



**Eamon De Valera, "On Language and the Irish Nation",
speech on Raidió Éireann, 17 May 1943.¹**

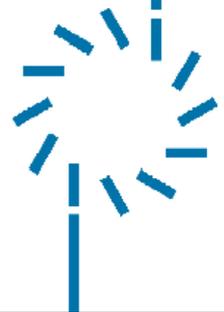
The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live.

With the tidings that make such an Ireland possible, St. Patrick came to our ancestors fifteen hundred years ago promising happiness here no less than happiness hereafter. It was the pursuit of such an Ireland that later made our country worthy to be called the island of saints and scholars. It was the idea of such an Ireland - happy, vigorous, spiritual - that fired the imagination of our poets; that made successive generations of patriotic men give their lives to win religious and political liberty; and that will urge men in our own and future generations to die, if need be, so that these liberties may be preserved. One hundred years ago, the Young Irelanders, by holding up the vision of such an Ireland before the people, inspired and moved them spiritually as our people had hardly

¹ A radio address by the *Taoiseach* (Head of Government) and erst-while insurrectionary leader, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the language-revivalist Gaelic League. Now often misreferred to, and derided, as the “Comely Maidens speech”. [SPIN note]

Source: Maurice Moynihan (ed.)
Speeches and statements by Eamon De Valera: 1917–73
(Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1980), 466.

been moved since the Golden Age of Irish civilisation. Fifty years later, the founders of the Gaelic League similarly inspired and moved the people of their day. So, later, did the leaders of the Irish Volunteers. We of this time, if we have the will and active enthusiasm, have the opportunity to inspire and move our generation in like manner. We can do so by keeping this thought of a noble future for our country constantly before our eyes, ever seeking in action to bring that future into being, and ever remembering that it is for our nation as a whole that future must be sought.



SPIN source text on
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