



Today sees the launch of Bertie Ahern and Fianna Fail's new election poster for the general election, entitled *The Next Steps*.

Vote FF — Not much done and we're tired

TODAY sees the launch of Fianna Fáil's slogan for their intended new regime, or rather the next election.

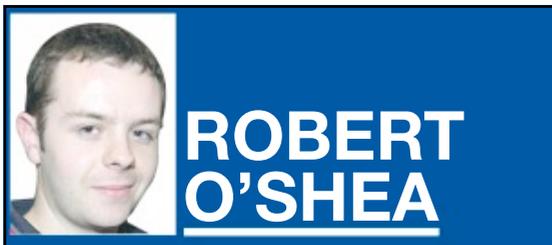
It is simply: 'The Next Steps.'

I saw the first poster of Bertie's new campaign yesterday. We see him facing two people with their backs to us, denoting that he is talking to these people. What are the connotations though, I tried to figure out as I sped by on my bike, almost crashing several times as I wrestled with the political nuances of the image.

Perhaps it means he is a man of the people. A man who can talk to people. And listen to people. But then I started wondering what he was talking to these people about. Or whether he was talking at all.

Perhaps the photographer caught him with his mouth open and it just appears that he is speaking. Maybe he is getting ready to spit out some chewing gum. Or could he be arguing with these people? Or they are tourists and he is giving them directions.

The whole point of the poster was lost on me so I decided to phone up someone who works with the Government on their marketing and PR cam-



paign. To protect this person's identity, I promised to refer to him throughout this interview with common Spanish Christian names.

Me: Carlos, what is that new Bertie poster meant to convey to me, the ordinary punter?

Him: What it shows is that Bertie is approachable. He likes a good chat, teasing out the important issues of the day with the man or woman on the street.

Me: That may be so, Pedro, but the last time I encountered him he was speeding by stopped traffic in a black Merc surrounded by garda outriders.

Him: Well, yes, we surveyed a lot of people and this too was how they last encountered him. But you can't put that on a poster.

Me: Why not?

Him: Well, it makes him seem aloof.

Me: Could we not have had at least one bodyguard in the picture? Mightn't some people look at the poster and be terrified by the thought

one or both of the people with their backs to us might have a knife and be threatening the Taoiseach?

Him: That's highly unlikely. Yes: there are some people out there who may want to assassinate the Taoiseach. No: we won't be putting them in our posters.

Me: Sorry to press you on the point Hernando, but what if the poster had shown the Taoiseach in the act of disarming the man with the knife. That says to me: He's the man to lead the country and he also knows some martial arts.

Him: Maybe next time.

Me: Pressing on Eduardo, 'The Next Steps'. What does it mean?

Him: What the Government is trying to convey here is that after 10 years in power they have implemented numerous steps that have led to our prosperity as a nation, but that there are further steps ahead that need to be taken to maintain this prosperity.

Me: So these steps are

more forward steps than backward steps?

Him: Exactly.

Me: Will they be long, ponderous steps or short, hurried ones?

Him: They will be suitable to whatever pace the Government wishes to maintain.

Me: Now when I first heard 'steps', Manuel, I presumed they referred to climbing steps, specifically the steps of a winding medieval staircase. Is this not a somewhat mixed message the Government is sending: We're looking to the future, but our staircases are rooted in the past?

Him: That was not what we were shooting at. The slogan is a reworking of "A lot done; more to do."

Me: It's interesting that you bring that up Ernesto, because you were responsible for coining that very phrase, weren't you?

Him: Yes. It's become a bit of a cliché now. But back in the seventies it was real cutting edge. A lot of politicians weren't even aware of their public persona back then and would stand under slogans like 'Not much done, and I'm a bit tired', 'Vote for me, or else' and 'ALD; MTD' revolutionised the whole thing.

Me: While watching the news yesterday, I noted in one segment that Bertie was in Northern Ireland

and in the next he was in Brussels. My immediate suspicion was: 'He has a body double.'

Him: Yes, Bertie has had a body double for the past four years. However, he is only used for photo opportunities, like when Bertie opens a pub or for low level talks.

Me: But Javier, is there a danger that the fake Bertie might assume power? How do you tell the two apart?

Him: The fake Bertie is 15 inches shorter than the real thing. In fact, one of the things the Taoiseach and I often laugh about is when people complain he spends over €25,000 a year in make-up. His body double spends four times this and nobody complains. Without the make-up, he looks nothing like Bertie.

Me: Any plans for more doubles in government?

Him: No, but they are working on a waxwork of Michael McDowell with a pencil in his mouth and the *Irish Times* crossword on his lap that can be sat in the Dáil to help make up a quorum.

Me: Speaking of waxworks, is there any chance Enda Kenny could be the next Taoiseach.

Him: I believe there is not.

With that a gust of wind blew the phone out of my hand and our conversation was at an end.

Health Update

From

irishhealth.com

Can the Irish health service really learn to say 'sorry'?

The health service is belatedly waking up to the need to improve communications skills in order to deliver a better service for patients.

"We are now putting in place training to make sure that every person who has contact with someone who uses health services is fully equipped through proper training in knowing what we as an organisation expect of them", said Mary Culliton, head of the HSE's Consumer Division.

Ms Culliton said the HSE is doing a lot of work to improve these skills. She pointed to a recent survey carried out by the HSE on patient satisfaction with hospital emergency departments.

It found that 76% of patients overall said they were satisfied with the service they received; however, this means one in four people were not satisfied, and she admitted that this was not an acceptable level.

"We now, however, have clear pointers as to how we can improve that. We are now putting in place the systems and processes to make things better"

The HSE has recently moved to beef up its complaints system through the recent launch of the statutory complaints process. It now has the 'Your Service, Your Say' comments and complaints section on its website, a move believed to be in response to the launch in September 2006 of the 'Rate My Hospital' online survey by Irishhealth.com.

It is also training new complaints officers. Each service in the HSE will have a named complaints officer and every hospital will have more than one officer, according to Ms Culliton.

However, the new legislation excludes complaints relating to clinical judgement. "While the legislation points to the fact that issues relating solely to clinical judgement cannot be dealt with, issues of a clinical nature can still very much be dealt with. Clinical judgement would be where we are talking about diagnoses".

After a poor experience with the health service, what many people really want is someone from the service to say 'sorry' face to face and to offer a reasonable explanation, she concluded.



We top Euro binge drinking poll

Irish people are the biggest binge drinkers in the European Union. One in three Irish respondents to the latest European survey say they usually have five drinks or more in one session.

This is well ahead of Finland with 27%, Britain with 24% and Denmark with 23%. The warmer countries are far more moderate, with only 2% of Italians and Greeks and 4% of Portuguese admitting to binge drinking.

Binge drinking is defined as taking five or more drinks in one session

Across Europe, young people are the biggest binge drinkers, with 19% of those aged 15-24 saying they 'usually' binge when drinking.



Eating disorder patients need beds

Ireland needs at least another 20 public hospital beds for sufferers with eating disorders, a lobby group says.

Bodywhys, an information and support group for sufferers of anorexia and bulimia, told a committee of TDs there are only three public hospital beds for such patients in the country. These are at St Vincent's hospital in Dublin.

A spokesperson for Bodywhys, said there are about 200,000 sufferers from eating disorders in Ireland. "Mostly it is anorexics who have lost so much weight they need to be in hospital, but bulimia patients can also become very ill," she said. Bodywhys estimates another two dozen beds are needed.

in association with

© irishhealth.com 2007

For more information on all aspects of health visit www.irishhealth.com - Ireland's premier health website

RateMyHospital.ie
irishhealth.com

It's your hospital service, log on today - and have your say!