

## Speech of Fianna Fáil Leader Micheál Martin

A Cheann Comhairle, i dtosach báire ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas ó chroí a ghabháil le baill Dháil Éireann as an onóir mhór seo a bhronnadh orm inniu.

Nuair a bhí Seán Lemass agus Jack Lynch san áit ina bhfuilim anois, dúirt siad gur chóir do dhuine ag dul isteach in oifig an Taoisigh agus glacadh le ról chomh tábhachtach le ról an Taoisigh, amhras agus buarthaí a bhreith leo. Aontaím go hiomlán leis na tuairimí seo.

Seo oifig gur chóir do dhuine glacadh leis ar an gcoinníoll seo amháin, ar mhaithe le leas an phobail, an mhaith choiteann, agus seo an rud a dhéanaim inniu.

Tá a fhios agam go rímhaith agus is maith is eol dom na héachtaí agus an obair shuntasach atá déanta ag mórchuid romham a rinne seirbhís ar son na tíre mar Thaoisigh, agus go háirithe an ghlúin ceannairí ó mo pháirtí féin a spreag mé nuair a thosaigh mé amach ar dtús ag cur spéise sa pholaitíocht.

These leaders believed in a practical republicanism. A republicanism which was determined to show that Ireland could overcome any barriers to its progress.

That spirit is as important today as it ever has been and it is a spirit I intend to work within.

There were many things said during this debate which should normally be replied to, but I think it is more important to move forward.

There is no question what our most urgent work is.

We are meeting away from our permanent chamber because of a historic pandemic which has struck Ireland and the rest of the world.

As of today, 2,278 people on this island have lost their lives.

Many thousands more have fought a long struggle to recover.

There is no community, no part of our country which has escaped untouched.

In the last three and a half months enormous progress has been made in controlling the spread of the virus and treating those who have become sick.

For this and much more we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to staff working in our health system, in other frontline roles and within our public services.

As part of this I want to acknowledge the work of the outgoing government and especially Minister for Health Deputy Simon Harris and outgoing Taoiseach Deputy Leo Varadkar.

However, while there is no doubt that we have achieved important progress since March, the struggle against the virus is not over.

We must continue to contain its spread.

We must be ready to tackle any new wave.

And we must move forward rapidly to secure a recovery to benefit all of our people.

As we meet here there are nearly 900,000 of our people wholly or partly relying on special pandemic payments.

This is the fastest moving recession ever to hit our country and to overcome it we must act with urgency and ambition.

There are restrictions which will remain in place for some time and no one can say today when we will return to something close to normality.

But there is much more that we can and must do to help our society and our economy to recover.

Starting today this work will be the at the very centre of everything the new government will do.

At the same time, we know that there are other great challenges which we faced before the pandemic and which remain to be overcome.

Too many of our people cannot find a decent and affordable place to live.

Waiting times for urgent treatments are far too long.

Our communities, our families, our young people need support to be able to thrive in a rapidly changing modern economy.

And we must tackle the existential crisis posed by climate change.

Recovery and renewal. These are the themes which underpin everything in the programme for government which has been agreed between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party and has been ratified by our members with overwhelming majorities.

Our three parties come from very different traditions. We do not and could not be expected to agree on everything. However, we have been able to agree on core democratic principles and on a balanced and comprehensive programme.

We are conscious of the fact that must work hard to build trust with each other and with the people we have a duty and privilege to serve.

To be elected to serve as Taoiseach of a free republic is one of the greatest honours which anyone can receive.

I want to thank the Deputies of my party for their support, and also those of Fine Gael and the Green Party, as well as those independent Deputies who voted for me.

Most of all I want to thank my family and my community.

Without them I could have achieved nothing.

My wife Mary has been a pillar of support and a partner for me since our days in college.

Our children have tolerated my many absences over the years. As they have grown, studied and experienced the world they have not just supported me, they have given Mary and I the benefit of their views of the Ireland which they have grown up with.

I was blessed to be born into the home which my late parents created for me and my brothers and sisters in the heart of the close-knit, working-class community which I have the enormous privilege of representing in Dáil Éireann.

Every day my parents showed us the importance of supporting each other, of tough but fair competition and of the spirit of community.

From my late father we learned not just of the great sporting achievements he saw, we learned of the characters and values of the heroes who were and remain immortal to us.

We learned the importance of persistence, of optimism and of always understanding that Cork will soon win another double.

Most of all we learned of the struggles of our country's great founding generation and their republicanism - a republicanism which always sought to evolve and to respond to the needs of today and the future.

They were warm, generous, visionary and brave not just physically but far more importantly in their willingness to question themselves and embrace change.

It is this republicanism, a tradition which does not wear and never has worn a party label, to which we all owe so much.

It is the reason that Dáil Éireann is the only parliament established in the aftermath of the First World War which has been democratic for the entire century since.

This week 100 years ago, the First Dáil was also obliged to leave its normal chamber in order to be able to meet in full session.

The minutes of that meeting show that, in the face of dramatic events and repression, they continued their work of building Irish democracy.

They voted to establish independent courts.

They reviewed and questioned the work of every department.

They looked at ways of funding housing in Dublin.

They set themselves the challenge of not just talking about the problems of our country but of developing solutions.

Our country has shown time and time again that we can overcome the toughest of challenges and we will do so again.

It is in the spirit of a deep belief in the role of democratic government; with a commitment to delivering the recovery and renewal embodied in our programme, and a determination to work

tirelessly to serve the people that I proudly accept your nomination."