

Cumann na nIar Oifigeach Coimisiúnta

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

ARCO Newsletter — September 2001

Issue No 1.

The **7th Annual General Meeting** will be held in the Auditorium, 2 Eastern Brigade Headquarters, **Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin**, on **Saturday, 13 October 2001 at 11 30 am**. Please see Notice and Agenda enclosed. Coffee will be available in the Officers' Mess beforehand, and a light lunch will be served after the meeting. It being Saturday and, in order to facilitate the Mess and to control costs, **members who wish to partake of the lunch are requested to notify the Honorary Secretary, ARCO, Colonel John Ryan, by letter or by telephone (01/8313731) not later than Monday, 8th of October.**

ARCO award to the Cadet School.

In order to foster a comradeship between retired officers and serving officers, and to mark our appreciation of the present day Defence Forces, the Executive Committee decided to sponsor an award to the Cadet School. We have purchased a perpetual presentation sword, to be known as 'An Claidheamh Gaiscíochta' or 'The Sword of Achievement', to be awarded to the best Cadet at commissioning. We are pleased to inform our members that the first presentation was made to Second Lieutenant Denise McDonagh by the President of ARCO, Brig-General Pat Monahan, at the commissioning of the 76th Class on 2nd July 2001. The Sword will be on permanent display in the Cadet Mess. A replica, in its own display case, accompanies each award as a personal memento of the occasion.

Commission on Public Service pensions. Final Report.

This Commission was established in 1996 to examine and report on the occupational pension arrangements of public servants (incls Defence Forces) having regard to present and future costs, claims for improvements, changes in the working environment and conditions of employment and the operational needs of the Services concerned. The Final Report of the Commission is comprehensive, detailed and informative and contains fiftyseven recommendations in addition to many observations. Many would be of benefit to pensioners if adopted, but there are some which would be a cause of concern, mainly because they are new and of uncertain implication. It is not possible at this stage to predict the final outcome of the Report, as staff associations, unions, representative bodies, pensioner associations, etc, will be consulted.

Future pension increases.

At present, pension increases are based on the parity principle. The Commission recommends a radical change, to one based on a Public Service Earnings Index, common to all. The theory is that the Index would aim to capture changes in pay across the whole public service and, by matching pension increases to developments in this Index, pensioners would benefit from the earnings growth of the Public Service as a whole. In practice, a single rate of increase would be applied, twice yearly, to all pensions, based on the change in earnings, averaged for the public service as a whole over the previous six monthly period, as compiled by the CSO. It would be paid automatically and as provided by legislation. The proposed new system would not result in any extra cost to the State. While, obviously, some groups would gain and some lose by the change at different times, depending on development of pay for different groups of serving staff at different times, it would be expected that, over time, the effect would be broadly neutral, according to the Commission. There are arguments in favour of this recommendation and also against. A detailed examination will be necessary before a view can be adopted.

Pensionability of MSA for pre-1990 pensioners.

The Association made a submission on this to the Commission. To quote the conclusion of the Commission — "the cost of any change in policy on this matter would be substantial. In addition a change in policy could possibly extend to other pensioner groups with similar claims — Accordingly — the Commission does not recommend any increase in pension — ". The Executive Committee is disappointed with this outcome, particularly having regard to the fact that it has taken five years to address the claim and that the reasons given by the Commission correspond precisely with those of the Department of Defence when rejecting our various submissions on the subject originally.

(over——)

Indeed the conclusion, as quoted, has parallels with the 'appalling vista' approach, and should not have been rejected on that basis exclusively. We feel that the issue was not judged objectively on its intrinsic merits and we intend to continue to press the case of MSA pensionability for those pre-1990 pensioners as new information comes to light and as opportunities arise.

We do suggest that it is a particularly relevant item to develop by those of us who have political clout or connection, and in the context of the impending general election it will be a suitably emotive issue to raise with all the candidates and canvassers.

For our older members.

We wish to remind our older members that changes announced in recent budgets may be of particular relevance—

- Medical cards for all over 70 years of age, without means test. (Cardholders are exempt from the 2% Health Contribution Levy, shown as a 'PRSI' deduction on pension cheques).
 - Free Schemes(TV licence,ESB/Gas, Telephone rental) for all over 70 years of age.
 - Pre 19 53 Social Welfare contributions to count towards the pro-rata old age contributory pension.
 - Social Welfare death benefit. (Now standing at £500).
- Unfortunately, forms must be filled in to get any of these benefits. These forms are available at Post Offices, Health Centres, Citizens Advice Centres, etc.

Defence Forces Personnel Support Service.

The Personnel Support Service was put in place in 1991 with the objective of providing a confidential welfare, information, education and referral service for officers and men of the Defence Forces. Its staff includes a Directorate at DFHQ, an officer at each Brigade HQ, Air Corps, Naval Service, an NCO at each Barracks, and professionally qualified Social Workers.

As a result of a request by ARCO to the Chief of Staff, and with the proactive support of the Director, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Kealy, this service has been extended on an informal basis to cater for retired personnel. This is a very significant gesture by the Defence Forces to its retired members and will help to retain and to foster a link between both.

There are many organisations, statutory and voluntary, operating in this field and it is not expected that the Personnel Support Service will be called upon that often, but it is a safety net and it is our own.

The contacts for retired officers are —

Lt-Col Maurice Kealy.	Director, DFHQ.	01/8042752
Comdt Oliver Barbour.	2 E Bde, C/Brugha Bks.	01/8046346
Comdt Eamonn Smith.	DFTC, Curragh Camp.	045/445052
Capt. Tim O' Donoghue.	1 S Bde, Collins Bks, Cork.	021/514193
Comdt Ned Kelly.	4 W Bde, Custume Bks., Athlone.	0902/211296
Capt. Garry Gartland.	Air Corps, Baldonnell.	01/8046560
Lt(NS) Colm McGinley.	Naval Base, Haulbowline.	021/378777

Sympathy Card.

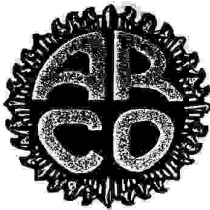
The Association now has its own special Sympathy Card. It was felt that there was a need for a suitably-expressed card to convey our sympathy and to demonstrate that our deceased members will not be forgotten. The intention is to forward one to the next-of-kin on the death of a member, or indeed of any retired officer, when the details become known. In this respect your assistance and co-operation would be appreciated.

Finally.

The Executive Committee welcomes the views and comments of members on the Association, and, in particular, on matters of concern to pensioners in general.

Personal column.

Capt Noel McEvoy, retired 1965, would like to hear from former army colleagues — 4/11 Rookwood Street, WA 6050, Australia. Tel 0892722794.



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Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

REPORT ON THE 6th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 21/10/00.

The 6th AGM was held on 21/10/00 in the Audio Visual Theatre, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Bks, Dublin, in accordance with the Notice and Agenda issued to all members. The President, Brig Gen P. Monahan presided and forty eight members attended, and there were twenty nine apologies.

REPORT OF THE HON SECRETARY.

Col John Ryan in his Report, covered the work of the Executive Committee over the past year. Some new initiatives were being taken to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between ARCO and the Defence Forces. He also covered meetings with the Chief of Staff, RACO and C&A Branch DOD, and an ARCO sympathy card. Long standing pension issues of MSA and LSI's not yet resolved.

REPORT OF THE HON TREASURER.

Col Jim Fagan distributed copies of the audited accounts for year end 28/2/00. The surplus of income over expenditure was £1967.00, leaving a balance in bank as on 28/2/00, of £17,938.00. compared with £15,971.00 for the previous year end.

REPORT OF HON MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.

Lt Col Martin Bates reported that paid up membership as on 28/2/00, stood at 487, an increase of 17 on the previous year. Membership as on date of this AGM is 507. He also reported on the progress in the computerisation of the membership lists.

INCOMING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

President.	Brig Gen Pat Monahan	01/8211117.
Vice President.	Lt Col Danny Flood	056/61758.
Hon Secretary.	Col John Ryan	01/8313731.
Hon Treasurer.	Col Jim Fagan	044/56315.
Hon Membership Sec.	Lt Col Martin Bates	01/8339772.
Eastern Branch Reps.	Col Neil O'Brien	01/2983284.
	Maj Gen Fergus O'Connell	01/2834271.
Curragh Branch Reps.	Col Donal O'Carroll	045/432451.
	Comdt Gerry Ryan	045/431450.
Athlone Branch Reps.	Col Kevin Hanley	0902/75638.
	Col Pat Begley	0902/78510.
Galway Branch Rep.	Lt Col Ned Cusack	091/555257.
Naval Branch Rep.	Cdre Liam Brett	021/353448.

No one came forward to represent Cork, Limerick or other areas. Three members agreed to be co-opted on to the Executive at its next meeting:- Col Harry Crowley, Comdt Terry McNulty and Capt Ray Tumulty.

CONCLUSION.

The President thanked all present for their attendance and contribution to the discussions to ensure a successful meeting. Members were requested to keep in touch, particularly at AGM time. The Executive Committee would appreciate any comments or suggestions to help maintain an effective Association.

*Hon Secretary,
28 Maywood Ave,
Raheny, Dublin 5.*

21/10/00.



The founding members of ARCO pose for a picture at a Mayoral reception at the Mansion House in June 1994.

A PUBLIC awareness survey of the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO) might establish that we have a low profile, with perhaps some negative views of our role and objectives. This is a matter of concern for us, and we would like to develop a more enlightened perception of who we are, our aims, and the degree to which we have succeeded to date.

Colonel Kevin Hanley was the catalyst for the establishment of ARCO in 1993. Following a long and distinguished military career he recognised that the *esprit de corps* of his comrades, always in evidence during their service, could find no fulfilment in retirement. There was no meaningful organisation in place to focus the energy and shared interests of retired officers. There had to be more to retirement than gardening classes and golf clubs.

Another factor was the frustration felt in the wake of the Gleeson Commission Report (1990), particularly in respect of the arbitrary decision by the establishment at that time to exclude the application of military service allowance from those who retired prior to 1990. This effectively excluded many officers who had given long and distinguished service throughout the War of Independence, the establishment of the army, the Emergency, years of UN Service, and border duty. This was surely military service, and was duly acknowledged as such by the award of military service medals – but there it finished, there was no recognition in

ARCO

By Comdt Terry McNulty (retd)

financial terms. It appears to us a clear injustice, and that sense of injustice became a focus for the establishment of the Association.

Initially we received support from RACO, with an inaugural meeting chaired by Lt Col David Stapleton (recently retired Chief of Staff), involving Comdt Brian O'Keefe with Col Hanley and Comdt Jack Devereaux proposing outlines for the new organisation. It was clear, however, that ARCO would have to be independently constituted, and so it evolved with the immediate support and participation of a great number of retired officers.

Together they structured an organisation with regional committees and developed a policy of assertive representation for our members and all retired officers and their families. Capt Ray Tumulty became involved and brought with him a degree of personal enthusiasm and organisational flair.

The formal founding meeting was held on October 9th 1993 at the Aisling Hotel, with an attendance of approximately 60. Many more meetings and discussions ensued with Ministers of State, politicians and public representatives, the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Noel Bergin, and RACO Secretary, Brian O'Keefe.

The steering committee proceeded to establish the Association formally, guided in the draft of its constitution by Capt Donal Egan, BL. ARCO is now recognised by the Department of Defence.

Politics aside there were other concerns and objectives. These included fostering comradeship through shared social occasions such as outings, lunches, meetings and visits. We are also concerned with the memory of deceased members and the welfare of their families, and ARCO attends the National Day of Commemoration ceremony at the RHK each year.

We aim to develop our membership from its current 600-plus to a potential 1,300 by an awareness and publicity campaign, and through pressing our claims for justice and fair play for retired officers. These include matters of pension entitlements, incorporating issues such as long service increment, military service allowance, and the equitable application of productivity clauses in the current pay structure. With a trend towards early retirement, ARCO may also soon be very relevant to a large number of officers currently serving.

We hope to reach out to more than the current membership, to inform them of our activities and appeal to them to come on board. If we can reach our target number it would greatly strengthen our hand in the many issues we are pursuing with the Department and the politicians. It is in this context that we share common cause with a number of other organisations, most notably RACO, PDFORRA, ONE, CAOGA, DFBF, and we are affiliated to the national federation of pensioners associations since 1995.

ARCO Executive

President	Brig Gen Pat Monahan
Vice President	Lt Col Danny Flood
Hon Secretary	Col John Ryan
Hon Treasurers	Col Jim Fagan
	Comdt John Kiely

(Lt Col Martin Bates is another industrious member of the executive, and is working steadily to complete a comprehensive membership database. The executive meets monthly at Cathal Brugha Barracks.)