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## A State Of Chassis

The world will go into "meltdown" according to George Bush, if Congress does not put up the billions, or trillions, that he wants as a support for the Ameranglian banking system which has honeycombed the globe. Meanwhile the European Union remains committed to making the world even more dependent on the ramifications of the Ameranglian banking system which threatens it with meltdown, and on increasing the military supremacy on which it is based.

But while the EU tries to push American military power (in the form of NATO) right up against Russia, Russia asserts itself purposefully for the first time in a generation, recognises South Ossetia and Abkhazia as its Protectorates, as the EU did with Kosovo—and it seems not at all bothered about melting down as a consequence of Ameranglian short-selling. It cut the umbilical cord connecting the new capitalism of Russia with Wall Street by getting Khodorkhovsky on taxes (as the FBI got Al Capone) and putting him in jail in Siberia, and by bringing BP to order. It is now in a position to view Ameranglian meltdown with equanimity. And China—with Tibet suddenly becoming a non-issue—is in the position of being able to help Ameranglia meltdown along if it cares to.

This startling turn-about in world affairs came about suddenly last month—or the chickens came home to roost last month. Putin said that Saarkashvili's invasion of South Ossetia was Russia's 9/11, after which things would never be the same again. But this apparently sudden change of the past month is the culmination of the process of change set off seven years ago by the 9/11.

After the Soviet Union disintegrated we were told it was "the end of history" and that the future was to be globalist market harmony under American supervision. The 21st century was to be the American Century. Britain found a role for itself as the voice of America. Blair as Prime Minister specifically rejected the traditional British 'balance-of-power' way of handling the world to its advantage. Britain did not have sufficient weight in itself to dominate the world unilaterally. It achieved its world power by manipulating the conflict of forces all of which were much weightier than itself. But, with the formation of Ameranglia, it seemed to Blair that unipolar dominance had become possible and practicable, and he brushed aside suggestions that British foreign policy should contemplate anything else.

Well, the American Century lasted a little over a decade. The strike at the World Trade Centre disrupted the enemy command. Military theorists explain that that is the strategic aim in warfare, and never before has that aim been achieved with such little loss of life. America in its response has inflicted many times the number of casualties that it suffered, but it is itself disrupted while its ghostly enemy—the idea which is its enemy—is stronger than it was eight years ago, and beyond that struggle against ghosts new powers of a more material kind have begun to assert themselves in world affairs. And capitalist Russia has breached the Monroe Doctrine with regard to South America in a way that Communist Russia never succeeded in doing.

And the small meaningful Europe established by Christian Democracy after 1945 has expanded in a random sort of way, egged on by Ameranglia, and is now left wondering what it has become.

\*

So much for the world. Back in Northern Ireland the SDLP is searching for a role for itself. Bertie Ahern wanted to put it out of its misery by organising Fianna Fail in the

*continued on page 2*

## The Lisbon Dilemma

### MUST TRY HARDER

An occupational hazard for political journalists is that they can easily come to believe that political practice is as simple as writing about it. The leading political Guru of the *Irish Times*, Stephen Collins, does not seem to appreciate the difference. Like all these journalists he is so very wise after the event. But when the event that happened should not have happened he and they are in a quandary. So it is with the Lisbon Treaty rejection.

He felt obliged, being the important wordmonger he is, to intervene, to call on his accumulated wisdom and provide political guidance over this issue. And that was to forget about referendums and have the Dail pass it. Brilliant and simple—but only for the simpleminded.

Having realised that this was not a winner, or even a runner, he has had a second thought:

"The only way it can be carried is to redefine the question, either by isolating the elements of the treaty that require a referendum and allowing the Oireachtas to ratify the rest, or else taking the nuclear option of asking the electorate whether or not they want the country to remain fully involve in the EU" (IT 13.9.09).

Wrong answer given—so ask a different question. How pathetic. And try a bit of good old fashioned blackmail into the bargain. Voting on Lisbon has nothing whatever to do with leaving or not leaving the EU unless it is made so. If it is, there is every likelihood that the country will find itself outside the EU and that will be thanks to the current EU enthusiasts and nobody else.

The nuclear option is dangerous in this age of democracy. Ted Heath once held an election with a nuclear option "Is it me or the miners that should run the country?" The electorate gave the wrong answer and that was the end of Heath. Not long afterwards it was the end of the miners as

*continued on page 5*

## CONTENTS

<b>A State Of Chassis.</b> Editorial	1
<b>The Lisbon Dilemma.</b> Jack Lane	1
<b>Editorial Digest.</b> (IMC; British Army 'homecoming: Reception & SF, & DUP, & SDLP, & Alliance; <b>30 Years War: a tragedy?, mistakes?, 1939; Durkan's Somersault: &amp; Chatham House, &amp; Cllr. McDonald, &amp; Rights; Monica's Dictum; Durkan &amp; IN; By Gadd!; Chill Factor 1, &amp; 2; Sarah Palin; Jackie McDonald; Victims; Ulster Scots; Hearts of Steel; Fermanagh Council results; Welcome Home!; FF &amp; North; Crazy Cork</b>	2
<b>Readers' Letters: What About The Sunday Independent.</b> Kells Reader	3
<b>Light On The Hill.</b> Feargus O Raghallaigh	6
<b>EU Commercial Policy.</b> Joe Higgins (report)	6
<b>Israeli Military Occupation &amp; EU Partnership.</b> David Morrison	7
<b>Israel: Rogue State.</b> Philip O'Connor (report of letter)	8
<b>Sectarianism: How Did It Start?</b> Jack Lane	8
<b>Shorts</b> from <i>the Long Fellow</i> (Tales Of The Tiger; More Tales From The Tiger; Global Financial Crisis; Progress; Engels On Finance Capital	9
<b>1974 &amp; Wilson's Domsday Scenario For NI.</b> Seán McGouran	11
<b>Dubs:</b> A poem from the Internet	12
<b>A British Intelligence Slur On John Swift.</b> Manus O'Riordan	12
<b>D.D. Sheehan.</b> Jack Lane	15
<b>Visions &amp; Revisions.</b> Brendan Clifford	16
<b>Does It Stack Up?</b> Michael Stack (O'Keeffe & Education; Social Ills; Gormley; Windfarms; FAS; The Public Service	19
<b>A Crying Shame.</b> Nick Folley & Mark Urwin on Mayo Memorial (report)	20
<b>Ireland Crunch.</b> Feargus O Raghallaigh	21
<b>The True Frances Ledwige</b> (Report of letters: Pat Muldowney, Niall Meehan)	22
<b>Julius Fuçik.</b> Wilson John Haire	23
<b>Errata:</b> <i>A 1968 Mixum-Gatherum</i> , September issue	23

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

*Pay 2008: Faugh an Ballagh*

North. But Mark Durkan, who has a vision, was vigorously opposed to the plan. Now Brian Cowan has called it off, and has adopted the policy of the British parties after 1921 of letting the Six Counties stew in their own juices.

Mark Durkan's vision was of a Northern Ireland freed from from the shackles (the "ugly scaffolding") of the Good Friday Agreement—shackles imposed on it by his predecessor, John Hume. He wanted to return to the normality of majority rule. For this to have made any political sense, he would have had to show that the SDLP had become the party of a substantial section of the Protestant community—or at least to have formed a tight electoral alliance with the UUP. And, even then, the outcome would probably have been the meltdown into Sinn Fein of the SDLP remnant. But, if he had that, his vision might be said to represent a remote possibility. But he didn't even have that. And his own newspaper, the *Irish News*—the undead presence of old "constitutional nationalism" in a situation in which there are now nothing but constitutional nationalists—had to tell him to drop it.

All that is now left for the SDLP to do is stay in being and harass Sinn Fein in order to ensure that it does not become the largest Six County party—which might possibly happen if the UUP split the

Unionist vote sufficiently while the SDLP remnant went over to Sinn Fein.

Under the present rules the First Minister is the leader of the largest party, as opposed to the leader of the largest party in the largest community, so there is a possibility of Martin McGuinness moving up from Deputy First to First Minister.

The SDLP is currently attacking Sinn Fein for not allowing the Ministers to meet as an Executive. Sinn Fein is doing this because the DUP, since the overthrow of Paisley, has been refusing to co-operate in implementing the provisions of the St. Andrew's Agreement about the transfer or policing authority and introducing an Irish Language Act.

Before Dr. Paisley made his deal, the talk was that the DUP was delaying until Blair retired and Gordon Brown, the son of the Manse, took office. Well, Brown is in office, and he has been to Belfast, and has addressed the Assembly, and what he said there was that the DUP should get on and do what it agreed to. And he said nothing nasty about Sinn Fein or the IRA, as Blair would certainly have done.

The DUP has demanded the disbanding of the Army Council of the disarmed and inactive IRA. What this amounts to in the circumstances is that the individuals who know themselves to be the Army Council should somehow be prevented from

speaking to each other. Gordon Brown brushed the idea aside. So did Lord Alderdyce's Independent Monitoring Commission—which is a ventriloquist's dummy operated by Whitehall.

The DUP has also expressed the intention of going to the IMC and asking it to assert a supervising authority, which it is said, allows it to compel Sinn Fein to allow the Executive to meet by agreeing to attend. It is a surprise to hear that the IMC has this notional power. No doubt the egregious Lord Alderdyce would be happy to exercise this authority—and thereby in effect become Governor-General! But his voice is his master's voice.

## Editorial Digest

**The Independent Monitoring Commission** (IMC) has declared that the IRA Army Council is no longer functioning—or words to that effect. This has meant that both the Irish and British Governments have been able to say that there is no possibility of a resumption of IRA activities (Irish News, 4th September). The dogs in the street know that this is the case. The Democratic Unionist Party expresses doubts, though it is likely that it does not have any doubts. The dogs in the street can be believed, even if the IMC can not. The IMC is not independent. Its sole source of information is MI5 (the police no longer have a "security" role). MI5 tells the IMC what the British Government wants to hear and the IMC repeats this back to the British Government!

**British Army "homecoming":** civic receptions for troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have been given the go-ahead by Belfast City Council by 26 votes to 20, thanks to the Alliance Party, which holds the balance of power. There will be a parade to St. Anne's (C of I) Cathedral on November 2. A British Army spokesman said that there are discussions with Councils throughout the province about ceremonies, but, apart from Belfast, only Ballymena has made a decision. It will hold a ceremony granting the soldiers the freedom of the town (Irish News, 2nd & 3rd Sept).

**Sinn Fein Councillor, Paul Maskey** said: "*The idea that there should be a civic reception for those taking part in a war which is internationally accepted to be entirely unjust is entirely wrong. This proposal has been put forward for no other reason than to create division within the city of Belfast. I think it sends out the entirely wrong message of what Belfast is supposed to be about.*" Sinn Fein's Lord Mayor, Tom Hartley, said he will not be attending the ceremony

(or perhaps is not being permitted to do so by his party?). The Royal Irish Regiment's very recent origins in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the B-Specials does not seem to have been an issue. Nor has the role of the British Army generally in Ireland and the world.

**DUP Councillor Ian Crozier**, said that Sinn Fein was using the occasion as a *"mantle of convenience for people who hate British soldiers"*. He went on: *"I'm sorry to say there is a yawning chasm in this Council on particular issues which are important to the unionist community. Mutual respect can not be found here, which is something which causes me great sadness."* He claimed that SDLP was being *"led by the nose"* by Sinn Fein.

**The SDLP response** was made by Councillor Tim Attwood: *"I think unionists have been genuine in their calls for this civic reception and that should be respected. But it should also be equally respected that there are those, including the SDLP, who are opposed to this war. The SDLP has always been a part of non-violence since its inception. We recognise that there have been 176 British troops among the 4,400 allied forces killed. But there have also been 655,000 Iraqi civilians killed and that should be remembered."*

**Alliance Councillor Naomi Long** said that her party also opposed the War but supported the homecoming parade: *"It's not fair to hold the armed forces responsible for the poor decisions of the politicians who started this war."* Ulster Unionist Councillor, Jim Rodgers said: *"I don't want to see this issue causing division on a council which has shown great maturity over the last number of years. It would be wrong to turn this into a slanging match."*

**The 30 Years local war** is increasingly being treated as at best a tragedy and at worst an unnecessary saga of criminal violence. On the 11th September (the anniversary of the Twin Towers attack in New York) the editorial of the *Belfast Telegraph* stated: *"The sacrifice of the men and women killed during the Army's service in the Northern Ireland Troubles was fittingly remembered in St Paul's Cathedral in London yesterday"*. It catalogued at length the great deeds performed of the British Army over 30 years as it policed the violent Paddies—Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. The only concession to reality was that *"mistakes were made"*.

*"Mistakes were made, but in general terms, the Army's role was to hold the line against terrorists from all sides. And ultimately the Army won that battle, not in the conventional manner of defeating the terrorists, but in convincing republicans that their murderous cam-*

## What About The *Sunday independent* ?

I wish to renew my subscription to your excellent publication. As a former newspaper man I believe that overall your paper is good at exposing Ireland's neo-unionist style revisionist historians, and the anti-nationalist agenda of the *Irish Times*, but strangely less critical of the right wing Sir Anthony O'Reilly-owned *Independent* newspapers. In particular, the *Independent* group's shameful coverage of the northern conflict over 30 years. Yes, of course, the *Irish Times* has a south Dublin elite, neo-liberal, anti-republican, anti-rural Ireland, anti-catholic church, agenda, but compared with for example the gutter tabloid journalism of the likes of the *Sunday World*, *Star*, and *Sunday Independent*, it is surely progressive enough by contemporary Irish daily and weekend newspaper standards. Keep up the good work *Labour Comment/Irish Political Review*, but remember that there are worse publications than the *Irish Times*.

Yours, Kells, Co. Meath reader

*paign would not succeed. Effectively, the Army and RUC paved the way for the peace process by demonstrating that continuing violence was futile."* This seems to be the agreed interpretation of events. There is no sign that Sinn Fein, outside of their Northern enclaves, and often not even there, are doing anything to counter this. It is certainly not being countered by them across the North, in the South or out in the rest of the world. The default position is becoming that expressed by people like the Editor of the *Belfast Telegraph*. For example Canon Ian Ellis, Editor of the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, can say that prior to the devolution of policing in the North, ex-Provos *"must make clear and adequate expressions of regret for their past crimes"*!

**The day after war "broke out"**. *"Yesterday a British Territorial soldier was shot in a struggle with armed men in Belfast. Other soldiers were stripped by armed men and their uniforms burned in the streets. In the Kashmir district another British soldier was stopped by men and stripped of his uniform which was then burned in the street. In the Markets area of the city another Territorial was stopped by armed men and taken into Turnley Street where they stripped him of his uniform and burned it"* (Irish News, September 5th, 1939).

**Mark Durkan's somersault.** This is how the *Irish News* of 6th September reported a speech in Oxford made by the SDLP leader the previous evening: *"SDLP leader Mark Durkan last night called for an end to enforced power-sharing between nationalists and unionists at Stormont. In a major speech at Oxford University Mr. Durkan said that his party believed the time was approaching when rules introduced to protect nationalists in government should be removed. The SDLP has for decades*

*argued for power-sharing as the only way to prevent unfair unionist domination but now Mr. Durkan has said that a strong bill of rights could prove sufficient protection for minorities."*

**Chatham House rules** obtained for Mr. Durkan's speech. This means that what is said or who says what cannot be divulged by anyone without the subject's permission. Nobody leaked anything on this occasion—they never do. Mr. Durkan briefed the press himself. He did not refute the *Irish News* story printed on the Saturday nor its follow up story on the Monday (8th) entitled *Unionists Welcome Durkan Comments*. Here Jeffrey Donaldson of the DUP said: *"I welcome Mr. Durkan's comments. I think we should be looking at how we may move beyond the artificial arrangements which are in place at present. We want to normalize politics in Northern Ireland"*. His remarks were also, more guardedly, welcomed in the Ulster Unionist Party. (Chatham House is the continuation of the *Round Table*. A secretive forum where the British Establishment thrashes out policy.)

**Councillor Pat McDonald, SDLP** group leader in Omagh, echoed his leader in the *Irish News* letters page on the 8th: *"We are doomed under the present system to a 'lowest common denominator' state. We are not living in the primitive insulated world of 1960s Stormont—a bill of rights, an alert media and vigilant observation from Westminster and Dail Eireann would make any such reversal to old-style discrimination a non-runner."* It's a funny kind of "state" that needs to be supervised by two other states. But a separate form of rule is insisted on for the Six Counties. Better that this was not the case. But, so long as it is, then it will be entirely sectarian and it is best that rules which take account of

this are applied. Of course, the SDLP would be quite happy with the present set-up if things had worked out as they had planned and they and the UUP were the biggest parties.

**A Bill of Rights** was also central to the Durkan speech. Such a proposal has been debated for ten years as part of the Good Friday Agreement and a new forum was set up after the St. Andrew's Agreement. It involves almost everyone and has got precisely nowhere. It will never get anywhere and that is no bad thing. Some Sinn Feiner reasonably pointed out that running to the courts every time a Catholic was given a hard time was no way to do things.

**The Sainted Monica Mc Williams**, formerly the Women's Coalition, and now chief Human Rights Commissioner—whatever that means, is more optimistic about a Bill of Rights (we think!): *"The content of the methodology poses a series of questions which are neither sequential nor hierarchical, but to which due regard may be given when considering whether a case can be made that the need for a proposed right arises out of the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland."* (Irish News 6th Sept. Not available on a gable wall near you!)

**The Irish News letters pages** and Columns are tightly controlled. It is a highly political paper. Its politics are Devlinite. By Wednesday 10th September it had had enough of Durkan. It did not think its readers wanted the SDLP going 'off message'. It printed a hard hitting letter by Sinn Fein MLA Raymond MacCartney who quoted a lot of SDLP policies back at them, and concluded: *"...the SDLP website informs us under the title of 'Major Achievements': 'More than any other party the principles of the Good Friday Agreement are the principles championed by the SDLP for over 30 years—power sharing, equality, human rights, north/south cooperation, east/west links. That is why we will not renegotiate the Good Friday Agreement. 'We will not weaken its protections. For the SDLP, the agreement is a covenant of honour between two legitimate traditions on this island. 'We believe that its principles and provisions must prevail for all.' Oh, a week can be a long time in politics, particularly if your politics are weak."*

**Similar letters followed**, though one supporting Durkan from the Alliance Party appeared on 11th. (Presumably one of their members found a copy of the *Irish News* on the Bangor train!) But it was on the 10th that senior columnists, Brian Feeney, delivered the *coup de grace*: *"It might have been better for Durkan if he had availed of the full protection of the Chatham House rule. The naivete of his remarks is equalled only by his lack of*

*political nous. What did he say? That compulsory power sharing between nationalists and unionists could be ended. That in future there would be no need to designate parties 'nationalist', 'unionist' and 'other'. That in Durkan's Shangri-La, decisions could be taken by majority voting as in Westminster or the Dail. How could this wondrous change come about? There would be a 'robust' bill of rights to protect people from decisions damaging to their interests, that's how. In the immortal words of John McEnroe: 'You cannot be serious!'"* That did the trick. Both Durkan and the SDLP have backpedalled and even claimed that they were wrongly quoted. But they were not.

**The Northern Propensity?** Bridge Gadd, weekly columnist in the *Irish News*, has been bemoaning the exclusion of the wee North from the radar of the United Kingdom, especially in matters relating to tourism. On September 9th she moaned:

*"It is not a good experience to ...realize that this small place of ours only mattered when we were hitting the headlines because of our propensity to kill each other... We are a small country ... We urgently need our own separate Northern Ireland brand which may symbolize our close links with the rest of the UK and separately with Ireland (sic) but which also celebrates our distinctly different image."*

*That is the Irish News for you.*

**Strabane Trades Council** has supported a worker at the local DHSS office who was "offended" by the presence on another worker's car of a Tyrone GAA flag in the lead up to Tyrone's All Ireland football final against Kerry. Ryan McNulty of the Trades Council said that the Flags and Emblems Act was clear on the issue. Meanwhile Culture Minister Gregory Campbell has opened the new St. Brigid's Gaelic Football grounds in South Belfast. You couldn't make it up!

**Educating Sarah.** Sarah Palin is being introduced in New York to the leaders of Georgia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Columbia, Ukraine, and various other dignitaries, as part of her induction into foreign affairs. Among those she will meet is Ireland's own international statesman, Bono. People complain about her ignorance of foreign places: she did not have a passport until last year, but wouldn't it be nice if more American politicians had no idea where the rest of us live?

**UDA leader Jackie McDonald** was due to speak at a meeting at Sarsfield's GAA Club in Andersonstown in late September. On the 18th the Club announced that it was cancelling the meeting as it had realised that the UDA man was to be there, plus a lot of other back-up reasons. Never mind that his presence was all over the papers for days. Mr. McDonald said afterwards:

"We very much appreciate the fear and hurt still being felt by many people in the Nationalist/Republican community... This is also very true for many in our own community... There are also many, in both communities, holding on to their understandable anger and there are still many who continue to nurture blatantly sectarian attitudes and behaviour. The vast majority of all our people, however, seek a way forward and we believe this can only be achieved for us and our children by open debate, joint action around our common needs and an honest exploration of our own feelings and perceptions..." (Irish News, 19th September).

**42 Victim's Support Groups** got a sympathetic hearing from Justice Minister Dermot Ahern on 19th September. No further comment!

**Ulster Scots** seems to bring out the sectarian worst in nationalist sectarians. Brian Feeney, in the *Irish News* on 17th September says: *"Since its appearance on the political radar at the time of the Good Friday Agreement millions of pounds have been thrown away on this nonsense language"*. This is the least of the almost daily carping and whingeing in the nationalist press. But what harm is there in this Ulster Scots language, dialect, or whatever, except that it embarrasses some Protestants. It is how English was, and is, spake in some rural parts of the North and its promotion, along with traditional music, brightens up everyone's lives. It is more pleasant than listening to the "kick the pope" bands. As to money—funds are still pouring into the most dubious of projects sponsored and lauded by nationalists.

**The Hammer and Sickle** was the emblem of the Hearts of Steel organisation of tenants in Co. Antrim in the 1760s and 70s. The *Irish News* for 17th September 1939 said: *"They were men of the tenant farmer, artisan and labouring classes... who found that—without vigorous organisation in the interests of the people—the rack-rent dissolute landlords would lay year by year heavier burdens on their shoulders and drive them into poverty."* Burning landlord houses and houghing (maiming) farm animals were their main tactics. Their motto was *"Necessitas non habet legem"* (Necessity Knows No Law).

**Fermanagh By Election** first preference results: Foster (DUP) 1,925. Coyle (Sinn Fein) 1,816. Johnson (UUP) 1,436. Flanagan (SDLP) 739. Kamble (Alliance) 231. McHugh (Ind. Republican) 158. Turnout was 50.89%. Arlene Foster, DUP MLA, was declared elected after the eliminations of the four lowest votes.

**Welcome Parade for Imperial troops.** In addition to the church service at St. Anne's Cathedral mentioned last month,

troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will also parade through the streets of Belfast on November 2nd. The *Belfast Telegraph*, 22nd September, reported:

"Around 40 soldiers from the Republic serving in the British army will parade in uniform in Northern Ireland next month—for the first time in over 60 years. The news comes as Belfast prepares to play host to a home-coming parade for members of the Royal Irish regiment, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. The parade—scheduled to take place in the city centre on November 2—will be the first of its kind in Northern Ireland since World War II, when 14,000 men from the Republic were joining the ranks each year. The procession is intended to celebrate the safe return of British servicemen and women from Afghanistan and Iraq. The soldiers from the Republic who fought against the Taliban in Afghanistan will march through Belfast, before taking the salute from a senior military figure at City Hall."

The Belfast Anti-War Movement was contacted about this some weeks ago, but no reply has been received.

**Fianna Fail** now appears to have no further interest in organising in the North but says nothing about the numbers it boasted of recruiting in Belfast and Derry less than a year ago. The matter was to have been part of the party's strategic review but "*We haven't actually proceeded with it. A number of other issues arose since then in terms of the North itself*" said Taoiseach, Brian Cowen. (Irish Times, 17th September) This may give Labour leader, Eamon Gilmore, the excuse not to permit the Labour Party, which already has an organization in the North, to contest elections there.

**Crazy Politics In Cork City:** Northside community activist Jackie Connolly has joined the Workers' Party and is vying for the nomination to represent the party in Cork North Central in the forthcoming local elections. Ms Connolly ran as a first-time Sinn Féin candidate in the 2004 local elections and came within 50 votes of taking the last seat. She has continued her community activism ever since. Ms Connolly turned down the opportunity to run as a Sinn Féin candidate this year when her husband Ed became ill. When his condition began to improve some months ago, Jackie decided to run on the Workers' Party ticket, saying:

"I have today joined the Workers' Party and I would be delighted to be selected as the candidate for the party in 2009 and to continue to chase that seat I lost out on in 2004. The people of Cork North Central know I am dedicated to being a public representative, and the issues that were there in 2004 still exist today."

Ms Connolly, the chairwoman of the Gurrabraher Residents' Association, has five children (Evening Echo, Cork).

## Lisbon Dilemma

continued

well. It turned out that neither could run the country and Heath had proved he could not do so by asking the question in the first place.

Plato likened democracy to a bull in a cave, a dangerous and unpredictable animal and it needed very careful handling to avoid serious consequences for all concerned. Otherwise, to mix metaphors, it could act like a bull in a china shop. Our political elite show all the signs of having the wisdom to only enrage the bull even more over Lisbon.

Of course, Collins's scheme was not new. Fianna Fail politicians were way ahead of him and had been mooted this for some time. The *Irish Examiner* reported that "*Some senior politicians believe that the Charter of Fundamental Rights is the only part of the treaty that changes the Irish Constitution*" (2.9.08).

The Charter promises all sorts of rights to every individual of the Earth's billions. As wonderfully worthy as it is useless in practice. How are all these conflicting rights to be made meaningful? That is the crux and repeating them *ad nauseam* and enshrining them in Constitutions is only self-indulgent pomposity.

After all, a lot of the human race have been trying to implement the Ten Commandments for quite some time with mixed success and they are surely as worthy as the Charter. Would it help if these were enshrined in the Irish Constitution? Surely it would it help to win a Referendum at least, so why not propose it with a second referendum on Lisbon? Who could then oppose it, after all? Why doesn't Mr. Collins promote that sure winner?

### HOW GREEN CAN YOU BE?

Deirdre De Búrca, Green Party EU Candidate for Dublin, tells us that:

"While we focused in the past mainly on the flaws of the EU, the changing geopolitical situation means we now see a vital role for a progressive transnational body like the EU in the global stage." (IT 15.9.09)

How peculiar. The EU was a progressive force when it was a counter to both the Soviet and Anglo-American view of the world. It had a social model to counter both and was creating a real transnational body via the Commission.

All that has changed and the EU has now adopted the US-UK view of things that is creating havoc in the world and a recession at home. The Commission has been reduced to a mere bureaucracy imposing petty rules and regulations. A few of the larger Member States rule the roost in the EU. Its other great transnational body,

the WTO, is in tatters.

And now some of the Greens decide to join up? This is logical at least and following their spiritual leader, Fischer, who made the German Greens into full blown warmongers. Can the Irish Greens be far behind?

### ANOTHER LAW FOR LIAM LYNCH?

There is no getting away from Lisbon, even in Kilcrumper cemetery. The *Corkman* reported (19.9.08) that:

"An Taoiseach Brian Cowen last Sunday braved the elements to deliver the annual oration in memory of General Liam Lynch at the Republican plot in Kilcrumper cemetery. More than 300 people turned up at the graveyard in the pouring rain to hear the Taoiseach's address and to pay their respects to a man still regarded by many as one of the driving forces behind Irish independence. This year marked the 85th anniversary of the death of General Liam Lynch, one of the key figures of the Irish War of Independence and the subsequent Civil War. On his arrival at the cemetery, the Taoiseach took part in a wreath laying ceremony at the Republican plot. ... The Taoiseach used his speech to broach the delicate topic of the Lisbon Treaty, appearing to issue an appeal to the Irish electorate to consider the option of a second referendum on the issue. ... The Taoiseach went on to say that as far as he was concerned "opting out" weakens rather than strengthens Ireland future prospects.

"In today's global environment, this country can not afford to turn its back on closer co-operation with like-minded countries on critical international issues such as developing trade links that foster jobs at home and exploit opportunities abroad, protecting the environment, tackling climate change, dealing with migration and ensuring the security of vital energy supplies in the years ahead."

Deputy Cowen's emotional oration was later described by Cllr Frank O'Flynn, chairman of the Liam Lynch Commemoration Committee, as "*one of the finest speeches ever heard on this*".

Lynch is renowned as the man who said he would '*serve no other law*' than that established by the Government of the Republic on foot of the 1918 General Election and was killed as a consequence of acting true to his word. He was about the most law-abiding person one could imagine. It takes some neck to use his annual commemoration to advocate the ignoring of a clear referendum result in the Republic.

Cowen's argument was essentially that Independence solves nothing and that it in some way automatically runs counter to all attempts at serious international co-operation to solve problems that affect us all. This is transparently spurious counter-posing. People like Lynch wanted independence precisely so that the country could have co-operation with others on

equal terms. He held that it was best to be in charge of one's own destiny when co-operating with others. Otherwise you are reduced to acting as a tool. John Redmond wanted to co-operate as a junior partner in the British Empire and got precisely nothing, except 50,000 dead Irishmen. This is the very role that Liam Lynch and later De Valera saved the country from. In the 1970s Irish Independence was protected and enhanced by joining Europe. Then there was real power-sharing and the pooling of sovereignty by the Member States meant that Ireland's weight in the world increased. That was entirely beneficial because the EU's purpose then was entirely peaceful and thus consistent with Irish aspirations. In those days defence meant defence and was not double-speak for war.

#### MILIBAND BLURTS IT OUT

But the EU has changed its purpose and that was made absolutely clear by British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, during his recent visit to Dublin. He said:

"He suggested the No vote had created an opportunity to clarify the modern purpose of the EU. Mr. Miliband said that for his parents' generation the purpose of the EU was obvious: to build economic and political ties to prevent war. For the generation of the 1970s and 1980s it was to develop the internal market and social standards that embodied the standards of the European social market economy. 'I think the purpose of the EU is as clear today, but it is different. It is to address the risks and insecurities that face Europeans beyond our borders. We have got to complete the project of single market reform, budgetary reform, etc, but the new threats are global threats' (IT 12.9.08).

In an interview with John Humphries, (Radio 4, 28.8.2008) the latter had teased out of him that the new Russia was an example of such a threat and this could mean a NATO war with Russia: which Mr. Miliband seems willing to contemplate with a certain amount of equanimity. The new EU is being led into developing a similar attitude to Russia and many other countries—and shows every sign of adopting the new war-like stance.

This is the reality that determines the public's attitude to voting on Lisbon 1 or 2 or 3. The political elite seem blind to it but they must face up to it and they will belittle the independence of the country at their peril—as Cowen did at Kilcrumper. The practical usefulness of political independence is proven every day of week by the countries of the world that are growing stronger before our very eyes. It is also proven more and more by the behaviour of the leading EU member states who nowadays, like Liam Lynch, serve no other law than their own when the chips are down.

Jack Lane

## The Light on the Hill

### —an Antipodean Note

#### INTRODUCTION

There many more people informed and knowledgeable about Australian politics and in particular, the history of Labour on Australia with all of its Catholic-Irish machinations than I am—I think in particular of Pat Maloney and his deep knowledge and experience of Melbourne.

But in the history of Australian Labour there is an incident, the Prime Ministership of one Irish-Australian, 'Ben' (Joseph Benedict) Chifley (1885—1951) and one speech that he made, *The Light on the Hill*, made in June 1949.

Chifley was an Irish Catholic who married a woman who 'dug with the other foot', and he 'changed' and never again, apparently, crossed the Chapel door.

He was a strange man as far as I can see, middle of the road Labour but radical on one thing, banking. This had to do with the fact that he was reared by his grandfather who lost his savings on a banking collapse and Ben retained a life-long belief in the necessity to nationalise banking. In government he attempted to create a national bank, the Commonwealth

Bank of Australia, overturned by the high court and it still exists as a private bank. Chifley went on to create what is now Qantas—one of the world's biggest airlines and initiate one of the world's greatest engineering phenomena, the Snowy Mountain hydro-power project. He did lots of other things but anyway, on 12 June 1949 he made this speech.

#### THE LIGHT ON THE HILL— THE SPEECH

"I have had the privilege of leading the Labor Party for nearly four years. They have not been easy times and it has not been an easy job. It is a man-killing job and would be impossible if it were not for the help of my colleagues and members of the movement.

"No Labor Minister or leader ever has an easy job. The urgency that rests behind the Labor movement, pushing it on to do things, to create new conditions, to reorganise the economy of the country, always means that the people who work within the Labor movement, people who lead, can never have an easy job. The job of the evangelist is never easy.

#### Report

### EU Common Commercial Policy

The following is taken from Joe Higgins' column in the *Irish Daily Mail*, 30th April

"...

The proposed Article 188C lays open our Health, Education and Social Services to encroachment by multinational companies who will be enabled to seek out profitable parts of these services for investment.

Despite how difficult it can be to follow the text of the treaty in parts, on this issue it is very easy for anybody to follow how public services can be made open to privatisation.

Article 188C states:

"The common commercial policy should be based on uniform principles, particularly with regard to . . . the conclusion of tariff and trade agreements relating to trade in goods and services, and the commercial aspects of intellectual property, foreign direct investment, the achievements of uniformity in measures of liberalisation . . ."

('Liberalisation' essentially means allowing private corporations provide public services for profit.)

The article mandates the EU Commission to discuss proposals for an international market in public services with bodies such as the World Trade Organisation. These proposals could provide for private companies being enabled, as of right, to commercialise public services such as education and health in the same way as they will be able to move into our postal services in a few years time.

Crucially, no country would have a veto to stop this. This is laid down in one simple sentence: "For the negotiation and conclusion of the agreements referred to in paragraph 3, the Council shall act by a qualified majority". Up to now every country would have had to agree.

Yesterday, in a submission to the National Forum on Europe in Dublin, IBEC, representing big business interests, said quite openly: "The Lisbon Reform Treaty creates the legal basis for the liberalisation of services of general interest (Art. 106). A yes vote for the Lisbon Treaty creates the potential for increased opportunities for Irish business particularly in areas subject to increasing liberalisation such as Health, Education, Transport, Energy and the Environment."...

"Because of the turn of fortune's wheel your Premier (Mr McGirr) and I have gained some prominence in the Labor movement. But the strength of the movement cannot come from us. We may make plans and pass legislation to help and direct the economy of the country. But the job of getting the things the people of the country want comes from the roots of the Labor movement—the people who support it.

"When I sat at a Labor meeting in the country with only ten or fifteen men there, I found a man sitting beside me who had been working in the Labor movement for fifty-four years. I have no doubt that many of you have been doing the same, not hoping for any advantage from the movement, not hoping for any personal gain, but because you believe in a movement that has been built up to bring better conditions to the people. Therefore, the success of the Labor Party at the next elections depends entirely, as it always has done, on the people who work.

"I try to think of the Labor movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody's pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective—the light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand. If it were not for that, the Labor movement would not be worth fighting for.

"If the movement can make someone

more comfortable, give to some father or mother a greater feeling of security for their children, a feeling that if a depression comes there will be work, that the government is striving its hardest to do its best, then the Labor movement will be completely justified.

"It does not matter about persons like me who have our limitations. I only hope that the generosity, kindness and friendliness shown to me by thousands of my colleagues in the Labor movement will continue to be given to the movement and add zest to its work."

12 June, 1949, speaking at the annual conference of the NSW Labor Party.

#### AFTERWORD

Whatever you think of *The Light on the Hill*—waffle, rubbish, uplifting, brilliant, whatever—it is a brilliant, to my mind, capture of a moment, a political second. Chifley, as he was—and as I understand the story—dying (of cancer) and knew it. It was his death-bed statement.

If Irish Labour is to mean anything it must produce its Light on the Hill and fire up to it. The failure of Labour in Ireland since the 'Spring Tide' is that it has offered on 'Light on the Hill'. We have whatever view of Spring, shallow, opportunistic, real, substantive, serious.

The point is no one, but no one has achieved such effect since on behalf of Labour. Is this the end of Labour? Can it be that Labour ends in a whimper in Ireland in the biggest crisis since the 1930s? Is this the end?

**Feargus O Raghallaigh**

long occupation of parts of Georgia.

It would be interesting to hear the EU justify those extraordinary double standards.

#### RESPECTING TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

There is another extraordinary aspect to the EU's relations with Israel—the EU has been happy to sign agreements with Israel even though, at the time of signing, Israel has been contravening obligations contained in the agreements themselves.

For example, the Barcelona Declaration, which established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, obliges its signatories to "*respect the territorial integrity and unity of each of the other partners*" [2] and a series of other norms of international law.

Lebanon, Syria and Israel signed the Barcelona Declaration and became EU partners in November 1995. At that time, parts of Lebanon and Syria were under Israeli military occupation and the Golan Heights had been annexed by Israel. Clearly, Israel was failing to "*respect the territorial integrity and unity*" of its Lebanese and Syrian partners in 1995, when it signed the Barcelona Declaration containing this obligation. But the EU turned a blind eye to Israel's breach of the partnership agreement at the time it signed the partnership agreement—and allowed it to become an EU partner.

And the EU has continued to turn a blind eye ever since and allowed Israel to remain an EU partner, even though today Syrian and Lebanese territory remains under Israeli military occupation and Israeli military aircraft frequently invade Lebanese air space.

#### CARRYING OUT

##### SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

The Barcelona Declaration also obliges its signatories to "*act in accordance with the United Nations Charter*", Article 25 of which obliges UN member states "to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council" [3]. In 1995, Israel was violating around 25 Security Council resolutions requiring action by it and it alone, including:-

- \* Resolutions 252, 267, 271 and 298 require Israel to reverse its annexation of East Jerusalem,
- \* Resolutions 446, 452 and 465 demand that Israel cease building Jewish settlements in the territories it has occupied since 1967, including in Jerusalem
- \* Resolution 487 calls upon Israel to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA supervision
- \* Resolution 497 demands that Israel reverse its annexation of the Golan Heights, which were captured from Syria in June 1967

## Israeli Military Occupation is not a Bar to EU Partnership

On 1st September 2008, the EU decided that meetings with Russia about a new partnership agreement would be postponed "*until [Russian] troops have withdrawn to the positions held prior to 7 August*" [1], that is, until no Russian troops are present in Georgia outside South Ossetia.

On 28th November 1995, the EU allowed Israel to become a partner, under Euro-Mediterranean Partnership arrangements with states bordering on the Mediterranean. At the time, Israeli troops were occupying parts of Lebanon and Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza) and had been for many years—Lebanon since 1978, the rest since 1967.

Had the conditions applied to Russia in September 2008 been applied to Israel in November 1995, the EU would have refused to enter into negotiation with Israel about becoming a partner until all Israeli

troops had been withdrawn from Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Clearly, the EU has applied very different standards in its relations with Israel and Russia.

On the one hand, Israel was allowed to become an EU partner in 1995, even though large swathes of territory not its own had been under Israeli military occupation for many years, and is allowed to remain a partner even though most of this territory remains under Israeli military occupation today. What is more, on 16 June 2008 the EU agreed to "upgrade" its relations with Israel, despite this ongoing military occupation of territory not its own.

By contrast, Russia is not allowed to enter into negotiation about a partnership with the EU without ending its month

In 1995, Israel was in contravention of these, and other, Security Council resolutions. In 1995, the EU turned a blind eye to this breach of the UN Charter and of the Barcelona Declaration—and allowed it to sign the Barcelona Declaration and become an EU partner. Israel is in contravention of these, and even more, Security Council resolutions today—and it is still an EU partner.

#### MIDDLE EAST ZONE FREE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

In the Barcelona Declaration, Israel also signed up to the following:

"The parties shall pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems.

"Furthermore the parties will consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms." [2]

Israel is the only state in the Middle East that possesses nuclear weapons (and probably the only one that possesses chemical and biological weapons). So, its disarmament of these weapons is a necessary, and probably a sufficient, condition for bringing about a "*Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction*", as required by the Barcelona Declaration. However, progress in bringing this about has been noticeable by its absence since Israel signed up to "pursue" this objective in 1995.

There has been no progress either on the Security Council's demand in Resolution 487, passed on 19th June 1981, that "*Israel urgently... place its nuclear facilities under IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguards*" [4]. 27 years later, Israel still hasn't opened its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspection, nor is there any noticeable pressure from the EU to make it do so, let alone disarm in order to produce a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, which parties to the Barcelona Declaration are supposed to "*pursue*".

By contrast, Iran's nuclear facilities, including its uranium enrichment facilities, are open to IAEA inspection. It is worth noting that, after extensive inspection in Iran, the IAEA has found no evidence that Iran has a nuclear weapons programme, or ever had one. By contrast, Israel has possessed nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them for around 40 years. It is estimated that today Israel has around 200 nuclear warheads and various delivery systems, including by submarine-launched missiles. It is capable of wiping Iran, and every Arab state, off the map at the touch of a button.

Strange that the EU is actively pressuring Iran about its nuclear activities, but not Israel, despite the requirement in its

partnership agreement with Israel to "*pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction*".

David Morrison

6 September 2008

www.david-morrison.org.uk

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## Israel: Rogue State

In his attack on my opinion piece in The Irish Times (21st August), Sean Gannon (Letters, 11th September), rejects my assertion that Israel's blockade of Gaza is collective punishment contrary to international humanitarian law, even though that is the unanimous view of the EU, the UN and our own Government. He dismisses these bodies as "lemmings" whose views are not worthy of consideration, and rejects the notion that under the Euro-Med Agreement the EU is actually obliged to suspend its Association Agreement with Israel for its horrendous breaches of humanitarian law.

Mr Gannon writes of the "long-standing claims of Israeli non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions", as if there was some doubt about this. To take just one example, in resolution 446 (22nd March 1979), the Security Council demanded that Israel cease building Jewish

settlements in the territories it has occupied illegally since 1967, including Jerusalem. That resolution stated that these settlements "have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East." It also declared Israel in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention which bans the planting of settlers on territory under occupation.

Israel has not only failed to comply with this resolution, but since 1967 its population of settlers has grown to about half a million (!), located in a string of settlements which increasingly undermine the viability of the "two-state" solution. Israel is now in breach of over thirty Security Council resolutions and—if the standards applied to others were to be applied to it—its contempt for international law should lead to it being branded a "rogue state".

The foundation of the State of Israel and its relentless expansion was and continues to be accompanied by the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. They were meant to simply disappear into the desert but, unlike the native Americans in a different era, have stubbornly refused to do so, despite the might of the forces ranged against them.

The Irish government has a duty to defend the national and democratic rights of the Palestinian people by insisting that Israel respect the human rights clauses of the Euro-Med Agreement.

*Is mise le meas*

Philip O'Connor

Press Officer

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

## Sectarianism—How Did It Start?

Davy Adams (UDA veteran and Irish Times columnist) gave another sermon to nationalists on 28th August: Nationalists Need A Leader To Speak The Hard Truths".

The 'hard truth' appears to be that nationalists must accept that "*Sectarianism is not something that only emerged with the founding of Northern Ireland; it has plagued the island of Ireland since the plantations, and never been confined to just one community*".

It is nice to know that Davy pinpoints when this sectarianism emerged. This is rare. Let's hope he elaborates in future columns. What exactly was the causal connection between the two phenomena—the Plantation and the emergence of sectarianism? Have nationalists not been pointing a connection for centuries? Was that not a 'hard truth' they were promoting when saying so? Have they been all wrong?

How exactly was it not confined to one community at source? As far as I know there was no emergence of a Reformation in Gaelic Ireland, one which began to laud the Book of Genocides (better known as the Book of

Genesis); which gave people an urge to rob and plunder in the name of this; and other horror tracts from the Middle East. Gaelic Ireland was not that sort of place and looked on people who did this as some kind of new brand of lunatic, at best.

The 'hard fact' that Davy wants promoted by nationalist leaders is that their robbed forefathers were just as sectarian as those who robbed them. The victims were as guilty as the perpetrators. That would indeed be a "hard fact" to promote as it is historical rubbish. Davy will have to give them more help to do so.

Anti-sectarianism—like 'fighting terrorism'—has become one of those mind-emptying concepts that allow people to speak unending rubbish. If one tries to put some meaning into the concepts by looking at specific examples one is assumed to be condoning and promoting a great evil.

Davy, like so many apologists for Plantations then and now, wants us to accept these things in the way an insurance man accepts that floods and earthquakes are Acts of God, except Davy would want us to take it literally. Get real.

Jack Lane

# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## TALES OF THE TIGER

Everything had come to him so easily: wealth, a beautiful wife and children. His parents had struggled so hard with so little to show for it until towards the end of his father's life a "nice little earner" had turned into a goldmine.

It appeared that the constant worry about money was in the past. When he thought of the future it was of unlimited sex and crack cocaine. And all of this was within a stone's throw of his large house.

After about six months he said that he was going to hell. His wife replied to the stranger who had once been her husband that she hoped it would be soon, which it was . . . in a crack house in Spain . . . in circumstances which are not spoken of...

That is a true story but not the whole truth.

## MORE TALES FROM THE TIGER

Not everyone has lost the run of themselves in this country. It is true that private debt has expanded dramatically in the last ten years (while public debt has contracted). But the level of individual private debt is not as much as in Britain and America. It was noticeable that, when the Northern Rock bank was in crisis, a disproportionate number of depositors were Irish. Savings from the Irish middle classes were financing lending to British borrowers.

Harvey Norman, the Australian based electrical goods retailer, has been losing €1.2 million a month in this country. That is bad news for Harvey Norman but maybe not so bad news for the country. Consumers are making necessary adjustments to their spending in more difficult economic times.

David McWilliams predicts that a major Irish bank will collapse in the near future. Perhaps he is right, but no Irish bank has collapsed yet. Perhaps the vulnerability of one bank will be absorbed by a stronger bank in the form of an acquisition. At the time of writing there is a rumour of a bid by Anglo-Irish bank for the Irish Nationwide. It is certainly logical that in an economic downturn following a property boom there will be a dramatic increase in bad debts putting pressure on the banking system. But it is by no means clear that this will precipitate a financial crisis comparable to what has happened in the US.

## THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

20 Years ago the Long Fellow (under a pseudonym) wrote in this magazine about the global financial crisis. In those far off days he believed in progress; that contradictions in the political and economic system would be resolved in a decisive direction. But he knows better now. The financial crisis of 1988 was not resolved and therefore it has re-emerged in a more intensive form.

In 1988, as now, the American working class was consuming more than its income. In 1988 an overvalued dollar enabled Americans to buy imports cheaply. This was financed by loans from the rest of the world. In that year the main creditors were Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2008 China has also become a major creditor. But in 2008 the debt could no longer be serviced. American banks have now had to accept some of the consequences of their greed, although not all of the consequences. Some of the burden has been offloaded from the American economy in the form of "securitised" debt which has been sold back to the rest of the world.

The financial crisis has its origins in the real economy. The American working class has been consuming more than its income, but it has not been the irresponsible class in American society. The American capitalist class is responsible for this crisis. Since the early 1970s the real incomes of the American worker have actually declined. The American capitalist class has broken one of the principal laws of capitalist economics. It has paid its workers less than the historically and culturally determined level of subsistence. That law was suspended by the expansion of credit, but it could not be negated. The law has now reasserted itself by the escalation of bad debts and the consequent financial instability.

## PROGRESS?

In 1988 Japan and West Germany could not afford to let the American economy collapse. There was also an argument that Japan and West Germany were obliged to bail the US out because the US was a bulwark against Soviet expansion and therefore provided stability in the world. But now China with over a billion consumers is less dependent on the US. And US military power is no longer—if it ever was—offering stability, but is a disruptive force in the world.

Perhaps the contradictions in the system will now be resolved and there will be a realignment of economic power away from the US and towards Asia.

Now that would be real progress!

## THE PROPERTY MARKET

Friedrich Engels in Vol. iii of *Capital* wrote (from Marx's notes) that property, or to be more precise the land on which that property is situated, is not a normal commodity. The price of land is not determined by the amount of labour contained in it. He speculated that market prices in agricultural land were determined by the potential income from agricultural production. But that logic cannot apply to land for residential use.

The property owner has a monopoly over that portion of the planet which he owns. The supply of land cannot increase and therefore the price is determined by demand.

Demand is determined by income and in recent years the expansion of credit. In most markets the price decreases as supply increases. But this law does not apply to mortgage lending. Like the heroin and cocaine markets supply generates demand. The more credit the banks supply, the greater the price of houses. And the greater the price of houses the greater will be the interest income for the banks. A greater proportion of young Irish people's income has gone into the pockets of the banking system through mortgage interest payments. And the banks have also been picking the pockets of the older generation by encouraging parents to re-mortgage their houses so that their children can step on the property ladder.

But it looks like loan defaults have put an end to the cycle.

## ENGELS ON FINANCE CAPITAL

Engels was quite enthusiastic about how finance capital was developing. He thought that it had become "socialised" in the sense that it was society-wide. Once the banking system had received capital it did not care about where it had come from. The individual components of industrial capital merge into an un-variegated lump in the form of finance capital. No restrictions are placed on where this finance capital is invested. Through the financial system capital could be transferred to the various branches of the economic system. This, Engels believed, would make it easier to bring it under social ownership.

80% of AIG, the largest insurance company in the world, has been bought by the State. However State ownership of financial institutions is hardly the dawn of socialism. In the case of AIG it was to save it from the consequences of its decisions (underwriting US mortgage protection policies). To quote from Gore Vidal: "*profits are privatised and losses are socialised*".

There is a social argument for protecting depositors, but there is no such argument for the State underwriting shareholders' losses.

The existing financial model must change. ■

## Mortgages: Irish 'Covered Bonds':

### *The Antithesis of Junk Bonds*

The piece below was written before the announcement of the proposed Poulson bail-out of the American financial system. It was offered to the *Irish Times* (a business column) but did not even receive an acknowledgement

"The tradition in Irish banking has been to keep mortgages in-house and not to trade or discount the mortgages in the markets."

The pearly words of our current Minister for Finance [Brian Lenihan] as reported in the *Irish Times* on 16th September.

It's a tradition of course, but of long, long ago. I grant the Minister the benefit of ignorance, he is but a barrister—if one of note among his bewigged peers.

Irish lenders are no different from their peers and would be dunce-like unique among them if they did not collateralise, securitise, package up, slice and dice their loans and loan-books—which they do like all other lenders. They do so under the rubric of "*Covered Bonds*" and they do so pretty well daily in Dublin, packaging, listing on the ISE and flogging to investors worldwide with professionals (solicitors, accountants, rating agencies, and so on), booking fine fees in the process.

This is not a criticism, it is no more than stating the obvious and the fact that Dublin has and does well out of it. We are now big players in covered bonds.

So far 'Covered Bonds'—a uniquely European invention—have proved their quality. They are not the toxic tissue passed off by Wall Street that would not pass as decent toilet paper in a run-down Bowery boozier. They have long pedigree, going back to 18th century Germany and the evolution of the *Pfandbrief* and subsequent adoption of this form of funding and issuance by other continental banking systems (Spain and France for example) in emulation of the German model. *Covered Bonds* remain on-balance-sheet, are pooled and over-collateralised and properly rated and supervised and regulated (at least so far).

Many European banks have taken something of a cold-shower, at least on the the US debacle, through buying into Warren Buffet's "*weapons of mass destruction*" (American banks' collateralised debt and a formulation the sage coined in 2002). For myself I think this European foray must be because they thought stupidly that they were, silly boys, buying America's equivalent of their own covered bonds rather than the fraudulent fictions that were being passed on them.

In Ireland in 2001 the Oireachtas passed the *Asset Covered Securities Act, 2001*

(up-dated last year) providing a statutory framework for Irish and overseas institutions locating here, to enter the Covered Bonds market, which from Dublin they have done exuberantly. Our financial services sector has achieved world standing in this line of issuing and funding by our (and other European) financial institutions, including particularly, German banks.

The US authorities (and keeling-over banks) are now hugely interested in these instruments, as opposed to their own toxic trash. Henry ('Hank') Poulson is on record as a fan since this Summer. Hank's idea though does not run with some US commentators. It is seen as a bit of a ruse: fly-tip the waste into spin-offs, park the quality in new vehicles, take off to sunny climes or even dreary Dublin and have the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) underwrite the crap (with depositors and stranded shareholders also taking a hit)—Freddie and Fanny Mark II. They may have a point but Europeans might also have a lesson to teach the *Liar's Poker* players and Dublin something to offer to a properly reconstructed American banking system—if it can rise from the wreckage of excess.

One final point: Irish lenders do have their own waste problems, as John McManus pointed out on 15th September in the *Irish Times*, noting the assessment by Kleinwort Benson of the situation here in our banking sector. The Minister for Finance also apparently takes advice from a University College Galway economist, Alan Ahearne, who, as it happens also, in the *Irish Times*, gave us a peep under the banking/economic bonnet: "...we will record [in the next two years] the largest cumulative drop in national income in an advanced economy since the second World War" (16th September). Read that again! The article was an outline of his remarks to the Fianna Fail think-in in Galway. I am not too sure if Ahearne is entirely right—I would need to check the New Zealand experience in the mid-1980s, the late David Lange's unfortunate baptism of fire.

I might not worry overmuch at the moment about European Covered Bonds but I would certainly be checking the domestic engine's dip-stick.

**Feargus O Raghallaigh**

See also page 22

## New Labour, Old Liberals

— — The following is an extract from the October *Labour & Trade Union Review* editorial, which shows that Brown is very much following in Blair's chauvinist footsteps:

"Blair decided that he could remake the Labour Party alone in the image of the old Liberal Party. The party of imperialism, war, and English individual liberties. Gordon Brown was the co-architect of these policies. And his speech to the Labour Party Conference emphasised this:

"New Labour has always been at its best when we have applied our values to changing times. In the 1990s Tony and I asked you to change policy to meet new challenges. We are and will always be a pro-enterprise, pro-business and pro-competition government. And we believe the dynamism of our five million businesses large and small is vital to the success of our country. But the continuing market turbulence shows why we now need a new settlement for these times—a settlement that we as a pro-market party must pursue. A settlement where the rewards are for what really matters—hard work, effort and enterprise. A settlement where both markets and government are seen to be the servants of the people, and never their masters, Where what counts is not the pursuit of any sectional interest but the advancement of the public interest—and where at all times we put people first. Let us be clear the modern role of government is not to provide everything, but it must be to enable everyone.

"With Britain's great assets—our stability, our openness, our scientific genius, our creative industries, and yes our English language—I know that this can be a British century and I'm determined it will be... And why do we always strive for fairness? Not because it makes good soundbites. Not because it gives good photo opportunities. Not because it makes for good P.R. No. We do it because fairness is in our DNA. It's who we are—and what we're for. It's why Labour exists.

"I don't believe Britain is broken—I think it's the best country in the world. I believe in Britain. And stronger together as England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland we can make our United Kingdom even better. And ours is a country full of heroes. And we pay special tribute to the heroism of our armed forces, as Des Browne said yesterday—to their service and sacrifice in Iraq and in Afghanistan and in peacekeeping missions around the globe. Quite simply the best armed forces in the world. And David Miliband, Douglas Alexander and I will do everything in our power to bring justice and democracy, to Burma, to Zimbabwe and to Darfur."

At the moment of one of its deepest crises, Gordon pledges his commitment

to the market system. His patriotism, echoing Blair's farewell speech, is based on genetics. The English, since the Scots seem to have other ideas, can once again feel that they are nature's, or God's, gift to the world and go about re-ordering it as their manifest destiny."

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## 1974 And Wilson's Domsday Scenario for Northern Ireland

BBC Radio 4 UK, in the *Document* slot, Thursday 11.09.08 examined *The Domsday Document*. This was drawn up by the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson as a response to Unionist opposition to the Sunningdale Agreement and the Assembly at Stormont—the 'cabinet' was called the Executive. Wilson was in most ways a sentimental united-Irelander. It might have been the influence of his Merseyside constituency Huyton, but like many 'progressives' of his vintage, he regarded 'Ireland' as a colonialist hang-over. He regarded Northern Ireland being part of the UK state as absurd as if Pakistan were still part of the Realm. As a Labour man he can hardly have regarded the enthusiastically Tory Unionists MPs he had encountered in his years in Parliament as anything other than a nuisance and unfair advantage for the Opposition. (The underside of this was a quasi-racist attitude to Ulster Protestants. Thus his foolish sneer at the UWC (Ulster Workers' Council), and Unionists in general, as unBritish 'spongers'. Some young people in east Belfast took to wearing small sponges on their lapels as a result of this outburst.)

His Domsday Document was drawn-up eighteen days before the UWC's 'constitutional stoppage' of 1974. It involved 'severing all constitutional links with Northern Ireland by extending 'Dominion' status—without membership of the Commonwealth but "*Ulstermen would still be subjects of the queen*". This latter was said by the presenter (and, possibly researcher) Mike Thomson. Presumably Wilson thought that the Republic would walk in and take the place over. He had implied that 'loyalists' in Northern Ireland were 'cowards' as well as spongers. The Dublin Government, as Roy Foster aptly put it "*were appalled*". Garrett FitzGerald still sounded appalled when interviewed 34 years on, saying "*we were right to worry about this man*": 'This man' being the Prime Minister of the UK, not some Loyalist paramilitary chieftain.

FitzGerald button-holed James Callaghan (the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer—finance minister in plain language) at his holiday home in west Cork. He was joined by the leader of the Dáil 'Opposition', Jack Lynch. And they

both pleaded to the UK not to "*cast*" the Six Counties "*adrift*". 'Cast adrift' is the phrase used by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, former head of the NI Civil Service). FitzGerald mentioned consulting Henry Kissinger about this matter. FitzGerald was anxious that "*our state*", meaning the actual 26 County State, "*was in danger*". He made some references to having to accommodate from the North. One got the impression that was said to take the 'bad look' off his appalling political cowardice. He also, of course, poor-mouthed about the Republic's economic incapacity to absorb Northern Ireland.

Wilson had a cabal to carry out his Domsday notions: himself, Joe Haines (the *Daily Mirror* journalist, whose expertise on Ireland was probably zero), and Donoghue (now an ex-SDP / LibDem, Lord). The latter used the phrase "*cynical and relaxed*" of civil servants about the fate of Northern Ireland. Apart from an inherited sentimental Irish nationalism this could describe his own political career.

The treatment of the actual Strike is interesting, Glen Barr claimed that it was the work of the UDA (Ulster Defence Association)—which is not correct. They helped police the action, but were clearly told that no violence would be tolerated, and they did what they were bid. The usual assertion of intimidation was made (but as one participant noted, in an interview twenty years on, every strike has an element of intimidation). We got (rather surprisingly for 1974) plummy BBC announcers telling us what we already knew—the Strike was a success from at least Day Two. Bloomfield, in an 'Ulster-plummy' voice raged at the strikers. He sneered at the "*stupid women*" on the Shankill, "*in their Union Jack dresses*" celebrating the fall of the Executive. They had overthrown a "*democratically constituted government*". This remark is made despite the fact that most elected Unionists were opposed to the Sunningdale Agreement, which was the basis of the new Assembly. And Sinn Féin did not contesting the election. The Republican Clubs / 'Official' SF—the Workers' Party of Ireland-to-be did not put a great deal of effort into the election, despite their strange

attitude to devolution. They wanted it to weaken the Unionists' addiction the the Union.

The IRA did not enter into this programme's perspective, except as "*Catholic paramilitaries*". The Loyalist paramilitaries were denounced. Bloomfield claimed that 'peace' could have been the outcome if the 'Sunningdale Assembly' had been a success. But the absolute refusal to take the Provisional (or even the Official) Republican movement into consideration meant that *The Domsday Document* was in many ways much ado about nothing in particular. The Provisionals were not dictating to the Catholic community and were certainly not the 'criminal conspiracy' the Beeb and the Establishment media were claiming (and clearly believed—thus the puzzlement when Sinn Féin got elected in the 1980s and '90s).

Bloomfield also implied that the Army should have been used to quell the strike, and raged at the "*wishy-washy*" Merlyn Rees for being unprepared to break a strike with violence. (Wilson had the fantasy notion of breaking the Strike by sending nuclear submarines to Belfast Lough to supply the power stations—which would at that point have been occupied by British soldiers.) Glen Barr said that if Northern Ireland had been abandoned by Downing Street there would have been "civil war". Presumably he means sectarian civil war—but that had been in progress since 1970. What might have happened is an imponderable. The UWC was really quite solicitous of all working class areas, but there would probably have been a major exodus from Catholic Belfast. But those remaining would have been willing to defend their own patch, and the Loyalist paramilitaries may have been willing to leave them alone. (Despite the 'low intensity operations' strategy of the British Army it took the latter all of 'internment week' (August 1972) to fight its way into the Ballymurphy / Turf Lodge area of west Belfast.)

Ronan Fanning noted Wilson's "*rage and humiliation*" at the effrontery of the anti-Sunningdale Unionists and the UWC in particular.

Mike Thomson claimed that Wilson's Domsday Document, to end "*British rule of Northern Ireland*" as he put it, was near-treachery. But from the Establishment point of view it was quite rational. The Unionists would not obey the Government (that he would never have taken a similar attitude to anyone in GB does not enter into this matter). The Republic of Ireland said it wanted the territory. Let it go—and let history decide—that had been done with some of the less lucrative colonies. Why not with what most of the Westminster Establish-

ment regarded as a political and economic liability? That he was living in fantasy land was of no consequence. He retired the following year.

The UWC Strike provides a conundrum for Unionism and the Left. The Unionist Establishment knows that it can no longer take their electorate for granted. Elements of the Left are fascinated by the smooth exercise of power by any sort of Workers' Council. They usually claim that it was essentially sectarian and designed to re-establish some form of Protestant ascendancy. Or that it was directed at 'power-sharing'—despite the fact that large swathes of Loyalism and Republicanism were not going to get a sniff of the (rather paltry) amount of power being shared. The straw that broke the camel's back was the insistence, by the SDLP, on the Council of Ireland element in 'Sunningdale' being prioritised. This policy was insisted on even—or especially—by the more obviously Labourite elements in the SDLP, Fitt and Devlin, who were not wholly despised by the Protestant working class. They did not despise or hate Hume, they simply did not understand him, except as a straightforward Catholic-nationalist.

**Seán McGouran**

## Dubs

From Waterloo to Bastapol I've charged  
the foreign snipers  
And left me blood on distant soil from  
Colenso down to Wypers  
At Easter week I reached me peak in my  
own native town .  
Though cannons blazed it took five days  
before they wore us down !  
Thus Fusilier or Volunteer as the mood or  
memory rouses—  
Yet a peaceable lar who likes a jar (so a  
curse on both their houses )

Oh we're the Dubs—the rub a dub Dubs  
And we're a breed apart  
Don't give two shits for Gaels or Brits  
No malice in our heart  
So come what may on Judgement Day  
The saints will sing our praises  
No other place can boast a race  
On first name terms with Jaysus !

## A British Intelligence Slur On John Swift

*Spying On Ireland: British Intelligence And Irish Neutrality During The Second World War*, by TCD historian Eunan O'Halpin, has recently been published by Oxford University Press. The author thanks me for drawing attention to the website [www.leopoldhkerney.com](http://www.leopoldhkerney.com) that has been set up by Éamon Kerney in vindication of the good name of his father Leopold H. Kerney, Irish Minister to Spain 1935-1946. But I had done rather more than that, for I had also sent the author a copy of my review of this website for the March-April 2007 issue of *History Ireland* [also at [www.geocities.com/irelandscw/docs-KerneyReview.htm](http://www.geocities.com/irelandscw/docs-KerneyReview.htm) - which is the "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War" website - and recently reprinted in the first issue of *Irish Foreign Affairs*, April-June 2008]. In that review I challenged the five and a half decades of conventional misrepresentation of this patriotic diplomat by a whole host of commentators, ranging from UCD historian T. Desmond Williams down to Eunan O'Halpin himself.

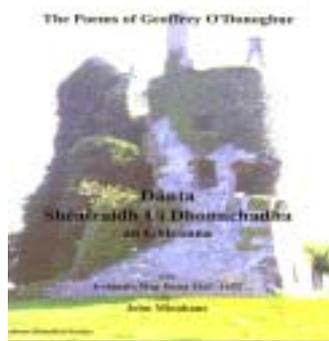
The purpose of this article is to illustrate from the latest O'Halpin book the dangers of allowing yet another Irish public figure's good name to be blackened on the basis of the slings and arrows fired by British Intelligence personnel, whether they be T. Desmond Williams or M15's Guy Liddell. Eunan O'Halpin writes as follows concerning correspondence between Liddell and the Director of Irish Army Intelligence, Col. Liam Archer:

"As neutrals, Irish people could move to and from the continent through Britain. Among those who attracted attention was the trade unionist John Swift, whom M15 questioned and found unhelpfully vague about what he claimed were his links with the underground trade-union movement in Germany. Guy Liddell was inclined to doubt his veracity, as despite his left-wing background he had obtained a travel permit from the German legation in Dublin as late as 22 August [1939]. But, apart from asking Archer for a report

on Swift, Liddell could do nothing to prevent him completing the journey home. {Liddell diary, 18 Sept. 1939, The National Archives(UK), KV4/185. Swift was regarded as a communist, in practice if not in formal membership of a communist party. It is conceivable that his trip was made possible by the *rapprochement* between Germany and the Soviet Union)" (p. 64)}.

Notwithstanding his Presidency of the Ireland-USSR Friendship Society from 1966 until his death in 1990, John Swift had never been a member of the Communist Party of Ireland. His was an independent Marxism, and he remained a life-long member of the Labour Party. Moreover, his simultaneous friendships with the Israeli Labour movement would have been anathema to the CPI. As for the issues of fact raised by the O'Halpin presentation of a Liddell slur bordering on character assassination, the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact was not actually signed until 24th August 1939, and while a bemused Swift was to encounter an unexpected manifestation of German public reaction to that Pact, it had absolutely no anticipatory role to play in the authorisation of his travel permit two days previously. John Swift had in fact already visited Germany during the previous year of 1938, when pre-War German-Soviet hostility had been at its most intense. There was certainly no need for Eunan O'Halpin to leave lying unquestioned on the table the M15 slur that Swift's 1939 visit was more likely to have been a pro-Nazi rather than an anti-Nazi one. For the full details of that visit had already been published in the biography that the latter's son, John P. Swift, had written of his father in 1991, simply entitled *John Swift—An Irish Dissident*.

In actual fact, Swift had paid his very first visit to Germany two decades previously again, as a member of the British Army of Occupation, but not willingly so. While an Irish worker in



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England, Swift had courageously confronted the menace of conscription as a conscientious objector, with a forthright declaration of his refusal to fight in an Imperialist War. As John P. related in his 1991 biography:

"At the court martial held a few days later, Swift was flanked by two soldiers with fixed bayonets... Observing that Swift had no work in Ireland and that Britain had brought him over and given him employment, the captain asked him did he not feel an obligation to serve Britain against her enemies. Replying to this, Swift declared that he did not feel under the slightest obligation. He was in Britain, he said, because of unemployment in Ireland caused by British misrule. The proceedings were terminated immediately... and the court sentenced him to two years' imprisonment with hard labour". (p.32).

Swift was to endure a brutal, health-destroying and life-threatening prison regime, being moved between Wormwood Scrubs, Wandsworth and Aldershot. Anti-war, but no pacifist, it was in the latter prison that Swift had forcefully pushed aside a British Army officer who was in the process of mounting a physical assault on a Jewish fellow prisoner, accompanied by foul-mouthed anti-Semitic rhetoric. A life-long opponent of anti-Semitism, John P. also detailed the equally life-long Jewish friendships that Swift was to form while living off Clanbrassil Street in Dublin's "Little Jerusalem" during the 1920s and 1930s.

Seventeen years after publishing a biography of his father, John P. has now followed up with his publication of *Told in Toberna*, a memoir written by the late John Swift himself. As the son's Foreword states:

"One of the very few written accounts of the experiences of an Irishman during the First World War, Swift's memoir is possibly the only account of an Irish conscientious objector in that momentous event."

By the end of 1917, however, Swift was to be 'drafted'—or, to be more brutally precise, transported cross-Channel in handcuffs—for service on the Western Front as an officer's cook in the King's Own Royal Lancasters. Swift recalled his experiences of the French town of Étapes:

"Around the centre of Étapes, there were lurid if, conforming with the reputed French taste, artistic signs of the war, in the posters appealing to local patriotism. They depicted some of the war excesses of the Bosch, the name now given the Germans, and pointed to their alleged crimes in occupied France and Belgium, their outrages on women and children, their razing of homes and tabernacles..."

"Wandering in the Étapes streets I heard sounds of music coming from not

far-off. I followed the sounds to their source, another army compound of huts and more permanent looking timber structures ... Still on the street I listened to some kind of concert. It included some of the vocal favourites then current, such as '*Keep the Home-fires burning*', '*It's a long way to Tipperary*', and '*Bring me back to Blighty*'; a more sophisticated sentimental number was '*Roses of Picardy*'. Perhaps the ditty that evoked the loudest chorus and applause was '*Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, and smile, smile, smile*'. Whether any of such songs ever inspired a British soldier to deeds of martial ardour, I'll never know. They bored me, and made me depressed to think that the like could entertain soldiers who claimed to be fighting for superior cultural values and their predominance over the barbarism of German Kultur. I was glad to turn from the compound and give ear to sounds coming from the opposite side of the street. They came from what looked like a large private residence, and the sounds were of a piano. The notes went in short phrases that were often repeated before a new phrase or cadence was started. The pianist was obviously rehearsing; and the clarity and expression put into the fingering made me feel that both the player and the composer of the piece were of high calibre; he, or she, played the runs of the main themes so often I was able to memorise some of them, particularly in the slow movement. Later I came to learn the piece was Beethoven's '*Pathétique*' Sonata. That experience in an Étapes street was to remain vivid with me for a long time, not only the depth and nobility of the music, but from the thought that in this small French town, with its hoardings blaring hatred of Germany, there was at least one musician, and presumably appreciative hearers who could, at least momentarily, forget the war to listen to the music of one of whom the Germans boasted as being one of their great geniuses." (pp. 57-59).

A love of German music was something that Swift continued to retain for the remainder of his life, as I well remember from the music of Weber, Schubert and Beethoven that John himself had chosen in advance for playing at his secularist funeral service in 1990. Swift's own uncompromising anti-Nazism had not altered that cultural predisposition one iota. His courageous public stance against every variety of fascism had led him to support the defence of the Spanish Republic, and he more than willingly accepted the office of vice-chairman of Ireland's Spanish Aid Committee, chaired by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. And as Chairman of the Bakery Trade's Social Club, Swift also had his own novel approach towards meeting the challenge of combatting all forms of fascist and Nazi ideology. As has been related in his son's biography:

"There was much discussion of social

and political theory in the early 1930s. Under the social club's auspices, public lectures and discussions were organised on such topics as socialism, soviet communism, Irish republicanism, Italian and Portuguese corporatism and German national socialism. Lectures on corporatism/fascism were held purely to criticise and expose these right-wing theories. Among the club's lecturers were Tom Johnson, leader of the Labour Party, and two prominent priests, the Jesuit, Fr. Edward Coyne, who defended private property, and Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, supporter of the Spanish republican cause. The speaker on Italian corporatism, Count Tomacelli, was Mussolini's ambassador to Ireland. A section of the audience expressed resentment at such a lecture being held under trade union auspices and Swift, who presided at the meeting, had to appeal for tolerance. The attendance included Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and, according to Swift's account, she made a devastating criticism of Mussolini's version of corporatism."

"Satisfied that the threat of Italian corporatism had been exposed, the club decided to confront Nazism. Some advocates of Hitler's national socialism were then in Trinity College as exchange students from German universities. Swift undertook to look for a real Nazi from this group. He visited the college where he met Martin Plass, a student of English literature from Berlin University. A member of Hitler's storm-troopers, Plass agreed to lecture in the union's premises on the German Labour Front, the Nazis' corporate alternative to the banned trade unions. But aware, apparently, of international trade union hostility to Hitlerism, the German Minister to Ireland prohibited the lecture at the last moment." (pp. 66-67).

It is this 1991 biography which also details the true facts of Swift's 1938 and 1939 travels in Nazi Germany:

"Two years after assuming the full-time office of National Organiser of the Bakers' Union, Swift embarked on an extensive tour of Central and Eastern Europe. Work pressures had prevented him taking his holidays during the intervening period but, to compensate for this, the union's national executive committee granted him six weeks' leave in 1938. The main purpose of his trip, which was of an educational and cultural nature, and not merely confined to sightseeing, was to learn something about the trade unions in the USSR ... At the end of August or the beginning of September 1938, when he was 42, Swift left Dublin on a journey that was to take him to, among other destinations, the cities of London, Brussels, Cologne, Berlin, Königsberg, Leningrad, Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Munich, Zurich and Paris. A major reason for visiting these places was to acquire some knowledge of the bakery trade and the trade unions catering for that industry's workers. Accordingly, in most of these cities Swift visited bakeries to examine

their products and production techniques. He also met representatives of bakers' and food workers' unions and acquainted himself with the policies and achievements of these organisations."

"Swift's journey was relatively uneventful until he reached the German frontier, where his occupation and Soviet visa provoked a hostile reception from the Nazi officials. Only after the most rigorous scrutiny of his modest luggage was he permitted to proceed... Swift had an unlikely contact in Berlin in Martin Plass, the Nazi whom he had first met in Dublin the previous year. Despite his familiarity with his fascist acquaintance, 'an amiable fellow, informed and broadminded in most matters, but aflame with the new patriotism of Nazi Germany', he was somewhat surprised on meeting Plass to find him sporting the brown shirt, jackboots and other insignia of a stormtroop leader. Having offered Swift hospitality should he ever visit Berlin, Plass suggested an inspection of stormtroop bases! The offer was declined politely in favour of visits to local bakeries."

"With much apprehension, Swift expressed a desire to visit the city's Jewish quarter. He wished, if possible, to assess some of the anti-Semitic boycott and persecution. To his surprise, Plass immediately acceded to his request, bringing him to the principal fashionable shopping area, the Kurfürstendamm, where many shops were owned by Jews. To distinguish these from non-Jewish ones, the proprietors' names were printed in large white letters on the shop windows. A more explicit manifestation of anti-Semitism was the 'Jews not wanted here' notice displayed prominently in most hotels. More ominous than that was the message in a special issue of the hysterical anti-Semitic Nazi weekly, '*Der Stürmer*', which declared in bold type on its front page, 'Der Juden sind unser unglück' (the Jews are our misfortune). Plass's assurance that '*Der Stürmer*' was not regarded seriously by either the people or the authorities did nothing to reassure Swift. That Berlin meeting was to be their last. Some years later Swift learnt that his Nazi acquaintance had been killed on the Eastern front fighting for the Führer."

"There were special reasons why Königsberg, then the East Prussian capital and now Kaliningrad in the USSR, was on Swift's itinerary. He wished to pay homage to two of its famous sons, Eugene Sandow and Immanuel Kant... Swift's tribute to Immanuel Kant, whom he regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of all time, led him to the Lutheran Church in Königsberg. It was there that Kant is entombed in an outer wall, a position Swift found apt for one who was ambiguous about his religious beliefs, being neither in nor out of the Church. This did not detract from his admiration for the great philosopher, particularly for his proposition that all knowledge derives through experience, and not from experience as contended by the English philosopher, Locke ..."

"[In] Budapest... he enjoyed a brief visit before taking the short rail trip to Vienna. Apart from his interest in matters pertaining to the bakery trade, he had come to the musical capital of the world to pay homage to Beethoven, whom he regarded as the greatest of all composers. At the State Opera House on the Ringstrasse (Ring Street), in the company of Inge Schine, a young German woman whom he had met on his journey to Austria, he attended a performance of Verdi's opera, '*Don Carlos*'. Inge was again his companion when he took the tram to the Zentralfriedhof (Central Cemetery), final resting place of Beethoven and many other celebrated composers. On the outward journey, Swift gave his seat to another young woman who was standing. She wore the badge that identified Jews from others. Earlier that year, Austria had been forcibly annexed to the German Reich. Swift's action drew disapproving glances from some German soldiers travelling in the same vehicle and, on arrival at his destination, he was informed by an officer of this group that he had acted indiscreetly. Swift and Inge made their way to the composers' plot in the cemetery to find Beethoven's grave marked by a fine monument bearing simply his surname. Alongside lies Schubert, a fulfilment of his wish to be buried beside Beethoven. Mozart, buried elsewhere in an unknown communal grave, is honoured in the Vienna plot by a monument close to the tombs of Beethoven and Schubert. A little further away may be found the last resting place of other such famous composers as Brahms, Suppé and members of the Strauss family ..."

"The following year, 1939, Swift returned to the Continent on an entirely different mission. A few years earlier he had participated in a labour seminar in Brussels run jointly by the British Labour Party and the Belgian Socialist Party. There he had met and become friendly with several underground anti-fascist Germans, one of whom was a socialist and a baker, while others were railway workers. Anxious to develop these contacts and, if possible, to help the anti-Nazi cause, Swift decided to go to Berlin. His arrival in London during the first week of September 1939 coincided with Britain's declaration of war on Germany. There was an immediate cessation of travel to that country. To circumvent this, Swift applied for a permit to visit Holland, aware that, once there, he would have no difficulty entering Germany. When his application was granted by the Foreign Office, he flew to Amsterdam. ... A few days later, Swift travelled on to Berlin. Though aware that the Soviet Union and Germany had signed a non-aggression pact, he was surprised to find that the Germans had reasonably friendly attitudes towards the USSR. In a bit of banter in a Berlin bank, Swift and a bank clerk were involved in a good humoured exchange of the communist and Nazi salutes! The Soviet Union's negotiation of the pact with the Third Reich was fully justified, in Swift's opinion. The USSR,

he contended, was neither prepared nor anxious to become involved in a war. He maintained that the West had since deliberately misrepresented the agreement as having been designed to facilitate Hitler's attack on 'The Democracies' when, in fact, it was purely for the Soviet Union's internal purposes. Swift's quest for anti-Nazi acquaintances ended in disappointment. The socialist baker whom he had met in Brussels no longer worked in the same bakery and had possibly been interned, while a clerical railway worker who had attended the Brussels seminar had since become a Nazi supporter."

"Swift returned to London by boat and train. Before reaching the Dutch frontier at Bentheim, where passengers changed trains to proceed into Holland, he was joined by two plain-clothes Nazi officials who had had him under observation for some time. He was questioned by one of them who spoke good English and it was evident that they were well informed about him and his attempts to contact anti-Nazis. On arrival in Bentheim, Swift was told he would have to come with them ... They proceeded to examine his papers and to search his pockets and suitcase. After some hours they permitted him to continue on his journey. More problems awaited Swift in London where the authorities saw from his passport that he had visited Germany. He was placed under a kind of house arrest in a hotel near Euston station. Two secret service agents keeping him under observation allowed him to telephone William Banfield, Labour MP for a London constituency, and General Secretary of the English Bakers' Union. Swift and Banfield were already acquainted through their trade union contacts. Banfield came to the hotel and gave the authorities a good account of his Irish colleague, after which Swift was at liberty to return home to Dublin." (pp. 105-110).

Based on interviews conducted by his son in 1986 and 1987, this account published in 1991 remains a fitting refutation of the slur cast by M15 on the anti-Nazi character of that outstanding Irish Trade Union leader, John Swift [1896-1990].

**Manus O'Riordan**

**"Close to 80 per cent of Irish exports come from US multinationals and, for those who doubt the significance of the US in Ireland, consider the following: the combined output in Ireland of Dell, Microsoft and Intel amounts to 20 per cent of Irish GDP."**

***Sunday Business Post*, August 24, 2008 David McWilliams**

**Book review:** D. D. SHEEHAN B.L. His Life and Times as Journalist, Editor, Politician, Officer and Author. By John Dillon, Published by 3 Bridges Publishing, Kanturk, 2008

## D.D. Sheehan

On 11th August 1911, D. D Sheehan, MP for Mid-Cork, declared in the House of Commons that he felt "*pleasure and gratification in knowing that at the present time we are able in a fair way of having 50,000 labourers in happy homes, where they will be able to rear their families in comfort and cheerfulness*". He was quite entitled to take most of the credit for this and few Irish Labour leaders achieved so much before or since. If the world had progressed as he and many expected then he would today be credited with being the founding father of Irish Labour. Connolly would be just a footnote as an eccentric commentator of the time.

But seven years later D D also had to take the credit for his major part in sending precisely the same number of Irishmen to their deaths and ruining as many happy homes for propaganda lies, including the one specially designed for Ireland—*'the freedom of small nations'*. The latter achievement came to completely overshadow the former and as a result his support melted away like summer snow, never to return. Therein lies the tragedy that was D. D. Sheehan, the first Irish Labour Member of Parliament.

Any biographer worth his salt would seek to explain satisfactorily such a tragedy. But this biographer sees no need to do so and his account of D D becomes a one-dimensional paean of praise to him. It is hagiography not biography.

Mr. Dillon sees a consistency in all his actions because "*his actions at the time {WW I, JL} were a continuation of his characteristic as a man of action*" (page 52)—but that explains nothing. There is surely a qualitative, moral, difference between housing people and having them killed and one is hardly a normal continuation of the other. They are very different kinds of actions and it is moronic, amoral verbiage to try to equate the two.

The author also tries to justify him by saying he was being loyal to his friends "*more especially William O'Brien and the All for Ireland League*". This is totally misleading. O'Brien and the AFIL stood aside electorally in 1918, supported Sinn Fein and in fact became Sinn Fein in their area. D D did not. He contested the 1918 Election in England and saw a future for Ireland having Dominion status at best with real power remaining in Westminster. He totally misjudged the situation, lost his seat and opted out of Irish politics at the critical moment. O'Brien and the AFIL did not and helped make modern Ireland.

Even worse in this book, we have a historical introduction that is inane, to put

it mildly. We are told about "*the disaster waiting to happen—the Famine*" (page 3). An accident waiting to happen can usually be avoided. Millions of such accidents are avoided every day by common sense actions. The context of the Famine was that it occurred in a very small part of the strongest state and Empire the world had ever known, one which had plenty of all kinds of food except just one. I don't think it would take a rocket scientist (or a pharmacist)\* to work out a remedy in these circumstances. I had always thought that it was hard to surpass the callousness of Charles Trevelyan, who was in charge of the country during the Famine, putting it all down to the wisdom of Divine Providence to solve the Irish problem. But to describe such an atrocious event as millions dying the worst of all possible deaths as simply an accident is beyond belief.

We are told that "*In many ways William O'Brien of the Irish Parliamentary Party when at his most thoughtful was the nearest to O'Connell in thinking*" (page 4). Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the most defining moments in modern Irish history was O'Connell's break with the Young Ireland movement of Thomas Davis and his colleagues. O'Brien was a most conscious follower of his fellow townsman, Davis, and most certainly not on O'Connell's side. O'Connell in his stupid abuse of the Presbyterians who had supported Catholic Emancipation, and in his invention of the concept of the 'Black North', had a most malevolent effect on religious divisions—and these were anathema to O'Brien. O'Connell was the great icon of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who were O'Brien's most bitter, sectarian, political enemies. To portray him, as Dillon does in relation to O'Connell, shows profound ignorance of Irish history and is beyond revisionism—it is history for ignoramus.

Two of the crucial decisions in D D's life are ignored—why he left in 1918 and why he came back in 1926. Again, any biographer would appreciate the significance of explaining these crucial decisions. But they are ignored. John Dillon previously claimed he was forced out but that is now dropped. If not forced out, why did he come back at a certain point? Could it have something to do with the fact that he was reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions by the London Police Commissioner on criminal charges in 1924 and promptly scarpared? John does not

\*John Dillon was a pharmacist in Kanturk—Editor.

help explain this episode. Is he even aware of any of this?

The fact is that it is hard to believe anything claimed by D D or by his apologists after 1914. He made a catastrophic misjudgement and spouted World War I propaganda for the rest of his life. As that propaganda was based on lies, it became second nature to him to treat other things in the same way. It was a pathetic end to a potentially brilliant career.

D D's speech against conscription is reproduced in the book—but this is a plea for more effective recruiting—not for an end to recruiting. He was being consistent as he always believed the war was about "*the cause of liberty and humanity*" (1.2.1916) "*fought for freedom and humanity and against the spirit of Prussianism which if it had prevailed would put the whole world under the sway of an atrocious tyranny*" (*Dublin Chronicle*, 1929). D D does not explain and John does not explain why Conscription was so wrong if this is what the War was about. Conscription was an obligation if this propaganda was true.

In the years before WW I we are told that "*ideologies such as Communism, Socialism, and Nationalism were active and growing forces but yet to exert malevolent and benevolent influences across the world*" (page 6). But the elephant in the parlour among these inconsequential political minnows is never mentioned—British Imperialism. Worth mentioning surely that it was the latter's declaration of war on Germany in August 1914 that destroyed the parlour, and the whole house, and put these hitherto inconsequential forces into power. Or does John have another reason how these hitherto minuscule forces came to power?

On the international front we are told, "*In 1907 Great Britain and France with Russia were aligned in a defensive alliance to balance the power of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Rumania*" (page 6). This is turning things on their head. The alliance was designed by Britain to surround Germany and use the desire by France to regain Alsace Lorraine as the lever to begin a war to destroy Germany. Its motive was that German industrial power now threatened its trade and the consolidation of Germany as a state affected the balance of power in Europe, meaning that, Britain could not get its way so easily in Europe or in the rest of the world.

And if the *entente* was simply a defensive alliance against the Central Powers, why were Turkey and Greece attacked by Britain and why were 36 other nations dragged into the War eventually? Germany had not engaged in a single

war with anybody since its unification in 1871, so why was a defensive alliance needed against it by the most aggressive powers in the world—Britain, France and Tsarist Russia? John should enlighten us.

John attempts a potted history of Irish art and literature and concludes with the remark that it was "*strange too that Joyce and O'Casey spent most of their lives in exile while Yeats became a Senator and was respected and honoured and Douglas Hyde became our first President*". Why is this strange? It is only strange if one has a notion that Ireland was only for Catholics and Protestants were outside the fold. He no doubt has been influenced by the Hart/Harris/Foster school of thinking but some bit of reality has sunk in that questions it. We should be grateful for small mercies.

John has promised another book on D D (Corkman, 7.8.2008) to deal with the "*dark decade*" of his life. Let's hope he dispenses with the euphemisms and explains that the '*dark*' side means DD's success in helping up to 50,000 Irishmen to die horrible deaths for a lie, '*the freedom of small nations*', that he deserted the country in 1918 and avoided the War of Independence, engaged in what the police believed was criminal activity in London and absconded back to Ireland to avoid prosecution in 1926.

He became a *persona non grata* in both countries and was an embarrassment to those who had supported him. I had always wanted to avoid telling the truth about D D after 1914 out of respect for his achievements before the War, but now his '*dark*' period is being lauded as much as the '*bright*' period of his life and that does not do justice to those who supported him loyally in the pre-Qar years, such as my two grandfathers. They could not forgive him for what he did during the War and afterwards.

He is now being made part of another agenda that belittles the Irish fight for freedom and that has the audacity to put the butchery and lies of the Somme and WW I on a par with 1916 and the Irish War of Independence. It will not wash.

Jack Lane

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## Visions And Revisions

In a strange turn of events we hear it being complained that the BICO revisionists have usurped the anti-revisionist cause and damaged it by attacking good people like President McAleese and Martin Mansergh. And when Peter Hart was cornered and left with nothing coherent to say at an academic conference in Belfast, we hear the carefully-reasoned academic indictment drawn up by Niall Meehan dismissed as a picket handout.

There is no disputing that BICO made a major revision of Irish history close on forty years ago. It did it openly and crisply on two points. It said that nationalist Ireland had misconceived the Ulster Protestant community, which under pressure would behave as a stubborn and durable community of the national kind, rather than a brittle remnant of feudalism—which is how it was usually described then. And it said that, when Ireland was partitioned by the British Government, the Six County part was subjected to undemocratic government by being excluded from the democratic political system of the British state. Having made those two revisions, and brought our understanding of the situation into accordance with what we saw as its outstanding social facts, and having done nothing to bring about the War in the North, we had no reason to feel guilty about the War and agonise about far-fetched causes of it, "*Pearsean ghosts*", and suchlike fancies.

The source of the revisionism that began to flourish in the Republic in the late seventies, and whose object was to erode the history of nationalist Ireland, was the people who refused to make the accommodation with obvious social and political fact proposed by us in 1969. And twenty years later we did not seek a confrontation with them: they sought us out to attack us, believing that they would scotch us. Our offence in their eyes was not that we were anti-revisionist and were harassing them, but that in what concerned the Republic we were pre-revisionist and were largely oblivious of them. They saw in us a scandalous survival of De Valera's Ireland—backwoodsmen who could be disposed of by a column of exposure and ridicule in the *Irish Times*. And so we were obliged to take issue with them. If by doing so we usurped something that existed that is regrettable, but I must say that I did not notice its existence.

HART

With regard to the Peter Hart affair in Belfast: Niall Meehan, as far as I know, was never a revisionist of any kind, and

this document was not a picket handout. He produced a tightly argued critique of Hart. It was not handed out on a picket. (There was no picket.) It was on sale within the Conference, at a table supplied by the Conference organisers. And its style and status, added to its content, were what made it so upsetting.

But the academic hierarchy, while tacitly acknowledging by their conduct that Hart has placed them in an indefensible position with regard to the intellectual substance of the matter, made it clear that on the more mundane level—where they have the power to advance careers or retard them—they will insist on lines being toed. If nothing can be *said* in defence of Hart, silence will be insisted upon.

McALEESE

As to the attack on President McAleese, I am the sole culprit. She attacked me and I defended myself. She sued me for libel. I undermined her case in my Defence and, after a year and a half of legal harassment, she dropped her case without getting costs or damages—after she had incurred extensive costs with two barristers and the most expensive firm of solicitors in Belfast—while I was unable to buy any law at all and had to defend myself. Then, after she became President, it was suggested that she had won damages from me. It is suggested in her Authorised Biography—an autobiography written in the third person? And then Mansergh made allegations about it in a Belfast paper. I had been willing to let the matter rest in obscurity, but McAleese and Mansergh weren't. So, years after the event, I published an account of the legal proceedings (including her Statement of Claim and my Reply) along with their surroundings.

The subject of this action was a piece by a Belfast solicitor, which I published, saying that McAleese was given the job of Director of the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in Belfast without meeting the job specification. That was indisputable. But since she had not appointed herself I could see no sense in her libel action.

Going into the matter, I established that the rules of the Fair Employment system had been broken on at least two counts by the employer in making the appointment. These rules are predicated on the supposition that Catholics and Protestants would be present in all occupations in numbers proportionate to their size in the population if religious discrimination was not being practised. It is held that traditional employment practices are conducive to discrimin-

ation and they are banned. There must be no word of mouth recruitment. Every job must be clearly specified and advertised and interviews must be transparent, and much else.

It was specified that the Director of the Institute must be an experienced and successful practising lawyer. McAleese was then a law lecturer in another state, and while she had qualified to be a barrister within the Northern jurisdiction, she had not practised. When the vacancy was advertised she did not apply for it, knowing that law lecturers did not qualify for it. But no successful practising lawyer applied for the post. The employer then changed the job specification, without advertising the change, and solicited applications from McAleese and from David Trimble (who was a law lecturer and gave lectures at the Institute, and was Acting Director for a while) and gave the job to McAleese. So the appointment broke the rules of Fair Employment on two counts at least. And McAleese settled without damages and bore her own costs—but then could not let the matter rest.

#### MELEADY

Dermot Meleady has written the first volume of a two-volume biography of John Redmond, published recently by the Cork University Press. He suggests that Redmond's approach might possibly have led to a united Ireland by agreement. While that strikes me as being farfetched, it is certainly the case that the other approach, of which that Institute affair is a sample, has been counter-productive of unity.

But the other approach is not really another approach. Meleady tries to conjure Redmond into something he was not. He was not a conciliator of the Protestant community in Ireland. He was a hardline one-nation nationalist, but under strong pressure he proved to have a soft core. That soft core, however, did not enable him to become flexible, but turned him into mush.

His was what it is nowadays fashionable to call "*inclusive*" nationalism. He excluded nobody in Ireland from the Irish nation. He said so repeatedly. But that does not mean that he drew substantial numbers of people into the national movement who would have been alienated from it if somebody else had led the Home Rule Party. If he had drawn substantial numbers of Protestants into his Party, so that they could have been stood for election as representative Protestant figures, the course of events in Ireland would have been very different from what it was.

When we were filling out the Two Nations view around 1970, I went into the 1912-14 period fairly thoroughly, and I came to the conclusion that in those critical years he alienated pretty well everyone who was alienable.

All he meant when he said he would

exclude nobody from the Irish nation, while every speech he made excluded them, was that he would not agree to anything but an all-Ireland Home Rule Government. The Ulster Protestants were to be included in it, whether they liked it or not, and they made it unmistakably clear that they did not like it and would not have it. It was against Redmondism that the Ulster Volunteer Force was formed.

His assumption was that the 1914 all-Ireland Home Rule Bill going through Parliament would be enacted and an Irish Parliament would be set up as a going concern by the power-structure of the State. After the Curragh Mutiny that was off.

A few months of deadlock followed during which Redmond was put under intense pressure to agree to a form of Partition. He could not bring himself to do either the one thing or the other definitely. Then he was relieved by the Declaration of War on Germany, and privately admitted that it was a relief. In September 1914 the Unionists agreed to humour him by allowing the Home Rule Bill to be enacted on condition that it should not be implemented, and that the Act should, in effect, revert to being a Bill under debate at the end of the War. Then, with a Home Rule Act in his pocket, he set about recruiting for the War.

The War provided him with a new line of patter. He still would not agree to the exclusion of anybody from the Irish nation, but neither would he agree to the coercion of anybody into it. Did that mean that in practice he agreed to the exclusion? Not at all. His solution to the conundrum of excluding nobody while coercing nobody was that the massive blood sacrifice which he helped to arrange in France and the Middle East would engender fellow feeling between Nationalists and Unionists as a result of their being immolated together.

I could find no evidence that this was actually happening, and I concluded that it was the self-deception—the delusion—of a man in despair.

Meleady says: "It is difficult to imagine him, like De Valera, looking into his own heart to find what the Irish people wanted" (p4). But what else did Redmond do on 3rd August 1914? He did not consult the Irish people, or the Party, or his closest political colleagues before committing the Party to support for War. The trouble was that his heart was not as reliable—not as representative—as Dev's.

Three events in Redmond's political career stand in gross conflict with the image of him projected by revisionists: his active support for Parnell in breaking the Party in 1891; his allowing the Ancient Order of Hibernians to honeycomb the apparatus of the Party around 1905 and making its leader Joe Devlin one of a leadership Triumvirate with Dillon and himself; and his unconsidered lurch to war in August 1914.

#### BEW

The Oxford *History Of Ireland*, written by the Professor Lord Bew slides over the Parnell conflict in a couple of paragraphs:

"Parnell was at the height of his power, and it was difficult for any Irish force to move against him. The bishops were silent... It was rather the "Non-conformist conscience" in England which first openly rebelled..."

"On 29 November Parnell managed temporarily to control his party. It re-elected him to the chair, but at this stage the members did not know of Gladstone's assessment of the situation. When this became clear, angry members pressed for a new meeting. In retaliation, on 29 November Parnell issued a manifesto, *To The People Of Ireland*. Its theme was a simple one: a section of the Irish Party had lost its independence. The Liberal alliance, Parnell said, had been desirable, but this had evolved into a fusion. He then, rather unprofessionally, attempted to make damaging revelations about his visit to Gladstone... in Dec. 1889" (p359).

He claimed that Gladstone was determined to whittle away the substance of Home Rule to such an extent that it would be preferable to call the whole thing off rather than compromise with him.

Parnell had not previously given any hint of this, and the sudden revelation at a moment when he found himself in difficulty made little impression on the members of the Parliamentary Party, who persisted in demanding a further meeting of the party to deal with the new political situation. Here is the Lord Bew's account of what happened next:

"On 1 Dec. the "requisitioned" meeting of the party opened a new debate on the leadership... The ensuing split tore the country apart. Parnell vehemently insisted that the independence of the Irish Party could not be compromised either by Gladstone or by the Catholic Church. Healy counter-attacked with a devastating series of polemics in which he attacked Parnell ("Mr. Landlord Parnell") and Katharine O'Shea with a chauvinistic moralising virulence. In articulating an aggressively Catholic nationalism, he defined one of the dominant idioms of modern Irish politics. Parnell, on the other hand, insisted, in a major speech in Belfast: "It is undoubtedly true that until the prejudices of the [Protestant and Unionist] minority are conciliated ... Ireland can never enjoy perfect freedom, Ireland can never be united". The bitterness of the split did not abate with the death of Parnell on 6 Oct. 1891. His supporters were inconsolable: the writings of W.B. Yeats and James Joyce bear witness to the intensity of their allegiance in the split.

"Stephen Gwynn's conclusion is striking: "Hatred is a fish that haunts slow, stagnant waters. It can hunt in packs, too. I have heard of a sick salmon being devoured alive by eels. Parnell's last months were like that"... (p359-60; Gwynn is quoted from 1938, almost half

a century later, and long after he had settled for a kind of 'Irish nationality' that was a sentimental hinterland of the British Empire).

The matter is disposed of in about 650 words (less than two pages) at the end of a 49 page chapter on *Parnellism*. The consequences are then skated over in the shortest chapter in the book, a mere 31 pages (humorously titled *Squelching, "by way of a hors d'oeuvre"*) which covers 27 of the most eventful years in the history of the country, 1891-1918.

Parnell "*managed temporarily to control his party*" on 25th November because nobody disputed his leadership then. Although he had acted arbitrarily and recklessly in the whole O'Shea affair (which involved much more than Kitty) and had deceived his closest colleagues (who in his eyes were little more than menials) who had done their best to protect him, they took on trust his assurances that he had everything in hand and no serious damage would come of it. He was re-elected party leader soon after the divorce case, before the aggressive democratic Protestantism of the progressive British party gave the ultimatum that Home Rule would be off the political agenda for as long as he remained the Irish Leader. The members of the Irish Party therefore decided that the leadership should be reconsidered, and they requisitioned a meeting. There were many ways in which the problem might have been dealt with to allow the storm of British religious fundamentalism to blow over. (This was not something dreamed up to damage the Irish. Sir Charles Dilke, the rising force in the Liberal leadership, had been driven from politics by a divorce action shortly before.)

But Parnell refused to manoeuvre. He insisted on remaining unconditional leader of the Parliamentary Party, and on discarding the Liberal alliance as not worth having because he knew that Gladstone was whittling away the substance of Home Rule. This claim was met with the scepticism it deserved. If a very modest measure of Home Rule was good enough in 1886, why was it not worth having in 1891?—especially since the Tories had been considering something like Home Rule in 1885, but had taken a definite stand against it in British party politics after Gladstone adopted it as the Liberal policy.

The first of the Irish leaders to say that Parnell must relinquish the leadership to save the Liberal alliance was Michael Davitt. It was through Davitt's efforts more than anybody else's that the *Parnellism & Crime* Commission, set up through the influence of the *London Times*, had been routed and Parnell had emerged triumphant.

The Lord Bew gives two pages to that Parnell Commission. He says that P.J. Sheridan, a radical Fenian Land Leaguer, who claimed to have had a part in the Phoenix Park killings and to have sworn Parnell into the IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood), agreed to give evidence against Parnell to the Commission in return for a bribe, was "*discovered*" by Davitt to be "*only 'playing' the Times*" and would not testify. This news was brought to Parnell, causing him to "*calm down*".

The crisis of the Commission is described as follows:

"Pigott had broken down under cross-examination... and then fled to Madrid, where he committed suicide at the end of February 1889. News of the sudden death of Dr Thomas Maguire of Dublin broke almost simultaneously. These tragic events decided the issue in Parnell's favour; he must, nevertheless, have been privately grateful that all the efforts made to get P.J. Sheridan to testify before the Special Commission had met with failure" (p356—because Sheridan "*could have been an explosively destructive witness*" p355).

The *Times* Reports of the hearings of the Commission—about 30 volumes of them—have never been reprinted, nor have extracts from them ever been published, even though they are an incomparable source of information about what was going on in Ireland in the 1880s. If they were, it would be seen what a power Davitt was. He constituted himself almost a rival government in countering the vast resources of *The Times* backed by the Government. The Lord Professor seems to suggest that he did not so much exonerate Parnell as enable him to get away with it, and, pedantry aside, he says the breakdown of the Prosecution was a tragic event. (The Dr. Maguire referred to was a Trinity academic who collaborated with Pigott in getting up the case against Parnell.)

Whether by enabling him to get away with it or otherwise, Davitt kept Parnell functional through a herculean effort, only to have it all thrown away by Parnell the following year. And then, when Davitt dared to say (in his Labour newspaper) that it just would not do for Parnell to carry on regardless, he was subjected to tirades of vulgar abuse by Parnell.

Davitt had been a Fenian. Then he became an agrarian reformer and a Home Ruler, and a Labour reformer in Britain with a Liberal orientation. He understood the political realities of the 'British Constitution' within which Home Rule was to be achieved, and he would not break the Liberal alliance on grounds that were merely personal to Parnell, and go along with wild rhetorical appeals to a Fenianism that no longer existed just so that Parnell could remain Chairman of a disabled Party. It was he who struck the first blow, and not Healy. Healy had in fact proposed the re-election of Parnell, and only acted against him when Parnell, as Chairman, would not allow a vote on the leadership to be put at the re-assembled meeting of the Parliamentary Party.

#### FINALE

Meleady says that, after the Commission affair, "*Parnell's status in Ireland... increasingly was that of a deity to be worshipped from afar*" (p133). Parnell himself certainly mistook his status as being of that kind. Like Chairman Mao,

he appealed to the populace over the head of the Party, but unlike Chairman Mao he was humiliated by the response. Things had changed greatly in that respect since the days of O'Connell's dismissal of Young Ireland.

When it became clear that Parnell would never allow a vote at the Party meeting, a large majority of the members got up and left. Since he was not ousted as Leader by a vote of the Party, Parnell declared himself still the Party Leader, and his little group of personality cult 'Loyalists' were the Officials of 1891. A series of by-elections fell due and Parnell's Officials were roundly defeated at all of them. He kept up the wrecking activity. And, like the Officials of eighty years later, he wandered off into ideological fantasy which the Lord Bew (an Official of that later variety) takes to be serious politics but which Meleady dismisses effectively as the displacement activity that it was.

Meleady's book is spoiled by far-fetched speculation, and ideological reading backwards, in the Introduction and Conclusion, but it gives a fair account of Redmond's origins as Parnell's hack in the great destruction of 1891. It is a shame that it is published so expensively, for an exclusive market.

#### Brendan Clifford

**PS:** Re my opening remarks: a very old letter of mine to the *Irish Times*, before I was black-balled and before I had any intention of being drawn into doing what in fact I have been doing much of the time since, has been dug up recently. Correction: it has been referred to, but not dug up. Digging it up would not serve the purpose. The reference is:

"His name also crops up in letters to the *Irish Times* in the 1960s. In one of them he joked about diluting his racial purity by marrying a non-Irishwoman."

The suggestion here is that I treated Irish nationality as racial. In fact my letter had to do with an *Irish Times* injunction to emigrants not to get sexually involved with blacks in England. (The advice was of course addressed particularly to girls in those unembarrassed male chauvinist times when it was understood that men must be free to sow wild oats of all kinds). I do not recall that the letter was joking. Race mixing was not a joking matter then anymore than now, though for a basically different reason. What I married was not somebody who was not Irish but somebody who was black. I assume that the gist of my letter—which I had long forgotten—is misrepresented out of respect for the reputation of the *Irish Times*, whose white racism must be concealed.

**\* Troubled History:** A 10th Anniversary Critique Of *The IRA & Its Enemies* by Brian Murphy osb & Niall Meehan. Introduction Ruan O'Donnell.

\* **The 'Cork Free Press' In The Context Of The Parnell Split**, *The Restructuring Of Ireland, 1890-1910*, by Brendan Clifford. Aftermath of the Irish Big Bang: Redmondism; Fenians; Clericalism; The Land War; Russellites; Land & Labour League, and All-For-Ireland League—an Irish pluralist political development, originating in County Cork. 168pp. Index. ISBN 09521081 06 10. AHS, Jan. 1998. E13, £9.99

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## Does It Up?

## Stack

### MINISTER BATT O'KEEFFE & EDUCATION

Barely installed in his new office, Minister Batt O'Keefe indicated that he wanted the return of University Fees for the very wealthy and a general overhaul of the Universities themselves and their practices. This column has already detailed the many things that are amiss in our Universities not least transparency and accountability. It is fair to say that, while every institution in the country has been modernising itself and its practices, in the last decade especially, the Universities have been dismissive of addressing change. (This critique addresses the Civil Service too and isn't it apposite that the former are well-entrenched in the Universities with work practices that belong to an era of 'genteel lively-hood'—with wastage both of money and time being the rule rather than the exception.) O'Keefe did not pussyfoot around and made it amply clear that he was going all out for change over the long-term.

Michael Martin (or "*the slithery Martin*") as he was called in a recent Profile in the *Phoenix* (19th September 2008) didn't address any of the abuses that have long been central to University life. He, as Education Minister, got consultants in at huge cost to the taxpayer—and just kept getting White papers drawn up but didn't even tinker with the system—much less try to change it.

Minister O'Keefe first off said he was getting the Comptroller and Auditor General "*to undertake an audit*" in Universities. (This official has also been approached by members of the Public Accounts Committee, also wanting to know about University spending.) Commenting on the issue the Minister said, "*I want to carry out an audit of the third level sector*

*to see how we are doing and where the funds are going. I want to be satisfied I'm getting value for money*". The Minister went on to say "*he wanted a number of areas examined as part of this audit including a lecturing profile to show how much time the most senior lecturers were spending in lecture halls, how much money is spent on student services and how much funding is earmarked for social inclusion*".

One of the areas most suspect, in my opinion, is that of exams. It is hard to credit, but there is still **no outside independent body** that students can appeal to if they think they should have got better marks in their exams. In itself that is a *scandal*. Students are told that there is an extern examiner—brought in by the departments themselves—but still cannot access exam papers to see how they were marked. By contrast there is full openness and transparency exists in the Leaving Certificate/Group Certificate—where recall of marked papers are not unusual. It is only in the University that secrecy and power are the norm. And what was the response of the Universities and their media cheerleaders.

The IUA (Irish Universities Association) patronisingly replied to the Minister that: "*The IUA welcomes any indication on the Minister's part that he is willing to examine how the sector is funded. It is important however, that any such examination look at both the government and private funding together and the appropriate balance between these elements.*" See how funding is the Holy Grail and the Minister is reminded where to look as if he couldn't work it out himself.

### SOCIAL ILLS

It is proposed that fees will be brought back for those who can well afford them.. It will have a hugely beneficial effect on some students. Perhaps they will then better appreciate the position of others, forced to work to pay for their fees. Looking at the number of Debs. Balls, now a staple of the papers where the fashion and glamour of the young girls is cooed over, and for which the boys dress in embroidered waistcoats and full dress suits. One is struck by the money spent by those who attend: the flash white limousines, the foreign tan, the elaborate hair-do's, the make-up, the manicures/pedicures and false nails etc. It is estimated that over €1,000 is the usual amount spent. Obviously entertainment comes under a different additional category.

So squeals from these prospective students or their parents hold no water for me. In a recent edition of Cork's *Evening Echo* (3rd September 2008), in a very popular weekly '*Street Style*' article, two students were photographed in their outfits and the two agreed "*that they spend at least €200 a month each on clothes*".

And there is the additional problem of

binge drinking/clubbing in our cities by these very youngsters, who are wreaking harm on themselves and putting such stress on our A&E's by filling them up with the after-effects of their behaviour. Vomiting, fighting, and rising statistics of STI's and the long-term effects on fertility by out-of-control drinking and drugs leave society, especially in cities, in a fragile state. To see Gardai wearing stab-vests suggest that young people have too much spending money and too little parental control. One can easily despair when the reaction of the Minister of Health Mary Harney to our sexually promiscuous youth was the making available next year of a vaccine **to twelve year olds** to prevent cervical cancer. What sort of message does this send out? Yet cancer patients are dying in Ireland due to lack of a proper diagnoses.

Again, what does our free marketer Health Minister do? She outsources life saving smear tests to a controversial US firm—Quest Diagnostics which has paid out more than \$40 million (€28 million) in fraud settlements over the past 10 years in the US. Yet it was still awarded control of Irish smear testing with a multi-million euro contract from the HSE earlier this year. Only Phil Prendergast, Labour spokesman for Health, said: "*I feel the opportunity for people in Ireland to become experts in cancer care is being denied. It is not supporting our home economy and it is making us overly reliant on the US. You also need to take into account that their means of evaluating smears is very different from ours.*" The company will become the outright provider of the national cancer screening programme for women between 25 and 60. Outsourcing the service also means hospitals across the country will have to find alternative work for specialist laboratory staff. Terry Casey, General Secretary of the Medical Laboratory Scientists Association, said: "*Quest has been given a monopoly. When the contract runs out there will be no one left in Ireland who could possibly compete*". What now of that cliché constantly used by our Government about Ireland becoming "*a knowledge-based*" society? And this comes from the dying Progressive Democrats, the party whose '*conditio sine qua non*' was to be the fiercest of the free marketers? Yes they may be a spent force but their ideology is embedded still in political policy in various guises.

### GORMLEY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND LUCRATIVE SPIN-OFFS

There was much excitement all round. The event was captured on the RTE 6 o'clock News. A fisherman (an almost extinct species) was pulling in his lobster pots off the west coast of Galway and you'll never guess what was inside it? A Portuguese-man-of-war. Dead. This is a native of Portugal and according to

Chambers Dictionary is a: "*dangerous (sub) tropical hydrozoan of genus Physalia with sail shaped crest and poisonous sting*". The creature could even administer a terrible sting even after death. He looked like a jellyfish with various bits added and lots of tendrils which were the dangerous part. "*Global warming*" said the experts could only be the reason it was so far from home. That meant telling a highly sceptic public that the seas were getting warmer. After the Summer we had! Going to west Cork, Galway or Donegal to holiday was a washout of epic proportions, and even dangling one's limbs into the various sea harbours—with the Gulf Stream in our favour—had us fleeing into our fleeced-lined clothes.

As the deadly jellyfish had no muscles, it could only drift about in the sea, and various currents were the determinant that really lead to Galway lobster pot captivity and almost certainly it was long dead. Using the same principle that 'one swallow does not a Summer make', one Portuguese-man-of-war does not mean warmer seas.

Staying with the West of Ireland, another RTE news item had a Shannon River fisherman with an account that was equally surprising. He told us that "*fishing and golfing*" were the two big tourist sports here but the fishing was failing fast due to an EU Directive of the Environment in the early seventies. It was and is forbidden to kill seals as their numbers then were decreasing rapidly. But now the situation is getting totally out of hand. On one beach alone there were about 7,000 seals and they are huge salmon eaters. The result is that while their numbers are increasing all the time, the salmon is almost extinct. Now the fishermen tourists hardly come at all as there is nothing for them to catch. It is costing huge loss of earnings to the area, with Boat Owners and Guest Houses and all the ancillary economic activity are going to the wall. Even a Bord Iascaigh Mara spokesman echoed the fisherman: they both said the only hope is a cull of seal numbers. This must be done in a humane manner but it must be done quickly. One species can't be allowed to destroy another, especially one which is very necessary to the local economy and also to future reserves of our world famous lovely salmon. It is imperative that the Minister take action now.

**GORMLEY AND WINDFARMS—  
ANOTHER LUCRATIVE SPIN-OFF**

The developers of a windfarm in the west of Ireland are investigating a bogslide—the second near the site of windpower plant in as many months, according to the Irish *Daily Mail* (25th September 2008). Windfarm staff worked in the darkness to stop the bogslide tumbling into a lake on the Leitrim-Roscommon border. In mid-August, a landslide near a windfarm in Co. Kerry caused the water supply to

## A Crying Shame

**Captain Donal Buckley, a retired Irish Army officer who lives in Derryhick, Castlebar, has put a lot of work into establishing a Mayo Memorial Park, launched by President McAleese on 7th October 2008. He says "It is there to commemorate Co. Mayo's 20th-century fallen officers, enlisted ranks and civilian casualties"—1,100 in all. While honouring those who fell in worthwhile peace-keeping roles, the Park besmirches their memory by equating their sacrifice with those who fell in ignoble causes. The latter fought in a variety of wars, none of them creditable, yet Capt. Buckley emotively asserts that they, "died for us, no matter what uniform was worn" (22.9.08 *Irish Times*). Below are two letters in reply, the first of which failed to find publication**

The Mayo Peace Memorial Park as described by Capt. Donal Buckley (Irish Times letters 22.9.08) seems a curious thing. It is clear enough why we might honour Irish soldiers who fell while on service in various UN peacekeeping missions. They paid the ultimate price to try and bring peace and stability to many parts of the world when it was needed and, I believe, are still greatly respected in places such as the Lebanon. What is less clear is why such a memorial would include Irishmen who died wearing a US or British uniform and, as Capt. Buckley reminds us, in theatres of war such as Vietnam. What contribution to peace did these men make? How did the war in Vietnam bring peace? How did men who died fighting the Vietcong in Vietnam, or Germans in the trenches of World War One "die for us" as Capt. Buckley would have us believe? To compound this nonsense he adds "no matter what uniform was worn" It is a historical fact that a small number of Irishmen also died in Nazi uniform or fighting for other fascists such as Franco. Does the Peace Memorial Park commemorate these too? I very much doubt it, as even Capt. Buckley would be forced to admit that it would also imply tacit support for Nazi ideology. It is equally inescapable that honouring Irishmen who happened to die in British and American uniform is tacit support for all the wars fought by these countries, mainly imperialistic in ideology and nature. Such support is in direct opposition to our tradition of being a sovereign republic, ironically the very national characteristic that has for so long made us so acceptable as UN Peace Keepers the world over. This is not a peace memorial, but a war memorial. It is not a sign of "maturity" or a "nation coming of age" to establish such a confused monstrosity, but a sign of a nation that's lost its sense of direction.

**Nick Folley** (submitted 24.9.08)

...In what way did a soldier fighting for the US in Vietnam "die for Mayo, Ireland and the free world"? How did a soldier who fought in any of Britain's imperial wars "die for Mayo, Ireland and the free world"? At this remove one can only guess at the motives of these men. They enlisted, mainly in the British army, for many reasons—some for lack of employment at home, some for adventure and glory, and others because they were duped by British propaganda.

The Mayo Memorial Peace Park appears to be part of a trend which aims to associate Ireland more closely with former colonial powers, particularly Britain, and conveniently to gloss over their murky deeds. The argument seems to be that all Irishmen who died in wars are heroic and deserve to be publicly commemorated while moral arguments must be cast aside for the sake of "reconciliation". I suggest that the purpose of such memorials should be examined more critically, particularly when public money and land are given over to them.

I note that President McAleese will open the park, thereby giving it the imprimatur of the Irish people. On the evening prior to the opening, the drums and pipes of the Irish Guards will take part in a remembrance concert. It is ironic that a regiment of the British army will be represented at this concert, while no mention will be made of the atrocities perpetrated by that army in many parts of the world, including Ireland.

Capt Buckley was also instrumental in organising an event in 2004, which commemorated Sgt-Maj Cornelius Coughlan. This Mayo man was a member of the imperial British forces in India that put down a mutiny. He was awarded a Victoria Cross for his bravery. At the commemorative event the Irish Army was represented and the then Minister for Defence, Michael Smith, as well as the British ambassador attended. This bizarre ceremony ignored the reality that Coughlan's regiment used savage methods to quell rebellion.

It is patently obvious from Capt Buckley's letter that there will be no place in the Mayo Memorial Peace Park for those Mayo men and women who died for the freedom of Ireland. His references to "parochial politics" and "right-thinking people" are breathtaking in their arrogance. It may surprise him to learn that many people are saddened to witness the glorification of colonial militarism.

**Mark Urwin** (published 24.9.08)

30,000 homes to be cut off. Workers at the ESB subsidiary, Hibernian Wind Power worked with the staff from the State's forestry company, Coillte, to build dams as Lough Allen was threatened by the slide near the village of Drumkeerin. A spokesman for the ESB said: "A peat slippage was detected at the elevated site at 4.30pm and our people stayed on the site all night working to erect dams to contain the slide. Three barriers were built in a gully to prevent the slide travelling down and the slippage was contained." The spokesman added that homes or water supplies were not damaged by the slide. However, staff from the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board have been removing fish from a nearby river and say they are concerned about the possible impact of the incident which they say has affected 4km or 5km of the water course. The development of wind energy in Co. Leitrim is in the initial stages. Bosses say 13 turbines are planned but none has been built yet.

#### COMPTROLLER & FAS

Under the Constitution of Ireland the Comptroller and Auditor General is very specifically appointed by and responsible to Dail Eireann and reports to Dail Eireann under Article 31.4 of the Constitution. The present Comptroller, Mr. John Buckley, reported earlier this year on the compliance or lack of compliance with procurement procedures at FAS. Also, its own internal Auditors have harshly criticised FAS procedures. So how loudly do they have to shout before Minister (and Tánaiste) Mary Coughlan takes effective notice? After the Minister spoke to both Peter McLoone (FAS Chairman) and Roddy Molloy (FAS Director General), **they** suggested to her, rather brazenly, that an inquiry (i.e. another one) might be needed to "restore public confidence". So, how did the Minister react? Amazingly, the Minister, instead of **doing** something promptly, has decided to ask the Comptroller and Auditor General to report on the effectiveness of the management and control systems that are in place across (sic) FAS. It does not seem to matter that the Comptroller and Auditor General has already said in his report what is wrong. If the Minister and the Dail are ignoring what Mr. John Buckley has reported, then what is the use of a further report? Mr. Buckley is already on record as saying his resources are not sufficient to carry out his work. Is it the intention of the Dail is to divert his attention away from other leakages of public funds?

#### THE PUBLIC SERVICE

In January 2007 the OECD was instructed by the Irish Government to investigate and report on the entire Irish public service. The tax-payer had to foot the bill. However, when the report was published in April 2008 the OECD official

who was in charge of the review, Edwin Lao, stated that the report was "toned down" by some of the senior officials under review. The civil servants apparently softened some of the more hard-hitting (and therefore more valuable) parts of the report. Apparently, the civil service appointed a "liaison group" from amongst themselves and it was this group which interfered with the independence of the OECD reporters. It all sounds like a big waste of tax-payer's money and an abuse of power and position. Will heads roll? Will they . . . ?

And what about their pay? The latest figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) are from the National Employment Survey in October 2006. They date from aeons ago, in these turbulent times, but in time for the new national pay deal which started to be negotiated on September 9th.

The CSO says public servants averaged €25.47 per hour as against private sector earnings of €17.11. That is, public servants earned 50% more per hour. Is it not timely now to ensure that every new recruit to the public service should have a Contract of Employment similar to such contracts in the private sector with similar conditions and pensions? At present it seems civil servants cannot be disciplined and their hours of work, holidays, sick leave (which they are allowed to take whether sick or not), and fully inflation-proofed pensions are way more feather-bedded than in the private sector. And oh! the free car-parking and the very subsidised meals in their canteens . . . sorry restaurants. Stack is watching and has a report in hand titled "Beware, the worm has turned . . ." More anon.

Michael Stack

#### World Economic Crisis, II

### Ireland Crunch

How well placed is Ireland to weather the global storm? "Not terribly" has to be the answer at this point. Ireland is not well-placed whether one looks at it from the perspective of political economy or from that of economic psychology or ideology.

Problems abound.

At the macro-economic level Ireland has pursued for more than a decade, a broadly pro-cyclical policy in the public spending side. In other words Irish public spending has fuelled domestic growth in what was anyway, a strong growth international environment: a strongly growing global economy of which Ireland was a part. This counter-Keynesian (as it might be called in strictly economic terms) approach by Irish Governments was facilitated by the effects of participating in a benign global economic arena on exchequer (tax) returns.

The exchequer position was further enhanced by the domestic authorities' fuelling of a massive property bubble: through stamp duty and VAT the Government took a massive cut of the top of the bubble they had themselves created.

In addition employment grew spectacularly, unemployment fell dramatically, and the labour force grew like topsy, in the main through immigration but also through growing female participation in the workforce.

What all of this provided was the opportunity to harmonise or synchronise the economic and political cycles—priming the electorate's already strong sense of economic and indeed national, well-being particularly during the second

half of the electoral cycle, combining that sense of well-being with the promise of more in the wake of victory, to be followed by the abandonment of electoral promises and the administration of a short, sharp shock to ensure some semblance of fiscal order in the aftermath of electoral success.

Cynical one might say, but it was a wonderful electoral formula (largely invented by McCreevy) and it did deliver much that was positive although it also created major problems in the way it was executed.

Revenues were wasted on a grand scale. Investment in infrastructure—whether roads, rail, public transport, hospitals, or whatever was shambolic. Health spending generally was and remains a basket case. Immigration was mismanaged and primary education particularly, but also second-level, given insufficient priority while the elitist universities scooped the pot and changed their ethos (becoming "businesses" in support of the "knowledge economy").

Through all of this the national debt was still paid down and down, yet the coffers remained stuffed and fantasies could be pursued. What is the point of this litany of nothing less than excess and stupidity on a grand scale?

It is that pro-cyclical policy and the synchronisation of economic and political cycles has left the locker dry and empty, now that the global context that facilitated the venture has run into the buffers, as it has with enormous vengeance. At the very moment that counter-cyclical spending is called for the capacity to take such a stance is not there, not least because of what has happened in Europe, the Growth and Stability Pact.

In truth any other party combination in government would likely have pursued a much similar course, it has to be said, which leaves Fine Gael and Labour protestations about the present situation suspect

at least. But the big point is that at the very moment that Keynesian counter cyclical policy is most necessary, there is nothing left in the locker, nothing.

Furthermore the Government is handcuffed—spangled by the so-called growth and stability pact (GASP), an EU formula invented by the Bundesbank and delivered by Ruairi Quinn as Minister for Finance and then president of the Finance Ministers Council, to restrict Keynesian policies in the context of underpinning the introduction of the euro currency, arguably temporarily sensible in the immediate context of introducing the new currency but now irrelevant yet still in place. It is an arrangement described by Romano Prodi, when President of the Commission as "stupid", and so it remains, but it is still law, the law of the Union.

There are some straws in the wind that Fianna Fail might depart from the stability pact rules, whether or not remains to be seen and by how much (according to the rules government borrowing cannot exceed three per cent of GDP). France and Germany have consistently ignored the rule but Ireland has so far rigidly more than adhered to it. France and Germany are again likely to breach it next year and there are hints that Ireland may coat-tail on that – but again by how much and to what end?

Which brings us to psychology and ideology. The reality is that the market and the private sector approaches are now deeply embedded in both the political and administrative states, at the highest levels (within all political parties as far as one can see). The provision of housing has been virtually privatised, practically all of the state assets and undertakings have been privatised (Telecom, Aer Lingus, ACC [Agricultural Credit Corporation] Bank and ICC [Industrial Credit Corporation] Bank for example) and those that remain are being undermined by public policy decision (look at the slow drift to licensing of private operators on the Dublin bus network). Native sectors and industries such as agriculture and food have been ignored or down-graded in favour of the chimera of the "knowledge economy" (i.e. American global corporates). In response to the hurricane swamping capitalism, it is all 'head in the sand'. The pragmatism that one might expect from Fianna Fail is constrained by the Stability Pact, the absorption of market ideology, the disposal of state undertakings, the entering into a concordat with the long-time friends of Fianna Fail, the 'developers', and adoption of the 'weightless economy' argument (we no longer have to make a living out of making things, we can grow spectacularly on intellectual property).

As to the recent developments, don't mention the 'd' word. If we don't it will all pass over and the economic and political

cycles will again be harmoniously synchronised. Hmnmnh.

**Feargus O Raghallaigh**

#### **Editorial Note:**

Charlie McCreevy as Finance Minister spent money as he had it: that was his economic philosophy. It was pro-Cyclical, rather than anti-Cyclical on Keynesian lines. But that meant that facts on the ground have been created: things exist which otherwise would not. He also created a Pension Fund, which has invested in shares all around the globe—what might be called 'saving for a rainy day'. But what is the value of those shares today? If McCreevy had 'saved' the money instead of 'squandering' it, in what form would it have been saved and what would it buy today? Comments on these matters welcome.

## **The True Francis Ledwidge**

**Andreas Ó Searcaigh made a rather puerile suggestion about Ledwidge fighting for Britain in the Great War in a letter to the *Irish Times*. Of the two responding letters below only the second was published.**

#### **IRISHMEN IN UNIFORM**

Andreas Ó Searcaigh (26 September 2008) says that the poet Francis Ledwidge fought in WW1 to defend Ireland against "an enemy of civilisation", not to escape from poverty nor to seek adventure. Those who simple-mindedly seek to align respected historical figures with the cause of imperial aggrandisement should exercise prudence in regard to a complex individual like Ledwidge.

Following John Redmond's 1914 declaration of war against Germany (and Austria, and Hungary, and all the rest—countries with which Ireland had no quarrel) Ledwidge was one of only six members of the Slane corps of the Irish Volunteers to oppose Redmond, and he was the only member of the Rural District Council to resist Redmondite war fever—for which he was condemned as "pro-German."

Yet, only five days later he joined the British Army. The reason may have been a crushing disappointment in love, about which he wrote:

"I'm wild for wandering to far-off places,  
Since one forsook me whom I held most dear"

[*After My Last Song*].

When, after the 1916 Rising, he returned on leave to Slane he said to his brother Frank: "If someone were to tell me now that the Germans were coming over our back wall, I wouldn't lift a finger to stop them. They could come!" Shortly after

this he was court-martialled and demoted for insubordination.

Mr Ó Searcaigh says: "I am happy to have grown up in an Ireland where I learned Gaeilge rather than German." Whose fault is it that Andreas Ó Searcaigh had to learn Irish as practically a foreign language? Wasn't it German scholars such as Kuno Meyer who salvaged the Irish language from extinction, so people like Andreas Ó Searcaigh could learn it if they wanted to? And wasn't it imperial-minded Redmondite fanatics and bigots who removed Meyer from the Roll of Freeman of Dublin and Cork, forcing him to resign from Directorship of the School of Irish Learning that he had founded in Dublin?

**Pat Muldowney**  
(submitted 26.9.08)

Andreas Ó Searcaigh (September 26th) draws a contrast between Francis Ledwidge's and Tom Barry's British army service during the first World War. His is a simplistic distinction between those who fought in British uniform between 1914 and 1918 and in Irish uniform between 1919 and 1921.

Mr Ó Searcaigh cites Ledwidge on his belief in a common British and Irish "civilisation" in 1914 against Germany. This fails to note a changed attitude after 1916. Ledwidge's poem about his fellow poet, 1916 leader Thomas MacDonagh, is well known. Less well known is Ledwidge's consistent poetic support for the Rising afterwards. Ledwidge's poem "*O'Connell Street*" began, "A noble failure is not in vain", and ended: "For mine are all the dead men's dreams". His attitude to Germans appears also to have changed. One of his last poems in 1917 was "*To a German Officer*".

Ledwidge's and Barry's views converged after 1916—perhaps to a position expressed by Tom Kettle MP, who remarked after the Rising and the British execution of his cousin, Francis Sheehy Skeffington: "I shall be remembered, if I am remembered at all, as a bloody British officer".

Irish attitudes were, at best, ambiguous. On his one experience on a recruiting platform, the father of Michael O'Leary VC urged those present to join up. Otherwise, "the Germans will come here and do to you what the English have been doing for the last 700 years". The British censor refused to allow the speech to appear in the *Irish Independent*.

The British Viceroy's private Secretary noted: "The men are drifting daily into the Sinn Féin camp." In 1920 the Viceroy himself said: "The haemorrhage of ex-service men to the ranks of Sinn Féin is well under way".

In Cork that year demobilised soldiers and sailors fought street battles with British troops. Seven ex-service men were killed by British forces. The former British

soldiers marched in formation behind the funeral corteges of Cork Sinn Féin Lord mayors Tomas Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney in March and August 1920.

The radicalisation of soldiers from the belligerent countries took many forms. In Ireland it took the form of growing support for Irish independence. Common to it was a rejection of empire and of imperialism. That should be remembered.

**Niall Meehan**  
(published 29.9.08)

## Julius Fučík

Why do some dead  
Live so little

Like Julius Fučík  
Editor of Rudé Právo  
Whose *Report from the Gallows*  
Was written with pencil and paper  
Supplied by Adolf Kolinsky  
An SS guard clad in steel-grey  
And smuggled out of Pankrác Prison  
Page by page  
Scrap by scrap

This Czech  
Registered as a German citizen  
Saved the soul of Julius Fučík  
But couldn't save his body  
(Nor could Police-Constable  
Jaroslav Hora)

Tortured in Petschek Palace  
Locked in Pankrác Prison  
Tried in Berlin  
On the 25th of August, 1943  
Beheaded in Plötzensee Prison  
On the 8th of September, 1943

Incarcerated in Ravensbrück  
His wife Gusta Fučíková  
Finds him in a whisper  
And loses him in a whisper

But it's still not enough for them  
This new lot in Prague  
They kill him day after day  
Strike him from the school book

1989  
The 'Velvet Revolution'  
What revolution?  
The glove was empty  
History's re-written  
The dispossessed  
On re-possessing  
Claimed their property rights  
Citing genetic inheritance

## PAY DEAL continued

Towards 2016 and Sustaining Progress before it. The four options available to unions and employers at the LRC and Labour Court are similar: (i) disputes over what constitutes a breach of the agreement are referred into a binding process; (ii) disputes over ability to pay or not pay the full terms of the agreement are put into an assessment process, with a binding decision at the end; (iii) issues over cost offsetting measures or part-payment of the terms go into an assessment process with a non-binding outcome, albeit with a 'cooling-off' period of three weeks before any industrial action; and (iv) disputes over what constitutes 'normal ongoing change' are referred into a binding process.

A pre-amble to the industrial peace clause is broadly similar to the previous module of Towards 2016, although it does make reference to the "current period of economic uncertainty". An earlier draft of this clause also explicitly mentioned the difficulties experienced by "some employers, including firms in manufacturing, construction and other sectors", but the final draft simply refers to "some employers", as did the corresponding clause in the previous national agreement.

### 'FAT-CAT' CLAUSE

One new element in the pay agreement is a commitment to pay moderation in the area of executive pay. This probably originates in recent criticism by unions and the wider public of high pay rises for top management over recent years. It is a recognition that high pay increases at the top of organisations make it difficult to

One of their writers  
A mere pin-cushion  
For Washington's medals  
Had his genius proclaimed  
By Western academia

New times  
Brought dump time  
Axe the national hero time  
NATO time  
Hunt the bear time  
And given time  
One more time  
Of Munich times?

**Wilson John Haire**  
8th of September, 2008

sell pay moderation to ordinary workers. While there are no sanctions preventing firms from paying such increases to senior managers, the fact that disapproval of such increases is included in a national wage agreement has a certain moral force. *Whew!*

The clause states: "In the context of the changed economic circumstances and the acceptance by the social partners of the importance, in the national interest, of observation of pay moderation under this Transitional Agreement, employer bodies will, as a matter of policy, encourage their members to ensure that pay moderation is also observed in respect of executive pay."

### BALLOT ON AGREEMENT

The agreement must now be ratified by the ICTU affiliated trade unions and by IBEC and the CIF. ICTU will hold a special delegate conference of member unions, probably in October, at which delegates will cast votes in accordance with the decisions made by affiliated unions. The largest private sector union, SIPTU, will hold its own special conference prior to the ICTU event. IBEC and the CIF are likely to make their formal announcements after the Congress decision.

### PS:

"THE COUNTRY'S second largest union UNITE is to recommend to its 60,000 members that they should reject the terms of the new draft national pay deal in a forthcoming ballot.

"Separately yesterday, the executive of IMPACT, the largest public service union, voted to recommend acceptance of the deal in a national ballot." (Irish Times-27.9.2008).

## Errata: September issue

### *A 1968 Mixum-Gatherum*

p14, column 1, 2nd para omits the word 'six'; should read:

But Britain would not have the Six Counties, which it separated from the rest of Ireland, simply as part of itself.

p15, column 3, 2nd last para:

1886. At that moment the Labour Party was supplanting [not supporting] the Liberals as the second party of the state

p17, column 1, last para: word 'for' omitted:  
...Lawless discovered McCann at Queen's, when recruiting for the Irish Communist Group

p18, column 1, para 3: 'be' not 'by'  
it could only be recognition of the pseudo-state

## PAY DEAL continued

Ahern's previous Cabinet were presented with in the post-holiday meeting at the same time last year.

Government revenue fell by a further €500 million in August.

John Beggs, economist at AIB Global Treasury, has stated that the Exchequer figures for August which revealed tax revenue was €2.8 billion lower than expected made "grim reading".

"Mr. Beggs said it could take until 2010 or 2011 to get the public finances back into order. He said unless taxes were to rise there was no scope for growth in current spending, which would probably mean an embargo on recruitment in the public sector and some kind of pay pause." (*Evening Echo*, Cork-3.9.2008).

"SIPTU General President, Jack O'Connor wrote to Mr Mannion earlier this week seeking clarification on the speculation of cost cuts.

"He also warned that if cost-cutting at Aer Lingus materialised it would almost inevitably torpedo the new national pay deal." (Irish Independent-20.9.2008).

### EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

Included in the 'Non-Pay' provisions of the new draft is a commitment to ongoing dialogue on EU legislation, the Government commits in the new deal to:

"dialogue with the parties on the potential implications arising from European Court of Justice cases that may impact on the domestic workplace..."

"The Government will continue to encourage the Court to have regard to the particular industrial relations traditions and cultures of Member States and in particular the unique voluntarist nature of industrial relations in Ireland, including those arrangements negotiated by the social partners in the areas of employment law, industrial relations policy and its related machinery."

This could be seen as answering the concerns of some in the trade union movement expressed during the Lisbon referendum campaign earlier this year, in which it was felt that some recent ECJ judgements had affected workers negatively.

Before the referendum, the TEEU had gone as far as to publicly call for a 'No' vote, despite the ICTU support for a 'Yes' vote. Citing the Laval, Ruffert and Viking cases, the craft union had argued that "unfortunately recent key judgements by the European Court of Justice show that the pendulum has swung against workers' rights and in favour of big business. In the circumstances it would be foolish to provide the institutions of the European

Union with more power." (See September *Irish Political Review*).

### PUBLIC SECTOR AND THE CITIZEN

"In a significant shift in emphasis, the public sector section of the new national deal highlights the need for modernisation efforts to emphasise the "needs of citizens" compared to a focus on industrial relations-related change in the first module of Towards 2016. This includes bringing the new Health Forum firmly within the partnership tent. (*Industrial Relations News*-17.9.2008).

Payment of the agreed Public Sector pay increases will again be dependent on staff co-operation with 'normal ongoing change' and the modernisation requirements set out in the agreement. Any dispute regarding these issues will be processed through the existing industrial relations machinery, including the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court, whose recommendations will be binding.

As in the private sector, no 'cost increasing' claims above and beyond these pay terms (National Agreement and Benchmarking Two) will be allowed, although 'minor claims' involving small numbers at little cost are allowed in certain circumstances.

The health sector modernisation process has the potential to make the case that social partnership can lead to major improvements in services. But given the problems in the sector, and the public dissatisfaction levels with the service, this will be a major challenge.

### BENCHMARKING PAYMENTS

In relation to benchmarking, it is agreed by the parties that the increases recommended in the second report of the Public Service Benchmarking Body will be paid as follows: 5% from 1 September 2008, or where the total increase is less than 5%, the full increase from that date. The vast majority of public servants were awarded nothing. The increases that were given (for senior grades) range from 1.1% for Civil Service Principal Officers up to 10% for Directors of Nursing, with a high of 15% for Principal Medical Officers.

It is stated that "the payment of any balances will be discussed between the parties in the context of any successor to this Pay Agreement which might be agreed between the social partners, or whatever other arrangements may be in place on the expiry of this Agreement".

### FUTURE OF BENCHMARKING

The benchmarking review covers union concerns about the operation and methodology of the first and second benchmarking exercises. More generally, the review of benchmarking reflects the fact that, since its inception, it had attracted substantial criticism from politicians,

employers and wider society.

The public sector unions were disappointed with the outcome of the second benchmarking report (with most groups receiving no pay increases, but knew that in the economic climate they had to accept it, as they had already accepted the principle of benchmarking in the first place. It was a system they had lobbied for. They hope the proposed review will come up with a revised system, which is unlikely to be named 'benchmarking', although it will surely be guided by most of the core principles of benchmarking.

"The unions, employers, and the government side know that, whatever amendments are made to this system, there can be no return to the irrationalities inherent in the old pay specials' system of yesteryear, and that any claims for pay rewards over and above 'cost of living' rises and increments must be based on productivity. That will be the 'name of the game' in the public sector from now on. (No 'benchmarking' exercise is planned during this phase of the Towards 2016 agreement)." (*Industrial Relations News*-17.9.2008).

### OECD REVIEW

The agreement has a small section on the recent OECD review of the public service, which commits the parties "to implementation of the basic principles emerging from the OECD report." There is a further rather vague commitment that the parties "accept the need identified by the OECD to give more emphasis to the public service as an integrated system with a greater focus on meeting the needs of citizens."

### MINIMUM WAGE

The proposed new deal is silent on the matter of the national minimum wage. The role of setting the actual rate was always a matter for the social partners, or failing agreement, the Labour Court and the Minister for Enterprise and Employment. But recent national deals have tended to include a timetable for the next adjustment and none was present in the versions of the new draft.

### INABILITY TO PAY

One of the rocks on which the national talks had foundered on August 1 was the inability to pay procedures. The employers had sought stronger provisions, particularly to take account of future projected difficulties. However, the unions had been concerned that this could lead to a flood of inability to pay claims, giving rise effectively to 'local bargaining with a cap'.

The inability to pay provisions of the deal now proposed are almost the same as those which applied in the first module of

continued on page 23

## PAY DEAL continued

### THE EMPLOYERS

"That's what it is, it's a draft. But it was the best the parties could do under the circumstances. There are pluses. It sends out a positive signal to the investment community at home and abroad and it keeps the process intact," stated Turlough O'Sullivan, IBEC Director General.

"Hopefully this draft agreement will give us some breathing space to confront the very serious difficulties that the economy is facing. The architecture of the agreement is capable of responding to whatever needs an organisation has in terms of their commercial and economic circumstances."

The Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME) said it was "outraged" at the draft terms of the new national pay agreement, claiming it could result in "wholesale redundancies".

ISME Chief Executive Mark Fielding said: "The agreement will have a devastating impact on our sector of the business community."

He said it was "beyond comprehension" that IBEC had agreed to a deal with terms "far superior to what was on offer just four weeks ago".

Mr Fielding said many firms had already contacted the association to say they "cannot and will not be complying with the latest terms agreed".

He said the body had called for an emergency meeting with the Taoiseach to discuss in detail the impact and consequences of the new agreement on a sector that had been "ignored, overlooked and disregarded".

Tom Parlon of the Construction Industry Federation said paying an extra 6% on top of high existing rates of pay could be the straw which breaks the camel's back for some employers. He said construction employers would not be able to add on the additional cost in their contracts signed over the next two years.

Irish Hotels Federation President Matthew Ryan said: "Labour-intensive sectors, such as hotels where wage costs are over 40% of turnover, cannot afford any further wage increases until there is a return to growth in the turnover of the business to recoup these additional costs.

"The hotel industry in Ireland employs over 65,000 people. If we are to sustain those jobs, there must be a pay pause until the end of 2009," he said. (*Irish Examiner*-18.9.2008).

### THE TRADE UNIONS

ICTU General Secretary, David Begg said the draft agreement represented the best efforts of negotiators over a very long period of time.

"If we were to stay there until next

Christmas we couldn't achieve more by negotiation so it's open to democracy now to decide," he said.

"Everyone in the trade unions in the country will get a vote on this. It's a very extensive process which will unfold over the next few weeks and months."

Mr. Begg said he was confident his members would accept the deal.

"My experience is that the people of Ireland are very reasonable, rational people and when they take time to study things they usually make the right decision whether that's to reject it or to accept it."

"The only time they make the wrong decision generally is when they don't have the right information available to them."

Mr. Begg said it would take four to six weeks for trade unions to study the document and take votes on it. (*Irish Times*-18.9.2008)

### THE DIVEL IN THE DETAIL?

"EMPLOYERS will still be able to hire temporary workers on a short-term basis despite the new pay deal banning the use of agency workers to break strikes, business leaders warned last night." (*Irish Independent*-19.9.2008).

"While the provision was heralded as a breakthrough for workers, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) said it would only apply where striking workers have been compliant with Labour Court recommendations.

"This does not interfere with normal and prudent business practices when circumstances arise where an employer who needs staff can employ, on a direct hire basis and on a short-term contract. It doesn't interfere with a company's right to engage in outsourcing," explained IBEC's director of industrial relations, Brendan McGinty.

"Responding to claims from the representative body for smaller employers, ISME, that its members cannot and will not meet the "outrageous" pay terms negotiated, Mr McGinty said businesses will still be able to act individually and agree their own terms with workers.

"In the private sector there will be a three-month pay pause, the agreement is at the higher end of what can be afforded. There are companies who will need to engage with their staff and negotiate a sensible agreement.

"We represent many thousands of small businesses as well and we're very aware of the difficulties and problems that are out there across all sectors. We will have architecture in the agreement for companies who won't be able to pay the terms or who will need cost offsetting measures." he added.

"Mr McGinty said he will be engaging in extensive consultations with members in the coming weeks and that a final decision on whether or not to adopt the draft agreement will be made in light of feedback.

"We're not going to pre-judge what

their decision will be. We're going out to listen and hear what they have to say. In our view it's at the top end of what is affordable, but we feel that the agreement is the best available in the current circumstances," he added. (*Irish Independent*-19.9.2008).

### CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS

Meanwhile, Fr. Sean Healy, a director at the Conference of Religious in Ireland, said the draft pay deal fails to address the needs of the working poor.

Speaking on RTE Radio's 'Morning Ireland', he said: "I think it's much better to have a deal than not to have a deal but I think there is still a weakness or two within the agreement that I would see and now it goes back to the Government to resolve it in the Budget."

"The Society of St Vincent de Paul expressed concern that the social commitments are being overshadowed by the pay and workplace elements of the deal." (*Irish Independent*-19.9.2008).

"Ireland probably got too much credit abroad for its social partnership model, given that it seems less successful than some of the European ones in establishing sensible economic parameters.

But the damage to our reputation would also be greater than deserved if the system failed at its first serious test. With the economy and banking system under fierce scrutiny from abroad, that is something we could ill afford. There could be other costs as well. (Brendan Keenan-*Irish Independent*-18.9.2008).

### UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES

The Central Statistics Office states that an extra 10,600 people signed on during the month of June, bringing the total number on the Live Register to 226,000.

The total number signing-on is up by more than 63,500, or 36.5%, since the start of the year, bringing the standardised unemployment rate to 5.9%.

Cork city dole queues have grown by more than 3,500 people in the last year, and almost 25,000 are now signing-on across the entire County Cork.

The pressure has been such that signing-days for some on the Live Register has changed from monthly to bi-monthly.

In Letterkenny on Friday, September 12, the dole office was forced to close to enable staff tackle new unemployment applications.

### EXCHEQUER FIGURES

The exchequer deficit is over €8.4 billion for the first eight months of the year.

This is three times the deficit that Bertie

continued on page 24

## PAY DEAL continued

phase, their salary would rise to €21,321 over 21 months.

### Public sector:

- \* A pay pause of 11 months.
- \* From September 1, 2009, a pay increase of 3.5 per cent for nine months.
- \* From June 1, 2010, a pay increase of 2.5 per cent—except for workers earning up to and including €430.49 per week (€22,463 per annum) on that date, who receive a 3 per cent increase.

For those earning €430.49 a week or less, which equates to an annual salary of €22,463, a 3 per cent pay rise will apply in the second phase of the deal.

Workers on a salary of €50,000 will see their pay rise to €51,750 in the first stage of the agreement. The second increase of 2.5 per cent will bring their salary to just under €53,050.

Not all workers are covered by the deal. Only public and private sector workers who are members of relevant unions will see their salary increase as a result of the agreement being accepted.

However, the terms of the agreement will most likely be used as a benchmark in pay negotiations for many workers who fall outside the remit of the deal. The date of the first increase may vary, as previous pay agreements expired at different times.

### NON-PAY ELEMENTS

The draft agreement covers a range of initiatives on issues beyond the basic pay terms, including:

- \* Setting up a process to develop a national framework on the employment rights of temporary agency workers; while prohibiting their use in the case of official strikes or lock outs;
- \* Optional recourse to voluntary arbitration on change at enterprise level;
- \* Setting up a time-bound process in which the issue of employee representation and the appropriate legislative framework will be addressed;
- \* The introduction of a statutory prohibition on the victimisation of employees based on their membership or non-membership or activity on behalf of a trade union, and on incentivising non-membership of trade unions;
- \* Making provision for pensions under the Transfer of Undertakings Directive; and
- \* Commitments in relation to public service modernisation, including responding to the OECD Report on the Public Service.

The main new employment relations elements in the national agreement include:

- \* Publish Employment Agency Regulation Bill before the end of 2008;
- \* Set up a six month process

(deadline of March 2009) in which the issue of employee representation and the appropriate legislative framework will be reviewed, with a view to enactment of the necessary legislation in June 2009;

- \* A commitment to enact the Employment Law Compliance Bill before the end of 2008;

- \* Introduce legislation to strengthen existing system of Employment Regulation Orders (ERO's) and Registered Employment Agreements (REA's);

- \* Amendment of Competition Act, 2002, with regard to collective bargaining rights for certain vulnerable workers.

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"Social partnership can be viewed as a soft-option policy. We cannot afford strikes because they would discourage US investment here. So, under the guise of social partnership income taxes are reduced to keep the unions happy. Governments make up the revenue through stealth taxes. The irony is that as a result of all these convolutions wage growth bears no relationship to productivity, is excessive by international norms so that national competitiveness is being eroded all the time and inflation is much higher than it is abroad. We are too clever for our own good." (Michael Casey-*Irish Times*-4.12.2007. Mr. Casey is a former chief economist at the Central Bank and member of the board of the International Monetary Fund.

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### LABOUR PARTY

The proposals on wage increases in the draft national partnership deal are probably the best that the trade union movement could have secured in the current climate, the Labour Party has said.

Enterprise spokesman Willie Penrose, T.D., welcomed the conclusion of the talks between the Government and the social partners.

"It was inevitable that any agreement concluded against the background of current economic difficulties would be significantly different than agreements reached at times of economic growth," Mr Penrose said.

"The proposals on wage increases are probably the best that the trade union movement could have secured in the current climate, but clearly for many workers it will mean that they will only stand still and will experience no real improvement in their living standards, particularly if the government fails to bring inflation under control."

The leader of the Labour Party, Eamon Gilmore had an article on the economy in the *Sunday Business Post* on September 7, 2008 titled "Charting a positive course forward for the economy". He wrote on long-term employment; the construction industry; a national insulation scheme; the property market and "Labour's proposed 'begin to buy' scheme" for those

who want to get on the property ladder.

Not once throughout the article did Labour's leader refer to National Partnership or the Pay talks, which were taking place that week. It is incredible that a party which purports to represent labour could ignore its trade union affiliates and treat the Pay talks as if they had absolutely no bearing on the economic life of the country.

### SF AND LOW-PAID WORKERS

"Sinn Fein MEP for Dublin, Mary Lou McDonald described the agreement as a bad deal for low-paid workers and said a five cent hourly increase for low-paid workers was farcical." (*Irish Times*-18.9.2008).

Unions had been looking for flat rate increases of at least €30 a week for their low-paid members. However, all they received was 0.5%, as little as €2 a week in some cases.

### PENSIONS:

Provision would also be made for pensions under the EU's Transfer of Undertakings Directive, where an employee is legally transferred from one employer to another.

Pension provisions are not currently covered by the Directive.

The Taoiseach, Brian Cowen stated that he was personally very disappointed that:

"the pensions agenda was not moved forward.

"I think the enormity of the pensions problem that the country is facing by virtue of its changing demographics and by virtue of the holes that are in existing occupational pension funds is quite enormous," he said.

"And some day at some stage it will have to be grappled with and the Irish people and the government will have to confront the reality of that. I would like to do it sooner rather than later but you can only do what you can do and we haven't managed to push it beyond the regime set out in the current agreement."

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"The least of the blame for this debacle should be borne by the trade unions who, in truth, tempered many of their demands. The leading lights of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), however, should be hanging their heads in shame. Even though their bargaining hand was improved considerably by the sharply deteriorating economic climate since the talks fell apart in August, the employers—again—failed to walk the talk. The only possible explanation is that IBEC knows the vast majority of private employers will ignore the deal, thus allowing it to gain some kudos from agreeing one in the first place." (Matt Cooper-*Sunday Times*, London-21.9.2008).

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continued on page 25

## PAY DEAL continued

"For IBEC, the precious element of certainty would have been lost had the talks failed. But their members now know exactly what wages will cost over the next 21 months. Not only have they a newly refined 'inability to pay' system to rely on, there are several clauses that establish the need for worker cooperation with ongoing change; and the new voluntary system of binding arbitration to resolve rows over major change.

"The unions secured some extra comfort for the lower paid and managed to hit the 6% figure that many, late into the talks, had believed might just elude them but which SIPTU's Jack O'Connor held to, as a critical target.

"They surely know they would have struggled in any 'free for all' alternative. But perhaps most significantly of all, from their institutional perspective, is that they retain their influence at the centre of power. Without social partnership the unions faced losing any hope of addressing their concerns on a range of issues, such as collective bargaining.

"Had the talks failed, the Government, and especially Brian Cowen, no matter how unfair it might have been, would have taken considerable media and opposition party flak. That has been avoided, and with Budget 2009 approaching, Mr Cowen and his team have the chance to convey a real sense of purpose and leadership just when it is needed.

"Others have suggested that the public service got off rather lightly at a time when the public purse is diminishing, and a pay pause that accounted for all of 2010 would have been more appropriate". (*Industrial Relations News*-23.9.2008)

Private sector unions had said repeatedly they would not accept any pay pause for their members, but in the deal private sector workers must accept three months without any rise.

The same unions had also been looking for flat rate increases of at least €30 a week for their low-paid members. However, all they received was 0.5%, as little as €2 a week in some cases.

### "IT'S A DRAFT"

IBEC Director General, Turlough O'Sullivan said it may take several weeks to decide which was the right course of action for the country.

"It's a matter now for the membership of all the organisations to consider the draft," he said.

"That's what it is, it's a draft. But it was the best the parties could do under the circumstances. Hopefully this draft agreement will give us some breathing space to confront the serious difficulties the economy is facing. The architecture of the agreement is capable of responding to whatever needs an organisation has in

terms of their commercial and economic circumstances." (*Irish Examiner*-18.9.2008).

### THE GOVERNMENT

The Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen T.D., welcomed the conclusion of the draft Agreement. He commented:

"A National Pay Agreement will give a sense of confidence and stability in the challenging period ahead. The negotiations were very lengthy and complex and the social partners made commendable efforts to enable the terms of a draft Agreement to be identified.

"The terms of the Agreement are supported by Government given the wider economic and social benefits of a National Agreement".

"Public Sector real winners in pay deal" (*Irish Examiner*-22.9.2008).

"The Government emerged as the big winner in the new national pay deal.

"It will have more than half a billion euro extra to play with on Budget day after securing an 11-month public sector pay pause." (*Irish Independent*-18.9.2008).

The total pay rise for public sector workers will cost taxpayers at least €1.2bn a year, when fully implemented.

In securing an 11-month pay pause, the Government has ensured it will only need to find an extra €235m for next year for its own employees, when it announces its budget on October 14.

Taoiseach Brian Cowen has effectively postponed the pain of a massive pay bill until after the European and local elections next June, in the hope that the public finances will improve by late next year.

"Securing a pay pause was a major boost for the employers, along with special provision for the use of arbitration in 'difficult change' situations designed to bring "finality to negotiations".

"The deal means employers do not have to worry about negotiating a deal with their own workforces on the ground. It also imposes a new degree of certainty and stability in difficult times—something economists often underestimate—along with a very sophisticated inability-to-pay clause which all sides agree works.

"As David Begg of ICTU noted at the end of the process: 'There is a limit to what influence we have and we have reached it.' Begg was recognising the reality of bargaining in uncertain times and the reality of union membership hovering well below 30 per cent in the overall private sector.

"The fundamentals of the deal were completed in a five-hour face-to-face negotiation session between key players including Turlough O'Sullivan of IBEC, Jack O'Connor and Patricia King of SIPTU, David Begg of ICTU, Peter McLoone of IMPACT, Kieran Connolly of the Department of Finance and Tom Parlon of the Irish Construction Industry Federation.

"Securing a pay pause was seen as vital by the employers while the unions decided that no deal would travel without the low-pay provision. In the end, SIPTU leader Jack O'Connor played a decisive role in getting the deal over the line. Without O'Connor, IBEC leaders knew the deal could not be sold." (*Sunday Business Post*-21.9.2008).

### PUBLIC SECTOR

"*He ain't heavy, he's my brother*" as the Private Sector workers once again carried the can for the stars of the HSE, FAS, etc. etc.

The unions themselves had different agendas. The public sector unions were always facing difficult times because of the rapid deterioration in the exchequer's finances. For this reason, they were happy to link their case and their claim to whatever emerged in the private sector.

Without an across-the-board pay increase which included the private sector, the public sector would have been left to fend for itself and might have had to face some unpalatable medicine in terms of cutbacks and even lower increases than eventually emerged.

The next stage of the process is union balloting and the budget. But many participants believe a wider framework to facilitate deeper change in the public and private sectors is required from the social partners, which would anticipate difficulties. (*Sunday Business Post*-21.9.2008).

Public Sector pay accounts for 50 per cent of all current government expenditure.

"Mr. O'Connor, SIPTU President pointed out his union had the largest number of public sector members and they recognised the fact that they have to live with rising costs also.

"It does not matter if one works in a hospital that is funded by a public authority or a private institution. One still has to pay one's bills at the end of the week.

"I do not approve at all of these efforts to divide worker against worker." (*Irish Examiner*-12.9.2008).

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### The New Deal:—

#### Private sector:

- \* A pay pause of three months (including the Construction Sector).

- \* A pay increase of 3.5 per cent for a period of six months.

- \* A pay increase of 2.5 per cent for a period of 12 months or, for workers on €11 per hour or less on the date that increase falls due, a pay increase of 3 per cent.

Under the terms of the deal, low-paid workers with a salary of €20,000 will see their salary rise to €20,700 in the first stage of the agreement. In the second

continued on page 26



## "Pay 2008":

*Faugh an Ballagh\**

# The Soft Part Is Over Now, For The Hard Graft!

On September 17, 2008, the Government and social partners reached an outline agreement on a new national Pay Deal, proposing a 6 per cent pay rise over 21 months with a final half per cent rise for lower paid workers at the end of that period.

In the good times, you fill the grain stores as full as possible in the knowledge that next year's crop may not yield the same record output—it is a pattern in every phase of economic life—but for all the praise and plaudits and planning, Social Partnership shows very little evidence that it is now going to "save the future".

Bertie Ahern was renowned for his unquestioning belief in Social Partnership. Come negotiation time, Bertie's chant was always "There will be a deal".

On this occasion there was no Bertie yet, under the logic of Social Partnership, never was a deal more certain or necessary!

In the teeth of the credit crunch, stock market meltdown, energy spikes and currency fluctuations, Irish workers may yet sigh a breath of relief at the pay elements of the draft agreement, that is, if they receive it.

240,000 people are unemployed, inflation is rising and growth forecasts are being revised downward on an almost daily basis.

This deal was about pay!

Most of the "Non-Pay" provisions are merely aspirational. It might not be the end of Social Partnership, but it is definitely on hold.

The "Fat Cat" clause appealing for "moderation... in respect of executive pay" and "moral force" is hilarious in the extreme. The thrust of the clause is towards private firms. We have no "Fat Cats" in the Civil or Public Service. Oh! No.

The major challenge now is getting acceptance of the deal from the employers. Local bargaining will take on a whole new meaning. For have no doubt, thousands, tens of thousands of trade unionists will

not receive the full terms of "Pay 2008", without one hell of a battle.

As *Labour Comment* goes to press, representatives of the construction employers have indicated they will refuse to pay wage increases to their 200,000 staff members.

In response, SIPTU has demanded the Government withhold lucrative state contracts from those employers, if they do not sign up to the new deal.

The employers said while companies in other sections of the workforce can claim inability to pay the terms of the new deal, construction employers are prohibited from doing so by the Registered Employment Agreement (REA). Therefore, they said the CIF needed to seek a review of the REA.

"However, SIPTU President, Jack O'Connor attacked the construction industry employers given that they 'had made millions beyond their wildest dreams over the last 15 years'.

"He said the new wage agreement would fall if the construction industry did not sign up to it.

"If the agreement is not ratified by all the constituents, there is no agreement. We are not going to operate on

the basis that workers receive entitlements on one side of the economy, but not on another." (*Irish Examiner*-25.9.2008).

### THE PAY DEAL

The outline agreement on a new national pay deal, proposes a 6 per cent pay rise over 21 months with a final half per cent rise for lower paid workers at the end of that period.

An informal offer from employers of 5 per cent over 21 months was on the table when talks collapsed last August, but the unions wanted a shorter agreement of 18 months. Taoiseach Brian Cowen had indicated his preference for a longer term deal.

Further stalemate arose with the employers' proposal of a pay pause—11 months for the public sector, 12 months in the construction sector, and six months for private-sector workers.

Therefore, the difference between the parties on pay had been between 5% over 21 months (2.8% when annualised) or 6% over 18 months (4% when annualised). The 6% over 21 months amounts to just over 3.4% when annualised, or a splitting of the difference between these two approximate positions.

### PRIVATE SECTOR PAY PAUSE

In the private sector deal, the most novel element is the three-month pay pause—the first time there has been a pay pause in the private sector as a whole. The employers had backed a six-month pause by the time of the August breakdown in talks, while at that time the unions had been strongly opposed to any pay pause in the private sector. The three months splits the difference between the two.

Unlike the rest of the private sector, pay pauses have applied to the construction industry in previous national agreements. For example, the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW), provided for a five-month pay pause in the construction sector in 1994.

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\* An old Irish battle-cry meaning "Clear the way!" Ed.