Debate on treaty urged

CALLS for an urgent debate on the Maastricht treaty and for the Government to publish a White Paper immediately on it as well as other matters relating to the abortion issue, dominated the Order of Business. Members also expressed concern over budgetary and constitutional questions and called for a debate on Northern Ireland which would take place in the appointment of Sir Patrick Mayhew, generally welcomed as Minister of State, Northern Ireland, by Mr. Manning, leader of the Fine Gael group, asked what guidelines existed, if any, for the judiciary to make decisions which intervened on current controversial issues. He was referring to Mr. Justice R. H. O'Hanlon's recent appointment as a judge. This action by the Government was seen in many quarters as an attempt "to intimidate" Mr. Justice R. H. O'Hanlon, he claimed, to cries of "ruffling" from the Fianna Fáil benches.

Mr. Martin Cullen (Progressive Democrat) said he was "deeply unhappy and deeply concerned" at the Government's approach to the Maastricht referendum.

He had no doubt that the right to travel and the right to information should be clarified in advance of the forthcoming referendum.

Echoing many other speakers who had declared that the public were generally confused on the subject, he called for an immediate White Paper.

"It is absolutely essential that a clarity emerges from this in advance that the public are fully informed and that there should be no attempt to roll back the Supreme Court judgments."

The order was agreed.

Power goes left in Limerick

From Arthur Quinlan, in Limerick

FIANNA FAIL has failed to secure the seat of Limerick, with the support of Mr. Jack Burke, who was a former Fianna Fáil councillor, Mr. Burke, said Mr. O'Dea, but that they will get a second seat. Both Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats also failed to nominate a former councillor.

The party had eight seats but has been in decline over the last few elections.

Yesterday, the former Lord Mayor of Limerick, Mr. Jack Burke, proposed a former Fianna Fáil councillor, Mr. Burke, to support Mr. O'Dea, but failed to get a second seat. Both Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats also failed to nominate a former councillor.

Mr. Burke said he was "deeply unhappy" and "deeply concerned" at the Government's approach to the Maastricht referendum.

He had no doubt that the right to travel and the right to information should be clarified in advance of the forthcoming referendum.

Echoing many other speakers who had declared that the public were generally confused on the subject, he called for an immediate White Paper.

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The order was agreed.

Bruton advocates green farm policy

By Sean MacConnell, Agriculture Correspondent

RATIONAL proposals for an alternative agricultural strategy for Ireland were outlined by Mr. Tim Bruton, a party meeting in Dunboyne, County Meath.

The Fine Gael leader called for taxation on the use of beans, milk, and milk products, to reduce the cost of production and to encourage farmers to consider other, more sustainable farming practices.

Having criticised the Government for having no agricultural policy, Mr. Bruton said the key element of a new policy must be to get a radical change in the rules of the EC, so as to give Irish agriculture a chance to compete internationally.

Grassland, he said, accounted for 95 per cent of total feed energy supply in Ireland compared with 50 per cent in Belgium and 40 per cent in western Germany, so that any policy undermining the competitiveness of the beef and milk production sector would be dangerous.

The fine policy was based on renewable, concentrated production, which is a form of energy that can be used in a way that does not damage the environment.

"I believe that Irish dairy and livestock farmers should improve their livestock by forming a strategic alliance with European environmentalists to curb factory farming in continental Europe, to encourage a return to grass-based production," said Mr. Bruton.

The development of the replacement of non-food farm use could reduce food surpluses and help to create a market for Irish farmers to form an alliance with environmentalists. A sound environmental policy could bring about changes by imposing a tax on non-renewable energy.

Mr. Bruton said the Irish Government was wrong in refusing the EC's proposal to impose a Community-wide carbon tax. It was wrong because a carbon tax would open up valuable production opportunities and reduce consumption of fossil fuels.

It was wrong because a carbon tax would help to reduce the cost of production and to encourage farmers to consider other, more sustainable farming practices.

Mr. O'Reilly said the Department was concerned about the sourcing of the beef. In terms of a review of the Department's role regarding sourcing, he said that his minute was not in favor of the company's proposal and was concerned about the potential of the beef.

Mr. Michael Farry, a Fianna Fáil TD, said Mr. O'Reilly was right in criticizing the company's proposal and was concerned about the potential of the beef. It was wrong because a carbon tax would open up valuable production opportunities and reduce consumption of fossil fuels.

Mr. O'Reilly said he did not know what the directive was. He said that the present secretary gave to people when telling them about the directive. There was a vast amount of documents. When it came to documents, Mr. O'Reilly said it was fine and it was fine.