Baptism barrier still an issue despite Minister Bruton’s plans

Last year, Paul Rowe wrote an article for PAI’s blog, entitled “Equality of Access and Equality of Esteem” (23 June, 2015), calling for greater ease of access to education for children whose parents did not wish to send them to a religious school. Now, in light of the promises made in the Programme for Government, the right to equality of access to education is a key topic of discussion.

Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD, has just released plans for a greater number of multi- or non-denominational schools. It is expected that these will be delivered by 2030.

Michael Barron of the Children’s Rights organisation EQUATE says that these schools will only be useful if delivered in conjunction with a reform of the Equal Status Act and a removal of what many are calling the “baptism barrier”.

He says, “It is also important to remember that this target of 400 schools is still only 1 in 8 of all our primary schools across the country … While the baptism barrier is still in place this will mean that the vast majority of state funded national schools will still be able to discriminate in their admissions on the basis of religion”.

Minister Bruton has publicly made clear that he will not be tackling the baptism barrier in schools. This has been criticised as disappointing at best, and as “basic discrimination” at worst.

The issue will be put to an Oireacthas committee, according to the Minister.

End to Luas/ Transdev dispute may be in sight

On Friday, 3 June 2016, SIPTU Luas drivers voted in the majority (108 to 56) to accept the Labour Court’s recommendation. It is hoped that this will bring a resolution to their dispute with Transdev.

The ballot took place after some discussion and debate among the members.

Under the agreement, the company must undertake a full review of the issue within the next 18 months, which should take into account developments in the public sector. There will be quicker pay acceleration for new employees, as well as a reduction in the terms and conditions of employment.

Productivity will be rewarded under the new agreement, and pay increases will range between 15.6% and 18.3% over the next four years.

SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Owen Reidy said, “Over the last few months, the SIPTU Luas drivers and their workplace committee have displayed great resilience in pursuing a significant improvement in their conditions of employment. They have shown what workers can achieve if they maintain unity.”

Transdev must now state their position on these recommendations.
Local authorities under fire for delays in social housing provision

Work has only just begun on the 1,700 social houses promised by local authorities over a year ago. This is in spite of the fact that the plan was dubbed “aggressive” in its attempt to deal with the housing crisis.

It has been 13 months since the Government pledged €312m in investment capital to have these units built. The delay, according to the Irish Independent, is being caused by issues such as completing designs, waiting for planning permission, and even securing land.

Some 2,730 housing developments were sanctioned by the Department of the Environment, in 145 individual schemes since May 2015. Not one of these has been completed.

However, there are 26 under construction in Donegal, Tipperary, and Louth. Louth County Council expect 12 of those units to be finished this month.

Fingal County Council and Cork City Council have purchased 44 and 28 units respectively. Louth has also purchased eight.

The Government plans to provide up to 35,000 houses to those on the social housing waiting list this year. This includes both new and rented units. Last year, 72 were built and 1,160 were bought.

The Government, in response to the lack of progress, will send “project delivery teams” out to local authorities to help them deliver on the units, which will house some of the 90,000-plus families on the social housing waiting list. Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Simon Coveney TD, said,

“We will send project teams from the department into the local authorities to speed up the planning, approval and design process. … I will expect and demand urgency from local authorities.”

Tax evaders will suffer with new clamp-down on policy

The Irish Tax Authority has committed itself to clamping down on the issue of tax evasion, especially where off-shore accounts are involved.

The Revenue Commissioners are currently collecting information from third-party sources. They have entered into the realm of big data and tapping into global tax networks in order to identify tax evaders. This includes receiving information from financial institutions in over 100 countries over the next two years. They already have an exchange deal with the IRS in the USA.

Niall Cody, chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, indicated that there would be a shift toward real-time reporting, doing away with the yearly tax return system and towards a system where tax data is constantly and consistently being collected.

He also warned that the new hard-line approach would also end the era of waving penalties and criminal prosecution for those who come forward voluntarily. Those with offshore accounts will suffer as a result of these policy changes.

He told the Sunday Business Post,

“Over the next number of years, there will be a far greater move towards real-time reporting. Essentially, nearly plugging into the bookkeeping systems, payroll systems. The UK talk about moving away from the tax return to having actual reporting, transaction-based, real-time information.”
Harnessing people potential – Motivation and Talent

Getting the best from your people is critical to organisation results. Knowing how to harness and develop people potential is important for organisations and managers as they strive to develop talent in a challenging operating environment.

Our morning workshop will help you tackle these issues in your workplace.

It will be delivered by Keith McCarthy and Marian Byrne of Mazars Ireland.

It will take place Friday 17 June, 9.30am to 12.30pm.

Registration is free for members. Registration for non-members is €145. For more details, or to book, visit pai.ie, email info@pai.ie or call us on (01) 819 8500
This week at Public Affairs Ireland

**On the Blog**

**Futures Trading: Brexit and All-Island Trade**  
Martin McTaggart  
Read [here](#)

**On the Programme for Government’s Commitment to “A Vision for Change”**  
Dr Shari McDaid  
Read [here](#)

**New Union merger talks given the go-ahead**  
Shauna Nimmo  
Read [here](#)

**The Programme for Government 2016: A Summary**  
Shauna Nimmo  
Read [here](#)

**Transatlantic Trade Talks face mounting criticisms**  
Tom Ferris  
Read [here](#)

**Couldn’t open last week’s Newsletter?**

Last week, a number of our readers got in contact to say that they could not view our newsletter.

I apologise for any inconvenience caused. We temporarily had to store documents off-site to do some maintenance.

You can view last week’s newsletter here.

Newsletters are now stored back on our own webspace and there should not be any further issues. However, if you encounter an issue opening or viewing the document, please email me.

Feedback is always welcome here at PAI.

Shauna Nimmo, Editor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday 7 June</th>
<th>Wednesday 8 June</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is no Dáil session on Tuesday 7 June.</td>
<td>2.30 p.m. Questions (Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine)</td>
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<td>3.45 p.m. Leaders Questions</td>
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<td>4.06 p.m. Questions (Tánaiste)</td>
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<td>4.51 p.m. Order of Business</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Single Resolution Board (Loan Facility Agreement) Bill 2016 - Order for Second Stage and Second Stage (Department of Finance)</td>
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<td>7.00 p.m. Private Members Business (1hr 30mins)</td>
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<td>8.30 p.m. Adjournments</td>
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<td>9.10 p.m. Dáil Adjourns</td>
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<th>Thursday 9 June</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.30 a.m. Order of Business</td>
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<td>Private Members Business (1hr 30mins)</td>
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<td>Motion re UK Battle Groups (to conclude within 45mins) (Department of Defence)</td>
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<td>Single Resolution Board (Loan Facility Agreement) Bill 2016 - Second Stage (Resumed) (Department of Finance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy Bill 2016 (Seanad) - (Second Stage Resumed) (Departments of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources )</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.30 p.m. Questions (Minister for Children and Youth Affairs)</td>
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<td>4.45 p.m. Adjournments</td>
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<td>5.25 p.m. Dáil Adjourns</td>
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Adjourned Sine Die
**Tuesday 7 June**

Housing and Homelessness (Committee)
CR3, LH 2000 10.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

**Wednesday 8 June**

Arrangements for Budgetary Scrutiny (Select)
CR3, LH 2000 11 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Government Submission to the Select Committee on Arrangements for Budgetary Scrutiny.

Dáil Reform (Sub)
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 12 noon
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Standing Order 112 (Select)
CR2, LH 2000 2.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: 1. Further scrutiny of COM(2016)198

**Thursday 9 June**

Housing and Homelessness (Committee)
CR3, LH 2000 10.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Committee of Selection (Standing)
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 12 noon
AGENDA: Private Meeting