

*Dé Máirt, 10 Márta, 2009
Tuesday, 10th March, 2009*

2.30 p.m.

**GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Fógra i dtaobh leasú ar Thairsceint : Notice of Amendment to Motion

49. “That Dáil Éireann:

notes with alarm:

- the catastrophic increase in unemployment levels that have seen 200,000 people added to the live register since the general election in May 2007, and the acknowledgement by the Taoiseach that the numbers were likely to exceed 450,000 this year;
- that the cost to the Exchequer of these additional numbers has been €4 billion in terms of extra social welfare payments and income tax foregone, before the cost of secondary benefits or the loss of spending power are factored in;
- the devastation being caused to individual families, local communities and the potential social damage of the return of mass unemployment; and
- the failure of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs to ensure that facilities are in place to cope with the huge additional numbers who have now to sign-on and claim the benefits to which they are entitled with dignity;

deplores the failure of the Government to treat the unemployment situation with the seriousness it deserves and the lack of action to create new jobs and protect existing employment; and

calls on the Government to produce a national jobs plan designed, in particular, to stem current job losses and to provide educational and retraining opportunities for those who have lost their jobs, which should include:

- an earn and learn scheme which would allow people to combine short time working with education or training;
- a reduction in the lead-in time for eligibility for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and the Back to Education Allowance;
- an improvement in access to Community Employment and Jobs Initiative Schemes;
- measures to ensure that every school leaver who finishes school next summer has the option of work experience, training or further education;

- the provision of better opportunities for career breaks and flexible work options, underpinned by legislation;
- a substantial programme of investment in skills, further education and retraining, including a greater role for the Institutes of Technology in this area and an increase in the number of places available under the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (currently capped at 5,000) and the use of vacant places in universities and colleges;
- the lifting of the ‘cap’ on the enrolments to courses in colleges of further education; and
- the provision of adequate facilities at social welfare and community welfare offices and the proper scheduling of appointments so that people are treated with dignity and that the practice of having to queue outdoors for long periods is ended.” — *Róisín Shortall, Willie Penrose, Eamon Gilmore, Joan Burton, Emmet Stagg, Thomas P. Broughan, Joe Costello, Michael D. Higgins, Brendan Howlin, Ciarán Lynch, Kathleen Lynch, Liz McManus, Brian O’Shea, Jan O’Sullivan, Ruairí Quinn, Pat Rabbitte, Seán Sherlock, Joanna Tuffy, Mary Upton, Jack Wall.*

Leasú:

Amendment:

1. To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

“recognises:

- the increase in the number of people signing on the live register and the need for jobseekers payments to be processed as speedily as possible;
- the fiscal challenge that this poses to the Exchequer; and
- the difficulties that the current economic situation poses for the unemployed and their families;

commends the Government for:

- the range of process improvement initiatives that have been introduced to facilitate speedier claim processing of jobseekers payments;
- putting in place the necessary resources to ensure that claims for jobseekers payments are processed quickly;
- the resources provided for the Back to Education Allowance and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance under the NDP;
- its commitment to ensuring that those who claim a jobseekers payment are treated in a dignified manner; and
- the measures it is putting in place to ensure that those who become unemployed are given effective employment services and training supports to assist their return to employment including:
 - the increase in jobsearch services capacity from 6,500 per month to at least 12,250 per month;
 - the launch of 51,000 new training places under the FÁS Training Initiatives Strategy which brings to 78,000 the total short training course places under the Bridging Foundation Training, Specific Skills Training and Traineeship Programmes;
 - the establishment of a training fund to provide a timely response to identified training and retraining needs for low skilled and redundant craft workers from the construction sector;

- the development of retraining opportunities for redundant construction workers in emerging areas such as the installation of energy efficient and renewable technologies, environmental activity, and compliance and regulatory work;
- the development of a series of actions to facilitate over 2,200 redundant apprentices completing their studies; and
- the substantial support given to community employment schemes, which give people employment experience to assist their return to the open labour market;
- the work it is involved in with the social partners to encourage flexible working arrangements;
- the increased investment in higher education to €2000 million in 2008, an increase of 135% since 1997, and which is supporting participation by over 170,000 learners;
- the introduction of the multi-annual Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) for higher education which has been a major catalyst in introducing more flexible and innovative approaches to the delivery of programmes responsive to the needs of industry and to an increasingly diverse group of learners;
- the establishment of a new legislative framework for the Institute of Technology sector which is facilitating new approaches to upskilling or reskilling those who may either be a long time out of the formal education system, or who do not have qualifications in areas where job opportunities may develop;
- the increased investment in further education to €414 million in 2008, an increase of over 400% since 1997;
- the access to learning opportunities in further education provided to some 145,000 learners in 2008, an increase of 95,000 over 1997;
- the introduction of the Back to Education Initiative which, with its emphasis on part-time provision, enables learners to combine a return to education and training with family, work and other responsibilities; and
- supporting the ongoing efforts of the Industrial Development Agencies and the City and County Enterprise Boards both in promoting new investment and job creation and in sustaining the maximum number of jobs in their existing clients during these difficult times.” — *An Tánaiste agus Aire Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta.*