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Mr Dave Thomas  
General Secretary  
Association of Higher Civil & Public Servants  
Fleming's Hall, 12 Flemings Place  
Dublin 4

Dear Mr Thomas,

Thank you for your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2009.

I enclose a copy of the speech that I made in Dáil Eireann on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 during the course of the debate on the Ryan Report. I believe that my comments are self explanatory in the context of the questions that I posed to the Minister over a number of months.

I have reviewed my relationship with the Minister and his department over the last twenty-one months. I have examined correspondence and replies to parliamentary questions.

I regret that in the circumstances I am unable to publicly withdraw my remarks.

If you have any further queries or questions I would be available to deal with them.

Yours sincerely,

Ruairi Quinn, TD  
24<sup>th</sup> June 2009

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	25.6.09
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## **Ryan Report on the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse: Motion**

12:00 pm, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009

Ruairi Quinn TD

(Dublin South East, Labour)

As we all do, I have limited time available to speak, and no words of mine or of anybody else in the House can undo the damage, harm or hurt caused to and which continues for those people. However, the actions that we take can make some redress to them, their children and their children's children. I appreciate the point made by the Taoiseach, which is contained in one of the recommendations, that we erect a monument containing the words of the apology that the Taoiseach uttered in May 1999 but I suggest we should go further. We should have a living monument dedicated to those people, some of whom are no longer with us, that contains their stories and memories and our records of abuse, both clerical and State, and inhuman treatment so that the walking wounded, emotionally and physically, who are the people who came to the gates of this assembly yesterday can be able to point to a permanent record of their hurt to explain in part to their children and to their children's children why they, with their stolen childhoods, could not live full lives as adults.

My next point is more substantial and I am delighted the Taoiseach is here with his colleague and friend, the Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Batt O'Keeffe, because I have a serious set of allegations to make against both of them. The problem with the Watergate controversy was that the burglary was wrong but the cover-up was worse. We have compounded our criticism of the religious orders and the church in this regard and we have let free the horrendous record of the Department of Education and Science that continues to the present day. We have castigated in financial terms the regulators for the failure to regulate the banks but the Department of Education and Science has got away scot free in many respects and continues to do so.

I put it to the Minister that there is a continuing culture of deferment and obedience to the Catholic church and its religious orders in the Department of Education and Science that has continually frustrated getting answers to simple questions of which I will provide three examples. It is for the Minister to refute this and he knows from my persistent questioning that it is not for the want of trying on my part to establish facts free of prejudice. On 26 February I asked the Minister for Education and Science "if he [would] enter into talks with an organisation (details supplied) [CORI], some of whose members, as teaching orders, are the legal owners of many of the primary schools". The answer I received was that he would not and that the information as to who owned what school of the 3,200 schools throughout the country was not readily available in an easily accessible format.

On 10 March I asked the Minister whether he would "identify by name, roll number, location and Roman Catholic diocese, each primary school in the ownership of a religious teaching order or a Roman Catholic bishop". The reply stated that there are in excess of 3,200 primary schools in the country and my net point centres on the following paragraph of the reply:

Information relating to school site ownership and property details would have been received by my Department over a long number of years and the legal documents relating to the interest of the State in buildings constructed on sites not in the ownership of the State are generally held on individual files as distinct from a central database. Accordingly, the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in a format that is readily retrievable.

This is what is happening on Marlborough Street and the Minister may spend much time in Cork but I wish he would spend more time there. On 28 May in another question I named the 18 congregations, which the Taoiseach met this week. I will read the second part of the reply I received as time does not permit me to read it out in full but the records are there. It states:

These schools are privately owned and as such the information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in a format that is readily retrievable [The Minister does not even change the text]. The legal documents relating to the interest of the State in buildings constructed on sites not in the ownership of the State are generally held on individual files as distinct from a central database.

Either officials in the Department are members of secret societies such as the Knights of St. Columbanus and Opus Dei and have taken it upon themselves to protect the interests of these clerical orders at this point in time in this year of 2009 or, alternatively, the Minister is politically incompetent and incapable of managing the Department of Education and Science. He went from February to last week saying that the information was not readily available.

The Taoiseach met with the same religious orders. Imagine what he could have said; imagine what power the Taoiseach could have had if he could have said to the 18 orders that, for example the Christian Brothers have 97 schools, paid for mostly by taxpayers through voluntary contributions and grants, and that the Sisters of Mercy and other orders together have perhaps 300 or 400 schools - I am guessing because these guys refuse to tell me.

The legal ownership of those schools should be transferred without any contribution and in return the schools should continue for the time being under the existing patronship arrangements until such time as we democratically and collectively decide how best to do it. We are the only country in Europe - including countries such as Catholic Spain, Catholic Italy and Catholic Austria - where the primary school system is controlled by private organisations. If one thinks they are not private one should examine the court decision on Louise O'Keeffe and how the State was not responsible for the abuse she received from a primary school teacher, who was not a religious person, but that the responsibility lies with the boards of management of the private organisations.

We have to deal with this problem and this is the way we start. The Taoiseach has asked the orders to return in two weeks with an inventory of their assets. The man sitting beside him knows what they are and he is refusing to tell me, a Deputy of this House. I do not believe the Minister, Deputy O'Keeffe, is a bad man. I do not believe he is a Catholic right-wing secret obscurantist but many of the people working for him on a permanent salary - he will be gone in a couple of years - most certainly are or else they are incompetent, lazy and destructive. He can take his choice as to what the explanation is but I have given him the facts. He and his Department are concealing from us, the citizens of the Republic, information on the nature and ownership of schools. I am unable to go into it but one of the replies I received was simply a lie; it suggested that legal protocols were in existence that prevented schools from being sold off. That is not the case for the vast majority of those schools, many of which are in built up areas and were built prior to 1960 when such protocols came into existence.

Build the monument and make it a living lasting voice of what we did. This was not some era of colonial exploitation; this was not the Anglo-Saxon invasion of the country; this is what we did to ourselves for the reasons Deputy Gilmore stated. We should have not just a monument but a living museum and a permanent reminder that never again can it happen and an explanation for those who were affected and their families as to why they were the way they were.

To learn for the future we need to take these schools and our entire primary school infrastructure into public ownership. We are paying for them and funding them. We need to get the management controls that are necessary to bring us into line with every other European country. The

Government has a golden opportunity; the value of 500 schools at €2 million or €3 million each is close to €1 billion. It will go a long way in the eyes of the public towards saying that we are sorry for what happened and for our consistent denial and refusal to recognise our responsibility. It would ensure that whoever is Minister for Education and Science in the future has rational control of the infrastructure to get the best productivity from it.

The Minister, Deputy Batt O’Keeffe, has a serious responsibility to either manage that Department in a modern and effective way or to route out the obstruction that is manifestly evident in the consistent replies I have received from him in the past year.