



Report on the Dublin Seminar 29th of January – 1st of February

At the end of January, Young Fine Gael (Ireland) hosted a YEPP seminar on the topic the **'Trans-Atlantic Relationship – The Strongest Link'**. The seminar kicked off on Thursday night with a reception at Iveagh House, the home of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. The reception was addressed by YEPP president Daniel Bautista, Young Fine Gael President, William Lavelle, Paul Henry, the YFG International Secretary, and an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs. This was followed up by a welcome dinner for all at the Mount Herbert Hotel, which was the base for the weekend's activities.

The following morning, delegates travelled to the heart of Dublin City to the offices of the European Parliament. It was there that Friday's discussion and debate took place. First up was a panel discussion on the 'Current State and the Future of the Trans-Atlantic Relation'. Due to his presence in Ireland because of the Irish EU Presidency, the meeting was addressed by Kyle Scott, the Political Minister of the USA's mission to the EU. He addressed the delegates on the topic, and offered us the view-point of the current US Administrations' view point on the relationship. He believed that NATO bound the US to Europe, and questioned why Europeans wanted 'to duplicate the framework, rational and development achieved by NATO.'" The Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, Mark J. Moher, also addressed the meeting and he was very eager to put across the distinctive viewpoint on the relationship that Canada offered. The meeting was also addressed by a former YFG activist and a current professor, lecturing on European Affairs, Ben Tonra.

Next up was the discussion on the 'Tensions within the Trans-Atlantic Relationship' and was addressed by a panel of eminent people, including Gay Mitchell the Fine Gael spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, (retired) Captain Tom Clonan, Paul Gillespie of the Irish Times newspaper and Brendan Halligan of the European Institute.

Gay Mitchell spoke initially of Enlargement and of Fine Gael's enthusiasm for this process; he described the enlarged Union as a Union of 'weight of wealth and of influence'. While Gay Mitchell accepted that there was a possibility of the previous warm relationship between the EU and the US cooling in the future, he felt the Javier's Solana's analogy between Europe as the proverbial Venus (the bringer of peace) and the US as the proverbial Mars (the bringer of war) was unhelpful and untrue.

Later in the evening we were privileged to be addressed by former Irish Prime Minister and Fine Gael leader, John Bruton. John Bruton's presentation

covered the broad span of history between European and the United States, dating back to the influence of two major European ideals, the Rights of Man and the Protestant German Revolution on the American War of Independence. Furthermore John Bruton argued that the US revolution also had a knock on affect for the French Revolution and much later, the German Constitution which owed much to its American counterpart's federal structure. The ECSC and European Integration were only possible due to Marshall Aid and John Bruton described the modern Europe as a child of America. Since the fall of the communist threat, he believed that the Trans-Atlantic relationship needed a new *raison d'être* for the EU-US alliance and added the proviso that we must ensure that Islam does not become a new enemy for Europe and America. However he thought that US pre-eminence was basically a good thing and that a one polar world was easier to manage than a bi-polar world.

The final speaker on Friday, was a representative of Amnesty International, who gave us an outline of the organisations current campaign to reduce the amount of small arms weapons currently in existence throughout the world. That night, delegates were taken to Dinner in Fitzsimons a pub and restaurant in Dublin's cultural quarter, Temple Bar.

The next day, Saturday was set aside for the YEPP working groups and the YEPP council to meet. Saturday's work took place in the Hilton Hotel in Dublin, and in the morning the Permanent Working Groups of YEPP meet. Later in the morning the two YEPP working groups on the European Elections met to discuss both YEPP's political message, and the campaign strategy of the European elections. The liveliest debate was however reserved for the discussion of the three Seminar working groups which dwelt on the subjects of 'Tensions within the Atlantic Alliance', 'Europe, the US and NATO' and 'The Trans-Atlantic Security Relationship'. After much debate and amendments to the prepared discussion papers, these working groups were brought to an end, just before delegates were brought across to the nearby pub, The Barge for a lunch kindly sponsored by Fine Gael Councillor and former YEPP Vice President Leo Varadkar. After lunch, the YEPP Council meeting took place, during which the various working papers were accepted, and a resolution on the subject of 'European Identity' was accepted by the YEPP Council Meeting.

That evening, after the YEPP Council meeting, delegates were taken to 'McGrattan's on the Lane' a Dublin restaurant, and were afterwards treated to some traditional Irish music. Later on Saturday night, the delegates dispersed to a variety of night clubs around Dublin City Centre, before eventually retiring to the hotel early on Sunday morning. Unfortunately, the following morning delegates packed their bags and with a heavy heart said goodbye to Ireland.