

THE outcome of the Tipperary South by-election could spell the end for the leadership of Fine Gael by John Bruton.

The Meath man has seen his popular support remain frustratingly in the doldrums, having slid back from his ratings during his brief couple of years as Taoiseach.



Sitting in the wings is Michael Noonan, the Limerick East TD of almost two decades Dáil experience.

MARTIN BYRNES looks at the background of Michael Noonan, and examines his prospects.

ONE of the major influences on the political career of Michael Noonan was Miss Justice Mella Carroll.

Shortly after her appointment as the first ever woman member of the High Court, Judge Carroll was selected to chair the commission to redraft the Dáil constituencies. Previous revisions had been proposed by the Minister for Local Government of the day, and the infamous "Tullymanner" had backfired badly on Liam Cosgrave in 1977, leaving Jack Lynch with an unmanageable 20-seat majority. The instability of that majority was the main reason for the rise to the office of Taoiseach of Charles Haughey in 1979.

In 1977 the dry-witty Crescent Comprehensive teacher, Michael Noonan, Gouldavoher, was already three years a county councillor. He had been elected for Fine Gael on his first attempt in the Bruff Electoral Area, which, then as now, stretches cityward to Ballinacurra Creek, and even includes the Caherdavin / Coonagh area across the Shannon.

Michael Noonan was the teacher son of teachers from lovely Loughill on the Shannon Estuary. His thinking was firmly West Limerick. He had been FG director of elections for Limerick West in the 1977 general election.

The three-seat Limerick West constituency was huge, stretching from Kilbehenny near Mitchelstown to the outskirts of Tarbert and from Abbeyfeale to—well, to Gouldavoher, actually.

And that's where Miss Justice Carroll and her team comes in.

It was decided to give Limerick an extra TD, making East a five-seat (up one) and leaving West at three. But to do this, West would have to sacrifice some voters, and the voters selected to be "moved" were those in Raheen, Dooradoyle and Gouldavoher.

So now the ambitious

Council base—although remaining in the county—was split in two for Dáil purposes by the boundary change. His heart may yet have been in West Limerick, but the fact was that an extra seat had been created in Limerick East and Fine Gael, with only one of four in the previous set-up, stood a better-than-evens chance of picking it up.

Added to that was the fact that Limerick East Fine Gael, under the management of such as Eddie Butler, was livelier than it had been for ages, and the party felt that Tom O'Donnell and Michael Noonan would constitute a dream ticket.

And so it proved in November 1981 when Michael Noonan and Tom O'Donnell found themselves in Leinster House together, supporting Garrett Fitzgerald's first coalition, but from the Government backbenches.

Jim Kemmy scuttled the Government in the Spring over Finance Minister John Bruton's budget proposal to tax children's shoes. He was to scuttle the succeeding Haughey administration too, and lose his own seat to Labour's Frank Prendergast in the resulting third election in 18 months.

Michael Noonan became Minister for Justice in the second Fitzgerald coalition. In that position he made himself instantly known by revealing details of the phone-tapping of journalists Bruce Arnold and Geraldine Kennedy.

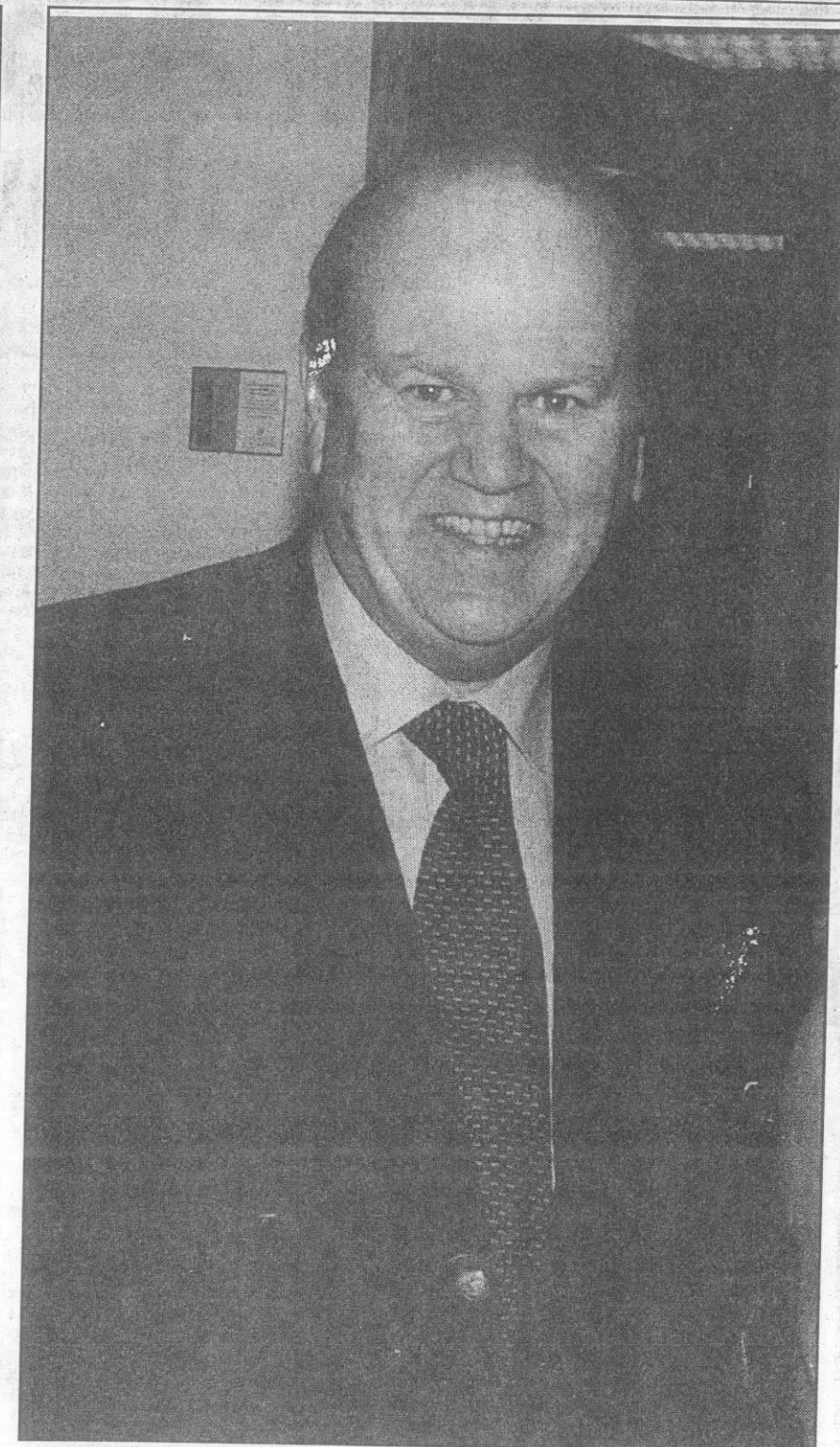
In 1986 he was transferred to Industry Commerce and Trade. And he later was given the Energy portfolio.

The 1987 election was the first one since the 1985 creation of the Progressive Democrats. Strangely, the PDs found themselves continuing the struggle against their bête noire from within cabinet in what Albert Reynolds famously referred to as "a temporary little arrangement".

When Reynolds' own coalition with Labour



Fine Gael force: John Bruton, FG leader, could face a threat if the party does not do well in the Tipperary South by-election, and right, Michael Noonan, the man who could succeed him (LL)



# High Noonan

without a general election, Michael Noonan was made Minister for Health. In that capacity he expedited the £40 million development of Limerick Regional Hospital.

He is currently shadow minister for finance.

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in 1947.

The outcome of the Tipperary South by-election could be the first (and final) chance for Michael Noonan to bid for the leadership of Fine Gael. With Bruton's standing in the opinion polls back at the mediocre level at which it stood before his couple of years as

been within a fingernail of reaching the very top.

Perhaps now would be the time to grasp the chance if it presents itself.

After all, no Irish government has been re-elected to office since 1967, the year, coincidentally, when Michael Noonan was first entitled to

ferent leader, the hard-nosed mandarins in Mount Street would have no hesitation in applying the necessary heave.

If Michael Noonan is to get a chance at leadership, he had better be aware that, at his age, he would not be allowed a dress rehearsal—he would be



ick an extra TD, making E a five-seat (up one) and leaving West at three. But to do this, West would have to sacrifice some voters, and the voters selected to be "moved" were those in Raheen, Dooradoyle and Gouldavoher.

So now the ambitious Michael Noonan had a decision to make. Much of his County

seives continuing the struggle against their bete noire from within cabinet in what Albert Reynolds famously referred to as "a temporary little arrangement".

**W**hen Reynolds' own coalition with Labour collapsed in 1994, and FG found themselves in power

Minister for Health. In that capacity he expedited the £40 million development of Limerick Regional Hospital.

He is currently shadow minister for finance.

Michael Noonan is not one of the populist all-singing, all-dancing breed of politicians. His image is one of business all the way. He seems never to be off duty. If he has opinions on the selection of the county hurling team, few have had the benefit of hearing them.

Michael Noonan was born in 1943. That makes him two years older than Alan Dukes who led Fine Gael before John Bruton, and Bruton was born

ary South by-election would be the first (and final) chance for Michael Noonan to bid for the leadership of Fine Gael. With Bruton's standing in the opinion polls back at the mediocre level at which it stood before his couple of years as Taoiseach, a bad outcome in Tipp South could be the excuse needed for change.

And it would be a serious shot in the arm for FG in Limerick East, providing a realistic hope of a second seat for the party in the shape of someone such as Cllr Richard Butler.

For the teacher from Loughill, Michael Noonan has come a very long way and has

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After all, no Irish government has been re-elected to office since 1967, the year, coincidentally, when Michael Noonan was first entitled to vote. If the party feels that it would have a better chance of re-gaining power under a dif-

would have no hesitation in applying the necessary heave.

If Michael Noonan is to get a chance at leadership, he had better be aware that, at his age, he would not be allowed a dress rehearsal—he would be expected to get it right on the night, first time.



**With Bruton's standing in the opinion polls at mediocre levels, a bad outcome in Tipp South could be the excuse needed for change**



**The outcome of the Tipperary South by-election could be the first (and final) chance for Michael Noonan to bid for the leadership of Fine Gael.**

## William St traders want better deal

By JESSICA QUINN

LOCAL business people are demanding that Limerick Corporation improve the condition of William Street.

The William Street Traders represent many businesses operating on Limerick's second main street. For the past four weeks they have been contacting local representatives to demand that the street be upgraded.

So far the group have had a positive response, said Tony Daly, of Daly's hardware.

"They are very enthusiastic, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the city manager where he spends the money.

"The issues we are dealing with go back as far as 1973. We have letters going back on file for 25 years and it appears to be a case of all take and no give. It's pay back time now," he said.

One of the group's main concerns is the

scarcity of litter bins on the street.

Seamus Flannery, of Finn's Bar said: "We are up to our knees in rubbish. The tourists that come in here are wondering what kind of dump we are living in here. Tourism is big in a pub and a lot comment that they can't believe the dirt on the streets. It's embarrassing. I can't understand the amount of litter on the streets."

He also pointed out that there are very few public toilets in the city.

"We pay a lot of rates, where is it going. At night the streets are awash with urine and litter," he said.

Mr Daly stated: "If you're a serious trader you must look nice and attractive. There are a lot of developments in Limerick but William Street has not changed other than what the traders have done themselves."

But litter is not the only concern of the William Street Traders. "The paths have got worse since 1973 with all the

work that has been done laying gas pipes and electric cables. We've had excuses from the Corporation over the years as to why it's impossible to improve, but everything's possible.

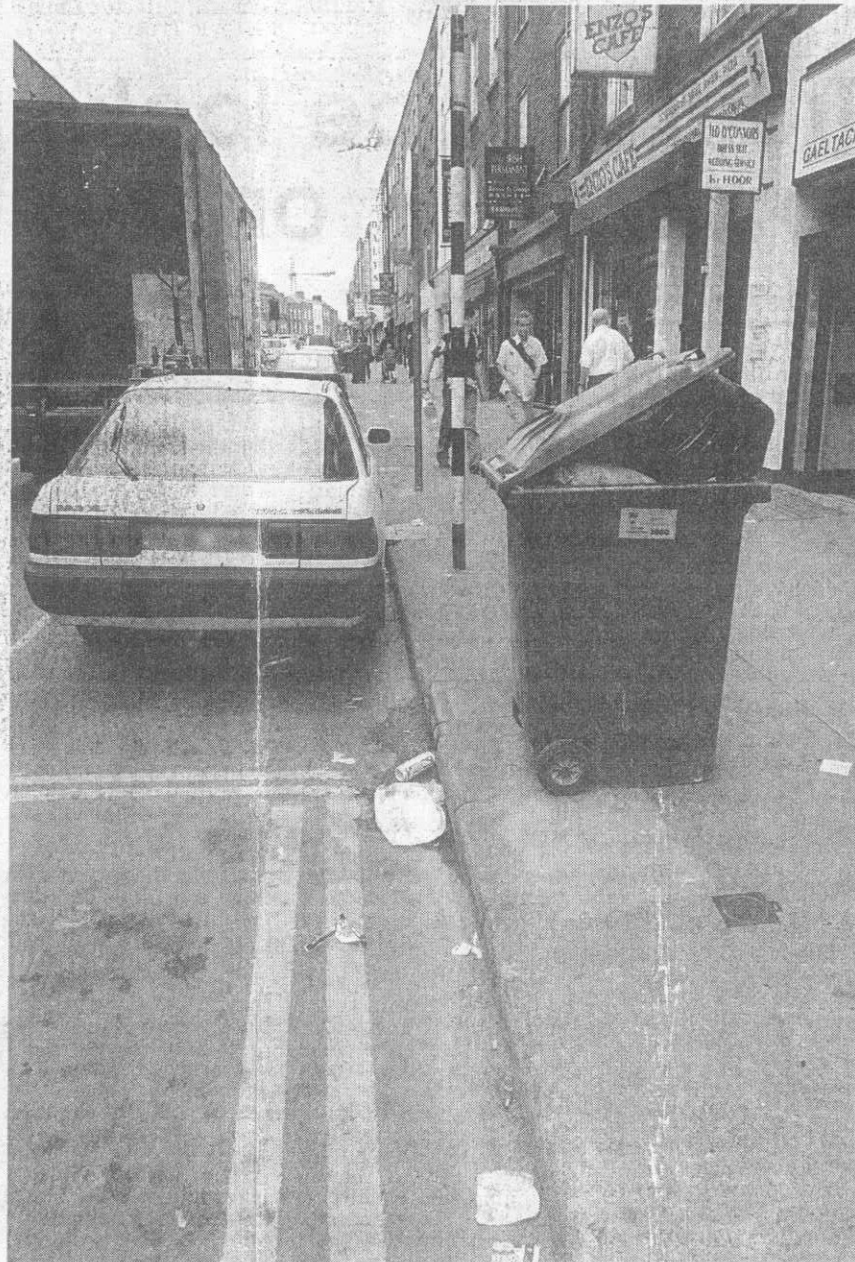
"We want more street lighting to make the streets safer, the removal of three poles which aren't in use anymore and the upgrading of footpaths.

"I don't think it's acceptable any longer when you consider how much William Street contributes in rates. We have not had a rates remission in 10 years like a lot of new developments have. We've paid and paid, but got nothing. We're seen as just a banker, but we do need to get something in return.

"It's traditional Ireland here, Cruises Street isn't. It's been great for Limerick and brought a vibrancy to the trading scene, but if we value ourselves as a nation we need to hold on to our traditional traders.

"In years ahead it will lose tourists if we lose our individuality. If we lose that we can never rebuilt it."

Limerick Corporation was not available for comment on the traders' demands. However, it is understood that discussions are under way between representatives of the Corporation and the group to find a solution.



William Street: traders want the street cleaned up and made safer

## Remand

THE Limerickman charged with the murder of Brendan O'Connell in the People's Park, Pery Square, last December 16 appeared before Judge Tom O'Donnell at Limerick Court.

Robert McNamara, 25, of 39, Clarina Park, Ballinacurra Weston, is in custody on the charge.

Judge Tom O'Donnell remanded the matter back to June 28, but said that he was concerned over the delay in having a book of evidence served.

"There has to be a balance in these matters. This man is in custody. I understand there are a number of books of evidence to be prepared for Limerick, but six months for a book of evidence to be served is too long," he said.

He said that he is likely to put the matter back to the end of July when it comes before him next week.

## CARI trek in Turkey

A LIMITED number of places are still available for a millennium Turkey trek in aid of Limerick's CARI Foundation.

The staff of the therapy centre for children, families and groups affected by sexual abuse, have organised a 25-mile Trek in Bodrum, Turkey, from Monday, September 18 to Monday, October 25.

Each participant has to raise a total of £650 each. Any one wishing to get involved in the trek should contact CARI at 317536 for further information.

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: I Richard O'Shaughnessy of Morenora, Askeaton, wish to apply for outline planning permission for the construction of dwelling entrance, boundary wall, concrete post and wire, septic tank and percolation area at Dromard, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. (f24/81775)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: Planning permission is sought from Limerick County Council for residence, entrance and ancillary works at site C, 14 Cluain Mhuire, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. Signed: Trevor and Orla Wood. (f24/1-2546)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: We, Tom and Catherine Fitzgerald, are applying for full planning permission to Limerick County Council to construct a two storey dwelling house including garage, septic tank, percolation area, entrance and front boundary wall at Tomdeely North, Askeaton, Co. Limerick. (f24/2549)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: Outline planning permission sought for refurbishment of existing derelict dwelling and outhouses to provide rented self-catering holiday accommodation at Drombane, Co. Limerick. Signed: Sean Kett. (f24/81775)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: I Michael Dillon intend to apply to the above for full planning permission for construction of a garage at Ardrahan, Galbally, Co. Limerick. (f24/2553)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: I Paul Leonard wish to apply to Limerick County Council for planning permission for 2 storey dwelling house, entrance, septic tank and percolation area at Knockderc, Patrickswell, Holycross, Bruff, Co. Limerick. (f24/81757)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: We Marie and Margaret O'Shaughnessy are applying for permission to construct a dormer style dwelling, septic tank, domestic garage and new entrance at Carrowbane Beg, Loughill West, Co. Limerick. (f24/81747)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: Application to erect a split level house and septic tank and percolation area, front entrance and front boundary wall, posts and wire around the site at Drombane, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. Signed: Donny and Katherine Maher. (f24/2540)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: Take notice that I Jeremy Duane intend to apply to Limerick County Council for permission to erect single storey dwelling house, septic tank and percolation area, entrance walls and driveway at Ardnacrohy, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. Signed: Jeremy Duane. (f24/2522)

### APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

Limerick County Council: Permission is sought for the relocation of escape stair and the construction of an external escape stair tower at The Southcourt Hotel, Gouldavoher, Raheen, County Limerick. (f24/c)



# TO-DAY, BREAD TO-DAY

