

FCG files moved by Lab

By EUGENE PHELAN

WITH a threat of court action looming, Limerick Corporation were this Friday continuing an investigation into how the private members' rooms of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail were entered on Monday by members of the Labour Party.

And what started as a squabble over political parties trying to get the "room with the best view" has now turned out to be one of the bitterest political rows ever to hit the city.

Labour's Ald Jim Kemmy confirmed in an interview with the *Limerick Leader* that the Labour Party entered the members room used by Fine Gael councillors on Monday morning, and moved filing cabinets and phone books into the room occupied by Cllr Jack Bourke, the sole Fianna Fail councillor.

"We notified Fine Gael of our actions beforehand. We feel that their reaction is childish, petty and undemocratic," said Deputy Kemmy.

The Fine Gael and Fianna Fail rooms were



Cllr Jack Bourke in the Fianna Fail members' room after Fine Gael files were moved there.

□ Picture: OWEN SOUTH (LL)

City Hall room row escalates

● FROM P1

locked, and assistant city manager, Flan O'Neill said that no official gave keys to the Labour Party to carry out this action.

Now, with Fine Gael threatening legal action after employing the services of Glentworth Street solicitor Dan O'Gorman, the matter looks certain to be aired at special protocol meeting which is likely to be held next week.

Labour are adamant they are right. Fine Gael and Cllr Jack Bourke of Fianna Fail are furious with the manner in which Deputy Kemmy has conducted affairs.

"We were in the smallest of the members' rooms," said Ald Kemmy. "There were six Labour councillors and John Gilligan, making seven out of 17 councillors, in that smallest room, while Jack Bourke was in a bigger room on his own," said Deputy Kemmy.

He said that items taken from the members' room used by Fine Gael were moved in an orderly fashion, and he strongly disputed that any sensitive or private material was "thrown about." He stressed that the filing cabinets were closed.

However, Fianna Fail's Cllr Bourke and the four Fine Gael members were incensed this week when Labour members entered Fine Gael's offices and transferred filing cabinets and other items into the members room used by Fianna Fail.

"There was a lot of sensitive material involved, and this was just thrown all over the place," said one angry councillor.

It is known that Fine Gael have acquired the services of Dan O'Gorman, solicitor, who is giving them "the fullest legal advice", according to party sources.

"This is bully boy tactics by Labour," fumed Cllr Jack Bourke. "I left my room locked and I could hardly get in the door when I returned. Filing cabinets and phone books were thrown in here. The place is in an awful mess."

The matter first arose when Ald Kemmy wrote to to members of the council pointing out that as Labour was the largest party following the local elections they were clearly entitled to the first and largest room, with Fine Gael reverting to the second room and the PDs retaining their present room.

However, when the rooms were measured it transpired that Fine Gael's was only the second largest room. The measurements were: PDs room 135 square feet, Fine Gael 126, Fianna Fail 106 and Labour 91.

Fine Gael members were delighted with the result, and told Ald Kemmy that as the second largest party they would stay in the second largest room.

Deputy Kemmy later told Fine Gael that his party intended moving into the room of their choice—Fine Gael's room—on Monday of this week.

Fine Gael leader Cllr Gus O'Driscoll, in a letter to Deputy Kemmy on September 18, a copy of which the *Limerick Leader* has procured, said that it was quite clear that Deputy Kemmy was now trying to change the goalposts.

"We agreed to your proposal at the previous meeting of your occupation of the largest room, now it appears to be 'the room of your choice.' Surely, this is a different criterion and one in which we feel we cannot allow you to sustain."

Later in the letter to Deputy Kemmy, a copy of which was sent to city manager Jack Higgins, Cllr O'Driscoll added: "We note your intention to attend at City Hall next Monday morning at 10 o'clock, for the purposes of occupying the room presently occupied by our goodselves.

"We see this action on your part as both gratuitous and precipitous. We can only say that we will not co-operate with such a move on your part and feel that this matter has already been aired at length and decided upon.

"In the circumstances, any such action taken by you will be met with the appropriate response."

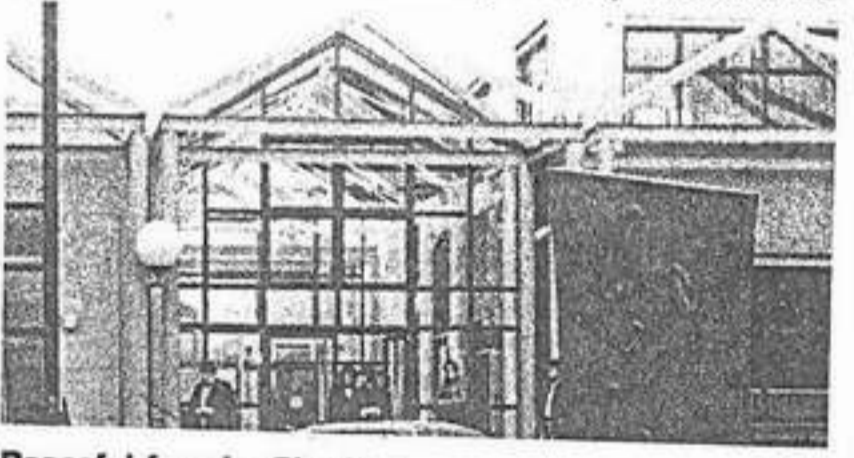
Ald Kemmy said that this letter was only received by him after Cllr O'Driscoll apparently put it in the letter box of the Mechanics Institute on Friday night "and I did not get it until later on Monday—I was informed that Fine Gael members had told him to hand it to me."

Ald Kemmy said that when his letter was apparently ignored by Fine Gael they decided to go ahead with their action on Monday. He added that problems with members' rooms started after the recent local elections.

"Alderman John Gilligan was three or four weeks walking around without a room, and we invited him into ours," said Ald Kemmy.

Ald Kemmy has written to Cllr O'Driscoll stating that Labour did not lay down any criteria for the allocation of the members' rooms at City Hall.

"This criteria was already clearly established



Peaceful facade: City Hall (LL)

since 1990, when Fine Gael, then the largest party, with six members, was allocated room number 1, and Fianna Fail, with four members, moved to room number 2. The other, smaller parties were given the two remaining rooms. The Labour Party merely wishes to follow this established procedure.

"There is no need for further vexatious procrastination in this matter. In my two previous letters I clearly set out the Labour Party's democratic right to room number 1. When I wrote my first letter of 1st September 1992, it was generally assumed that room number 1 was the largest room.


"The fact that it later transpired that it is not the largest room does not in any way invalidate the right of the six Labour Party councillors to exercise their prerogative to select this room."

Ald Kemmy says that it is clear to his party that the vast majority of members of the City Council fully accept the new allocation of members' rooms.

DEATHS

CUNNEEN — September 24, 1992 (peacefully), in the wonderful care of the matron and staff of the Regional Hospital. William (Bill), Ballysimon Road, Limerick, beloved husband of Nancy, loving father of Pat, Helen and Anne and dear grandad of Deirdre, Niamh, Eoghan, Aine, Aoife and Neil; deeply regretted by his loving wife, family, daughter-in-law Jacinta, son-in-law Neil, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives and many good friends. Rest in peace. Removal from Thompson's Funeral Chapel, Thomas Street, to St. Bridget's Church this (Friday) evening at 8 o'clock. Requiem Mass tomorrow (Saturday) at 11 o'clock. Funeral afterwards to Mount Saint Laurence Cemetery. (c)

SUPPLE (nee McGuire) — September 24, 1992, Maura, Rathmale, Mungret, and late of Davis Street and Lynwood Park, Limerick. Deeply regretted by her loving husband Pat, sons James and Michael, brothers, sister, relatives and friends. Rest in peace. Removal from Thompson's Funeral Chapel, Thomas Street, to St. Oliver Plunkett Church, Mungret, this (Friday) evening at 7 o'clock. Requiem Mass tomorrow (Saturday) at 10.30 o'clock. Funeral afterwards to Mount St. Laurence Cemetery. House private please. (c)



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