

## **Rosemary Masinga was placed with Mary Lou McDonald TD from February to July 2015**

### **Biography**

Originally from Zimbabwe Rosemary is now an Irish citizen. She holds a Masters in Social Policy from NUI Maynooth and a Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from the TCD-UCD Innovation Academy. Rosemary has extensive and wide ranging administrative experience from Zimbabwe including 11 years where she worked as a Consular Assistant and Management Assistant at the British High Commission in Harare, Zimbabwe. Rosemary lives in Lucan, Co. Dublin.

### **Diary**

#### **Part 1**

Day 1: It was great that I had my Leinster House ID already processed. I was able to go straight through the outside security desk. I was brought to the office from the reception by a member of Deputy Mary Lou McDonald's administration staff. I was introduced to all members of staff who were in the Sinn Fein offices. I liked the working environment and all the party office staff gave me a big welcome and were very friendly to me. Deputy McDonald's administration PA went through the work plan with me formally. The work plan had already been emailed to me prior to today which made it easy for me to know what I was expected to cover before hand. **The Deputy's office is quite busy to the effect that I was hands on the job immediately after the introductory process.**

Firstly, I was shown Deputy McDonald's diary for the week to get an idea of the daily work schedule. On looking at her diary I wondered how she managed, being TD, a Deputy Leader of Ireland's largest opposition party, a member of the PAC Committee and on top of that a mother and wife. I was given a task to respond to general letters written to the Deputy. **It is amazing the various different queries that the office has to deal with.** The rest of the day was spent reading the letters and typing up the replies.

Before today, I was of the impression that the only busy and interesting days at Leinster House were Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays when TDs would be in the office. I was wrong. The office was busy all the time. Busier than I had expected which is how I like a workplace to be. I finished at 4.00pm and walked out of Leinster House with a sense of

achievement, and very grateful to Crosscare for affording me the opportunity to experience what it is like to work in a TD's office. I am looking forward to going back on Friday.

Friday 13/2/2015: Today I went straight to the office on my own. I was again greeted with cheerfulness. The day was hands on once again. I spent the day responding to more letters to Deputy McDonald. There has been a big backlog in attending to these queries so it may take some days to clear them.

Monday 16/2/2015: Deputy McDonald came to the office just to greet me this morning. She had another busy schedule ahead of her and also to prepare to go on Clare Byrne's live TV programme later this evening. The senior member of staff whose desk I was working on joined us this afternoon. She assigned me to a project which needs to be completed in 3 weeks. I must produce a report on the project and hand it in to the staff member. I got my head so deep in it I did not even notice I had gone way past the time to go home. I had another great day. I was delighted to be working on the project. It also gives me the opportunity to practice my project management skills.

Friday 20/2/2015: I know my way around the building much better now. I spent the day on the project and making some progress.

Monday 23/2/2015: I made big progress on the project. It is looking good and I am very happy with my progress. **I have settled in very well and I am loving every moment in Leinster House.**

## **Part 2**

23 February - 22 May

This has been another busy period. I finished the project I worked on for 8 weeks. I was then assigned to help out on clearing a backlog on administrative correspondence. I went to RTE studios in Leinster House with Deputy Mc Donald. This gave me the opportunity to witness first hand how she engages with the press. I went to her constituency office for the first time. I met with staff who showed me what the TD does during clinics. I am still working on clearing the backlog on general administrative correspondence.

### Part 3

Diary 12 May – 14 July

I went to the public gallery of the Dáil chamber a few more times during this period. I had the opportunity to watch the issues on Direct Provision, single parents payment cuts, social housing crisis and homelessness being debated on. I worked at the constituency clinic for half a day. On that day I worked in the Leinster House in the morning and proceeded to Deputy McDonald's Amien Street constituency office in the afternoon. It was a relief to be away from the constant ringing bells of Leinster House.

#### Reflections

First of all, I am very grateful to have been part of the OPD programme. It was a great honour and highest privilege for me to be afforded the opportunity to shadow Deputy McDonald, Teachta Dála for Dublin Central, Sinn Féin Deputy Leader and the party's Spokesperson on Public Expenditure and Reform. **One memorable day for me is the first day I went to the public gallery of the Dáil chamber. I remember sitting in the gallery and observing the Leaders Questions session and thinking, wow, I am watching democracy in action.** It is one thing to watch the debates at home on the news; it was a whole different thing to be present in the Dáil chamber during the debates. Deputy McDonald serves as a member for two Oireachtas Committees; the Public Accounts Committee, and; the Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform Committee. A highlight moment for me was when Deputy McDonald brought me to a Public Accounts Committee meeting. I felt so privileged to be given the opportunity to witness first-hand how the Committee members quiz Government agencies how they allocate, spend and manage finances. Prior to the internship, I was not aware that such a mechanism was in place and that Government agencies can be held accountable to every public euro they spent.

The most memorable day was when Deputy McDonald invited me to go with her to the RTÉ studio in Leinster House where she was to be on air. I was mesmerised by the whole atmosphere of being in the studio watching her speaking on the radio and meeting the RTE political correspondent David Davin-Power in person for the first time. This was a great opportunity for me to witness first hand how Deputy McDonald engages with the press.

Having studied a Masters degree in Rights and Social Policy, I was happy to witness how social issues are dealt with in practice within the Irish political system. On a few occasions I sat and watched from the public gallery of the Dáil Chamber when issues for single parents and asylum seekers in direct provision were being debated. I remember being the only person in the gallery on Friday 12 June 2015 during the Direct Provision Report Motion and listening to all the speakers as they delivered their speeches on the report.

**The best thing for me about the internship is shadowing a female TD. I have always wondered how it is to be a woman involved in politics.** I learnt from Deputy McDonald that being a female in politics requires a strong will power, commitment and dedication. I am still in awe at how all female TDs manage to juggle political and family responsibilities especially the TDs with multiple roles in politics and those with small children. I never knew they worked so incredibly hard for very long hours.

My biggest takeaway from my participation on the OPD programme and from Deputy McDonald, is that **although politics is still a man's game, there are opportunities in the political world for women to do the work just as well.** From the inspiration I acquired from Deputy McDonald and all the female TDs, I may, in the near future choose to take a further step into the political arena.

Last but not least, it was a great pleasure working with all the administration staff. They took me on board from the very first day to the last, to the extent that they made it very sad and hard for me to leave. I suppose in this case the sadness is a good feeling because it can only mean that in them, I found true friends and colleagues. I miss working with them. The only thing I do not miss is the sound of the Dáil and Seanad bells – and the Division bells.