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CC: <john.o'farrell@environ.ie>
Date: 14/03/2008 10:39
Subject: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM : ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Dear Minister John Gormley

Dear John o' Farrell

Ref: Local Government Act 1994 (sect. 17) and as amended

I live in Cobh, the Urban District on Great Island in Cork Harbour in the County of Cork. The total population of Cobh in the 2002 Census was 6767. The Total Population of Cobh in the 2006 Census was 6541

Because of the use of the 1994 Act by Cork County Council the TOTAL electorate for the 2004 Cobh Town Council Election was 7572.

I would expect that the total electorate for Cobh to be in the region of 5200 not 7572.

Cork County Council is deemed to be the competent authority to organise and hold Local Government elections for Cobh Town.

I understand this is a national issue.

The 1994 Act has enabled County Councils to extend the Electoral Boundary of Urban Districts (Towns) without extending their administrative boundary.

This has major consequences for the principles of Electoral Democracy.

1. As Town Councils legal remit is only within the Urban Boundary, the Council can not make bylaws for and deal with local issues in the extended

(County Council) electoral area.

2. The Town Councillors who have been elected by voters in the extended electoral area therefore can not represent those voters to the Town Council. Neither can they represent those voters to the County Council, because they have not been elected to the County Council.

a. All Elected Town Councillor who received their votes from voters only in the urban district (The Town)

can represent all who voted in the election and they have an electoral mandate from the voters of the town.

b. If some Elected Town Councillors received votes only from voters who are not residents of the town these councillors do not have an electoral mandate from the voters of the town and should not take part in the decision making process for the urban district.

c. All Elected Councillors received a combination of votes from within the Urban District and outside it. Therefore all Councillors can not be certain that they are the electoral choice of the voters of the town. Because the electoral process is secret there is no certainty of where each councillor received his votes from voters, i.e. the Urban District or County Council area.

d. It is hypothetically possible that no voter resident in the town would vote and a Town Council still be elected by voters who do not live in the Town

e. Neither the candidates in the elections nor more importantly the voters of the Town(s) were advised that Local Elections (Town Council) are non-representational and that the Councillors elected may not be their choice but the choice of someone else, who will decide on the future of their town.

f. The Electoral Process is the ultimate power of the people but without certainty, without clarity and without transparency, the electoral process is meaningless and not fulfilling its fundamental role in democracy.

3. In a national sense Town Council Elections should be the basis of Electoral DEMOCRACY. Yet the form of electoral democracy that we

recognise and cherish is being corrupted and not being promoted and enhanced.

For Electoral Democracy (Representational Elections) to be respected, Town Boundaries have to be extended in line with the electoral boundaries or the electoral boundaries to be reduced to those of the Town Boundaries.

I hope this you will consider this submission in the review of Local Government that is taking place.

Yours sincerely

Mike Sweeney

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