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The rise and rise of Des O'Malley

DESMOND O'Malley is no stranger to tense election battles. His first election to the Dail – in 1968 – saw a difference of only 927 votes between himself and the nearest rival for a seat.

Mr. O'Malley was elected to Dail Eireann in May, 1968, on foot of a by-election that followed the death of his uncle – then Minister for Education and former Health Minister, Mr. Donogh O'Malley.

Mr. O'Malley was elected ahead of Labour's Mick Lipper with a vote of 18,447 first preferences against 17,520 for the latter.

Final count

In 1969 he was elected on the final count following the elimination of his aunt, Mrs. Hilda O'Malley (widow of the late Donogh O'Malley). He captured a first preference total of 5,960 with 7,143 votes on the final count.

His moment of triumph

came in 1973 when he produced a superb performance to top the poll in Limerick East with 7,806 votes, while his nearest rival, Tom O'Donnell, F.G., had to wait until the third count to be elected.

Prior to his poll topping success in Limerick East, he served as Minister for Justice in 1970-73 at the young age of 32. He was 29 years of age when elected to Dail Eireann in 1968 and he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach and Chief Whip, 1969-70.

Committees

Mr. O'Malley was opposition spokesman on Health (1973-75) and on Industry and Commerce (1975-77). He was

a member of the Committee of Privilege and Procedure, 1969-70 and 1973-77; Committee of Selection, 1969-70, and chairman of the Informal Committee on Reform of Dail Procedure in 1972.

Following the landslide success of Fianna Fail in the 1977 election, in which Mr. O'Malley captured 8,672 first preference votes (again topping the poll over F.G.'s Tom O'Donnell) he was appointed Minister for Industry, Commerce and Energy (later Tourism).

He served with distinction in this ministry until the dissolution of the 21st Dail in June, 1981. Mr. O'Malley is regarded by both Fianna Fail and Opposition politicians as among the most successful Ministers ever to administer

the Industry, Commerce and Energy portfolio.

In the elections of June, 1981 he was elected with 9,915 votes on the first count although he relinquished his poll-topping place to Tom O'Donnell, F.G.

Leading

Mr. O'Malley was a leading opposition spokesman during the tenure of the 22nd Dail when he had the Industry, Commerce and Energy portfolio.

As Minister for Industry and Commerce and Energy he was responsible for the revitalisation of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company.



"SHATTERED"

BY DYMPHNA BRACKEN

THE news is "shattering" declared former Mayor Cllr John Quinn one of the founding members of

Progressive Democrats along with Mr O'Malley.

"I was very sad to hear the news, It is hard to visualise the party with Mr O'Malley as leader," he said.

"He is of course not giving up his Dail seat so he will probably be able to give to the people of Limerick what some people said he was not able to do in the past," he said.

Frank O'Mahony, who stood for the party in Ward One in the last local elections said he was very sorry to hear Mr O'Malley's announcement.

"Over the past 25 years, Mr O'Malley has made a huge contribution to this country and both a personal and financial cost and well deserves a rest," he said.

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By EUGENE PHELAN

PROGRESSIVE Democrat leader Des O'Malley was this Tuesday afternoon announced his retirement as Party leader.

Mr O'Malley was due to hold a press conference this Tuesday afternoon in Dail Eireann to officially make his announcement.

The Limerick East TD first told members of the Party's Parliamentary Party at a meeting at Leinster House this morning.

"He is resigning as leader, but staying on as a TD," a leading member of the Progressive Democrats confirmed.

Now the big question is if Mr O'Malley will run for Europe next year? And if he runs for Europe will it be in Munster or Leinster?

In an interview last June with Limerick Leader deputy editor Jimmy Woulfe Mr O'Malley was emphatic that he would not leave the leadership of the PD's to run in next years European Parliament elections.

"It's my intention to lead the party into the next election. You can't foretell everything, but it's certainly my intention. I won't be a candidate for the European

elections. They will be in June next year, but I won't be a candidate. We expect to be pick our candidates at the end of this year, perhaps December or next January, and I won't be a candidate," he stated.

If Mr O'Malley changes his mind and runs for Europe, there will be nobody more pleased than Fianna Fail in Limerick East.

Not for Europe

By JIMMY Woulfe

DES O'MALLEY broke the news of his decision to resign as party leader at an emotional meeting with friends and supporters at the PD office in Cecil Street. He was accompanied by his wife Pat and his sons Owen and Des.

"It was a very emotional meeting and a number of those present pleaded with him to reconsider. But he said his decision was final and he had thought about it for some months. He made it clear that he will be running in Limerick east at the next general election and would not be going for Europe," said Cllr Tim O'Malley, who was present.

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