

## ULSU President welcomes back Former Sabbaticals



**It is a privilege to be able to welcome you all to this celebration of the University of Limerick Students' Union. Although the University will only be 30 years old in 2002, this week sees the 30<sup>th</sup> cohort of Union Officers take up the challenge for the coming academic year.**

The idea of a reunion came about after the official opening of the new Student Centre by Mr. Frank Doyle (Chairman of UL Foundation) and the President, Dr. Roger Downer. The Student Centre marked yet another new era of the Union and has been invaluable in establishing a new level of professionalism, which in today's rapidly changing climate is vital to both successful student representation and also in providing students with the necessary services.

The University of Limerick has experienced many changes over the last 30 years, from

100 students attending lectures in Plassey House and students playing sports on the lawn where Dr. Walsh could be heard appealing for quiet from the top window. In tandem with the University, the Students' Union has grown over time and today we have over 70 Clubs & Societies travelling all over the globe representing UL with great pride and honour and often returning with silverware for the cabinets.

However, one cannot forget that as the University grows and students are placed under increasing pressure to succeed, both the University and Students' Union have a vital role to play in providing the necessary support for our students to compete in an ever-changing world and to ensure that UL maintains its status as one of the premier universities in Ireland and Europe.

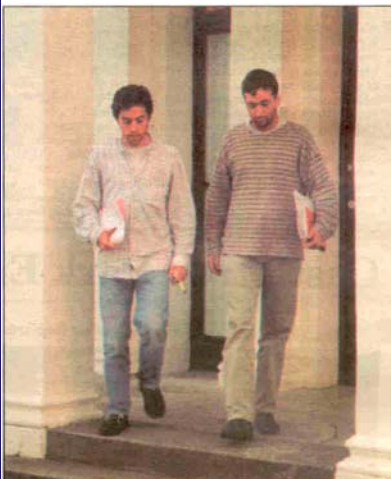
I would like to thank the former sabbatical officers for making the journey to UL for this cele-

bration of the Students' Union, and hopefully this will become more common in the Unions future calendar. It is my sincere hope that tonight will demonstrate to you the vibrancy of the organisation that each of you played such a part in developing.

Finally tonight also marks the end of one year in office and the beginning of another. On behalf of the Union I wish Siobhan O'Connell and Fergal Fennessy all the best in their future pursuits and welcome Tara Curley and Patrick Kennedy to what will no doubt prove to be an extremely challenging but thoroughly enjoyable year in office. As for Tom and myself, we have another year in the Union for our sins, but as with the current team in the Union and the shop, the year flies by and we are both looking forward to another memorable year

I hope you all enjoy the night and once again, thank you for taking the time to celebrate with us on our birthday.

## A Brief History Of ULSU



*Synnott and O'Toole walk out after repeats protest —1994*

**Time has often hindered the activities of the Students' Union and likewise in attempting to reveal its history, time has only allowed a brief and concise account of the Union's establishment and early years. Whereas a history of any organisation necessitates a trawl through that organisation's archive and several interviews of surviving members, time has only allowed a brief perusal of certain documents that remain the Union's archive. This 'short' history will not analyse the successive administrations that have come and gone, but will try to highlight certain events which dot the history of the Union.**

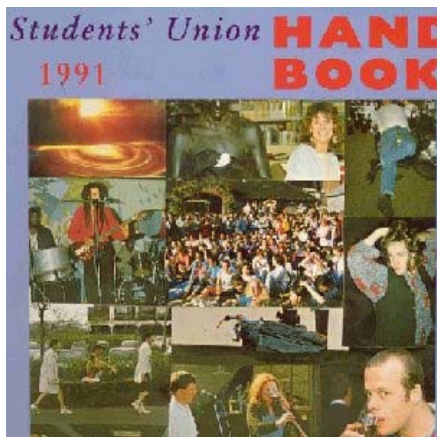
The National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) was founded in Limerick in 1972. The first pioneering students numbered 113 and founded the NIHE Students' Union during that academic year, with John Redington as their president. The oldest known document in the archive of the Union is his presidential report to an ordinary general meeting, dated 18 May 1973. It reveals the raw nature of the first Union

and the experimental nature of structures and type of environment that these first students experienced. He highlighted the inefficiencies of members who did not fully carry out their duties and attacked those who sought to dominate business by proposing ill-informed motions. He went on to mention the 'hurlers on the ditch', as he put it, who 'love to knock everything they can' as well as those members whom he termed 'dogmatic' in that they refused to listen to other people's points of view and thought their own judgment superior to others. While recognising that diversity was good for any organisation he hoped that next year some thought would be given to those elected to represent students.

Clubs and societies, as today, formed the backbone of that first Union. The continuity of these organisations with so few students on campus was an issue of concern for the Union administration. It is difficult to identify the first clubs and societies of the NIHE, but we know that there was a 'Dramatic and Arts Society' as well as an all encompassing 'Sports Club'.

The general atmosphere of the campus must have been unique. The newness of the place both for student and teacher alike, as well as the thought of being the first students to graduate from a new quasi-university Institute must have been prevalent in many minds during the 1972/3 year. The attitude of the people of Limerick was also important to the first administration. They saw that there was a possibility of creating a division between 'the people of Limerick' and the students of the NIHE. In his report, Redington comments: '... there have been indications lately that they [the people of Limerick city] are beginning to think that we consider ourselves a cut above the masses, and for God's sake I ask everyone to make sure that the situation will not deteriorate into a typical 'Town and Gown' hassle.'

That first year also saw the inaugural Rag Week, which must have been a daunting experience to organise and participate in. Considering that Rag Weeks have been traditional in many European universities for centuries, the NIHE students seemed to have embraced the tradition wholeheartedly. The first Rag Week, however, was not successful according to Redington, as there was little organisation and most of that work was done by a small number of people.



Students' Union handbook—1991

Redington's report reveals too the fears and hopes of those who entered the new Institute, not knowing what type of degree or qualification they would eventually receive. He states: '... it will be an extreme disappointment not only to ourselves as students, but also to our lecturers, many of whom have left better paid jobs with easier conditions to come here and try to develop the Institute.' Indeed it was in these initial years that the greatest amount of turmoil beset the quiet banks of the Shannon. As the NIHE was claiming one foothold, the National College of Physical Education (NCPE), and later the Thomond College of Education, raised its flag to claim another to the north of Plassey House, with a Students' Union of its own. The NCPE was founded in 1973 but students spent a year in Tralee before arriving in Limerick in the following year. Throughout the 1970s and into the



Charles J Haughey, Mary O Rourke, Jack Daly and Dr Edward Walsh at the inauguration of the University Of Limerick 1989

1980s staff and student strikes were common, on a variety of issues. From what the records tell us, the Unions were keen participants in these disputes, though there is little or no documentary material left to account for these various disputes.

Student numbers began to rise steadily as courses came on line and students began to file through the basement of Plassey House. By 1976, when the first students admitted in 1972 graduated, there were 680 full-time students. By 1979 the number attending the NIHE had reached and surpassed the 1,000 mark. One must presume that the Union continued to grow and evolve. The representative structures established in 1972/3 must have undergone some significant change to cater for the increased student intake. It would reform itself from a representative council structure with a voluntary president and a number of officers to one full-time sabbatical president, increased to two sabbaticals by 1980, sitting on a small Union executive and a much larger class representative council. This council also incorporated members from clubs and societies.

In 1977, a rare insight into the NIHE from a student perspective was presented as part of a class project by first year business students. In referring to the NIHE Students' Union they cited the Union's declared objectives, firstly, to clarify the educational status of NIHE students and graduates and secondly 'to undergo a complete review of the courses in the NIHE ... and to strengthen the services being offered at present to the students'. There concluding remarks tried to enliven fellow students to support the Union, and noted 'the NIHE Students' Union is understaffed and lacks secretarial back up. If the NIHE Students' Union is to operate at its best then it needs the help and fullest cooperation of all the students.' Such appeals to apathy rarely bore fruit in the sheltered bowers of the riverside campus, as it grew progressively onward.

From 1983 the Union began to keep regular minutes of both executive and council meetings. Earlier minutes do not seem to have survived - a normal consequence of many student organisations. A brief glance at these minutes show that the Union was continually involved in pushing the infantile library into providing an adequate service as well as a concerted effort to tackle the tuition and entrance fees for the NIHE. Internally the Union began to increase its expenditure and rose a number of debts, which were maintained at adequate level throughout the early 1980s. For example, in a minute dated 12 November 1984, it was stated that a 'debt of £4,000 inherited from previous years had been cleared'. Rag Week and several other entertainment events continued as usual and usually broke even. Ber Angley was Entertainments Officer in 1984 and continued in a similar position for several years (look out for him - he's still around).

By 1984, the Union's clubs and societies had increased to 15 clubs and 13 societies, receiving approximately £16,500. One of the more interesting societies, then existent was the 'Submerged Coke Can Society' who in November 1984 received £30 for a forthcoming debate. However a week later the Society had seemingly cancelled the event, and the £30 was 'withdrawn'.

In 1985 the minutes of the executive reveal how tension can quickly surface in the day-to-day politics of student affairs. In a somewhat confusing minute of 4 November 1985 the following is recorded:

'4. Emergency General Meeting. President [Michéal O Callaghan] stated he regarded Treasurer's action an insult (in regard to the Treasurer, Steven MacNamara, calling a special General Meeting). The President ... called Steve a ballox [sic]. Chris then said the issue of wages was distracting from other

main issues. Steve stated that wages issue should have been on the agenda. [sic] (Steve ManNamara was to serve a two year period as President between 1987 and 1989). This internal anger seems to have petered out, and later in the month the executive was preparing to occupy the library for the night of 18 November, over opening hours and other matters. This seems to have worked and the library remained open to 11 p.m. during weekdays.

In 1987 a third sabbatical position was created to perform the functions of an information officer for the Union. By then the Union had its familiar S.U.N. (Students' Union Newsletter) which was joined about this time by Link-Up, which remained in publication until Mercury appeared in 1989/1990. A year later, in 1991, a more professional looking An Focal appeared for the first time. Throughout the Union's history various 'Rag mags' appeared increasing in size as the events themselves ever increased in magnitude. The Union also began to publish an annual hand-book for incoming first years starting in the mid 1990s.

The year 1989 marked yet another milestone in the history of the Plassey campus. That year saw the inauguration of the University of Limerick, which combined the NIHE with the Thomond College of Education. It would be almost two years later in 1991 that the two students' unions amalgamated and ratified a joint constitution.



Michael Phelans Election campaign 2000

Another milestone for the Union was in 1989 when the first and only woman president of the Union was elected - Maura Adshedd. Semesterisation and the move from a three term to a two term academic year was one of the main discussion topics during this period and remained so until it was finally introduced in 1994. Repeat examinations was also a bone of contention during the early 1990s, with the battle eventually going in favour of the Union. The Union of Students' in Ireland (USI) furthered created much debate and discussion. The NIHE had been a member of USI since 1972 and had received loans from the national body during the 1980s. However USI became dysfunctional, corrupt and eventually bankrupt.

Consequently most universities, including UL, had left by 1992.

In 1992 the Union had accumulated several services providing for student needs. A second-hand bookshop, operating since the late 1970s, evolved into a grocery and confectionary shop. The campus laundrette had come under Union guidance while a reprographics unit was also established. Thus the Union constituted its first company, named Students' Union Services Ltd. Consequently the Union hired Gerry Barry, as its first general manager, to oversee the running of the company on behalf of the Union later that year.

Although what has gone before merely touches on the events of the first two decades of the Union, much more can be written, exposing the coloured and varied events that have formed the present Union and its prominent role in the formation of the University. I have not for example been able to identify when the Union accountant, Dermot Hartigan, began his long residency in the Union, probably around the time when the first general manager was appointed. Neither have I had time to delve into the series of Union staff members down throughout the years.

During the past decade the Union embraced Keith Piggott as its full time Ents co-ordinator who has made Rag Week (now termed Kollege Week) one of the largest University festivals in the country. In 1997/8 the Union employed its second general Manager - Stan Blennerhassett - who continues to ponder over the Union's accounts and services. In 2000 the Union created its fourth sabbatical officer with sole responsibility for Education. Meanwhile clubs and societies grew and grew and in 1998 a Clubs and Societies Development Officer was appointed as a full-time waged member of staff. There are now approximately seventy clubs and societies on campus. The building of the new Student Centre and its completion in 1999 was yet another achievement by successive Union administrations. For the first time in the Union's history, space was no longer a major problem.

In conclusion I cite John Redington's concluding remarks in his 1973 report on the Union's first year: *'After looking at the last year the future must now be considered. It is inevitable that over the years the Union will become more remote from the ordinary student. It would be foolhardy to idealistically think that this will not be the case, but that does not mean that we should not try to ensure that this trend is minimised. It may not happen in our time, but the time will come when a crisis of grave proportions will arise on the campus, and it is then a strong and representative students' union will really be needed, and if in such a situation the Union is unable to meet it, it will be through the fault of the students, and the students alone.'*

## Charity Work

**The University of Limerick Students Union is a registered charity with the Revenue Commissioners with the emphasis on providing benefit to the "Community of Students" on campus. One of the most rewarding aspect of the Union activities is the many Fundraising Events that have being organised over the years for the benefit of many charities both locally and nationally.**

The annual Kollege Week Festival has contributed a total of £ 68,000.00 over the last four years. This is made up as follows:-



Presentation of cheques to charity

• 1998	£ 17,000.00
• 1999	£ 22,000.00
• 2000	£ 23,000.00
• 2001	£ 6,000.00

There was a big drop in this years funding for charities due to the "Foot and Mouth Disease" with a lot of soul searching by the Union Executive and Kollege Week organisers before we finally got the approval from the Dept of Agriculture for the festival. Despite the short notice and many changes to the calendar of events we were able to go ahead with this great fundraising festival. Many thanks are due to our Union President and Entertainment Officer for organising this event at such notice.

### "Tis Of Limerick We Sing"

The Union used the government "Summer Jobs Scheme" to employ a number of Students to research this project. Many old and new songs were collected and copy write obtained. The CD/Cassette is a compilation of many Sporting, Cultural and Emigration songs of Limerick. In order to make the CD/Cassette authentic and relevant many of the singers involved are not professional singers but would be associated with the area or events which their songs describe.

The CD/Cassette was a big success with a total of £5,000.00 collected for charity.

## STUDENTS' UNION



# Role Of Honour

Year	President	Welfare	Education	Communications
2001 / 2002	Michael Phelan	Tara Curley	Tom O'Donovan	Patrick Kennedy
2000 / 2001	Michael Phelan	Siobhan O'Connell	Tom O'Donovan	Fergal Fennessy
1999 / 2000	<b>President</b> Pat McCarthy	<b>Welfare</b> Dee Dee Hosty	<b>Education</b> Dave O'Donovan	
1998 / 1999	Barry McLoughlin	Tara McCabe	Kieran O'Hara	
1997 / 1998	Bobby O'Connor	Elaine Kiely	Ivan Moran	
1996 / 1997	Seamus Doran	Elaine Kiely	Conor Cronin	
1995 / 1996	Brian Synott	Lorna Kerin	Duncan O'Toole	
1994 / 1995	Matthew Hamilton	Caroline McGrath	Cormac Daly	
1993 / 1994	<b>President</b> Ray Hurley	<b>Vice President</b> Fergus Hennessy	<b>Transitional &amp; Services Officer</b> Sean Cummins	
1992 / 1993	Diarmuid Scully	Enda Lonergan	Billy Kirwan	
1991 / 1992	Colm Croffy	Donal Waide	Billy Kirwan	
1990 / 1991	<b>President</b> Colm Croffy	<b>Vice President</b> Joan Keating		
1989 / 1990	Maura Adshead	Pat Diggin		
1988 / 1989	Steve McNamara	Jim Hayes		
1987 / 1988	Steve McNamara	Ian Dinan		
1986 / 1987	Joe Neylon	Harriet Whelan		
1985 / 1986	Micheal O'Callaghan	Chris McInerney		
1984 / 1985	Tony White	Matt Lee		
1983 / 1984	Ronan McDermott	Eleanor Gaire		
1982 / 1983	Brendan O'Sullivan	???		
1981 / 1982	Jim O'Dwyer	Rachel Humphreys RIP		
1980 / 1981	Jim Collins	John Ryan		
1979 / 1980	Daithi O'Sullivan	Anne Lynch		
1978 / 1979	Sean O'Brien	Winette Reddington		
1977 / 1978	Ger Slattery	Andrew Elder		
1976 / 1977	Pat Mangan	John Reddington		
1975 / 1976	Pat Carroll	John Kerr		
1974 / 1975	John McCann			
1973 / 1974	John Kerr			
1972 / 1973	John Reddington			





# AN FOCAL

www.ulsu.ul.ie

*an Focal*  
 University of Limerick Students' Union Newspaper 18th Oct - Week 4, Autumn Semester, 1994

Page 8  
 Whats wrong  
 with UL 2

Page 6  
 Vision  
 2020

**Inside**  
 Letters: From First Year & Postings  
 News: Wednesday, From Vision 2020, In-Errol  
 Opinions: Eamon & Matthew Hamilton  
 Features: Electron & Musicians



## Wednesday Afternoons Gone!



**PRESIDENT**  
**DIARMUID SCULLY**  
 University of Limerick Tel:065-333644



**OFFICERS**

STUDENTS' UNION  
**an Focal**  
 University of Limerick Students Union

ULSU  
 UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK  
 ULSU CLUB

TERM 2  
 WEEK 6  
 18 OCT 1994

**Student Centre  
 Plans Published**

First Name : Homer  
 Surname : Simpson  
 I.D. Number : 00a234g  
 Date Of Birth : 30/03/1979



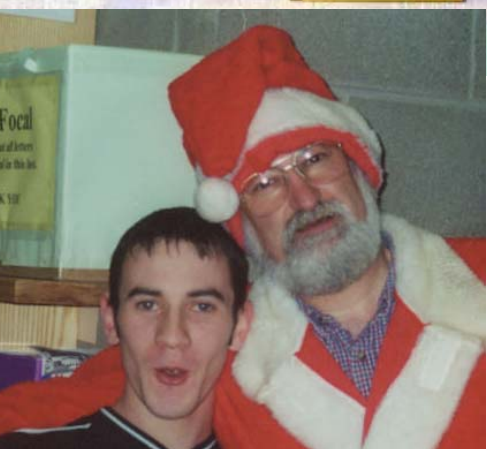
**CÁRTA C  
 MEMBERSHIP CA**

**FIANNA Fáil**  
 OF IRELAND

Name SEAMUS DORAN  
 Address PRESIDENT ULSU  
 Cumann..... C.D.C

I hereby declare that I accept the Constitution of Fianna Fáil to work resolutely for the achievement of its aims.

Signature of Member.....  
 Signature of Cumann Sec.....



## The Student Centre

**The new Student Centre provides the Student Union with a focal point and a headquarters from which various services can be provided to students. The present Students Union now has a facility, which can provide the following services:**

- Administrative Offices
- Clubs and Societies Office and rooms
- Games Room
- Radio Facility
- Alumni Office
- Co-op Interview Rooms
- Music Rooms
- 2 Conference Rooms
- Stables Bar & Restaurant
- Scholars Bar & Restaurant
- Retail Units

The present Student Union would like to thank those former officers that played a major part in bringing this project from its original concept to completion.

The original concept was put to the students by the President of the Union in 1996. The motion was that:

“UL Students approve the introduction of a special capitation fee of £30.00 per annum to initiate and provide 50% of funding for the construction of a Student Centre.”

A condition of this proposal was that the fee would only remain in place for as long as was necessary to complete the capitalized funding of the project.

Over the next few years the Sabbatical Officers worked very hard to bring the dream through to reality.

- In 1996/97 Seamus Doran, President, Elaine Keily, Welfare Officer and Conor Cronin, C.E.O., sold the idea to the University
- In 1997/98 Bobby O'Connor, President, Elaine Keily, Welfare and Ivan Moran, C.E.O., finally got agreement to commence the project.
- The Building work started in July 1998.
- The Sabbatical Officers for 1998/99 under the Presidency of Barry McLoughlin with Tara McCabe, Welfare Officer and Kieran O'Hara, C.E.O., formalized the agreement under which the Union and The University manage and operate the new centre.

The Student Union finally moved into the new centre in October 1999 and the Student Shop relocated from the old mall to its present location adjacent to the Stables, Book Store and Paddocks Restaurant. The president of the Union at the time was Patrick McCarthy with Dee Dee Hosty as Welfare Officer and Dave

O'Donovan as C.E.O.

The Student Union had finally come of age. Over a period of five years the union had taken the initiative of the project from its original concept as proposed by students at referendum to completion.

The Student Union would also like to thank the staff of the Union over this period. In particular, Mr. Gerald Barry, the General Manager of the union at the initial stages and later on Mr. Stanley Blennerhassett

The management and staff of Limerick University and Plassey Campus Centre Ltd should also be thanked for all their efforts, encouragement and foresight during this project. Both the Students Union and the University have put a great deal of effort into this project.



*The Games Room in the new ULSU centre*

## ULSU Clubs and Societies

**The following is a synopsis of events that have taken place since my appointment here in the University of Limerick Students Union. As such the complete history of clubs and societies is not available to me, therefore there is no offence intended to those clubs and societies and sabbaticals that have gone before my tenure.**

There was a comment passed this year in the Clubs and Societies Office, in the heat of the election battle as Mick and Tom sought re-election and many Clubs and Society individuals responded to their call to arms (extra arms that is to pass out the flyers/posters / stickers and manifestos). The comment was that there was a political wing in all organisations and that the Unions political wing appeared to be the clubs and societies, needless to say the quips and banter that followed was akin to a comedy show.

However jokes aside, the ingenuity and drive of clubs and societies is indicative of all that is good and positive amongst students in the



*Clubs and Societies Village—2001*

University of Limerick Students Union today. This was displayed in earnest three years ago when, under Bobby O'Connor's reign as SU President he was mandated by the clubs and societies to create a full time position to help ensure the continuity of the Clubs and Societies and establish a long term plan for their development. Hence my own position as “Clubs and Societies Development Officer” was created and

effectively replaced the previous incentive of 2 students who on an annual, 6 month basis, were placed on co-op as the clubs and societies Administrator. Clubs and Societies as a body had begun to flex its muscle.

Shortly after that time individuals such as David Fleming, Muiris O'Sullivan, Ron Byrne, Mike Knightson, Tim Mc Auliffe, Garvan Barry and Keith Pigott and Barry Mc Loughlin provided the backbone for the support and background necessary for the newly created position. Henceforth we began to focus on the impasses that existed to clubs and societies in the past.

First came the re-structuring of the Clubs and Societies Executive. This necessitated a 200-person quorum to amend the constitution to allow clubs and societies a measure of autonomy that was not possible with the SU constitution of the time. Although defeated the first year by virtue of the EGM being inquorate we succeeded the very next semester and the winds of change blew rapidly thereafter. Council meetings became a regular discus-

sion forum of approx. 80 to 100 people on a fortnightly basis and the newly invigorated Clubs and Societies executive received their mandate for the development of clubs and societies as a whole. Budgeting procedures became streamlined and the students began to



*ULSU Waterpolo Club in action*

determine their own finances in a democratic fashion and a set of criteria was established to allow for the elimination of bias and a more fair dispersal of funds agreeable to the majority. Issues that necessitated sabbatical intervention were quickly utilised as clubs and societies realised their own growing power and regularly mandated their elected sabbaticals to do they're bidding. The first major success on this front was the re-activation of a Capital Intensive Club Fund which had been lapsed and 5 clubs enjoyed an unexpected windfall of £16,000 which had amassed over a four year period in the Plassey Campus coffers. Two years ago the Clubs and Societies Executive established a 13 point 3-year plan. At the end of this year (12 months from its inception) all but 3 remain achieved or initiated, such is the enthusiasm and motivation of the Clubs and Societies Executive. Incorporated in the list of goals, has been the introduction of a clubs and societies lotto to help alleviate the current financial shortfall. A concerted drive for the re-introduction for Wednesday afternoons for sport is underway, an application to the University for mini-buses and the successful implementation of an "Orientation Week Village".



*ULSU Debating Union in action*

The orientation week village, the brainchild of Mick Phelan as a Societies Executive, was brought to fruition last year as a marquee was erected (sponsored by Digiphone-on-Line) with 70 custom built stalls (sponsored by Willamette) to house all clubs and societies. This provided a more central and a more concerted approach to reaching more students and educate them on the benefits of a clubs and society involvement during their time in UL. Many of the clubs in existence at the moment have already successfully tapped into the ingenuity and resourcefulness of its members within the ULSU's Clubs and Society structure. Examples of this reign from the Physics society trip to France to photograph the chromosphere of the sun as part of a NASA based project during the last total eclipse. The Rowing club who have twice competed in the world renowned "Head of the Charles" in Boston and are on their way back for a third time this year. The Kayak club who have twice been to Wales and the Alps in the last two years. The Outdoor Pursuits Club who have been caving in the Pico's in Spain, mountaineering in Scotland and are currently engaged in plans for an expedition to go to South America in 3 years time.



*ULSU Kayak Club in action*

In the best traditions of the Debating union this year they competed in the "worlds" which took place in Glasgow (Sydney-Australia last year). They were also present at the Oxford IV which is the biggest outside of "Worlds" whereby Michael Hourigan and Keith Pigott made the final and were beaten but Keith did take first prize as the best individual speaker. They also made the Irish Times final. As a consequence of all these achievements both were invited to the prestigious "British Isles Individual Speakers Championships". Only 8 people are ever invited to this competition outside of the UK and UL was the only college with two representatives and both made it to the final stages.

Probably the most the most audacious venture that the clubs and societies executive have been mandated to address is to lobby the University for the provision of a boathouse on UL grounds. This is to provide a permanent base for our Rowing club and Kayak clubs respectively who to date have in their possession, in various locations on and off campus, equipment whose value is in excess of £60,000. Through vandal-

ism and lack of a permanent base the rowing club have incurred £18,000 worth of damage this year alone.

All the achievements above are made more remarkable by virtue of the fact that we currently experience an £80,000 shortfall from the budget figure we have to offer but the resourcefulness of clubs and societies in obtaining sponsorship from the simple table quiz to corporate sponsorship is quite remarkable.



*ULSU Athletics Club in action*

In conclusion, in an eagerly fought student union presidential election two years ago as one candidate responded when the question was levelled from the floor, that the students union were a cliché and what was his view on this. Expecting a response of plausible denial from the presidential hopeful, as cliché was seen as a dirty word it was categorically stated that "Yes the Union were a clique". The astute individual in question went on to explain defiantly that a cliché was not to be interpreted as a bad thing because it was in fact the close knit people who gave a damn about the "Union". Although unsuccessful in his bid to be elected which was more to do with the individuals choice of politics (presently holds the position of the "Director of Elections for Munster" for Sinn Fein). He successfully captured the ethos of students union and all its associated entities such as clubs and societies. The minority strive for excellence that the majority may reap the fruits of its labour.

I have never worked for an organisation where the sheer dedication of a disproportionate few exudes such loyalty from so many, it for this reason that the future of the students union at the present moment in time is well assured.

*Paul Lee*

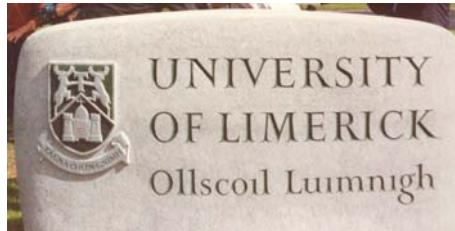
## The Next 30 Years

**As we look back on the last 30 years of the Students' Union and look forward to the next thirty years, perhaps it is as well to pause and remember the basics. The Students' Union is about looking after students and their welfare. That duty is the paramount responsibility of the Students' Union, and everything that we do must be done with that in mind. The Students' Union can be thought of as an organisation that rests on three main legs.**

First of all its political structures, the Union General Meeting, Class Representatives Council and the SU Executive giving students a voice that can be heard and ensuring that students are fairly represented, both within the University and within the context of the wider community. The second major leg of the Students' Union is the Clubs and Societies that it is responsible for administering and financing, and the third is to provide some of the many different services that are needed by students. Like any tripod, if one of the legs is taken away, then the entire structure will collapse, and so it is vital that the development of the Students' Union continues to strengthen these three areas.

With the recent rapid expansion of the University of Limerick, there has of late been a growing feeling that the students of UL are becoming more distant from the Students' Union. While this is perhaps in some respects inevitable, one of the major challenges that must be faced is to minimise this effect as much as possible. The Students' Union must always seek to be as inclusive as possible, and must never lose touch with the students who are its fundamental reason for existence in the first place. One way that this can be tackled is to try and increase participation in the Class Reps

structure. The Class Reps Council can be used both as a means to receive feedback from students on the ground as to the problems that they face to take direction from that feedback and act on it in the correct forum, and also as a means for the Students' Union to disseminate information. As has already been seen with the Clubs and Societies, the appointment of a person dedicated to the development of the structures of Class Reps would undoubtedly mark the beginning of a major step forward in this direction. It is hoped that a full time employee in this role could also build on the sterling work of David Fleming and other members of



the Secretariat in developing the internal structures of the Students' Union.

The Clubs and Societies of UL have already had the benefit of the hard work of Paul Lee for the last number of years. The successes that the Clubs and Societies of UL have had in the last number of years, both in the competitive sense and also in the wider social context is due in no small measure to him. Clubs and Societies provide a social outlet to students, and the enthusiasm with which many students pursue their chosen sport or pastime gives lie to the image that all students are merely interested in alcohol. While drinking is undoubtedly part of the social scene in any university, the alternative outlets offered by Clubs and Societies ensure that going to the pub is far from the only thing to do on any given night, and the Students' Union

must always strive to ensure that Clubs and Societies are always given the best possible chance to strive and prosper. Of course the completion of the new Sports Arena, with its impressive facilities offers even more opportunities to develop the clubs on campus. Given fair access to this building there is no doubt but that the Clubs and Societies of UL will go from strength to strength.

The final leg of the tripod on which the Students' Union rests is the services that it offers. The new Student Centre has meant that the Students' Union can offer new services to students and also improve the standard of the existing services it offers. For example, this year, the Students' Union is hoping to get a recruitment agency off the ground. The idea of this service is that over time it will develop into a full blown employment agency that will find jobs for both UL graduates and also find relevant part time jobs for current students. Any money created from this enterprise will be invested back into the Students' Union and Club and Societies to allow those bodies to develop further.

The Students' Union must always seek to develop, to move with the changing times and to ensure that it always stays relevant to the students on the ground, whose welfare and well being it is charged with. It is a tribute to the sabbatical officers of the last thirty years that the Students' Union of UL is as strong and as vibrant an organisation as it is today, and I have no doubt that that the Union will in future continue to go from strength to strength .

*Michael Phelan*

*July 2001*

## Special Thanks

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Finally, all our staff for their time and dedication to the Students' Union. They are a truly remarkable team to be a part of, and hopefully the coming year will be as successful as the last.

