

Polls open in IFA race after salary controversy

VOTING has opened to elect a new president of the Irish Farmers' Association to replace Eddie Downey - who stood down from the position after the exorbitant salaries of top IFA officials were revealed last November.

The election will run until April 15, with three candidates - Henry Burns, Joe Healy and Flor McCarthy - all vying for the top job.

The final national count will take place in the Castletknock Hotel in Dublin on April 19. Membership of the association dropped to 75,000 farmers in the wake of the controversy surrounding the huge salaries of its chiefs. It previously stood at well over 80,000.

The IFA's returning officer, caretaker chairman and treasurer Joe Bergin, used the launch of

By **Ferghal Blaney**
Political Correspondent

the election campaign yesterday to highlight the issue of farm incomes.

'In the context of the formation of a new government - hopefully - over the next couple of weeks, I think it's very important that there are policies in place in the new programme for government that start to address this issues, focusing on reversing the cuts in the last few years during the economic crisis,' he said.

Derek Deane, the whistleblower who highlighted the high salaries at the top of the IFA, pulled out of the running to become its president at the end of January.

Carlow IFA chairman Mr Deane said in a statement: 'I believe that there are issues that I have raised with the chairman of the rules committee that should be reviewed before the next election.'

An IFA spokesman could not confirm exactly what issues Mr Deane raised with the committee chairman when the Irish Daily Mail asked.

In November, Mr Deane went public over pay levels at the top of the association, particularly the remuneration of Pat Smith, who was general secretary.

Mr Smith stepped down after it emerged he had earned a total of €535,000 in 2013 and €445,000 in 2014. He negotiated a €2million severance package.

Varadkar 'has failed on organ donation plans'

By **Ferghal Blaney**
Political Correspondent

A DOUBLE lung transplant recipient has hit out at Leo Varadkar for failing to follow through on a promise to introduce an opt-out organ donation regime in Ireland.

Gordon Ryan criticised the Health Minister for inaction on the proposal, pointing out that the promise for the new donor system was made in the Programme for Government five years ago.

Mr Ryan, who underwent the double lung transplant in July 2013, told an audience at the launch of Organ Donor Awareness Week yesterday that it was unacceptable that the last government had broken its promise to introduce the opt-out system.

That system operates on the presumption of automatic donation unless a person chooses to specifically opt out. Mr Varadkar indicated that family or loved ones would still have the final say under this system. Criticising the acting Minister for Health and his government, Mr Ryan, from Boyle, Co.



Views: Gordon Ryan yesterday Roscommon, said: 'My hope is that sharing my experience will encourage people to sign up for organ donation.'

Mr Ryan, who required his transplant because he has cystic fibrosis, told yesterday of how he watched many friends die while waiting for a suitable organ for transplantation. 'Seeing them pass away convinced me that we need to introduce the opt-out system for organ donation,' he said.

He added: 'It is absolutely unacceptable for people to be dying on the waiting lists when that option is there for us and I'm calling on the Minister for Health today to introduce it as soon as possible.'

The Irish Kidney Association hosted yesterday's launch and its position on opt-out is different to that of Mr Ryan, as it believes that changing laws would not change practice.

Mr Varadkar said that legislation was not the most important thing here, and that changing the culture and encouraging more families to have the necessary conversations about donation while people are still alive are more important. 'I would like to see it (the opt-out system) in the next programme for government whenever it happens, but I think the most important thing though is to remember the objective - the objective is to increase the number of transplants that happen,' he said.

He added: 'The number of transplants did increase last year on the year before and we'd hope that it would continue to increase in the years ahead. Ultimately, anything that's going to happen will require family consent.'

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Accident with dog killed man

AN elderly man knocked down the stairs by his pet dog was left paralysed from the neck down and later died, an inquest has heard.

Ignatius Fox, 71, fell backwards down the stairs and landed on a concrete hallway on October 14, 2012, Dublin Coroner's Court heard.

Mr Fox, from New Street, Carrick-On-Suir, Co. Tipperary, had a pet dog who adored him, his wife Mary Fox said. 'I knew the dog was upstairs and when she saw him coming up she went bounding out to meet him,' Mrs Fox said.

She said that during her husband's two-year paralysis he never told her it was the dog that caused him to fall down the stairs.

'He told his sister; he was afraid I would punish the dog,' Mrs Fox said.

Mr Fox suffered a serious neck injury that damaged his spine and left him paralysed from the neck down. The court heard that around Easter 2014 he

By **Louise Roseingrave**

got a respiratory tract infection and his health deteriorated.

He had problems aspirating and developed muscle spasms, the court heard. 'All of this flowed from the neck injury sustained as a result of the fall down the stairs,' Coroner Dr Brian Farrell said.

After the first respiratory infection, Mr Fox developed a pattern of recurring infections, according to medical reports. He had great grace and dignity throughout his ill health and never complained, the court heard.

He passed away on September 30, 2014, at Cherry Orchard Hospital.

The cause of death was pneumonia complicated by a fall down stairs at his home, Dr Farrell said. He returned a verdict of accidental death.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Love is a most beautiful force, but why is there so little around?

THE Dooley family is like any other. We have good days and bad. Sometimes, the sun shines brightly. Sometimes, it doesn't shine at all.

Families are like little societies. There is a hierarchy to maintain order, a value system and a process of give and take. As such, the family is the first of our institutions.

It is also a school of love. All other institutions function in the absence of love. Solidarity and loyalty are required for them to run effectively, but love is not a prerequisite.

And what is love? St Paul tells us that 'love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.'

To love is to leave self behind in favour of the other. It is to forgive wrongs as soon as they occur. It is to look into the eyes of another and see a friend and not a foe.

Love redeems, perfects, saves and heals. It is the salve for every heartache, the remedy for pain that will not subside. It is a force that can produce miracles, that can transform a person from the inside out. Love is the greatest thing of which we are capable. Why, then, is there so little of it around? As we all know, our society is often violent, cold and loveless.

Our age is narcissistic, self-absorbed and insensitive. It is impatient and unkind, self-seeking and quick to anger. Everything that love is, our age is not. Could it be that the school of love has lost its vocation? Could it be that the family too often mistakes indulgence for true love? Could it be that we have forgotten why, without altruism, love will never come to perfection in a person?

To love a child is a gift beyond measure. Like watering a plant, it is to see the little one bloom and thrive. To deny a child love is to deprive him of everything that matters.

A parent who loves is like the sun to a daffodil. The child never ceases to beam in the presence of such a parent, never ceases to radiate colour and light. This, however, does not mean that parents should see no wrong in their children, or that they should indulge their every fancy.

An essential element of loving children is teaching them self-restraint and respect for others. For that is how we practice love in the public world: we respect people by putting their rights before our own. To follow the path of love means putting responsibility before rights.

Restraining a child is not a way of suppressing their self-expression. It is not to stymie their 'inner growth' or their capacity for spontaneous crea-

tivity. It is simply a way of teaching them that this world does not revolve around us alone, but that it also belongs to others whose existence and rights must equally be respected.

We cannot always love people we don't know, but we can respect them. And in respecting them we put their needs ahead of ours. In practical terms, that is what it means to lay down one's life for another.

To teach children that vital lesson is to teach them, not only how to love, but also how to be lovable. The person who respects others, who thinks of their needs before his own, is someone who attracts love and admiration. Without an apprenticeship in the school of love, however, that is a lesson that will never be learned.

My boys love each other and cannot imagine living apart. Our good days are those when that love takes the form of laughter and well-mannered play. Our gloomy days are those when selfishness triumphs over sibling harmony and the storm clouds erupt.

It is then that they fight and shout and behave like mini anarchists. That is all very healthy and part of growing up. Still, it also provides a golden opportunity for us to step in and firmly explain why it is wrong.

ISUPPOSE the fact that they often shed tears when the troublemaker is punished, or that their anger very quickly gives way to forgiveness, is a sign that they are learning something in our little school. A family without arguments and eruptions is, after all, quite unnatural. It is how we resolve the arguments, and what we learn from them, that determines if they have served any useful purpose.

It is not easy for any parent to restrain, deny or punish their children. Nothing wounds me more than to have to scold my little friends. I have learned, however, that it is not a choice but a necessity which must be endured if they are to learn the ways of love and respect. Love does not dishonour others and keeps no record of wrongs. It sounds so strange in a world where vengeance is the norm and where we honour only ourselves. And yet, we shall never live in peace, or realise our full human potential, until we live as love requires.

Our two eldest can't go to sleep without hearing the other say, 'I love you'. Sometimes, as I secretly hover outside their room, I hear a whispered argument that goes something like this: 'Say it!', to which the other responds, 'No, I'm too tired!' Then, after a brief weep, the magic words: 'OK, OK, I love you! Good night!'

I sneak away happy to have learned that, even in sleep, we need the only thing that truly matters.