



Cahirdown,
Listowel,
Co. Kerry.

25/01/09

Fellow member,

I am writing to you to seek your support at the coming National Executive elections on February 21st in Athlone. I will be contesting for the position of *Vice President of YFG*.

I am contesting, firstly as it is your entitlement to be offered choice and democracy in your political party. In this process, I at least can offer my voice to the debate on the future of our organisation.

To those who do not know me, I am from the fertile heartland of Listowel in Co. Kerry. The product of parents who have always encouraged exploring politics, my family are predictably far from politically homogenous. Around our kitchen table, debate has swung on every issue from education, religion to foreign affairs. It is this atmosphere which has shaped my views. I hope that it has given me some values and a degree of responsibility. I sincerely hope that I have been of service to the party over the last five years.

My candidature is based on the debates that occur in the branches of our party. I feel that there is superior need to represent members at this juncture, to take their views and to actually act upon them. The reform of communication in YFG will certainly be my focus, with the hope of reducing the distance between exec and membership. Stemming from this, a viable and working organisation can be achieved.

Contact and membership response is a baseline which is the very least that we can expect from our organisation. It is not adequate to the needs we have currently. It is not unreasonable for members to expect that they are a part of how the executive operates. It is acceptable for branches to expect at least regular updates to the work done by their officers on the executive. It is no bad thing to see how those elected are representing us. I therefore support the publication of the executive's minutes to branches, which is obviously a move being strongly sought.

The response of members to the national executive is a crucial instrument in any democratic organisation. I offer you myself and the position of VP, as a member's representative on the executive, to raise whatever concerns on your behalf. The role ought to be a touch base position, which is accessible, approachable and amenable. While the president functions as an outward leader and chairman, I would seek the counter-position of an internal assistant and representative, your servant in the party. I can only hope that this would bring you into the decision making situations more, and offer you a genuine voice. I would encourage you to think on the topic of communication in the run up to this National Conference.

To illicit responsiveness from members in the past, as well as feedback may have been more difficult than expected. As discussed at summer schools and branch meetings, the idea of inter branch debates and discussions would be a great asset to the party. It is a great ambition of mine and many others to see it coming to fruition, and to know that from this, accessing the opinions of the membership will be more immediate. It is an area I would dearly wish to work on.

My political views will certainly not be washed aside. I remain the son of pragmatic people, the grandson and descendant of those who did not have it as easy. I stated when I ran for panel 15 months ago, that I would stand by the native constituencies of our party. I hope that that has been of service to you, the membership during my tenure and that the party remains anchored to the bedrock of our faith in our cause.

To paraphrase loosely a line of John Bruton's that I read recently, *our ideology steers clear of reducing society to a functionalistic role, instead emphasising the personalistic and human need of people*. Our Christian democratic heritage in this party has a deep resonance for me, and my own faith in Fine Gael. I promise that I will continue to work for the person rather than the process or the pedantic elements that can sidetrack, and that our resolve will be resultantly strengthened.

I hereby offer you myself, my services, and my experience to date. I hope this letter will bring a response from readers, and that it has stimulated some thought. Our organisation is one of Fine Gael's most valuable assets. In the run up to the Local and European elections, it will be ever more important to work on its communications, branch activity, rejuvenation, and training of effective officer boards in each constituency, so as to provide those flying the Fine Gael flag with strong resource behind them.

It is on this platform that I ask for your support. I hope that I can meet as many of you prior to conference. If you have any questions, queries or if you want to contact me, please feel free to phone or email me at any time.

Yours with kind regards
Stephen Behan

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