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The Sinn Fein Story
Irish Times History &
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Northern Ireland

Fissured Politics

The pseudo-democracy of Northern Ireland has now reached a clear position of stalemate. All that is new is that the stalemate is out in the open. The moves have all been gone through and there is nothing more that spin-doctoring can do to camouflage the situation.

Northern Ireland is not, and never has been, a state. It was never anything more than a delegated apparatus of the British state designed to keep the Six Counties at arm's length from British democracy and to give Britain leverage on 26 County affairs.

Because it is not a state, the democratic principle of majority rule cannot work in it. If it was a state it would have given rise to a form of politics appropriate to its functioning as a state. But the state in Northern Ireland has always been the British state—not only in ultimate sovereignty but in a wide range of the institutions within which everyday life is lived.

Politics do not relate to the actual state. Elections in Northern Ireland have never been contested by parties seeking a mandate to govern the state. The shifts and accommodations and compromises and *de facto* changes of individual position, which happen as a matter of course in the political framework of a state, have never happened there. Elections, therefore, do not give rise to politically functional majorities.

The majority is not a political majority. Policies for government have little or nothing to do with it. It has therefore no moral standing with the minority.

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Captain Kelly: Posthumous Revenge

What is it about Captain Kelly that arouses such vindictiveness? He is beset by enemies on three sides: revisionist, Lynchite and a number of Official IRA hold-outs. (It should be said that not all the erstwhile Officials go along with denigrating Jim Kelly, and some have acted quite honourably towards the Captain in the past, including Cathal Goulding.) Even after death, the assaults go on. Indeed, they are pursued with greater vigour than ever, now that he can no longer vindicate his good name in the courts.

The latest, and perhaps most crudely vicious of all, attack happened on the afternoon of 16th July. It took place virtually to the minute on the first anniversary of his death. The location was Derry. A large assembly of 70 people had gathered to launch an organisation which would campaign and petition to clear Captain Kelly's name. His wife, Sheila, and two of his children were present. The event was attended by an array of well-wishers, including Neil Blaney's nephew, Niall, John Kelly, Dr. and Mrs. MacLean, Paddy 'Derry' Doherty, and Fr. Des Wilson. The meeting was chaired by Fionnbarra Ó Dochartaigh, who himself as a republican had been involved in the Civil Rights movement.

Ó Dochartaigh had been instrumental in inviting a group who attended the campaign launch with destructive intent: a group of former Official IRA people who sat together and viewed the proceedings with sinister and cold faces. They had come to blacken Captain Kelly's name.

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Labour Comment, edited by **Pat Maloney**:

Lessons To Learn by *John Ryan*

The 'Partnership' Age Continues

There has been a change in the relative strengths of majority and minority during the past 80 years. The ratio began at a potential 70:30—but the differential was usually much wider in practice due to demoralisation on the minority side. It is now a steady 60:40, or something less. But the change did not reflect a political 'swing'. It was entirely the product of what is politely called "*demographics*".

The 1998 Agreement took account of the fact that Northern Ireland is only a pretend-democracy in which actual democratic politics play no part. It made detailed arrangements for a subordinate administration in which Ministries were shared out proportionate to the voting strength of parties, and operated independently of each other, being responsible neither to a Cabinet—there being no Cabinet—nor to a Parliament. Ministers were chosen by party leaders from members who were elected to a kind of Parliament, called an Assembly, and operated independently thereafter. The Party could change its Ministers without reference to the Assembly and the DUP did so. Elections to the Assembly were political contests only within each of the two communities who were explicitly recognised as the component parts of Northern Ireland.

The Agreement gave formal structural expression to the social reality of Northern Ireland, and thereby entrenched that reality. The Democratic Unionist Party

rejected the Agreement but took the two Ministers to which it was entitled under it, declaring that this did not imply acceptance of the Agreement. While refusing to recognise the Court, it took a seat on the Bench.

Last year it defeated the Ulster Unionist Party in the Unionist election on an anti-Agreement mandate. The UUP is also anti-Agreement. The difference is that the UUP sought to subvert the Agreement from within while the DUP rejected it outright.

Sinn Fein won the Nationalist election. The Social Democratic and Labour Party was held to have been gullible in its conduct of affairs since 1998.

The DUP, being the major party, will not accept that majority rule does not apply in Northern Ireland. It now refuses to operate the system under which it held two ministries for four years.

High-powered talks were held between the British Government and the DUP at Leeds Castle in mid-September (and also between Sinn Fein and the Government, but not between the DUP and Sinn Fein, and the other parties were also present in the vicinity). A BBC radio report, obviously based on a Government briefing, said that Sinn Fein had met Government requirements in the matter of arms' decommissioning, and the obstacle was the DUP refusal to operate the old Ministerial system, and suggested that, if the DUP made it impossible to restore the

Agreement in its essentials, that fact would be taken into account when an alternative system was devised.

That was the threat which caused David Trimble to sign the Agreement on Good Friday 1998. The alternative was understood to be an enhancement of the minimal joint sovereignty arrangements of the Hillsborough Agreement of 1985. He thereupon decided to sign the Agreement but shred it by opposition from within. The Hillsborough Anglo-Irish governing structures were dismantled under the Agreement.

The threat does not appear to be working on Paisley.

The SDLP was a ghostly presence at Leeds Castle. In the subsequent bickering the DUP suggested that it too should give up something in the interest of compromising, if the IRA gave up its weapons. But the SDLP has nothing to give up short of treason. Its decline was due to the fact that it gave up so much to Trimble while getting nothing in return.

Durkan responded: "*The IRA should never have had arms in the first place*". And there are a great many other things that should never have happened, including Eve eating the apple. But politics is an activity conducted within the Fall, and its object is not a return to Eden.

We never gave any semblance of support to the IRA campaign. At a number of critical junctures the SDLP gave it very substantial support. But we have held for 30 years that the perverse mode of government in Northern Ireland was sufficient reason for the re-emergence of the IRA—in fact the construction of a new IRA out of Northern Ireland conditions.

Durkan's remark is a mere debating point. If it was the position of the SDLP in earnest, it would have agreed to forming an 'anti-terrorist' Coalition with the Unionists. But it knew very well that its electoral support would collapse if it did such a thing.

The gullibility of the SDLP was one factor in causing the Agreement to be a dead letter almost from the start. Another was the aggressively anti-Sinn Fein posture of Dublin Governments. A third was the fact that the appearance of Unionist support for the Agreement was brought about by confidence trickery and there was bound to be a reaction.

John Bruton has now put himself at the head of a movement to re-Anglicise Ireland. He became Taoiseach unexpectedly, at a time when his political career

appeared to be over. He had the sense to know that, unlike De Valera, he needed to do more than look into his heart to know what to say. The Republic was not yet ready for a Unionist Taoiseach. He therefore requested Martin Mansergh, who had been assistant to previous Taoiseachs on Northern policy, and had been one of the organisers of the confidence trick, to stay on as his adviser. Mansergh refused. In the circumstances Bruton can hardly be held responsible for the weakness of his action as Nationalist guarantor of the Agreement. By instinct he was on the Unionist side, and when he sought help for his problem he was refused. And his Fianna Fail successor has often been worse.

And now, by an interesting turn of events, the very failure of Dublin Governments to act as Nationalist guarantors of the Agreement, as British Governments have acted as Unionist guarantors, has led to a resurgence of Sinn Fein in the politics of the Republic.

The culture of the Republic is not yet media-culture. It runs its own way, regardless of the *Irish Times* and Sir Anthony O'Reilly and the greater part of RTE.

*

The Northern Assembly was elected a year ago but has not yet been allowed to sit. Disgruntled fundamentalists of the defeated UUP are therefore short of outlets.

David Burnside found a platform at a meeting of the all-but-forgotten Northern Ireland Grand Committee at Westminster on 17th June, where he said:

"If I was applying to join the Police Service of Northern Ireland, apart from the discrimination in the legislation which has been raised... many times, the disgraceful state discrimination against young Protestant men and women in Northern Ireland. When you apply, in the application form, there are two main categories... There is Catholic, and there is Non-Catholic. Now that is historically wrong, and it is offensive to the population of Northern Ireland. I am a Catholic, a member of the Church of Ireland, when I recite the Creed, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Roman Church is a sect within the Catholic Church. It is the Roman sect. And it is offensive to us as Protestant people to be referred to as Non-Catholic some sort of grouping. And I would ask the Minister to get that legislation changed so that it refers to Roman Catholics, Protestants or Others... Because it is offensive to us as if we have somehow different citizenship in Northern Ireland, and we cannot be represented even within this discriminatory legislation as what we represent in our personal religious affiliations."

Review; *Hope And History, Making Peace In Ireland* by Gerry Adams. Brandon Press. Dingle, Co. Kerry. 2003.

The Sinn Fein Story

"To me, in Co. Waterford, Northern Ireland was merely a squalid little briar-patch swarming with human anachronisms—who often seemed sub-human—and seething with dreary dissensions punctuated by ghastly excesses. Since there seemed to be nothing anybody could do about it, it was best forgotten... and wherever I went people asked me why Christians were fighting in Ireland. To which I replied impatiently that I didn't know myself. It never occurred to me that this reply, from an Irish-woman, betrayed an attitude both stupid and unkind, even, some might say, irresponsible" (*A Place Apart*. Dervla Murphy. Penguin, London. 1979. Foreword p11).

"They built a paper wall around Ireland; on the inside of it they wrote what they wished the Irish people to believe, on its outside they wrote what they wished the world to believe about Ireland" (*Seán Moylan In His Own Words—His Memoir Of The Irish War Of Independence*. Aubane Historical Society. Millstreet, Co. Cork. 2004. 3rd Edn p158).

"The fact that the British government and media have captured the commanding heights of much of the language on the North—IRA/loyalist violence is terror. British Army-RUC violence is not—neatly conceals the fact that the trick with terror is to have so much of it that you don't need to use it, and can therefore wrap yourself up in the comfortable drapery of constitutional rectitude... And the clearest reality of all is that the British gun remains much the biggest one in the affairs of the island" (*Sun. Tribune*, 17th May 1998. Professor Joe Lee (former Chair of Irish history in UCC and now in NYU).

When I was asked to review Gerry Adams's book, I had no qualms and answered immediately in the affirmative. I had read all of Adams previous books and thought myself to be well enough acquainted with his politics that I could do justice to the assignment. But then I asked myself, what did I really know about the North that would qualify me to interpret Adams's account? I had never even visited the place and yet consider myself rather well travelled. As an outsider, I couldn't write about Northern Ireland with the easy familial familiarity of others who write for the *Irish Political Review*. I lived with everything from that place mediated through our media whose hostility to Sinn Fein remains ferocious. Conor Cruise

O'Brien's infamous *Section 31* in the (*Broadcasting (Amendment) Act of 1975*, with its draconian censorship of Sinn Fein is still in place with only the order banning Sinn Fein rescinded. He boasted in his Memoir, *My Life And Themes*, that "the power to reimpose the ban remains" (Poolbeg, Dublin 1999, p375). That repressive and illiberal legislation still casts a very long shadow over any discussion of the North and its affairs, but more especially the republican/nationalist dimension. How can it not when its most ardent supporters still hold powerful political, media and academic positions, and their revisionist history holds sway over our country?

In the last few weeks, as I reread Adams's *Hope And History*, Ireland reeled to such surrealist echoes that, were they fictionalised, would immediately be disregarded as being too far-fetched. First off, there was the Connaught Rangers *imbroglio*, where an Irishman, Cornelius Coughlan, VC (do I have to say that he was serving with the imperial forces?), was commemorated for "heroic behaviour" during the savage suppression of the Indian Mutiny. The American historian Mike Davis, in his seminal study *Late Victorian Holocausts, El Nino Famines And The Making Of The Third World*, wrote that, such was the ferocity of the British response to the Mutiny, that the "India of 'supine sufferers'... was still traumatized by the savage terror that had followed the Mutiny twenty years earlier. Violent protest was everywhere deterred by memories of sepoy's blown apart at the mouths of cannons and whole forests of peasants writhing on the noose" (Verso, London, 2001, p54). Davis unapologetically linked the terrible famines of India and Ireland and the imperial "state terror" that followed pitiful uprisings in both countries. But the Mayo commemoration was attended by none other than our Fianna Fail Minister of Defence, Michael Smith, TD; Defence Forces Chief of Staff, Lt. General Jim Sreenan; the Secretary to the Archbishop of Tuam; and the British Ambassador to Ireland, Mr. Stewart Eldon (See *Irish Times*, 9th August 2004).

The Phoenix (27th August 2004) reported that the organisers were a group called Military Heritage Tours Ltd., "a

revisionist group with strange political beliefs which conflict with Fianna Fail doctrine and Defence Force tradition". It also reported that the group was "part funded" (?) "by British National Lottery funds and also organised trips to WW1 battlefields and shrines in Europe to various achievements by Her Majesty's forces". The *Phoenix* went on to outline that other

"support comes from Andrew McKinley, Labour MP for Thurrock, Essex... an odd assortment of military fantasists... Kevin Myers-style British military buffs, British empire loyalists, the Machine Gun Corps Old Comrades Association (sic) and overseas admirers like the Greengairs Thistle Flute Band (a Scottish musical group with the unique distinction of having been expelled in 1988 from the Orange Order for anti-Catholic and racist bigotry)".

Photos of this fiasco in the media strangely show stage-dressed Rangers beneath a rather huge Union Jack flag. Where, one wonders was G2 (army intelligence), or were their political masters already in the know?

Next up was the speech of EU Ambassador designate John Bruton at the Reform Movement's Conference in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 18th September 2004. The Reform Movement has two patrons, Ruth Dudley Edwards and the *Irish Independent* journalist, Bruce Arnold, MBE (as reported by *Phoenix*, 24th September 2004). Bruton's speech repudiating 1916 and all that followed—true to the revisionist agenda—was reported extensively in the *Irish Times* (20th September 2004). But Reform and its associates had seriously misjudged the public mood as evidenced by the highly critical letters published in the Letters' Page of the *Irish Times*.

The silence of the Fine Gael leadership and party about Bruton's expressed ideology is only slightly puzzling. In the *Sunday Business Post* Damien Kiberd in his 'Opinion' piece warned that party, writing: "It's about time Fine Gael stopped genuflecting to the Ulster unionists in a craven fashion" (7th December 1997). Their origins were otherwise. It was Kevin O'Higgins—the celebrated "strong man" of Terence de Vere White's biography—who, when he was a Free State Minister, shot down plans that Merrion Square should be turned into a memorial for those Irishmen who fell in WW1. O'Higgins declared:

"I believe that to devote Merrion Square to this purpose would be to give a wrong twist, as it were, a wrong suggestion to the origins of this State. It would be a falsehood, a falsehood by

suppression of the truth and by a suggestion of something that is contrary to the truth... I say that any intelligent visitor, not particularly versed in the history of the country, would be entitled to conclude that the origins of this State were connected with that park and the memorial... This is not the position. This State had other origins, and because it has other origins I do not wish to see it suggested, in stone or otherwise, that it has that origin" (Kevin O'Higgins, Anvil Books, Co.Kerry. 1948, p172).

To counterpoint Bruton's West Brit. position (what a boon to western diplomacy he will be—this man whom the British Government pushed for preferment over their own Commissioner Chris Patten), there was another camera-grabbing moment. On the RTE1 News at 6-o'clock on the 19th September 2004, there was truly an extraordinary event. The PD Minister of Justice, Michael McDowell, honoured a relative, a grand-uncle I think, killed in the Civil War—one of the Sligo Five up on the slopes of Ben Bulbin. With the relatives of the other dead men, the Minister stood in front of the simple Celtic Cross marking the spot where he said the Five unarmed men were killed. With his grandfather, Eoin MacNeill, in the Free State Government, McDowell made this most remarkable indictment, saying to camera, that the Sligo Five were executed "in a shoot to kill policy" by the State. No newspapers, as far as I am aware, carried this incredible turnabout for this politician, whose anti-Sinn Fein republican rhetoric this Summer before the European and Local Elections was alarmist and over-the-top hysterical. This change I attribute to one man—Gerry Adams—and to the growing electoral success of Sinn Fein both in the North and South, which has impacted manifestly on the political parties in the south.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, when faced with this Summer's Fianna Fail electoral meltdown, eschewed the inane comment of his Minister of the Marine, Dermot Ahern, "we took a mid-term hit". Facing the media, he said on RTE1 News: "We lost, they won". He repeated this grimly when the media pack tried to interject with his Minister's witless comment. The "we" were of course Fianna Fail and the "they" were Sinn Fein.

On 9th September 2004, on RTE1, there was a documentary, *Hanging With Hector*. Its first subject was the Taoiseach. Shot over the Summer, it was interesting to note the images Bertie Ahern wanted conveyed to the Irish public. He was seen in Fagin's pub, his local in Drumcondra, man of the people personified. He was in Croke Park at a GAA match shaking hands

and talking with Gerry Adams. He was also filmed in his spacious office in Dail Eireann. Facing his desk were portraits of Eamon de Valera and Sean Lemass, but behind him prominently was a large portrait of Pádraig Pearse. The camera lingered on the image of Pearse, and Hector O'hEochagáin asked Bertie about it. Bertie eulogised Pearse, saying he was his "greatest hero" and an "inspiration". Explicitly, Ahern was staking his credentials and those of his party in a strong republican tradition, and this clever politician was letting the new guys on the block know that they had a fight on their hands and they'd better believe it.

One other nugget—UCC has taken out advertisements promoting a course on "conflict resolution", taught by a Thomas Diedmuller, "an expert" in the subject. This from an university whose former Professor of Irish History was John A. Murphy (who incidentally chaired a session at the Reform Movement's Conference). And whose former President Mortell unearthed the buried statue of the Famine Queen Victoria and had her put on display in a glass case with very expensive security in place. And whose recent professor of Irish history, Tom Dunne, claimed in his latest book that John A. Murphy and Conor Cruise O'Brien were "the real architects of the peace process" (*Rebellions Memoir, Memory And 1798*, Lilliput Press, Dublin, 2004, p83.)

Which brings me finally to Gerry Adams's book and its review. I had noticed in another forum how *Hope And History* topped the non-fiction best-seller lists long before it had ever been reviewed. By 4th October 2003, the book had enjoyed neither the preview, review, published extract, or interview with the author, that books favoured by the *Irish Times* get, plus the photo op of the book launch. Finally it was reviewed on the 25th October 2003 (still at the top of the best sellers) by Liz O'Donnell, the PD TD and "former Minister for State to the Government and Dept. of Foreign Affairs and government representative at multi-party negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement", according to the blurb at the end of the review. O'Donnell was the only politician willing to publicly warn McDowell about toning down his anti-Sinn Fein propaganda in the run-up to this Summer's elections.

Steve MacDonogh, publisher of Brandon press, has had a most fruitless engagement with the Irish media and in particular the *Irish Times*. His books, though best sellers, are neglected; and only when it becomes rather obvious that something is afoot are they finally given an airing. But it is plain it is an onerous obligation and I very much doubt that

sales increase after exposure in the *Irish Times*. In his own fine book, *Open Book, One Publisher's War*, MacDonogh wrote revealingly about the way Gerry Adams's books are reviewed in the media. Reviewers and journalists concentrate—not on the writings—but rather engage in invective and denigration. “The “correct” journalistic position was it seemed to refuse to progress beyond sweeping dismissal and puerile abuse” (Brandon Press, Dingle, 1999, p175).

Indeed, MacDonogh's own book was reviewed by the Managing Editor of the *Irish Times*, Eoin McVey, on the 20th November 1999. This superb account of modern day Irish publishing, with its trenchant criticisms of the “*reviewing circle*”—particularly of the *Irish Times*—was not referred to by McVey. The latter excoriated instead the author's “*self-justificatory life story*” (?). McVey's sourness and soreness was evidenced further by his remark that the style of the book “*is close to that of “Dear Diary”*” and “*it will have little appeal outside the world of publishing*”. Contrast the above so-called review with the balanced and positive one written by Adrian Weckler in the *Sunday Business Post* on the 31st October 1999.

One couldn't find a more perfect example of the type of review that Mac Donogh complained of than that written by Sam Smyth in the *Irish Independent* on the 20th September 2003 under the heading, *Why Is It All Talks And No Action In Gerry's Book?* The fact that the book pulsates with action (yes and Talks) is of no matter to Smyth. Readers of the book fall into two categories according to him—“*idiots*” and “*myopic voters*”. And what followed is not a review but a rant against the success of Adams and his party not only in Ireland, but right across the globe it appears. From Belfast to Paris, New York, Capetown—the man is feted and all the “*unionist sources*” whispering in the journalist's ear can't alter that galling fact.

The *Irish Times* review was, as I said earlier, written by Liz O'Donnell on the 25th October 2003. It was headed, *Peace Through A Prism*. In case our senses were a bit on the slow side, there was a huge photo canvas—almost all blacked out with just a keyhole-type lens shot of Adams himself. And, lest we were still in the dark (get it?), the text under the heading reads: “*Essential as it is, Gerry Adams's book is not the place to find balanced analysis of the peace process*”. So, with these health warnings in place, O'Donnell managed eventually to state that Adams's book was “*essential*”, that Adams is a competent writer, and that the book is “*thorough*”. She castigates Adams for doing what he said at the outset he would do, that is write his account. But worse, she found him only admitting to a “*little remorse*”: all

else was just a “*steely and sad acceptance*”. So far so predictable. But what really astonished this reader was her following statement:

“There is no understanding by Adams of the risks posed to democracy by the peace process. From the Irish Government's perspective it was always huge risk”.

Isn't that extraordinarily revelatory coming from an Irish Minister (admittedly junior status) who was involved in the Talks? The only sense I can make of that Freudian slip is that Irish (Southern?) democracy is threatened by the ballot box—and the logical corollary of that is that the Fianna Fail/PD Government feels itself imperilled by the electoral success of Sinn Fein. And that was before this Summer's elections! O'Donnell also managed an awful, low smear of the friends of Sinn Fein and of Gerry Adams, who extend from North America to South Africa as she acknowledged: “*They*”, she stated, “*of course, were not picking up the bodies*”. This is an utterly vile aside that besmirches O'Donnell and her ilk far more than it does anyone else.

The rest of the review is given over to a pouting petulant O'Donnell who didn't find herself named among the great and the good of Gerry's narrative. “*You will search hard to find a laudatory or sympathetic profile of any elected Irish political figure*”. Well not so: Adams is very enthusiastic of the contributions made by Albert Reynolds as “*practical and straightforward*” (p197). And Mary Robinson is well-feted. The latter's visit to West Belfast and her handshake with Gerry Adams caused the *Sunday Independent* to call for her resignation—*plus ca change*. But Adams believed that, for the republican community, the “*visit was an important initiative. I have always felt*”, he wrote, “*that she did not get the proper recognition for the stand she took*”. She made the visit against the wishes of the British Government and of the Irish Government—most especially Dick Spring, the Labour leader. The *Irish Times* “*carried eight critical articles*” on the handshake (ibid, p128-131).

O'Donnell ended her critique thus: “*This book may fail to acknowledge the greatness of others*” (ooch poor darling) “*but it is an important insight into the major republican figure of our time*”. This reviewer concurs with the last half of that statement. From the outset, in the introduction, Adams states: “*In telling the story of the Irish peace process, I can only tell my experience of it, my understanding of it, my role in it... My intention is to tell... my story. My truth. My reality*” (ibid, p2). And he does so with clarity and an economy that marks him out, not only as the statesman of our era, but as a writer of rare skill. He offers

us a chronologically coherent narrative of how the peace process developed—through a working out of political positions—that is at once gripping and accessible. Adams never patronises the reader by glib analysis—he carefully assesses the approach of all the various players, and manages to keep things in play with a virtuoso display of patience and tenacity. And, because Adams has a central role now in Irish affairs, I cannot recommend this book highly enough because it is the essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of Northern Ireland.

At this stage I should acknowledge that the *Irish Political Review* provided with me with a better understanding of the dynamics at work in Northern Ireland. I had been disabled from a comprehension of the political realities operative in these isles by a reliance on academic and media analysis.

On the one hand, there was the project to democratise it, by having it included in the party structures by which the rest of the state was governed—which came up against a brick wall within British governing circles. And, indeed, which was opposed by many elements in the south—especially those now championing ‘revisionism’. Unionism too, under the spell of Professors Bew and Patterson *et al*, refused to shift, and “*its chosen ground has been crumbling under it ever since*” (as Brendan Clifford has put it).

On the other hand, Gerry Adams and his people took an opposite course, which led “*from their origins in the pogroms of August 1969 to their present occupation of the corridors of power*”. The progress of Sinn Fein took place, as Adams himself acknowledged in his book, even though the whole intent of the powers-that-be was to isolate Sinn Fein and leave it at the margins—but things turned out very differently.

Adams, by connecting in this book “*this small picture perspective to a big-picture screen*”, leads the reader to see how the actual realities of Northern Ireland worked themselves out, thus transforming the scene. He quotes Senator George Mitchell who said, “*Implementing the Good Friday agreement was going to be harder than negotiating it*”. But, as an unfazed Adams pointed out, “*Negotiations were now a part of struggle*” (p376). And the recent Leeds Castle Talks give an added potency to Gerry Adams's analysis. The Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, grimly standing beside a fawning Tony Blair, stated unequivocally: “*There is no going back to majoritism*”.

Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams now have much to hope for as they fashion out our history.

Julianne Herlihy.

Captain Kelly

continued

Right at the beginning of the meeting, one of them, John White, IRA Officer Commanding in 1969, stood up to make some angry and vile allegations against Captain Kelly. He claimed that in 1969 “*fucking Jim Kelly*” had offered him personally £50,000 to kill six fellow republicans. He claimed that Kelly did this on behalf of “*fucking Fianna Fail*”. All this was supposed to have happened in Derry City, on the staircase of a private house. White alleged, “*I was offered £50,000 on condition I would be responsible for killing six of my comrades*”.

White’s allegations were supported by another of that group, Peter Collins, Derry Brigade Intelligence Officer in 1969, who claimed to have witnessed the attempt to bribe White and who declared that “*Kelly put his finger in my face*”. Why Kelly would have risked making a criminal proposal in front of a witness was not explained. Nor was the state of relations between the three men brought up. Was Kelly stupid enough to canvass assassins he hardly knew? It must be assumed that anyone in his right mind would only make such a proposal to people he knew well and would have reason to believe would give it a ready hearing. But Kelly did not know John White or Mr. Collins. If there had been much of a connection between them, his wife, Sheila, in whom he confided closely, would have been familiar with them. And what might have led Captain Kelly to believe that OC White was open to any suggestion of killing republicans?

However, neither White nor Collins filled out chapter and verse of the allegations. In particular, they refused to say in which house this offer was allegedly made, nor did they give the date. If any detail had been offered, it could have been tested against known facts.

Quite apart from anything else, it would have been out of character for Captain Kelly who—strangely for a soldier (though perhaps not in the Irish Army) hated violence. He abhorred bloodshed and was particularly upset by some of the senseless incidents of the war—such as the killing of Ranger Best by the Stickies in Derry City, which caused revulsion against that

tendency in the town. It is said Mr. White has not been seen much around there since then.

If any date had been given, it would have been something to test. Captain Kelly made only two visits to Derry in that period, one in August when he witnessed the Battle of the Bogside in a personal capacity and one in September 1969 on behalf of the Irish Government. He did not enter Northern Ireland at all after September 1969. His habit was to meet Northern Ireland community leaders south of the Border, as his chief, Army Director of Intelligence Colonel Hefferon, had ordered him to stay out of the North.

The Chairman of the launch and moving spirit of the campaign to clear Captain Kelly’s name was Fionnbarra O Dochartaigh. He afterwards told the Irish *Sunday Mirror*:

“I was in the Republican leadership at the time this meeting is supposed to have taken place.

“If it had happened I would have known about it, I would have been privy to that information, so I totally dispute what he said.

“I do not know what his agenda is in bringing this up at this time more than 30 years later, but it is the first time anyone has heard of this allegation.” (18.7.04)

The sum of money mentioned is also bizarre. The total amount spent on Northern Ireland relief—including arms purchases for Northern Ireland Catholic communities—by the Irish Government in 1969-70 was £100,000. Was half as much again was offered just to get six republicans killed? The files of the Irish Government in the National Archive show signs of frugality throughout. Any expenditure of £50,000 would have been thought about very carefully. And Kelly himself would not have had ready access to that kind of money. He had to justify every request for funds he made—including for arms purchases—to Minister of Finance Charles Haughey and his Secretary.

Quite apart from the logistics, it is hard to see what Captain Kelly or anyone else had to gain from any individual Republican deaths, Stickie or otherwise. During this period the whole effort of the Southern State—of which he was a leading edge—was to enhance the capacity for self-defence of various Catholic communities under attack. And the whole State machine, domestic and diplomatic, was bent on making Ireland’s case on partition to the world. Now, if White had declared that the British Government was ready to

pay that kind of money for Republican killings, that would have been credible. But it strains belief that the Lynch Government—however bad it became after mid-April 1970—would go to such lengths. Whatever the differences between the various strands of Catholic-nationalist—on the ground in Derry and in Government in the South—there was an underlying community of feeling between them at the time in question.

A query which springs to mind is why did OC John White wait 35 years to mention this alleged bribe and incitement to murder? He declared at the meeting that he had been angered by the civil rights context in which people were trying to clear Captain Kelly’s name. Even so, why did he wait 35 years to expose such a heinous crime?

Another peculiarity is that Cathal Goulding, Chief of Staff at the time, went out of his way to clear Captain Kelly’s name in 1971, when Garda Superintendent Fleming told a pack of lies to the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee hearing into the alleged arms smuggling affair. The Republican Publicity Bureau issued a statement on 9th February 1971, rebutting allegations made by Fleming in relation to Kelly’s contacts with him, and thus put information in the public domain which would tend to clear Kelly’s name. Would Goulding have done that for someone who had tried to get his men killed a year before? It must, after all, be assumed that OC White told his superior officer of Kelly’s approach.

And how come the Irish Special Branch—and the whole Lynchite establishment—harboured such an *animus* against Kelly if he had been intent on getting republican ‘troublemakers’ killed on their behalf?

It might be remarked in passing that OC White gave anonymous evidence at the Bloody Sunday Tribunal. Whatever he said, he certainly had questions to answer in relation to Official IRA actions on that day when he was in command—a day on which the Provisionals exercised a restraining influence on Officials intent on complicating a difficult situation with gun-shots at the British forces.

What is certain is that the more the White allegations are considered, the more absurd they appear. They relate to the pre-split IRA. Within four months of that split, which occurred on 28th December 1969, Captain Kelly himself was under interdict in the Irish State.

What seems likely is that people like OC White are determined to maintain the legend that the Provisional/Official split in the IRA was engineered by the Lynch Government because it was afraid of the new class struggle objectives of the movement. And spreading this false story about Captain Kelly helps to sensationalise and give colour to the fiction that passes for history on this matter. Not only did the Irish Government split the IRA but, before doing so, it tried to kill the anti-militarist faction, using anti-militarist republicans as tools!?!

But I believe that there was sufficient reason within the republican movement for the division in the IRA: it did not need external interference to happen. The split was not between ‘politics’ and ‘militarism’ as is suggested nowadays, but between those who insisted on continuing a divisive debate on abstentionism and suchlike issues even after the North had lapsed into a state of disorder in August 1969 and those who thought that such theoretical questions should be set aside in the face of the needs of the moment in the North. (It is noteworthy that Roy Johnston in a letter to the *Irish Times* made a gesture to reality when he conceded that Gerry Adams was continuing the policy of demilitarisation of republicanism started by himself!)

As for Captain Kelly’s good name: the politically-motivated intervention by yesterday’s men in Derry failed to prevent the launch of a movement to vindicate his reputation. After these Officials had vented their spleen, the meeting adjourned and reconvened without them.

However, the incident strengthens demands for a proper public inquiry into the events of 1969-70. The information to vindicate Captain Kelly as a good and faithful officer of the Irish State is all there in Government files. What already has been made public clears his name. But a policy of obscuring Taoiseach Lynch’s role is evident in the pattern of document releases in the National Archive—and it is also evident from the Arms Trials in the conduct of both the Judges and crucial witnesses like Charles Haughey.

Despite being a defendant, with his political career in the balance Haughey gave minimalist information to the Court. He was clearly protecting Jack Lynch. He and others could have revealed Cabinet discussions and amplified the decisions taken—which would have exonerated all the defendants in the Arms Trials. They failed to do so, not from any personal

regard for Lynch and his cronies, but to protect Fianna Fail—the national party—and Ireland as a State.

Whatever the justification for the reticence of Haughey and others 35 years ago, there is no reason for it now. The truth can no longer damage the essential Fianna Fail—but it would totally discredit the Lynch/O’Malley element who destroyed republican tendencies within the party on the basis of a false account of what happened in 1969-70.

Angela Clifford

PS:

Since the above was written, the *Derry Journal* (20th August) has carried extracts from an interview given by White and Collins in the *Starry Plough*, official paper of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. The intervention of the two was because they were “*so incensed*” that someone who they have “*intimate knowledge of attempting to split the republican movement in 1969 should be lauded as an innocent victim of injustice...*”. They say that:

“[The Irish Government wanted to] eliminate those from within the [IRA] leadership who would have been considered Socialist or Communist.

“This would then have laid the groundwork for the formation of a right wing and Catholic leadership that would have been prepared to dance to the tune of the Dublin regime.

“The meeting [with Capt Kelly] lasted only a few minutes. Kelly, after explaining his role, offered those present arms, training and money (£50,000).

“When those present asked Kelly what the government wanted in return, Kelly said, ‘a guarantee that the struggle would be contained within the Six Counties’.

“The OC then pointed out to Kelly that he knew as well as him that such a situation was already guaranteed as the standing orders of the IRA prevented any attacks within the 26 counties.

“At this point, the OC then demanded to know exactly what Kelly wanted in return for these weapons and money and aggressively demanded, while pointing his finger towards Kelly that he give him a straight answer.

“Kelly then said: ‘the elimination of certain members of the leadership of the republican movement’.”

The claim that the meeting, at which such a serious assassination proposal was made, “*lasted only a few minutes*” shows just how much credence can be placed on the episode!

The *Derry Journal* cites the *Starry Plough* to the effect that two other IRA

men at the meeting then joined in. One asked Kelly how many IRA men were to be eliminated and he replied, “*Six*”. At which—

“Kelly was then told, in no uncertain terms, to f••k off. The meeting then ended.”

Messrs White and Collins then made contact with their leadership in Dublin, seeking an urgent meeting—which took place the following day in South Derry. Apparently, higher authority did not quite take the incident seriously. The story continues:

“The Chief of Staff told the Derry Brigade OC that he should have got the £50,000 first and then told Kelly to f••k off.”

The men were told the leadership would “take care of it from then on”.

OC White and IO Collins went on to say the Irish Government offered this deal because—

“...they feared less an armed struggle contained within the Six Counties than an armed struggle throughout the 32 counties.

“They feared a scenario where tens of thousands of working class men and women would take to the streets and challenge their authority and attempt to change their system into one that put working class people first.

“As the republican movement was to the forefront of that struggle, it would have been important to divide the movement and form an organisation that would have been prepared to pay lip service to the Free State Government.”

In so far as there is a grain of truth in any of these ravings, it is that the Irish Government in August 1969 was helping with the organisation of Citizens’ Defence groups which had the single purpose of defending Catholic communities. Six Intelligence Officers, one of whom was Captain Kelly, were sent North to liaise with nationalist leaders and republicans willing to work in the community interest. If Captain Kelly talked to republicans in Derry—as he did to Cathal Goulding himself six or seven times—it was entirely to see which individuals were prepared to put community defence before crackpot schemes.

PPS:

Liam O Comain Joins The Mud-Slingers

On 25th July Liam O Comain produced a jumble of unfounded allegations and erroneous statements in support of OC White’s assault on Captain Kelly in *The Blanket*, a web-magazine. In this he

complains of “*a form of censorship being placed around those who agree with Johnny White’s action*”.

But was O Comain himself the greatest censor? An extract from his *Memoirs and Thoughts* appears on a web-site, *Ireland’s OWN* (web download made on 23rd August 2004). Here he speaks of Captain Kelly contacting Republicans to split them. And he mentions that “*the Dublin agents used the possible supply of weapons as a means of courting those [who saw the gun as the only means of uniting the country]. In addition, they used the well-worn ‘communist or red scare’ in their attempt to undermine the republican leadership of the time*” etc. A catalogue of what these ‘agents’ were up to is given, but there is not a word about trying to bribe republicans to kill each other (for, of course, any killing would have brought retaliation).

Liam O Comain says that he himself “*took on the role of organising for the movement*”, was in contact with Dáithi O’Connail—whom he tried to bring out of retirement—and was close to the late Malachy McGurran, as well as Sean Garland and Cathal Goulding. Yet there is no inkling that he knew of the proposed assassination plot. If there had been such a proposal, as one of the people strongly agitating on the ‘political’ side of republicanism, surely White, Collins or any of the others would have taken him into their confidence and warned him of what was afoot? After all, he had been approached by an agent of the Irish State in Monaghan and felt out about “*the need to defend the nationalist people*” and the strength of his allegiance to Cathal Goulding.

If O Comain had had any hint of money for assassinations, he would certainly have dramatised the story in his web autobiography. He is certainly not shy of having a highly-coloured story about the parting of the ways with Martin McGuinness on the site.

Here are the arguments which O Comain adduces to support his insistence in the *Blanket* piece that there was “*truth in the allegations made by Johnnie White that he as OC of the Derry Brigade was offered money by Captain Kelly to get rid of certain republicans at the time*”.

His first seems to be that “*the birth and development of extra-parliamentary activity in the north in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies helped as a catalyst to plant hope in the nationalist people*”.

It seems that O Comain is here trying to claim the credit for the Stickies for the self-activity of Northern Ireland

communities under far more mainstream leaderships. He also goes on to imply that the Provisionals-to-be regarded such social agitations with distaste, being wedded to pure militarism. But that is nowhere near an accurate description of a chaotic and messy parting of the ways within republicanism.

Looking backwards, O Comain is over-emphasising the importance of republicanism in the North at this time—which is easily done considering how it is now eclipsing all other political tendencies on the nationalist side. In reality, the Citizens’ Defence Committees—comprising republicans of all tendencies as well as members of the minority in other parties and with no party affiliation—were “in constant contact” with the Irish Government in 1969, while the IRA “had been conspicuous by its inactivity” (Kevin Boland, *Indivisible Faith*, p51).

Quite apart from these organisations, the single most de-stabilising and agitating force in Northern Ireland at that point was Miss Bernadette Devlin—who was a thorn in the side of officialdom everywhere.

Why does O Comain describe Captain Kelly as a “*Civil Servant*”? He must know very well that he was an Army Officer and that he was Personal Assistant to the Chief of *Military* Intelligence—a completely different kettle of fish to the civilian garda intelligence organisation—the body which was in fact the premier Intelligence-gathering body of the Irish State.

His major allegation in the *Blanket* is that—

“...recent southern state papers... reveal Captain Kelly’s mandate was to split the Republican Movement in order to disable its more progressive elements and via the dissenters to manipulate the movement in the north... as a means of bringing to an end the increasing agitation in relation to housing, ground rents, etc. in the south”.

I have been through many files relating to this period in the National Archive. I have yet to see a word which indicates that this was Captain Kelly’s mandate. If Liam O Comain can produce the evidence for this, let him publish it. If not, he should apologise to the Kelly family for the character assassination of a man who cannot answer for himself.

AC

PPPS

Since the above was written, Fionnbarra O’Dochertaigh has responded to claims that he is in no position to rebut

the White/Collins claims about Captain Kelly, as he was not involved in the Republican Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s and was therefore was not in a position to know what really happened. He said:

“I don’t know how Johnny White can claim that I was not in a position of leadership with the movement.

“I attended the Ard Fheis in 1969 and supported the leadership position on taking seats.

“My involvement with the Derry Citizen’s Action Committee, where I was secretary is there for all to see.

“A he claims that I wasn’t even in Derry at the time of these happenings all I can say is that I went to Cork long after these events an anyone who was around in the late 1960’s knows of my involvement.

“All I can say is that if Johnny White’s memory is such that he cannot remember my role in the republican movement in those days then I have to call into question how reliable his memory he claims to speak of regarding Captain Kelly.”

Sean McGouran adds:

The Official IRA was dominant in Derry until the killing of Ranger Best in May 1972, when there was a wave of revulsion against it.

In 1974 virtually the whole of the Official Republican movement in Derry seceded as a result of J. White’s mis-management.

The *Starry Plough*, having been the publication of the Officials/Republican Clubs in Derry, ceased to be a Stickie publication overnight, and became the IRSP paper.

The allegations against Captain Kelly made by J. White and P. Collins did not appear in the pamphlet produced by the Officials which alleged that Fianna Fail had set up the Provisionals.

Do you want to sign the petition to clear Captain Kelly's name?

You can do so and obtain information about his life and work on the dedicated website at:

www.captkelly.org

An Cor Tuatail

Oisín:

Uob fearr liom-sa san bréas
beic i bpoáir na Féinne mar bhínn,
san rian san éadaic san arán,
so dealb ná in arúflaiceas Chríost.

Pádraig:

Is oc liom uaic 's is doilic
c'iomcáin 's do úmolaó ar Dia,
de síorghnác le briacra buile
as iomrá ar cumas na bfiann

O.:

Ní cuí tuic-se aois, a Pádraig,
aicis ná iomcáin do éasad liom;
nac abair cusa sur maié Dia
is deirim-se an fiann agus fionn.

P.:

Dá éad linn cú 'molaó na bfiann,
a nsaice i nglia 's a lúic,
is doilic, is leam 's is saob
iomcáinead Dé is molaó ar fionn.

O.:

Níorb aicnis dom-sa Dia,
uob aicnis dom an fiann is fionn;
más fearr Dia ná iad súo
a maic ná a élú níorb fear dúinn.

P.:

Ní éanaim-se bréas ar Dia,
i bfeartaib, i bfiail, ná i ngníom;
a sheanóir nac cneasta lua,
a maiceas acá buan de síor.

Digneas Oisín agus Pádraig (3)

O.:

Ní creidfead do glór ar Dia,
a maiceas, a fiail, ná a roinn,
so ucise cú liom 'na dún
so bfeicead im síile an fíor.

P.:

Dá mbeiceá-sa i bflaiceas Dé,
a sheanóir san céill san sraon,
cread do éifeá isan dún
is so bfuilid do síile dall?

O.:

Má cá Dia fiail i bfeartaib
ba crua leis mo samail san raóarc;
dá mba dom laiscic den doras
d'iarrfainn so hobann mo leiceas.

O.:

Dá mba dom-sa sa dún úo
dá nsoircear cúirc Rí na nSrás,
sió cáim críonna agus dall
do braidfínn an ann uob fearr.

O.:

Do sheodainn fós aicne ar Dia
an bfuil duiniúil fiail san roinn;
má cá aise iomad an aráin
u'fanfainn 'na dáil de síor.

A Pádraig, do molfainn cú féin,
's do molfainn mar an seána a élar,
ac gluaiseac liom fá lán-lúic
so sroicéam an dún san Dia.

P.:

Ní hé criall na bfiann do seilc,
ná criall fá meirc i ucis gleo,
is cosúil le criall ansúo
ní nearc lúic do beir ann creoir.

O.:

Innis, a Pádraig, don Dia úo
nac raib 'fios as fionn ná as an bfeinn
so raib sé ann lena linn,
's dá mb'fios so mba gnáoi leo a réir.

Abair leis fós san dearmad, crác,
muna lise dá léicair an fiann,
mise do cur fán bfeinn
as fulaimis na péine mar iad.

P.:

Mar a bfuil fionn is an fiann
is ann acá do criall is baol,
a Oisín, is dearb liom súo
is ní so dún domhnic Dé.

The contest of Oisín and Patrick (3)

Oisín:

I would truly prefer
to be in the company of the Fianna as I was,
powerless, naked, hungry
in poverty rather than in the paradise of Christ.

Patrick:

My regret and my grief
are your disparaging and belittlement of God,
unceasing in words of madness
praising the greatness of the Fianna.

O.:

It is not fitting for you, O Patrick,
to accuse me of abuse and belittlement;
did you not say yourself that God is good
just as I say that Fionn and the Fianna were?

P.:

I would not mind you praising the Fianna,
their battle exploits and their vigour,
but it is grievous, importunate and foolish
to belittle God while praising Fionn.

O.:

I was not acquainted with God
but I knew Fionn and the Fianna;
if God is better than they were
his virtue and repute were unknown to me.

P.:

I tell no falsehood about God,
his virtue, his charity, his deeds;
you old fellow of churlish speech,
his goodness is everlasting.

O.:

I will not believe your sayings about God,
his goodness, his hospitality and his sharing,
until you come with me to his household
to see with my own eyes if they are true.

P.:

If you were in God's paradise,
you old man without sense or regard,
what would you see in his mansion
since your eyes are blind?

O.:

If one of God's virtues is his generosity
he would pity one such as me to be sightless;
if I got inside his door
I would ask him for an instant cure.

If I was inside that mansion
that is called the court of the King of Grace,
though I am withered and blind
I would sense whether it was better to be there.

I would soon obtain knowledge of God
whether he is humane and generous in sharing;
if he has plenty of bread

I would remain in his company forever.

O Patrick, I would praise even you,
and likewise I would praise your clergy,
if only you would come with me with all speed
until we arrive at this mansion of God.

P.:

It is not the haste of the Fianna to the chase,
nor the charge with war-standard at the
comencement of battle,
that resemble the journey to that place;
it is not physical strength that takes us there.

O.:

O Patrick, tell that God of yours
that Fionn and the Fianna did not know
that he existed in their time
and if they had known they would have
been pleased to do his bidding.

Do not forget to tell him in time,
if he will not permit the Fianna to be in his presence,
to send me to the Fianna
to suffer the torment (of the damned) with them.

P.:

Where Fionn and the Fianna are
that is where you are going, I fear,
O Oisín, I am certain of this,
and not to the mansion of the Only-Son of God.

MORE LETTERS SUPPRESSED BY THE *IRISH TIMES*

15 September 2004

Casement And Guilt By Association

I don't know whether the Casement "Black Diaries" were forged or not, and in some respects I don't care. What I do care about is the use to which those diaries were put by the British Government to ensure Casement's judicial murder for struggling for the freedom of his own small nation. And what I particularly object to on the part of those who now trumpet that the "Diaries" were authentic is the "guilt by association" polemics employed against others who continue to question that yet-to-be-conclusively-proven assertion. Still worse is their posthumous deployment, not only against those who originally challenged that supposed authenticity more than three score and ten years ago, but also for the purpose of smearing Casement's own patriotic and anti-racist politics by association with the radically different politics of some of those who would invoke his name more than two decades after his death.

W.J. McCormack derides W.J. Maloney (September 14) for his lack of foresight in failing to see where fascism was leading in 1936, but he omits to remind us that within three years Maloney had withdrawn the permission he had earlier given Francis Stuart to publish a translation of his Casement book in Nazi Germany. One of Maloney's supporters, Maud Gonne, is indeed accurately described as an anti-Semite, coming as she did from the anti-Dreyfusard tradition in France, but McCormack also omits to remind us that Maloney's chief collaborator, Dr. Patrick McCartan, held the opposite point of view and, in fact, wished to honour Casement by proclaiming him to be "the Irish Dreyfus". Nor are we told that the preferred retail outlet for Maloney's book in Dublin was that of the foremost Irish writer of anti-Nazi verse during the 1930s, Dermot Fitzpatrick.

If Nazi German propaganda proclaimed that Catholics experienced discrimination in Northern Ireland, this does not make such discrimination any less a fact. And Britain's crime against Casement becomes no less a crime, notwithstanding the fact that, as McCormack points out, "Casement was extensively exploited in Berlin during the Nazi years". The chief agent of that exploitation was Francis Stuart, who concluded his own 1940 Berlin book, "Der Fall Casement", with a vision of Irish participation in something like a Waffen-SS guard of honour in a Nazi-occupied Britain: "Perhaps one day, no longer lying far away, Irish and German soldiers will stand together before Casement's unmarked grave".

Stuart is indeed a stark omission from McCormack's list of "baddies". To call McCormack an admirer of Stuart could,

however, be described as misleading, but only to the extent of constituting an understatement. As editor of "A Festschrift for Francis Stuart on his 70th Birthday", W.J. McCormack in fact emerged as the high priest of the Stuart cult in 1972. He offered the following apologia for his hero:

"Despite the outbreak of war Stuart decided that he should go to Berlin, that he should be where Europe was then focussed ... For those who were not there, those who were not touched outwardly by the holocaust, the testimony of a returned witness may be embarrassing; they prefer the pure martyr to the flawed survivor who may still speak. Stuart is such a survivor; Anne Frank is such a victim. Many who read 'The Diary' mentally limit their experience to specified periods of time, specific individuals. The reader is largely immune".

W.J. McCormack was not, of course, into Holocaust denial. Notwithstanding the benefit of thirty years hindsight, however, he was quite willing to trivialise that Holocaust when he invoked Francis Stuart in order to slap down "The Diary of Anne Frank" for being preoccupied with what the French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen would infamously categorise in 1987 as a mere "point of detail of Second World War history". Personally, I find W.J. Maloney's short-lived lack of foresight in 1936 far easier to forgive. "Guilt by association" is not a game to be played in such a fragile glass house.

Manus O'Riordan,

10 September 2004

Famine Figures

Your editorial on the recent population figures ("*More Irish People*" 8/9/2004) uses some statistics regarding the Famine that are open to debate.

Officials and demographers at the time did not accept the official figure for the population of 1841 - 8.2 million - as being reliable. Cecil Woodham-Smith records this in her book '*The Great Hunger*.' As she says, it was reckoned on the basis of some recounts that there was an underestimate of about one third. Sticking with figures rounded to the nearest million, that means the population figure for 1841, as established by the partial recount, was 11 million.

That was not the only occasion on which census figures had to be readjusted. It happened again in the UK in 1991 because of the Poll tax. I know from personal experience that the results were then immediately disregarded as totally unreliable in many areas. Tithes, among many other factors, were a major factor in 1841 that inclined people in Ireland not to volunteer information.

The annual Irish population rate of

growth was then 1.6% which would have given a figure of 12 million by mid-1846 and could have been 13 million by 1851. As you say, the official figure for that latter year was 6.5 million and ironically this could be an overestimate as people were then inclined to 'overinclude' themselves in the hope of extra relief.

Accepting your figure for emigration of 1 million we are left with a considerably larger death figure than 1 or 2 millions, the numbers usually quoted. Instead, it could be uncannily close to 6 million.

One of the amazing facts about the Great Hunger was that there was never a contemporary counting of the numbers who died. I suggest that it is a long overdue fact of our history that should be fully discussed and the facts clearly established once and for all. Your columns could provide a valuable service to help do this.

Timothy Lane

September 22, 2004

BY WAY OF CONTRAST.....

Consider how the important subject of Kevin Myers's tender ego is dealt with as a topic in the Letters page of the Irish Times.

He writes fictitious and absurd letters criticising himself and then publishes them with a smirk of self-satisfaction in his column (10 September 2004). Perhaps the Irish Times should do something to bolster his clearly flagging ego and do as they did in 2001: publish a series of letters praising the great man. Though this time we would suggest varying the message somewhat. Merely concocting different headings is the lazy way out. The laughable loudmouth of Irish reaction deserves better, surely. The following letters found no difficulty in getting published:

October 15, 2001

Voice Of Realism

In this island of pharisaical hypocrisy, thank heavens for the voice of realism from Kevin Myers.

Yours, etc., John McGeorge,
Doonbeg, Co Clare.

October 5, 2001

State Funeral For Kevin Barry

In this island of pharisaical hypocrisy, thank heavens for the voice of realism from Kevin Myers.

Yours, etc., John McGeorge,
Doonbeg, Co Clare.

October 1, 2001

Terrorist Attacks In United States

In this island of pharisaical hypocrisy, thank heavens for the voice of realism from Kevin Myers.

Yours, etc., John McGeorge,
Doonbeg, Co Clare.

[Editorial Note: These letters are not an invention: check for yourself!]. ●

Irish Times History

One of the interesting aspects of *The Irish Times* was its stability over a long period. When it was incorporated in 1900 it had seven shareholders: John and David Arnott, William Guest Lane, Robert Stokes, John Simmington, Albert Hall and John Carlyle. In 1965 some of the original shareholders family names were still on the company's register. There was a Lane, a Simmington and a John Arnott. Also, there was a Howard Robinson who may have had a family or business connection with Albert Hall since he was listed as a director of a company called the Hall School Ltd. But by then their influence was a remnant of their ancestors. All were small shareholders with the exception of John Arnott who held 25% of the ordinary stock. By the early 1970s Arnott and the others had all sold their ordinary stock to the five Directors who benefited from the restructuring in 1974.

But up until the early 1940s the old guard was very much in control. Tony Gray in his entertaining biography of the legendary *Irish Times* Editor, R.M. Smyllie, gives an interesting insight into the running of the paper in the forties and fifties. This book was originally intended to be part of a history of the newspaper which *The Irish Times* was compiling in 1982. But for some reason *The Irish Times* decided not to go ahead with the project!

In the early forties the Arnott family, the well known retailers, owned all the ordinary shares, according to Gray, and an Albert Hall had been the Company Secretary for many years. The General Manager was J.J. Simmington, who seemed incapable of making Smyllie amenable to discipline.

Gray presents a picture of very weak management of the newspaper. Although Smyllie seems to have been at the centre of Dublin intellectual life for a period, holding court in the Palace Bar and subsequently in *The Pearl*, his administrative skills left a lot to be desired. There is a quote from Brian Inglis (Casement's biographer) indicating that:

"Smyllie is infuriatingly casual in all routine matters. To answer letters is his agony; to lose them his delight."

In 1941, "*the tough businessman*", Frank Lowe, became the *de facto* Managing Director and it seems for all Smyllie's

supposed administrative incompetence he was able to thwart Lowe's every attempt to bring him to heel. Smyllie survived as Editor until his death in 1954.

But the story of Frank Lowe's rise to power in *The Irish Times* is an interesting one.

The company was not in a healthy financial state in 1941. Its Preference Shareholders had not been paid for many years and, according to Gray, they had no say in the running of the company.

A revolt by these shareholders, led by Fred Croskerry of the well known legal firm, succeeded in appointing a Frank Lowe to the Board of Directors of *The Irish Times*. In Gray's book Frank Lowe is described as a "*prominent Mason*", "*a church going Christian*" and "*deeply interested in the Boys' Brigade*".

Gray doesn't say why Croskerry didn't get himself appointed to the board instead of using Frank Lowe as the front man. At the Annual General Meeting of the company in 1941, Simmington (the General Manager) was kicked upstairs and Lowe was appointed a Director with very considerable executive powers. Loftus Arnott retained the title of Chairman, and Sir Lauriston Arnott continued to be called Managing Director, though all the managing was now done by Lowe.

It is possible that at this time the unorthodox policy of giving votes to Preference Shareholders was introduced. The balance of power was shifting away from the original shareholders (in particular the Arnott family) towards the Freemason Frank Lowe and his allies.

Gray says that, following the successful *coup*, Lowe and Fred Croskerry, sat down for lunch together at Jury's. Croskerry asked his close friend, who was now thanks to him the *de facto* Managing Director, for a seat on the Board. This request was refused. Understandably, Croskerry never spoke to Lowe again.

This betrayal is difficult to understand since Gray described the two men as being best friends. However, Gray offers a possible explanation. Quoting a George Hetherington he says that Lowe was:

"...perfectly right. Croskerry would have been disastrous, absolutely impossible to work with."

Again, quoting Hetherington he says that:

"Croskerry was a bit of a bohemian, a man who sailed a boat on the Shannon, frequently colliding with bridges and with other craft, and was famous the length and breadth of Ireland for his foul language."

I found this picture of Croskerry as a man "*impossible to work with*" implausible. For one thing he seems to have been capable of marshalling his forces very well to enable Lowe to become *de facto* Managing Director. Secondly, it is unlikely that such an "*impossible*" man would have been able to develop such a thriving law practice as Croskerry did. Thirdly, George Hetherington was hardly an impartial observer.

Gray describes Hetherington as Frank Lowe's nephew, but he was more than just a nephew.

A year after George Hetherington's birth his father died and his mother emigrated to Canada with the two elder children. George remained in Ireland to be reared by Frank Lowe and his wife.

Hetherington was one of the main beneficiaries of Frank Lowe's success. He became a director of *The Irish Times* in 1954, and in 1959 he became joint Managing Director with Douglas Gageby (Gageby's obituary in *The Irish Times* says that Hetherington invited Gageby to join him as Managing Director). In 1962 Gageby and Hetherington were succeeded by McDowell. Hetherington, of course—along with Gageby, McDowell and the two Walkers—was one of the five directors /owners who benefited from the restructuring in 1974.

He was also a joint Managing Director in 1962 of Frank Lowe's company, Helys, the printing and stationery firm. Ralph and Phillip Walker were also Directors of this company. Major McDowell seems to have been close to the Walkers. He started life in *The Irish Times* as a joint shareholder with Ralph Walker.

Incidentally, it is interesting that Hetherington described Croskerry as "*a bit of a bohemian*" because it appears that he was something of a "*bohemian*" himself. According to his obituary (*The Irish Times* 24.11.01), he was a "*highly regarded*" poet and "*a gifted painter in watercolours*". In June 1962, following the dissolution of his marriage, he remarried in New York. This marriage was to Christine O' Brien, who had divorced Conor Cruise O' Brien the previous year.

And yet this didn't seem to affect his career in *The Irish Times*.

The other omission from Gray's book is that, although he reveals that Frank Lowe was a Freemason, he neglects to tell us that the subject of his book, R.M.

Smyllie, was also one (see *Head Or Harp* by Lionel Flemming, quoted by Dave Alvey in *Church & State* magazine No. 77). One can only wonder what other details are omitted from Gray's book.

John Martin

The Irish Times Share Structure After 1974

One of the surprising discoveries that the *Irish Political Review* has made is that in 1974 The Irish Times Ltd. was 100% owned by the Irish Times Holdings, an unlimited company, while control of The Irish Times Ltd was exercised through the Irish Times Trust Ltd., which owned all the preference shares. This was interesting because all of the newspaper reports on *The Irish Times* have indicated that it was owned by The Irish Times Trust.

As indicated in previous issues of this magazine the five directors (Major McDowell, Douglas Gageby, George Hetherington and Ralph and Phillip Walker) owned all of the Ordinary Share capital before the restructuring in 1974. This amounted to a total nominal value of 120,000 Pounds. However, they didn't own all of the Preference Share capital amounting to 380,000 Pounds.

The Irish Times Holdings entity bought out all the shareholders for 2,005,000 Pounds. The Preference shareholders were bought out at "par" or £380,000. This is not totally unreasonable since the Preference shareholders would not have been entitled to any profits over and above the interest dividend. However, they were entitled to votes at the General Meetings.

The Ordinary Shares were valued at 1,625,000 Pounds or about £13.54 per share. Readers might remember from the July 2004 issue of the *Irish Political Review* that, when the Directors were issuing new shares to themselves in 1972, they bought them at par or 1 pound each! So in effect they succeeded in buying the Ordinary Shares at a price that was much cheaper than they sold them for two years later. This enabled them to increase their voting power in relation to the Preference shareholders.

So, given that each Director owned 20% of the Ordinary Shares, they would have received 325,000 each (1,625,000 divided by 5). *The Irish Times* obituary on Gageby in June confirms that he received

this amount. It also says that this was a "net" figure. In other words there was no tax paid. Kevin Myers informs us (*Sunday Telegraph* 18.10.02) that the deal was done only hours before the introduction of Capital Gains Tax in Ireland. So the boys did very well.

But where did this money come from? The 1,625,000 required to finance the Ordinary Shares purchase came from the Bank of Ireland. The Irish Times Holding issued this amount in the form of Preference Shares. (In those days Banks could avoid paying taxes on the income of loans to companies by calling such loans "shares".) In my view the Bank would still have required a guarantor for these preference 'shares'.

The remaining £380,000 required to finance the purchase of the The Irish Times Ltd Preference Shares came from the Directors themselves. The five Directors paid £76,000 each, less the amount of Preference Shares that they might have already owned.

So the issued share capital in 1974 of The Irish Times Holdings was as follows:

7% Cumulative A First Preference Shares	
Held by Bank of Ireland	1,625,000
7% Cumulative B First Preference Shares	
Held by George Hetherington and Derdiu Ltd	76,000
7% Cumulative C First Preference Shares	
Held by Rossdohan Ltd (Ralph and Phillip Walker)	152,000
7% Cumulative D First Preference Shares	
Held by Fetchfer (Douglas Gageby)	76,000
7% Cumulative E Preference Shares	
Held by Dowell Ltd (Major McDowell)	76,000

There were also 100 One Pound 5% Non Cumulative Preference Shares. 13 of these shares were distributed to individuals. The remaining 87 were owned by the ubiquitous "The Irish Times Trust Ltd".

But the other interesting thing is that there were 100 One Pound Ordinary Shares. The same thirteen individuals who owned the 5% Non Cumulative Preference Shares were listed as owning the 1 Pound Ordinary Shares. The remaining 87 were owned by The Irish Times Foundation Ltd.

The significance of this is that the ordinary shareholders would have been entitled to any dividends from The Irish Times Ltd. While 13 Ordinary Shares does not seem very much to own in a company, if there are only 100 ordinary shares in total, that represents 13%. Also if the other 87% of the company is owned by an entity which has no share capital, as is the case with The Irish Times Foundation Ltd, **all** dividends would have to go to the individuals who own the 13%. This might seem an academic argument for a company which claims to be "non profit" and therefore has no dividends. But is this true? Did The Irish Times Holdings, the owner of The Irish Times Ltd, ever pay dividends?

There is a rather confusing article by Liam Collins of *The Sunday Independent* (23.12.01) on Major McDowell's tax affairs. While it looks like he had a long running dispute with the Revenue Commissioners, the only reference I could see to fines and penalties was for 357 Pounds.

But the interesting thing, and about the only coherent part of the article, was that Major McDowell received dividends amounting to 4,953 pounds, 11,811 pounds and 7,421 pounds in 1979, 1980 and 1981 from the Irish Times Holdings! Collins doesn't make much of this because the objective of the story seems to be to show that McDowell was a tax evader.

But what this appears to indicate is that the individual owners of The Irish Times Holdings were receiving dividends. If this is true the assertion that all the profits in *The Irish Times* have gone back into the newspaper since 1974 is not true.

I could not find any evidence of dividend payments in the Companies' Office, because there are no financial statements for the The Irish Times

Holdings or The Irish Times Ltd filed for the period from 1973 to 1989. However there was nothing to prevent the payment of dividends in the 1974 Articles of Association and there were still some individual Irish Times Holdings ordinary shareholders, including Major McDowell, for the 1979 to 1981 period. It was only in January 1985 that individual ordinary shareholders transferred their ordinary shares to The Irish Times Foundation.

It would appear that ordinary share dividends ceased to be paid out after 1985. But, if Liam Collins is right, there were ordinary share dividend payments made after 1974 and before 1985.

REDEMPTION OF SHARES

Although I have not had sight of The Irish Times Ltd financial Statements between 1973 and 1989, the evidence would suggest that it may have struggled from 1974 to 1977. Fergus Patrick D'Esterre Pyle succeeded Gageby as Editor in 1974 and became a Director in July of that year. But, according to *The Times* obituary of Gageby, the financial affairs of the company deteriorated to such an extent that "only Gageby's return would satisfy its bankers".

Pyle resigned as Editor on 30th June 1977. The Articles of Association of the company also required him to resign his position as Director. However, McDowell used his powers to re-appoint him to the Board. But he resigned again the following February.

Another casualty of the financial problems of *The Irish Times* was Peter O Hara, who apparently was the "Managing Director" (Major McDowell's title was "Chief Executive"). He resigned in March 1977.

Gageby succeeded Pyle as Editor and also re-joined the Board of Directors after his resignation in February 1975. This became known as "the second coming". The company appears to have made a spectacular recovery in his time as Editor and The Irish Times Holdings, as well as paying ordinary share dividends (allegedly), was able to redeem the 1,625,000 Pounds worth of Preference Shares held by Bank of Ireland in February 1985 (nearly 7 years before they were due for redemption). Not bad when you consider the state of the Irish economy in the first half of the 1980s.

The successor to Douglas Gageby as

Editor was Conor Brady who was appointed to the Board of Directors on 23rd December 1985. It must have been a memorable Christmas for Brady. The newspaper continued to be profitable and by November 1988 the company was in a position to redeem the Preference Shares owned by the 1974 owners.

OTHER DIRECTORSHIP CHANGES

The first three directors to resign after the re-structuring in 1974 were Ralph and Phillip Walker and George Hetherington. As indicated in the July 2004 issue of the *Irish Political Review* it was their intention to resign and "cash in" which triggered the 1,625,000 pound jackpot. I could find no evidence of any involvement by them in The Irish Times after their resignations.

Donal Nevin, the well known Trade Unionist, was a founding and longstanding Governor of The Irish Times Trust Ltd. He was appointed a Director of The Irish Times Ltd on 2nd July 1974. He then resigned on 23rd July 1974. When I saw this I thought that he might have had a problem with swearing the Oath. This is required of Directors of The Irish Times Ltd but was not required of the founding Governors of The Irish Times Trust Ltd. However, whatever the reason for his resignation, he seems to have overcome it and was re-appointed Director on 9th September 1974.

THE GREATEST BRITISH RUGBY PLAYER OF ALL TIME

The famous journalist John Healy had a brief involvement with the inner sanctum of *The Irish Times* group. He was a founding subscriber for The Irish Times Holdings in 1974. He also had one preference share in that company. But for whatever reason, he seems to have renounced his exalted status within a few weeks and reverted to being a mere journalist.

Readers who were "shocked" at last month's revelation that Mike Gibson declared his nationality to be British might be interested to know more of his involvement with *The Irish Times*.

His involvement appears to have been quite brief. He was appointed a director of The Irish Times Ltd, The Irish Times Holdings and a Governor of The Irish Times Foundation in March 1975. But he resigned as Director and Governor in September 1976. Shares of One Pound each in The Irish Times Ltd and The Irish Times Holdings were disposed of in November 1976 and October 1977.

I can shed no light on why he resigned. Perhaps that "Oath" bothered him. It's one thing to be working for the good of humanity, but to have to do it in secret was maybe too much for him. Instead he chose the soft option of winning glory for Ireland, the Lions and the Barbarians on Rugby fields all over the world!

John Martin

Reader's Letter

Carryduff, Co. Down

I was invited recently to give a talk to the Carryduff Historical Society about the area as I remembered it from 1938 - 1946. Parts of Carryduff in Mid-Down is rapidly being built on and has already been roped in as a Belfast suburb and those who remember it as it was are beginning to die off

What is interesting about the area is the reclamation of Protestant history, the taking back of 1798. I wrote a letter some time back to the *Irish Political Review* concerning a work by two Carryduff historians which brought in something of 1798 and how it affected the area. I thought Brendan Clifford summed up very well in the September 2004 issue of the *Irish Political Review* what 1798 meant in reality to both Protestant and Catholic.

Now 1798 is becoming alive again in Carryduff. This was once a subject which

couldn't be mentioned in this area because of it hijacking by Irish Nationalism. Now you get lectured on it everywhere you go. After speaking to the historical society I was asked by the Principal of Carryduff Primary School to speak to the children and their teachers. After that I was given a tour of the area and visited the old Killynure school which has been converted into a small church by the Free Presbyterian Church. The minister in charge told me about the history of the school and how it first opened during the 1798 Rebellion.

Driving back through Killynure with the Principal, the retired caretaker of the school accompanying us constantly asked for the car to be stopped a number of times in order to point out the farms of the Protestant families whose forebears had fought in 1798. His family has lived in the area during that period. He spoke of the 1798 fighters as revolutionaries.

A large area of Killynure, within Carryduff, remains somewhat remote and the Free Presbyterian Church is rapidly expanding there. They now find the old Killynure school too small and have already bought land nearby in order to build a much larger church. There is no doubt that the Free Presbyterians are beginning to overshadow the traditional local Presbyterians by their optimism and vibrancy.

Personally I see this renewed interest in 1798 by sections of the Protestant population as a warning to Whitehall to keep the Ulster dimension. How ironical and naive of Catholic Nationalists to think that when the Protestant re-awoke to his/her past history that the United Irishman (woman) would be re-born to create a unified country.

It was interesting to hear a local Catholic in Carryduff realise that he had once saw the Protestant as an interloper. Now he insisted that the Protestant is as part of the that area as the very soil itself. I also felt that the Irishness of the Protestant in this part of Mid-Down is such that people from Cork would feel at home among them.

In talking later to some other Catholics in the area about 1798 one of them said they supported its history in the past because the Protestants had abandoned it. But now that there was renewed interest in it by the Protestant community they had handed it back because it had ceased to be a Catholic myth. The Catholic community there appear strong and confident in their identity and have introduced Gaelic football to the area. This is a great change from how the few mixed and whole Catholic families in Carryduff had to skulk about in the past. They were reviving the old Irish place names such as Ceathra Aodha Dhuibh for the anglicised Carryduff on their notepaper and websites. The mainly Protestant Carryduff Historical Society in their literature has also helped to stimulate interest in the old Irish placenames.

Catholics tell me their population has risen in numbers and that Carryduff has become a peaceful place for many mixed Catholic/Protestant families. I had a last look around and except for one small area in Killynure, Carryduff is politically and religiously free of graffiti. No flag or bunting flies and no kerbstones are painted.

Wilson John Haire.
16 September, 2004

Housing Policy In Northern Ireland

Now that the war in Northern Ireland is, effectively, over, journalists have to write about other aspects of the place. David McKittrick of *The Independent* (London), while reluctant to discard the exotic 'place apart' image which is becoming hackneyed, has written interesting, if not very enlightening stuff. An item (Tues., 06.04.04) is headlined *A Land Where Protestants And Catholics Are Still Strangers To Each Other* features the information emerging that housing is 'polarised' to use the word fashionable in the 1980s. A glib response to this is that people in Northern Ireland, like people everywhere else, meet in public places: where they work, travel to and from work, and where they take their leisure. People in Northern Ireland are not 'strangers' to each other: they live apart because they know each other intimately—why create a situation where the political can become lethally personal?

According to this article "...many assumed the ceasefires would result in a drawing together of the communities...". But they must have been living in a different planet from the rest of us—or on the Gold coast of North Down—whichever is the furthest from common reality. What has actually happened is that there is now "near-total segregation... The authorities therefore face a daunting task in aiming to reverse ...polarisation and working towards a more tolerant and exclusive society". Why have 'the authorities' set themselves this task? Generally speaking people are quite happy to live with people they agree with politically. (That this is difficult to comprehend in England, indeed the whole of Great Britain, because of the trivialisation of the political process, does not mean that the readership of the *Indy* should not be asked to at least, attempt to get their heads around the matter.) Living apart means living in peace.

McKittrick's other item is *Ulster Tackles Segregation With Mixed Housing Estates*, those 'authorities' (again) have been "galvanised" by the figures for 'segregated' housing. It seems that 98% of "working class Belfast" lives in what a smart-alecky 1970s academic called 'confessionally-pure' areas. The Powers that Be plan to "create" new housing estates in which Prods and Papes "will live alongside each other in schemes which it

is hoped could herald a new future of co-operation between the two communities".

The use of the term 'the authorities' is quite interesting, the actual Housing Executive (NIHE) is not mentioned until the tenth paragraph, of this particular article. The NIHE probably knows why people want to live apart. (McKittrick actually alludes to it: "lives have been lost when people strayed into the "wrong" areas".) When people are asked what sort of area they want to live in, the usual response is 'mixed,—or...'. Living with 'our own' is rarely anybody's ideal situation, but it is safer for all concerned. Social engineering is clearly being pushed by the NIO (Northern Ireland Office), probably backed up by the New Labour government with its propensity to meddle, and not leave well alone, Blair himself may have inspired the notion. There are at present four hundred 'mixed-marriage' families on Belfast, and they may well be the nucleus around which this social experiment will be carried out.

'Stormont' set up a Housing Trust (NIHT) in 1947, with Local Government areas retaining their right to house local residents, presumably after putting pressure on the Northern Ireland Government. An agitation about the disposal of Local Government houses in Dungannon—one was given to the nineteen year old, unmarried, secretary of a local Unionist (Stormont) MP rather than to a large Catholic family—led directly to the implosion of 'Northern Ireland', the setting up of the Provisional IRA, and the demise of the Unionist-dominated 'Stormont' government of the six counties of Northern Ireland. The NIHT operated a fair and strict 'points' system, so that even people who were in desperate need of accommodation, were merely irritated if it took some time for them to be housed. The system was played straight by dispassionate civil servants. (Furthermore, the houses and flats, while usually nothing spectacular to look at, were sturdy and well-built.) The dispassionate civil servants also tended to house Protestants and Catholics in the same estates, except in places (like east Belfast) where it was not really possible due to the overwhelming numbers of

Protestant (or Catholic) people in particular areas. I do not know if this was 'policy' in the sense of being a thought-out (if not necessarily written down) strategy. Places which are now 'notorious' were 'mixed' from the start, Ballymurphy and Rathcoole are examples. There are still some Protestant families in the 'murph. People lived in these places quite happily from the late 1940s/early '50s, until the balloon went up in 1969. Even then, the mass movement of population tended to happen in the first two or three years of the 1970s.

These people did not move out of areas they had brought their families up in because their neighbours suddenly developed anti-social habits, or because they suddenly discovered that their neighbours were unpleasant people. When questioned by the media, most of those moving regretted their decision and most of those remaining were genuinely upset at losing valued neighbours. Clinton's team in the White House had a sound bite *'It's the economy,—stupid'*: in Northern Ireland in '69 to '73 it was *'politics,—stupid'*. Everyone living in Ulster knew that the place had politically imploded, despite the British, and to an extent, the other English speaking and international media, drivelling on about 'mindless violence' in Ulster. We were in the midst of a war to, somehow or other, clear up the debris.

The people who live in these new estates will, one hopes, enjoy their lives in what will probably be better laid out estates than those built in the straitened forties and fifties. (Though the quality of the work and of the materials used seems to have deteriorated.) A minor aspect of this is that, while the NI Housing Trust was discreet in preferring to house people, in 'mixed estates', it was the great liberal O'Neill who made an issue of the matter. Instead of allowing the Trust its head, and giving it the remit to house everybody in Northern Ireland (which may well have been one of the reforms he and Bill Craig refused to call reforms), he insisted on show case estates. One was Twinbrook, on the western outskirts of Belfast; another one was Unity Flats at the former junction of the Shankill and Old Lodge Roads. It is (just about) conceivable that, if O'Neill had not been exhibitionist about these matters, the solid groups of Catholics and Protestants living in recognisable 'ghettos' would have become a thing of the past in the course of the past thirty years.

Seán McGouran

Fahrenheit 9/11

I went to this film without any high expectations despite it winning the Palm d'Or. One reason for my scepticism was that, after the last US Presidential election, Michael Moore appeared on BBC's *Newsnight*. His response to the accusation that he helped elect Bush by urging Democrat supporters vote for the Green candidate Ralph Nadar was supercilious. He replied that at least now Americans have the consolation that, no matter how stupid they might be, they will still be more intelligent than the President of the USA.

I was expecting a few more belly laughs in this film and little else. There are plenty of belly laughs, but the humour doesn't detract from the politics of the film. Moore's film is a devastating critique of the Bush Administration. His targets are well aimed and if, in the course of his polemic, collateral damage is inflicted on some so called innocent civilians such as Ricky Martin and Britney Spears, such is war!

The film opens with the 2000 election and asks did it really happen or was it just a dream? It concludes that it did happen. George Bush did indeed steal the election from Al Gore. It details the disenfranchisement of voters who were unlikely to vote Republican (*"You could tell by their colour"*), the supervision of the counting by Bush's supporters etc. etc.

It argues that the Supreme Court validated the election result because it was packed with Bush cronies. I wonder whether this was true. After all, a Democratic President was in power for the previous 8 years.

Gore accepted the decision of the Supreme Court even though he didn't agree with it. There was one last appeal available and this was a petition of the people supported by one Senator. But not one Senator, including Al Gore, was prepared to support this petition. Strangely enough, the person chairing the hearing of the petitions in the Senate was Gore himself. Each petitioner addressed Gore (at least one referred to him as *"President"*) but Gore rejected the petitions on the grounds that no Senator had signed. One person said that she didn't care if no Senator had signed. To which Gore, memorably replied: *"Unfortunately the rules care"*.

The film doesn't explain why Gore didn't sign the petition. It is possible that he felt that the price of bringing the whole political system into disrepute was not worth paying, even if his own political ambition had to be sacrificed. A less benign view would be that he was so entrenched in the political establishment that he was incapable of supporting a popular campaign that was not controlled by his party.

Following the election Bush is portrayed as a *"lame duck President"*. The film says that before September 11th he was on holidays for more than 40% of his time. On September the 11th he heard of the first plane crashing in to the World Trade Centre before attending a photo opportunity at a kindergarten. While he was listening to the story of the three pigs, an aide told him of the second plane. The film shows disturbing pictures of the president transfixed, opening and closing a children's book. Moore tells us that it was like this for a full seven minutes.

The film will confirm suspicions that George W is not the sharpest tool in the garden shed. But the actions of his administration cannot be explained away by incompetence. After September the 11th, all flights were grounded except for the extended Bin Laden family. Over a hundred of them were allowed leave the United States for Saudi Arabia, the country of origin of most of the hijackers. The film indicates that this, of course, is against all known police procedure. The family members of a fugitive from justice are the first to be interviewed.

There was an interview with the Saudi Ambassador to the USA on the Larry King show. He explained that it was felt that preventing the Bin Laden family from leaving the USA would have been unfair since they couldn't be held responsible for the actions of Osama Bin Laden. Interesting that the Saudi Ambassador was called upon to explain US policy! Then for the delectation and delight of the viewers the Ambassador revealed that he once met Osama Bin Laden in the 1980s. On that occasion Bin Laden asked him to thank the American Government for the help it had given him in the struggle against Communism in Afghanistan. *"How ironic"* was the reply of a slightly worried looking Larry King.

The film went on to detail the close business relations between the Bush family and Saudi Oil interests, as well as the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the USA (Investments by Saudi Arabia in the US equal about 7% of the investments in the American stock exchanges).

The film indicates that the Bush administration saw “*nine eleven*” as an opportunity to implement domestic and foreign policies that would have been impossible in normal circumstances. Vice-President Dick Cheney’s company, Haliburton, was involved in building an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea. It suited the US to invade Afghanistan and impose an oil consultant to run that country. I have read elsewhere that the US turned its attention to Iraq when Oil Reserves in the Caspian Sea turned out to be less than expected. It was less easy to link Hussein with Al Qaeda. But Bush kept on repeating the words “*Saddam Hussein*”, “*terrorism*” and “*Al-Qaeda*” in the same sentence.

The most interesting part of the film showed how the fears of the American people were manipulated. Not even small towns were safe from the terrorist threat and therefore people should be happy to sacrifice some of their civil liberties.

The film also showed a business conference demonstrating the money to be made from the war in Iraq (“And don’t worry. The state will pay for the costs”). One businessman said unctuously that this was his way of “supporting the troops”.

How the American military recruits its troops from the poor areas of America was also revealing. One of the potential recruits thought that the pictures of bombed out Baghdad didn’t look so different from his own neighbourhood in Flint, Michigan.

The film concludes with two statements. One is a quote from George Orwell’s *1984* indicating that, in a class society, it was not important that the objectives of wars were achieved but that the State was constantly in a state of war. The other statement from Moore himself was a rather cloying appeal to his audience that, if poor people are to be forced into the army, the least we can do is ensure that they are not exposed to unnecessary danger. The assumption seems to have been that “*poor people*” wouldn’t be looking at the film!

There is a great need for this kind of film. Never before has so much information been processed for the immediate political needs of those in power. It is good to see an attempt being made to place such information in a coherent framework. Go and See!

John Martin

JFK Rides Again

John Forbes Kerry (the initials happen, perhaps, to be JFK, as in the great Democratic ‘icon’, John Fitzgerald Kennedy) is probably not going to win the election for President of the USA, to be held on November 2, 2004. This is mainly because of the accusation that he ‘*flip-flops*’ on matters of major political importance, because he voted for the war on Iraq, but then turned against it. That he probably did not expect the (Republican) Administration to engage in lies and distortions in the evidence it placed before Congress in the run up to the war, is not part of this argument, or jibe, put forward by the Republican Party. But Kerry is stuck with the ‘image’ of being a man unable to make up his mind on matters of national importance. This has allegedly to do with the fact that he is a Massachusetts ‘Liberal’ and thereby detached from the feeling and aspirations of the average American citizen. The average American citizen could hardly have found Iraq or Afghanistan on the map prior to 9 / 11.

Kerry, according to *Project Vote Smart* (<http://www.vote-smart.org>) is an identikit Liberal: in favour of gun control and of fairly easy access to abortion. He is also the opposite, according to Peter S. Canellos, a member of a Senate awkward squad. The headline is, *Real Kerry Doesn’t Fit The Label Of ‘Liberal’*, he has “... *long sought to shake free of party dogma*”. Canellos quotes two breaks with “*liberal theology*”: in 1992 Kerry bemoaned the “*lack of personal responsibility in poor urban neighborhoods*” and suggested that affirmative action sent the wrong message to the underclass. He is also said to have been “*delighted by the shake-up*” following the Democratic loss of control of Congress in 1994 (*Letter From America, International Herald Tribune*, Thurs., July 15, 2004, reprinted from *The Boston Globe*, Kerry’s ‘home town’ paper).

What this tends to indicate is that Kerry is too politically minded to be a party-man (or a President?): he engages in thought about society.

Kerry helped expose the Reagan administration’s dubious ‘wars’ in Central America, along with “*Republican moderates like Arlen Specter and Rudolph Giuliani, and such Democratic moderates as Joseph Lieberman and Joe Biden, Kerry enjoys wagging a finger at powerful interests of any type, demanding truth and*

transparency”. He might fit into a European legislature quite comfortably, which is why many Americans find him decidedly uncomfortable. Andrew Sullivan (*Sunday Times* 19.09.04) put his finger on an aspect of Kerry’s lack of the common touch. He has spent his political career in Congress arguing about the niceties of legislation on such arcane matters as global warming and sewage plants. This background makes him dubious about grand gestures, which is pretty fatal on the ‘campaign trail’. Sullivan put Kerry forward as a suitable candidate for conservatives to vote for only a matter of weeks prior to the above; he now thinks that Kerry is going to be as big a loser as George McGovern in 1972. The title of the article is *So Long Kerry, You Look Like The Ultimate Loser*, ‘you look like’ is a bit of a face-saver for Sullivan, just in case Kerry makes a better showing than is anticipated at present.

His opponent, Bush (like many successful Presidential candidates) skipped law-making duty and went straight for a Governorship—of Texas in his case. He plays the bluff Texan very well, even though, like Kerry, he was born to the purple. He is the son of a President of the USA and the grandson of a Senator, and is a ‘big oil’ man. There are successful ‘small oil’ entrepreneurs in Texas these days because of tribulations in the Arab lands. Bush also seems to be a genuine fundamentalist Protestant Christian, and probably also genuinely believes that the human race is living in the ‘end time’. This sort of thing reassures many of the American electorate, including people who would normally regard his views as off the wall. A Roman Catholic former Chicago policeman interviewed on *Sunday* (Radio4 UK, 19.09.04), who described himself as ‘pro-life’, is going to vote Bush, because he is a religious, moral man.

Kerry is (nominally) a Catholic. In these strange times his religion might be more of a problem than it was for John F. Kennedy. (Canellos mentions the fact that the *Boston Globe* has a *Left of Ted* [Kennedy] slot, which Kerry has inhabited for most of his 20 year Senate career. It speaks volumes for American politics that a multi-millionaire is the lodestar of the ‘Left’.) Apart from the fact that the Pope is regarded by most of the fundamentalists

who are infesting the Republican Party as 'Anti-Christ', Roman Catholics are not 'sound' on the series of wars in which Bush has involved the US. (Some elements in the Southern States probably have not forgiven the Kennedy family for the Civil Rights Act.)

The Republicans, for the past ten years or so, have used 'knocking copy' on their opponents, some of it pretty brutal. Apart from the 'flip-flop' jibe about the Iraq war, they have left Kerry pretty well alone. The reason is that Kerry is comparatively exotic: his family's name was Kohn and they are from the Hapsburg's Austrian lands. The Kerry name is, allegedly, an accident; a pin was inserted in a map (whether of the world in general, or Ireland in particular depends on the teller of the tale). Kerry became the new name—rather lucky for a family which had settled in the heavily Irish and Catholic Massachusetts—one feels that 'Kazakhstan' might not have filled the bill. The family had converted to Roman Catholic Christianity while in Europe (not an eccentric matter at the time: the best known converts from Judaism to Christianity were the composers Mahler and Schoenberg. The latter, characteristically became a Lutheran). Subliminally this tends to emphasise the alleged 'flip-flop' element in Kerry's mental make up.

Kerry speaks fluent French, while Bush has problems with the English language—he even made a joke about it at the Republican Convention, making one wonder of it is not part of a cultivated *persona*. Kerry's linguistic skill would not endear him to large swathes of the US public at the best of times. At a time when the French are regarded as virtual allies of Al Qa'ida, such cosmopolitanism is not an electoral advantage, and the matter is made worse by the fact that Kerry has relatives in France. On top of that his wife, who inherited the vast Heinz food processing empire from her (deceased) husband, is Portuguese. Though this is difficult to fit into a demonology, she has a habit of being abrupt with Republican-oriented journalists. Portugal was also less than enthusiastic about the war on Iraq, and the Portuguese-Americans (largely resident in Massachusetts) are not particularly well regarded. The only 'famous Portuguese' are John Philip Sousa, and the novelist John Dos Passos on the Left, who was involved in the campaign to save Sacco and Vanzetti from the gallows, becoming a 'Jeffersonian' Republican at the end of his career.

The major problem the Republicans have with Kerry is that he fought in the Viet Nam war and won a lot of medals, and then campaigned against the war, making the reputation that got him into the Senate. A number of increasingly desperate attempts to destroy his reputation as a brave soldier have been made. This created a situation where the Veterans, a substantial element in the electorate, have turned against the Republicans. Kerry did not make an issue of his record in Viet Nam, the Republicans did, and realised that it was counter-productive. The main

problem facing the electorate is that Kerry has not got a policy on Iraq, or the 'terrorist' problem, that is different from the Republicans. He wants Iraq to become a sovereign democratic state. So does Bush. He would like the various allies of the US, including France and Germany, to share the burden in Iraq and Afghanistan. The only difference between his approach and that of Bush is that Kerry might be more polite about asking.

It is difficult to blame the American electorate if they choose to stay with the devil they know.

Seán McGouran

Launch of new book
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12.00: World War One Propaganda
◆ Ted O'Sullivan

2.30: War and Atrocity in the 21st Century Congo
◆ John O'Shea, Chairman of GOAL

3.30: Waging Covert Nuclear War – Horror of Depleted Uranium Munitions Today
◆ Fintan Dunne, Journalist, www.breakfomews.com

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due to report in 2007.

“Last time the 2002 report provided spectacular pay rises which averaged at 8.9% for civil servants, teachers, nurses, gardai and local authority employees” (Irish Independent, 4.8.2004).

“‘Sustaining Progress’ is delivering the highest pay increases in any of the world’s leading economies”, IMPACT General Secretary, Peter McLoone states.

It sure is, if you’re employed in the middle or upper tiers of the public service!

“In exchange, Irish workers are delivering the highest productivity improvements in Europe and the E.U.’s highest rates of economic growth.” (ibid.).

They are indeed—but it is not these workers who are receiving the fruits of economic growth—in the caste system which now underpins the national agreements, the public service ‘drones’ are gobbling further and further that which belongs to the ‘worker’ bee, the ‘soldier’ bee and the ‘queen’ bee.

Further, the “*productivity improvements*” and record growth is overwhelmingly contributed by the *IT* sector, where trade union membership is pathetically weak and contributes greatly to the ever decreasing Trade Union membership in the private sector in general.

There is a political dimension to all this as well—the core vote of the ‘establishment’ parties, as Dana calls them are Mr. McLoone’s “*civil servants, teachers, nurses, gardai*”. This is especially so in the case of New Fianna Fail. McCreevy may be an economic rationalist but his inane political cuteness doesn’t allow political gain to get in the way of his ideology.

When you’re robbing Peter to pay Paul, of one thing you can be certain : Paul won’t bloody well object, that’s for sure!

CRAFT UNIONS

The country’s largest craft union, the 37,000 strong Technical, Engineering & Electrical Union (TEEU) voted in favour of Phase II. This is the first occasion the TEEU have voted for acceptance of a national wage agreement.

It also voted in favour of a controversial motion that will increase the number of reserved seats for women on ICTU’s Executive Council from four to eight. The successful motion also created a second Vice-Presidential position, which must be filled by a woman.

The TEEU members voted by four to one to accept the Phase II. Acting General Secretary, Eamon Devoy, said the Union had voted against the original agreement because of the strict compliance clause restricting the right of unions to pursue

local bargaining.

“However, on this occasion we will only have to decide on a pay rise and the T.E.E.U. Executive Council has recommended acceptance. This is not just because of the terms on offer but because of significant progress on non-pay issues as well.

“The Government has promised that a combination of pay increases and tax reforms will deliver ‘significant increases in take home pay’ over the next 18 months.” (Irish Examiner, 30.8.2004).

The TEEU decision followed the CPSU public service union vote of two to one in favour of Phase II despite opposing Phase I in March, 2003.

“The eagerness with which vocal critics of the national social pact are now embracing the pay terms may boost employer suspicions that they conceded too much during last June’s protracted pay negotiations” (Irish Independent, 30.8.2004).

THE TEACHERS

The “Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) will not be buying into the deal. It complained yesterday of not having the opportunity to ballot members on the new wage offer.

“The T.U.I. said the wage offer under the agreement was not adequate to compensate for inflation and economic growth” (Irish Examiner, 30.8.2004).

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) backed the agreement.

The Association of Secondary Teachers’ of Ireland (ASTI) are not affiliated to the ICTU.

S.I.P.T.U.

The country’s biggest trade union, SIPTU, voted by a margin of 70 per cent to 30 per cent to support the deal. SIPTU made up nearly 20 per cent of the 392 delegates at the Special Delegate Conference.

SIPTU President, Jack O’Connor, said members had clearly decided in favour of the proposals on the basis of commitments given by the Government in relation to personal taxation and improved public services.

This was a reference to the unions’ expectation that tax adjustments in the Budget will result in further increases in take-home pay.

While the new deal does not include a specific commitment to that effect, unions concluded the pay negotiations in June with a clear understanding that workers would benefit from budgetary changes such as a widening of tax bands.

“Mr. O’Connor described the pay

deal as a ‘working document’ and said there was ‘much unfinished business’ in areas such as take-home pay, pensions, childcare and measures to support standards of employment” (Irish Times, 31.8.2004).

THE VOTE

FOR: SIPTU (76 Votes) 70%/30%; IMPACT public service (32) 91%/9%; TEEU craft workers (27) 81%/19%; MSF/AMICUS (21) 80%/20%; INTO teachers (21) 90%/10%; CWU communications (18) 62%/38%; CPSU public servants (14) 62%/38%; UCATT builders (13) 78%/22%; PSEU civil servants (11) 91%/9%; AHCPS civil servants (4) 93%/7%; NUJ journalists (4) 85%/15%; GPMU printers (4) 66%/34%.

AGAINST: MANDATE (29 Votes) 97%/3%; INO nurses (24) 74%/26%; ATGWU general (16) 97%/3%; IBOA bank staff (14) 98%/2%; TUI teachers (13) 100% against; BATU builders (11) 100% against; IMO medical doctors (6) 100% against; POA prison staff (4) 95%/5%.

OTHER SMALL UNIONS: (30 Votes)
TOTAL VOTES: (392)

“Sustaining Progress—Phase II July, 2004—December, 2005

Workers to receive 5.5% increase over 18 months.

Some Private Sector workers are already due the First Phase increase of 1.5% under the new deal, which comes into effect at different times for different employments.

- * 1.5% for the first six months
- * 1.5% for the second six months
- * 2.5% for the final six months

Public Sector workers will receive the first 1.5% next June, 2005, followed by the next 1.5% in December, 2005 and a 2.5% increase in June, 2006.

Additional one half per cent rise for those earning 351 Euros per week or less, or up to 9 Euros an hour, giving them a First Phase increase of 2%.

REDUNDANCY: Ceiling on Redundancy Pay to be increased from 507 Euros to 600 Euros per week.

MATERNITY: Maternity Benefit to be restored to 80% of earnings, up from 70%.

MINIMUM WAGE: Minimum wage of 7 Euros an hour to be reviewed by the Labour Court, with a view to a new rate applying from May 1st, 2005.

BENCHMARKING: Benchmarking body to start new review in the second half of next year and to report in 2007.

LABOUR INSPECTORS: Appointment of four additional Labour Inspectors and review of functions and operation of Employment Rights bodies.

PENSIONS: A working group of Government, Employer and Union representatives to examine Pension provisions.

SEMI-STATES: Government promises “active engagement” with social partners on the future of commercial Semi-State bodies.

remain. In such an outcome something might be salvaged from the recent referendum result. It would be important also not to forget about the multitude of environmental issues facing us a nation.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

As the traditional parties experience shrinkage in their base, it is important to those of us who are activists for an alternative, to ask where we ourselves are going. The potential of disillusioned Fianna Fail voters should not be underestimated as we ought to be a society in conversation with ourselves beyond political correctness and buzz words. In being part of a recent organising committee in Cork for Diversity Day, which brings immigrants and Irish people together to celebrate music and art, I experienced a lot of good will but we were very overburdened with insurance costs and this may ultimately make an event next year impossible.

At times like this one can almost lose heart and wonder at the value of people-action but we have many positive examples from our national recent past which we can reclaim. Over the years the dynamic of much of Irish culture could be discovered in the GAA and the ICA [Irish Countrywomen's Association]. The people in such organisations do not suffer fools gladly; are extremely resourceful; and can facilitate a superior form of debate to anything which features on Questions & Answers. In the past, the Left have been wrong to dismiss such institutions of the Irish people simply because of the comments of a few or the attempt by some politicians to hijack these organisations for their own ends. The welfare of the mass of people has improved since independence, in a patchy way and insufficiently, but let us fairly study and acknowledge where benefits have been derived and focus our attacks for those deserving.

John Ryan

The 'Partnership' Age Continues

THE SECOND 18 MONTH PHASE OF THE "SUSTAINING PROGRESS" NATIONAL AGREEMENT WAS APPROVED ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2004 BY 267 VOTES TO 110 AT A SPECIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE OF THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (ICTU) AT THE HELIX IN DUBLIN.

The Agreement provides for a 5.5% increase over 18 months as follows:

- * 1.5% for the first six months
- * 1.5% for the second six months
- * 2.5% for the final six months

Each union's votes are calculated on their membership in the Republic and representation is skewed in favour of the smaller groups. While SIPTU accounts for nearly forty per cent of ICTU union members in the State, its voting strength is just under twenty per cent.

In March, 2003, on the vote for the First Phase, there was major embarrassment when the delegates' votes were counted at 195 to 147 in favour of the Agreement, which indicated that about 50 elected Congress delegates had not bothered to vote. On September the 1st, things were much more disciplined.

The new deal will bring improvements in Maternity Benefits and Statutory Redundancy payments and also a review of the National Minimum Wage, currently seven Euros per hour.

ICTU General Secretary, David Begg, stated he had received a commitment from the government that December's forthcoming Budget would include a widening of income tax bands.

The two terms of "Sustaining Progress" over three years works out at 3.6% on an annual basis.

The deal was a foregone conclusion when unions representing well over 200 of the 392 delegates entitled to vote pledged their support for the 18 month agreement.

A shift by the TEEU electricians, the Communications Workers' Union and the CPSU public servants in favour of the deal ensured safe passage for "Sustaining Progress" Phase II.

The main opposition was led by MANDATE, the retail trade union, ATGWU, IBOA bank staff, TUI teachers and INO nurses.

MANDATE, which represents thousands of retail workers, said the deal did not go far enough to address the needs of those on low pay.

The Irish Nurses' Organisation and the Teachers' Union of Ireland, both of which backed the first phase of Sustaining Progress, also opposed the deal on this occasion.

INO Deputy General Secretary, Mr. Dave Hughes said many nurses believed supporting the deal would be an endorsement and acceptance of the "appalling state of the health service".

These unions also wanted a higher minimum or floor-pay increase, improved union rights and a local bargaining clause to facilitate top-up pay claims.

BANKING UNION

Whilst the Irish Bank Officials' Association (IBOA) executive rejected "Sustaining Progress" unanimously, which marked the first time the IBOA had rejected a national pay deal, the country's largest public service union's members voted by a nine-to-one majority in favour of the new national pay deal.

The IBOA said the 5.5% pay increase over 18 months, proposed under "Sustaining Progress", fell short of its expectations and criticised the absence of local bargaining provisions that would allow unions in certain sectors to negotiate better deals.

Larry Broderick, IBOA General Secretary said banks were enjoying record profitability and that the proposed deal failed to reflect the contribution of bank staff on low pay.

"I.B.O.A. believes employers, particularly profitable ones, should reward employees with adequate wage increases. Productivity in the private sector has substantially increased, yet staff are not getting the financial reward they deserve."

IBOA said the deal was unfair because it allowed employers to plead inability to pay if they were under financial pressure, but there was no mechanism to extract pay rises above the 5.5% mark from employers that could afford to pay more. The IBOA originally wanted a 7% rise.

"Unions should be able to negotiate reasonable increases with employers who are making record profits, yet the people who generate the profits... are prevented from benefitting through the absence of a local bargaining clause," said Mr. Broderick.

"We must be free to negotiate locally with highly profitable organisations" (Irish Examiner, 21.7.2004).

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

IMPACT General Secretary, Peter McLoone said: "It is the best deal since 1987 and benchmarking has been a key factor in producing a high vote in ballots" (Irish Independent, 2.9.2004).

Of course, nearly all of the IMPACT trade union's 50,000 members will qualify for the second round of the special benchmarking bonanza, which is a feature of the new pay terms on top of the annualised 3.6 wage they will receive under "Sustaining Progress".

Close to nearly 300,000 state employees benefitted from the last Benchmarking decision in 2002.

"Public service unions participated in separate secret talks in June on launching a new round of benchmarking

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LABOUR

Comment

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Lessons To Learn

WE MIGHT ASK ourselves if any long-term implications can be taken from the recent Euro and Local Election results? In the County Council elections the right-wing parties lost around a net of seventy seats. They lost other seats in the less significant Town Council elections. Some time in the next couple of years the Government may try to bring back water charges and escalate the rate of privatisation of the refuse service. In more than one Council, the combined force of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are now in the minority. However, as seems likely in many areas, Labour will go about forming alliances with Fine Gael. Based on their respective so-called principles, how will this work when estimates need to be agreed? Will the pattern repeat itself of representatives claiming to promote communities buckling under the threat of abolition by the Department of the Environment?

Furthermore, when we consider the large agenda facing the newly returned Councillors, we might ask if all is now forgotten of the intention to elect Council Chairs democratically and directly. Whether chains of office are given out, or junkets are divided up, is it not more fundamental to ask how much longer that Local Government in Ireland will remain under the dictatorship of the County Managers?

Whoever forms the next Government is unlikely to tackle this issue. A negative impact of the Tribunal age is that there is a new school of thought that doesn't trust to put any power into the hands of elected representatives, if at all avoidable! The high poll in the recent elections was interesting but it is difficult to see how the interest of voters can be maintained, given the large number of local crises and the severe limitation of any Council to be able to do much to sort out the causes. Actions

in communities outside Council Chambers could become crucial.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

When communities are healthy, they are capable of working independently. Whether this means switching water back on if the meter man disconnects someone, or deciding to go and decorate some derelict buildings, or having a protest or boycott of known hoodlums in the drugs business. The same can be said of mobilisation when the downgrading and outsourcing of services happens. Whether it is Garda stations which only open in the daytime, Post Offices closing down, or Home Helps being put on shorter hours. Never have our communities needed people more to work to keep our areas safe and serviced at a time of downsizing, and Mary Harney wanting people to work in the real economy. The reskilling of a bulk of ordinary people is very necessary. Many have never been in a Trade Union, or have had their opinion seriously considered. A participation in Social Forums and community workshops would help.

In a future Local Election, people need to consider carefully the lists of candidates, taking into account two key principles. Firstly, the voting record of the candidate,

and secondly, if he or she has a proven ability to respond to the initiatives of local Action and Community organisations—rather than seeking to dictate, impose or even stifle such efforts. Once this vetting is seriously followed, a number of preferences may be offered to the best available people in a given ward from the range of Sinn Fein, Labour, Green, Socialist and Independent candidates. The best choices may be those that prove they can operate effectively in broad alliances, be they Union, Voluntary group or Inter-Party lobby, and who are not simply biding their time to make a bid for the personal glory of a Dail seat. In five years' time, another seventy or so seats could be taken from the Right on the various Councils. Such a prolonged pattern could be of significant historical impact for Ireland.

EURO ELECTIONS

Meanwhile, in the Euro elections, in the case of Ulster, the only unapologetic candidate on the Left—Eamon McCann—polled a mere 9,000 votes. With everybody else playing safe, and now that the push has been put on the SDLP, it is possible that in a future election a considerable number of Ulster people might decide to tactically vote for a more Left leaning person, who would embrace a greater socio-economic picture than what is usually discussed in the politics of their province. In such a set of circumstances, a message might be sent to Brussels that there are more facets to the region's difficulties than are usually portrayed through the funnel of the mass media.

Overall, the capture of two seats by Sinn Fein was significant, and fair play to them. As with all newly-elected MEPs, there is much on which we could lobby. A campaign for an amnesty for all asylum seekers and immigrants here for longer than four years, with a granting of right to remain for life, would be very welcome. This might be followed by a demand for a right to work for all those with leave to

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