

Address

By

Michael McDowell SC

Former Tanaiste, Minister For Justice And Attorney

To

Patrick McGill Summer School

Glenties

30th July 2013

The Crisis in Democratic Accountability

In his address, Michael McDowell

- Reiterates his view that the proposal to abolish the Seanad is a power grab to give all political power to a Government which totally dominates the dysfunctional rubberstamp Dail through the whip system, and to wipe out independent parliamentary scrutiny.
- He calls for a New Deal now for Dail Eireann (not just in 2016) to create real parliamentary accountability, including an entirely new relationship with Government, and Standing Orders providing for an independent, freshly elected Ceann Comhairle and fully independent committees chosen by secret ballot, and real, effective scrutiny of the exercise of Executive power.
- He says that a reformed, functional Dail needs a reformed, functional Seanad to carry out its functions.
- He points out that far from saving €100 million, the real annual “saving” from abolishing the Seanad is €1.60 per person in Ireland.
- He predicts that the Government, having lost the bogus “cost” argument badly, is now planning to confuse the voters by claiming that Dail reform somehow depends on abolition of the Seanad in 2016.
- He points out that Dail reform has nothing to do with Seanad abolition.
- He calls on voters to heed the wise counsel of Garret Fitzgerald, Mary Robinson, Michael Collins, John A Costello, TK Whitaker and others who have argued strongly for a reformed bi-cameral parliament and against abolition.
- He calls on the Taoiseach to give a clear commitment that he will reform the Seanad if the people reject the abolition referendum.