

...an will take disciplinary action against the Dublin West TD arising from the inquiry report.

The Fianna Fáil inquiry was prompted by Mr Frank Dunlop's revelations at the Flood tribunal that he made payments to nearly 30 politicians who were either sitting or former members of Dublin County Council.

Mr Lawlor would not comment last night on speculation that he might resign. However, he denied reports that party backbenchers had asked him to do so. "I'm awaiting the publication of the report to see if it is factual. I haven't a clue what I will do after that," he said.

The report will raise serious questions about payments received by Mr Lawlor in the 1980s and 1990s. It will also raise questions about money received by other Dublin party councillors and former councillors, including at least one other Oireachtas member.

Mr Lawlor's letter signals that he believes the party is not entitled to take any disciplinary action against him arising from payments he received since 1991. The inquiry was set up to examine any payments made to party councillors between 1985 and 1999. Mr Lawlor maintains that because he lost his Dublin County Council seat in 1991, payments to him after that date are excluded from the inquiry's remit.

While Fianna Fáil TDs and senators will be given the report today, it is the Taoiseach who will decide whether disciplinary

...of co-operation given by individuals in this inquiry or previous ones and contains general recommendations in a number of policy areas including possible reform of the land zoning process.

The section of the report dealing with Mr Lawlor is understood to refer in detail to payments he received after 1991. Mr Lawlor last night disputed the inquiry's right to examine such payments, saying "their concern is did anyone while a member of the council receive any payment in relation to how they voted".

The inquiry is understood to have examined the costs incurred by various members in running election campaigns and constituency offices, leaving open the possibility that the report will ensure such costs incurred will now be opened to wider scrutiny.

Ahern reacts angrily to charges by Bruton and Quinn: page 7



Mr Lawlor: likely to be disciplined by FF

...120,000 students begin their Junior and Leaving Cert exams this morning at 4,500 centres. The major change to this year's exams is an extra 20 minutes allowed for some subjects.

The Department is to review the pattern of grades awarded following concern about wide variations expressed in the Commission on the Points System report issued several months ago.

This said students were choosing their subjects based on a perception that they were likely to be marked "more easily" than other subjects.

The Government-sponsored Points Commission report was the first major examination of the points system in several decades, and its membership included several leading academics and educationalists.

Another study — by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment — found in some cases there was more than double the chance of getting an A1 in one subject over another.

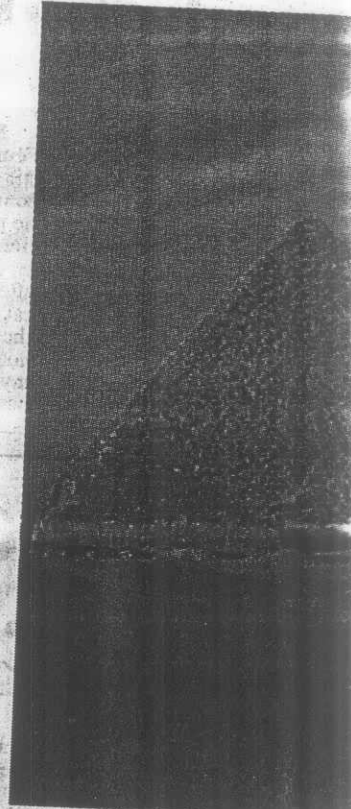
The Department will look at the discrepancies and consider what changes, if any, are needed.

The NCCA report released in April found the chances of getting an A1 in higher-level accounting was double that of higher level Irish in one year examined. It pointed out that in 1996, 2.8 per cent of candidates in higher level engineering received an A grade, but this rose to 11.2 per cent in last year's exam.

It said it was unlikely this occurred because students in one year were more gifted than in others. It said a more likely

...mission report. A spokeswoman for the Department said yesterday it had set up a Departmental group to implement the various pieces of the report. However, the Department has discretion on which parts it implements.

Teacher unions and other education bodies have pointed out that students perceive physics and chemistry as subjects where the chances of gaining a high



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Chicago man seeks share of McCourt brothers' royalties

From Joe Carroll, in Washington

WHEN Frank and Malachy McCourt were just "a couple of blaguards" and short of cash they met Mike Houlihan who helped them out. Now Mike wants some of the loot which has rolled in from the best-selling *Angela's Ashes* and other books by the brothers.

Long before there was Angela and her ashes, there was *A Couple of Blaguards* — a play which Frank and Malachy used to perform around the bars of New York, based on the bad old days in Limerick. Frank was then a humble schoolteacher and Malachy an actor, bar owner and boulevardier.

In the early 1980s, they met Mike Houlihan, a Chicago actor and playwright, who raised \$20,750 between himself and friends to stage the play in the Windy City.

In 1984, the McCourts signed a contract promising to pay Mr Houlihan and friends a percentage of royalties from the play and any "subsidiary" works for 15 years. Now it's payback time, says Mr Houlihan.

Yesterday's *Wall Street Journal* reports that Mr Houlihan has begun an action in a federal court in Chicago claiming 40 per cent of the profit from the brothers' memoirs for the investors in the *Blaguards*. This could be big money.

Frank has written *Angela's Ashes* which was also made into a movie and a follow-up called *Tis*. Malachy has written *A Monk Swimming* about his own adventures.

Thanks to the success of *Angela*, there was a revival of *A Pair of Blaguards* starring Malachy but no longer Frank.

The theatre critics noted the

strong resemblances between the play and especially *Angela's Ashes*. The *Washington Post* critic said: "The stories and songs of *Blaguards* are the primal matter from which *Monk* and *Angela* and *Tis* were created."

The *Baltimore Sun* called *Blaguards* the "stage version" of *Angela's Ashes* and *A Monk Swimming*.

Frank McCourt, noting that a fair bit of money is involved from the four million sales of his memoir, says that Mr Houlihan "has hopped on America's favourite form of transport — the bandwagon".

Blaguards has been performed in at least 13 venues, including a production on a cruise ship in Sri Lanka.

Frank maintains that "the book's the book and the play's the play."

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