

Teachers want top priority for schools

By **DYMPHNA BRACKEN**

SCHOOLS in Limerick deserve top priority from all candidates in the election according to Willie Lawlor, the local ASTI representative.

Earlier this year, an independent survey commissioned by the ASTI showed the effect of inadequate funding on schools in Limerick.

The ASTI has a 10 point list of priorities which requires urgent action and to which they want to see positive responses from all Dail candidates.

"The real issue for voters is the failure at official level to see the contribution our widely lauded education makes to the present Celtic Tiger economy and the apparent unwillingness to re-invest some of the dividends of this success into our education system.

"In spite of the pre-election hyperbole, spending on education has increased at a much slower pace than the rate of increase in exchequer

receipts or the rapid growth in the country's GNP," he added.

On the basis of the money being collected through fund raising or voluntary contributions it is clear, according to Mr Lawlor, that there is a 20 per cent shortfall between what schools receive from the state and what they need to meet their present running costs.

Mr Lawlor points out that most recent figures show that, in 1994, Ireland would, because of its larger school-age population, have needed to spend 75 per cent more state funds than our EU partners to provide the same level of educational resources.

"In fact we spent only one fifth more, thereby causing us to fall further behind in terms of the resources we provide for our students," he claimed.

While praise for teachers is welcome, Mr Lawlor said the ASTI is concerned that a complacency may be abroad which assumes that teachers will continue to deliver such a high quality service with increasingly threadbare resources.



Limerick hurler Ciaran Carey with recipients of certificates in tractor training at the Bawnmore awards night in Jurys Hotel: Alvet Costello, Gerry O'Mara, John O'Sullivan and Denise Kelly. (LL)