

Review of the Official Languages Act 2003

A Chara,

I refer to your recent advertisement in the newspapers concerning public consultation on the above. I do not make this submission lightly nor with any sense of malice or anger. I wish to make the submission from a practical point of view which hopefully will help promote and develop the language for those who wish to retain it. Printing Government documents including legal, educational, medical and security (Gardai) in fact all public documents in two languages is an appalling waste of money and effort. English is the spoken language of this country whether we like it or not.

I was educated in Scoil Caitriona, Eccles Street, Dublin and obviously left school with fluent Irish. I spent many summers during my 20s in Baile an Fheriteirigh ag caint agus ag foghlam an teanga. Bhi eagla orm go raibh an teaga ag imeach uaim.

Having joined the civil service I used the language once in over forty years as a serving civil servant. As a member of an interview board a young candidate from a Gaeltacht area asked to have the interview conducted in Irish. The request from the candidate came ten minutes before she was due to be interviewed. The fact that I had fluent Irish was a help to the candidate who spoke better Irish than she did English. The other interviewers had not enough Irish to interview the candidate. However, I wish to emphasise that this was the one and only occasion I used the Irish language officially in over 40 years in the civil service. Furthermore the language was not used generally in either of the two Departments I served in.

When the Official Languages Act was passed, the work area I was involved with published a yearly report. Public interest in this report was extremely limited. The cost of translating and publishing this report was outrageous in 2004 and must be more outrageous now as there is so little money is available in the

current economic climate. Printing Government documents on the double appears to me to be a unwarranted waste of resources.

I suggest you examine

- (1) the number of all public documents that have been translated into Irish under the 2003 Act that have been requested by the public. You will be shocked had how low the interest is.
- (2) in detail the cost the translations of each document on a yearly basis for the period from 2004 to 2011 inclusive.

State policy of restoring the Irish language as a working language has been a total failure over a period of ninety years. We must be doing something wrong. Should we not be examining a new way to implement its usage otherwise it will be lost to the next generation.

Why are we wasting money on publishing reports? Many of them are never read in English not to mind Irish. I strongly recommend that this piece of legislation be repealed immediately. It is not contributing in any way to the development of the Irish language.

If Government policy makers consider it important to revive the language why not spend the money in teaching it properly in our schools in Gaeltacht areas as well as the rest of the country. Just listen to the limited Irish on the various Irish TV and radio channels. I despair when I hear it spoken as it is not as good as it should be. We are not providing the best education in languages in our education system. However, this is not a point for your consideration in relations to the above piece of legislation. Recently we have been criticised about our lack of language skills in this country so please look at the failure to make even the slightest progress with Irish over ninety years.

Perhaps you could consider a more useful way of promoting the language, while at the same time saving some money, than publishing every Government document in two languages.

Is mise, le meas,



Eilís Ní Bheiceid