

PRESS RELEASE – 3 Nollaig 2013

Sinn Féin the party most associated with Irish speakers of yesteryear, but little mention of Fine Gael

If famous Irish speakers of yesteryear could vote, would they choose Sinn Féin and reject Fine Gael?

According to new research, Sinn Féin is the most frequently mentioned political party on the database ainm.ie, which contains 1.3 million words and biographical notes on 1705 people who had a connection with the Irish language since 1560.

Of the four major political parties, Fine Gael is the least mentioned on ainm.ie, and the current senior coalition partner is referred to in just seven biographical entries in ainm.ie.

Sinn Féin is mentioned in 137 of the biographical notes on ainm.ie, an online resource administered by Fiontar in DCU and based on the series *Beatháiscníis* by Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú.

Fianna Fáil is the second most frequently mentioned party on ainm.ie and is mentioned in 68 biographical notes.

The Labour Party is in third place with 22 mentions, just ahead of Fine Gael/Cumann na nGaedheal who are mentioned 21 times.

As 14 of the 21 references to Fine Gael/Cumann na nGaedheal are to the older party, Fine Gael, currently the largest party in the State, is mentioned in only seven of the 1705 biographical notes.

The Communist Party of Ireland is mentioned twice on ainm.ie, in the biographical entries on the writer Liam Ó Flaithearta, a founding member of the party, and the dramatist Seán Ó hÉidirsceoil, an active communist. Saor Éire, the left-wing republican organization, is mentioned in three entries in the biographical database.

Speaking about the results of the analysis of ainm.ie, Dr Gearód Ó Cleircín, Fiontar DCU, said:

“Many of the Irish speakers on ainm.ie played a central role in Irish history. Many were involved in shaping a modern Irish identity at the time of the Gaelic Revival and, after that, in the foundation and development of the Irish State.

“The results in relation to Sinn Féin make sense when you consider that it is the oldest party in the State. Formed in 1905, many of those involved in the Gaelic Revival would have also been involved in Sinn Féin and most of the mentions of the party are in the ‘lives’ of people born in the latter half of the nineteenth century, who would have been active in Sinn Féin in the period between 1905–1923.

“In the case of Fianna Fáil, one would expect a reasonably high number of mentions given how the party dominated Irish politics from 1932 to 2011.”

The low number of references to Fine Gael in the 1705 biographical notes is, however, more difficult to explain, according to Ó Cleircín.

“It is interesting that there are only seven specific references to Fine Gael, which grew out of the amalgamation of Cumann na nGaedhal and two other groups, and has been the second largest party in the State for so long.”

A new search function has been added to ainm.ie so that users can search the database by various themes, including ‘Political Parties’ and ‘Occupations’.

The most common occupation on ainm.ie is that of ‘teacher’ which is mentioned in 345 biographical notes. ‘Writer’ and ‘scholar’ are in second and third place. Many of the people whose biographies are included in ainm.ie had a religious background and we find 186 priests along with 31 Franciscans, 17 Jesuits and 14 Christian Brothers. There are also a significant number of Protestant clergymen included. The occupation data reveals that the Gaels were a multifarious and versatile lot. Among the less common occupations in ainm.ie can be found six miners, five judges, four pharmacists, three surgeons, two taxi drivers and one solitary lighthouse keeper.

It was also announced this week that 10 new entries have been added to ainm.ie. The newly written entries include accounts of the lives of football legend Páidí Ó Sé, scholar Robert Welch and poet Dara Beag Ó Fáthartaigh.

ainm.ie, Irish-language biographical website, developed by Fiontar, DCU in collaboration with Cló Iar-Chonnacht.

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