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pg 4

Noonan calls to scrap Stadium

Anita Guidera

FINE GAEL leader Michael Noonan has called on the Government to scrap the plans for Stadium Ireland in favour of developing sport and recreation facilities throughout the country.

Mr Noonan claimed there were simply not enough sporting events to justify two sports stadiums in Dublin, with capacities of 80,000 each.

Speaking at the MacGill summer school in Glenties, Co Donegal, he questioned the justification of the Government spending up to £1bn on one sporting project, when even half that amount could be spent on providing sport and recreation facilities all over the country.

"The advantages of such a deployment of public funds would be seen in healthier lifestyles, less dependence on alcohol and drugs and a reduction in vandalism — surely something to which any government and the general public should aspire," he said.

Mr Noonan said there were only about half-a-dozen games each year which would draw crowds of 80,000. These included the two All Ireland finals and some rugby and soccer international matches.

In general, though, there were simply not enough sporting events to even fill the stadiums to 60pc capacity, he maintained.

"If the Taoiseach wants a monument to his term in office, I believe that young Irish men and women participating in the sport and leisure activities of their choice, with proper coaching facilities, would be a far better legacy than a colosseum at Abbotstown."

He expressed the hope that the GAA would shortly make the refurbished Croke Park available on a commercial basis for other sports.

Addressing the theme of *Alcohol and Drugs in Irish Society*, the Fine Gael leader said the creation of a real national sports policy was a



Rachel Murphy, from Ballybofey, at a young writers' workshop at the Pat

major element in providing alternative outlets and lifestyles for young people to counterbalance the attractions of drink.

Outlining the cost to the State of alcohol abuse, Mr Noonan added that while the licensing laws were relaxed last year, no provision was made for the public safety consequences.

Random violent attacks, some with fatal consequences, and sporadic and deliberate vandalism were rapidly becoming the late-night norm in many areas, he said.

Methadone 'is

THE GOVERNOR of Mountjoy prison has criticised the State's reliance on methadone as the way of tackling the heroin problem.

John Lonergan told the MacGill summer school last night that while methadone was acceptable as an intervention, it was not by itself a solution to the growing problem.

He has called for a national strategy which would bring together all the agencies to tackle the problem in a planned, long-term way. The number of prisoners in Mountjoy with heroin as their dominant addiction has risen by 31pc in

EVENING COURSES AT GCD

Return