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DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*  
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

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## DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Déardaoin, 5 Deireadh Fómhair 2017*

*Thursday, 5 October 2017*

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 12 p.m.

*Paidir.  
Prayer.*

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### **Business of Dáil**

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Minister of State, Deputy Joe McHugh, has a business proposal to put to the House.

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Expressions of sympathy on the death of former Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, will be taken now and on the conclusion of expressions of sympathy, the Dáil shall adjourn forthwith until 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 October 2017.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Is that agreed? Agreed.

### **Death of Former Taoiseach: Expressions of Sympathy**

**The Taoiseach:** I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of an t-iarThaoiseach and former Member of this House, Liam Cosgrave. As Taoiseach and leader of Fine Gael, I extend my deepest sympathy to his family and friends. Liam Cosgrave was someone who devoted his life to public service. Today a grateful country thanks and honours him for always putting our nation first.

Mar Thaoiseach agus mar ceannaire Fhine Gael, ba mhaith liom mo chomhbhrón a dhéanamh lena chlann agus lena chairde. Bhí Liam Cosgrave tugtha don tseirbhís phoiblí le linn a shaoil, agus tá an tír fíor-bhuíoch as an sár-seirbhís sin, ag gabháil buíochais leis agus ag tabhairt onóra dó as an saothar a rinne sé in ar thug sé tús áite do leas an náisiúin i gconaí. Le linn a shaoil, rinne sé a dhícheall institiúidí daonlathacha an Stáit a chosaint, agus a chaomhnú, le misneach agus le díograis. Bhí a shaol ar fad tugtha do sheirbhís an Stáit, agus spreag sé an oiread sin daoine lena dhiongbháilteacht ciúin, a mhisneach agus a rúndaingne.

Throughout his life Liam Cosgrave worked to protect and defend the democratic institutions of the State, and showed great courage and determination in doing so. He always believed in

peaceful co-operation as the only way of achieving unity among the people on this island, and in the 1970s he celebrated that this country had embarked, in his own words, “on a new career of progress and development in the context of Europe”.

Born in 1920, in the middle of the War of Independence, Liam provided a powerful link back to the foundation of the State. His father, W.T. Cosgrave, helped create many of our institutions, and defended them when they were in jeopardy. His son shared the same values and approach to public life. He joined the Army during the Second World War when volunteers were needed, reaching the rank of lieutenant, and he brought the same spirit of civic responsibility to his political career.

An internationally respected statesman, Liam Cosgrave was in the Government that declared Ireland a Republic, and as Minister for External Affairs he brought Ireland into the United Nations, thus taking our place among the nations of the world. As Taoiseach he was invited to address the Joint Houses of Congress in 1976, a notable honour, and one which enabled him to make some powerful points about how a democratic state should derive its power from the consent of the governed.

Consistently opposed to all violence, Liam Cosgrave was a courageous voice against terrorism, and protected the State in times of crisis. He looked terrorism in the eye and did not flinch. In May 1970, he showed his courage and determination to get at the truth in this Chamber, when as leader of the Opposition he pressed the Taoiseach about the plot to import arms illegally after receiving information from a trusted source. A few days later Liam Cosgrave addressed this Chamber and spoke of a situation that was “without parallel in this country since the foundation of the State”. His action and that of the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, has been credited with saving the security forces of the State from becoming embroiled in a crisis in Northern Ireland, and has been called by some a great public service, and by others his finest hour.

A man of conscience and principle, Cosgrave joined Fine Gael at the age of 17 years, was a Deputy for almost 40 years, and leader of the Fine Gael party for 12 years. His term as Taoiseach between 1973 and 1977 will be remembered for Sunningdale, the qualities he brought in leading a successful coalition, and his courageous defence of the State against threats, both internal and external. Ministers from both parties in that coalition praised the way he chaired Cabinet meetings. He believed in giving everyone their say before reaching a decision. It was a very effective way of doing business. As one of my forebears, John Bruton, said, he set an excellent example.

Liam Cosgrave sometimes arranged special Cabinet meetings to deal with specific topics. In my brief tenure to date, I have tried to follow that example.

It was said Liam Cosgrave marked his Cabinet papers with the same attention to detail that he marked the racing page in the *Irish Independent* and, of course, racing was his great interest outside politics. It was noted that the racing page of the newspaper was the only media output to which he really paid attention - a wise man perhaps. Sometimes, on rare occasions, we have been told that he allowed Cabinet meetings to go on for too long, with a Minister rambling on, and that he would slip out the racing page and study the form for the weekend.

Because he was leader in the days before the Dáil was televised the public did not get to see just how good Liam Cosgrave was in this Chamber. Although he was a man of few words, who did not believe in making speeches in the Cabinet, he chose his words carefully and when he

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used them he was able to make them count. To quote a senior figure in the Labour Party at the time, “When you sat behind him on the benches listening, you felt very secure, you felt somewhat proud, you were reassured.” He was able to express eloquently the mood and feeling of the country at times of crisis and tragedy. In May 1974, following the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, he spoke movingly about how the men of violence were contributing to “a world where reason and compassion are dead and only might is right.” It was his desire to find a peaceful settlement which inspired him to come to the Sunningdale Agreement which became the template for the Good Friday Agreement, peace and power-sharing in the future.

As Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave hosted a very successful meeting of EEC Heads of State and Government in Dublin Castle. He welcomed the first visit by a British Prime Minister to Ireland since independence, with a Prime Minister and the Taoiseach meeting as equals.

On moral and social issues, Liam Cosgrave’s views reflected deeply held religious beliefs. However, even those who disagreed with him profoundly praised his approach which was always respectful towards others who had a different point of view. His decision to vote against his own Government’s contraception Bill in 1974 has always drawn attention and it surprised many at the time, but whatever about the rights or wrongs of the issue, he showed his courage in allowing a free vote on what he believed was a matter of personal conscience and he also had the courage to follow his own conscience on the issue.

No matter how high the office he assumed Liam Cosgrave never forgot about serving his constituents and the community. He took an enormous interest in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and believed politicians’ political strength and legitimacy came from their democratic mandate in their constituency. In fact, history tells us that in the Élysée Palace, while he was preparing to take over the European Presidency, he kept in touch with events back home in order that he could monitor the resolution of a strike at Blackrock post office.

Predeceased by his beloved wife, Vera, Liam Cosgrave was a man of great loyalty and kindness, who had a sharp wit, a wonderful sense of humour and strong personal dignity. Our thoughts are with his three children, Mary, Liam, who succeeded him in this House, and Ciarán. His entire life was in the service of the State as a politician, soldier and Taoiseach. He inspired so many with his quiet, showless determination, courage and fortitude. I had the honour, on occasion, to meet him and be in his presence. I was always struck by his commanding presence and great humility which in him were complementary characteristics. In my career I have been inspired by his spirit of incredible public service and, as Taoiseach, I hope to live up to his great example. He is perhaps best summed up by paraphrasing one of his most famous speeches: he was a man of integrity who, totally disregarding self-interest, always served the nation. Today we have lost someone great from our land. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam. Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís.

**Deputy Micheál Martin:** Ar son Pháirtí Fhianna Fáil agus ar mo shon féin, déanaim comhbhrón le clanna Liam Mhic Cosgair, Mary, Liam agus Ciarán, agus le baill Pháirtí Fhine Gael. Is léir gur polaiteoir den scoth ab ea é. D’oibrigh sé go dian dícheallach ar son mhuintir na tíre. Bhí sé dílis don Stát, dá chreideamh agus, go háirithe, don chóras daonlathais agus bhí sé láidir, cróga agus tuisceanach agus é ag déileáil le dúshlán mhóra le linn a shaoil.

On behalf of the Fianna Fáil Party, I would like to express our condolences to the family of Liam Cosgrave - Mary, Liam and Ciarán - and to all in Fine Gael who saw him as a statesman central to their pride in the history of their party. When he was born 97 years ago, his father,

who had shown incredible bravery during the Easter Rising, was a Deputy in the First Dáil, a Minister in the Government, a Dublin City alderman and a prisoner of the British authorities. It was a time of real fear and deep uncertainty for the Cosgrave family but it was also when they developed the closeness that has always been one of their defining features. Liam was particularly devoted to his late wife, Vera. To be born the son of W. T. Cosgrave was to be born the son of an important figure in a revolution and a central figure in the early decades of the State. There is no question that absolute loyalty to his father's ideals formed the core of Liam's beliefs, but he was also a major figure in this own right.

One of the things that is too often missing in Irish politics is a willingness to be generous and understanding towards other political traditions or to respect the fact that it is possible to share patriotism but disagree on programme. I have no hesitation in saying that Liam Cosgrave was a man who gave so much to Irish public life and deserves a place of honour in our history. It would be completely wrong to imply that he was some form of consensual or non-partisan figure; he was a party loyalist and an always-robust opponent. His great skills as a platform speaker were frequently used to the detriment of those he saw as wrong-headed. While they were mainly focused on members of my party, he often made time to deliver a sharp message to perceived troublemakers within the Fine Gael Party also.

As well as serving as a Deputy for 38 years, he led his party for 12 years and served in or led three Governments. Throughout this time, he was, most importantly, a central figure in, first, maintaining and then building a distinct and European Christian democratic tradition in our politics. This was far from inevitable, particularly given the difficulties and diversions his party experienced soon after it was founded. This Christian democratic tradition, in spite of many things with which I would disagree, is an important component in a moderate politics that has achieved far more for Ireland than anything that would have been possible with the ideological extremes that have been so much stronger elsewhere.

In terms of his early career, we should particularly value the contribution Liam Cosgrave made as Minister for External Affairs. When the Soviet veto on Irish membership of the United Nations was lifted, he reaffirmed Ireland's belief in strong rules-based co-operation between nations. Ireland's participation in the United Nations was not to be about asserting national self-interest but about working with others for the benefit of all. In doing this, he reaffirmed the spirit of the 1916 Proclamation, for which his father had fought so bravely. Ireland's unique contribution to the United Nations and the exceptional international standing in which our country is held by so many others began to be constructed because of Liam Cosgrave's leadership at that time.

As Taoiseach, his Government faced the rising impact of the illegitimate campaigns of the Provisional IRA and loyalists. Not all of its responses were acceptable, and these were correctly reversed by later Governments. However, the basic thrust of working to promote democratic politics and fight attempts to intimidate communities was both correct and received support from the overwhelming majority of the Irish people. Liam Cosgrave, together with Jack Lynch, ensured that the fixed will of the Irish people to oppose violence and work for reconciliation was never in doubt here or internationally.

Deputy Enda Kenny is the only member of the House who served here alongside Liam Cosgrave. I remember well that, at the moment of Deputy Kenny's great success in 2011, he was visibly moved when talking about receiving a telephone call from his former leader and colleague. It struck me how important this connection to Fine Gael's history was for him. For

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many of us who came here only after Liam Cosgrave's portrait was hung outside the Chamber, however, he was regarded as very much a part of Irish public life throughout his retirement. I regularly had the opportunity to meet him at important commemorations and at Croke Park. I always looked forward to talking with him and I was always struck by his sharp mind, vivid memories and polite way of addressing points of controversy.

Of course, he was immensely proud of his father and his role in 1916, as well his promotion of the nationalist and republican cause well before then. At State commemorations over the years, in particular during last year's centenary commemorations, he was a reminder that the great generation which fought a revolution and brought Ireland's cause to the attention of the world was a broad one. In honouring them, we have a duty to put aside party labels and focus on the unity of purpose which they showed.

Soon before his passing, I had the great pleasure of sitting with the late Colm Murray from RTÉ, during which he told me of a wonderful day he spent at Punchestown with Liam Cosgrave. He said the racing was okay but the stories were magnificent.

When one listens to the many recordings of him down through the years it is hard not to be struck by how his was a distinct accent, one which is now quite rare. To today's listeners, it reinforces a sense of him representing another era, something reinforced by the fact that it is 36 years since he left Dáil Éireann having served here through nearly his entire working life.

He was a child of a rising Dublin Catholic professional class. He shared its passions and many of its views. He was proud of his nationalist heritage, deeply committed to his faith and firm in his attitudes. He saw Ireland as a proud nation which should stand with the international community in a spirit of co-operation and a commitment to democracy. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Deputy Gerry Adams:** Ar mo shon féin agus ar son Shinn Féin, ba mhaith liom mo chomhbhrón a dhéanamh le mic agus le hiníon an iar-Thaoisigh, Liam Cosgrave, a fuair bás inné.

On my behalf and that of Sinn Féin, I want to extend sympathy and condolences to the family and loved ones of former Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, following his death yesterday. For many people he was during turbulent and controversial periods of our history a controversial and divisive figure. Today is not the day to analyse this, in ionad ba mhaith liom a rá go ndéana Dia trócaire air.

I did not know Mr. Cosgrave personally. I saw him at many of the 1916 centenary events and other events over the years, as well as in Croke Park on many occasions. As others have said, he had a long career in the Dáil and the great privilege of serving as Teachta Dála for nearly 40 years representing the people of Dún Laoghaire and Dublin County. During that period he served as Chief Whip, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Minister for External Affairs and Taoiseach from 1973 until 1977. He led Fine Gael for 12 years.

Bhí gairm fhada aige in oifig phoiblí agus tá mé cinnte go bhfuil a mhuintir agus a pháirtí brodúil as sin. Tá an ceart acu.

As others have noted, he had a long career in public office. I am sure his family, party, Mr. Cosgrave himself and his late wife, Vera, were rightly proud of this record. I want to extend my sympathies to his children, Mary, Liam Jnr. and Ciarán and to all his friends and family, as well

as to An Taoiseach, the leader of Fine Gael, and the Fine Gael family. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Deputy Brendan Howlin:** My first knowledge of Liam Cosgrave came from my political mentor, the former Labour leader Brendan Corish. Although they came from very different political traditions, they became very firm friends. They worked together on the basis of trust and honour. Brendan often told me of the many difficult and challenging issues, including the economy and national security, which were dealt with by the two of them, face-to-face and in direct conversation without aides or advisors.

He described to me a generous man, who took the time to listen carefully and to act always in the best interests of the country rather than the party. Liam Cosgrave was a person of deep principle and still he managed to hold together a Government between 1973 and 1977 which had been labelled a Government of all the talents. That Government certainly had great talent but it also had very strong personalities. There was certainly a clash of views over a changing Ireland which came to a head when, as the Taoiseach referenced, Liam voted according to his own strongly held conservative views against his own Government's Bill to allow married couples to have access to contraception. It is an amazing thought now. He was a man of his time whose political views were shaped in the earliest years of this State. He was a patriot whose primary focus was the defence of the institutions of this newborn State. Lest we forget, those institutions were under direct and violent attack from the IRA of that time.

Brendan Corish told me many stories about Liam Cosgrave. They shared a mutual interest in horse racing as well as a shared appreciation of a glass of Paddy. One story is well-known during that period of Government when Brendan and Liam spent a very long time together locked in a room in Government Buildings. Senior members of both parties became increasingly alarmed that the Government had reached some irreconcilable impasse. When the doors finally opened, it was seen that both men were watching the races and enjoying a half one.

We are in an age where personality sometimes trumps substance but Liam Cosgrave was a man of substance. He had a clear view of his country, his religion and his politics. His achievements, particularly at Sunningdale, set the agenda and arguably the actual framework for the peace process on this island. With a deep sense of self-deprecation that all of us would do well to copy, he left it to history to judge his stewardship and I believe history will judge him well. In recent years, like others, my personal contacts with Liam were at Croke Park or State occasions and he was always supported by his gentle daughter Mary. Liam never failed to have a personal and incisive comment to make about the happenings of the day. In discussions with colleagues from Fine Gael over the past few years, I have referenced Liam Cosgrave's partnership Government more than once. He left a distinguished legacy of service, of respect, of loyalty, and I say it again, of true patriotism. I extend my condolences and those of the Labour Party to Mary, Liam, Ciarán and all his extended family. I also extend them to the Taoiseach and the Fine Gael Party on the loss of such a significant figure. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** I also extend my sympathies and condolences to Liam Cosgrave's children, to all his extended family and to the Fine Gael Party. Obviously, I did not know Liam Cosgrave personally and his period of political activity predates my own but as somebody who has lived all my life in Dún Laoghaire, one could not but be familiar with his name and indeed the Cosgrave family name, which, for as long as I can remember, was a name that was synonymous with the politics of Dún Laoghaire. Deputy Barrett probably knew Liam

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Cosgrave well. It is fair to say that my aunt, Janet Kinsella, or Janet Boyd Barrett, who is now deceased, would have been a prominent activist in the Dún Laoghaire Fine Gael branch-----

**A Deputy:** Scandal, scandal.

*(Interruptions).*

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** Political debate around the dinner table with another uncle who was involved in Fianna Fáil-----

**Deputy Brendan Howlin:** No wonder the Deputy ended up as he is.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** -----and another uncle was involved in the Labour Party in Dalkey-----

*(Interruptions).*

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** These names were all familiar - the Cosgrave name, Jack Lynch and so on. There was intense political discussion and perhaps some of that rubbed off on me-----

**Deputy Bobby Aylward:** Not the way we would expect.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** -----although I am sure it was in a way that none of them would have particularly approved of. Anybody who lives in Dún Laoghaire has a passionate love for the area, which I believe Liam Cosgrave shared. Notwithstanding our very strong political differences on other things, anybody who has had the privilege to represent Dún Laoghaire would share that.

I would not adhere to what I see as the very conservative, Catholic political and social viewpoint of Liam Cosgrave. I am at the other end of the spectrum but, of the little I know about him, what I understood and what rubbed off on me was that, while he might have had a different political view, he had a great belief in public service and that is to be commended, notwithstanding the need for robust disagreement and debate from people at different ends of the political spectrum. There is no doubt that he played a major part in the history and development of this State and I would, therefore, like to pass on my sympathies and condolences to his family and friends.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** On behalf of the Rural Independent Group, I would like to extend our sympathies to Liam Cosgrave's family and the Fine Gael Party on his passing at such a great age. Liam Cosgrave was a man of deepest political integrity. He talked about a true Republic of opportunity long before it became the catchphrase it is today. Under his leadership, Ireland entered the United Nations General Assembly. He was, in that sense, someone who expanded Ireland's international role and prestige. He showed genuine political bravery and courage on the matter of Northern Ireland and in his work in bringing together the Sunningdale Agreement, which in turn created the conditions that allowed for the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the subsequent Northern Ireland peace process. His legacy is one of peace and we must protect and honour it at all times.

I had the great pleasure of meeting Mr. Cosgrave on several occasions. He was a man of great wit, humour, insight and vision. I met him as late as last July at a very pleasant function for the departing papal nuncio. He was in great form that evening and was helped by his

daughter Mary. I extend my sympathies to his daughter, his son Liam who I know well, his son Ciarán and his extended family.

His passion for his country remained undimmed. He sought only its good until his last days. He will be fondly remembered and missed by many on all sides of this House. May he have his eternal reward that he has so richly earned. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Deputy Róisín Shortall:** On my behalf and that of the Social Democrats, I want to express regret and sadness at the passing of Liam Cosgrave at the great age of 97 years. He had a distinguished career over a 40-year period, serving the people of Dún Laoghaire and serving the State as a Minister and as Taoiseach. As Taoiseach, he led the country with courage and dedication during a particularly difficult period for the State and, like his father, he made a very significant contribution to the development of the Irish State. History will view him kindly.

Beyond his service to the Irish State, he will be remembered for his sharp wit, his very clear mind right to up to the very end and his understated and self-effacing style - all very endearing qualities on a personal level.

On behalf of the Social Democrats, I extend our deepest sympathy to the Cosgrave family and to Liam's many colleagues and friends within the Fine Gael Party.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I am glad to say I am young enough, or I am not too old, that I cannot remember. My filter on Liam Cosgrave was through "Hall's Pictorial Weekly". When I think of Liam Cosgrave, that is where I go. God, I suppose it was not very flattering. It was interesting. I did meet him in recent years and it shattered that vision of a grey man. It is funny, he was very different.

What Deputy Micheál Martin said really rang a bell with me. One aspect is that he brings one back, because of that accent, that slight nasally tone that could be at home in Plunkett or O'Casey, or a Dublin accent which has been replaced by a south California drawl in many instances. It was that sense - he had that wit - of having that relic of ol' decency touch to it. It brought one back to the foundation of the State because of his personal history, because of his age. It was appropriate that he was able to see out the centenary celebrations of something that his father had been so clearly involved in.

I would make two points, if I may, in praise of the man. Not knowing him personally, but from what I hear, the sense that he was a Taoiseach who was the Chair of the Cabinet rather than the chieftain is really important. One of the strengths of the State - I saw it in my own personal experience - is that one has real power as a member of Cabinet to say, "No". If we look at our neighbouring island, in the UK they have gone slightly wrong and one of the reasons is because, from the late Margaret Thatcher and from Tony Blair, the Cabinet run from No. 10, or of No. 10 and No. 11 fighting, is a weakness. One of the things Liam Cosgrave did, in that incredibly sensitive difficult time, was being a Chair rather than chief, and it did us real service. It was interesting to hear Deputy Howlin state that it was the Government of all the talents. I am sure that existed not more than in the mind of those same talents. It cannot have been easy to run in that collegiate Cabinet way, but I think that is hugely important.

Second, regardless of what one's views are, there is something greatly to be admired in someone who is willing to stand by certain underpinning core values, certain principles and certain faith, not that it dominates one's politics or that one immediately brings it into politics, but that it is a part of what one is. He was willing to vote against his own Government. While

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I would not have voted the same way on the issue, I very much admire those sorts of values in a person, in politics as much as anywhere else.

As everyone else has said, ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** On behalf of the Independent Alliance, I join with the sympathy that has been expressed to the Cosgrave family and to the late Liam Cosgrave's friends.

Today, I suppose we are marking the final departure of Liam Cosgrave after a very long life and a long career. My most vivid memory of him is, in fact, what was his first departure. Some Members of this House will remember it. When, in 1977, he lost the general election, immediately he went out on television to the media and he admitted defeat, he congratulated his opponents and disappeared. It was one of the most humble performances I have seen on television from any politician. It summed up the man, that he had done what he considered a service to the State - he was only 57 - and his job was finished. We never heard from him since. That was also indicative of a person who regarded himself as not the relevant ingredient of the politics which he represented but that the values which he espoused had been represented. Those values had been proved to be somewhat old-fashioned in those days. Liam Cosgrave was old-fashioned, I would suggest, from birth. He was old-fashioned in 1977 and was old-fashioned when he died. Those values, to which everybody has referred, were values which he held so dear that he was prepared, as the Taoiseach and others have mentioned, to vote against his own Cabinet. I do not suggest that the current Taoiseach follows that particular course but Liam Cosgrave was prepared to vote against the wishes of his own Cabinet for his own principles. He got away with it because people respected him for what he believed in. That is pretty rare now. He was also prepared to sacrifice his leadership on one occasion where it was in peril and was only saved by a tragic incident on the streets of Dublin afterwards. He was a man of extraordinary and gritty integrity which many of us would be wiser to follow, if we had a better sense of history than we have of the immediate, today.

In recent times he kept his own counsel about what was happening in Ireland. We can only guess at what he thought of us and our pandering to the media and commentators, which he refused to do. Indeed, he had some fairly harsh words to say about the media but he was consistent with that. He did not pander to the media. He did not pander to outside opinion but simply stuck to what he believed in, did the job, got on with it and finished up defeated, bloodied but certainly, unbowed. He was unique, not only in that he voted against his own party or that he stood up to outside forces. He was also unique because while holding these deeply conservative principles, as Deputy Howlin rightly said, he managed somehow - in a political manoeuvre which I find difficult to comprehend - to go into coalition with the Labour Party. That was particularly difficult at the time because he had to deal with such extraordinary characters like Conor Cruise O'Brien, Justin Keating and Brendan Corish. He managed to do it, from his deeply conservative background. These were mavericks, very left-wing in some cases and very committed in the other way and he brought them together and formed what was a very stable coalition Government. That was because he cared about the State and about his own principles being implemented. One of the people who paid him the greatest tribute during his own lifetime was Conor Cruise O'Brien. That was rare; Conor Cruise O'Brien did not pay many people many tributes but he paid great tribute to Liam Cosgrave.

I would like to say, on behalf of the Independent Alliance, that we mourn the passing of Liam Cosgrave. We respect his values and we sympathise with his family, with Mary, Ciarán

and Liam.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** In accordance with well-established tradition, we will now hear from Deputies from the late former Taoiseach's constituency. I call Deputy Seán Barrett.

**Deputy Seán Barrett:** I learned an awful lot from Liam Cosgrave. He was all about public representation. Many of us, from time to time, forget that we are public representatives but he was a great believer in representing the people who elected him. It was a great quality. He did not ask what people's politics were. If they were constituents with a problem, he looked after them. His dedication to his constituents, even when he was Taoiseach was notable. Even when he was Taoiseach, he never forgot them, or those who elected him. No problem was ever too big or too small for him and he always had time to revert back. Even when he was in Brussels, when he came home, he went to constituency meetings because he wanted to keep in touch. He went to local branch, or cumann, meetings to learn from and listen to people, a lot of which is missing today. We are all tied up with modern technology, but dealing with and meeting people to find out what their problems are and listen to their concerns are still what we are all about. At the end of the day, when we are gone, others will be elected as public representatives.

Although Liam Cosgrave tended to be a simple man, he was also very shrewd. I was elected to Dublin County Council in 1974 and my area was part of his constituency. Through his private secretary, I would receive messages asking me to call to see him. The meetings would be about local issues. As a young politician who had entered politics innocently and without any tradition in it, I learned so much from him about being a public representative. He was a true public representative who wanted to represent people in this place and express their views. Sometimes my views and those of others did not coincide, but that is what this assembly is about. It is also what he was about. He stood firm in what he believed. At times it cost him, but that was his great quality. He did not deviate. If he believed something was wrong, he would say so and if he thought something was right, he would go with it. I learned so much from him about how to deal with a local organisation, local constituents and so on, things we all have to do on a daily basis.

Liam Cosgrave was unique in that when he realised his time was up, he left. He did not create any great fuss and I was fortunate enough to follow him when he retired in 1981. It was not an easy task to keep up the pace he had set in dealing with various problems in the area, about all of which he knew. After he retired he stood back and never interfered or made statements. His attitude was, "I have done it and now I am retired." He had other interests outside politics which were somewhat similar to mine, above all, horses. He was a regular attender at Leopardstown racecourse, even up to a couple of months before he became very ill. For me, he summed up everything that life was about. Many times we make life so complicated and get so tied up in our own beliefs that we cannot see others' viewpoints.

I will always remember Liam Cosgrave's qualities. He was able to deal with an issue and then move onto the next one. In his latter years he displayed his great love for his wife who had fallen into bad health. He showed the great love between a husband and a wife and was a great example to others. His life was about setting an example for people and giving leadership and his leadership was unique. He did not shout at people but led by example. He would turn up at a constituency or branch meeting or at a funeral and say hello. It was all of the simple things and he would do it, even though he was very busy as Taoiseach. To me, that is what public representation is all about. I hope his type will never be lost in politics. As others said, he will be a great loss to his daughter, Mary, who looked after him exceptionally well, and his

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two sons, Liam T. and Ciarán. I have no doubt that he is enjoying his time up above discussing our problems here. May he rest in peace.

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Tá brón ó chroí tagtha orm faoi bhás Liam Cosgrave. D'fhóin sé d'Éirinn go dúthrachtach agus go tírghrách agus tharraing sé gradam mór air féin as an tseirbhís sin. Duine uasal onórach ab ea é. Inniu tá na meáin lán le moladh ina thaobh. Duine na linne ina mhair sé ab ea Liam Cosgrave agus duine ar thit oidhreacht phearsanta agus oidhreacht pholaitiúil a bhí iontach ar fad air. Mar aon lena oilteachtaí féin, bhain sé feidhm as an oidhreacht seo chun cabhrú lena thír, le hinstiúidí na tíre, le pobal na tíre agus le daonlathas na tíre. Aithním an tábhacht a bhaineann lenár stair. Baineann an tábhacht chéanna leis an áit as a dtagaimid agus as an áit ar a mbímid ag triall. Toghadh mé den chéad uair go Dáil Éireann sa bhliain 2011 chun ionadaíocht a dhéanamh do Dhún Laoghaire. Bhí thart ar 30 bliain caite ó ndeachaigh Liam Cosgrave ar scor ón bpost céanna. Táim an-bhródúil, agus is mór an onóir dom é, a bheith mar chomharba Liam Cosgrave mar Theachta Dála do Dhún Laoghaire.

I am deeply saddened by the death of Liam Cosgrave who served Ireland with great distinction and patriotism. He was a most honourable man. He was a man of his time who had inherited an extraordinary personal and political legacy. From 1948 until his retirement he topped the poll in the constituency. His father's biographer, Mr. Michael Laffan, remarked that W. T. Cosgrave had been insufficiently concerned with his party and public opinion. He said his son, Liam, had learned his lesson and always remained deeply involved in Fine Gael's activities. I am very well aware that this involvement manifested itself in assiduous attention to local constituency matters, as well as his many wider national responsibilities.

Members of this House appreciate and are very aware of the need to keep politics local. Liam Cosgrave's election poster in 1973 was headed: "Cosgrave puts the nation first". That was very true, but he always kept Dún Laoghaire a very close second. Although many years have passed since he stood down, I continue to meet constituents and supporters who remember him so well. Without exception, they speak fondly of his attachment to the greater Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area and its people and especially his courtesy, kindness and dedication. These sentiments are expressed across all party lines and by people from all backgrounds. He was genuinely admired and liked. To his children, Mary, Liam and Ciarán, and their families, I extend my deepest sympathy. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís.

**Deputy Maria Bailey:** It is with great sadness that I speak about the late Mr. Liam Cosgrave. I have listened to many others speak before me outlining some of his many great achievements, but, to use some of his own words in a different forum, "the facts speak for themselves." He was a man who got things done without any self-interest. He represented the people of Dún Laoghaire from 1943 to 1981 with great pride and diligence. In some parts of the constituency, he is still mentioned with great warmth and humility, and often when I knock on the door in particular parts of the constituency, people refer to me as being part of the Cosgrave party.

As a man who was one of the people and a calm voice in turbulent times, his public life was one of service and he believed deeply in democracy. He was consistently opposed to the use of violence. Liam Cosgrave was a courageous voice against terrorism and he protected the State in a time of crisis.

He was held in high esteem in my family home and my father, Councillor John Bailey, always told us great stories about him. This morning he reminded me of a story that I heard

growing up as a child. My grandfather used to work in Dún Laoghaire train station and my father would attend with him at his job at 6.30 a.m. every day before he attended primary school. On occasion Mr. Cosgrave would arrive impeccably dressed at 6.30 a.m., with a bowler hat in place, and he would meet the people of Dún Laoghaire on their way to work or wherever it was they were going. He met them with honesty and humility and had the ability to listen, no matter what their query or comment. It may even be that he would just say hello to them. On occasion my father would take advantage by making him a cup of tea and a bit of toast because that would give him five minutes to have his ear and to listen to him also. On occasion it would make him late for school but that is a different story for a different day.

I listened to many commentators on the radio this morning and all spoke of him with great admiration and pride. He set a high bar in political life and his loyalty is something we should all strive to emulate. As someone who spent much of my youth growing up on the sideline of a GAA pitch - I am sure there are many of us here - I was aware that he was a great supporter of all sports. Deputy Seán Barrett spoke about his interest in horseracing. My father said that he was also a great supporter of the GAA, mainly hurling, and I believe this was the first year he missed an All-Ireland final since 1930. I am sure, however, that he was delighted by the results of both teams and celebrated in his own way.

My thoughts today are with his family, Mary, Liam, who we all know, and Ciarán, at this difficult time. May his gentle soul rest in peace.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Before I call for a minute's silence in respect of the former Taoiseach, I will briefly add my own few words to what has already been said. First, I express my sympathy to Ciarán, Liam, our former colleague, and Mary who provided so much support to Mr. Cosgrave over many years.

Like Deputy Eamon Ryan, I was a teenager during the 1970s and my awareness of Liam Cosgrave was from the national media. However, when I came to this House I had the opportunity to meet him at State functions and in Croke Park and I found the media image of someone who was stern and austere was completely removed from the reality of a man who was warm, friendly, kind and engaging. My most regular engagement with him was at his beloved Punchestown - he was there every year without fail - and we had wonderful conversations about a wide variety of issues. What struck me was his keen intellect and incredible memory and that he was always engaging, encouraging and enlightening. A person, having met him, would come away feeling he or she had got something from that particular engagement.

As has been said, he laboured here before opinion polls and focus groups and one certainly always had a sense that this was a leader who did not have to put his head out the window to see which way the wind was blowing. He was a really devoted politician of conviction and he never departed from those convictions. We all know him to have been a man of substance. All of us would have to say that his long service greatly benefited this country and those who observed him observed the characteristics of dignity and integrity. We would all do well to be able to emulate those characteristics. It was a privilege to have known him.

Let us stand for a moment's silence.

*Members rose.*

The Dáil adjourned at 1 p.m. until 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 October 2017.