as he understood it. If he had done otherwise, would we now admire him so much? He was not a politician in a party political sense, or someone who could personally change what he believed was the message of Christ. I often wondered at how that great responsibility could be carried so consistently for so long and I realised that he did so partly because he was walking in the footsteps of Christ. He gave us the courage to be spiritual and to manifest that spirituality in a temporal world. As a spiritual leader, that was the great gift he bestowed on us.

If one is to admire anyone, it is important to try to emulate that person's life and try to understand and follow the message, which in this case

the Pope so clearly enunciated. I read an article by Bruce Arnold in a newspaper the day after the Pope's funeral. The heading was quite stark: "The church must now come to grips with reality". I thought that a little premature and that some further time might be allowed. I was also taken aback at how quickly we rushed into what was perhaps a vacuum created by the sorrow, with references to the inadequacies and abuses of the church while at the same time failing to acknowledge the wonderful people we have had in the church, the great brothers, priests and nuns who gave service in Ireland and throughout the world. They were in the majority. Each time I hear this debate I have to put my hand on my heart and say that I never noticed or experienced many of the inadequacies which now seem to be supreme in every debate.

That is the reality the church must face, the deep wellspring of spirituality in every individual, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, which can be tapped through example. The greatest sermon Pope John Paul II gave us was not a sermon of words but the example of the manner in which he accepted his suffering. Almost everyone sitting in front of a television in recent years saw the great distress the Pope was feeling, but he was determined not only to follow in the footsteps of Christ but to give hope and inspiration to the less fortunate.

The Pope was not only a man of God but a man of peace and justice. This House has had many great debates about the terrible things happening in the world. The Pope never compromised himself whether with President Bush, Tony Blair or anyone else. He stated matters as he understood and interpreted them. That gave many of us courage to do likewise. Too often, nations compromise themselves for mercenary gain in partnership with other countries. There are times when we must draw back from that and ask the great questions. Why are there millions dying of hunger and of AIDS? Why can the world not marshal the same forces, support and power which we can in time of war? As Senator Dardis said, the Pope showed that the just war is out of date and that we must now make war on the vulnerability of people, on helplessness and poverty. If we are to emulate the Pope in the future, these are the issues on which we must focus.

I thank the Leader for this opportunity. This day will go down as one of the memorable occasions in the House when we could all join together in common cause. We have sown the seeds for positive thinking and action in the future.

Mr. Callanan: I feel inadequate to make any contribution to this debate but I feel obliged to make one. I thank the Leader for providing the opportunity this afternoon to express words and thoughts, which have mostly been kind, in mem-

ory of the late Pope John Paul II. While I defend the right of people, including Senator Norris, to say what they want to say, it does not follow that I agree with what is said. I take great solace and support from the millions of people who showed their expressions of sympathy and care for the man to whom we are now paying tribute.

Pope John Paul II was born in poor circumstances to a poor family, like many in this country and around the world for whom he spoke so eloquently and to whom he gave such great leadership. He saw what Naziism and Stalinism were and saw the impoverishment they brought to Europe and his own country. He was ordained a priest and was elevated through the ranks of the church to archbishop and finally to the position of Pope. I remember when he was elected Pope. Like all here, I recall his visit to Ireland. I was at Limerick racecourse. The Pope did not come to Cork, although some of the councillors there felt he should have come to Mallow racecourse as well. Millions flocked to the various centres he visited in Ireland in order to meet this great man. I am not sure that we all recognised at that time the quality of the person we were going to see, but a Pope was visiting Ireland for the first time.

Pope John Paul II travelled the world. He brought his message openly, fairly and, as Senator Ó Murchú said, without compromise, which was only right as leader of the Church. I do not expect a Pope to compromise on matters of principle, faith or doctrine. When he addressed world leaders and disagreed with them, as he did a number of times, he showed tremendous leadership.

The millions who watched the funeral in Rome, young and old, were sad and felt the loss of a great leader. Pope John Paul II was for me the greatest man who walked this earth
5 o'clock as a world and church leader. It would not be unfair to say that he is a difficult act to follow. The next Pope must be his own person and ensure his own style of leadership.

I did not realise I could say so much as I had nothing prepared. However, I felt obliged to say a few words. I join my colleagues in the expression of appreciation to God for giving us Pope John Paul II. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Mr. Lydon: I was attending the 112th Inter-parliamentary Union assembly in Manila when I learnt of the Pope's death. When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo opened the assembly attended by Deputies and Senators of all religions and none from 145 countries, and from dictatorships, principalities, monarchies, socialist and communist countries, all as one stood as a mark of respect to this man. The long period of silence was amazing.

On the day in October 1978 when he became Pope, John Paul II had a great message. The message of this "servant of the servants of God" was the call of Christ to his disciples, "Be not afraid". The Pope said:

Be not afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ's power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind.

Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilisation and development.

Be not afraid. Christ knows "what is in man." He alone knows it.

The world, Pope John Paul II reflected, was afraid of itself and its future. To all those who are afraid and to all those caught in the great loneliness of the modern world, he said, "I ask you . . . I beg you, let Christ speak to [you]. He alone has the words of life, yes, eternal life."

The Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas once said that what most impressed him about Pope John Paul II was that he was a man utterly without fear. His fearlessness was not stoic, nor was it a consequence of Karol Wojtyla's "autonomy" as a person independent of others. It was an unmistakably Christian fearlessness. In Christian faith fear is not eliminated but transformed, through a profound personal encounter with Christ and His cross — the place where all human fear was offered by the Son to the Father, setting us all free from fear.

Pope John Paul II produced so many writings that it is impossible to refer to more than one or two. In his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, he had a simple message which we all know but seldom believe:

God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In 1984 in *Salvifici Dolorison* the meaning of suffering, he said:

Love is the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

In his famous *Letter to Families* in 1994 he referred to another encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* — the Splendour of Truth:

Why is the splendour of truth so important? First of all, by way of contrast: the development of contemporary civilisation is linked to a scientific and technological progress which is often achieved in a one-sided way, and thus appears purely positivistic. Positivism, as we know, results in agnosticism in theory and utili-

[Mr. Lydon.]

tarianism in practice and in ethics. In our own day, history is in a way repeating itself.

Utilitarianism is a civilisation of production and of use, a civilisation of “things” and not of “persons”, a civilisation in which persons are used in the same way as things are used. In the context of a civilisation of use, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents, the family an institution obstructing the freedom of its members. To be convinced that this is the case, one need only look at certain sexual education programmes introduced into the schools, often notwithstanding the disagreement and even the protests of many parents; or pro-abortion tendencies which vainly try to hide behind the so-called “right to choose” (“pro-choice”) on the part of both spouses, and in particular on the part of the woman. These are only two examples; many more could be mentioned. It is evident that in this sort of cultural situation the family cannot fail to feel threatened, as it is endangered at its very foundations. Everything contrary to the civilisation of love is contrary to the whole truth about man and becomes a threat to him: it does not allow him to find himself or to feel secure, as spouse, parent, or child.

Pope John Paul II lived the papacy, faithful to the Lord’s promise to St. Peter that when you are old people will put a belt around you and lead you where you do not wish to go. His suffering and vulnerability before millions became part of his teaching office. It was apparent to all that his authority did not depend merely on his charismatic gifts, rather on his willingness to speak the truth, popular or unpopular, in season or out of season. He was no mere celebrity. He did not care what people thought of him. His strength came from being passionate about the Gospel.

Karol Wojtyla came to resemble G.K. Chesterton’s description of Thomas More:

He was above all things, historic: he represented at once a type, a turning point and an ultimate destiny. If there had not been that particular man at that particular moment, the whole of history would have been different.

Like those of Thomas More, Pope John Paul II’s historic qualities have not been generically humanistic but specifically religious in origin. They have been, in a word, Christian qualities.

In his great book, *Witness to Hope*, the biography of Pope John Paul II, George Weigel gives this little vignette which I wish to share with the House:

Piotr and Teresa Malecki, long-time members of Karol Wojtyla’s *Srodowisko*, were staying at the papal villa at Castel Gandolfo in the late summer of 1997 as the Pope’s guests. Their bedroom was just below his, and before

dawn each morning they knew by the thumping of his cane that he was up and about. One morning, at breakfast, the Pope asked whether the noise was disturbing them. No, they answered, they were getting up for Mass anyway. “But Wujek,” they asked, “why do you get up so early in the morning?” Because, said Karol Wojtyla, the 264th Bishop of Rome, “I like to watch the sun rise.”

Karol Wojtyla will never again see the rising sun but will, I believe firmly, for all eternity see the risen Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. With Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God the Father he will live in the presence of the Holy Trinity in perfect peace. May God bless you, Pope John Paul the Great, and thank you for the great legacy you have given to our troubled world.

I encountered this man three times. Each time I realised the great strength he had. He was the first man to reach out, to go to Canterbury Cathedral and to pray in a mosque. He addressed 10,000 young Muslims in Morocco. He visited a synagogue. He was a man who reached out and gave us hope. Go raibh sé i measc na naomh chun Dia a ghlóiriú go deo.

Mr. Hanafin: The world lost a great leader on the death of Pope John Paul II on Saturday, 2 April 2005. His was a unique papacy. It was an honour and privilege to live at the same time as him. When Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope the world was a very different place. His was the hour and he was the man, a man sent by God.

Karol Wojtyla was cardinal of Krakow. This is interesting in that Krakow is very near Auschwitz-Birkenau, the place of humanity’s greatest crime. In the Pope, a shining light came from Krakow to do wonderful things during his papacy. He was a very strong man who followed the Christian tradition and upheld the Catholic Church to its finest and nth degree. For that we should all be grateful.

Pope John Paul II educated us in many different ways. I think of one way in which he will continue to educate me for the rest of my life. Although he said he left nothing in his will — he left no personal effects — he has left us a wealth of information, of encyclicals and of words we should listen to and put into practice. Here in Ireland he asked us to keep away from violence. He asked us to uphold the best traditions of morality and to ensure that Ireland did not waver from the faith. We should remember this. It was not the first time that someone from Poland saved Europe on behalf of Christianity. King John of Poland stopped the Turks at the gates of Vienna during the Middle Ages. However, this time it went the other way as Pope John Paul II freed eastern Europe. That should be remembered. When Solidarity members were at

the gates of Gdansk facing Soviet troops who were prepared to use their tanks, the Pope said, "Tell them I will be standing there with the workers". All of Stalin's tanks were useless against the Pope of Rome. He prevailed and eastern Europe is free.

Part of the Pope's legacy is his request to us to remember that Europe extends from the Atlantic to the Urals and, therefore, his work must continue. He has left Europe a freer and better place. However, he not only took on communism but also unbridled capitalism and injustice done to the developing world by wealthier nations. He was not afraid to speak out against communism or the wars in Iran and Iraq. He was unbiased in preaching the Christian message regardless of the opposition, which many of us would have looked on as insurmountable but it was not to him. As previous speakers stated, he was working and following the path of Christ.

I refer to the way he educated me about the role of women. He said Mary was the mother of the church. There is no higher position in the church than the unblemished, the pure Mary. He reminded us of that and for those who ask about the position of women in the church, the Pope said there is no higher, finer or greater position than mother of the church. Let us remember that.

While he argued for compassion and justice for the vulnerable worldwide, Pope John Paul II conserved faithfully the teaching of the church. He was a great defender of human life, whether it be loss by abortion, war, euthanasia or judicial execution. He upheld the family based on lifelong marriage and he said what he had to say, whether society regarded his views as politically correct. He condemned the sin, not the sinner.

The past four decades have brought unprecedented change in all our lives on the national and international scene. Surging demographic and technological changes have affected every area of our lives but this has often been accompanied by excessive human conceit, arrogance and moral confusion. Pope John Paul II provided us with a clear guide. He cleared the path for us and showed us the light and for that we should be grateful. He sought compassion for those who are less well off and he supported the alleviation of debt in the third world. He left no personal goods. We were fortunate to have had the guidance of such a wonderful navigator for many years. The world will miss him sorely but he has left a great deal behind to guide us. May he rest in peace.

Members rose.

Question put and agreed to.

Acting Chairman (Ms O'Meara): When is it proposed to sit again?

Ms O'Rourke: At 10.30 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjournment Matters.

Hospitals Building Programme.

Mr. U. Burke: I welcome the Minister of State to the House. My matter is to ask the Minister for Health and Children to indicate if, following her recent visit to St. Brendan's Hospital, Loughrea, County Galway, she is in a position to allow the plans submitted to her Department to advance to the next stage so that overcrowding and health and safety issues are complied with at this hospital for the elderly.

An excellent service has been provided at the hospital for patients through the years by dedicated medical, nursing and administrative staff. The problem in the hospital is that much of the accommodation is located on the upper level. When the Minister visited, she saw 32 immobile patients who are cared for in an upstairs unit, which is unsatisfactory. Following a recent fire risk assessment, it was indicated that this was an area of great concern to the management and staff of the hospital. As a result, the provision of additional accommodation at ground floor level was made a priority.

As far back as 2000, the Western Health Board indicated, under the national development plan, that St. Brendan's was a priority for funding to provide a 40-bed extension. Plans were approved by the previous Minister for Health and Children in 2003 but nothing has happened since. It is unfair on the management, staff and patients that they have been left in limbo. The number of patients in the hospital has declined steadily over the years because, as people died, their beds were removed, particularly those in the upper levels. Those beds were taken down, particularly those at the upper levels in the hospital. We currently have very serious waiting lists in the Loughrea area. I understand 35 females and 20 males are awaiting admission, all of them very elderly. It is important to note that in the west we have the highest percentage of elderly people — approximately 14%, which is far above the national average. That gap is increasing, which means there is increasing demand for the provision of such places.

It was proposed that a 40-bed unit be provided. Some 35 of those beds would be standard hospital beds, with five respite beds and one palliative care unit. Over the years, it was to have progressed in stages to an 80-bed unit for an extension to replace the existing hospital. The old hospital was previously a workhouse. It served its purpose well in the past but now, because of fire regulations and the advancing need for greater care for the elderly, it is important that we delay

[Mr. U. Burke.]

no longer. The Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, saw it herself and was astonished at the situation there. I ask that the plans, which have been with the Department since 2003, be advanced so that progress towards finalisation and completion of the proposed unit might be made.

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Mr. B. Lenihan): The current bed complement in St. Brendan's Hospital is 174 beds and 25 day care places. The health and safety co-ordinator undertook a fire risk assessment late last year which raised concerns regarding the upstairs accommodation at St. Brendan's. Several possible solutions are being explored by the Health Service Executive, western area, which is responsible in the first instance for the provision of health services in the Loughrea area including, in light of the report, the relocation of those patients most at risk to ground-floor accommodation while retaining the overall bed complement.

The Government has made services for older people a priority and is fully committed to the development of a comprehensive health service capable of responding quickly, fully and effectively to the health service needs of older people. In recent years, health and social services for older people have improved, both in hospitals and in the community. Since coming into office, the Government has substantially increased the level of funding, both capital and revenue, in respect of services for older people. Between 1997 and 2004, total additional funding allocated was approximately €287 million, and additional funding of €15.228 million was announced for this year. That serves to demonstrate the Government's commitment to improving services for our older population. Significant capital funding for the health sector has been provided since the commencement of the NDP in 2000. Total expenditure for the years 2000 to 2003 was approximately €1.7 billion.

Considerable progress has been made in addressing the historical deficits in health infrastructure and improving the standards and facilities required for quality, modern patient care. The NDP provides considerable capital funding to services for older people. Nationally, that will enable a comprehensive infrastructure of community nursing units and day care facilities to be put in place, as well as the refurbishment of existing extended-care facilities and the replacement of old, workhouse-type accommodation. Older people deserve first-class facilities, and we intend to provide such facilities in appropriate locations.

The implications of the Health Act 2004 providing for the Health Service Executive have been pointed out in many Adjournment replies. Under the Act, the executive has the specified

statutory responsibilities, including for the proposed development at St. Brendan's, Loughrea.

The HSE, western area, has prepared a project planning brief for the development of a 40-bed community nursing unit in Loughrea, with expansion to 80 beds. That brief was prepared by a multidisciplinary team, and the group proposed several units based on the major population centres of Tuam, Loughrea and Ballinasloe as the east Galway centres set out in the Western Health Board strategy entitled "Health and Wellbeing for Older People". That proposal was one of several for capital funding submitted by the HSE, western area, to my Department for consideration. As responsibility for development of services now rests with the HSE, any decisions relating to that project will be a matter for the HSE, having regard to the western area's overall capital funding priorities in the context of its service plan for 2005.

Mr. U. Burke: "Cat and mouse" and "pass the buck" come to mind.

Cancer Screening Programme.

Dr. Henry: I thank the Minister of State for attending the House this evening.

The issue of colorectal cancer was drawn to my attention by Colm Ó Móráin, professor of medicine at Trinity College Dublin and senior gastroenterologist in the Adelaide and Meath Hospital at Tallaght. Colorectal cancer poses a major public health problem. According to a recent report from the United European Gastroenterology Federation, it is the leading cause of morbidity and deaths from cancer in Europe. The incidence of colorectal cancer is steadily increasing in both males and females, and that increase is most prominent for malignancies in the sigmoid colon. In Ireland, 1,730 patients with colorectal tumours are diagnosed each year, with 925 deaths occurring.

The prognosis for patients with colorectal cancer is closely related to the clinical and pathological stage of the disease at the time of diagnosis. Unfortunately, most cases of colorectal cancer are detected at an advanced stage, and survival rates are therefore poor. Five years' survival for cancer limited to the bowel wall at the time of diagnosis approaches 90%. However, survival of five years is 35% to 60% when regional lymph nodes are involved, and less than 10% with more extensive metastatic disease. That makes it the most common cause of cancer mortality in western Europe.

The biology of colorectal cancer provides an excellent opportunity for early detection. It develops as a result of stepwise accumulation of genetic mutations. The transformation from normal mucosa to adenoma and ultimately to carcinoma appears to occur slowly over about ten to 20 years. Survival is closely related to the clinical

and pathological stage of the disease diagnosis. Evidence from several studies suggests that detection and consecutive removal of pre-cancerous lesions by endoscopic polypectomy reduces the incidence of death.

Cost-effectiveness analyses have shown that screening for colorectal cancer, even in the context of imperfect compliance, significantly reduces mortality, with costs lower than or comparable with already implemented cancer-screening procedures, such as those for breast cancer. However, screening tests vary considerably in diagnostic performance, compliance rates, acceptability and cost. Randomised controls, however, in Europe and the USA have shown a decrease in death rates of between 15% and 30%.

One test widely used, which would cost less than €10,000 per life saved, as compared with €200,000 per individual for chemotherapeutic drugs, is the faecal occult blood test. Such tests detect the presence of blood or blood products in the stool. They rely on the fact that colorectal neoplasms tend to bleed more often than normal mucosa. Since some colorectal neoplasms will bleed only intermittently, testing several stool samples increases the yield. It has become standard to test three consecutive stools using guaiac-based methods. Such tests have the disadvantage that they may react positively to peroxidases activity in the faeces and not solely to peroxidases activity from human haem. Faecal occult blood can also be traced using immunochemical methods. However, they are more expensive and have been criticised because of their low sensitivity.

Recently performed trials indicate that screening targeted at particular age groups significantly reduces colorectal cancer mortality. Consequently, various professional organisations have recommended the screening of asymptomatic persons to reduce the mortality rate in the population. As I said, in several European countries such screening has either been introduced or is being considered. The European Union has recommended faecal occult blood screening for colorectal cancer in men and women aged 50 to 74. It would appear to be cost-effective, and the optimum strategy cannot be determined solely by the currently available data. We must have considerable research into this area to determine the most important screening strategy. However, no such studies are in progress in Ireland. This proposal defines the start of an endeavour that will garner significant information on many aspects of screening programmes for colorectal cancer in Ireland.

Making the screening programme a reality and achieving high response and compliance rates are important. The pitfalls of earlier screening programmes should be avoided. Co-operation with existing screening programmes such as the breast-screening programme that I mentioned can

greatly contribute to avoiding the pitfalls and stimulate progress in implementing a screening programme for colorectal cancer. The practicality of a screening programme depends on the detection method. Fortunately, faecal occult blood testing is simple and can be performed by the subjects at their homes without high demand.

It is essential to know those who are at risk and to be familiar with their specific education and information needs if we are to achieve high awareness of colorectal cancer and, in turn, a high level of acceptance and response to screening among clients. It is particularly important for scientific and practical reasons that we give sufficient and accurate information to all relevant and interested parties, especially if we wish to maintain and improve high rates of response and compliance.

I am sure the Minister of State will be alarmed to hear that the level of awareness in Ireland of the risks and symptoms of colorectal cancer is among the lowest in the European Union. It is conceivable that those who consider themselves to have a high risk of developing colorectal cancer are more inclined to respond and to be compliant. A high-risk assessment questionnaire has been developed to assess such expectations and considerations. Other considerations, such as general quality of life and satisfaction, might influence levels of response and compliance.

Are people satisfied to undergo regular colorectal cancer screening without a guarantee that they will be free of the cancer for life? It is possible that the awareness of risk influences the quality of one's life. Changes in one's quality of life and behaviour can change one's response to screening tests in many ways. It is hard to predict whether the availability of screening will be seen as positive or negative for certain people. We need to examine and address such issues.

I have details of how it is proposed to conduct such a pilot project and I would be delighted to submit them to the Minister of State. I hope he will mention in his response that he supports the implementation of a pilot project, especially as it is such an important issue in this country, where there is a low level of awareness of the high incidence of colorectal cancer.

Mr. B. Lenihan: I thank Senator Henry for raising this issue on the Adjournment. I welcome the opportunity to outline the Government's position on population-based colorectal screening.

The European Commission's recommendations on cancer screening were adopted by the European Council in December 2003. The Commission recommended that screening tests which have demonstrated their efficacy should be seriously considered. Any decision to implement a screening programme should be based on available professional expertise and the priority given to health care resources in each member state.

[Mr. B. Lenihan.]

The proposals recognise that ethical, legal, social, medical, organisational and economic matters have to be considered before decisions can be made on the implementation of screening programmes.

The Commission's recommendations, which encompass breast and cervical screening, suggest that consideration be given to the introduction of faecal occult blood screening for colorectal cancer in men and women between the ages of 50 and 74. Almost 60% of Irish cases of colorectal cancer occur in that age group. International randomised controlled trials have demonstrated that faecal occult blood testing reduces mortality for colorectal cancer. While such testing has been well evaluated and its benefits have been demonstrated, it has limited sensitivity and needs to be repeated every one or two years.

That a large number of people must undergo faecal occult blood testing to prevent death is a major deterrent to its use as a screening test. Although it is an effective test, its efficacy makes it unsuitable as a population screening tool. As it is just a screening test, it will not save lives without the use of colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy to evaluate positive test results. The follow-up test for positive faecal occult blood tests remains to be clarified. Therefore, based on current evidence, general population screening for colorectal cancer is not recommended at this time. It is important that we keep our approach to colorectal screening under review, however. For example, we should consider the outcome of the well-advanced pilot screening programme in the UK.

A new national cancer strategy is being developed by the National Cancer Forum in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children. I am sure the Senator is aware that the forum comprises a multi-disciplinary group of cancer experts and representatives of voluntary and professional groups. A subgroup of the National Cancer Forum has been established to deal with generic screening. The multi-disciplinary group is reviewing all issues relating to screening and is developing the criteria under which future screening programmes will be assessed. The group has undertaken a review of international literature and evidence in respect of cancer screening. I understand that the position I have outlined is consistent with the forum's approach.

Population-based screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer have been proven to reduce mortality, with subsequent improvements in the population's survival, morbidity and quality of life. Screening aims to improve survival from cancer, limit morbidity and improve the quality of life of those who have developed cancer. The current priorities of the population screening programmes relate to the two specific cancers I

have mentioned. Over €60 million has been made available to support the national breast screening programme, BreastCheck, since 2000. The programme is available to women in the 50 to 64 age group in the eastern, north-eastern and midlands areas, as well as parts of the south-eastern area. More than 165,000 screenings were conducted under the BreastCheck programme between 2000 and September 2004. Approximately 1,250 cases of breast cancer were detected during that period. Plans are under way for the extension of the screening programme to the remaining counties. Capital funding of €21 million has been approved to provide for the necessary infrastructure in that regard.

A pilot cervical screening programme commenced in October 2000 in the mid-west region. Under the pilot programme, screening is being offered free of charge to approximately 74,000 women between the ages of 25 and 60. An international expert has recently completed a report on the feasibility and implications of a national roll-out of the screening programme. The Department of Health and Children is consulting relevant professional representative and advocacy groups about the report. Approximately 230,000 cervical smear tests are conducted in this country each year. The Department of Health and Children has provided approximately €14.5 million since 2002 to enhance laboratory and colposcopy services. A further €1.1 million has been allocated to the screening programme on an ongoing basis to support the introduction of new and more effective testing in the remaining laboratories and the development of quality assurance and training programmes.

The Department's current priorities in respect of population-based screening are to complete the roll-out of BreastCheck to the remaining counties and then to consider extending the upper age limit from 65 to 69. The Department also needs to need to develop an implementation programme for cervical screening. It needs to keep international evidence on colorectal screening under review, particularly in respect of high-risk groups.

Dr. Henry: I thank the Minister of State for his reply. I ask him to consider the pilot scheme if I send him some details on it. I would like a pilot colorectal screening scheme to be pursued along the lines of the highly satisfactory cervical screening programme. We would all like the latter scheme to be extended to all parts of the country as soon as possible.

Health Service Reform.

Mr. Leyden: I thank the Minister of State, Deputy Brian Lenihan, for coming to the House to respond to the matter I am raising on the Adjournment. I ask the Minister of State to implement sections 41 to 44 of the Health Act

2004, which was signed into law on 17 December 2004. I would like him to outline details of the establishment of the consultative forum in this regard. I would also be interested to hear details of the mechanism for the establishment of the advisory panels.

There has been a democratic deficit since the demise of the regional health boards in 2004. The local authority members who were elected in June 2004 do not have a forum in which they can speak about health service matters affecting people in the regions. I refer, for example, to the delivery of health services by the new Health Service Executive, under the Department of Health and Children. Senators can raise issues on the Adjournment or at meetings of the Joint Committee on Health and Children, but in most instances we are unable to raise issues of a local nature. Certain structures and procedures are in place to prevent us from doing so on the Adjournment or at committee meetings.

When I was a member of the former Western Health Board, of which I was chairman between 2001 and 2002, I was allowed to raise local health issues. It was possible to discuss matters affecting Roscommon General Hospital, for example. The INO and SIPTU held a picket at the hospital today to highlight problems in its new accident and emergency department, developed at a cost of €8 million. Some €2.5 million was allocated last year to provide 40 staff to ensure that the new unit, which was opened by the Taoiseach in February 2005, is staffed fully. Nine observation beds in the unit have not yet been opened, however. There is no forum at which local representatives in the area can raise such issues. They would like to discuss the many proposals which were made in the Hanly report, for example. Those are the relevant issues. Councillors elected in June 2004 must have a voice in the delivery of health services in proportion to the representation of parties and independents elected then. It is vital that the Minister of State, the Minister and the Department implement the Bill passed and signed into law in 2004. We are well into 2005 but no progress has been made with implementing it yet. There is a need for a forum where local issues can be discussed.

I cannot see any change or improvement since the new Health Service Executive was established. Centralised delivery of health services is now the norm even though the health services in the health board of which I was a member were getting better. The establishment of a forum will assist in the delivery of health services and give councillors a new role in delivering them.

Mr. B. Lenihan: I thank the Senator for raising this issue. He has spoken to me about the matter on numerous occasions and has asked me to raise it with the Minister for Health and Children. It is a matter to which he has attached great import-

ance throughout his political career. He is a former chairman of a health board and is well aware of the importance of local accountability in the health services.

The Health Act 2004 provided for the establishment of a Health Service Executive on a statutory basis which took over responsibility for the management and delivery of health services from the Eastern Regional Health Authority, the health boards and a number of other specified agencies on 1 January 2005.

The Government takes very seriously the issue of democratic accountability throughout the health services and in the Health Act 2004 accountability at all levels of the system was a central part of the reform. The Tánaiste and the Government are particularly anxious to ensure proper accountability to public representatives at national and local level. In the Act, provision is made to ensure the accountability of the Health Service Executive to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children and, under section 79, provision is also made to regulate dealings between Members of the Oireachtas and the executive.

Section 42 of the Act provides specifically for the establishment of a number of regional health forums. These forums will facilitate local representatives in raising issues of local concern to health services within their region with the executive. Membership of the forums will be based on nominations from city and county councils within the functional areas of each forum. Putting such arrangements in place will ensure that the voice of local public representatives will continue to be heard in the development of health services.

These arrangements are designed to complement and reinforce the role of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children in reflecting the views of public representatives in the ongoing oversight of the health system. The forums will be established by regulations which my Department is drafting. The regulations will specify the title of each forum and define its functional area, the number of members for each forum, the number of members from each city and county council to be nominated to each forum and the requirements relating to the manner in which the functions of a forum are to be performed.

They will also set out the procedures for appointing members to a forum, the election of a chairperson and vice-chairperson of a forum, the filling of casual vacancies, the meetings of a forum, the establishment of committees of a forum and the appointment of their members and ensuring the proper administration of each forum. It is the Tánaiste's intention that these regulations will be brought before the House shortly.

Section 43 of the Health Act 2004 provides for the establishment of advisory panels. It is a

[Mr. B. Lenihan.]

matter for the executive to determine the terms of reference, membership, rules and procedures for each panel. Section 44 of the Act provides that the Minister may direct the executive to establish an advisory panel for a specified purpose.

There are numerous consumer groups that play important roles in local service planning and delivery. The HSE has reported to the Department that it is starting the process of examining the different structures that exist in each of the former health board areas for involving consumers at local level. The HSE wants to build on the consumer panels that already exist, learn from the experiences and develop an improved model of consumer participation.

The HSE is also establishing a customer service division. A key challenge for this division will be to design an effective model of consumer involvement and an open approach to service user feedback and comment. The entire approach to consumer involvement will be brought together under the HSE customer service division. Consumer participation is a central objective of the National Hospital Office and the primary, continuing and community care directorates of the HSE.

Pending the full development of the service directorates, the structure in each former health

board area is continuing under the leadership of a chief officer. Consumer involvement will continue to be managed through existing local arrangements. The HSE has indicated that there will be no change to these arrangements unless or until there is an improved model to replace them.

The HSE has recently advertised key management positions at national directorate level for corporate affairs and strategic planning and development. These key directorates will have responsibility for putting in place the administrative framework to support the regional health forums and the establishment of advisory panels.

Section 41 of the Health Act 2004 provides for the convening of a national health consultative forum to advise the Minister on matters relating to the provision of health and personal social services. This will involve the preparation of a statutory instrument to facilitate the convening of the forum this year and its organisation. The Department is currently preparing a position paper on how this matter might be progressed, which the Tánaiste will consider in due course.

Mr. Leyden: I thank the Minister of State for his reply and welcome the decision to implement the legislation. I urge that this be introduced as soon as possible because it is vital for local democracy.

The Seanad adjourned at 5.45 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 13 April 2005.