

THE YOUNG ONES!

GERALDINE COMISKEY TALKS TO FOUR YOUNG SOUTHSIDERS AND ASKS WHAT POSSESSED THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS

YOU'RE young and free, the world is your oyster and everyone wants to entertain you. There just aren't enough days in the week to fit it all in.

So why the hell would you want to spend a large chunk of your precious free time grumbling about high-rise development in your neighbourhood, protesting about bin charges or listening to rambling speeches by people your parents' age? When others your age are spending the weekend at a rock

concert or getting drunk on the beach, why are you putting on a shirt and tie and heading off to a party of another kind – an Ard Fheis! And what are you doing in the audience of Questions and Answers?

Because you care – about your community, your country and, perhaps most of all, your party. You're idealistic, you're committed, you're convinced that the political party you have chosen has the best answer to society's problems – and you're not going to sit

back and let the grown-ups do all the work.

Youth membership of political parties is surprisingly vibrant, given that there are so many distractions for young people.

Southside People spoke to some young locals whose civic spirit makes them stand out among their peers.

We contacted other main parties seeking to interview young members but they had not responded at the time of going to press.

THE FIANNA FAILER

IT DOESN'T get more mainstream than joining a party which is in Government. Fianna Fail is the meat-and-potatoes of Irish politics.

It's this respectable image of Fianna Fail that attracted Southsider Shane Scally.

The UCD history and politics student is as unimpressed as most people his age by the scandals which have threatened to ruin the party – but, unlike other young people, he didn't let it put him off politics. Pointing out that half of all 18 to 28-year-olds don't vote, he

believes scandals and corruption are to blame for their "general cynicism" regarding politics.

He cites several people who ruined the image of the

says, "Some of my own friends don't even vote."

He was just 19 when he joined Ogra Fianna Fail last April but it was a decision that had taken years to make. Already getting into the political mode, he says he is "not going to say" which party, if any, his parents support, but adds they showed him good example by always voting.

Shane himself has always had a "general interest" in politics.

"I'm concerned about who runs the country," he says gravely.

He admits he would con-

pressed, he singles out Brian Cowen.

"He's well able and he's certainly pragmatic in my opinion," he says.

He also admires the Taoiseach because of the way he brought the party together.

"Before he took over, there were factions in the party," he says. "He appointed people from different factions of the party, [such as] Charlie McCreery and Maire Geoghegan Quinn. It helped to eliminate the factions."

It's hard to imagine a political party in which there is no infighting, and Shane admits the members of his branch of Ogra Fianna Fail occasionally disagree. But they always keep squabbles civilised and try to

Meale Richmond says he and his fellow politics enthusiasts prefer to keep their party affiliations secret.



IT'S GAEL FORCE