



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

DUP councillor vows to fight Irish language school.



Roy Gillespie

DUP Ballymena councillor, Roy Gillespie, has said he will “fight tooth and nail” to block the establishment of an Irish language primary school in the Ballymena borough.

The Council for Irish Medium Education has highlighted Ballymena as a core area for development. Its plan recommends the establishment of a new Irish medium pre-school and primary school in the town as soon as possible and proposes that post-primary provision for the greater Antrim area be located there by 2008.

Mr. Gillespie says that he “would be against this move to set up an Irish language school in Ballymena. The borough already has enough primary schools to cater for children in that age bracket. This move to set up an Irish-speaking school would be divisive. I wouldn’t like to think the NEELB would be involved in funding something like this in any way, especially when cutbacks are having to be made in other areas.” It must be borne in mind that these Irish language schools are fully paid for by the British government even though the Irish language is dying, with fewer people using it as their first preference language, even in the Republic of Ireland, than ever before. Many members of the Irish Parliament freely admit that to debate in Irish is far beyond their capabilities, despite its compulsory status on the Irish national school curriculum. The favouring of Irish schools by the Northern Ireland Office is but another example of the placating of Republicanism that is central to Tony Blair’s policy on Northern Ireland. The promotion of Irish schools is commonly perceived to be one of the means employed by Sinn Fein in the “Gaelicising” of Northern Ireland.

In contrast to the readiness of the government to fund these schools, no funding has ever been available for Christian schools within the Free Presbyterian church which have been operating for more than 25 years now. They must raise every penny required to operate the school, including the teachers’ wages.