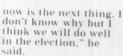


y McDonnald

gates



said.
"It's very successful and one of the biggest conferences and biggest crowds we've had in a while," said Damian O'Dwyer from

Dromkeen. "There is a huge "There is a huge crowd here and I think it will reflect very well on the canvass. There is good support out there for us. The people wouldn't be here otherwise," he said. Rita English from Raheen doesn't travel Raheen doesn't travel much to conferences but enjoys them when

they are in Limerick. "I attended a lot of the speeches and enjoyed them all," Ms English said.



slams laclava mics'

ities. The reversion to what we endured in the past: mass unemploy-ment, emigration and economic deprivation," she

The Tanaiste was scathing of Sinn Fein ide-ologies and said: "This country doesn't need balaclava economics either. There are some that say there are no differences between the political par-





Reports: RON KIRWAN and MARTIN BYRNES



Harney leads the praise for 'the best Taoiseach we never had'

TANAISTE Harney led the praise for PD founder member Des O'Malley, who is retiring from public life at the next elec-

The party leader presented Deputy O'Malley with a silver salver to mark, his sterling work in political life over 34 years and for being "the best Taoizeach this country never had."

Ms Harney had a warm welcome for the 600 Pro-gressive Democrats and gressive Democrats and their guesis who sat down to dinner, and a special welcome for former PD deputy Peadar Clohessy. The party decided to hold its conference in Limerick because this is the last conference which Deputy O'Malley gan

Deputy O'Malley can attend as a member of the parliamentary party and Dail Eireann, the Tanaiste said.

Tanaiste said.
"The Progressive
Democrats could not be in
being if it were not for
Des O'Malley. This party
would never have happened, this party would
never have succeeded."

she said.
"It's often been said that he is the best Taoiseach this country never had that's a cliche but I certainly agree with

"His integrity, his intellect and his determination knows no bounds. In fact his passion and determination and his unerring instinct for what's right and for doing what is right is exemplary. Des has always put principle before pragmatism. He is overlain with a possible. overlain with a passion for what he believes to be

"In the parliamentary party I'll certainly miss him. We'll all miss his advice, his guidance, his



Family portrait: Fiona, Des and Pat O'Malley

wisdom. We'll miss his steely determination," said Ms Harney.

said Ms Harney.

She said that it was going to take two O'Malleys to replace him in the next parliamentary party.

"I've no doubt that the tradition will be continued with Fiona, his daughter who is running for us in Dun Laoghaire, and Tim, his cousin who is running here in Limerick East. It will take both of them to make up for Des when we lose him from the parliamentary party this summer.

"I know we will con-

party this summer.
"I know we will continue to have his support, his loyalty and his friend ship. This party is a shining example of what Des O'Malley has achieved in Irish politics.
"He has genuinely broken the mould and conken the

ken the mould and con-tributed an enormous public service to the peo-

ple of this country.
"It would have been eas. ir for him to have followed different options, but his courage, his integrity, his determination and his love of this country meant that he chose a different one and for that Des we are all eternally grateful to you." she said.

Ms Harney presented Des and Pat O'Malley with a holiday voucher worth €2,500, jokingly pointing out that it was in

a light brown envelope.

Deputy O'Malley later returned the voucher, saying that he did not feel right taking it.

She also presented Des with an inscribed solid silver salver which read "With appreciation." silver salver which read "With appreciation, respect and admiration, for a life of outstanding public service Presented on behalf of the entire membership of the Progressive Lemocrats to its founder, Des O'Malley, 8th February, 2002" February, 2002 "I'm a

"I'm a bit over whelmed." Des O'Malley responded. "Thank you very much. I'm very grateful for this. I've been over the last quite a num ber of years overwhelmed by thanks and presenta tions for not very much." he said.

"I recall a friend of mine who led a larger party and led the country and he did a hell of a lot more than I did. He never 20t a presentation I. got a presentation. Hap pily we live in different

pily we live in different times now and in a differ ent situation. I'm very grateful to all of you." He said he was absolutely delighted with the huge number of peo-ple at the dinner and felt it augured, very well for the forthcoming general election. election.

"I was delighted to meet people here tonight for the first time and to meet

old friends also And I think that augers well too "I am reminded of a thing that started in Lim orick now you see it all over the country John 3.7 Let us rejoice ladies and gentlemen. There are many here tonight who are reborn," he said. He recalled that Frank

Hogan, the owner of the John 37 sign was at a final in which Limerick was playing against Cork and, that someone was cute enough to go behind him with a sign that said

On a more serious note, he said the first part of the history of his party in a sense was negative because we were dominated by what we were against. I'm delighted that the second part of it has been the positive part, where we could implement what we were for."

"And that's the part that has made the difference On a more serious note,

has made the difference And that's the half that has benefited ireland and has benefited freland and has achieved what we set out to do. And that's the half that was led by Mary Harney," he said. "I want to say how grateful I am to the people of I impedely particularly.

of Limerick particularly to the people in this organisation in Limerick that stood by me and helped me for 34 years."





Denis O'Kee



Cllr Tim O'Mc

PROGRESSIVE Democrat leade Harney was acr hypocriss by th