

**Remarks by Eamonn Kearns  
on the retirement of Pól Ó Duibhir  
from the Department of Finance  
on 10 February 2006**

Tá áthas orm deis a glacadh cúpla focal a rá ar an ócáid seo. Go deimhin is mór an onóir é. Tá Pól Ó Duibhir ag fágáil an Roinn Airgeadais taréis dhá scór bliain. Is stát seirbhiseach é Pól ó bhun go barr; amach is amach; ó cheann ceann.

Indeed to many people, including myself, Pól embodies all that is best in the civil service. Pól is, and has always been, thoroughly dedicated to his chosen profession; he is loyal to his colleagues; he is a man of great personal integrity; he is a generous man - ever willing to share his time, experience and knowledge. Above all, Pól is an achiever. Throughout his career Pól has made lasting contributions to this Department, to the civil service and, through his work, to the Irish economy and society. Everyone who has worked with Pól knows that he has left each of his many posts and responsibilities better than he found them.

Pól joined the Department of Finance on 22 September 1967 as an AO and immediately went on leave to undertake a course in European Studies in Bruges, Belgium. It was a period during which the civil service was preparing for Ireland's eventual entry into what was then known as the Common Market and through-out the rest of his career Pól developed expertise in the policies and processes of Europe that is unsurpassed.

Pól returned to the Department in 1968 and was appointed an AO in Finance - Long Term Planning Section. In 1972 Pól was promoted to AP in Economic policy Division. Most of you are probably not aware that in his role in Economic Policy Division Pól was one of the backroom financial experts involved in the historic Sunningdale Agreement in

1973. One of his assignments at that time was to brief a prominent SDLP politician on certain financial details. I understand that the meeting took place in a bedroom in the Burlington Hotel and that the first thing the SDLP man did was to take his RUC-Approved revolver out of his pocket and lay it in front of Pól on the table! That must have concentrated Pól's mind to give a good briefing! Happiness is a warm gun.

Pól worked in EPD until he transferred to the new Department of Economic Planning and Development that was established in 1977. Pól was promoted to Principal in 1979 and when the Department of Economic Planning and Development was closed down on the instructions of the new Taoiseach Charles J Haughey in December 1979 Pól transferred to back to the Department of Finance - suitably annotated.

As an economist, Pól was quite at home working in the economics section of the Department. He was part of a special group. However Pól was doubly specialised in that he was a member of an elite subgroup who were Gaeilgeóirí economists, other well-known members being Nicolas Ó Murchú and Feargal Ó Brolcháin. In the late 1980's the Economics Section had two Assistant Secretaries and some innocent soul from elsewhere in the Department asked one day how was the work divided between the two and was duly informed that one of them looked after the past while the other one looked after the future. Apparently no one was responsible for the present!

During his time in the economics area Pól had a wider variety of roles covering medium term economic assessment and policy; multi-annual resources, short-term forecasting and EEC co-ordination. It was a tough time as the country faced soaring unemployment, mass emigration, virtually zero growth and spiralling national debt. There is, I believe, insufficient recognition of the outstanding work done by Pól and others in the economics section during those difficult years that led eventually to the development of policies

needed for recovery and subsequent growth.

In 1986 Pól transferred to Finance Division where he assumed responsibility for policies on the EIB, EMS (transfers), monetary policy, credit interest rates, external reserves, T.S.B. legislation. -

As a keen Gaeilgeoir, Paul kept a copy of Dineen's famous Irish dictionary in his room. The older folk amongst you may recall that Myles na gCopaleen often poked fun at this dictionary because of some of the strange meanings it contained. When Minister Charlie McCreevy introduced the SSIA's 5 years ago Esther McCarthy was asked by an outside Gaeilgeoir what was the Department's Irish version! However the Department had not got one! Esther duly asked Liam Murphy, who got a translation from the Dáil Translation Service. As a cautious civil servant, Liam felt he needed a second opinion and asked Pól about the Irish wording. Pól consulted Dineen and the following translation emerged - Special Savings THORN Accounts! I wonder did Liam ever tell the Minister about the thorn!

Outside of his civil service career Pól has many accomplishments. He is a talented musician and during the sixties he was a member of a folk music group with his wife Nora that enjoyed considerable popularity including appearing on RTE television. Pól is also multi-lingual. As well as being thoroughly fluent in both the first and second national languages Pól is also a Welsh speaker. I understand that he was once a member of a Welsh language choir. Indeed I am looking forward to hearing some of his solo pieces in Welsh later this evening. I know Pól has spent a lot of his vacation time in Wales over the years and is deeply knowledgeable of, and sympathetic to, its people, history and culture. Perhaps with his love of Wales Pól will help GAA people like myself

get over the fact that a Welsh soccer team is going to play at our national stadium in Croke Park next year.

The late management guru Peter Drucker once remarked that "There is an enormous number of managers who have retired on the job." That was never Pól's way. I have had the pleasure of working with Pól over the last two years in PED and I can say with absolute conviction that in a Department rightly known for its willingness to work hard and long hours I know of no other civil servant who has given such energy, commitment and enthusiasm to a very demanding job as Pól has given. To paraphrase Prof Scott Eledge on his retirement from Cornell. "It is time you stepped aside for less experienced and less able men." I wish you and Nora and your sons, Eoghan and Dónal (in Australia) well in your retirement.