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**Paddy And Mr. Redmond!**  
Peter Hart  
CAP

**Work Skills**  
(Back page: Labour Comment)

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## A Time For Peace

War and peace in Northern Ireland exist in a common medium of conflict between two communities. Much the same relationship exists between them in peace as in war. There is either conflict with guns or conflict without guns. The guns have never been the cause of the conflict. There is even in a sense in which the guns alleviate the conflict by formalising or objectifying it. When this round of the war ended—and it did not end in July, but seven years ago—the conflict of communities intensified. The cause of the conflict is the entirely artificial structure of state imposed on the two warring communities back in 1921, when the British state—by then a democratic state—was making war on the Irish democracy as a whole. The crime was not the Partition of Ireland. It was the system of government and politics that the Partitioning power imposed on the Six Counties. Nothing like it exists anywhere else in the world. In its perversity it is fully deserving of Edmund Burke's description of the Penal Laws, and its consequences have been even more damaging in certain respects than the consequences of the Penal Laws. The Battle of the Boyne was an action in a sectarian conquest and those who were defeated knew to expect the worst. But the system of Protestant communal dominance called Northern Ireland was set up following the British victory in its "*war for democracy and the rights of nations*" when people were expecting something entirely different, and had a right to. Thousands of Northern Catholics had been duped into taking part in that Great War for all things good and beautiful, and they came home to be treated with contempt by the regime of their recent comrades-in-arms. And this unique system of state, through its proper functioning, reproduced the hostile relations between the communities in every succeeding generation.



Winston Churchill, the great Warlord of the Empire, has a purpose passage about the dreary steeples of Tyrone and Fermanagh re-emerging as the flood of the war receded, having refreshed everything else in the world. But Churchill himself was a major cause of the dreariness. He went to Belfast in 1912, when the Liberal Government of which he was then a member depended on the Irish

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## The Right Wing Health Agenda

It used to be said that Ireland has a two-tier Health service. Following Mary Harney's decision to postpone (perhaps indefinitely) the risk equalisation scheme between Voluntary Health Insurance and entrants into the health insurance market the system is moving towards a multi-tiered market system.

The Irish system was a compromise between a Social Insurance scheme and a purely market-based one. The state paid for low income individuals' hospital needs and the better off (but not that much better off) paid their insurance premiums to the VHI, a state insurance organisation. From a socialist point of view this was unsatisfactory. There was always the feeling that the VHI members' health needs took precedence over the public patients. However, although the VHI had different insurance policies for ordinary people and the very wealthy who wanted to avail of the Blackrock private clinic etc, there were "*social*" aspects to its scheme. It was "*community rated*". It could not offer different policies for young people and older people. Neither could it offer different policies for people with a record of illness and those who tended to be healthy. In effect, the young subsidised the old, the healthy subsidised the ill.

Socialists favour a social insurance system, but about twenty years ago when Barry Desmond was the Health Minister there was a suggestion that something approaching a social insurance system could be reached by making VHI insurance available to all. But those were the days when people didn't think that the "free

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*Labour Comment*, edited by **Pat Maloney**:  
*Work Skills* by *Mark Langhammer*

Home Rule Party for its majority, and he rabble-raised for Irish Home Rule. Eight years later he took part in setting up in the Six Counties the unique system of government which a few years later, regarding his handiwork, he found so dreary. It could be nothing else but dreary. The wonder is that its dreary routine of communal political conflict, which had nothing whatever to do with representation in the governing of the state or the determining of state policy, was tolerated for close on half-a-century. And that it was left to the Unionists to start the war in August 1969.

The war on the nationalist side was a response to Unionist/Loyalist action in mid-August 1969, in which part of the apparatus of state combined with militant elements in the Unionist populace (the two being never sharply distinguished) to launch assaults on Catholic areas. Those assaults met with resistance. And effective resistance to an assault by the state is an insurrection. And life could never be the same again in the concoction called Northern Ireland.

The Unionist assault was itself a response to a reform agitation in support of demands that were so modest that in any functional state they would have been implemented as a matter of course. In the British state proper they had long been implemented. The reason they were resisted in the Northern Ireland sub-state

set up by Britain is that the Nationalist community had been mobilised in support of them. The issue was not the issue. The issue was who was demanding it.

The only provocation offered to Unionism (apart from the fact that a minority of 40% had united to ask for something) was given by the bizarre entity that came to be known as Official Republicanism and which now enjoys the leadership of the Irish Labour Party—to the discomfiture of old Labourites like Joan Burton who cannot bear to talk about it. And the present leader of that party will not talk about that phase, though his venom against the Provos derives from it.

But let's admit that the provocation offered by the Official IRA was not great. Its disproportionate effect was due to the brittleness of the Unionist regime. (But the Officials did go on to fight a strictly lunatic war of Marxist-Leninist fantasy for two years.)

The Taoiseach too played his part. Though Jack Lynch did not offer provocation before the event, he made an inflammatory speech during the event, and the expectations raised by it played a part in consolidating the Nationalist defence into an insurrection. And Jack Lynch played with insurrection for the next six or seven months before being faced down by Britain. He took the heat off himself by procuring conspiracy

prosecutions against an Army officer who carried out his orders and a Cabinet Minister who had taken part with him in determining the policy which was now held to be subversive. The Army Officer (Captain Kelly), though acquitted, was punished. And, though documents completely exonerating him are now in the public domain, he never received an apology from the state which blackguarded him—and against which he was initiating a civil action when he died suddenly. The state could not apologise without raising unanswerable questions about its own conduct in 1969-70.

The effective defence against the pogrom of August 1969 was not mounted by the IRA, whether Official or Provisional. The Provos did not exist then. They are a consequence of the war, not a cause. British ex-Servicemen played a crucial part in the organising of the defence which became an insurrection. That is to say, Catholics who had served in the British Army, and who had no wish for separation from Britain, but who could not put up quietly with what they saw going on around them.

The Provos were formed from various sources during the Winter of 1969-70, and they declared war in 1970. But the situation in which they declared war was not a situation of peace and stability, even by the standard of 1956 when the official IRA had declared war. And, even though the Provos took on the trappings of anti-Treaty Republicanism for a while, it was evident that the purpose animating them was a specific product of 'the Northern Ireland state'. That is why they quickly acquired a substance equal to, or greater than, the substance that the anti-Treaty IRA lost in the mid-1920s.

The line spun by parts of the media that they have called off the war even though they have lost it is groundless. Insofar as they ever thought they were fighting the war against the Treaty, they called it off a generation ago. They were fighting a different war, and that is why they came to a parting of the ways with the anti-Treaty Republicanism of the South twenty years ago. But the politicians and commentators in the South were locked into an understanding of the Provos as mere anti-Treatyites, and in their own retreat from anti-Partitionism in the mid-seventies became incapable of appreciating what life was like in a fake democracy structured by a communal antagonism from which there was no escape within the system.

## Paddy And Mr. Redmond

Well I met with Johnny Redmond and his cheeks were all aglow.  
“Come follow me young Paddy and to Flanders Field we’ll go.  
I’ll put money in your pocket and boots upon your feet,  
And we’ll take a turn in Europe till we see who we shall meet.”  
(Haven’t we guides for yeez all!!)

Arrah ! Johnny don’t timpt me! The shillin’s look grand!  
What a figure I’ll cut wid me gun in me hand.  
Bullswool roun’ me bollix and a poepot on me head—  
And me belly fair bewildered from bein’ so well fed.

Never mind that young Paddy! Just pull in your chin,  
Then throw out your chest an’ give us a grin !  
Shure his majesty’s watching , with eyes full of pride,  
As his barefoot Irish gosoons flock in thousands to his side.  
(Shure hasn’t he boots for yeez all!!)

Arrah! Etc.,

But answer me this John and tell me no lie.  
Who exactly’s this Hun and why must he die?  
Shure what did he do to us beyant in Belmullet,  
That we’re off to Belgium to bayonet his gullet?  
(A reasonable enough question, some might think?)

Arrah! Etc.,

The Hun he’s a monster – a low form of life!  
He’ll treble your rents and roger your wife!  
He knows nothing of music nor learning nor art.  
And he hates Holy Ireland deep down in his heart.  
(Hasn’t he pitchcaps for yeez all!!)

Arrah! Etc.,

There’s a little bit more Pat – there’s also the Turk!  
An’ the arrogant Austrian – a low job-o’-work!  
But we’ll free every Magyar an’ Slovak an’ Pole.  
Not to mention the Arab – God bless his brown soul!  
(Haven’t we nation states for them all!!)

But tell me now Johnny , don’t make me a fool!

When this job is done , will we have Home Rule?  
Of course we will, Paddy. When this job is done  
They’ll give us our freedom. No more need for the gun.  
(Haven’t we fairytales for yeez all!!)

In that case John Redmond, sure Paddy’s your man  
Since we’re fightin’ for Ireland I’m yours to command.  
I need a few weeks of fresh air and bright sun  
Far away from the stench of this dark Dublin slum.  
(There’ll be plonk and Mamselles for us all!!)

Arragh!

So lead on John Redmond and let me see Fritz.  
Be the thunderin’ Jaysus I’ll blow him to bits!  
Then it’s back home to Ireland , in clover for life.  
A pansion for me – a new hat for the wife!  
(Poor Paddy wrote THAT letter to his Irish Molly-O!!)

Arragh! Etc.,

So Paddy went to Passchendaele, the Somme ‘n’ Wipers too.  
He saw the German Army and at their ranks he flew.  
But Fritz stood brave and steady, his Mauser in his paw,  
An’ the flash from Fritz’s rifle was the last thing Paddy saw.  
(Wir haben kugeln fur euch allen!!)

Arragh! Etc.,

When we next met Butcher Redmond , he’d had a great fall!  
He tried to conscript us... no-one heeded his call.  
He was lonely and beaten – a sad go-be-the-wall,  
His auld Home Rule Party couldn’t fill a parish hall!  
(Is this a reasonable question – did John Bull pull  
his hairy bullswool over Butcher Redmond’s unsmiling Irish  
eyes?)

Arragh! Etc.,

In their postwar election we gave them a shock.  
Shoulder to Irish shoulder we stood like a rock!  
We hoisted the Green Flag and voted Sinn Fein’  
And we’ll NEVER, nay NEVER, be westbrits again.  
(We have an Irish Republic for all.)

Liam Mhic I Shearcaigh ©

Vincent Browne discussed the North with Henry Macdonald of the *Observer* in his radio show a couple of months ago, at the time of the local elections when Trimble’s party was disappearing fast. Browne said he could not understand why Trimble had not claimed victory on Good Friday 1998, when “*Nationalism capitulated to the Unionist Veto*”, and Macdonald agreed that it was incomprehensible. It appears that Trimble’s mode of understanding was too sophisticated or complicated to allow him to see that he had won, and so he snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

Another thing that Browne could not understand was that, even though the

British and Irish media focussed on Republican atrocities, always finding some instance with topical resonance to focus on, as their contribution to the SDLP election campaign, the vote for Sinn Fein always went up. They thought they were on a winner this year with the McCartney affair, but the Provo vote was up again everywhere except Pottinger, in the immediate vicinity of the Short Strand.

Browne had observed this phenomenon over the years and had been content to remain bewildered by it. And the Dublin politicians must have noticed that the tactic was invariably counter-productive, but they were fated by their own natures to repeat it. They told Northern Catholics

that they must not vote Sinn Fein because that would be voting for murder. And when the Northern Catholics went and voted Sinn Fein despite this moral exhortation, the politicians of the Southern democracy refused to draw any coherent conclusion from the fact.

So, why did Trimble not claim victory in 1998? Because the argument that he won is a debating point made by a foreign observer with an irrelevant understanding, and it carries no conviction on the ground.

The project of military victory over the British Army, if it was ever held, was given up a quarter of a century ago. The object has been to keep the insurrection

going with a view to incorporating its dynamic into a transitional political settlement. That object, supported by all but a small fringe of the Catholic community, was achieved by the Agreement.

The British Parliament, like the King in the *Fair Maid Of Perth* with the clans, made an arrangement for the Six Counties under which the two communities must do battle with each other, and neutralise each other, in an arena hermetically sealed off. There were only two possible exits from this perpetual conflict of communities with no political object. One was into the politics of the British state. The Unionist Party and Whitehall shot that down at a moment where there was a danger of its being realised. The other exit is into the Republic. Trimble disabled himself by sealing off the British exit, and thereby facilitated the movement towards the Republic that was formalised in the Good Friday Agreement.

In the situation that has existed in the North ever since the defensive insurrection of 1969, and the formation of a new Republican movement out of that insurrection, the SDLP has been a kind of hinterland of the Provos. That has been the relationship on the ground, and SDLP leaders have had to take account of it when tempted to strike out on their own in response to Unionist or British offers. That is why Lord Fitt backed away from Faulkner's offer in the Summer of 1971 after first welcoming it in exuberant terms.

The Agreement was made by John Hume and Sinn Fein. The decline of the SDLP began with Hume's resignation as leader and his replacement by two leaders, Seamus Mallon and Mark Durkan, who took the party conflict with Sinn Fein more in earnest than the realities of the political situation warranted, and more in earnest than most SDLP voters did. They lost sight of the fact that Northern Ireland was not a democracy, or even a possible democracy, and began increasingly to refer to it as a democracy in which there had, unaccountably, been a massive upsurge of criminal activity.

When the decline of the SDLP set in, it began to be suggested that Hume had sacrificed it to the peace process. But there was no inevitability about the decline of the SDLP under the Good Friday Agreement. The decline was due to the failure of its leaders to maintain the high level of ambiguity which is the role of a 'constitutional nationalist' party in the weird constitutional wonderland of

'Ulster'. They let Trimble veto the implementation of the Agreement for a year and a half, and when Trimble eventually nominated Ministers under a short-term ultimatum they pretended he was implementing it. They gradually allowed the letter of the Agreement to be supplanted by Blair's private letter to the Unionist Party (before the 1998 elections) in the matter of decommissioning. And they played the part of exemplary pupils which was allocated to them by Dublin and London in election contexts. And they began to speak of "*post-nationalism*" in a situation in which nothing but nationalism was possible except make-believe. If the electorate had stood by them in those circumstances, the regression towards the pre-insurrectionary situation would have been on.

Brian Feeney regressed very rapidly last December under the impact of the great bank robbery organised by Adams and McGuinness—who are we to dispute the word of the Taoiseach in that matter? He said, in effect, that the Good Friday Agreement should never have been made because it did not involve a Provo surrender. But he soon realised that the bank robbery and the McCartney killing were not going to play as intended, and that he was on the road to nowhere. He then remembered the terms of the Agreement and saw that they had not been implemented by either the Unionists or Whitehall.

The case that no Agreement should have been made with the Provos, and that the war should have gone on until they were destroyed, is intelligible though not realistic. The war had been in stalemate for many years and a clear British victory was no more in prospect than a Provo victory. The British understood that the war was sustained on the Republican side by the unique Constitutional structure they had imposed on the Six Counties, and since they were fundamentally determined that the North should not be incorporated into the political life of the state, they saw that some kind of deal must be made with the Provos sooner or later, which would have to include an all-Ireland dimension, and would by implication legitimise the Republican military campaign.

What is neither intelligible nor realistic is a policy on the implementation of the Agreement which relies more on the case that the Agreement should not have been made, than on the terms on which it was made and put to referendums. And that has been the position of the Dublin Govern-

ment under McDowell and Ahern. If one infers a purpose from their actions, their purpose has been to undo the Agreement in the course of implementing it—which was also Trimble's purpose.

What stood in the way of the realisation of this purpose was the refusal of the Catholic electorate in the North to submit to moral blackmail.

If the terms of the Agreement had been kept in the forefront of the public mind by the SDLP and the Dublin Government, the mock-stupid (or perhaps authentically stupid) question asked of Alex Maskey by the BBC (in the person of Liz McKeon) on 29th July, the day of the IRA announcement, would not have been askable:

"The Good Friday Agreement was signed seven years ago: why has it taken this long for the armed struggle to be ended?"

It took so long because the terms were not met by the Unionists and Whitehall.

Neither the SDLP nor Dublin has profited from their failure to insist on the actual terms that were agreed. The SDLP is reduced to claiming as a victory the fact that it was not wiped out at this year's election. And the Dublin parties are disturbed by the arrival amongst them of a Sinn Fein party which they all hate but which is likely to increase its representation substantially at the next elections.

The successful extension of a Northern Ireland political movement into the Republic is something new. The Unionists tried it and failed. The success of the Provos can be put down to the misguided Northern policy of successive Dublin Governments, combined with the atrophy of political life in the South. The Labour Party is not a Labour Party, and Fianna Fail is doing its best to cease to be Fianna Fail, and Fine Gael has freed itself altogether from the Republican dimension which it re-founded in 1948, after jettisoning it in 1924. These parties have disowned their historic origins without re-founding themselves on other principles.

Senator Mansergh, the ideologue of Fianna Fail, has gone over entirely to the Treatyite view of the Treaty. He has declared the 1922 election, held under the threat of military action by the British Empire if the vote went the wrong way, to have been a democratic election. It is a strange view of democracy. And, if that election is held to have been a democratic ratification of the Treaty, it brands Fianna Fail as an anti-democratic party in origin.

The public life of the South has lost track of itself. If Sinn Fein can keep its bearings it has a bright future there. And we assume that the IRA decommissioning announcement had at least as much to do with the Republic as with the North.

It was evident in 1998 that the campaign was over and that all that was at issue was concluding it on the agreed terms. It was therefore important to the Unionists, for whom the humiliation of Republicans was the requirement, that the agreed terms should not be met. As Paisley was taking over from Trimble, and giving the false appearance of reaching an agreement with Sinn Fein, Ahern supported him in making a demand which Paisley had frankly declared to be for the purpose of humiliation. When the IRA rejected that demand, and refused to implement the decommissioning measure which would have been part of the deal, Ahern turned on Sinn Fein in a completely reckless manner, making wild accusations which he hoped would break it. The Republican movement handled all that Ahern and McDowell could throw at it and emerged stronger at the end. When it hinted that it would decommission unilaterally in its own time, Paisley said he would not stand for it. Decommissioning had to be part of a deal, and the deal had to involve humiliation.

The IRA has now initiated the decommissioning process, in conjunction with General de Chastelaine's genuinely Independent International Monitoring Commission (as distinct from the group of political hacks headed by Lord Alderdice which counterfeits the IIMC by giving itself a title with very similar initials, with the 'I' standing for a whopping great lie: Independent). Decommissioning is being got out of the way during dead season, with no advantage to either Paisley or Ahern. Neither of them is happy about this unilateral disarmament, but what can they do about it? There is a time for war, and there is a time for peace, as Adams put it when commenting on the announcement. The war has served its purpose. The Catholic North has been completely transformed by it. And, if there are parties to the Agreement who cannot bring themselves to implement its peace terms, why then the forces for whom the time for peace has come must just go ahead without them.

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The *Irish Times* reported as its front page lead the police execution of a Brazilian member of the public in Stockwell Underground Station under the

headline, *Shot Man 'Directly Linked' To Terrorism, Say Police*. It subsequently emerged that every detail of the police briefing of reporters was wrong. It was the police, not the Brazilian who vaulted the barriers to go into the station: he used a ticket and passed through the barriers. And he did not panic because he feared challenge over a work-visa. As for the 'direct link' with terrorism, it was the most tenuous that can be imagined. There was a terrorist investigation. There was a man who was killed. Therefore there was a link between the investigation and the man! The correct details were subsequently published by the *Daily Mail*, but the *Irish Times* did not give the same prominence to the vindication of the man's innocence, as it gave to the police lies.

What is interesting is that British security forces now openly admit to having a 'Shoot-To-Kill' policy of terrorist suspects. When this was operated in Northern Ireland it was never admitted, and still has not been.

\*

The Leader of the Labour Party issued a statement on the IRA Statement to which the press, being kind to him, gave very little publicity. It is a Stickie, rather than a Labour, statement. Pat Rabbitte cannot forget where he comes from:

"The vicious, brutal and largely sectarian campaign of murder and violence carried out by the IRA over a period of more than 30 years has left an understandable legacy of bitterness and distrust. The climate has been further soured by the failure of the Republican Movement to honour commitments previously entered into, events such as the Northern Bank robbery and the murder of Robert McCartney, and by a series of belligerent and threatening statements issued since the collapse of the most recent talks in Dublin last."

Responsibility for the Bank robbery remains a matter for speculation. Robert McCartney died after a brutal attack launched by his drug-addict friend. And the threatening statements are unspecified.

The campaign of murder and violence which was regarded as such by the Northern Catholic electorate was the campaign waged by enemies of the Provos, the Official Republicans, or Stickies. Popular hostility forced them to stop it. The Officials were excluded from Northern politics by popular conviction of their total irrelevance and complete loss of electoral support. The community which relegated the Stickies to political oblivion made the Provos their major party in the struggle for democracy, which is

not the same thing as the struggle for Northern Ireland. Is it not time that the Irish Labour Party came to terms with this fact of life, and unhijacked themselves from the Stickie feud?

Rabbitte also launched a Stickie attack on Fianna Fail. The Stickie line used to be that Fianna Fail created the Provos as a counter-balance to the revolutionary Marxist socialism of the Stickies which was poised to take over the state. That line no longer plays since the Stickies, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, became ultra-capitalists. Rabbitte's attack on Fianna Fail therefore took the form of accusing it of introducing deficit financing—Keynesianism!—under Haughey (see *Irish Times* 14.7.05).

John O'Donoghue replied on behalf of Fianna Fail on 21st July, suggesting that it was Fine Gael/Labour that started overspending and reminding him of his own political convolutions:

"...According to Deputy Rabbitte, the Labour-Fine Gael government of 1973-77 should no longer be seen as the one that introduced substantial deficit financing to Ireland, but rather as fiscally virtuous.

"The truly incredible thing about this assertion is that it was these very policies that he now praises which caused him to desert the Labour party in favour of a hard-left movement.

"He then went on a crusade over the next 15 years during which he sought to destroy the Labour Party as the standard-bearer of the Irish left. This established a pattern for the following two decades where he trenchantly advocated policies that would have caused dramatically more damage than anything done by any of the governments that held office.

...

"Deputy Rabbitte's stand... was to consistently demand more spending and more taxation...

"One of the few things he did agree with was the decision of his then enemies in the Labour Party to run away from government in 1986 because their partners were not willing to run ever higher deficits. ...

"Not alone did he and his present and past parties oppose fiscal sanity by calling for more spending, they also opposed the other keys to later growth. Never capable of taking a pro-enterprise stand, they consistently opposed the lower rate of corporation tax which did so much to attract inward investment.

"While now posing as its guardians, they also voted against the social partnership approach introduced by Fianna Fáil which replaced destructive industrial conflicts with a united approach to vital economic an social

issues.

“The development of the EU’s competencies through various treaties, and its new approach to regional development also played a part in our economic turnaround.

“This had no attraction for Deputy Rabbitte who was as reliable as Anthony Coughlan in his opposition to EU treaties.

...  
“When he left Labour in 1976 he joined a party which had no problem cosyng up to totalitarian regimes. It was not just the despotic North Korea it developed fraternal relations with. It had no problem accepting hospitality and support from the regimes that incarcerated Vaclav Havel and Andrei Sakharov.

“At home it championed Marxist Leninism and sought to impose democratic centralism on a fledgling democracy through surreptitious means. There was a concerted campaign to ensure that the national broadcaster promoted the interests of their party.

“Ultimately, it only gave up the ghost at the same time as the Soviet Union in 1991 and decided to abandon overt hard-

left politics.

“Having completed a reverse takeover of the Labour Party, Deputy Rabbitte is now attempting to rewrite the record to suit his own ends...

...  
“It may be a long journey from Sinn Féin the Workers’ Party to the Workers’ Party, from the Workers’ Party to New Agenda, from New Agenda to Democratic Left, from Democratic Left to the Labour Party, and from there to an embrace with Fine Gael, but history cannot be rewritten to accommodate the passage.

Not even for a tired and retired revolutionary.”

\*

The Labour Party has dismissed a call following the IRA statement, by Mick O’Reilly, leader of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers’ Union, to open an alliance with Sinn Féin as part of a left bloc in the Dail. Pat Rabbitte described O’Reilly as a “hurler on the ditch”, as he wasn’t a Labour member, whose “nonsense” views “deserve to be ignored” (IT 2.8.05).

the basic means of life for all, maintained a general framework of social order, held the forces of what is called Muslim fundamentalism in check, and drew elements from all the component parts of Iraqi society into the administration. There were no suicide bombings following the defeat of 1991. That sort of thing wasn’t in the Baath style at all. In the aftermath of defeat Saddam just got down to restoring the infrastructure required for urban living, which had been deliberately wrecked by the United Nations bombing—effectively US/UK and France. He gave up the attempt to build the weapon of mass destruction (because there is really only one, despite the insistent use of the plural by US/UK propaganda news), even though a state without nuclear weapons is now indefensible. He hoped by this means to gain the lifting of sanctions so that Iraq might resume orderly existence as a state of no major consequence. And the Security Council would have authorised this in the mid-1990s but for the US/UK Veto.

There was much justificatory US/UK propaganda about corruption connected with the Oil for Food programme. But corruption, properly speaking, is the kind of thing done by client dictators of US/UK, such as General Mobutu in the Congo. Whatever cheating was done against UN rules by the Iraqi administration was done in the service of the state which was working against great odds to maintain conditions of civilised life for the populace. Saddam, Tariq Aziz etc. did not abscond with millions when the game was up and they are not living in affluence in villas overlooking Lake Geneva.

In 1991 Bush senior and his old regime pulled back from the liberation of Iraq when they saw what was being liberated. Bush junior and the new Trotskyist regime in the White House, along with Blair and the Communist Party/Militant Socialist regime in Whitehall, unleashed the social forces which had been held in check by the Baath regime, and systematically wrecked every piece of the Iraqi state that might hinder them, even encouraging looting so that nothing should remain in place. And they did this even though they had been advised that they would be creating a new base for Al Qaeda. But, when the work of destroying the state had been accomplished, they were not prepared to allow the liberated forces to make their own arrangements for the future of Iraq. They devised a new state system to serve their own interests, made laws for it, and set about forcing the newly-liberated forces of Islam into it. It was intended that it

## ...And A Time For War

Britain is strongly in denial just now about the cause of its transport bombings. It denies that it has brought this “*terrorism*” down on itself by its conduct in the Middle East. The Prime Minister, his Foreign Secretary, his Home Secretary, and the holder of the office that was once called Secretary for War but is now called Secretary for Defence, all deny that there is any connection between British foreign policy and the bombings, and the Opposition parties support them in this denial. And yet everybody knows that there is the most intimate connection between them. The man in the street knows it. This knowledge is even expressed in public opinion polls, in which people are inclined to say the right thing in such matters rather than the thing they think. And even the politicians, when not addressing the question directly, often say things which show that they take it for granted that the bombings are a small measure of retaliation for the destruction of states in the Middle East. But the official stance remains that there is no connection. That is the lie which it is hoped to make true by success.

But the line was modified in late July in response to pressure from Muslim leaders whom the Prime Minister described as “*moderate*” and asked to encourage informing. They said that his denial of a connection between the bombing and the destruction of the state in Iraq raised a great problem of credibility for them in their encouragement of moderation. The Prime Minister then began saying that there was no justification for the bombings whatever one might think of Government policy. He did not withdraw his ‘no connection’ position, therefore it still stands officially. He just started using language that did not mark him out as a fantasist every time he spoke. Nietzsche observed that a liar denies reality to other people while a fantasist denies it to himself. Blair is undoubtedly a fantasist, but his advisers have persuaded him to act cute on this issue.

What has led to the the transport bombings is not the defeat of Iraq, but the utter destruction of the Iraqi state—a secular state which provided for a solid stratum of good bourgeois living, provided

should be a subordinate state, protected by US/UK bases, subject to pre-existing laws which the subordinate democracy would be allowed to amend, and governed under the supervision of the US Ambassador—as “*independent and sovereign*” Egypt was governed by the British Ambassador for about three generations. When the liberated forces did not immediately toe the line the Occupation forces launched a new war, against them, in which Falluja was bombed to dust.

As we go to print intimidating noises are being made towards Iran by US/UK, and also by the EU, because Iran refuses to be gulled into giving up its nuclear programme while getting nothing in return. It is being denied that there is any intention of invading Iran if it does not capitulate. But one does not need a long memory to recall that the British Foreign Office, a year before the invasion of Iraq, was denying that there was any intention of invading, and even explaining why there were no grounds for invasion. Its present reassurances are therefore not very reassuring, especially when they have much more tangible reasons for wanting the Iranian state destroyed than they had for the destruction of Iraq. Iraq was a spent force when it was invaded. Iran still has the momentum given to it by the popular revolution 26 years ago.

The era of contemporary Jihad was launched 25 years ago. A modernising revolution had occurred in Afghanistan. There was a Communist Government in Kabul. Communism was able to exert an attraction on parts that other modernising ideologies could not reach. The Kabul Government asked for Soviet assistance against the internal forces of reaction. The US supported the Afghan opposition, which consisted of the forces of fundamentalist Islam which it is now trying to suppress. Jihad was the only way of developing an internal Afghan resistance to the Communist regime, so Jihad it was. And the theological schools in Pakistan which are now being complained about were lavishly funded with dollars. US foreign policy in recent times has been characterised by reckless incitement of anything that seems to serve the purpose of the moment.

During the 1980s the US/UK were also encouraging, and funding, and arming Iraq for its war on Iran. The Islamic revolution in Iran was threatening to run like wildfire along the Gulf. The only secular force in the Middle East capable

of containing it was the Baath regime in Iraq. Saddam was therefore encouraged to engage in the enterprise which is now declared, by the very people who encouraged it, to be a crime against humanity, or one of those things. The Iraqi state was greatly strengthened by its long war with Iran as the champion of the liberal West.

In 1990 the Soviet regime was crumbling and the Iranian revolution had been contained. Kuwait, saved by the Iraqi war on Iran, had availed of Iraqi pre-occupation with Iran to encroach on Iraqi oilfields and was not disposed to negotiate on the matter. Baghdad sought US advice and was given to understand by the US Ambassador that America would not be concerned if Iraq resorted to direct action. This was in circumstances in which an Iraq/Kuwait war was clearly an imminent possibility. Baghdad took the response of the US Ambassador as a green light for direct action. But, when the Iraqi Army crossed the frontier, the US/UK declared that a great breach of international law had been committed, and set about creating a diplomatic atmosphere in which the Iraqi Government could not withdraw without severe loss of face. General Schwarzkopf later explained frankly on Radio Eireann that the “*nightmare scenario*” was a successful Iraqi withdrawal, thus demonstrating that the object of the ‘diplomacy’ in the latter half of 1990 was war on Iraq.

US/UK might easily have deterred the Iraqi move against Kuwait by diplomacy of a different kind. If it had informed Baghdad that a move against Kuwait would be a cause of war, there would have been no move against Kuwait. Instead of that, it gave Baghdad to understand that it might move against Kuwait with impunity. One can only conclude from this that Iraq, having served Western purposes against Iran, and strengthened itself in the process, was set up for a war in which its defeat was inevitable.

In March 1991 Iraq had more powerful weapons than it possessed in 2003. Its position was indefensible because it did not have nuclear weapons. But it had some unconventional weapons that the US had given it. It was deterred from using these weapons by the US Secretary of State, James Baker, who met the Iraqi Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, in Geneva in December 1990, about three months before the war was launched, and said that if Iraq defended itself with all its power it would be obliterated. This was understood to mean that nuclear weapons would be used against it.

Iraq moved against Kuwait in the first instance with the limited objective of rectifying Kuwait’s frontier encroachments. About a fortnight later, seeing that US/UK and France were intent on making war on it, it declared the incorporation of Kuwait into Iraq. That was a gesture of defiance of Powers which were acting in bad faith towards it. It was the reassertion of a historic claim in a situation in which there was nothing to be lost by it.

Kuwait was part of the province of Basra in the Ottoman Empire. The British Empire induced a local chieftain in the region to make a subversive and treasonable secret treaty with it, in breach of his allegiance to the Ottoman Empire, while it was still at peace with the Ottoman state. Then, after its conquest of Mesopotamia, Britain detached Kuwait from Basra and made it into a puppet state.

Edward Heath, who died during the month, brought Kuwait onto the world theatre as a state. He was utterly shocked in 1990 when he saw that Bush and Thatcher were seriously intent on making war on Iraq on the pretence that Kuwait was a real state whose sovereignty had been wantonly violated. Puppets should be tended to as puppets. Kuwait was a puppet serving a British interest, and it might have been protected by a phone-call to Baghdad in July 1990. Since that was not done, he saw no justification in using it as the occasion for a major war in which thousands would die and the Middle East would be further destabilised. All that was required to remedy the situation was diplomacy whose purpose was not war.

Heath was the statesman of the brief interlude when Britain thought it was giving up Imperialism and becoming a modest European state. His ousting by Thatcher marked the beginning of an imperialist resurgence.

The present War Minister, John Reid, has announced that Britain is back in the business of bending the world to its will. Thirty years ago he was doing battle with Heath as a militant of the Communist Party.

Heath was Prime Minister for four years 1970-1974. He tackled the immense negative power of the Labour movement in two ways. First he introduced a Trade Union law (a thing which the Socialist, Barbara Castle, had tried a year earlier). When the Trade Unions refused to act in accordance with that law, he set up an institution for determining incomes outside

the market, in which Trade Unions, Employers and Government would be represented. This was the most advanced socialist measure ever attempted. But the Trade Unions, encouraged by the Communist Party, would not have that either. Heath was brought down by a strike, and Thatcher raised the capitalist banner against him and displaced him as Tory leader. Harold Wilson then tried to introduce a variant of Heath's scheme, but was defeated by a great alliance of Trade Unions, the Communist Party, and the capitalists whose spirit had revived under Thatcher's influence. And then Thatcher came to power, and socialism evaporated from the British body politic. And now the British state is being conducted Communist Party apparatchiks, such as Reid and Charles Clarke (Home Secretary). And the Foreign Minister was the Communist President of the Students' Union for the Revolution.

In Northern Ireland Heath first tested the earnestness of the insurrection with the administrative massacre of Bloody Sunday. Having failed to cow protest, he brought about the best attempt at power sharing there has yet been.

By the time of his death he was comprehensively alienated from the state he had once governed because of its Middle East policy.

\*

The present Middle Eastern situation follows on from a strategic decision made by the British Empire over a century ago that there was to be no place for Islam as a political entity in the structure of the world. But it has proved impossible to eradicate Islam, or even to diminish it. It provides the framework for a way of life whose attractiveness to those involved in it is not receding. It is a strong, and growing, cultural force in the world, but there is no great Muslim state to direct its expression.

Over a century ago an Irish land reformer, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, proposed to the British Liberal movement that it should form an alliance with a modernising movement within Islam instead of acting imperialistically towards it (*The Future Of Islam*, 1882). His proposal was made with relation to Egypt. In 1908 he surveyed the consequences of its rejection:

"Unfortunately for my pleading, there were financial interests which primed all others at the Foreign Office and in the London Press... A British fleet was sent to Alexandria to coerce them, and a British army to Ismailia. After a brief campaign the Nationalist army was

defeated at Tel-el-Kabir and 10,000 Egyptian peasant recruits massacred. Cairo was occupied; the Constitution at a stroke was abrogated; and a *regime* of absolute power, backed by British bayonets, was re-established. This betrayal of liberty by England sealed the fate of the Reform movement of Islam for a whole generation" (*The New Situation In Egypt*. 1908).

Around 1900 Germany assisted the Ottoman state in renovating the infrastructure in the Middle East, where many peoples and religions were living under its loose hegemony without nationalist antagonism or religious war.

But that did not please Britain, which had extended its Indian Empire into southern Persia (Iran) and was intent on connecting it up with Egypt where its Ambassador was ruling. A well-informed American observer in 1915 was of the opinion that the German alliance with the Ottoman Empire was the decisive factor in determining Britain to make war on Germany. Well, the Ottoman Empire was destroyed, the Arab nationalism brought into being to help in its destruction was swindled and suppressed, and the Middle East was Balkanised for purposes of manipulation, and so "*We are where we are*", as Brigid Laffan likes to say.

## The Right Wing Health Agenda

continued

market" was the panacea for all our ills.

Of all 'services' health is probably the most unsuitable for supply through the market. The principal reason is that the suppliers (i.e. the doctors) tell the customers (the patients) what they demand. In a free market system the doctors have a vested interest in hypochondria. It is no accident that the market-based USA system spends a higher percentage of GNP on health than any other country in the world.

But in order to conform to prevailing fashions it was decided that the VHI needed competition. We're talking about competition in a simple insurance "product"—one in which the larger the provider, the greater will be the economies of scale, in terms of administration etc. (The opposite is also the case: if the "market" is divided into a number of smaller companies the "product" will be supplied more expensively. From a social point of view there will be duplication in admin, sales, management etc).

However, it was considered that the "community rating" system should be preserved. Also, new insurance companies competing with the VHI would have to compensate the latter after a few years in order to avoid a situation where VHI would be left with elderly and sick patients while the new insurance companies would have attracted the young and healthy. When BUPA entered the market, it knew that it would have to compensate the VHI after a number of years for its 'cherry picking'. This was called "*risk equalisation*".

Following Mary Harney's appointment as Minister for Health, the whole subject of risk equalisation became the subject of a debate. The state advisory body the Health Insurance Authority was commissioned to review the matter and this "debate" was facilitated by *The Irish Times*.

Last April a story appeared by Arthur Beesley headlined:

"*Harney faces hard choice over risk equalisation*" (*The Irish Times*, 15.4.05). The report indicated that the Health Insurance Authority (HIA) had recommended that risk equalisation should be triggered. In other words the existing policy should be implemented. How could this be a "*hard choice*" for Harney?

The report presented the decision of the HIA as a bad news story for BUPA:

"It suffered a severe setback last month when the Health Insurance Authority said for the first time that the risk equalisation should be triggered.

"The authority is now of the view that the benefits to health insurance customers, which would accrue from the commencement of risk equalisation payments would outweigh any countervailing factors."

Poor Bupa!

The curious thing about this report is that it gives the impression that the HIA had changed its mind. It says the decision was made "*for the first time*" and that it "*is now of the view*". But the report doesn't indicate if the HIA ever had another view.

Over one month later the newspaper decided to re-heat this old story in

anticipation of the minister's approaching decision. A report of 20th May 2005 was headed:

*"Subsidies will deter new health insurers—Authority".*

The report by Barry O' Halloran began:

"The Health Insurance Authority (HIA) believes that introducing a system that would force VHI's competitors to subsidise it could hit competition by deterring new players from entering the market" (*The Irish Times*, 20.5.05).

Had the HIA changed its mind in just over a month?!

No! Later on in the report we learn:

"The HIA views are contained in a report seen by *The Irish Times* that recommends that the Minister for Health, Mary Harney introduce such a system, known as risk equalisation."

So it's the same report. The headline and the first paragraph are a misrepresentation. Even when the report eventually says that the HIA was recommending "risk equalisation", the words "introduce such a system, known as risk equalisation" give the impression that this was something new that had just been thought up by the HIA. At least Arthur Beesley's report said, more accurately, that the HIA was recommending that the "risk equalisation should be triggered".

The reason why VHI's rival BUPA was against this was that it would affect its profits, which is interesting because in all its literature it says it's a not for profit organisation.

More than a month later Mary Harney announced that the risk equalisation policy would not be triggered. *The Irish Times* reported the decision with the front page headline:

*"VHI plans emergency meeting on increasing charges"* (*The Irish Times*, 28.6.05).

In smaller print below the main headline was:

*"Harney rules out asking competitor for subsidy".*

It considered the VHI's plans to meet more important than what Harney actually decided.

The first paragraph of the report by Barry O' Halloran was:

"The Board of State health insurer VHI will hold an emergency meeting this week to consider increasing charges after Minister for Health Mary Harney decided against asking its biggest competitor to subsidise it."

Why use the word "subsidise"? Another word would be 'compensate' the VHI for the 'cherry picking' of BUPA.

The second paragraph gives Harney's excuse for not "introducing" risk equalisation:

"...she would not introduce risk equalisation into the Irish health insurance market until the Government had at least started the process of converting the VHI to a commercial State body."

But it is not until the seventeenth and last paragraph that we read VHI Chief Executive's response to this point:

"Last night Mr Sheridan said there was no link between the two issues. 'That's something we called for and it has nothing to do with community rating or risk equalisation and it has nothing to do with private health insurance'."

The following day a similarly bland headline appeared over another O' Halloran report:

"VHI to decide on fee increase next week."

His first paragraph read as follows:

"The VHI will wait until next week to decide whether or not to increase charges as a result of Tanaiste Mary Harney's decision not to force its biggest competitor subsidise it.

So the heroic Harney decided "not to force" the market to "subsidise" VHI.

These articles by their nature are not easy to read. I suspect that few will read beyond the first couple of paragraphs. So not many people will have read the seventh paragraph which indicates the consequences of Harney's decision:

"Trade unions yesterday criticised Ms Harney, who is also Minister for Health and Children, and warned that her decision could result in increased health insurance costs. John Tierney, general secretary of the State's second biggest union, Amicus, argued that it could result in premium increases of 600 per cent to 700 per cent for older people. He added that her decision had created further instability in the health insurance market."

It's not our job to help *The Irish Times* shore up its flagging sales. But maybe the above paragraph or something like it could have been the opening paragraph and the headline could have been "Union Chief says 600% plus increase in health premiums". But then again that might not have suited the right wing agenda.

The final paragraph reads as follows:

"David Begg, secretary general of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Ictu), accused her of caving into pressure from Bupa, which had threatened to pull out

of the Irish market if she introduced risk equalisation. However, Ms Harney has already dismissed suggestions that the British company's suggestions had swayed her."

Notice that word "introduced" again. Also, notice the instant rebuttal from "Ms Harney" to Begg's accusation. David Begg is a member of *The Irish Times Trust Limited* which controls *The Irish Times Limited*, but it is obvious he has no influence over how the newspaper reports on this matter.

John McManus of *The Irish Times* gave an uncritical analysis (28.6.05) of Harney's reasons for rejecting the HIA's recommendations. According to McManus, Harney's advisers said that there were "doubts" over the accuracy of the HIA's calculations and that they:

"...may have been skewed by 'random statistical variation'." "Doubts" and "may have"?! Can the HIA do its sums or not?

Not only does McManus analyse what Harney said he also obligingly tells us what she was thinking:

"What she did not say, but is abundantly clear, is that she and her advisers sees (sic) an insurance market with several large players—rather than a somewhat truculent state monopoly—as necessary percussor (sic) to her ambitious plans to increase the involvement of the private sector in the provision of healthcare."

So it's a story of good and evil: the ambitious Minister against the "truculent state monopoly".

However the final paragraph in his analysis makes the pertinent point that these reasons will be of—

"...little comfort to the 1.4 million VHI subscribers facing premium hikes and the Bupa customers who will continue to support 17 per cent profit margins".

Not bad for a "not for profit" organisation! You can learn things from *The Irish Times*, but you have to work very hard to do so.

However, just in case there might be any lingering doubts about the objectivity of the newspaper on this issue, it opened its pages to Oliver Tattan who, the newspaper informs us, is the Chief Executive of the new private health insurance company, Vivas Health. (It didn't say that the same person was also a former VHI Chief Executive. Knowing that he is a gamekeeper turned poacher makes all the difference. He was also a Chief Executive of Bord Failte, so this

“entrepreneur” knows his way around the state sector.)

Tattan’s article contains the usual right-wing propaganda, as well as some cheap shots at VHI’s competence. However, he has to be careful what he says because Vivas has already signed up for the risk equalisation scheme. So he is in favour of risk equalisation because Vivas has signed up for it, but not now and maybe not ever. Certainly, not before VHI is restructured.

He urges the Tanaiste to consider:

“...dividing up the VHI book into a number of smaller companies with similar membership profiles. VHI has complained long enough about its older customer base.

“Carving up the VHI book is a very simple solution to VHI’s problem, one that does not require the disproportionate heavy handedness of risk equalisation payments. Surely a simple mechanism can be found to either split the VHI book into smaller competing entities or to transfer older members to other insurers in the market so that the market shares and age profiles converge. Such an approach would be an effective means of promoting vigorous competition on multiple fronts in the interests of all consumers.”

You must be joking! Would Tattan’s company be prepared to take on the older profile VHI subscribers and offer them lower premiums? Of course not! His proposals would spell the end of community rating.

All these proposals are very radical and will have a very damaging effect on the quality of life of ordinary people. But there has been hardly a peek from the left. Liz McManus of Labour and Arthur Morgan of Sinn Fein have criticised Harney for ignoring the advice of the HIA, but much more is needed. (Incidentally Liam Twomey TD of Fine Gael thinks we need more private insurers in the market, which makes one wonder about the prospects for a future Fine Gael/Labour coalition).

Under the circumstances it would be reasonable for any self respecting left-wing party to state publicly that a condition of its participation in government would be that Bupa and Vivas honour their commitments (amounting to 30 million euros a year) regarding the risk equalisation payments to VHI. It should be made clear that these payments will apply retrospectively from 2005. Such a proposal is hardly “socialist” but it could be a big vote winner and will have the added benefit of stopping the right wing health agenda in its tracks.

**John Martin**

## MANSERGH versus CASEMENT

A curious item appeared in the *Irish Times* (16.5.2005): *Casement Was Allowed A Discretion Given To Few Others*. In it Mark Mansergh asserts that Casement was “rarely reined in”, implicitly by his Imperial bosses, or his fellow Nationalists. Given that he was in the lowly Consular Service, there was little reining-in to do, the job was quite strictly demarcated, the Diplomatic Corps, of English Public School origin, had all the leeway. Consuls dealt with ‘trade’ and the human flotsam of Empire, not important matters. This assertion was made in the context of discussing the exhibition in Clare County Museum on Casement in Germany, which included previously unpublicised material. These were letters, or copies of letters, which had been in the hands of Count Blücher (a descendant of the man who saved Wellington’s bacon at Waterloo) whose solicitor handed them over to the County Library as long ago as 1969.

Mansergh says that Casement did not “glory in First World War”, which is hardly news, and waffles about “these letters and pamphlets between 1913 and 1916”. His readers might be inclined to think that the ‘pamphlets’ were simply part of this ‘cache’ of material rather than Casement’s own published writings. They have been republished by Athol Books and it is difficult to believe that a member of the Mansergh clan is unaware of that fact. That is the reason for the headline of this article, Mansergh is trying to have his Republican cake and eat his revisionist one.

He describes, as “moral cant” Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell’s 1906 assertion that “separation was unthinkable” except in the case of a “world cataclysm”. Surely stating such a principle publicly is the opposite of “cant” moral or otherwise? Those were the days when servants of the British Empire were morally convinced of their position as the apex of human civilisation: people who wanted to leave the empire were probably mentally, and morally, defective. Mansergh quotes John Redmond’s imperialist St. Patrick’s Day message of 1913, as an example of why he left “few followers”. The up-front ‘revisionists’ are more modern-minded than Mark Mansergh is implicitly claiming to be here, Britain is no longer embarrassed by its imperialist past: it rejoices in it, and regards the leaving of Africa, in particular, as precipitate. Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, said so in Kenya a matter of weeks ago. Presumably the legal case for compensation for brutal treatment in the 1950s, brought forward by Mau Mau veterans, is a political move underlining the fact that not everybody in Africa is willing to be absorbed by a reconfigured British Empire.

Mansergh offers an element of what we are probably expected to take as Casement’s ‘quixotry’: “In 1910 he metaphorically saw “justice to unhappy, outraged people coming

about through the Irishmen of the world””. He may have had in mind the entirely practical example of Michael Davitt’s exposure of the anti-Jewish violence of the Tsarist State in 1905. This was broadcast by the Irish Nationalist press throughout the English-speaking world, not to mention offshoots in Buenos Aires and Paris, and the journals of other nationalist movements that paid attention to the Irish movement. There were also journals on mainland Europe following Irish affairs pretty closely, for reasons ranging from Catholic solidarity, Socialist interest, chauvinist anti-Britishness, or solidarity with the victims of England’s Empire. (1905 was the year the British parliament passed the Aliens Act, which was designed to prevent the Tsar’s victims finding a safe haven under the British crown.)

Mansergh, none too implicitly, infers that Irish Republicanism is a synthetic matter, almost an irrelevance. He quotes from *Witnesses Inside The Easter Rising*, by Annie Ryan, and in particular Min Ryan, “later wife of Gen Richard Mulcahy”. She asked Tom Clarke “why a Republic”, and Clarke gave her a sales-pitch. It was “something striking... to appeal to the imagination of the world”. Tom Clarke had been a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood for forty-odd years, so he may have chosen a form of words to attempt to put the matter in a nutshell. There is no indication in this article when she asked the question—life in the GPO was pretty fraught from fairly early on in the proceedings. He presumably did not have time for a lengthy disquisition on imperialism and the republican form of government.

“The United Irishmen, who came before a secret committee of the Irish parliament in 1798, gave much the same answer.” And “Min Ryan thought... [the] countermanding order was “the mercy of God””. This is because a “big rising” would have meant a “lot of destruction”. The potential destroyers go unnamed here, presumably because we are not allowed to contemplate what the Empire John Redmond was so dedicated to, could and would have done to the uppity Irish. It is difficult to understand the reference to the United Irish: they looked around the world, and saw France as a beacon of freedom, which unlike America, had abolished slavery and landlordism. (Britain, on its own home ground, has not either.)

It is difficult to get a grip on this article, is it an artful exposition of the revisionist view of Irish history as a series of stupidities on the part of the Paddies in rejecting the connection with England? Or is it an example of the revisionist interpretation simply saturating the atmosphere, making clear thinking about matters like 1798 and 1916, and Casement’s career problematical? Until Mark Mansergh proves himself to be the former, we will charitably assume the latter is the case.

**Seán McGouran**

# Peter Hart

## Digs A Deeper Hole

In the current issue of History Ireland (July-August 2005) Peter Hart attempts to reply to three critical letters in the previous issue that challenged a number of specific points from his book on the IRA in West Cork during the War of Independence and in an interview in the previous edition of History Ireland.

He begins by caricaturing his critics, describing them as people who

*“.. practice a kind of faith based or creationist history: faith in the purity of the IRA; creationism with regard to their politics”.*

None of his critics showed any evidence of ‘faith-based’ or ‘creationist’ history or any such childishness but had put straightforward questions that Hart has evaded for some time.

One of the letter writers, Manus O’ Riordan, is someone I happen to have known for a while (over 35 years) as a ‘two nationalist’, which in itself is hardly evidence of a faith-based approach to Irish history. O’ Riordan has also publicly detailed his critical assessments of Tom Barry on specific aspects of his politics on a number of occasions. He has researched and made radical assessments of even bigger fish than Barry, namely James Connolly, pointing out that his actions in 1916 can only be fully understood on the basis of his support for a German victory in WW I. Again, hardly evidence of a ‘faith based’ approach to history. I have had, do have, and no doubt will have, disagreements with him but there is absolutely no doubt that his positions on these issues are based on thorough research with a ruthless respect for the truth of the conclusions he draws from that research. He is therefore, almost inevitably, one of the growing group of trenchant critics of Hart.

### **DEAD MAN ALIVE, LIVE MEN DEAD, BUT ALL DELETED!**

In his letter O’ Riordan concentrated on just one aspect of the many suspect aspects of Hart’s prize exhibit, the “report” that he claims Barry wrote just after the ambush and he asked Hart to explain why he had chosen to omit from his own reproduction of that ‘report’ the sentence that immediately demonstrated its bogus character, i.e., the claim that

only one volunteer (“P. Deasy” in a post-script) had been killed outright at Kilmichael and two others died later. But it was the other way round. Deasy died of his wounds six hours later and half a mile away at Gortroe, while the two others (Sullivan and McCarthy) were killed outright in the ambush. Could Barry not know who was dead and who was alive after the ambush? Could he have made such a mistake? Of course not, and Hart knows he could not, so he cuts it out of the “report” in his book. This is the question O’ Riordan posed and what does Hart say about this crucial fact in response? Not a word, not a single word. Silence speaking volumes comes to mind.

### **DEAD MEN TALKING, AND TOURING!**

In her letter Meda Ryan asked Hart, yet again, to explain how he was able to interview participants in the ambush on dates after they had all died and she challenged him to name them. But Hart does not explain how he did this extraordinary feat (and how he had toured the ambush site with one of them). He presents a most curious extract from notes he made of an interview with one of them where ‘false’ is conveniently inserted in square brackets before the word ‘surrender’ which is one way of establishing a false surrender!

Could we not have the full notes reproduced to clarify matters?

He will not name the interviewees because he promised not to, he says. So we have two of the famous ‘Boys of Kilmichael’ who did not want their names known nearly 70 years after the event, nor for all eternity. Modest people indeed.

Maybe there is a simple explanation. People in West Cork can be kindly and generous and go in for a bit of mutual flattery with visitors and tell them what they want to hear. As they say down there about a certain type of person who comes their way, “they saw him coming,” and maybe Hart falls into that category.

Anyone who has listened to some local accounts of ambushes will know that they were really massive affairs and the only wonder is why the IRA did not use the occasions for fundraising by selling tickets for the events! Barry had this problem

shortly after the Kilmichael ambush itself and had to get a number of ‘participants’ to clear off at a commemorative event.

### **SECTARIANISM?**

Meda Ryan demonstrated in her book that the killing of 13 Protestants in the Bandon/Dunmanway area happened because their names appeared on a list of local informers left behind by the Crown forces so they were killed as informers. And if Catholics had appeared on the list they would undoubtedly have met the same fate as indeed many Catholics already had for the same reason. Does Hart challenge this? No, he simply ignores these facts and refers again glibly to the ‘massacre of Protestants.’

### **SELECTIVE QUOTATION**

In his letter, Niall Meehan brought up, again, after first being raised by Brian Murphy in 1998, the misuse by Hart of the source material contained in the *Record Of The Rebellion in Ireland, 1920-1921* (Jeudwine Papers, Imperial War Museum). Hart has used this source to argue that “men were shot because they were Protestants’ and not because they were informers. The extract from the *Record*, chosen by Hart, reads: “in the south the Protestants and those who supported the Government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, as they had not got it to give.” If that was the case, then Hart’s position would be almost made. However the next two sentences tell a completely different story. They say: “an exception to this rule was in the Bandon area where there were many Protestant farmers who gave information. Although the Intelligence Officer of this area was exceptionally experienced and although the troops were most active it proved almost impossible to protect those brave men, many of whom were murdered while all the remainder suffered grave material loss.” These sentences destroy Hart’s case so he omits them! What does he say to Meehan about this – not a word. Again, silence speaks volumes.

### **OMISSION EQUALS ADMISSION**

Hart again makes play of the fact that if the false surrender is not mentioned by somebody in an account of the Kilmichael ambush then that’s evidence that they are saying it did not happen. That’s like saying that everyone who ever sang ‘The Boys of Kilmichael’ is therefore confirming that there was no false surrender as the song does not mention it. The fact is that the false surrender was a fact agreed by people on both sides and constant reference to it was therefore unnecessary. It was a banal fact for nearly 80 years. Indeed, if it were mentioned over and over again by all on

every possible occasion, there would be a justified suspicion that they might be protesting too much. For example, if I kept referring to where and when I am writing this there might be a justified suspicion of some sort of alibi being concocted. Hart tries to get Liam Deasy on his side by this tactic but it does not work. Deasy and Barry had a dispute about various aspects of the War, tactics, strategy, roles played by people, the capability of the IRA etc. And there was a political party edge to the dispute. But if Deasy thought that Barry (and many others) were downright liars he would hardly have summed Barry up by saying that his

“... distinguished service in the national cause became an inspiration, and as a guerrilla fighter his name became a household word throughout the country ... He had proved himself an ideal Column Commander .. He was a strict disciplinarian and a good strategist, but he was something greater still: he was a leader of unsurpassed bravery, who was in the thick of every fight and so oblivious of personal risk that his men felt it an honour to be able to follow him”.

#### INSTEAD OF REPLIES—ABUSE AND HOMILIES

Instead of replies to the questions posed what we get is abuse of Meda Ryan that verges on the libellous “.. *her book is a catalogue of justification for killing*”. Abuse which is clear evidence I would suggest that he has lost the argument. Also, homilies about the awfulness of war and killings and fantastic, absurd analogies and comparisons. For instance, he compares the actions of the IRA in the War of Independence and the American invasion of Iraq and their destruction of Fallujah, and with the Balkan wars.

Hart refers to his “... *belief that people who take it upon themselves to kill others (the IRA was a self-selected volunteer forces after all) should be scrutinised very carefully indeed, and hence my amazement that people should object to this*”. If that was the case, they should not only be scrutinised: they should be arrested, charged, tried for murder and sentenced.

We are told that “... *the IRA were not soldiers and what was happening in Ireland was not a war*”. He ignores here, as he always does, the rather significant fact that the IRA was the army of the legitimately-elected Government, set up on the basis of the 1918 election. The British Government suppressed that Government and the elected Government defended itself. That is the fundamental fact, the basic cause and effect, of the War

of Independence, and it is the fact that Hart and all the other revisionists must determinedly ignore because, if they don't, their whole house of cards falls down. It's the huge elephant in their garden that must be ignored at all costs.

#### LORD, LET ME REPLY BUT NOT YET— AGAIN!

Another of Hart's standard responses is repeated: “*I have not been able to tackle every issue the letter-writers brought up and I have a lot more to say about those I have discussed. If readers would like to read more, I am currently writing a brief*

*book on all this in answer to the three books (!) that have appeared so far denouncing me.*” I wonder will a brief book be sufficient seeing as he not yet refuted any but simply ignored all the essential questions put to him so far. Maybe he realises, as anyone would who reads this article of his, that he is digging himself into a hole and his only choice is to dig away as slowly as possible and hope that people's attention will lapse and they will tire of the issues involved. However, that does not seem likely if the response to his original interview is anything to go by.

Jack Lane

## The *Sindo*, The Shinner, And Filthy Lucre

The *Sunday Independent* (*Sindo*; 04.04.05) had an odd wee article in the Business section, *Sinn Fein Finance Boss Splashes Out On Portugal Pub*, about a standard business transaction. Involving “*a top republican*” it was couched in language usually reserved for the Mafia (or Fianna Fáil), and was written by Shane Ross a former Senator, and current Business Editor of the *Sindo*. Like most such journalists, he does not seem to have made his fortune in actual commerce.

It is foolish for the ‘revisionists’, of which company Ross is an enthusiastic member, to draw attention to the fact that Sinn Féin is not the identikit Leftist ‘threat’ they have been claiming for years. (They like the Castro / Cuba model, Ireland being the offshore island of a much greater and more important entity: the UK.) It seems that Des Mackin, “*the finance director of Sinn Fein*”, took a relaxed attitude to *Sindo* ‘probing’: “*“Sinn Fein is not just made up of reds,” he insisted*””. He is happy to work with the “*reds*”: the staunch democrats of the Irish (adjectivally, anyway) media-can't understand this.

A sub-headline is *Des Mackin invests abroad and sells out in Donegal*. Presumably we are to draw from this the inference that a Shinner should not to be investing where he will make a profit. Maybe he ought to be investing in Ireland, but the seriously rich who usually feature in the Business section don't hurt their own prospects by prioritising Ireland in their investment strategies. They follow the pattern of the wealthy classes in Ireland prior to Charles J. Haughey (the vestiges of the Ascendancy and the ‘Castle Catholics’), who invested their money outside of the State. (In 1966, Seán Lemass claimed that £600 million was invested by citizens resident in the State, outside of Ireland. As he had been Finance Minister for a lifetime, he was in a position to know.)

Mackin, and his financial partner “*whom*

*he refused to name*” (the *Sindo* named him), denied having invested in property in Portugal. Mackin “*rang back*” and “*admitted*” that he had “*a lease on a building where there is a bar*”. Presumably he was asked if he had bought a ‘bar’, said no, then realised his mistake, or the imprecision of the *Sindo* question.

The “*top republican*” (anois) said he was involved in “*property here [Ireland-SMcG], apartments and stuff like that*”. Much is made of an auditor's report on one company. The kind of bookkeeping referred to has been encouraged by the PDs, the only element in Government that matters—specially to the *Sindo*. The Progressive Democrats' outriders in the media can't really object if the ‘wrong’ people use the facilities provided. Mackin is described as “*The Sinn Fein moneybags*” (not a compliment), as if the fact that a Shinner can do well in commerce might harm the Republicans' reputation. It will probably enhance it, showing that the Shinners can ‘cut the mustard’ in whatever field they choose to operate.

This is emphasised by the rest of the article, Des Mackin has a very large variety of businesses, other than property, under his control or he has a very large interest in them. They include “*restaurants, pubs, a cleaning business, security, construction and film projection...*”. Does the latter mean projected movies, or employing projectionists? It's a wonder Mr. Mackin has the time to be Sinn Féin's ‘finance’ man—we are probably to infer that he is the IRA's finance operative too.

Shane Ross should have left Des Mackin and his business dealings well alone. A fair number of people in business will have read this article and felt that voting Sinn Féin will no longer put them in the category of ‘a turkey voting for Christmas’.

Seán McGouran

# Shorts

from

## *the Long Fellow*

### THE BLOOD PRICE

It could be said that there was an outbreak of “evil” in London on July 7th and more than 50 people died and that it was similar to the evil in Madrid last year in which close to 200 died. It could be said that a particularly virulent form of “evil” has manifested itself in Iraq since March 2003 and there have been more than 100,000 deaths. And, of course, evil should be condemned by all right-thinking people.

But this column insists on living in the world of cause and effect. Therefore it can only conclude that the people of London are paying in blood for Blair’s policies on Iraq, just as the people of Madrid paid for Aznar’s policies. It was thought that Iraq could be bombed with impunity, but it is not true. The most powerful country in the world could not protect Madrid or London.

The Spanish decided to “give in to the terrorists” because imperialist virtue was not considered worth defending. But perhaps Britain is immune from such rationality.

### IRELAND CELEBRATES DEFEAT OF ALLIES!

More evidence of the decline in national morale comes in a report of Irish participation in a celebration marking the 200th anniversary of the British defeat of its long-standing allies, France and Spain, in the Battle of Trafalgar.

The flagship LE Eithne, and the sailing training ship, Asgard II, were reviewed by Queen Elizabeth during the ceremony off Portsmouth, which was hosted by the British navy.

Apparently, the LE Eithne and Asgard II were given specific instructions on how to salute the Queen during the fleet review, involving more than 175 ships and warships of various nationalities.

### WAS 1916 A CRIME?!!!

Yes you’ve read correctly. Not the “*The Crime against Europe*”, the title of Roger Casement’s book explaining how Britain started the First World War. “*Was 1916 a Crime?*” was the theme of a Summer School held in June. In the July 1st edition of the *Village* magazine Vincent Browne reports that none of the speakers—including Brendan Howlin TD, Trevor Sargent TD, Deaglan De Breadun of *The Irish Times* and Cormac O’ Malley a son of Ernie O’ Malley—could bring themselves to say that it was a crime. On the other hand, neither did they say that it *wasn’t*. Pathetic isn’t it?

Is it really necessary to say that the 1916 Rising was the seminal event that led to the foundation of the State?

If there are people among the chattering classes who think the foundation of the state was a mistake, they should say so and start promoting the alternative: the imperialist war-monger John Redmond, who was prepared to sacrifice 50,000 Irish people in exchange for a promise (unfulfilled) of a measure of local government. But perhaps they are afraid that the Irish people will give the same verdict in 2005 as they gave in 1918.

All of this points to a problem. The 1916 Rising has never been given an appropriate place in the national calendar. The celebration is a moveable feast and is merged with the Christian celebration of Easter. Next year will be the ninetieth anniversary. In this era of pluralism it is time that the Rising was celebrated on its proper date, April 24th, and that it replace St. Patrick’s Day as the National Holiday.

### SARTRE WAS RIGHT!

This column has already noted that this year is the centenary of Jean-Paul Sartre’s birth. An article appeared recently in the communist newspaper *l’Humanité* giving a description of his political positions. Sartre and the French Communist Party seemed to have held each other in mutual fascination. The former was a fellow-traveller but criticised the Party for its support of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. He also accused the French CP of being “*pacifist*” in relation to the Algerian struggle for independence. Sartre was a critic of the Soviet system in Eastern Europe and urged the French CP towards the “*Euro communism*” of the Italian Party. In the late 1960s, for a brief period, he was a Maoist. From a philosophical point of view he was an opponent of the determinism of French communist intellectuals such as Louis Althusser. He founded *Liberation* in 1971, but can hardly be blamed for the current state of that newspaper.

Just as he appears to be becoming unfashionable, *l’Humanité* has realised that for the most part Sartre was right!

### RIGHT ON BONO!

From a great thinker to a ... singer!

The U2 lead singer had this to say:

“The truth of it is we totally respect the US military and US navy—even if you don’t agree with the war, anyone who would put their lives in harm’s way, you have to respect them, and lots of them are kids who have no hope, no jobs. I mean, for me the bravery of people who would fight for what they believe in, or take a job fighting for what they might not believe in but think it’s the right thing to do—you have to give respect to that. It’s not my

position, I don’t know where they’re coming from, particularly, but you must give respect to that” (*Sunday Independent*, 19.6.05).

But, of course, you don’t have to “*give respect to*” the heroic Iraqi resistance fighters. They don’t buy your records.

### U2 CORPORATE RIGHTS

The U2 Corporation is very interested in rights, mainly its own. It brought a case against hairdresser Lola Cashman over the ownership of among other things a pair of trousers which she was trying to sell at Christie’s auction. The proceedings descended into farce when the defence council suggested that the Corporation did not have a leg to stand on.

It appears that, in the 1980s, U2 left various clothes and other items lying around after each concert. If no one picked them up they would have been left there. Those were the days when the band was ‘big’ and extravagant but not yet a large corporation.

Why would multi-millionaires Bono and Mullen, who according to an *Irish Times* report (29.6.05) looked more like bank directors than rock stars, be interested in such trivia? The answer is it’s not the trousers, it’s the principle. The U2 Corporation believes that nobody should make money out of the U2 name except the U2 Corporation itself.

And you have to “*give respect to*” that, otherwise you could find yourself in court.

### MORE CORPORATE VALUES

Irish dairy farmers are not happy and for once this column sympathises with them.

“We have a situation whereby our milk processors are getting richer and richer while we their suppliers are getting poorer and poorer...”

“The processors and the superstores in this country are enjoying phenomenal profits. We are the second most expensive country in Europe. The consumer is spending more than ever on the weekly shopping and the producer—the first link on the chain—struggles to survive” (Oliver McDonnell, *Irish Independent*, 24.5.05).

A few years ago farmers sold their rights as co-operative producers and joined the ranks of the proletariat.

“We are monitored and spied on at every level and any privacy we had has ceased to exist. Everything we have, everything we possess and every resource at our disposal is orientated towards producing milk for an ungrateful processing industry whose only aim is to fleece their supplier and to deplete the source of supply in the name of profit...” (idem)

Of course, it was the farmers’ own decision. But subsequent generations of farmers can’t be blamed for the gullibility of their forebears. ■

# The Irish Catholic And Benedict XV

By choosing the name Benedict, the new Pope has focussed attention on the last Pope Benedict, sometimes referred to as “the unknown pope”. In doing so he has done history a great service because Benedict XV is “a man who has passed into oblivion as unintelligent as was his war-time unpopularity” (Fr. Philip Hughes, *Pope Pius The Eleventh* p177).

One can understand Benedict’s unpopularity in England during the Great War and why he was consigned to oblivion afterwards. It was no accident that an English language account of his life did not appear until 1940 (by Rev. Henry Rope, an English contributor to the *Catholic Bulletin*). By 1940 it should have become evident that, if England had listened to Benedict XV between 1914 and 1917, it would not have got into the position it had dug itself into.

There is an interesting section in Rev. Rope’s Foreword in which he says:

“The memory of the Pope of peace cannot long be in abeyance, for the world’s or its rulers’ rejection of his work is the key to its present discontents, acknowledged by many and varied judgements of weight. It is astonishing and not credible that a Life of Benedict in English should still be lacking. The following effort to fill the gap is also a small effort in reparation, personal in the first instance, for the writer shared for a time the prejudices current in 1914-15” (*Benedict XV, The Pope Of Peace* p5).

Those “prejudices current in 1914-15” were, of course, the fierce anti-Hun propaganda whipped up by Liberal England and its Redmondite Irish Home Rule allies which determined the messianic character of the war and its unstoppable momentum.

I was sent an article about Benedict XV from *The Irish Catholic*. Obviously Benedict has passed into oblivion for it too. In its edition of April 21st, Olivia McParland, in an article entitled *Who Was Benedict XV?* demonstrates that the nation that once prided itself in being so knowledgeable and representative of Rome now does not even know its own history when it comes to the Vatican. So the disorientation of Irish society in its understanding of history has now reached *The Irish Catholic*. One is tempted to ask:

*is the Irish Catholic either Irish or Catholic anymore?*

The reader may wonder—“so what”? But the matter in which the *Irish Catholic* reveals its startling ignorance is a matter of world-historic importance, a matter of fundamental significance to any understanding of twentieth century history and Ireland’s place in it. It is a matter that no knowledgeable publication printed in Ireland between the two World Wars, or after, would have omitted in its reading of history and current events. And a matter that Irish people would not have been allowed to forget, lest they slipped back into the British way of seeing things—the way that prepared the amnesia necessary to participate in a new European war in 1939.

If one were to compare the *Irish Catholic* today with the *Catholic Bulletin* of the 1930s one would despair. And one shouldn’t have to be of purely Romanist orientation to do so.

A year ago we republished selections from the *Catholic Bulletin* to remind Ireland of the independent mind it had a few generations ago. Here is what the writer *Fear Faire* wrote in the *Catholic Bulletin* of December 1938 about the relationship between the rejection of the Benedict’s peace efforts and the second catastrophe that was about to hit Europe in a generation. The piece was headed, *Why The War Did Not End War*:

“The blunder which brought the world to its present pass was not so much the war as the rejection of the just terms of peace which were proposed by Pope Benedict in the year 1917. On August 1st in that year, the Holy Father called upon the warring Powers to end what he described as fratricidal conflict, and to negotiate a just and durable peace. He called upon civilised humanity to substitute the moral force of right for material force of arms. If this had been done a permanent peace would have been founded then and there.

“The Pope asked both sides to restore all conquered territories and to give up claims for indemnity; he recommended the freedom of the seas, an International Court of Arbitration, a decrease in armaments and a conciliatory settlement of disputed territories on the basis of the will of inhabitants. The rejection of the

Pope’s proposals threw the guilt of the following year of war upon the Allied Powers. The most destructive year of the whole conflict followed.”

In 1914-19 when Europe was encouraged by Britain into collective suicide the Papacy “spoke and saved its soul”. It really should be the business of Catholic publications, and particularly Irish Catholic ones, to tell the world about this—how the Vatican was so right, in the light of subsequent history, and virtually everyone else was wrong. It really should be trumpeted to the high heavens by Catholic publications that, if the Vatican had heeded there would have been no *Great War*, no Bolshevism, no Fascism, no Nazism, no Second World War, no concentration camps, no Soviet occupation of Europe, no Israeli state built on the plantation of Palestine etc.

But the mind is no longer there in the *Irish Catholic*—just as it is absent elsewhere in Irish history writing—to say anything thoughtful, or independent of the British story, which is, of course, much the same thing. Irish history is now second-hand because of a paralysis of mind and the fact that there’s no money in it.

So it may be a good idea to outline the story of the conflict between Benedict XV and the aggressors of the Great War in the light of the failure of the *Irish Catholic* to do so.

The European War of 1914-19 was described, as the “war to end all wars”. That was because it was believed that the war would have to be fought to a finish, no matter what the consequences were, in order to see off an evil that had emerged. If that evil had not been eradicated completely it would return to cause greater suffering in the future. On the other hand, the disposing of that evil completely would make future war unnecessary.

But when did this notion of wars being about Good and Evil emerge? After all, the aristocratic wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been called off when the political or economic interests of Britain had deemed them no longer to be in the nation’s interest to fight. These wars had been selfish, but limited, balance-of-power wars and they had made the Empire what it was through the ability of the British ruling class to know when enough was enough.

It only occurred to me that Puritanism had anything to do with the importation of

morality into warfare when I read Carroll Quigley, the American geopolitics professor, a few years ago—and in the light of the most recent “*good versus evil*” war now being conducted by the Puritans in Washington and their Whitehall allies. (Watching the VE Day celebrations from Westminster Abbey this morning I heard a woman read a poem written by T.S. Elliot about one of Britain’s twentieth century wars. There was a line in it about Britain confronting “*the powers of darkness*”. That is the unquestioned context of every British war now, as it is for the interpretation of all world issues, including the London bombings, by the media in England.)

A few years ago when researching the influence of the Lord Milner group/*Round Table* influence on British policy toward Ireland between 1900-25 I came across Quigley. Quigley’s mammoth 1400-page book *Tragedy And Hope* contains a wealth of interesting analysis of the twentieth century. But Quigley is particularly interesting on a very significant factor in relation to the Great War and contemporary politics—the Puritan influence on war (as opposed to the traditional Catholic position of “*old Europe*”).

I am aware that Quigley’s views have an element of danger to them. I do not believe that Quigley’s understandings would be helpful to the politics of Northern Ireland—the implications of his views would not be conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflict there. Far better that Republicanism controlled and directed the natural impulses of the Croppies there who have been getting up from lying down.

But what Quigley said is very illuminating in connection with why the Great War proved to be so different from anything that went before—why it was so destructive, why it was so unlimited in duration and geographical spread and why it proved so difficult to stop, even when it seemed to be resulting in, not the fulfilment of any concrete war objectives, but simply the destruction of Europe.

It is also at the root of understanding the conflict between the Papacy and the Allies, in particular, and why the Pope ultimately failed to halt the catastrophe that Britain engulfed the continent in and continued with until its aims were satisfied and its mission fulfilled.

Quigley noticed that from 1914 on wars began to assume a different character from the old European wars of the previous

centuries. Although Quigley was an American patriot who regarded Britain highly, he realised that there was something messianic and highly dangerous brought from the Puritan impulse of seventeenth century England into the secular world that Puritanism had itself developed in the Anglo-Saxon countries, after Darwin had undermined its essence in the late nineteenth century. This had major implications; in particular, in the way the powerful Anglo-Saxon states began to conduct their warfare in the democratic age.

Carroll Quigley saw the old European Catholic view of good and evil in the following way:

“the traditional Christian attitude toward human personality was that human nature was essentially good and that it was formed and modified by social pressures and training. The goodness of human nature was based on the belief that it was a kind of weaker copy of God’s nature, lacking many of God’s qualities (in degree rather than in kind), but nonetheless perfectible, and perfectible largely by its own efforts with God’s guidance... In this... point of view, evil and sin were negative qualities; they arose from the absence of good, not from the presence of evil. Thus sin was the failure to do the right thing, not doing the epitome of positive wickedness (except indirectly and secondarily). In this view the devil, Lucifer, was not the epitome of positive wickedness, but was one of the highest of the angels, or close to God in his rational nature, who fell because he failed to keep his perspective and believed that he was as good as God. In this... outlook, the chief task was to train men so that they would use their intrinsic freedom to do the right thing by following God’s guidance” (p1238).

In contrast he described the Puritan view:

“The general distinction of this point of view... is that the world and the flesh are positive evils and that man, in at least this physical part of his nature, is essentially evil. As a consequence he must be disciplined totally to prevent him from destroying himself and the world. In this view the devil is a force, or being, of positive malevolence, and man, by himself, is incapable of any good and is, accordingly, not free. He can be saved in eternity by God’s grace alone, and he can get through this temporal world only by being subjected to a regime of total despotism. The direction or nature of the despotism is not regarded as important, since the really important thing is that man’s innate destructiveness must be

controlled...” (pp1238-9).

Quigley concluded that the re-emergence of the Puritan view had implications for world affairs in the twentieth century:

“The Puritan point of view, which had been struggling to take over western civilisation for its first thousand years or more, almost did so in the seventeenth century. It was represented in varying degrees in the work and agitations of Luther, Calvin, Thomas Hobbes... and others. In general this point of view believed the truth was to be found by rational deduction from a few basic revealed truths... the result was a largely deterministic human situation, in sharp contrast with the orthodox point of view, still represented in the Roman churches which saw man as largely free in the universe whose rules were to be found most readily by tradition and the general consensus. The Puritan point of view tended to support political despotism and to seek a one class uniform society, while the older view put much greater emphasis on traditional pluralism and saw society as a unity of diversities” (pp1240-1).

Quigley went on to describe how the thinking behind the Puritan view of the world created the catastrophe of the Great War:

“The newer ideal led directly to mercantilism, which regarded political/economic life as a struggle to the death in a world where there was not sufficient wealth or space for the different groups. To them wealth was limited to a fixed amount in the world as a whole, and one man’s gain was someone else’s loss. That meant that the basic struggles of this world were irreconcilable and must be fought to a finish. This was part of the Puritan belief that nature was evil and that a state of nature was a jungle of violent conflicts...”

The English Puritan view of the world, which produced Social Darwinism in the decades prior to 1914, linked the economic struggle with geopolitical affairs and saw disaster around the corner. There was only a limited amount of the world’s resources left for the British Empire to plunder, and Germany, through its social economy and commercial aptitude, was threatening British world dominance. But commercial rivalry could not be presented as evil. Germany was said to be infected with the evil of “*Prussianism*”—a militarist expansionism ingrained in the Hun—and this evil had to be destroyed in a fight to the finish, just as in nature. Between 1900 and 1914 the impending

life and death struggle between the two strongest and most virulent Anglo-Saxon races was described in countless English periodicals and it was urged that Germany be destroyed before it was too late. That opportunity occurred in August 1914.

The Great War of 1914-19 was only was a *Great War* because of Britain's participation in it. If England had stayed out it would have been a much more geographically limited and short continental war that Germany, Austria, France or Russia would have called off when interest dictated. None of these countries saw in it good or evil and they would have got out of it given a favourable opportunity.

But the British participation turned the continental war into a Great War with a strong moral dimension that had to be satisfied by total victory and a division of spoils amongst the good.

It was being waged by a Liberal Government which needed to dress it up as something more than it was—a war of conquest to see off a commercial rival that Britain had put in its sights from a decade and a half earlier. And so the first war of Puritan character was waged since the Seventeenth Century, although by that time, the decline in religious impulse in England gave it the appearance of a secular crusade.

The Liberal Government that orchestrated the Great War was, as M.J.F. McCarthy, the Irish non conformist, remarked, the most Puritan since Cromwell's. A lot of the Puritan Liberals, including Lloyd George, had been against the war as a wasteful exercise in needless aggression when their Liberal Imperialist leaders declared it in August 1914. But they morally collapsed in the face of Edward Grey's *fait accompli* of secret alliances, and then they had to justify their collapse and convince themselves that it was not a war for commercial gain, but a war for civilisation they had joined.

The Liberal conscience thereafter depicted the war as a kind of secular crusade against a great evil and spread that view across the world. It was necessary to do so to galvanise a divided party, which had a strong anti-war element, behind the Liberal Imperialist leadership and also to get the cannonfodder to volunteer for war since conscription was against the Liberal doctrine. When the Tories took over during 1915-16 they kept up the pretence with Lloyd George at the

helm for them.

The Great War proved to be such a catastrophically costly war because the English Puritan liberal conscience justified it to the English masses as a war against Evil. Investing war with a strong moral dimension made it unlimited and meant it had to be fought with any means necessary—for wars against evil cannot be called off when the going gets tough, since evil cannot be compromised with.

And so England refused to stop the Great War, even when it was apparent that there was stalemate on the western front and millions would die, and empires fall, before a decision would be reached. Instead England escalated it across Europe and the globe. It drew in the Balkans and the Middle East—not caring what disasters were bred—all to see off the great evil.

Benedict XV was the great fly in the English Liberal ointment in September 1914.

Giancoma della Chiesa of Genoa had become Pope Benedict XV only in September 1914. It was said that Pius X died of a broken heart at the outbreak of war a few weeks earlier. The new Pope called on the belligerents to cease hostilities in September 1914:

“What was the reception of the new Pope's first suggestions of peace. In England and France not many were ready to listen. In their present mood it seemed to very many like the calling off of a crusade” (*Benedict XV—The Pope of Peace*, Rev. Henry Rope, p68).

I said earlier that in 1914-19 the Papacy “*spoke and saved its soul*”. It is important to note that this was not something that could always have been expected of the Papacy, as the moral guardian of Europe.

An interesting point is made by Francesco Nitti in his 1911 book, *Catholic Socialism*:

“... no one can refuse to admit that the power of the Papacy is now much greater than it has been in the last few centuries. The fall of the temporal power and the introduction of the representative parliamentary system and of universal suffrage in almost all civilised states, have given the sovereign Pontiff most extraordinary power and an undeniable influence over the politics of the whole world” (p385)/

Nitti reasoned that:

“So long as the Pope was but the puny sovereign of a small territory, he was obliged to maintain the same attitude as

all other temporal sovereigns, or, in other words modify his spiritual action according to the interests of the small Pontifical States. The history of the Papacy from Charlemagne down to our days clearly proves that all the errors, faults and weaknesses came from the desire to preserve and extend the temporal dominion. And even Pius IX, in view of the wants of his states, abandoned the unfortunate Catholics of Poland to Russian tyranny, and refrained from raising his voice in defence of the Irish Catholics... At the present day the Papacy is more independent than it has ever been. When the Pope was Sovereign of Rome—that is to say, of a small state,—he was subject to the pressure, and very frequently to the violence of all the larger states. If he refused the aims of France or of Austria, a French or Austrian army was sent to occupy the Roman States... Subject as it was to the dictates, violence and tyranny of other more powerful states, the Papal policy was always weak and uncertain. But the Pontiff is now more free than ever he has been, and is no longer obliged to limit or adapt his action to necessities of state. Whereas formerly, a small army or squadron sufficed to oblige him to bow his lofty head and to make the most painful concessions, he is now forced to yield to no one and can employ a thoroughly free and energetic policy of his own” (pp385-6).

So, by the eve of the Great War, the Pope was free for the first time to pursue a principled policy in line with Catholic moral doctrine and was far more influential in Europe, where the Catholic masses were becoming more powerful as democracy developed.

The Allies expected the Pope to become an ardent partisan and join in their crusade. But when the Pope declined to join the crusade the Allies therefore had a tricky problem.

They were waging a secular crusade for Good against Evil that depended much on their propaganda being believed by the neutral nations. But if the Pope, the supreme arbiter in the world over issues of good and evil, at least as far as the Catholic democracies were concerned, did not give his *imprimatur* to this crusade of good over evil and characterised the war as one, instead, of Evil versus Evil, where did that leave the moral standing of the crusade? And the moral standing was everything to a crusade that sought to enlist a sceptical world in its ranks.

**Pat Walsh**

(*To be continued*)

# Does it Stack up?

## Pomp And Circumstance

The fallout from the 'Drake' monument in Carrigaline has generated a lot of debate. In the Letter Pages of the national/local papers there is a general consensus that Drake was a slaver, a pirate, mass murderer (in July 1575 alone Drake was involved in the murder of 600 Rathlin Islanders—not to mention his pillage of Cadiz), but the Irish State does not hesitate in honouring him with all its full panoply. The *Irish Times* carried a fine photograph of the Naval Service in full salute but the flag unfurling in front of them was *not known* to this writer. The maritime sculpture by Peadar Drinan appears to be a Bermudan rigged yacht which being a relatively modern design would have been unknown to Drake. Cork County Council provided the ground ("to celebrate Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture"), a local businessman from the Lions Club, Mr. Stephen McCarthy of Astra Construction Services provided the 20,000 Euro and both Defence Force and Naval Service personnel were present. Fianna Fail TD Michael Martin, in his capacity as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, unveiled the monument on 1st July. County Mayor Michael Creed, Fine Gael and other politicians were present.

This event follows hot on the heels of the Government of Bertie Ahern giving permission for the Irish Naval Service (and ironically the *Asgard*) to give the salute at the 200th anniversary of the British defeat of the French in the Battle of Trafalgar.

The British Ambassador Mr. Stewart Eldon, and his sidekick, Col. John Steed, Military Attaché at the Dublin Embassy have been particularly busy in Cork and Munster in the last year. On 12th July, the Ambassador unveiled a portrait of King William of Orange and one of King George I at the Waterford Museum of Treasurers. The Ambassador said:

"These paintings, along with the rest of the museum, symbolise and give concrete form to the extraordinary close connections that exist between the British and Irish people. The relationship between the two countries is changing very fast. I think we've got rid of a lot of the historical encumbrances that have appeared over the past 800 years or so".

Up at Aras an Uachtarain, the *Irish Times* reported that the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese hosted her annual garden party to "mark July 12th and the anniversary yesterday of the Battle of the Boyne. Some 350 people from the North's unionist community and members of the southern Protestant community enjoyed canapés and wine, 17th century baroque music and the re-creation of a camp the night before battle that would have been typical of the Battle of the Boyne, with actors playing the roles of Williamite and Jacobite soldiers and other characters. The President acknowledged that "three centuries later we, their Williamite and Jacobite children, gather together acknowledging our very different debts to history, but also our shared responsibility for the future". She noted that "Ireland's first president, Douglas Hyde, a Protestant Gaelic scholar, died on July 12th 1949".

In University College, Cork, the Freemasons of Ireland Medical Research Fund announced details for a "new research project being undertaken by Professor Edward Johns, Department of Physiology." The Freemasons/ statement indicated that this was part of the "Order's ongoing commitment to support a variety of medical research projects on this island and to make a positive and relevant contribution to Irish society." Earlier this year UCC also exchanged a "Memorandum of understanding" between University College, Cork and Memorial University of Newfoundland. The little circulated photograph showed UCC's President Gerry Wrixon and Dr. Axel Meisen, President, MUN, signing the Memorandum. Peter Hart is the Canada Research Chair in Irish Studies at this academic institution. Reputedly, Newfoundland has one of the largest Orange Lodges in the world.

The *Observer*, 24th July 2005, contained a little gem that should be more widely circulated. Apparently, David Trimble told John Humphrys recently "that the greatest blunder after partition was to allow Catholic and Protestant schools to survive". Some of the paper's columnists want Prime Minister Blair to put a stop to "faith schools" but Mary Riddell went further, wanting him to disestablish the Church of England from the state. The *Observer* has always had close links with the intelligence services and was quite up to speed about Cobra and JTAC. So you can imagine my amazement when, a day later, Tom Clonan ("former Army officer") made a very similar analysis to both Andrew Rawnsley and David Rose, both

very serious *Observer* journalists, in the *Irish Times*. Coincidence? While the *Observer* men were concerned about the record of the services, and had on-the-record briefings from the likes of Eliza Manningham-Buller—MI5's Chief, Clonan insisted bizarrely that: "*The response capability of Cobra saved hundreds of lives in the vital "golden hour" in July 7th*".

Back to Cork European City of Culture 2005 where, after UCC's Spenser Conference and the Drake affair, we are now invited to attend a special weekend event in September. Dr. Dagmar O'Rian heads up a commemoration to Walter Raleigh in Youghal, yes that other mass murderer—remember Smerwick? Thomas McCarthy, the poet and librarian, who is Assistant Director of Cork 2005, must be getting desperate about the lack of hoopla surrounding this cultural year. He insists in the Aer Arann in-flight brochure that Cork has so much to offer. "Cork has been a shopping city since the 1600's—Sir Walter Raleigh, Bishop Berkeley, President Dwight Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, Elizabeth Bowen and William Trevor, all have shopped and remembered shopping in Cork city centre". And just to show how committed Tom is to Cork, he will be publishing his next book of poems *Merchant Prince* in.... erm...London.

And still with the culture theme, *Culture Ireland* has awarded a Mr. James Ryan 5,000 Euro towards Irish participation in a proposed exhibition of Irish art in China. Mr. Ryan is not an artist but he is the husband of Ms. Caroline Walsh, Literary Editor of the *Irish Times*. Theo Dorgan who is from Cork, interviewed the very successful Marie O'Riordan, the Dublin-born Editor of *Marie Claire*, a woman's magazine, and asked her on Lyric FM the best question of the year so far; "Did you have the sense that you were coming to the heart of the empire?" Indeed. Even the *Irish Times* winced at this with Bernice Harrison referring to it as "toe-curling".

**Michael Stack.**

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# Food And The Market

There are some things in life such as health and food that are too important to be left to the market. If agriculture were left to the market there would be very few people working on the land in Europe. A rational market approach would be to cover the land with golf courses and leisure parks and rely on cheap food from the Africa, Asia, South America, Australia and New Zealand. If agriculture were left to the market, people involved in that industry would migrate to the cities to obtain higher salaries.

But European leaders from the inception of the European project after the Second World War have believed that food is too important to leave entirely to market forces and made the Common Agricultural Policy the cornerstone of the European project.

The objective of the CAP has been to make Community members self-sufficient in food so that Europeans would not be exposed to crop failures or natural disasters in other parts of the world. Secondly, it was considered desirable that as many people as possible remain on the land so as to, at least, mitigate the historic flow of population from the countryside to the city. Thirdly, it was not considered sensible to import food, a perishable product, half way across the world while land in Europe lay idle. Fourthly, since food is important for people's health, dependency on imports with little quality controls was not considered a desirable policy.

There is no doubt that a detailed examination of the CAP would reveal absurd anomalies and inefficiencies, but by and large it has achieved its objectives. Western Europe is self-sufficient in high quality food and there are a greater number of people working on the land than other countries which have opted for more market-orientated policies.

In recent months there have been calls for the EU to lower its protectionist barriers so as to help the Third World. Articles in such diverse publications as the *Irish Catholic* and *The Irish Times* have called for such "reform". *The Irish Times* had an interesting article recently on the problems facing a sugar plantation in Mozambique.

The workers in this plantation were paid low wages even by Mozambique standards. The point of the article seemed to be that, if only the EU stopped subsidising its own sugar producers, the owners of the Mozambique plantation would be able to pay their workers a bit more. It then let slip that the owners were South Africans and a Portuguese family. So the real beneficiaries of dropping protectionist barriers will be the white colonialists and food processing multi-nationals.

The supporters of Globalisation want Third World agriculture to be organised on capitalist lines. They want such countries to specialise in growing specific commodities, such as sugar and coffee, which would therefore oblige them to trade with Europe. Such specialisation will force them to import food from other countries, such as the cheap surplus products of the EU. It will also tie them into international trade and make them dependent on world commodity prices. The more Third World countries that are tied into this system, the lower the price of such commodities will be—which is not in the long term interests of such countries. This is not to say that the developing world should not trade with the EU or the USA; only that it should trade on its own terms. "*Its own terms*" means being self-sufficient in food.

If we want to help, the developing world the debt should be cancelled with no ideological economic conditions placed on such a cancellation. Secondly, those countries should be allowed to implement policies of protection to enable them to be self-sufficient in food as the EU is. Finally, we should support African leaders, such as Robert Mugabe, who want to reclaim land stolen from their native population by their imperialist oppressors.

**John Martin**

## **Report: Dominique Bussereau On European Agricultural Policy CAP Is An Inexpensive Way To Safeguard Our Future**

What a bitter taste was left in the mouths of all committed and responsible Europeans at the end of the latest discussions on the European Union budget. Our continent was divided just as its faces decisions crucial to its future: for example, on trade at the World Trade Organisation and on security, particularly in the battle against terrorism. Looking inwards, Europe has to address social cohesion and regional development.

The division is all the more serious because it concerns the only integrated European Agricultural Policy. This has been turned into a scapegoat for wider problems. The CAP is

one of the symbols of Europe's many achievements: it has allowed the continent to regain food self-sufficiency and guarantee secure farm prices and genuine food traceability and safety for consumers. The 2003 reform of the CAP demonstrated the EU's ability to adapt to a changing economic environment and was hailed as a significant step forward by all member states, including the UK.

France stands ready for further reform of those aspects that need to be changed... In my view, the current attacks on the CAP rely on three main errors.

One: the CAP is said to be very expensive and wasteful. The reality is very different. It is the only European policy totally funded by the EU and not by individual member states. To compare the budget for agriculture with those for other sectors, you need to consolidate expenditure at EU and national levels. Taken together, Europe and the member states spend less than 1 per cent of their collective budget on agriculture, compared with 2 per cent on research. If the Lisbon objective of allocating 3 per cent of EU money to research were met, the EU and its member states together would spend about Euro 785 bn (£438 bn) on research compared with the Europe 305 bn for agriculture under the Luxembourg presidency's proposals. We spend far less on agriculture than on research.

Two: the strategic role played by food self-sufficiency cannot be ignored. History shows the importance of controlling food supplies during war. But even in times of peace, risks need to be addressed. Thanks to the CAP, European countries need not fear drought in Brazil, an economic crisis in Argentine or an epidemic of swine fever in Australia.

Furthermore, Europe is able to provide its citizens with products of proven quality. The independence of our food supplies allows us to establish our own health standards. The two most recent big health crises (mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth) started in the UK and cost the EU between Euro 5 bn and Euro 10 bn. They are a reminder of the importance of traceability.

Food self-sufficiency does not mean abandoning openness, strategic trade partnerships or solidarity with the rest of the world. Europe is not a fortress using the weapons of protectionism and unfair competition against development nations. Europe's effort's in favour of development are genuine. We have a great track record going back to the first Lomé agreements in 1973. The EU is now the developing countries' number one customer and the first to defend them in WTO negotiations. The EU alone imports more from the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions and from the least-developed countries than all the other developed countries put together.

Three: It is claimed that agriculture is a thing of the past. It is not. It is an investment for our children. In our mostly urban societies, agriculture is essential as the leading steward of the environment. It has a huge role to play in curbing the greenhouse effect and great potential, particularly with the advent of "green chemistry" and bio-fuels, for developing environmentally-friendly products and reducing the use of fossil fuels...

It is true that the CAP now accounts for 0.4 per cent of European gross national product. But it benefits 100 per cent of the EU population. It is a forward-looking policy, constantly adapting to changes, as shown by the many reforms it has already undergone...

*Financial Times* 15.7.2005

# Markievicz Revised?

The *Village* magazine (10-16 June, 2005) had, on page 70, a rather elegant reproduction of a holding of the National Gallery of Ireland. It was *Constance in White*, by Count Casimir Markievicz Dunin. It is a vaguely impressionist portrait of his wife, completed in 1899. Constance Markievicz (née Gore-Booth) is described in a legend as “*Artist and Revolutionary*”, presumably the former soubriquet is a reference to the fact that Casimir and Constance met in an art school in Paris, though Constance produced more literary than ‘artistic’ work.

Apparently Casimir disapproved of Constance’s politics, on the grounds that it “*made securing portrait commissions difficult for him*”. That quotation comes from a short ‘potted’ biography of *The Rebel Countess*, which itself seems slightly disapproving. Further on is the following: “*She was the first female Minister to be elected to Westminster, but Sinn Féin policy did not allow her to take her seat...*”. Markievicz was not pointlessly disallowed to take a seat in Westminster; she thoroughly approved of the policy of setting up an Irish Parliament in Ireland, and would have objected to being asked to sit in Westminster. (In fact, apart from the hard-line IRB personnel who ‘entered’ Sinn Féin in 1917, she was probably the most committed to the policy, having been an officer in the Citizen Army in 1916, rather than the Volunteers. Cumann na mBan was an ‘auxiliary’ body attached to the Volunteers / Oglagh na hÉireann, and remained so for three quarters of a century—doing the important and dangerous work, like transporting and hiding weapons, and intelligence.)

Markievicz was not “*elected*” a “*Minister*”, she was elected as an MP (Member of Parliament), and was made a Minister by Dáil Éireann, the TDs (Teachta Dála, were called MIPs in their first session). Presumably Sara Donaldson (Research Assistant, National Gallery of Ireland), author of this item, is not particularly interested in politics, or is the victim of coarse editing.

But, more to the point, it demonstrates the fact that the revisionists have saturated Irish thought. Sara Donaldson does not know what Sinn Féin was about in 1918, clearly thinks Dáil Éireann was of no consequence, and that Markievicz was the victim of a whimsical policy which did not allow her to take a seat in the ‘proper’ Parliament. Thus the use of the word ‘Westminster’: she does not have to explain what the word implies, it is assumed that all her readers will know it is ‘Parliament’. The Republic of Ireland did not celebrate its seventy ninth anniversary this year, by 2016 the revisionists may have us back inside the UK.

Seán McGouran

## The British State-Nation

It was with dismay that I noted the heading ‘A Nation and a Half Once Again!’ over my dialogue with Brendan Clifford. Not that the Editor can’t maintain the joke, but then in the form of ‘A Nation and a Bit’. For I never suggested that the Ulster unionists form anything like a half of the great British nation.

As I have said, I call them British because that is their chosen definition of their nationality, and for me it is a matter of common courtesy, as well as a useful opener of dialogue, to accept anyone’s national self-definition without dispute. Let me stress that. If the Ulster unionists called themselves Eskimos, I might blink twice, but I would accept it.

However, Brendan Clifford’s disagreement with me is based on his denial that such as thing as a British nation exists. ‘British’, he writes (Irish Political Review, June) describes only a state, not a nation.

But is he really and truly saying that no British nation exists? Attending closely, I note that on p.18 he denies ‘that there is a British nation in the ethnic sense’. And I respond, ‘But of course, I agree, there is no British ethnic nation!’ There is only a British state-nation; a state-nation like the American, Australian, Spanish and French nations. How can Brendan not have noticed that besides ethnic nations, there are state-nations?

A state-nation, as the term implies, is formed by a state. Regarded initially by its nominal members as a fiction, it develops through shared experiences, a shared language and the education system, into a felt fact, eliciting allegiance. It may be of the multinational kind, what I call the ‘umbrella’ kind—forming an umbrella for a group of ethnic nations. Spain, France and Britain are of this kind. (We are agreed, I suppose, that there are Spanish and French nations?) There is always a core nation—Castilians, Franks, English—which cloaks its dominance under the invented common name. The USA and Australia, on the other hand, are unitary state-nations formed by a state out of immigrants from many nations.

When I call the Ulster unionists the Ulster British, I am saying that they belong by emotional choice, rooted in ancestry and allegiance, to the British state-nation. They share the island of Ireland with the Irish ethnic nation.

Perhaps Brendan can see the truth of that.

Desmond Fennell

## Voting For Rebellion!

Ryle Dwyer writes that Pearse (had no authority from the Irish people for an Easter rebellion, (Irish Examiner 30.07.-05). How exactly does one obtain authority for a rebellion against an occupying force? Perhaps Pearse should have put it to a plebiscite, advertising heavily in the newspapers of the day. Something along the lines of “*secret rebellion planned for Easter weekend in the cause of an Irish republic. Please indicate if you approve by return of post not later than Friday next*”?

In this context it is instructive to recall the experiences of Vonnie Munroe and her colleagues of Dunnes Stores when they decided to protest against the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Immediately suspended from their jobs, they also had to endure a public backlash, “*many of the public spat at them and shouted abuse, calling them nigger lovers and telling them to look after their own instead*” (Irish Examiner 19-07-04). As with 1916, public opinion slowly swung round after a greater understanding of the issues.

The argument that an action is not moral unless it has majority support is shown to be fallacious also by the history of Nazi Germany. Fast forward to the northern Troubles: I question the accuracy of Ryle’s claim that the IRA provoked the British who overreacted and turned the people to the IRA. It echoes a discredited loyalist line that their violence is always a response to republican violence. In fact the IRA were helped in no small way by police batons and the baseball bats of loyalist thugs who drove the people to them for defence. And initially the people complained “*I Ran Away*” and it looked as if they’d be left alone to the mercy of the B-Specials and loyalist mobs. That amounts to a mandate from the northern nationalist population at least. No one else, least of all the southern government, was willing to do much in the way of help. The IRA may not have pushed the British out, but they ensured Northern Ireland stayed firmly in the spotlight, neither the British nor Irish governments could sit smugly by and the apartheid regime the unionists (even yet) were keen to maintain will never again be a possibility. For me, one of the saddest thoughts is that had it not been for the hard-heartedness of unionism and successive governments in denying half the population the equality we all now expect as an automatic right, three decades of bloodshed and 3,500 deaths (1,700 of them attributable to loyalists, the RIC and British Army) may have been avoided altogether.

Nick Folley

## XXX continued

set alongside the IALS may present a different picture.

The recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) report compiled by the OECD from 43 developed countries worldwide, showed Northern Ireland 15-year-olds assessed overall to be in 6th place for Reading Literacy, 6th in Science Literacy and 12th for Mathematical Literacy. Behind countries like Finland, Canada and Korea, but ahead of Scotland, Wales, the Republic of Ireland, USA, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and Japan! The PISA assessment for the lower-performing range of pupils also showed Northern Ireland no worse than 14th out of 43 in any discipline. So we have a good educational base, a good story to tell.

### SKILLSACTIVE

I hope I haven't unduly depressed you all. Having heard all that, what would I advise **SkillsActive** to do? Whatever about past "schemes" and programmes, the Government have given every appearance of being serious about the sector skills agenda. We should take them at their word and produce, through the Sector Skills Agreement mechanism, a challenging, work relevant schedule.

If you need them, insist on work-based routes. Be aware of the likely short shelf life of government-unded 'employer led' initiatives of the past. Get a life outside of Government as soon as can be sustained. I wouldn't obsess about finding Higher Education routes, or Foundation Degree fixes—let Government do that. But you must give real **clarity** on the benefits for any young person entering into your sector.

Critical to this is defining real **currency** in the sector. If employers think the bar has to be set high, fine—but reward those who jump it. Beware of *credentialism*. If you need minimum entry qualifications, well and good—set them. But if you don't need qualifications, don't set them for the sake of it. There are easier ways (and increasingly sophisticated and accurate psychological testing methods) than credentialism to sort out sheep from goats in recruitment.

**SkillsActive** should be bossy with Colleges. Colleges are at the centre of delivery, but Government will be receptive to well-organised, representative sectors that know their minds. Get yourselves onto the **Area Workforce Development Forums**. Let your voice be heard. Ensure that you have good guidance and

signposting to College provision at Level 2 or below—but don't waste too much time on these qualifications. If you need a Health & Safety Certificate, a Health & Hygiene certificate or other regulatory needs, get the Colleges to do it, insist on quality, but don't waste too much time on it.

What I would do, and concentrate on, is where Level 3 qualifications are required for jobs Engage with Colleges and Employers to provide courses and qualifications that are work relevant—and where the ballast is undertaken with you in the workplace. Insist on the work-based route—if not in full blown apprenticeships, then through work-based qualifications, qualifications with work placements. And if the Apprenticeship route is chosen, ensure that the apprenticeship has currency—that if you finish it you get real reward, that there's incentive to complete.

I'll finish with a quotation from **Alison Fuller** and **Lorna Unwin** of the Centre for Labour Market Studies who are, in my opinion, engaged in some of the most valuable recent research on Apprenticeships and the work-based route. This is what they have to say:

"Having an occupational identity is very important to young peoples' sense of worth and carries status in the adult world. If young people are to learn at work, they need some anchors, something to make them secure for the time they are training. They need to hear how their sector has developed and where it is going ... Young people need to talk about the work they do, to feel part of a skilled occupational community."

That, I think, is the best advice I can leave **SkillsActive** for the important task you have ahead. Thank you.

**Thomas Ledlie Birch:**  
**A Letter From An Irish Emigrant**  
(1799).  
*A Vindication Of The United Irish*  
*Rebellion In The North.*  
Edited and Introduced by  
**Kenneth Robinson.**  
168pp. Chronology, Bibliography,  
Dramatis Personae, Glossary, Index.  
ISBN 0 85034 110 8. Athol Books. 2005.  
E10, £7.50.

The book will sell at a concessionary rate at the Launch, where other books concerning the United Irishmen will also be available

## Recommended Reading:

**Economic Outlook and Business Review**, First Trust Bank, Issue 20.1 March 2005 Articles by Alan Lennon ("Northern Ireland Education, Too Modest for its own Good")

**Alan Felstead** (Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester), **Duncan Gallie** (Nuffield College, University of Oxford) and **Francis Green** (Keynes College, University of Canterbury): *Workskills in Britain 1986-2001*, for the Department for Education and Skills, 2002.

**Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin**: Does Apprenticeship still have a meaning in the UK? The consequences of voluntarism and sectoral change. Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester

**Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin**: Learning as Apprentices in the Contemporary UK workplace; creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation. Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester

**Ewart Keep**: The State—an Elephant and a snake in the telephone box of English VET policy: occasional paper, University of Warwick 2003

**Ewart Keep and Ken Mayhew**: The Economic and Distributional Implications of Current Policies on Higher Education

**Labour Party**: Northern Ireland Labour Forum, response to the consultation on the Government's Economic Vision for Northern Ireland: [www.labour.ie/northernireland/policy](http://www.labour.ie/northernireland/policy)

**Mark Langhammer**: The Northern Ireland Skills Strategy, Towards a High Skills Equilibrium? Speech to the Chartered Management Institute, Belfast City Hall, 5 March 2004 [www.ufi.com/northernireland/publications](http://www.ufi.com/northernireland/publications)

**Sector Skills Development Agency**: Working Futures Regional Report (Chapter 14 Northern Ireland), 2004

**SKOPE Research Paper 44** Qualifying for a Job: an educational and economic audit of the English 14-19 education and training system: Rosa Fernandez and Geoff Hayward, 2004

**SKOPE Research Paper 50**: Enterprise Product Strategies and Employer Demand for Skills in Britain: Evidence from the Employers Skill Survey, 2004

**SKOPE Research Paper 52** The Anglo American approach to Vocationalism: The economic roles of education in England: W./Norton Grubb, Chair in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, USA, October 2004

**Christopher Winch and Linda Clarke**: Front Loaded vocational education versus "lifelong learning"—a critique of current UK Government Policy, Oxford Review of Education Vol.29 No2 2003

**Christopher Winch**: New Labour and Training. The Philosophy of Education Association, 2003

## Launch

by Mark Langhammer  
and Kenneth Robinson

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## SKILLS continued

and Learning took a bit of a beating. Funding moved towards Health and hospitals, Education and schools. And within DEL, the priority was to support Higher (ie 'academic') education over the 'Bottom 50%'. The measures identified, such as '*Level 2 Entitlement*' or '*ICT as a 3rd Essential Skill*' are not programmed or timetabled with funding streams. The money's not there. The Skills Strategy, in other words, is aspirational only, at this stage.

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

An excellent body of research is available to us which gives us, I think, a solid perspective. I'll spend five minutes going through some highlights before return to **SkillsActive**

The 2nd Skills Strategy, Work Skills in Britain, 1986-2001, was published back in 2002 for the DfES in England. It is a comprehensive study, due to be redone in 2006-07. Broadly it found that there was a low demand for high skills, that low value added product strategies were widespread and, for many employers, wholly rational. It found that task discretion was lowering, particularly for professionals. This was interesting because, far from '*moving up the value chain*' with highly-skilled, self-motivated, workers in flexible teams, with high levels of discretion and autonomy, what was found was sharply decreasing task discretion in low trust, routinized environments with less staff or worker involvement.

There was evidence of employers adopting "credentialism" (ie seeking higher levels of qualifications for jobs which did not strictly require them) to 'cut the pool'.

The Skills Survey tended to find that the incidence of "high skill" environments correlated with larger company size, foreign ownership, recent growth in sales (reflecting the point by Alan Lennon that I started with), new product lines, export focus, international outlook, and a sophisticated IT utilisation.

Another excellent piece of research with local focus is the **Working Futures** document produced by the **Sector Skills Development Agency**. It predicts that there will be, over the next ten years in Northern Ireland, a loss of full time, predominantly male, skilled jobs, with further losses in manufacturing, utilities and construction. It predicts a corresponding rise in part-time, personal

service and mostly female jobs. Not all jobs would be low waged, low skilled "MacJobs"—some would require high levels of human and social capital, though not necessarily qualifications.

Overall, the predicted growth is for work in associate professional and technical employment at Level 3.

This runs against the trend of Government policy which seeks to corral young people into higher education, whether or not there are any prospect of graduate level jobs. Aside from the obvious social spin-offs of driving towards 50% in Higher Education—the vandalising of neighbourhoods proximate to Universities, such as Belfast's Holyland, being one—the weight of evidence is demonstrating that '50% to HE' is wrong-headed.

It is now understood that the link between numbers accessing Higher Education on one hand, and productivity on the other is not proven, either internationally, or closer to home—where Scotland has achieved the 50% target.

Very few graduates (as low as 13%) use, or require their degree to get or maintain their jobs! Graduates increasingly occupy jobs which don't require graduate skills, a wasteful and inefficient strategy, surely. Outside London and the South East, the concentration of graduates in the public sector is massively disproportionate—notably in Northern Ireland and the North East. I understand that the **DfES** is currently '*sitting on*' a report which demonstrates the embarrassing scale of this trend. The production line of graduates is now starting to affect employers seeking staff for craft and technician posts. **SEMTA** (the Engineering sector Skills Council), the **Construction Industry Training Board**, the **Federation of Builders**, the **IoD** and locally here, the **CBI** have all made the same points.

What is clear is this. The Government's obsession with pressing for 50% access to higher education has little, if nothing, to do with 'Skills' or international competitiveness. It has more to do with a political policy aimed at promoting the 'Meritocracy' principle close to the New Labour heart.

**Do Qualifications Pay:** Recent work by SKOPE and others has indicated that there are varying returns associated with different qualifications. As parents, when we advise, or seek advice, on which training, educational and occupational routes our children should take, we don't generally consider '*Is this good for the economy?*' We try and assess the likely

returns for going down certain routes. We aren't daft when we try to push the kids to go to University. University graduates earn more, simple! Likewise, more kids take the general, or 'academic' educational route over the 'vocational' route for the same reasons. It may be socially and economically wrong but, from an individual or family standpoint, it's not irrational.

The evidence compiled recently shows that getting 5 or more GCSE's or 'O' Levels (Level 2) will tend to earn a wage return of between 8% and 20% as compared to if you didn't achieve those qualifications.

Two or more 'A' levels (ie Level 3) will earn a 17% to 23% return.

Level 3 Vocational qualifications, by comparison, only earn a return of 7% to 12%. And here's the nub—**Vocational qualifications at level 2 or below are not only of negligible value in productivity or competitiveness terms, they will earn a zero wage return!**

And what does the core of the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy propose. It emphasises the need for Level 2 qualifications!

The very least that can be said is that, based on the available research, our policy makers are throwing money at the solution with the least likelihood of returns! But who am I....

The final thing that I would like to touch on—before returning to **SkillsActive**—is the oft repeated statistic from the **International Adult Literacy Survey** of 1996 that up to a quarter of our adult population are functionally illiterate and innumerate. I wouldn't want to second-guess the work of the IALS and have no grounds to do so, but I would say that, after many years working in some of the most deprived areas of our city—it's a statistic that doesn't accord with my life's experience. I have met, worked with and managed hundreds, maybe thousands of people on 'schemes' over the years. Very few were not capable of being engaged and motivated by skills development or learning—if it was worth it. Of course there are people with literacy and numeracy needs. I suspect that many with the most severe needs will not be engaged by an Essential Skills strategy which is obsessive about qualification targets. Without significant confidence-building and hand-holding, the severely-disadvantaged will run a mile from what is, in essence, a qualification strategy. But another, recent, statistical information to

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## SKILLS continued

useful, stabilising, social tradition, particularly for working class boys. Can we recreate a work-based apprenticeship route, particularly without state involvement and the underpinnings of state, employer and trade unions? Or is the work-based route damaged beyond repair?

The lessons to be learnt from the (Modern) Apprenticeship programme are, again, clear enough. The programme was 'supplier' driven—driven by education and training 'providers' with weak evidence of employer involvement or ownership. There were few incentives to complete. As such very few, particularly in service apprenticeships, actually completed. And there appeared to be few sanctions on either provider or employer for non-completion at Level 3. In the absence of a "licence to practice" or real **currency**, apprenticeships have little value or 'pull' for young people. If completing means you get 'taken on', with a genuine rise in wages and status, then young people would be given incentive to complete.

In many apprenticeship areas, such as Administration, Business, Services, Retail and Customer services, the apprenticeship programme is often seen as '*an extra pair of hands*' from day one. Employers—for whom the process is distant and who often see no obvious business benefit when set against the hassle of '*taking young ones on*'—use Apprenticeships as a recruitment sifting device—take on half a dozen, see the 'whites of their eyes', see how they work, and maybe retain one, if business is OK, at the end of the year. In some cases, 'apprentices' didn't even know that they were apprentices!

We are, in a sense, asking our youngsters to second-guess the labour market. Should they invest in developing specific skills for two or more years without reasonable prospects of reward? Not unnaturally, few will take a risk to invest in personal skills development unless it has **real currency**, unless there are tangible rewards at the end. As for employers, there is, I believe, too much risk involved for young people starting out. For lack of a planned interventionist approach, and the tri-partite structures which are commonplace in skills development across much of Europe, is it likely that Northern Ireland will break out of the service-based, low-skills equilibrium that Finegold and Solskice identified back in 1988?

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMY.

### "MOVING UP THE VALUE CHAIN" ?

I don't intend to go over an analysis of the Northern Irish economy in any real depth, but the rudiments—in successive economic strategies on which there is significant consensus—are well known to us all.

The **Good** is that we've seen recent, stable, year on year, modest growth; unemployment is lower than at any stage I remember; we are on the cusp of a significant infrastructural boost with £16 billion to be spent over the next 10 or so years. Communal-based politics is as unstable as ever, but there are fewer people getting killed, so that's good.

The **Bad** is that there are high levels of economic inactivity, a lot of people 'on the sick', the private sector appears as unattractive and risk-averse with the public sector seen as the 'employer of choice', productivity is lower than the UK average, which in turn lags behind Europe. The 'travel to work' area for many is constrained by sectarian chill factors, and increased, post-ceasefire, geo-sectarian segregation.

The **Ugly** is that our need for migrant workers in many sectors is arrested by an emerging, raw racism; there is a well-entrenched black economy, some of it linked organically to paramilitarism and organised crime.

The Government's **Economic Vision**, published in January 2005, is the basis of the **Skills Strategy** which is still to be finalised after public consultation last year. The Vision is to move Northern Ireland '*up the value chain*', to create real 'value added, high skills' jobs and growth. The odd thing about the Economic Vision is that it supercedes an earlier economic blueprint, **Strategy 2010**—whose period is not complete, and which has not been evaluated. The Vision also supercedes the economic strategy published by the **Economic Development Forum**, which has become redundant, again without evaluation!

However, the Economic Vision stresses several key messages. First, that we need to increase Research and Development and technology transfer. Few would argue with that. Second, it seeks to encourage Enterprise, particularly high value added FDI (foreign direct investment), and sectoral clustering and collaboration. Third, there will be significant infrastructural investment, some £16bn in ten years, albeit that this is to be done in contentious fashion through the Strategic Investment Board with a bias in favour of '*reform*' and '*modernisation*'—

privatisation in old fashioned language. The privatisation of the Water Service, initially through a Government Owned Commercial Company is an example of the Strategic Investment Board approach. Fourth, the Vision stresses the need for better basic skills in the workforce, skills for Employability.

The draft Skills Strategy, built on the foundation stone of the Economic Vision, aims to create a '*learning ladder*' that will allow for individual progression over time. It is aimed, predominantly, at the '*Bottom 50%*' (the '*Top 50%*' going to University) with employability, literacy, numeracy, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages, aimed at migrant and foreign workers), an entitlement to a *first* Level 2 qualification, and recognition of ICT as a third essential skill.

Further Education Colleges will be at the heart of this—the key delivery agent, with 16 Colleges being merged to, I think, 6 all with an onus to develop local, employer led **Workforce Development Forums**, to develop **Area Workforce Development Plans**—the basis of public funding for FE Colleges in the future.

There are lots of reservations about the merits of the Skills Strategy, but for the purpose of today, I will limit myself to two points.

Firstly, if we are to '*move up the value chain*', it is by no means self evident that there will be significant employer engagement through the tactic of providing public subsidy to individuals. If we are to '*move up the value chain*' we need to engage with companies and sectors, and with their competitive strategies. This may have been possible, to a degree, had assistance been tied into an enhanced **Company Development Programme**, and leverage sought with employers through that to encourage growth along a high value added path. For many companies skills issues are, at best, a third order priority. The first priority is usually the company's place in the market, their competitive strategy. Second order issues usually revolve around work organisation, structure and systems. After that, skills, location or marketing come in as '*third level*' priorities or lower. How providing public subsidy to individuals will at all engage with the competitive or product strategies of companies is beyond me, but that's the strategy.

The second reservation is just as fundamental. There's no money to back up the strategy! In the recent spending round, the Department for Employment

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## SKILLS continued

of financial services was the only sector sufficiently important to be mentioned within the Treasury's initial five tests for entry to the Euro. (I think there may be six or seven tests now.). In any reasonable lay terms, Britain lives, in the words of many a Chief Constable, way beyond its visible means of support. It's a modern economic paradigm—it grows very little, we extract and mine very little, it manufactures very little, it has a 'phantom' economy, yet it is allegedly the fourth largest in the world. In fact, it is the 'invisibles' of financial and tradeable services that make up much of the balance of payments deficit. And, whatever the merits of that economic strategy in the long run, the needs of a productive economy are very different to those of an economy built on financial services. A service economy needs lawyers, accountants, actuaries and, let's face it, a decent army in the field and an adventurist foreign policy across the globe. What need for productive skills in this economy?

A final factor to consider in the macro-economic context is that, in the last generation, Britain has adopted a 'voluntary' attitude to skills training. The 'flexible labour market' is treasured by New Labour and the Tories alike. There are few labour market or regulatory pressures, there is no statutory training levy (such as in France), or formal system of "co-determination" (such as in Germany). Tri-partite or partnership arrangements which once existed, and are the stable, institutional building blocks of successful vocational training throughout Europe, have, effectively, disintegrated.

The context, in short, is not a supportive one for good quality, front-loaded, vocational skills training.

### N. IRELAND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In looking at vocational training in Northern Ireland, it is impossible not to stumble across the big elephant in the room—that of the enhanced status in the society of an 'academic' education. There are very significant cultural biases against practical, work-based, technical or vocational routes that should not be underestimated. And these, as I will explain later, are rooted in more than just social snobbery, but in the rewards available.

The recent history of vocational education in Northern Ireland is not an inspiring one. As Jim (Rose) said in his

introduction, I have worked extensively in a range of vocational training programmes. I do not consider myself to be an excessively unstable individual—but in the past twenty years, I have had spells working in the Youth Opportunities Programme, The YTP (Youth Training Programme), the JTP (Job Training Programme), and the ACE schemes (Action for Community Employment). I was responsible, with Paul Shevlin and others in the Flax Trust for helping design and pilot the Worktrack Programme (piloted in Rathcoole and Ardoyne, but recently ditched in the spending round cutbacks just past). I've had an involvement in Jobskills, the various programmes within New Deal and with the Modern Apprenticeship programme. And I have more recently headed up the Ufi **learn-direct** initiative, which Government has just dropped after 4 years. A lot of initiatives that, for twenty years!

What does this tell us? Firstly, that training schemes are just that—"schemes". In the UK, vocational training has not, primarily, been about skills development. It has been more about providing a palliative for the political problem of long-term unemployment or nowadays, within a context of near full employment, to deliver social inclusion goals rather than skills. Spending on UK vocational education in the past twenty years has been, to put it crudely, 'shut up' money.

Secondly, the context within which vocational education programmes has taken place has not been one of trust. There has been significant institutional change. College incorporations, then mergers, Government Training Centres coming and going, private providers setting up and shutting down, voluntary sector provision stimulated under EU PEACE initiatives now cut short. A culture of micro target-setting, endless audit, inspection, and assessment, with league tables and the like, has meant a deficit in the sort of long term relationships—personal and institutional—that allow longer term planning and stability. The name, shame and blame game has been hugely disruptive to developing stable vocational education interventions.

Thirdly, in the sector skills arena, there has been massive programme and policy churn—change of revolutionary, not evolutionary, proportions. Take a look, for instance, at the litany of "employer-led" bodies that the Government has encouraged and funded into being, only to tear them down before their roots had

really had a chance to settle.

We used to have Industrial Training Boards, remember them? Then there were NSTOs, the Non Statutory Training Organisations. Then we had ITOs the Industry Training Organisations, followed by NTO's, the National Training Organisations. In Northern Ireland we've had the Sector Training Councils, in England the TECs, the Training and Enterprise Councils and now, since 2002, we have seen the growth of the Sector Skills Development Agency and the various Sector Skills Councils. All in little over twenty years!

The current rhetoric of Government is that it really wants to hear from employers. And we have to resist the temptation to be cynical, and take Government at its word, that the Sectors Skills Agreements being put together by **SkillsActive** and others will be taken seriously and acted upon. I certainly hope so. But the record is one of creating organisational, institutional and policy chaos over the past generation. The signs are ominous.

At company or workplace level, the experience is that investment in skills is unevenly spread. Staff near the top of an organisation structure will get more training than those at the bottom. Men will tend to attract investment more than women. Those with fewest skills and qualifications will attract least investment. Those on part-time or atypical contracts will attract less spend. All of this is well understood and documented.

Employers will concentrate on job-specific and non-transferable skills—for all sorts of rational reasons. Employers fear that if they invest significantly in employees in ways that enhance that employees' worth in the labour market they might be poached, or they might get dissatisfied. For employers, skills investment can be a sort of '*prisoners dilemma*'. And my view is that employers cannot be expected to take all the risk—that if good technical training is required to enhance the general pool of skills in any given sector, then risk needs to be shared by employers, the employee and the state in the formative years—at the 'front end'—all three are beneficiaries.

Equally, the work-based apprenticeship route—perhaps more so in Northern Ireland, given the extensive loss of the manufacturing base and the predominance of sole trader and micro businesses, more than the rest of the UK—has atrophied. We've seen the loss of good intermediate and technical skills, but also the loss of a

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**LABOUR**

# Comment

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## Work Skills

Mark Langhammer (Labour Party)

Speech to the SkillsActive conference (Sector Skills Council for Sport and Leisure)

at

The Share Centre, Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, June 24th 2005

Firstly can I thank Siobhan (Weir) and Ashley (Pringle) for inviting me here today. What I want to do is to set the work programme of **SkillsActive**, and its aims to develop an employer led Sector Skills Agreement, in the context of current macro economic constraints, current government policy but also taking note of current research, not all of which readily supports the direction taken by Government policy.

I should say a bit about myself first, and why I would be an appropriate person to comment on **SkillsActive's** future activity. I have had a long involvement in vocational education, most recently as Head of Ufi in Northern Ireland and the **learndirect** programme, but also with a range of Government programmes going back over twenty years. I am on the Policy Forum of SKOPE (Skills and Organisational Performance), an ERSC funded vocational education "*think tank*" run through Oxford and Warwick Universities. As an elected councillor in Newtownabbey over the past 12 years, I led our efforts to develop the first comprehensive Play policy in local government in Northern Ireland. I'm glad to see quite a few people from local government here today. I was, for a short time, Chairperson of Playboard, the childrens play charity—and it's good to see Playboard represented on the speaking panel here today. I am also a member of the Labour Party (the Irish Labour Party, that is) and have just recently joined the Labour Party's National Executive Committee, the first from a Northern Ireland branch ever to do so. I will bring all those perspectives to bear on what I will say today.

I'd like to start with a quotation from **Dr Alan Lennon**. I don't know Alan

Lennon personally. I've heard him speak, and read some of his articles. He's a businessman in North Down, I think—but he is also (rare in this part of the world) a very reflective businessman. In his spare time, he is Chair of the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment. In the most recent First Trust Economic Outlook and Business Review quarterly, he says:

"It may be a myth that the supply of skilled people is a major problem for the Northern Ireland economy ... this DEL strategy may turn out to be a solution looking for a problem.... It is economic growth that drives skills supply and not the other way around."

Dr Lennon was talking in the context of the growth of the economy in the Republic of Ireland—that growth, and demand for high level skills—drives the supply of skills. And I agree with him on that.

### THE MACRO ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, was described as early as 1988 in the now celebrated report of

Finegold and Solskice, as tolerating a "*low skills equilibrium*" across many sectors of the economy.

There are many contributing factors to this ailment. One is that the Anglo American conception of the company is very narrowly construed—towards shareholder return and little else, producing a "*short termism*" that is inimical to the development of companies as great institutions, inimical to the long term development of the skills of its people. Short term solutions such as merger, acquisition and takeover, asset stripping, or ruthless cost competitiveness will meet a short term agenda much better. Equally institutional investors will rarely 'get to know' a company, think about it proprietorially, and seek to develop its people's skills over the long term.

Equally, the political consensus by all the main British political parties for the past twenty-five years has been on keeping taxation low—much lower than is common throughout Europe. This has produced a similar dynamic in the public sector as in the private sector. "Best Value", outsourcing, Compulsory Competitive Tendering, PFI/PPP [Private Finance Initiative; Public-Private Partnership], performance-related pay and other devices have enforced a cost competitiveness to mirror that of the private sector. Nothing wrong with the taxpayer getting '*bang for their buck*', of course, but in the long run these strategies will pinch the training and staff development budgets which are often the first targets of public sector cutbacks.

We also see a significant policy bias towards the health of the financial services sector—and the City of London. The health

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