

## **Cork branch's response to Minister Quinn's article in Irish Independent, 13 April, 2013 .....**

Apr 19, 2013

### **WHAT RUAIRI QUINN DID NOT SAY!!**

Ruairi Quinn responded to Diarmaid Ferriter's article on 13 April 2013

1. He began with a platitude - History has a very bright future in our Junior Cert classrooms

**WE SAY : If History has this bright future why are History teachers so concerned!**

2. He said - history is not a compulsory Junior Cycle subject in all post-primary schools. Last year, 5,000 students did not take the subject in their Junior Certificate exams.

**WE SAY: History is compulsory in secondary schools and even though it is not compulsory in VEC schools over 90% of all Junior Cert students took History in their exam**

3. He said - history will be embedded into the very heart of the curriculum for all students under the new Framework for Junior Cycle which I announced late last year.

**WE SAY: This is incorrect! More platitudes! .... embedded in the very heart!**

4. He said - I believe students will no longer miss out on the chance to build on their study of history in primary school, to develop the critical and analytical skills of the historian.

**WE SAY: Students have no hope of developing the critical and analytical skills of the historian if they are only taught short courses as you propose below.**

5. He said - Under the Framework, every school will have to ensure that every student "values local, national and international heritage, (and) understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change". This is one of the 24 statements of learning underpinning the new Junior Cycle programme that must apply to every student, without exception.

**WE SAY: History is going from one of the core subjects for JC students (1 out of 5) to becoming one of 24 statements! Is this what you mean by being 'embedded in the very heart of the curriculum'?**

**Your own document, A Framework for Junior Cycle, states that the following subjects, Chinese, Classics, CSPE, Geography, Jewish Studies, Religious Education and Science can also ensure that the student "values local, national and international heritage, (and) understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change" (p. 32-33).**

**So why bother with History?**

6. He said - I agree with Prof Ferriter that to have no knowledge of the past "is to be permanently burdened with a lack of perspective, empathy and wisdom".

**WE SAY: - So why are you downgrading History! Either you mean this statement or you are .....?**

7. He said - We are introducing much needed changes to the Junior Cycle which will liberate students, and yes, their teachers, from the tyranny of teaching to the test, rote learning and a narrowly focused terminal exam. To equate these long overdue reforms with the end of History or other subjects is simply wrong.

**WE SAY: Everybody wants to get away from the tyranny of teaching to the test etc. But you can do this by changing the syllabus and the style of exam. Instead you have dropped History (& Geography) to one statement out of 24.**

8. He said - Given the importance we as a people place on history and the high quality of our history teachers, the subject will remain a core element of the curriculum in schools.

**WE SAY: This view is totally contrary to what you are actually doing. Either you mean this statement or you are .....?**

9. He said - Our enthusiastic teachers will also have the opportunity to inspire further study through the option for short courses that will be introduced. The short courses innovation will allow, for example, young people in Enniscorthy to study in depth the 1798 Battle of Vinegar Hill, which took place on their doorstep, or teenagers in Trim to examine Norman Castles, the largest Irish example of which dominates that town.

**WE SAY: Short courses and study in depth on their own are totally contrary to good History which has to use context to explain and understand events. Students will end up knowing about a local battle or a local castle but nothing else.**

**You will have replaced a 3-year course with one short course! Is this what you mean by being 'embedded in the very heart of the curriculum'?**

10. He said - Beyond the school gates, there is a wealth of opportunities here for historians, or historical and heritage organisations, to devise their own short courses to make available as an option to schools.

**WE SAY: What experience have any of these in devising courses? That is unless these courses are intended to be meaningless and just doing for the sake of doing!**

11. He said - The decade of commemoration, 1912-1923, which is also referenced by Prof Ferriter in his article, is another excellent chance for teachers to be creative in examining this period which led to the foundation of the State.

**WE SAY: In the decade of commemoration, you are downgrading History. Will this be part of your political legacy? The man who put an 'end to history'?**

12. He said - Students too will have a wider choice of historical periods to study, periods which interest them. I gave up History for my Leaving Cert because I did not have an interest in medieval European history.

**WE SAY: You did your Leaving Cert back in the 1960s and things have changed a lot since then in the teaching of History!**

**For one thing, the Junior Cert History course has a very wide range of historical periods of study which you should know about as Minister of Education!**

13. He said - In my opinion, politicians and particularly socialists have a predilection towards history. One only has to think of Karl Marx or, closer to home, James Connolly, to recognise the fundamental importance of history to political discourse.

**WE SAY: But is this interest just to use History to support some political theory or is it the study of History for other reasons?**

14. He said - History is a compulsory subject for students in voluntary secondary schools, but not for those in vocational schools and community colleges.

**WE SAY - SO NOW THE REGULATIONS OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE BEING IMPOSED ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS!**

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