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## Fantasy North

The Good Friday Agreement has led to the drastic decline of the two Northern Ireland parties which were central to its negotiation, the Ulster Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party. The essential futility of the structures put in place by the GFA led to their displacement by the 'extremist' parties, the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein. These parties are now experiencing the futility of it. But there are no other parties in the offing to displace them—except perhaps Jim Allister's movement of Unionist dissent, which may well appear as a party at the British Election next year and put the wind up the DUP and UUP.

There is a big difference between the DUP and Sinn Fein as 'extremists' relative to the GFA. The DUP rejected the Agreement, condemned the UUP for supporting it, campaigned against it in referendums and elections, swore it would never sit in Government with Sinn Fein under it, and then, when it had displaced the UUP as the major unionist party, took its place alongside Sinn Fein in Government.

In fact, it did what the UUP had not been required to do. It undertook the office of First Minister to Sinn Fein's Deputy First Minister. Sinn Fein had not been the senior party of the Catholic community while the UUP was the senior party of the Protestant community so the Deputy First Minister was SDLP.

'Extremist' Sinn Fein, by contrast, was enthusiastically pro-Agreement from the start. It had been advocating something like the Agreement long before 1998. For perhaps ten years the war had been kept going, after the prospect of military victory had receded, in order to compel the Government to make an arrangement of this kind.

The SDLP, though it was the major electoral party of the Catholic community for a third of a century, always had the air of second-best about it. It shot its bolt back in 1971, or 1974 at the latest. It held its majority status, not in antagonism with Sinn Fein, but because it was respectable and acceptable to British and Dublin administrations and it was known on its home ground that its rivalry with Sinn Fein was shadow boxing which posed no threat of communal rupture.

The Ceasefire which prepared the way for the Agreement was experienced in the Catholic community as a Republican victory. Media commentators, who never troubled to understand what Northern Ireland is, and the position in which it placed the Catholic community, say that that experience was a symptom of delusion. They say that in reality the Provos were defeated. But experience is experience, and the 'reality' that is posited

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## Politics And An Bord Snip

The 'Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes' (aka *An Bord Snip Nua*), chaired by UCD economist Colm McCarthy, has produced its findings. As an accountant's report in fulfilling the task set it—how to cut a few billion off the costs side of a balance sheet in a context where annual expenditure of  $\approx 50$ bn compares with income of  $\approx 30$ bn—it is an efficient, competent and thorough job. It came up with cuts of  $\approx 5.3$ bn but, given its methodology, it could have been any figure. The premise it chose as its starting point, the type of savings proposed, the areas outside its remit—where it suggests further revenue savings can be made—and the sacred cows it refuses to touch, tell a story however.

The McCarthy report is a Thatcherite wish list in the basic sense that the major cost savings it proposes are in the area of social spending, while steering clear or only tentatively touching on such elephants in the room as the ludicrous salary and pension privileges which have been allowed to accumulate at the top of the public service and judiciary, or the hospital consultants contract agreed by Mary Harvey in the last year (three times the rates earned by their opposite numbers in France or Germany).

While virtually every social spending

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## Some EU Heroes Of The Moment

**BARROSO**

The way the appointment of the next EU Commission President is being arranged speaks volumes about the Post and the current state of the EU. Barroso has been a good President, i.e., he has done what he has been told to do by the big Member States and overruled when he shows signs of having an independent view. That is the way a Commission President must act these days since the authority of the position was wrecked by Pat Cox and the Liberals.

As one of the thousands of broken-down Marxists that now operate across Europe, Barroso is the perfect man for holding a broken-down post. Barroso tried to go it alone once on the completion of Doha negotiations. But Sarkozy slapped him down and he lost all credibility as an international negotiator. Sarkozy is one of those who will now ensure he gets the job again. Why sack a good butler who knows his place?

And everyone else agrees he should get the job:

"Barroso should be a shoo-in for the job, principally because no one else has emerged as a contender. Across the main European political groups he has already won unanimous backing from his own political family, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP). He has also won support from three Socialist prime ministers: Britain's Gordon Brown, Portugal's José Socrates and Spain's José Luis Zapatero. This has torpedoed the candidacy of the one possible rival, former Danish prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen. (Irish Times, 16 June).

At the Council meeting in June he got the support of all 27 Prime Ministers but,

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***Labour Comment*, edited by Pat Maloney:  
People's Verdict**

(back page)

**Real Minimum Wage Already Cut By 4% :** Manus O'Riordan  
(page 27)

Due to pressure of space a number of articles have been held over, including a historical review of the formation of Afghanistan by Pat Walsh and John Martin on Racism and Community

against it is mere transcendentalism, even when expressed by dissident Republicans nurtured by Professor the Lord Bew.

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There is complete absence from the national press of any publication sympathetic to the predicament of the Northern Catholic community. Such sympathy is seen by the superficial mind of the social stratum that produces the media as sympathy with Sinn Fein. The fact that Sinn Fein was produced out of the situation in which the Northern Catholic community was placed, not by Partition as such, but by the political arrangements made by Britain as the means of enacting Partition and maintaining it, is denied. The implications of admitting it are too awful to contemplate. Dispassionate description of British political conduct, whether in Northern Ireland or in the world, is put down as *Anglophobia* by Fianna Fail Minister Martin Mansergh, as well as by Ruth Dudley Edwards on the wilder shores of political hysteria. *Aphobia* is a groundless, irrational fear or hatred of something. But, in official Ireland, a strictly accurate factual account of how Britain has managed the Six Counties for three generations

is decreed to be Anglophobic.

That it is Anglophobia is an Article of Faith. Articles of Faith issued by Rome about the affairs of another world, which if they are not provable are not disprovable either, are not held in high esteem in Ireland these days. But the secular Article of Faith that Britain is not responsible for the political condition of the Northern Ireland region of its state is held piously, in defiance of fact and reason.

If the condition of Northern Ireland is not the consequence of the very strange way Britain chose to govern it, what is it the consequence of?

The acceptable belief is that it was caused by an intrusive evil called Sinn Fein. But where did Sinn Fein come from? In the viable form in which it revived forty years ago, it came from the depths of Northern Ireland.

In 1970 there were two Sinn Feins. One, which was in the direct line of Apostolic succession from the Treaty split, was called Official Sinn Fein. It was what remained after the Cumann na nGaedheal (later Fine Gael) secession, the Fianna Fail secession, the Republican Congress secession, and the Clann na Poblachta

secession. In 1969 it was in the process of rejecting nationalism, disarming the IRA, and trying to find a way of waging class war under Marxist ideology.

In mid-August 1969, when the North was in turmoil for reasons that had nothing to do with Sinn Fein and little to do with nationalism, the leader of that Marxist Republicanism, Cathal Goulding, issued a statement to the press that he had given marching orders to his Belfast Brigade. The Loyalist populace in the North had no grounds for knowing that he had no Belfast Brigade.

At the same time the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, made a television broadcast in which he said he would not stand (idly) by while events in the North ran their course. Lynch had an Army of sorts and he moved it to the Border. His hagiographer, Professor Keogh of Cork University, tells us that Lynch had the firm intention of not using his Army, but of standing by and recognising the North as British. But the Loyalist populace had no means of knowing that either. What the Taoiseach actually said, combined with what the Chief of Staff of the IRA actually said, helped to confirm the Loyalist populace in the view that the 'civil rights' conflict within the North—which arose from the internal structure of Northern Ireland—was the Fifth Column of a United Ireland offensive.

Historical events occur in real time on the basis of what is present at the time. The chief external influence present in the Northern situation in mid-August 1969 were the inflammatory speech by the Taoiseach and the inflammatory press release (to the same general effect) by the Chief of Staff of the IRA.

Lynch's speech was experienced as inflammatory by the Loyalist populace. Therefore it was inflammatory.

Protestant activists in the Civil Rights movement, who were far removed from Loyalism, were brought up short by it as they saw it on television.

In recent years British Government spokesmen have devised a phraseology for denying what seems to be an obvious connection between British military activity in the Middle East and certain activities undertaken by Middle Eastern people in Britain. At first Prime Minister Blair said there was no actual connection. This was too absurd to be credible. It was modified into a statement that there was no legitimate connection, but that certain ill-disposed people used British action in the Middle East as an excuse for their own actions in Britain.

This is a back-handed admission of causative connection. Causation in social affairs is not of a kind with physical causation. In the physical world responses are not mediated by motives or excuses, which are the medium of response in the social world.

But, given the internal circumstances

of Northern Ireland in mid-August 1969, it would be far-fetched to describe Lynch's speech as anything but directly inflammatory. It did not cause the flames, but it was fuel thrown on the flames. If Lynch did not know that would be its effect he was a fool. But it is now considered necessary to construct the fool into a wise statesman.

John Paul McCarthy, who lectures on Irish history at an Oxford College and writes for the *Sunday Independent*, is the latest of the learned hurlers on the ditch who denounce Sinn Fein for the way it has played the Northern Ireland game, without finding it necessary to understand what kind of game the very peculiar structure of Northern Ireland makes necessary and what kind it makes impossible.

In his article on July 19th condemning an Adams article in the *Guardian* (*Adams Still Repeating The Same Old Boring Inanities*) he trundles on Lynch as the hero—or, in accordance with the modern spirit, the Joycean anti-hero)—when in fact he was neither. He was neither the resourceful Odysseus devising means of action inspired by Athena, nor the unambitious practitioner of the routine of rather grubby lower middle class life—the terms on which the American judge declared *Ulysses* harmless. He neither kept his head down during the critical period after mid-August 1969, nor did he direct Republican Ireland, of which he was the Executive head, into some kind of constructive line of action. He did a bit of this, and then he did a bit of that, and then he did a bit of the other. He flailed about and he bungled.

McCarthy tells us that "modern Sinn Fein still has no answer to the question posed by Taoiseach Jack Lynch in the white heat of 1970".

But the white heat was 1969. That was when Northern Ireland was thrown into flux—when it threw itself into flux in its response to a popular demand which now seems so modest that it hardly seems believable as the subject of a major agitation. And what Lynch said in the white heat of mid-August was that he would not stand (idly) by which was generally, and reasonably, understood to mean that he would not let his Army stand idly by.

The white heat lasted during the Autumn and Winter of 1969-1970. Positions taken up then largely determined the working out of subsequent events.

We published the two-nations view of the situation in September, saying that Partition did not break up an existing nation (except as regards the minority in the North), but was made durable by the conflict of nationalities that preceded it. In October Lynch repudiated that view, declaring that Ireland was a single nation, that Partition was the cause of the trouble in the North, and that peace depended on

## Political Reform and the Irish State

In the *Irish Political Review* of June 2009 the *Long Fellow* mentioned the *Late Late Show* of May 8th last in which a number of politicians were arraigned before Fintan O'Toole, Nell McCafferty and *Sunday Independent* writer and distinguished Oncologist John Crown where they were lectured to. The principal lecturer was O'Toole.

The *Long Fellow* finished by regretting how "*this programme calls into question RTE's relationship with the State. In no other country in the world would journalists be given such a platform to denigrate the Democratic institutions of the State and its representatives*".

Could it be the institutions of the state are in sore need of denigration?

How many states with democratic institutions will this year be forced to borrow approximately 40% of current government expenditure? In which European Union state are junior ministers paid more than the President of the United States? The answers to the above questions are instructive.

There is a fearful national economic crisis which is largely home grown and RTE and the journalists were attempting to get to the root of the political malaise which lies behind it.

O'Toole stated in his talk: "*People are in despair about Irish politics... decrepit and self-indulgent system... we as voters need to grow up*". I can only agree.

Reform of the electoral system was a big part of the talk. He did say: "PR is good and we should keep it but...". He was opposed to multi-seat constituencies. The main themes were electoral reform and structural reform so that we can enjoy the benefits of functional political institutions.

A clear and realistic insider's exposition of the questions involved was set out in the *Irish Times* of 4th May by former Fine Gael Education minister Gemma Hussey under the title *Our political system is no longer fit for purpose*.

Hussey got to the essence of the problem when she wrote: "*The skills required to massage a constituency seven days and nights a week have nothing to do with running a small European country with an open economy*".

Our political institutions are profoundly dysfunctional. This is what the journalists were attempting to address by proposing radical change regarding how we elect politicians and what they are meant to busy themselves with once in office.

**Tim O'Sullivan**

**Editor's Note:** While there is much to agree with in this letter, it is a misconception to think that TDs will find better things to do when they no longer have to 'massage' their constituents. The experience in England shows otherwise. Surely a more effective way of stimulating thought is to make TDs actually sit in the Chamber during debates? The empty benches speak volumes.

unification.

One did not need any insider knowledge at that time to see that Lynch's Government was doing things with guns which accorded with his speech about not standing idly by. But in May 1970 he prosecuted a group of people for 'conspiracy' who had been implementing his own policy. For thirty years it was possible to deny that it was his own policy that he prosecuted people for implementing. With the release of secret documents after 2002 that denial could no longer be made in good faith. And now those documents no longer lie in bundles in the National Archive, accessible only to people with months of leisure and a strong appetite for research. They have all been published, along with newspaper reports of the Arms Trials (the official Court Transcript having been lost) in Angela Clifford's *The Arms Conspiracy Trial*.

It is no longer deniable that Lynch instructed his Army to make itself ready for incursions into the North, and in the Summer of 1970 it was his own policy that he prosecuted as subversive conspiracy.

What was "*the white heat of 1970*" that caused Lynch to abort his own policy and prosecute it as conspiracy? A quiet word from the British Ambassador perhaps.

At the time we saw Lynch's Northern policy as absurdity conducted in fantasy, and were not greatly concerned that the events of 1970 gave a comic-opera appearance to the Republic. What concerned us was the impact in the North of Lynch's inflammatory speech-making combined with his invented Arms Crisis. Certain developments had been set in motion in the North between August and May were then disrupted.

There was perhaps a realistic possibility of an effective 'Constitutional nationalism' in the North, acting in conjunction with a Dublin Government with an active Northern policy taking effective leadership of the Catholic community and exerting pressure on Britain to enact a structural reform that would make things tolerable for a while. That is not what we advocated. But it was something that might have been done. When Lynch forced the Arms Crisis,

that line of development was off. And that was when Provisional Republicanism came into its own. The arrest of John Kelly was a slap in the face of what are usually called 'moderates' in the North, and it cleared the way for those who were willing to act independently of Dublin, and to see what might be done.

Now, almost fifty years later, McCarthy says that Lynch rounded on "*the fundamentalists and the sectarians*" and asked them if they wanted to "*adopt the role of conqueror over one million or so six-county citizens who at present support partition?*" No doubt that statement can be found in his speeches, which were a welter of self-contradiction. His basic theme was the old one that Partition was an atrocity against the Irish nation, and that no adequate solution to the trouble in the North could be found short of ending it.

Our view was that the atrocity at the source of the trouble was not Partition *per se* but the regime that was set up under it, which deprived the Northern minority of a political outlet in the democratic political system of the British state. That view was rejected by Lynch and by the Dublin Opposition parties, and was not even allowed to be expressed in the columns of the *Irish Times* or any other Dublin paper.

Blaise Pascal, a 17th century French philosopher, said that if everybody stayed quietly at home there would be much less trouble in the world. It would have accorded with Lynch's contradictory views on the North if he had given that advice to the Northern Catholics. But he did not give it—at least not in so many words. Somehow it doesn't seem democratic.

McCarthy complains of the use of "buzzwords" by Gerry Adams. But 'democracy' is an obligatory buzzword in these times, even though democracy in the proper sense, government *by* the people, has very little scope in the world we call democratic. Great care is taken that the people are bound into a small number of tightly organised political structures which govern: they are never left to govern themselves. Our democracy is an affair of organised elites. The role of the people is to choose, every four years, one or two of the three or four available elites to govern them. That is what is called democracy. Take that away—and it was taken away in the 6 Counties when they were set up as Northern Ireland—and where is democracy? England, Scotland and Wales

**The Arms Conspiracy Trial.** Ireland 1970: the Prosecution of Charles Haughey, Capt. Kelly and Others by *Angela Clifford*. 720pp. ISBN 978-1-874158-20-8. 2009. £30, £25.

**Military Aspects Of Ireland's Arms Crisis Of 1969-70** by *Angela Clifford*. 164pp. ISBN 1 874 157 16 2. 2006. £10, £7.50.

choose the party to govern the UK state. Northern Ireland has never had any part in the process of voting for a Government, or in the many procedures which are part of that process. It is all decided on the 'mainland'.

McCarthy:

"Adams remains wedded to hardcore republican theology and the same tattered parade of arguments. Ulster Protestants still remain chattels in this analysis, pawns on a chess board, to be moved and manipulated according to the whim of more powerful actors. The article [published by Adams in the *Guardian*] once again emphasises "British policy" as the "key unlocking the potential for this change to occur", and his references to Britain's "colonial past" are simply a coded way of denying the democratic basis of the unionist desire to go their own way in 1920, however imprecise the constitutional line-drawing was at that point."

But the Unionists did not "*desire to go their own way*" in 1920. It was once a standard item in the tattered parade of arguments that nobody from Ireland voted for the setting up of Northern Ireland. The statement was accurate. Unionist Ulster, having rejected the Parliamentary Home Rule Bill for Ireland by force, did not desire separate Home Rule for itself. Separate Home Rule for itself was thrust upon it by Britain as the only way it might avoid Irish Home Rule. What the Ulster Protestants wanted was to settle down as a normal part of the British state. British policy did not allow it. Carson said the Ulster Unionists had never aspired to govern Catholics, but British policy said they must either govern Catholics, or else come under what they saw as Catholic rule. Faced with that choice they agreed to govern Catholics, on a communal basis, in a separate devolved government, outside the ambit of the democratic political system of the State.

Northern Ireland is a product of British policy, not of Unionist desire. The Unionists were not able to govern what they had never desired to have. The Catholic minority—much bigger than a Protestant minority in all-Ireland Home Rule would have been—had to find things to do in this sectarian parody of democracy. McCarthy does not say what they should have done. He does not acknowledge the predicament in which they were placed by British policy and Ulster Unionist compliance with it. If he did acknowledge the predicament, the only advice he could give consistent with his denunciation of Sinn Fein is that they should have stayed quietly at home—as in fact large numbers of them did, under clerical exhortation, for two generations. But staying quietly at home, while subject to the provocations of a democratic state but excluded from its outlets for political energy, could not continue indefinitely. And when it proved to be no longer

tolerable, the outcome was a remarkable war-effort, sustained for a quarter of a century.

McCarthy:

"having waded through the conciliatory references to dialogues with 'ethnic minorities' and Professor Brendan O'Leary's ecstatic theories of future Irish federalism, we are left as ever with arguments that would have cheered Slab Murphy and Brian Keenan: Get the Brits to force the Prods into line; talk for a bit with them, then start pushing. His [Adams'] name checking of O'Leary here makes a lot of sense, since he is a worthy companion in the Emerald Piper. He wrote a bizarre essay in 2005 called *Mission Accomplished? Looking back at the IRA*, where he cleaned up every one of PIRA's historical arguments for modern consumption and tinkered with PIRA's kill-rate statistics... leading many of us to wonder if this had been written by the ghost of Liam Lynch in high dudgeon.

"Here O'Leary said PIRA punishment beatings were simply "by-products of the absence of legitimate state institutions" (i.e. the Brits made them do it). He also wrote that the "IRA demonstrates the power of the weak", an argument that is never squared with the fact that they killed more innocent Catholics than all the security forces combined. And his claims that "the IRA famously does not do drugs" must have come as a severe shock to its new friends in FARC.

"For all the constitutional pyrotechnics here about future confederations and pooling of sovereignty, there are the usual malevolent mutterings about "demographic transformations" which must strike self-respecting unionists as a Tim Pat Coogan-style threat. If the "political process" doesn't get you, then the sexed-up Catholic minority will, so you better start making a deal" etc.

"*Getting the Brits to force the Prods into line*" has never been a particularly Provo position. It was the position of Jack Lynch and of every party in the Dail in 1969, of Conor Cruise O'Brien and Garret FitzGerald in the crisis of 1974, of Fitz Gerald again in 1985. "*The Brits*" means in Northern Ireland the constitutional authorities of the State. It was "*the Brits*" who in 1921 compelled "*the Prods*" to undertake the communal government of Catholics and forego their wish to settle down as part of the British political system. And, insofar as the 'constitutional' SDLP ever had a coherent strategy, "*the Brits*" making "*the Prods*" toe the line was the means of realising it.

"*The Prods*" have never shown any autonomous capacity for dealing with crises within the semblance of a state which "*the Brits*" thrust upon them. In 1969 Jack Lynch demanded that "*the Brits*" make "*the Prods*" toe the line on the trifling Civil Rights demand for Local Government reform and on mid-Summer

parading. "The Brits" refused and the North blew up. In 1972 the 'Northern Ireland state' was demolished by "the Brits" at the stroke of a pen. In 1985 Garret Fitz Gerald made an Agreement with "the Brits" that could only have been designed to rile "the Prods" and John Hume said its purpose was to "lance the Unionist boil".

"Demographics" was the form of politics proper to the Northern Ireland system set up by "the Brits". It was never the case that there was a system of politics based on social issues there which the Provos, or even Tim Pat Coogan, debased into sectarian demographics. The size of Northern Ireland was determined with demographics in mind, and Electoral Registration Societies enrolled Protestants and Catholics in the electors' list and got them out on Polling Day. Protestants were chastised by their political leaders for not breeding fast enough. And Capt. O'Neill's justification to the Protestant community for the reforms, which (under pressure from "the Brits") he tentatively suggested, was that they would probably reduce the Catholic breeding rate.

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Professor O'Leary looked at Northern Ireland about 20 years ago. He saw what we saw, probably under our influence. He was then a lecturer at the London School of Economics, close to the centre of power, with a career to make. He saw that Whitehall power was determined to continue operating British policy in Ireland with the instrument of the undemocratic polity of Northern Ireland. A successful career would not have been made in fundamental opposition to that policy. Whitehall patronage was very, very extensive and effective in all that related to Northern Ireland. O'Leary therefore got himself off the hook of his inconvenient understanding by arguing that there were in Northern Ireland "facsimiles" of the institutions that made the British state functional. By this ingenious verbal device he gave up on the project of democratising the North as part of the UK and gave academic assistance to the project of making the North part of the other actual state. McCarthy jeers at this, but only on the basis of refusing to address the reality of what Northern Ireland is.

The implication of his jeers is that the strictly institutionalised sectarianism of devolved government in the North, subordinate to Whitehall and excluded from the political system that sustains Whitehall, is democratic.

**"Facsimile" Politics In Northern Ireland,** And how it makes the governing of Northern Ireland democratic. A comment on the creative political accounting of Professors J. McGarry and B. O'Leary by Brendan Clifford. 48pp. ISBN 0 85034 078 8 . AB, 1996. €5, £4 .

Brian Cowen lent his authority to a similar absurdity during the month:

"In his first address to the Seanad as Taoiseach, Mr. Cowen said the "democratic institutions [in the North] and the peace that we all worked so hard to achieve are being challenged by a tiny and unrepresentative group of people with no mandate and no support for their actions". But the "continued existence of sectarianism, of peace walls and of deep communal divisions in parts of the North is an affront to democracy and to a civilised society. It defies the belief that this is continuing in the year 2009..." Mr. Cowen stressed that "the next vital step is to complete the devolution of policing and justice to Northern Ireland so that locally elected leaders can deal with some of the most serious and central issues faced by any society."

"He said: "The great genius of the Good Friday Agreement is that it has overturned the old historical analysis where people from different traditions sought an end destination which is mutually exclusive from the other. The great genius of the Good Friday Agreement is that it commits us to a common journey regardless of destination, a common journey that is about signifying our mutual interest in working together" (IT report 15 July).

We suppose that Cowen is a very busy man, trying to deal with the serious problems of his own State under the scrutiny of a well-informed public, and that any old high-falutin guff will do on the subject of that far-off piece of a country about which his electorate wish to know nothing. But really! — a common journey to nowhere with everybody just happy to be on the train along with everybody else, not caring where they're going, or if they're going anywhere. Round and round the rugged ranks the ragged rascals run!

The old historical analysis is overturned. All but a tiny minority are happy to be engaged in the democratic adventure without purpose, structure, destination, or functional parts, which was launched by the GFA.

So why the "continued existence of sectarianism, of peace walls and of deep communal divisions" .. Because what the GFA provided for was peace in a carefully structured medium of sectarianism and communal division. Until the GFA there was communal division *de facto* in the North, behind a pretence of something else. The GFA established communal division *de jure*.

Cowen's speech deserves notice as the ultimate gesture of contemptuous washing of hands on the North.

What the GFA requires in order to be a final settlement is that everyone should stay quietly at home. If they must make journeys, they should do so separately, in the privacy of their homes. They should

content themselves with fantasy journeys to nowhere, because anything else will activate the communal division which the GFA sanctifies.

Might we suggest that Cowen should order, for mass distribution in the North, as the only piece of literature likely to support his contemptuous ideal for the North, Xavier de Maestre's *Voyage Autour De Ma Chambre — A Journey By Myself Around My Own Wee Room*.

## Editorial Digest

**Orangefest?** The Twelfth of July, and its celebration of a Protestant victory over the Catholics at the Boyne in 1690, was celebrated by Orangemen again this year — mostly on the 13th. Some within the Orange Order, and outside it, want to get rid of its old sectarian image and turn the Twelfth into what is called an Orangefest. A bit of family fun. All welcome, etc. This trend is vocally supported by Unionist supporter Roy Garland, especially in his Irish News column. But many in the Order see that approach as a betrayal — especially clergy associated with the Order. They say that people are welcome to attend the marches and other events but that tourism and the like are not their purpose. That is to celebrate Protestantism and its triumphs, and to act as a warning to loyal people to be on their guard for the future.

There was an amusing letter to the *Irish News* over the period, pointing out that the events celebrated by the Orangemen, Aughrim, Derry, Inniskillen and the Boyne, with thanks to their forefathers, occurred more than 100 years before the Order was formed.

Many Protestants read the *Irish News*: one assumes that they get their information on the marches elsewhere for, while a very detailed programme for the Twelfth was published in that paper, it didn't tell you whether the particular march was on the Sunday or the Monday. In the case of Belfast it got the times spectacularly wrong.

Ardoine saw rioting yet again—three nights in succession, stone throwing, petrol bombing and one shot. The Provos said the trouble was got up by dissidents, a position echoed by the *Irish News*, day after day. On the other hand, they blamed the Orangemen and the police. Gerry Kelly said: "Eirigi, Republican Network for Unity (RNU), Republican Sinn Fein (RSF) and the 32-County Sovereignty Movement sent people to Ardoine with the deliberate purpose of creating a riot situation. They brought weapons into the area, then created a riot situation during which they fired shots in a heavily built up area" (*Irish News*, July 15th). But on regional TV he emphasised the responsibility of the Orange Order and said its march was a provocation. He also said the the police handling of the situation, water cannon and plastic bullets, made matters worse. RSF leader in the area, Martin O'G

continued on page 11

# Politics And An Bord Snip

*continued*

scheme or local development initiative, however small, is targeted for cutting or scrapping in the report—despite the substantial redistributive factor they represent in both urban and rural disadvantaged areas—not a single roads project or prison building project is questioned (the prison building programme "should proceed in a cost-efficient manner as soon as possible"). An editorial in *The Irish Times*, in a rare lucid moment, noted: "The first thing to be said is that this report presents a menu of financial options to the Government without any reference to the social policy of the state" (17 July).

The report is Thatcherite too in the many secondary areas of cultural and educational spending it identifies where it indicates the state should abandon or greatly reduce expenditure, on the basis that it should not be involved in such things as they are of no discernible economic benefit.

Finally it is Thatcherite in its presumption that economics provides the key to solving the current crisis.

It is not surprising that this is the case. The Group was not an independent body. Its second-in-command was Donald McNally, Second Secretary General, Department of Finance; and the other members were Pat McLaughlin, CEO, Irish Payment Services Organisation and former deputy ceo of the Health Services Executive; Maurice O'Connell, former Governor of the Central Bank and former senior official in the Department of Finance; William Slattery, Executive Vice-President of the US investment bank, State Street Corporation; and Mary Walsh, former Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and member of the Commission on Taxation. *"The Group was supported,"* the report tells us, *"by a Secretariat provided by the Department of Finance."* It was thus led by the nose by the higher echelons of Brian Lenihan's Department of Finance with a few global capitalist celebrities thrown in.

At the height of the Celtic Tiger—during what is now regarded as the period when it lost the run of itself—Ireland was the darling of the globalist elite: the *A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalisation Index* ranked Ireland first in its league of globalized economies in 2002, 2003 and 2004, and second in 2005, and the *2006 Index of Economic Freedom*, compiled jointly by the *Wall Street Journal* and the neo-conservative Heritage Foundation, found Ireland's economy to be the world's *"third freest"*, and the *"freest in Europe"*. The writ of the Chicago School of Economics and Harvard Business School have long held sway at the Department of Finance.

But the resolution of Ireland's economic crisis will be fundamentally a political one, as it was in the 1980s. Economic policy is merely a tool in that process. In the mid-1980s Fine Gael advocated a stringent strategy of deflationary measures and suppression of social discontent (echoing what was then being done in Britain), and Alan Dukes offered his support to the new Fianna Fail regime of Charles Haughey on the basis that that was what he was about to do. Haughey instead built a solution based on introducing the German social model and the implementation of Social Partnership. This produced twenty years of growth that included working class prosperity and the creation of a substantial and expansive social state. It also included putting Ireland at the centre of Europe in the real sense of making robust alliances with France and Germany against Britain. That was the time of the Franco-German strategy of deepening EU federalist and social integration, a visionary project alas since abandoned in favour of the bleak world of an ever-expanding 'competitive' single market..

There are signs that Fianna Fail realises that the country is again at a 1987 moment (rather than a 1956 Lemass moment as being urged on it by Senator Harris). It has both owned and disowned the McCarthy Report. It has published it six months ahead of the Budget to allow its messages to be absorbed by the political process, while making it clear that it regards its recommendations as proposals only. It is right to do this, as the Report, despite protestations to the contrary, persistently acted contrary to the terms of reference it was given (see the article below, *A Globalizer's Wet Dream*). And Fine Gael has responded to it more or less as Alan Dukes responded to what he thought Haughey had in mind in 1987.

The Government has released the report and made it known that it is *"part of the solution"*. It is clear that it is meant to mesh with other *"inputs"*, especially the 2008 OECD report on public service reform, *Towards An Integrated Public Service*, and the imminent reports of the Commission of Taxation and the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector. These latter bodies no doubt have been given marching orders in relation to property tax and effective "reverse bench marking". (The Bench-marking process brought public sector pay into line with that in the private sector in return for productivity increases; Reverse Benchmarking will presumably decrease salaries in line with the fall in pay.)

Fortunately there is, still, a political process. Despite 20 years of deep and cynical hostility to it by the media, and the successful bringing down of three of four Taoisigh in that period, Fianna Fail has as yet failed to implode. Last month in Tralee

the ICTU conference showed that the Trade Unions too remain a power in the land. The first act of the newly elected Congress President, SIPTU's Jack O'Connor, was to propel a resolution of the electricians dispute, on the ground of Social Partnership. The 1980s-type showdown had been generated in a situation where a deflationary strategy by Government and Employers seemed to be on the cards. By threatening an all-out strike in support of the electricians, O'Connor reminded the public that Trade Union power remains an element in the land, and forced the Employers' groups to pull back from the anarchy of the free market and allow a resolution of the dispute through the Labour Court structures. It was left to the former Progressive Democrat Minister Tom Parlon, of all people, to denounce rogue employer groups who wanted to abandon Partnership structures in favour of pursuing their case in the High Court.

Jack O'Connor represents the opposite pole to the assumptions underlying the McCarthy group report—a negotiated solution to the economic crisis that maintains the substance of the social achievements of the boom decades generated by Haughey's revolution.

The ICTU Conference also saw the re-emergence of the potential of the Labour Party. Ruairí Quinn, whose blind hatred of Fianna Fail ensured that the Party excluded itself from power for over a decade, allowing the PDs in their place, opposed Social Partnership in 1987 and is again aligning himself with a Fine Gael-led slash-and-burn "alternative" government. But if Eamon Gilmore's speech at Congress shows a return to first principles — seeking a negotiated national recovery and implementation of industrial relations legislative reform to make Trade Union support for Lisbon possible—then maybe, just maybe, there is again some labour spirit back in Labour, just as Cowen/Lenihan seem to be showing that there is still some of de Valera's steel in Fianna Fáil.

A substantial way in which the current crisis—and the response needed to it—differs from the Lemass challenge of 1956 and is more comparable to the 1987 crisis which Haughey took on, is that, while the 1950s finally offered an option for connecting with a wider European and world economy, there are substantial things to be saved and built upon this time.

*The Irish Times* is a key political player in the Republic, after Fianna Fáil and the Unions. Its merchants of doom, such as its new-found celebrity performer Prof. Brian Lucey of TCD, have denounced the period of the Celtic Tiger as one of Government profligacy and waste. This relentless negativity—about which even George Bush's Ambassador to Ireland recently expressed shock in a farewell article—has contributed to undermining the economic

standing of the State internationally. A consequence of this is that the cost of Government borrowing on world markets has risen, now being higher than for Greece. To these destructive critics, the McCarthy Report is grist to the mill. Noel Whelan (18 July) loudly denounced Government waste "*now proven in this book of evidence*".

"Politicians and public officials stand indicted for failing to ensure adequate financial accountability. By page five the reader begins to understand that any realistic menu of savings has to include some cuts in social welfare and further savings in public sector pay and/or pensions. The report, for example, points out that of every €10 of current public spending, €3.70 is spent on social welfare and €3.50 on pay or pension, with €2.80 spent on the remaining non-pay items. The allegation that governments were failing to ensure adequate financial accountability in the public sector has been made repeatedly in recent years. It was dramatised particularly effectively in Eddie Hobbs's Rip Off Republic series broadcast on RTÉ television in 2005. It has been an allegation made most frequently by Fine Gael's Richard Bruton. The allegation is now proven in this book of evidence. There was clearly a systemic failure in the way in which public money was spent in implementing policy. *Politicians and public officials stand indicted for those failures.*"

Taoiseach Cowen is standing firm against this nonsense: "*Every recession provides the opportunity for a restructuring of our economy and that is what we have to do today*". Furthermore, the boom years had created considerable wealth which had been invested in substantial physical and social infrastructure: "*We have seen a lot of improvements, and quite rightly so, in a whole range of social policy areas down the years... I think all of us have to avoid any knee-jerk reaction to the report and just recognise that the quicker we get our public finances in order, as we know from recent economic history [i.e. the 1980s—Ed.], the quicker we can put ourselves in a position to get back to growth and jobs again.* (Irish Times, 18 July).

Cowen is right. Right-wing economists from Ed Walsh, President of Limerick University, to Constantin Gurdgiev, a UCD/TCD economist and now Director of the neo-conservative "Open Republic Institute", along with newspaper commentators, have reacted to the McCarthy Report with unrestrained glee at the prospect of a deconstruction of the social state and abandonment of Social Partnership.

The fact of the matter is that huge wealth was generated by both the Celtic Tiger's real economy and its property bubble—between 2002 and 2006 the Department of Finance regularly underestimated by billions the budget surplus

accruing. And this surplus, though some of it was doubtless "*wasted*", was ploughed overwhelmingly into physical and social infrastructure that took the welfare state in Ireland (and general standards of living) way beyond the standards applying in the UK (which have declined under Thatcher-Blair to the worst in the EU-15). The substance of this achievement must be saved in any recovery programme.

The current political-economic crisis can be traced to the abandonment of the discipline of the social model after 2002 and the allowing of free market forces in the property and financial markets to run their course. In 2007, at the height of the building boom, just before the crash, 50% of houses built were 'second homes' availing of irrational tax breaks and built to rent out as holiday homes or housing for immigrant construction workers brought in to build yet more houses.

The country is at a crossroads. It faces the same choices that it faced in 1987. One road leads to a consolidation of Social Partnership through a New Deal recovery approach, with its concomitant political and social policy disciplines; the other—the Thatcherite option reflected in the commentaries of the cheer-leaders of the McCarthy Report—leads to the anarchy and social ghettos of the Anglo-Saxon

model, where the dissolution of the welfare state has destroyed social solidarity and produced a sprawling and deadening underclass culture.

Following the ignominious collapse of the Fitzgerald Coalition in 1986, in the wake of a national debt far in excess of GDP, a failed Divorce Referendum and the walkout of Frank Cluskey's Labour Party, a *Programme for National Recovery* (PNR) was developed by the new Haughey regime working closely with the newly constituted system of Social Partnership. This occurred in the thick of opposition from Alan Dukes and Ruairí Quinn. Cowen/Lenihan must go back to first principles. Haughey took Congress at its word—the dramatic ICTU document *Confronting the Jobs Crisis*. By-passing the disciples of Keith Joseph in the Department of Finance, he built the PNR, working through the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) with the Social Partners. The NESC—and indeed the Department of the Taoiseach itself—which have been sidelined in the past year and replaced by the hard men of the Harvard School at the Department of Finance, must be brought back into the centre of things, and charged with generating a radical report to serve as the foundation for building a new Programme for National Recovery.

## Bord Snip Report—

### A Globalizer's wet dream

The terms of reference given to the McCarthy group were to "*review the scope for reducing or discontinuing Expenditure Programmes with a view to eliminating the current budget deficit by 2011*" and to "*to this end, [to] analyse and make recommendations on reducing the numbers employed in each area of the Public Service.*" These aims were to be achieved taking account of three principles: identifying and prioritising particular "*output targets and areas*", achieving "*greater efficiency and economy in the delivery of all services*" and the "*rationalising and streamlining delivery of public services in the consumers' interest*".

But the Group decided to tear these up and invent a few principles of its own instead. As its 'Basis of Evaluation', the report states:

"In assessing the scope for savings in each area of expenditure, the Group considered each programme from first principles insofar as possible. This involved raising basic questions such as the necessity for provision of the service, and the reasons why public service provision might be warranted, rather than allowing the private sector to provide the service... Some services, such as public

goods and transfer payments, are best provided from general taxation. For these programmes the Group examined the underlying need for the programme of expenditure and the scale of provision. Similar considerations applied to 'merit goods' such as education and healthcare, which can be provided by either the public sector or the private sector, but which under our political and economic structures are predominantly provided from the public purse. Other expenditures can generally be categorised as grants and subsidies and a key element of the Group's review in respect of these programmes was the necessity for continued public subsidy"

The Group thus took it upon itself to identify what it saw as the need for any particular service, and secondly asked itself why there was any reason for the State to provide this, rather than private enterprise. Grant and subsidy programmes were examined from a point of view again of whether there was any need for the subsidies in question in the first place. Surely this was something it was simply not in a position to do.

In the area of taxation the Group also

decided where it stood. Despite being beyond its remit, it comments on Government plans for substantial tax increases:

"Clearly the need for further sharp tax increases can be mitigated to the extent that greater economies in expenditure can be identified. In this regard, the Minister for Finance has stated that the scope for further income tax increases is very limited and that the Government will be looking to the expenditure side for the greater part of the fiscal consolidation effort. The full-year expenditure savings of €5.3bn identified by the Group (see section 1.2 below) should give the Government more scope in this regard, although it is not claimed that these proposals are an exhaustive list of policy options available."

Although taxation was beyond its remit, it makes no bones of where it stands on the principle of it: tax increases must be avoided at all costs. Instead of identifying revenue options, however, it defers to the forthcoming publication of the Commission on Taxation. But why not comment on the potential of Property Tax not only as a vast reservoir of untapped revenue, but also as a major controlling mechanism for socially desirable planning and development?

Its position on public sector pay—also outside its remit—is no less clear. It states that Government expenditure is dominated by three areas—social welfare (37%), exchequer pay and pensions (35%) and other programmes (28%). Now, it could have broken this down in any number of other ways, e.g. cost of delivery of education services, health services etc. But no, "rates of pay" is the issue:

"In the Group's view, the Government will need to secure further savings in public service pay costs to achieve the required reductions in overall public expenditure, and in this context it will have to consider further reductions in rates of pay and allowances in addition to the numbers reductions proposed in this Report."

There is much sense in the Report, if it is taken at the level of an accountant's assessment of how the State could do better in managing public spend. Numerous cost saving measures are identified through restructuring and consolidation of programmes and spending lines. Many restructuring proposals are effectively implementing the recommendations of the much hailed 2008 OECD Report *Towards an Integrated Public Service*. The report identifies massive waste in Science and Technology investment and in funding large numbers of PhDs for little discernible economic return. It also has sound recommendations for integrating enterprise support bodies, restructuring third level Technology Institutes and rationalizing state agencies (not least in the educational area).

On civil service reform, the report criticizes civil and public service staffing structures, notably the—

"disproportionate increase in the ratio of senior-level grades where, for example, the numbers at middle to higher management levels in the civil service grew by some 82% in the period 1997 to 2009 at a time when civil service numbers as a whole increased by 27%."

It cautiously notes that 41 of 76 Irish Ambassadors abroad are currently graded at Assistant Secretary grade or higher, and recommends—in addition to greatly reducing the number of Ambassadors and Embassies given that the EU will be taking care of foreign policy after Lisbon is passed (!)—that no more than four Ambassadors should be graded at that position. It also attacks the perks of the diplomatic service: "*The Group notes that the Foreign Service Allowance is not taxable nor is it subject to the pension levy or income levy and recommends that it be reduced by 12 1/2% in recognition of the contributions made by those serving in other areas of the public service.*" It hints that the forthcoming Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector and the benchmarking process be used to establish "*comparators*" with international standards. Now that would be interesting, as we already know that many senior grades, including Ministers themselves, senior Army grades etc. are paid well in excess of even their UK counterparts.

At a recent meeting of the Lemass International Forum there was much talk of the need to "*slaughter sacred cows*" (thus Senator Harris in the *Sunday Independent*, 28 June). But our Bord Snip has its own sacred cows where it fears to tread. The judicial salaries question was not addressed, although the question of the legislature was even though the shape of this arm of the state is also provided for in the Constitution. Yet the group could feel free to speculate on the case for fewer elected representatives and a unicameral parliament (i.e. abolition of the Senate). There may be a case for both—indeed de Valera never believed in the need for a senate (he abolished the Free State Senate because of its penchant for electoral corruption) and sought to have a single chamber in his 1937 Constitution, only exhaustedly conceding a second chamber because of the excessive din of the Blue Shirts.

The Committee's recommendations on cuts in social welfare rates by this stage are well known. The public seems to have been taken by surprise by the report's statement that general social welfare rates had increased by over 100% since 2000. The establishment of a substantial welfare state during the Tiger years is not something the press has liked to report. Single Jobseeker's Allowance at €204 per week

is nearly three times the UK rate of £68. This is of course "*uncompetitive*", but UK welfare rates are now the lowest in the EU-15 and its minimum social standards have become an unacceptable and unimaginable standard for the Ireland shaped by Social Partnership. Nevertheless, the McCarthy Report not only makes the case for a 5% cut in basic rates, but also for a cut of 20% in Child benefit ("*savings of €513m*"), the abolition of the Christmas week bonus, changing eligibility criteria to "*eliminate second welfare payments*" (e.g. under the Carer's Allowance, Illness Benefit, Jobseeker's Benefit and Community Employment Schemes), grading jobseekers assistance by age, changing eligibility conditions for Family Income Supplement (€20m), discontinuing the Family Support Agency (€30m) and so forth. The social cost of such proposals, if implemented, would be truly staggering.

In addition to taking the axe to social welfare, the McCarthy Report wishes to remove a wealth of schemes which exist in poorer rural and urban districts and which contribute to the maintenance and development of social capital. These include a welter of innocuous sounding "*equality projects*", local development initiatives (€40m), FÁS programmes, RAPID and CLÁR programmes (€106m) and so forth. While they could probably do with reorganizing and restructuring, they effectively involve quite substantial resource and income redistribution to poorer communities and enable myriad community level activities to be developed. But in the opinion of the report: "*There is little evidence of positive outcomes for these initiatives*" and it proposes vast cuts to them. This, if implemented, would represent a rupture with the contract that has existed with the poorest places in Ireland since 1991, when the then social partnership agreement—the *Partnership for Economic and Social Progress* (PESP)—inaugurated a state onslaught on poverty and deprivation at the behest of Congress. The multiple Local Partnership initiatives that resulted made a considerable impact on communities afflicted at that time with unemployment levels way over 40% and intergenerational long term unemployed. By 2003, long term unemployment in Ireland had come down to about 1% of the workforce and the cycles of poverty in these areas was effectively broken.

Also for the chop are school capitation grants, the Rural Transport Scheme, the rural Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the REPS programme (Rural Environment Protection Scheme) and Affordable Housing programmes. And, of course, the privatization of Bord na Móna (despite the fact that it was restructured in recent years and now actually returns a profit to the state). All of this, of course, will further add to the misery the Report's recommend-

ations would inflict if implemented. The carve-out of such schemes represent an onslaught on rural Ireland and on the foundations of Irish society in rural townlands.

The structures of Social Partnership are also examined. Here the Report seeks the abolition of the National Economic and Social Development Office and National Economic and Social Forum and National Centre for Partnership and Performance, leaving just the core National Economic and Social Council (NESC) standing. The Department of the Taoiseach should also be cut down to size, with a 25% programme expenditure cut. That Department has operated since the Haughey Government of 1987 as the elite steering group of the State, with special responsibility for its two most important programmes — the Northern Ireland Peace Process and the Social Partnership Process. Why have such a Department at all, the report seems to imply, now that the Department of Finance is back in charge of things.

Apart from its recommendations on social spending cuts, the economists and globalizers of Bord Snip do not see much point in the state subsidizing cultural activities and vents its ire on particular idiosyncratic aspects of the State, such as the Army Equestrian School which it dismisses in comic opera terms: *"The Group sees no justification for the Army Equitation School as part of a modern professional defense force."* Maybe the Austrians should get rid of the Spanish Riding School and the Spanish should privatize the Prado? Equally hilariously it recommends boldly that expenditure on UN peacekeeping missions be subsumed as —

"part of Ireland's expenditure on foreign aid", "given the significant contribution that this Programme is making to overseas development by guaranteeing the security of people and property... Irish commitments in this regard should be reflected within Government accounts by reference to the totality of humanitarian related expenditure, thereby fully recording Ireland's distinctive tradition of whole hearted engagement in peacekeeping operations."

Its recommendation that the Chad mission be abandoned would certainly be supported by *Irish Political Review*, though for reasons other than those of An Bord Snip. The report also advocates abandoning plans to rebuild the Navy's training sailing ship *Asgard II* (named after Erskine Childers' *Asgard* which ran the guns to Howth in 1913). Without a hint of irony it recommends that the insurance payment due from its sinking should be made over to the general exchequer. This would "save €3.8m as well as ongoing savings of €0.8m a year

*from termination of the [Asgard young people's sailing] training scheme".*

In similar vein, the Report recommends abolition of the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism and their functions redistributed across various Departments. It says this would leave scope for "*two other Departments, whose creation could reflect emerging priorities for the Government*". For sale should also go "*surplus*" state properties. Rural development schemes and income supports should go. As regards the state forestry service, it calls on Government to "*review the operations of Coillte with a view to realising optimal return through rationalisation, asset disposal and, possibly, privatization*". The Irish language?: "*matters relating to Irish language and culture should be assigned to the Department of Education & Science*" while "*allocation of grants should become a responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government*." Abolish the allocation to *Culture Ireland*, generating a saving of €1.6m and charge entrance fees at "*various national cultural institutions and the National Gallery*". Maybe sell the books in the National Library for another few bob as well as things like the Ardagh Chalice as they are of little discernible economic benefit?

The sooner we get a political initiative of the type sought in the Editorial of this journal the better.

Philip O'Connor

## Cúpla snip eile.....

- \* Reduce TDs to two per constituency.
- \* Abolish the Seanad.
- \* Abolish the plethora of new prima donna Mayors.
- \* Abolish salaries for local councillors.
- \* No more Tribunals — report allegations to the Gardaí.
- \* A windfall tax on Tribunal lawyers' earnings.
- \* Ditto on RTE chatterboxes.
- \* Abolish University History Departments.
- \* Reduce Defence Forces to defence needs.

Watch this space.

## EU Heroes

continued

looking at the small print, he won it by promising crucial Member States the Commissioner posts they wanted. And he got very emotional about their support! A pathetic sight. He was acknowledging that he was getting the job at the behest of the Member States. At this stage of the EU's development, the relationship between the Commission President and the Member States should not be like this. This is a backward step. The formalities could be the same but the substance should be different. Member States should be having to choose between different candidates with distinctive policies for the future of the EU.

There is not even any pretence at contention for the post. This should be the EU top job and therefore there should be great competition for it,. After all, these days, even in countries where there is very tough and thankless work to do, there is no shortage of people willing to unseat the current incumbents to do it. That is natural. It is unnatural where there are no contenders for a top political post. The fact is that this is no longer such a post. At this stage of the EU project it should not be such a subservient position, almost a token position, but it is and it will become more so as time goes on. The Commission Presidency has become the lowest common denominator rather than being the highest common factor in the EU structure.

### SARKOZY

The leadership of the EU is taken by whatever Member State or grouping of Member States that asserts itself sufficiently. Sarkozy is trying to do this at the moment. He is also planning another visit to Ireland to get the Lisbon Treaty passed in the October 2nd Referendum. Who exactly does he—and the Irish Government—think he is? The real leader of the EU no doubt acting as though he was still President of the Council and practising perhaps for the new role of permanent EU President that is in the offing if Lisbon succeeds. But Tony Blair may get the first go at that—what a choice and what a prospect!

There is an Anglo-Saxon caricature of Frenchmen as vain, arrogant, verbose, and duplicitous—but not to be taken too seriously as they will always defer to Britain when the chips are down. If they are short in stature they fit the caricature even better. Sarkozy has all the qualifications to bring the caricature to life and is working hard to do so. What he does not seem to realise is that the more he does so the more contemptuous of him the Anglos become.

His most craven bit of obsequiousness towards Britain was to denounce the Irish

Bank Deposit Guarantee Scheme in the European Parliament as unfavourable to the City of London—after telling the Irish Government he had no objection.

What he did not see fit to mention was that the 'big bang' of deregulation was first initiated in the City of London in the 1980s—a move which Wall St. was obliged to follow in order to compete, and this led to the present financial problems. Yet Sarkozy put the interests of these speculating sharks before the interests of Irish bank depositors. This is the man that the Government may invite to advise us on how to vote!

Even worse was his decision to rejoin the NATO military command for no other reason than to be cringingly obsequious to the US. He did this as if he was doing it for the EU as well and nobody has objected. What a state the EU is in—does it have a death wish?

#### PAT COX

Pat Cox is back in the limelight, leading a campaign of Irish celebrities who support the Lisbon Treaty. It seems a perfect role for him. But this is a poor man's collection from Fame Lane. Saints Bono and Geldof don't appear, and if by any chance they signal a doubt about the Treaty, then the lesser mortals that Pat has got will lose all their lustre for those poor sad souls who are impressed by celebrity antics.

Cox has a great reputation as a European Liberal. Can anyone recall a single contribution he made to the liberal controversies in Ireland in recent decades? He rose without trace while they were raging and his only contribution was to confirm his Catholic credentials as and when necessary. Then he went to the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg and became its President and its leading Liberal! How come?

The European Parliament is the type of Parliament that discredits parliaments. A real Parliament is set up to reflect and operate a polity. New polities have always—at least so far in history—been established after upheavals, wars or revolutions. Such are usually inseparable in practice. In other words parliaments are not self-creating. They operate within an already agreed consensus and framework that people have established by various means and hitherto this has been by serious conflict. Soldiers are therefore usually prominent in the early days of a new Parliament.

But there was no new polity established when the European Parliament was set up. What was happening was that a new polity was being created by a historically new and unique method, via the institutions of the then EEC. It was a delicate and long-term business to create such a new polity in a new way but it had powerful forces in its favour. The main driving force was the European experience of the greatest wars

in history caused by Britain's divide and rule policy in Europe (otherwise known as the Balance of Power) and the other was the determination and ability of the then Christian Democracy to ensure that this never happened again. A further and essential part of the framework were the exclusion of Britain, while working within the parameters set by the Cold War which concentrated minds wonderfully.

All this framework is now gone and the World Wars have retrospectively been turned into crusades against evils—such as the Holocaust, even though it was a World War that provided the occasion for this. In other words, European history is turned on its head.

The Commission was the key instrument for progress towards the new polity of deeper integration. It acted as the final arbiter between all the structures—not Member State Governments, not an unheard of European Parliament, nor the European Court of Justice. The latter will more and more take the role that the Commission should have.

That is why the Commission was always the main target of the dyed-in-the-wool anti-EU brigade, from Anthony Coughlan to the British Tories who were at one on this target and quite rightly so from their perspective.

But now European jurisprudence will become more and more a law unto itself and will inevitably come a cropper as it will not survive a clash with the real political power—the major Member States.

A Parliament was created—just like that—that does not even have a permanent location. Its party system is a total contrivance and it is looking for an executive to be accountable to it. It treats the Commission as its executive but this is now a straw man. It will jump up and down over Barroso's appointment to try to show it has a role. It has been given some power but it does not have any consequential responsibility. It is the perfect talking shop at best and a platform for demagogues at worst. It illustrates very well that pure democracy and demagoguery have more than a similar etymology. The EP shows how they are interdependent.

Along came Mr. Cox and his Liberals: they decided to use this Parliament to discredit the Commission. This tactic had the tacit support of the major Member States and the result is an emasculated Commission whose members no longer even seem to realise they have been ousted from their role as the cutting edge of the EU project.

The Parliament has great pretensions about itself, and the Member States flatter it by seeming to take it seriously. But, if there is one serious attempt by it to do to the Member States what it did to the Commission, it will be slapped down and put back in its box sharpish. However, it is

still a good stick to beat the Commission with and therefore has it uses for the Member States—but it is there on their sufferance and all the speechifying and spoofing does not hide that elemental fact.

The EU has become a collection of Nation States doing what they wish to do and not doing what they don't wish to have done. They are inevitably dominated by the interest of the larger states—there is no longer an equalising, mediating mechanism. This situation is a world away from what the European project was originally meant to be. The idea that the original purpose of the EU still stands is now a grand illusion obscured by tons of rhetoric from the Pat Coxs of Europe and the rest of the chattering classes. It is a mantra used to browbeat electorates into agreeing to whatever policies serve the current national political elites.

#### BRIGID LAFFAN

In the *Irish Times* on 25th July Brigid Laffan did the Lisbon debate a great favour. She identified where exactly that much talked about but elusive concept, 'the heart of Europe', actually is. It's the place where we all want to be and will be once we vote for Lisbon. Right?

She explained:

"The identification of a new role, President of the European Council, will endow the council with a personality and a coherence that it has lacked heretofore. The European Council is at the political heart of the European Union as it brings together all of Europe's key political leaders in a common search for solutions to the problems that they face."

This problem is that there are 27 other hearts there also, not just one. That is the essence of the Council. The reality is that Lisbon will complete a heart transplant for Europe that has been progressing for some time. It is being transplanted from the Commission to the Council. It is becoming very noticeable how the Commission is disappearing from sight. Ms Laffan ranges far and wide in her article but does not mention it once. Not once. I wouldn't be surprised if she has forgotten about it. And, if the Commission is missing, the real heart of the EU is missing.

The unique aspect of the whole European project was the Commission. This is what made the project not just another intergovernmental arrangement of which there are hundreds in the world—Governments coming together to do various things and not doing things that they don't want to do. Perfectly understandable from their point of view. The Commission was to change all that and create a new polity based on an ever integrating Europe. It was naturally, formally, undemocratic, non-democratic or rather ademocratic as it is not possible to be democratic about something that does not yet exist.

For example, it is not practically possible to vote a world government into existence. Not until the world is one political entity. So it was with Europe. But in this ideologically democratic age who will make a case for the practical benefits of non-democracy? (One could immediately hear the denunciations of such a Stalinist notion).

That is why the Commission has no real defenders and that is why it is a rather sorry sight in all this debate. And why the EU is in a similar plight. Instead we have a most creative description by Ms Laffan of how "*The Lisbon Treaty enhances the constitutional architecture of the EU*" as she put it.

A sample of this is as follows:

"Beginning with the Single Act in 1987, the powers of the parliament have increased so that it has become an equal legislature with the Council of Ministers. The parliament represents the people, while the council represents the governments."

This is an interesting new constitutional phenomenon. A first in the world, I would say. But it is full of inherent absurdities. We have two equal legislatures operating in the same political arena. Where is the executive for either? There is none in sight and should there not be two, for the Parliament and for the Council? If there is a clash of interest between these equals—what happens? Between the representatives of the people and the representatives of the Governments? The only thing to do would be to call an election and let the people decide. But it would have to be two elections at once—an election in all 27 states for the Council and a Europe-wide election for the Parliament. The same electorate would vote twice on the same issue on the same day presumably.

Then we would know who decides—or would we? If the result of the elections reflect the clash of interest that caused the elections we are back to square one. This democracy business can be very tricky when you take it literally.

But these are all non-issues for Ms Laffan and we have the usual litany of alleged benefits and issues paraded and she adds a new one—world population!

"First, Lisbon will strengthen Europe's voice and presence in the world. Europe and Ireland face major challenges over the next 20 years. Global population is set to grow by 23 per cent to 2025 compared to just 2 per cent in Europe, which will leave Europe at just 6 per cent of world population in 2025. We are already seeing a shift in economic power to the emerging markets, notably, China, India and Brazil."

Is there a problem for Europe to solve here? I can't see it. The implication seems to be that the countries mentioned are getting strong because of their increasing populations. In fact these countries are getting stronger because for once they are

becoming truly free and independent of Europe's legacy to them. If this was honestly acknowledged by the EU it would be a great help to its reputation. But no. Instead the EU has taken on the trappings of the old imperial states towards the rest of the world.

This is done under the guise of security and Ms. Laffan is on message: "*Security threats have altered across the globe*". What security threat is the EU facing? What army is planning to march on us? On the contrary, EU Member States have armies marching in many countries which are certainly a threat to those countries' security. But I don't think Ms Laffan sees the security issue that way.

*"The financial crisis brings it home to us just how connected the world is."* Yes, connected by the free market capitalist system whose Anglo-America version is the cause of the present crisis and which the EU is keen to adopt. In all these grand plans why is there no concrete, practical plans to deal with some of the fallout from the present crisis for people affected?. For example why cannot the EU with all its new powers under Lisbon ensure the minimum wage is maintained in all Member States? Is it beyond their collective wit to ensure that? Why is that not in Lisbon? There are some other missing items as well.

#### LISBON TREATY

The pro-Lisbon lobby took some heart from the German Constitutional Court decision on the Treaty. However, it did not bode well for any serious supporter of the EU to look too closely at the full judgement. The Court raised the spectre of what the courts and lawyers might have to consider in the future:

"The court makes clear what will happen if the EU oversteps its boundaries, refuses to retreat and endangers German "constitutional-conformed identity": "if the worst comes to the worst, it is for Germany...to refuse to further participate in the European Union'" (Irish Times, 2 July 2009).

In other words we can see lawyers and courts attempting, and feeling they are fully entitled, to decide on whether a Member State remains a member or not of the EU in the not too distant future—thanks to the legal rigmarole that is the Lisbon Treaty. Clearly, this is a prospect that already has occurred to that profession. They are smart indeed and must be licking their lips in anticipation of the glorious days to come. It will put the pickings from the Tribunals in the halfpenny place.

A positive vote for the Lisbon Treaty will be a Pyrrhic victory of great magnitude as it will see lawyers and judges becoming the arbiters of the EU and its future. If they feel entitled to judge what States can do, as the German Constitutional Court does, then the European Court of Justice and

other legal bodies will certainly feel entitled to be the judge and jury of all the so-called guarantees obtained by the Irish Government—including provisions on workers' rights in every shape and form that might be enacted by the Irish Government. Michael O'Leary will certainly feel confident in appealing to them!

Relying on Constitutions, Treaties and such legalisms to provide the glue holding the EU together and providing the focus for its future development was misconceived from the word go. It was the scheme of that present-day "old man in a hurry", d'Estaing, who tried to short-circuit the evolution of the EU with a premature Constitution. The strategy shows the bankruptcy of the EU elite to fashion new methods of continuing real internal, deepening integration and more independence and self-respect in foreign policy in the post Cold War world. The EU is either doing those things or it is a waste of space. But the actual EU went in the opposite direction to the way it should have gone. It is becoming a hollow and hollower shell—or maybe fossil would be the more appropriate word.

**Jack Lane**

## Editorial Digest

**continued**

Meehan, said: "*I was only one of a number of local residents who were stopped by the PSNI storm troopers from staging a peaceful protest on the Crumlin Road. I didn't organise anything and certainly not a riot. Anyone who saw me knows I was actually trying to stop kids rioting. Things only happened when the PSNI turned water cannons on people and started firing plastic bullets. You don't hear Sinn Fein condemning that*" (IN 15th July.)

Well Kelly did, and was followed the next day by Sinn Fein leader Jim Gibney in his *Irish News* column:

"The one organisation that cannot escape a major share of responsibility for the outbreak of violence in Belfast's Ardoyne on Monday night past is the Orange Order... The PSNI also has to share responsibility for the part they played in mishandling the situation. It should not only have objected to but prevented the Orange march on its return journey home from the Field passing Ardoyne...Using plastic bullets disturbingly reminds the nationalist people of the worst excesses of the RUC and the British Army. They should be banned."

Peaceful Protest on the Crumlin Road front of Ardoyne is not possible, a fact known to all sides and in particular the Provos, for whom this annual event was a major plank in its campaign after the Ceasefire to consolidate and, where possible, to extend the scope of Catholic areas. It saw the Crumlin Road as important as it is an interface between a declining Protestant community and Ardoyne which is bursting at the seams. The sectarian

separation of the two sides has increased rather than diminished since the Provo Ceasefire. Even if the protests were genuinely peaceful in intent, that intent would be undermined by the constant leaving of the parade by marchers hitting out at protesters and spitting at them—as seen on every TV report.

The *Irish News* tried its best to portray the rioters as at best manipulated by dissident Republicans. But it could find no evidence for the view it was propounding, that the rioters had no support in Ardoyne. And it looked very hard indeed. The people of Ardoyne may appear an unforgiving lot, but there is an awful lot to forgive or forget. And this was the same Orange Order and the same police that they had confronted for 40 years. Martin O'G is a case in point. When his father was interned, one of the things the police did to him was to stick a needle into his calf and wiggle it about after it had touched the bone! His father was also one in a string of recent deaths, including those of Brian Keenan and Michael Ferguson, which have occurred among former internees who were bombed with CR Gas in Long Kesh. Calls for an investigation into this matter appear to have been so far ignored.

**Dolly's Brae** is remembered in song and story by Orangemen. It was a skirmish between Orangemen and Catholic Ribbonmen near Castlewellan on 12th July 1849. The following account is from an account by historian Colin Johnston Robb and printed on 13th July 1940 in the *Irish News*. It was reprinted in that paper on the 13th July of this year:

"...On that morning, George Shaw, agent to Lord Annesley, received a communication from the Ribbonmen, or Catholics, that they intended to resist the passage of the Orange procession over Dolly's Brae.

"On the morning of the Twelfth, members of the Orange party, mostly armed, began to assemble at Ballyward Lodge, the seat of Francis Beers, a local landlord. They were assembling to march, via Dolly's Brae, to attend a demonstration at Tullymore Park, the seat of the Earl of Roden. On the same morning, Tabuteau [local magistrate] proceeded to Dolly's Brae where he found about 400 Ribbonmen assembled on the road and fields nearby. Some were armed with muskets and others with scythes and pitchforks. The processionists had their way and little trouble was encountered but on the return journey many of them and the Ribbonmen would appear to have been well inebriated. Following party cries at the Brae, firing between the parties commenced. Four of the Ribbonmen were killed by two shots and four others were removed in a dangerous condition to Castlewellan dispensary. According to the depositions of a trooper of the Dragoons, he saw two of the Orange party killed and carried away by their friends."

According to the *Irish News* the event led to the Party Processions Act which put curbs on the marches. This Act was abolished by Gladstone's Government in 1872. Curbs did not re-appear until the

formation of the Parades Commission a few years ago—though several laws existed for the curbing of nationalist parades.

**The UDA**'s likelihood of getting lots of money and/or jobs as a result of decommissioning has got Tom Kelly, a commentator on the *Irish News*, into a right old tiz. "*Not one pound of scarce taxpayers' money should go into mainstream UDA or UVF-controlled areas. The onus is on mainstream unionism to reconnect with the communities living under the cosh of paramilitarism and not to allow paramilitaries to rehabilitate themselves with lucrative 'community' jobs at the expense of ordinary decent citizens...* To many observers he [Secretary of State, Sean Woodward] was played like a fiddle by the scheming loyalists who must have a right old laugh, as they 'Brasso' their Friday night, two-carat bling or as they chatted in East Belfast salons waiting for their tangerine spray-on." Happily the British seem to be ignoring the likes of Kelly on both sides and are willing to give the UDA and the UVF the chance to retire. As to mainstream unionism, it was this which set up the UVF in the first place, back in the 60s—in a very deniable way, of course.

**Sinn Fein** is suffering a severe identity crisis—especially because it failed to advance in the recent elections in the South. Public representatives like Louise Minihan, John Dwyer and the party's longest serving councillor, Christy Burke, have resigned. The seepage in the North continues with the resignation of former Strabane councillor, Gerard Foley. In the North the disillusion is with the party's perceived softening on the national question, and is probably not going to be a serious threat to the party anytime soon.

But in the South the critics are all over the place. Louise Minihan claims that the party is ignoring "*the rotten system of capitalism which is causing so much hardship to working families across Ireland today*". The language is pure British left liberalism. It is rebutted in *An Phoblacht*, where Cllr. Toireasa Ferris addresses the same problem. "The recent Ard Fheis motion and constant 'rights talk' by our national spokespeople show the party to be out of touch with its base. We need to involve councillors and local organisers who have the finger on the pulse of public opinion in the formation of policy and in setting the direction of publicity" (9th July). However, beyond recoiling instinctively from these typical British slogans, Ferris has little to offer.

The South is not British, despite the best efforts of the media and academia. It developed, not in a cauldron of class antagonism, but in an atmosphere of what British left liberals would criticise as class collaboration. Yet it has powerful workers' and farmers' organisations. Sinn Fein has allowed itself to be greatly influenced by British left liberalism in the South. That is its problem. There is, of course, a market for British left liberal politics—especially

in South County Dublin. This is well catered for by the Labour Party and, more recently the Socialist Workers' Party in the guise of People Before Profit. Sinn Fein should be the 32-County Party trying to sell the Irish way of doing things in the North instead of trying to make its way in the South by promoting the British way of doing things. Gerry Adams may be a lost cause here. But there must be many in the North who would be impressed by the way things have been done in the South if this was explained to them. Likewise people in the South should be lauded for their chosen path through history. Every time Fianna Fail wobbles on matters such as the Partnerships, Sinn Fein should be in there cutting the ground from under them. But how can it do that if its members, even Kerry councillors like Toireasa Ferris who have good instincts, have such little understanding of Ireland's distinctive and very un-British development since independence?

## Conspiracy?

BBC2 (Tues, June 30) screened *The Conspiracy Files: 7/7*. It examined, among other things, a video called *The 7/7 Ripple Effect*. This collated a large number of (apparent) inconsistencies in the official reports. The people behind this film were a chap who, it was allegedly, believed he was the Messiah. Another was a 'Holocaust denier'. The relevance of either of these attributes to the accuracy or otherwise of the *Ripple Effect* compilation is difficult to grasp.

Having a deep-seated aversion to conspiracy theories I am prepared to accept it is baloney. But such theories have uses in a democratic society. They provide an element of grit in the often over-smooth machine of Establishment public relations. Who would have believed what the spooks got up to in Northern Ireland? (And in the Republic. The Dublin/Monaghan bombings of 1974 were the biggest atrocity in the course of the war)

What was somewhat shocking was the treatment of this programme by the television critics. The two pinko-gray conspiracy theorists were, largely, dismissed. Dr Mohammed Naseem of the Birmingham central mosque was slated because he was promoting the *7/7 Ripple Effect* video to his congregation. It was clear from the evidence presented that Dr Naseem was offering copies of the video to those who wanted them. They could then make up their own minds about the contents.

He was open about the matter. When he asked for a show of hands from the congregation as to whether or not they believed the official explanation of the 7/7 atrocity (the London bombings of July 2007) a good majority raised their hands. If (pinko-gray) journalists have problems coming to terms with the fact that Muslims in Britain (and Catholics in Northern Ireland) habitually discount practically everything they hear from the UK authorities they're living in La-La Land.

It may not be overt Islamophobia or racism that lead to this emphasis in the press. But Salma Yaqub, leader of the Respect party, and Birmingham dweller's, dismissal of the conspiracy theories was not reported.

**Joe Dalton**

# Shorts

from

## *the Long Fellow*

### NAMA

There is a view that NAMA is a means to give a sweetheart deal for the developers and the banks.

That is certainly not the theory, but it is too early to say how the plan will be executed.

The proposed "*hair cut*" or discount on the development loans to be transferred to NAMA does not mean that the discount will be given to the developers. NAMA will pursue 100% of the loans. However, if a debtor is bankrupt, blood cannot be taken from a stone. That is a reality, which applies to trade creditors no less than banks. The overall percentage discount or haircut should reflect the overall risk of default. It is not a licence to pursue the repayment of development loans less vigorously.

There is a view that if the "*haircut*" is too big, the banks will have to be re-capitalised. But that is certainly not a reason for the State (through NAMA) to pay more than the net realisable value of the loans. If, through the independent valuation process conducted by NAMA it emerges that the real value of the development loans is less than the banks own valuation (i.e. the banks' bad debt provisions are inadequate) then the value of the banks' assets will have reduced. If, as a consequence, the banks require a new round of re-capitalisation so be it. The extra funds provided for by the State should be in exchange for even greater ownership and control. Under no circumstances should a hidden subsidy be given to the shareholders of the banks in the form of a reduced "*haircut*".

The idea of NAMA is to provide certainty to outside investors regarding the true value of the Irish banks. Also, by taking the development loans off the balance sheets of the banks they will be in a position to resume lending.

That is the theory. And the Long Fellow sees no evidence to suggest that the implementation of the plan will not be successful.

In recent months Irish banks, thanks to the support of the State, have begun to lend again to small businesses. However, it is noticeable that the foreign owned banks remain "closed for business". It looks like the long term strategy of such banks is to withdraw from the Irish market.

### BAIL OUTS

In all this talk about bail outs there is an assumption that we as a nation have not been "*bailing out*" the developers and landowners up until now.

A few years ago—long before the housing bubble was at bursting point—the *Long Fellow* noticed that the speculative element in the price of houses in Lucan, Co. Dublin (not a particularly affluent area) was about 42,000 euro at *1998 prices* (see *Irish Political Review*, January 2003). The mere act of the local authority changing the land from Agriculture to Residential had caused the price of a plot of land needed for one house to increase by that amount. This was before any "development" such as the building of roads or access to services—never mind the building of the actual house—had taken place. It therefore does not include building and development profits.

The house buyer was the person paying for all this. It is perfectly in order that the house buyer should pay for the work that the builder did in building the house. It is also reasonable for him to pay for the work in developing the land. But how much should he pay for the land that the house is built on?

Land has no "value" in the Marxist sense of that word. There is no labour contained within it. It is a free gift of nature. The price of land is therefore dependent on value that is created elsewhere in the economy. In short it is dependent on the buyer's willingness and ability to pay.

In the case of Ireland the price of land was fuelled by borrowing from the banks, but the ultimate source of the funds was from abroad (David McWilliams says German Pension Funds). When the banks were no longer able to access funds from abroad the bubble burst.

The withdrawal of credit provoked a crisis within the real economy, but the crisis was most intense at its source. The source of the crisis is the price of land. It is interesting to note that the homeowner has been able to continue to make his repayments. The financial crisis has been provoked not by the homeowner but by the likely loan defaults from developers who bought land for commercial as well as residential development.

### WEALTH TAX

Isaac Newton tells us that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. And in economics for every transaction there is a buyer and a seller.

Where did all the money go? It didn't just disappear into thin air. And it wasn't taken away from us by foreigners. Quite the contrary! Warren Buffet lost a fortune on Irish bank shares. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the British banks have been very badly stung by their involvement in Irish property.

The answer is that it didn't disappear. For every loser there has been a winner. Sean Dunne may have lost hundreds of millions on the Jurys Hotel site but the Doyle family who owned the site must have gained hundreds of millions.

John Maynard Keynes said something like 'if someone owes the bank 1 million it's that person's problem. If he owes the bank 100 million it's the bank's problem. If he owes 1 billion it's everyone's problem.'

The loans given to the likes of Sean Dunne are everyone's problem. The State has had to step in to underwrite the banking system. The beneficiaries, or the people at the other side of the transactions which led to massive loan defaults, should be obliged to compensate the State for the crisis which they participated in.

The Constitution will not allow the State to introduce new tax laws to apply to past transactions (retrospective taxation) but there is nothing to prevent the State from imposing a tax on wealth. Wealth is the net assets held by individuals or collective entities (i.e trusts, companies etc.). It is not current income or profits. It is, in effect, the accumulation of past income or profits. This private wealth should be taxed. The people who benefited from the crisis should be obliged to help the State emerge from it.

### 250 MILLION v 1 BILLION

The Government thinks that  $\approx$ 250 million is enough to stabilise businesses and ensure that no long term damage is done to the economy. IBEC and the ICTU, on the other hand, think that  $\approx$ 1 billion is required. What does the difference of  $\approx$ 750 million mean in real terms?

In order for a company to qualify for a loan from the State body *Enterprise Ireland* it must show that it is viable. One test is that it will have to show that it was profitable before July 2008 so as to prove that subsequent losses were down to the credit crunch rather than some other reason. Restrictions are imposed on Directors' salaries and dividends. *Enterprise Ireland* wants to ensure that the loans it gives will be put into the business rather than keeping the directors and shareholders in the style they are accustomed.

Another requirement is that the company's banks retain their credit facilities. *Enterprise Ireland* does not want its loans to be used to reduce the banks' exposure to the company. In most cases the Irish banks, unlike the foreign banks, are willing to accede to this request. The fact that the company has passed *Enterprise Ireland's* rigorous stress tests is reassuring to the banks.

*Enterprise Ireland* does not want to fund companies that compete with other Irish companies. There is no point in helping one company make another Irish company go bankrupt.

It would be interesting to know what type of companies ICTU and IBEC want to qualify for funding but do not qualify under existing criteria. At the last budget IBEC put in a submission which amounted to throwing money at the Irish Motor Industry. But helping the Irish Motor industry will not help the economy.

Economic recovery can only be based on Agriculture and Manufacturing.

The *Long Fellow* thinks that the Government rather than IBEC or ICTU is correct.

#### LEMASS DOCUMENTARY

RTE broadcast a typically irritating documentary on Sean Lemass (30.6.09). It began with his early life as a "gunman" (his participation in 1916 and the execution of the Cairo Gang). Of course it was not mentioned that the execution of the Cairo Gang was authorised by Michael Collins and the Chief of Staff Risteard Mulcahy. Lemass's subsequent life was portrayed as a turning away from the path of violence. There was no explanation of the context of his political development. The impression given was that he was some kind of reformed criminal.

The conventional wisdom on Sean Lemass is that de Valera held him back and that he should have been Taoiseach much earlier than 1959. This was repeated in the documentary without any discussion. But Diarmuid Ferritear has questioned this wisdom indicating that Lemass was a reluctant leader who was overawed by de Valera.

One of the contributors was Fintan O'Toole who was hardly past early childhood when Lemass left political life in 1966 and has no particular expertise on the subject. It was hard to know why he was there other than to give *The Irish Times* imprimatur to proceedings.

#### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Another retrospective was provided by *Questions & Answers* in its final edition (29.6.09) of a 23 year run. There was an interesting exchange between John Waters and Fergus Finlay on the subject of the Mary Robinson/Brian Lenihan Presidential election of 1990. The verdict of John Bowman, who has always been much more than a host, was that it was game, set and match to Finlay in his exchange with Waters. Finlay is certainly a more polished media performer than Waters, but Waters's point was well made. It was that *The Irish Times* was not just a reporter but a participant in that campaign. It did not just report on the Duffy tapes, but held a press conference about them.

The *Questions & Answers* television programme was the vehicle for the trap set by Fine Gael for Lenihan in 1990. Jim Mitchell was due to appear for Fine Gael but that party asked RTE if it could replace him with Garret FitzGerald. (FitzGerald was with President Hillery at Aras an Uachtarain when Lenihan was alleged to have made phone calls to the President regarding the dissolution of the Dail in the early 1980s.)

In the 1990 programme a member of the audience, who just happened to be the leader of Young Fine Gael, asked Lenihan if he had made phone calls to President

Hillery. By a strange coincidence Jim Duffy—a Fine Gael activist, who in the course of academic research had tapes of Lenihan saying that he had phoned Hillery—happened to be sitting beside the member of the audience. And, of course FitzGerald was on hand to contradict Lenihan's version of events. Nuala O'Faolain, who was then an *Irish Times* journalist, was also on that 1990 panel. The archival footage showed her smiling ecstatically while Lenihan was giving his reply. Could she have been in on the Fine Gael sting?

In 2009 all agreed that the issue of whether Lenihan made phone calls to Hillery or not was of no importance.

In the course of the programme Bowman asked about changes in the last 23 years. All agreed that technology such as the internet and mobile phones had had a dramatic influence on our lives. Then Bowman asked if there had been any small changes which had come in under the radar but which over time had had a significant impact.

That was a curious and interesting question, which would require some thought to come up with an answer.

#### THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The *Long Fellow* can think of one gradual change which has had a significant impact over time. That change is the role of the media. In the 1980s he remembers supporters of Charles Haughey criticising the media handling of the 'heaves' against their leader. One complaint was: "*The journalists are actually interviewing each other*". It was considered remarkable that unelected journalists should give each other licence to express opinions on the national airwaves about unfolding political events. But what was then considered remarkable is now a matter of routine.

There were a total of sixteen guests on the final edition of this current affairs programme, but only nine could be considered politicians in the broadest sense of the word. Included in that list of nine was Senator David Norris, who is elected under a restricted franchise and is probably better known as a media personality and Joycean scholar. Also included was Mary Lou McDonald, who does not hold elected office; Liz O'Donnell, who has retired from politics; and Mairead McGuinness, who was a media personality before she became a politician. Four of the guests were journalists/media personalities; two were lawyers and Fergus Finlay who could also be considered a journalist (he writes a column for the *Examiner*) but is also the Chief Executive of Barnardos.

Of the nine politicians two were Fine Gael, two PDs!, one Sinn Fein, one Green, one Labour, one Independent and only one Fianna Fail (the Taoiseach Brian Cowen at the end of the programme).

The concerns of the media are those of the professional middle class. There were

no Business or Trade Union leaders on the programme.

#### THE PRESTIGE OF THE MEDIA

The increasing assertiveness of the media has not corresponded with an increase in its prestige. The opposite is the case and journalists themselves know it.

Peter Murtagh admitted in *The Irish Times* (29.6.09):

"Many fellow citizens believe we in the media think we can say anything we like and get away with it. They think we target people unjustly, with little thought of the pain we inflict on them and their families. You know what? They are largely correct, but the brush is applied across all media, as though we are all the same."

Apart from the arrogant attempt to exclude *The Irish Times* from the general low standards in the profession, it is difficult to disagree with the analysis.

There has been criticism by journalists of the amount that Monica Leech (Minister Martin Cullen's PR consultant) received in her libel case against Independent Newspapers. But there are two points that can be made in defence of the €1.8 million award. Firstly, anyone embarking on a libel case risks becoming bankrupt in the event of losing it. It is a high stakes game and therefore the reward for winning should be high.

Secondly, and more important, the amount that Leech received reflects a punitive element and a compensatory element. The jury wanted to punish the bad behaviour of the newspaper as well as compensate Leech for the distress caused to her.

Perhaps juries in a libel case should be allowed separate out these two elements. The compensation element should be given to the victim; and the punitive element should be paid by the newspaper to the State.

#### And Is There Jaffa Cakes Still For Tea?

A blanket-grey candy-floss too suspect to eat mixes with the kerosene air straining the rivets heading for its lair the wings quiver alert and circumspect steel hydraulic muscles hits the airbrakes undercarriage down with a thumping sound as it swoops towards the de-briefing pound at Bagram Airbase tea and Jaffa cakes in the village children dead and bleeding old folk pregnant women and the dogs died trees slowly succumb grass and flowers are fried

crimson earth and the insects are feeding hearts and minds lie buried in fertile mud they could not be bought but soon they will bud

**Wilson John Haire.**  
17th June, 2009

# Did Elizabeth Bowen Slander James Dillon As A Fascist?

The June issue of *Irish Political Review* reported on Jack Lane's address to the Bowen/Trevor Summer School in Mitchelstown on May 1st, in which he alluded to Elizabeth Bowen's conclusion that, notwithstanding the fact that she regarded James Dillon as a Fascist, he was a welcome ally in Britain's war against Germany.

Enough said. Or is it? Should we not look more carefully at Dillon's record? Two items of reading have recently prompted me to do so. The first was Ryle Dwyer's column in the *Irish Examiner* on June 20th in which he drew attention to a vicious diatribe from Dillon in 1947 vilifying Galway-born Monsignor Edward Flanagan, founder of the world-famous Boys Town in Nebraska, for daring to criticise how Irish religious orders were running their Industrial Schools gulags. And the second was the newly-published book by Daniel Leach entitled *Fugitive Ireland: European Minority Nationalists And Irish Political Asylum*. As I related in the September 2007 issue of *Irish Political Review*, Leach had occasion to protest against the misuse and misrepresentation of his research in the RTE documentary "Ireland's Nazis", and against the very title itself. In his own book, however, he does draw attention to the following 1949 statement of note:

"More remarkably, Dillon... also directed Irish sympathy to the plight of one Ante Pavelic. That an Irish TD should consider Pavelic, Stepinac and Mindszenty equal victims of communist oppression is extraordinary, given that the first was not a clergyman but Poglavnick (Führer) of a Croatian fascist terrorist organisation installed in power by the Nazis in 1941, which then presided over some of the worst atrocities {the systematic massacre of 750,000 Serb and 30,000 Jewish civilians—MOR} of the Second World War." (p135).

And, indeed, when one checks back on the record in the *Irish Times* for 2nd February 1949, one finds Dillon attempting to have his cake and eat it:

"Speaking in Dublin last night at the inaugural session of the Law Students' Debating Society, Mr. Dillon, Minister for Agriculture, declared... one had only to recall such names as Stepinac, Mindszenty, Pavelic, and the memory of the millions of anonymous victims of the Nazis and the Bolsheviks during the last 20 years to realise that every yard of the road to serfdom had been, and is being, contested..."

Dillon was, of course, no Nazi. He abhorred its pagan content. His Fascism was of a Catholic character. Yet none of

this is alluded to by those modern-day historians and pundits who wish to make a virtue of Dillon's pro-British opposition to Irish wartime neutrality. Such is the case with Brian Girvin's 2006 book *The Emergency*, wherein he relates:

"James Dillon had broken with neutrality... in a surprise speech at the Fine Gael Ard Fheis in February 1942. This was in response to American entry into the war and according to Bowen, who was present, had the impact of a bomb exploding among the delegates. Dillon wanted Ireland to end its neutrality and openly support Britain and the United States against Germany... He became effectively isolated as a result and resigned from the party..." (p242).

And in his own conclusion Girvin fully concurs: "*The position taken by James Dillon in 1942... was the policy most likely to fulfil most if not all of the objectives of national policy...*" (p324).

The only other Southern Irish politician to agree with Dillon was Senator Frank McDermott. Girvin rightly describes both of them as "*pro-British figures*" (p139), but he does not delve too deeply into what other prejudices they might have held in common. Perhaps, given Girvin's own political history, it might have been too much to expect that he would have acknowledged the full publication of Elizabeth Bowen's *Notes On Éire* by the Aubane Historical Society from 1999 onwards. But when he himself quoted (p168) from Bowen's letter of 9th November 1940, it was more than a little disingenuous for Girvin to stop short from even alluding to the following observations in the same letter regarding Dillon:

"He holds some views which even I distrust, and which are abhorrent to many Irish people whose integrity I respect... religious fanaticism of the purest kind I have met. This streak in Mr. Dillon might be felt in this country, if he ever came into full power. It would not, I think, affect his external policy—at least, where England was concerned. If the de Valera Government were to fall (which does not at the moment seem at all likely) I have no doubt that Mr. Dillon would emerge as leader of the so-called Cosgravites... I have heard Mr. Dillon labelled a Fascist—which I am afraid is at least partly true" (Aubane edition, p20).

Since we cannot rely on the professional historians to explore Dillon's views, we must do so ourselves. Girvin had no problem describing Dillon and McDermott as "*pro-British*", being that way inclined himself. But since he is not at all anti-

Semitic, perhaps he did not at all relish exploring the antics of the same pair during the debate on the 1934 Moneylenders Act.

This had been initially spearheaded by the Jewish Fianna Fáil TD, Bob Briscoe, who abhorred that trade and had previously employed the IRA to force a number of predominantly Jewish moneylenders to come to equitable settlements with their customers. But when Briscoe withdrew his Private Bill to regulate moneylenders in favour of an official Fianna Fáil Government one, Dillon sneered in the Dáil on 20th June 1933: "*Am I to understand that the introduction of Bill no.2 results from the fact that the Government did not like the Bill as it came back from the Committee? Does it mean that the Committee suggested that all moneylenders should learn Irish?*"

This was grist to the mill of McDermott's own Dáil speech that day:

"I hope Deputy Dillon's sinister suggestion is not justified, and that we shall not see that the new Bill leaves out the Irish-speaking clause. It appears to me that the moneylending class is a particularly suitable one for an experiment with regard to the Irish language... If the efficiency of moneylenders was to be restricted by their being called upon to tackle the extra burden of learning the Irish language... the public might be better pleased if they were less efficient. Then, again, the moneylending class as a class are in the main drawn from a race which has special talent for learning languages..."

And a month later, on July 20th, there was the following exchange between two Fine Gael TDs:

Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenny: "Does the deputy think that any moneylenders who may come down here from Belfast would be of the Celtic race?"

Mr. Dillon: "Well, at least, any money-lender who came here from Belfast would have acquired a Celtic veneer. He would have 'wrapped the green flag round him'..."

All good 1930s fun? There is a prevailing myth about Fine Gael, when finding it impossible to deny that its first President for 1933-34 was the Fascist leader Eoin O'Duffy, to pretend that all such unsavoury connotations ceased upon his break with them. Not so. The Dáil Debates for the remainder of the 1930s are replete with Fine Gael trying to portray the Fianna Fáil policy of economic protectionism as a "*Jewish plot*". And to be fair to both the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, and the Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee, they openly confronted Fine Gael anti-Semitism in that regard. The worst offender was General Richard Mulcahy. But Dillon also railed against the de Valera-Lemass policy of facilitating Jewish industrialists in setting up clothing factories. In vain did Lemass respond

with the question "if you have no clothing industry here, to whom are the woollen mills going to sell their cloth?" when Dillon railed in the Dáil as follows, on 27th October 1937:

"Any fly-by-night from Czechoslovakia, Great Britain or Yugoslavia can come here, provided he has got a name you cannot get your mouth around, and he will be nurtured and cherished by this Government, to the detriment and the ultimate destruction of people who were engaged in industry in this country before de Valera was heard of ... (and) worth more than all the new industries, established by gentlemen with unpronounceable names, put together... I should like to have a list of the manufacturers of ladies' clothes in this country. I should like to get their names and I should like the Minister to try to pronounce them. He would choke before he would get through the list..."

Dillon added, during a further Dáil intervention that same day:

"This brings me to one of the factors in the situation which is among the most menacing. The ordinary conditions of international trade provide for immobility of labour and capital and for high mobility of the goods produced by the nations. In other words, if we contemplate a mid-European country, a man does not leave Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia to go anywhere without very grave reason..."

I once half-defended James Dillon in a letter published in the *Irish Times* on 4th October 1975. I now regard parts of that letter as mistaken, on two fronts. (1) My attack on de Valera's policy of wartime neutrality, written from the pro-USSR Stalinist perspective of 'he who is not with me is against me'. (2) My defence of Dillon, springing from the fact that Oliver J. Flanagan had called for his internment in his own maiden speech to the Dáil on 9th July 1943. But I also quite rightly highlighted what was grossly outrageous about that speech, namely, Flanagan's explicit call for Ireland to emulate Nazi Germany's example by routing the Jews out of Ireland. The overriding context of my 1975 letter had been to denounce the Liam Cosgrave / Conor Cruise O'Brien "government of the talents" for appointing Flanagan as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, notwithstanding the fact that he had never once apologised for continuing to function as a foul-mouthed vociferous Nazi mouthpiece to the very end of the Second World War. Indeed the Cosgrave/Cruiser regime went one better: they elevated Flanagan to become full Minister for Defence in 1976!

Brian Girvin wrote of those who won Dáil seats in the 1943 General Election: "Of the independents, Oliver J. Flanagan supported the IRA and was strongly anti-Semitic, with James Dillon, in County

Monaghan, doing well enough to retain his seat despite his criticism of neutrality" (p.246). During World War Two, Flanagan and Dillon each championed Nazi Germany and Great Britain, respectively. And yet Fianna Fáil Government Ministers began to notice and comment on a growing camaraderie between the two. For there was little else that divided them. Dillon would rejoin the Fine Gael Party in 1953 and Flanagan would follow suit the following year. And when the second Inter-Party Government appointed Dillon Minister for Agriculture in 1954, it also appointed Flanagan as his Parliamentary Secretary.

The reasons for Dillon's support of Britain's war did not spring from any opposition on his part to anti-Semitism. Quite the contrary. Five months after Flanagan's opening Dáil diatribe, Dillon teamed up with Liam Cosgrave to engage in the politics of anti-Semitism by innuendo, in the following Dáil exchanges on 16th December 1943:

Cosgrave: "Does the Minister (Lemass) remember when Deputy Briscoe discovered gold in Wicklow?"

Dillon: "There were no flies on Deputy Briscoe. The gold was in Wicklow all right. Devil a much would he spend going round looking for it if it was not there."

Briscoe: "But there were flies on Deputy Dillon."

Dillon: "The Deputy would have done very nicely out of that."

Which indeed, was a more polite version of Flanagan's own mantra:

"Where the bees are there is the honey, and where the Jews are there is the money".

While Oliver Flanagan's anti-Semitism remained alive and kicking in the post-War years, it began to be expressed more circumspectly. It was none other than James Dillon who was in fact prepared to be even more explicitly anti-Semitic than his future Junior Minister. Following the death of de Valera, the *Irish Times* would report on 2nd September 1975:

"The Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in Ireland, the Very Rev. Dr. Isaac Cohen, last night at a memorial service in the synagogue in Adelaide Road, Dublin, recalled the late Mr. de Valera's deep personal sorrow and concern at the suffering of the Jews in Europe in the second World War... They also remembered that, at the very earliest opportunity after the War, his Government had made a generous gift of one million tons of Irish meat as a gift to the survivors of inhuman Nazi concentration camps."

Yet this action was vigorously opposed by both Flanagan and Dillon.

In the Dáil debates on 13th February 1947, that anti-Jewish duo sought to outdo each other, by denouncing de Valera's gift of meat to Holocaust survivors in Europe's

displaced persons camps. "Mr. Flanagan asked the Minister for Agriculture if he will consider cancelling the proposed gift of 25,000 head of cattle to Europe... as the export of such a large number of cattle will cause a shortage of beef in this country..."

Mr. Dillon:

"Has the Minister's attention been drawn to the statement which appeared in the *New York Times* of Thursday, February 6th, headed 'Dublin' and which goes on: 'The Irish Government is preparing to ship 10,000,000 lb. of kosher meat to Europe for distribution among Jewish displaced persons'..."

An Ceann Comhairle: "That is a separate question..."

Mr. Dillon: "Is this meat to which Deputy Flanagan referred the kosher meat described in the *New York Times*?..."

Minister James Ryan: "All that I can say is that the two Deputies have tried to outdo each other in exaggeration..."

Mr. Dillon: How much of this meat is going to Europe in the form of kosher meat?"

Dr. Ryan: At the outside, 1,000,000 lb."

Mr. Flanagan: "It is a damn shame..."

Dr. Ryan: "The country does not agree with the Deputy".

Mr. Flanagan: "It does."

And, two months later, on 16th April 1947, Dillon continued to harass Dev himself in the same matter when he asked de Valera—

"whether his attention has been drawn to a series of articles appearing in the American Press... whether he is aware that, in the *Denver Register* it is alleged... that 10,000 lb. of kosher meat was being shipped to Europe from this country, for distribution among Jewish displaced persons, at a cost of about \$3,000,000..."

Anyone who wishes to research the Dáil Debates still further will find that Dillon was little different in the immediate post-War years, than he had been in the 1930s, in charging Fianna Fáil's Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, of pursuing a protectionist policy that discriminated in favour of Jewish businesses.

Elizabeth Bowen is more than deserving of recognition as a spot-on spy. Her espionage reports had not at all slandered James Dillon. She had instead got the full measure of the most pro-British politician in the Dáil.

**Manus O'Riordan**

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### LISBON TREATY—MARK 11.

Now that a date has been decided for the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty again, it is interesting to see where the dices fall—politically speaking. Just as the Dail is about to go off on holiday, the release of the An Bord Snip Nua (or the Colm McCarthy Report) was well timed to say the least. While the newspapers reacted with that shrill hysteria that they have lately become renowned for—is it a case that they think we won't react unless they shriek at us—the world as we knew it was ending, if the media are right about it that is. So many things will be gone, the Gardai, the Defence Forces, the local Councils, the Civil Service, civilization, etc. etc. Well maybe not quite—because the Taoiseach Brian Cowen, TD, in an interview, stated that he will have to think about things until—oh like—the beginning of the New Year. So the savings of ⠼5 billion can be left for a while longer and we can thus deduce that it is not a matter of import really.

But by goodness it is still one way to put the fear of God into the solid citizenry of Ireland who have now been scared enough to become willing pawns to whatever *saviour* might deliver us out of such terrors. You see where I am going with this? Ah yes Lisbon! So there might well be a back-up plan? Aren't we the lucky ones? And aren't the Government? The *Phoenix* (19th June 2009) did a rather wonderful exposé on luminaries who people the 'Yes' side, chief amongst them being Brendan Halligan—yes that old war horse—whose Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA), of which he is still Chairman, obtains truly munificent monies from our State every year and goes on to produce literature and propaganda in favour of all European treaties. However, as *Phoenix* pointed out, Halligan began political life as an opponent of the European Community in the early 70s.

The other war horse is of course that old friend of Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Martin: the University College, Dublin, European Professor Brigid Laffan, who stalks the media and RTE coverage so often that her absence would actually be notable. Also onboard is former Fianna Fail General Secretary Martin Mackin, now with PR company Q4 and lastly but certainly not least, the former President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox. And keeping a close watch is the very English *Private Eye*, the satirical magazine with all the political news and scandals. In its No. 1226 issue (Dec.to Jan. 2009) it proclaimed that "so it came to pass as foretold that Ireland would vote again on the Lisbon treaty in late 2009" proving

itself as it noted "uncannily accurate". The *Eye* described the guarantees given to the Government as "pure political theatre. Not one single word will change". And, on the issue of neutrality, for Cowen it was all "smoke and mirrors"—something which the *Eye* of course knows a lot about. In its next issue, the *Eye* had more about the phoney guarantees the Irish had got from Brussels—courtesy of *The National Platform EU Research*, whose Director is Anthony Coughlan. But still the Irish Government continues to peddle the safeguards to the people and now, amidst such financial meltdown, that 'fear' may be the one thing that will drive the Irish people to finally buckle down and pass the Treaty. I think that is what is going to happen but it will be a very small turnout.

### SHELL AND IRELAND

The *Phoenix* is easily the most informative and investigative media organ working to uncover what Shell is up to in Mayo. For a time, *Phoenix* looked as if it had joined the cosy consensus and just rode along on its former glory days but, boy, how that's changed and all for the good. Consider that, though the *Irish Times* makes much of its so-called *ethical journalism*, the paper seems to loathe the poor householders who have to continually protest while living lives of terrified desperation.. *Please*. Recently, the *Sunday World* crime hack Paul Williams fronted a TV programme entitled '*The Battle for the Gas Fields*', a programme made by Praxis Pictures—owned by none other than Gerry Gregg and Eoghan Harris. It was wilful in its distortion but then that's propaganda for you. Despite its controversial nature, it was overlooked by much of the mainstream media. Of course Senator Harris used his *Sunday Independent* column to promote it (did he bother to state a conflict of interests—did he what?).

The programme was reviewed in the *Sunday Business Post* where Emmanuel Kehoe noted Williams' "*lip-curling disdain for the protesters*" in a programme that "*never seemed neutral in its intent*". There Paul Williams might have lain except the *Phoenix* exposed his rather beneficial relationship with Shell itself. In one instance of such a nature, when Croke Park was opened to the Rugby people with that 'historic' match against England in 2007, Paul Williams was one of the spectators in the sold-out stadium. Not that he paid. The crime correspondent was deemed sufficiently influential to be included on what Shell told Goldhawk was its "*stakeholder engagement list*". Williams was the only crime hack invited and feted by the oil giant that day.

The *Phoenix* (17th July 2009) did another piece in which it was revealed that a "*pro gas Mayo Irish Times correspondent was scathing about those who would criticise Shell's safety record*". Well the

*Phoenix* did a little digging and found that "Shell International was last month fined in London £300,000 and also ordered to pay £45,000 costs (a total of ⠼406,000) for three breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) 2005 following two fires at its own HQ, the Shell Centre in central London. The fine was the largest ever exposed under the RRO." And this was not a once off either. In 2003 Shell failed to remedy what the London Fire Brigade noted, while handling the outbreak of fires there, that there was a widespread breach of fire regulations and "Shell's own staff were being put at risk".

So one can imagine how concerned Shell executives are to protect the little farmers in remote Co. Mayo when they wouldn't even safeguard their own staff at their magnificent London HQ?

Marathon Oil has reached an agreement to sell its 18.5pc stake in the Corrib gas development for up to \$400million. The oil and gas company will sell the stake to Canadian firm Vermilion Energy Trust, which will join the group developing the field, including project leader Shell and Statoil (Irish Independent 26th June 2009).

### SHELL AND THE NIGER DELTA

I was watching a programme on what happened to the rich, beautiful Niger Delta in Nigeria recently. It was fronted by one Ross Kemp and he had a TV crew with him. He said at the outset he was looking for Pirates and this completely threw me: when do the British go looking for Pirates with their TV crews in tow? It must be said that I laughed out loud at the historic irony which amazingly didn't seem to strike Kemp and his mates.

The swooping aerial shots of the amazing waters of the Delta were something to behold. But when the camera crew went on a small boat up the actual Delta they were visibly choking and trying to keep their mouths covered. In the end a coughing Kemp with tears streaming down his face admitted that the chemically-laden air was so polluted that he couldn't stand much more of it. But to see the people of the filthy area, with their reed-thin malnourished bodies telling Kemp that this "*was the so-called clean-up by Royal Dutch Shell*", was to be very furious. The fumes were coming from the rusted Shell oil pumps, still lying twisted and seeping all around the ground. Everything was affected. The poor fishermen were out of work and would indeed never fish those waters again in anyone's lifetime. The birds were gone too—and yet we make deals with these people! Secret underhand deals. And our own Government too blackguards the very people they are committed to protect. How come it is always the poor who end up paying the most? Oh and Kemp—well he, it seems, thought that the out-of-work fishermen were now operati-

ng as Pirates but he never got to seeing them I think, but *ironic – no?*

#### UK ARMS AND TERRORISM

David Miliband, Foreign Secretary (who was in Dublin recently urging the Irish voters to vote for Lisbon—what is it about irony this month?) after the Mumbai terrorist murders called on India and Pakistan "for peace between two hostile neighbours". As if that is what the UK wants when it has been selling both states arms like there is no tomorrow. Well—of course there well might not be. Anyway *Private Eye* (No. 1225) again informs us that the Foreign Office licensed £82.5m of British arms last year for sale to the two countries, of which Pakistan only got £18million worth. In 2006, there was more parity with arms exports to Pakistan worth a whopping £62.3million while India got £54.5million.

#### THE RYAN REPORT

As I am working on a long piece for the next *Church & State* on this whole subject, there is just one thing I just have to say. Amongst all the media hoopla and political furore there was one thing, one step too far, one abiding **image** that was utterly *vile* and *exploitative*. It was the picture—well thought out—of a pile of children's shoes. The shoes, redolent of the iconography of the Holocaust, of the hellpits of the concentration camps was utterly appalling. The shoes were new, expensive—I recognised converse trainers, Uggs etc. How have we as a people come to this? Have we no shame anymore?

Julianne Herlihy

This letter went in to the *Irish Times* on 3rd July but did not appear

## Closure of Foinse?

The only remaining Irish language newspaper, the weekly *Foinse*, faces closure. The problem apparently has to do with an insufficiency of financial support from the cross border body concerned; *Foras na Gaeilge*.

Interestingly, just in recent years our European partners consented that Irish be recognized as an official working language of the Union and agreed funds be made available for such matters as appropriate translation facilities.

Isn't it strange that at European level the Irish state expects to have more respect extended to the language than what it is prepared to extend itself on this island? The word *hypocrisy* comes to mind but fails on grounds of inadequacy.

Ted O'Sullivan

## Granville's Grips

The *Campaign for Labour Representation* (in Northern Ireland; CLR) re-emerged into history in the pages of the *Morning Star* (19.6.2009) under the banner *Ireland Matters*. (The MS seems to have adopted the BBC's habit of using 'Ireland' where 'Irish' should be used). The headline is: *Bad news for Good Friday agreement*.

The article was written by David Granville 'online editor of the Irish Democrat', the publication of the Connolly Association (CA). The CA, which dates from the late 1930s, was perceived as a Communist Party 'front' organisation in the Irish community resident in Great Britain. There is an (apparently) flourishing local group of the CA in Northampton. The associated Four Provinces bookshop in London's Grays Inn Road opens a couple of days a week. The Communist Party of Great Britain is no more. That must induce existential problems for erstwhile 'front' organisations and their members. The *Morning Star* is the daily publication of the CPGB's largest shard the CPB (CP of Britain).

A sub-heading presumably supplied by a *Morning Star* sub-editor reads: DAVID GRANVILLE on Labour's entry into the six counties political field. Labour has been involved in the Wee Six since Labour Party members served in the Great (1914-18) War Cabinet. Labour has had direct responsibility for the place every time it exercised power, whether solo, in the National Government, or in the wartime coalition of 1940–45.

The above may be laboured but worth emphasising—Labour administrations in Westminster / Whitehall administer Northern Ireland—whether they relish the prospect or not. Like the Conservatives, they have taken an essentially colonialist attitude to the place.

David Granville appears to think that is a legitimate socialist attitude to the governing of Northern Ireland. The CLR is described as "pro-union, "integrationist"" along with *Democracy Now!* (mentioned minus its exclamation mark!). CLR wound itself up in 1993. Kate Hoey's *Democracy Now!* fizzled out some years later. It had performed the task of destroying the CLR's long campaign to get the Labour Party to do its duty by the people of Northern Ireland. Presumably Hoey was doing her duty by whatever body of spooks to which she is connected. She got to be a Minister of State when Blair led New Labour into Government in 1997. She spent a deal of time in Northern Ireland campaigning on various Unionist platforms. And canvassing for the Robert McCartney / UK Unionist Party. And latterly the UUP (Ulster Unionist Party): Chris McGimpsey's tendency insists this still exists, being opposed to the Reg Empey / David Cameron 'New Force' lash-up).

Granville writes of an unnamed group (presumably *Labour in Northern Ireland*) have been allowed to set up a constituency body—and may well be allowed to fight elections at some unspecified time in the future: New Labour's version of glass beads for the natives. (More or less the offer CLR rejected in 1982). He writes that 'Andy McGiven' is responsible for this situation because he brought a court case against the Labour Party. (The man's name is 'McGivern'). He and his colleagues are accused of being sectarian.

Granville makes a laboured comparison between New Labour and the SDLP. (Which tends to demonstrate that the SDLP is rather to the left of New Labour). He asks rhetorically why 'McGivern' and company don't join the SDLP. The obvious reason is that the SDLP is not in contention to rule the UK (or any other) State. Northern Ireland is going to be part of the UK for as long as it is in the perceived interests of the British State for the region to be part of it. Andy McGivern has been a Trade Unionist (GMB) activist for many years. He is not 'sectarian'.

Granville quotes from the 1992 publication *Oranges or Lemons?*, attributed to Kevin McNamara. (It was actually written by Professor Brendan O'Leary formerly of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The quotation is to the effect that 'integrationists' and 'Unionists' are one and the same. And they should be kept out of the mystical body of the Labour Party. It might then become polluted with sectarianism. What he fails to recognise is that the Labour Party—when it meant something—killed off actual sectarianism in Glasgow and Liverpool (and a fair number of other places where it was conducted in a more genteel fashion).

Activists in the CLR consider themselves lucky not to have been involved in the 'Blair project'. Democracy Now! fizzled out in the mid-1990s. Ms Hoey is probably holding the title in reserve if it ever again becomes necessary to break up a move towards real Labour politics in Northern Ireland. New Labour—so precious about 'sectarianism' in the North of Ireland—is in the process of demonising the Muslim community in Great Britain.

Seán McGouran

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# Massacre and Other Matters

In the July issue of the *Irish Political Review* John Martin had an article on 'The Rise of Left Liberalism' which referred to three of my books and commented on some passages from the latest of them: *Ireland After the End of Western Civilisation*.

I am grateful for feedback, I thrive on it for refinement of my thinking; and in my turn I have a few comments to make on Martin's article.

He writes that I have things to say about 'Christian Civilisation' and its recent demise. But I have never used that term and do not know what it means. I have written about the end of European or Western Civilisation, meaning the civilisation that developed in Western Europe from around 1000 onwards; that extended across the Atlantic and other oceans; and that lasted until the mid-twentieth century. A civilisation is, essentially, a set of rules of behaviour that is subscribed to by rulers and ruled over a long period, because it makes sense as a life framework. By the end of European civilisation—actually its overthrow—I mean the rejection and replacement of many of its essential rules by western governments. Martin says I am on weak ground in what I say about the rejection of the rule forbidding massacre.

This European rule forbade two kinds of massacre, namely, of people indiscriminately, and of prisoners taken in war. In Irish history a notable instance of each kind led at the time to widespread condemnation. The massacre of prisoners was at Dún an Óir on the Dingle Peninsula in 1580, when 600 Spanish and Italian soldiers who had surrendered were put to death on the orders of Lord Grey. The massacre of people indiscriminately was that at Drogheda in 1649 when Cromwell's army massacred many civilians as well as the garrison.

In *Ireland After* (pp12-13) I quote a phrase from the American Declaration of Independence which implicitly indicates that its authors regarded massacre as a savage action, alien to (Western) civilisation. The Declaration refers with abhorrence to 'the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an indiscriminate destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions'. Long before the Hiroshima and Nagasaki massacres—namely, in Conventions agreed at Geneva and the Hague in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a ban on the deliberate killing of non-combatants in warfare had become formally part of International Law.

John Martin, in the belief that he is contradicting me, writes "The killing of

Japanese civilians to save the lives of American soldiers did not undermine Western Civilisation'. But I didn't say that the killing of itself did that! I write (p12) that the "*official justification of these massacres*" (directly by the American government, and acquiesced in by Britain and France) did it. That was a rejection of the European rule that forbade massacre unconditionally. It replaced that European or Western rule with a new rule which said implicitly: "Massacre is legitimate if carried out in a righteous cause and with *humanitarian intentions*".

Martin does well to make clear that the left liberalism that now passes for 'liberalism' in Ireland, as in the US and Britain, is not the 'classical' liberalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in these countries. A fundamentalist development of that liberalism's principles of individualism and equality, with an anti-religious bias added, it is the ideology that has facilitated consumerism. Because its new, post-European rules to live by suited the consumerist project, they appealed to the American rulers, who had their own reasons for wanting that kind of economy; not only in the US, but also in its West European satellites. So from the 1960s onward, the new consumerist liberalism, with its 'agenda' of new rules, came to power in Britain and arrived in the Republic of Ireland as a local spin-off of that process.

Martin is right to reject the notion that *The Irish Times* adopted that liberalism, and championed it in the Republic, as part of its effort to undermine the Irish State. Finding an internal Irish cause for every cultural or ideological event in Irish history —forgetting that we have always formed

part of a wider world—is a mistake that we too frequently make. Take Harry White, Professor of Music in UCD. He has long been 'explaining' the absence of a classical music composer in nineteenth-century Ireland by attributing it to Irish nationalism, while ignoring that Ireland was then part of a United Kingdom which was a desert of classical music. *The Irish Times*, in adopting the new liberalism, was indeed following its habit of following London; but seen in a broader context, it was doing in western capitalist terms what the newspapers of Moscow-controlled eastern Europe had earlier done in communist terms. It was adapting to the requirement of a superpower.

The left liberalism of *The Irish Times*, taken up from the start by RTÉ, gradually replaced the previous pluralism of the Dublin press, so that from the 1970s the Dublin media were as ideologically unified as the media of communist Bucharest. With the tacit support of the Irish Government and Irish commercial interests, left liberal journalists and academics replaced the Catholic clergy as the endorsed moral teachers of the nation. Because they instruct us on the correct way to see life, and the correct ways to think and behave, I call them, collectively, the Irish Correctoriate. Every western country has a left liberal correctoriate of its own, linked to the one in Brussels that legislates for the EU, the Republic included.

How this new, post-European collection of rules to live by measures up in terms of sense, I discuss in *Ireland After*. Given that all of us are required to subscribe to this replacement Decalogue, and to live by it, that is an important question.

Desmond Fennell

## Political Stories, Whigs And Tories, Free Trade, World Peace, And Imperial Glories.

John Martin's article in the last issue of the *Irish Political Review* raises many more questions than it answers. And they aren't questions that can just be let sit, questioning away as unanswered questions tend to do. They are questions that deserve at least some further questioning with at best some answers to follow.

According to John Martin:

"In the nineteenth century British Liberalism was an alliance of Manchester Capitalism and the old Whig aristocracy..."

"By the middle of the nineteenth century the Liberal Party had adopted what appeared to be an anti-imperialist position. It believed that it was no longer necessary for Britain to have colonies. All that was required was that the capitalist system be spread throughout the world. However, by the turn of the century, the Liberals—possibly in response to the rise

of German capitalism—reverted to an orthodox imperialist position. British Capital needed the British Navy to open new markets throughout the world. Indeed, the Liberals became more extreme imperialists than the Tories. A section of the Liberal Party believed that no boundaries should be placed on the geographical extent of the British Empire whereas the Tories and Joseph Chamberlain's Liberal Unionists thought that the existing Empire should be consolidated rather than expanded."

John Martin doesn't say anything specific about the roots, origin or formation of the Liberal Party. Nor is he entirely clear about what apparently anti-imperialist position it had adopted "*By the middle of the nineteenth century*". He doesn't say what influential persons or tendency within the Liberal Party wanted to dismantle or at least halt the growth of the Empire at that time. It is up to his readers to investigate in order hopefully to discover something to which his words might refer. That's quite a lot of work for him to put us to but, hey, it's a typical Irish

Summer complete with unpredictable heatwaves and torrential downpours and I've little else to occupy me . . .

#### WHIGS AND TORIES

So to begin. Stating the simple fact that "*By the middle of the nineteenth century the Liberal Party*" had not yet been formed would be mere pedantic fun. It might call John Martin's procedures into question but it answers nothing. For answers we have to get down to the particulars of the matter in hand, which in this case is the British political system, a two-party system which in the first instance was, more or less, a matter of Whigs and Tories.

It is perhaps worth stating that each of those titles was originally an insulting epithet which the insulted chose not to be injured by and instead took up as a kind of badge of honour. Tories were a species of Irish bandit. Whigs were some manner of Covenanting Scots. So far so much, so very little. Of themselves the names have no political significance whatsoever.

But the radical section of the ruling class which succeeded upon the Glorious Revolution and its Act of Settlement was happy to be called Whig. And the reactionary section was not downcast to be called Tory. So we call them such, knowing that the names mean nothing that can be caught or fielded in serious political discourse where the real balls of it all are radical and reactionary.

Under the direction of, and within the network of corruption established by, Walpole, the Whigs developed into a coherent party long before the Tories. Stating the case very broadly I think it would be accurate to say that radicalism had a coherent sense of mission about it while reaction was more inclined just to leave things be; the Whigs were naturally inclined to government while the Tories were a born opposition.

In the first parliaments of the glorious revolutionary era, when radicals and reactionaries were evenly balanced, the reactionaries proved willing to convict James Stuart of High Treason (the Act of Attainder in 1702) but unwilling to swear allegiance to William III (the Abjuration Bill, also in 1702). And that sums them up: where the Whigs were positive and dynamic the Tories were acquiescent and bloody-minded about it, which is just to say, a born opposition.

The general tendency of English politics between the Glorious Revolution and the Reform Bills of the 19th century was so thoroughly radical, so overwhelmingly progressive, that divisions within them could really only have formed around differences in temperament.

The Tories became coherent and capable of governing in the 1780s, when Pitt split Walpole's grand old party and led it and his country through the series of wars against Revolutionary France. Throughout

this period Pitt called himself an Independent Whig. The party he created was referred to as the Independent Whigs or the Friends of Mr. Pitt. Only after Pitt's death did the new party acquire the old name and become generally known as Tory. And fair enough, as those former radicals had during the course of the French Wars become thoroughly reactionary.

By the 1830s then the Whigs were back in the run of themselves, in a radical alliance with an industrial bourgeoisie that was simply aching to be introduced to the Constitution. The agitation which led to the 1832 Reform Act established the Whigs as the radical element of the two-party system.

But, regarding the Tories, there is no *vice versa* here. It wasn't their opposition to the owner-operators of Hull and Halifax and Hell that, so to speak, damned the Tories as the reactionary element of the two-party system. That was their opposition to Repeal of the Corn Laws in general. In particular it was the blame which attached to them over the Peterloo Massacre that set the popular template once and for all.

However, the Whigs became the Liberal Party in kind of an interesting way, in that the Liberal Party as such, in name and fitted out for pack drill, was founded on the basis of a split in the Tory Party (just as the Tories some eighty years before had finally found coherence on the basis of a split in the Whigs).

Free Trade, in its first agitational phase Repeal of the Corn Laws, was one of the two major planks of mid-nineteenth century Whiggery. Opposition to Repeal was one of the defining characteristics of Toryism in the same period. So when the Corn Laws were at last repealed by a Tory administration under Sir Robert Peel the Tory Party split. The Corn Laws were repealed and Peel very soon after had to resign (the protectionist rebellion against him was organised and led by Disraeli). He left the Tory Party in 1846, taking a substantial minority (about a third) of his parliamentary party with him. Peel died in 1850 and in June 1859, following a meeting in Willis' Tea Rooms in London, Whigs and Peelite Tories merged to form the Liberal Party.

And, just to keep things straight, the Tory Party which opposed, a majority of which continued to oppose, Free Trade, had officially been, since Sir Robert Peel's Tamworth Manifesto of 1834, the Conservative Party.

The Tamworth Manifesto itself is worth a bit of a quote:

"With respect to the Reform Bill itself, I will repeat now the declaration I made when I entered the House of Commons as a member of the Reformed Parliament—that I consider the Reform Bill a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question—a settlement which

no friend to the peace and welfare of this country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or by insidious means.

"Then, as to the spirit of the Reform Bill, and the willingness to adopt and enforce it as a rule of government: if, by adopting the spirit of the Reform Bill, it be meant that we are to live in a perpetual vortex of agitation; that public men can only support themselves in public estimation by adopting every popular impression of the day—by promising the instant redress of anything which anybody may call an abuse—by abandoning altogether that great aid of government—more powerful than either law or reason—the respect for ancient rights, and the deference to prescriptive authority; if this be the spirit of the Reform Bill, I will not undertake to adopt it. But if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper combining, with the firm maintenance of established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances—in that case, I can for myself and colleagues undertake to act in such a spirit and with such intentions."

After Free Trade the other major plank in mid-nineteenth century Whiggery was just what Peel referred to in 1834: "*a perpetual vortex of agitation*" for reform and further reform of the electoral franchise. The Conservative Party was very much against this. Then in 1867, dominated by Disraeli who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Earl of Derby's administration, it u-turned spectacularly and carried a Reform Act which, going much further than the Liberals had proposed, brought the working class into electoral politics for the first time.

#### PARTY POLITICS

I hope it is clear at this point that the two party system of British politics has never been a contest between Whig and Tory, Liberal and Conservative (or Labour and Conservative). Rather, it has been a very fluid set of arrangements between radicals and reactionaries to take account of the pervasive, overwhelmingly radical and progressive, tendency within those politics and provide a quiet stable ground amidst the shifting chattering chaos which is the business.

Peel and Disraeli moved a considerable way from principled positions of their parties, which in many's the body politic would lead to great unrest and upheaval, but they moved along stable lines within the fluid arrangements of the British two-party system.

Now then, the Liberal Party holding an apparently anti-imperialist position by the middle of the nineteenth century when "*it believed that it was no longer necessary for Britain to have colonies*" and then reverting by the end of the century to "*an*

*orthodox imperialist position*". What's that all about?

The sentence in between those positions — "All that was required was that the capitalist system be spread throughout the world"—strongly suggests that John is referring to Richard Cobden and the extreme Free Trade propaganda of the Anti-Corn Law League; in which case we're talking about ideology not politics (certainly not run of the mill party politics), over the head of which there are many interesting things that can be said and argued about.

And this is interesting to me in the first place because Cobden's biographer (also Gladstone's) John Morley, along with John Burns (formerly of the Social Democratic Foundation and the Independent Labour Party), resigned from the Liberal Cabinet when it launched the First World War that a small group within it had been secretly planning for years. I hadn't realised until Brendan Clifford mentioned at a meeting in London earlier this year that the grounds of Morley's resignation was the Cobdenite belief that Free Trade made imperialist wars unnecessary. If Burns' resignation wasn't some species of dissenter pacifism it may well have been on similar grounds (one of these days I'll get round to checking).

Interesting also in the second place because the neo-Imperialist historian, Niall Ferguson, raised just this point (without mentioning the Liberal Party or claiming it as a party political position) in the introduction to his *Empire—How Britain Made The Modern World*. According to Ferguson:

"...it was Cobden who had originally insisted that the expansion of British trade should go hand in hand with a foreign policy of complete non-intervention. Commerce alone, he maintained, was 'the grand panacea',

which, like a beneficent medical discovery, will serve to inoculate with the healthy and saving taste for civilization all the nations of the world. Not a bale of merchandise leaves our shores, but it bears the seeds of intelligence and fruitful thought to the members of some less enlightened community; not a merchant visits our seats of manufacturing industry, but he returns to his own country the missionary of freedom, peace, and good government—whilst our steamboats, that now visit every port of Europe, and our miraculous railroads, that are the talk of all nations, are the advertisements and vouchers for the value of our enlightened institutions.'

"The critical point for Cobden was that neither trade nor even the spread of British 'civilization' needed to be enforced by imperial structures. Indeed, the use of force could achieve nothing if it sought to run counter to the benign laws of the global free market:

'So far as our commerce is concerned, it can neither be sustained nor greatly injured abroad by force or violence. The foreign customers who visit our markets are not brought hither through fear of the power or the influence of British diplomats: they are not captured by our fleets and armies: and as little are they attracted by feelings of love for us;

for that "there is no friendship in trade" is a maxim equally applicable to nations and to individuals. It is solely from the promptings of self interest that the merchants of Europe, as of the rest of the world, send their ships to our ports to be freighted with the products of our labour. The self-same impulse drew all nations, at different periods of history, to Tyre, to Venice, and to Amsterdam; and if, in the revolution of time and events, a country should be found (which is probable) whose cottons and woolens shall be cheaper than those of England and the rest of the world, then to that spot—even should it, by supposition, be buried in the remotest nook of the globe—will all the traders of the world flock; and no human power, no fleets or armies, will prevent Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds, from sharing the fate of their once proud predecessors in Holland, Italy, and Phoenicia...' "

"Thus there was no need for an Empire; trade would take care of itself—and everything else too, including world peace. In May 1856 Cobden went so far as to say that it would 'be a happy day when England has not an acre of territory in Continental Asia'.

"The common factor in all such arguments was and remains, however, the assumption that the benefits of international exchange could have been and can be reaped without the costs of empire. To put it more concisely, can you have globalization without gunboats?" (Penguin Books, xviii - xx, no references given for the passages quoted from Cobden).

Within a page of posing the question Ferguson admitted that "free" markets have to be imposed on people; so you can't have globalization without gunboats.

Cobden (and John Bright) built the mass extra-parliamentary movement that forced the Cotton Lords' demands on the attention of the two-party system as I have described it. An earlier Anti-Corn Law Association had failed to rouse much or any public support for a sectional interest. Cobden set out to make the Anti-Corn Law League into a national movement. He issued instructions to the League's organisers and orators that they should not "...let the enemy make it be believed that this is a mere manufacturers' or cotton spinners' question" (quoted in *Myths Of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* by Jack Snyder, New York, 1991, page 184).

So he preached a gospel of Free Trade as the engine of Universal Peace which worked up popular enthusiasm and converted the Conservative administration of Robert Peel (not any administration of his own Whig Party) from an aristocratic and agricultural to a bourgeois and industrial policy.

And he believed every word of that gospel and went on preaching it until the day he died. But, while he carried Repeal of the Corn Laws, Universal Peace eluded him (as much as anything else because it did not especially interest either the Cotton Lords or the guardians of the two-party system).

In his resignation speech Peel paid tribute to Cobden's efforts and, more

interesting in the broader context, explained how the two-party system had been called into play by the agitation:

"In reference to our proposing these measures, I have no wish to rob any person of the credit which is justly due to him for them. But I may say that neither the gentlemen sitting on the benches opposite, nor myself, nor the gentlemen sitting round me—I say that neither of us are the parties who are strictly entitled to the merit. There has been a combination of parties, and that combination of parties together with the influence of the Government, has led to the ultimate success of the measures. But, Sir, there is a name which ought to be associated with the success of these measures: it is not the name of the noble Lord, the member for London, neither is it my name. Sir, the name which ought to be, and which will be associated with the success of these measures is the name of a man who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has advocated their cause with untiring energy, and by appeals to reason, expressed by an eloquence, the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned—the name which ought to be and will be associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden. Without scruple, Sir, I attribute the success of these measures to him."

#### MODERN LIBERALISM

Returning to John Martin's article; I can see little value in describing Margaret Thatcher as the first Liberal leader of the Conservative Party. The two-party system simply hasn't worked in any way that would make sense of that statement.

Take Winston Churchill. Churchill entered Parliament in 1900 as a Conservative MP. In 1904, on a matter of principle concerning Free Trade versus Imperial Tariffs, Churchill, always a free trader, crossed the floor of the house and joined the Liberal Party. As a Liberal he was President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for Air. Then the Great War destroyed the Liberal Party and in 1925 Churchill, who had stuck it out as long as he could among no-hopers, '*re-ratted*', ie. rejoined the Conservative Party which, after all the ups and downs you'd expect, he subsequently led.

Nor was Tony Blair, as John would have it, the first Liberal leader of the Labour Party. Only two leaders of the Labour Party can reasonably be described as having been other than Liberal in their political outlook: Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson. Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson and George Lansbury (who should maybe be forgiven an early mistake, except perhaps for his later mistake) were former members of the Liberal Party, the first three of whom had left it upon failing to be selected

for a winnable seat. Barnes, Gaitskell, Callaghan, Foot and Kinnock were all Liberal by inclination at least (John Smith may have been of a different stamp, I don't know enough about him or his period as leader to be sure; John Clynes I would think of as a Liberal but really I don't know enough about him to say). Brown is a Liberal in the radical mould of Blair and Thatcher.

Blair attempted to be honest at least once in his political career, when he addressed his first Labour Conference as Prime Minister in 1997 and said:

"Since this is a day for honesty, I'll tell you my heroes aren't just Ernie Bevin, Nye Bevan and Attlee. They are also Keynes, Beveridge, Lloyd George. Division among radicals almost one hundred years ago resulted in a 20th century dominated by Conservatives. I want the 21st century to be the century of the radicals."

The programmatic statement therein pledged Blair to heal the great division in the British Left which opened up when the Labour Party stuttered into existence outside the embrace of the Liberal Party which had shepherded the working class into politics in the wake of Disraeli's Reform Act.

However, just to set the record straight. The "*Division among radicals almost one hundred years ago*" (referring to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, which became the Labour Party six years later) was not really a seismic event. The division was not terribly deep and there was good reason to believe it would not long endure.

The Labour Party flourished electorally under the wing of a New Liberalism that was the shared inheritance of Labour and Liberal Progressives. Labour's impressive showing in the 1906 election (which was otherwise a Liberal landslide) was the result of a secret deal between progressive New Liberals in each of the two parties. Ramsay MacDonald, acting for Keir Hardie, negotiated an electoral pact with Jesse Herbert who was acting for Herbert Gladstone. The collapse of the Liberal Party, which no-one could have foreseen before the event, forced Labour out into the open to govern (as minority governments which required Liberal support) in 1924 and 1929-31.

From Lib-Lab days—when the Liberal Party wined and dined and spoke extravagantly in praise of Trade Union MPs like Thomas Burt, Henry Broadhurst and Alexander Macdonald—it took great care to keep in touch with the development of labour representation. Immediately upon the formation of the Independent Labour Party the leaders of New Liberalism, J. A. Hobson and Herbert Samuel, formed a discussion group, the Rainbow Circle, which was to function as a link between the Labour and Liberal wings of

the Progressive Movement which Gladstone had brought into existence in the 1860s. In 1894 Ramsay MacDonald was elected onto the Rainbow Circle's organising committee. He was still a member of the Rainbow Circle in 1931. As was Sir Herbert Samuel.

The radicals whom Blair spoke of as being divided in 1900 continued in a substantial contact which facilitated the development of a common Progressive policy on all the major issues of many's a long day until the great *dénouement* of 1931. That year Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of a minority Labour Government, conspired with his Rainbow Circle colleague, Sir Herbert Samuel, soon to be Leader of the Liberal Party, to collapse his Government and go into a coalition including the Conservatives that he and Samuel expected would end with a General Election which the reunited Progressive Movement would fight under whatever title, but win as New Liberals all.

Quick decisive action by Ernie Bevin smashed the conspiracy and punctured the conspirators' expectations. MacDonald collapsed his administration into a National Government which gained very little support from his Cabinet and Party, practically all of which had been pulled into line by Bevin and Citrine. The ensuing election resulted in a Conservative Landslide. This is the point at which the appalling division to which Blair referred actually occurred.

A couple of months into this debacle the Rainbow Circle finally gave up the ghost. It held its last meeting and wound itself up on 14th October 1931.

Radical Liberalism was sidelined thereby. When party politics re-emerged after a period of National Government and war-time coalition, it was dominated by the new working-class Labour Party that Bevin built to replace the displaced section of the Liberal Party which Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald had led. The two-party system coped with that and showed every sign that it would be able to cope with the major extension of working-class power that the implementation of industrial democracy would have inaugurated.

But industrial democracy was not implemented and the consequent collapse of the working class Labour Party led to a revival of Radical Liberalism under Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. All three of the main parties of British politics today are Liberal Parties with similar policies and similar personnel to oversee their implementation. I'm not at all sure that the two-party system has survived the last thirty-two years.

I very much suspect that the next British General Election will be followed by a period of National Government, with all

three of the Liberal parties together in coalition. Liberal Dictatorship as far as the eye can see or the mind can speculate.

The end of history?

Joe Keenan

## From Judaism to Islam: the journey of Muhammad Asad

*The Road to Mecca: the journey of Muhammad Asad. A documentary film directed by Georg Misch (2008).*

Screened at the Austrian Cultural Forum in London, 14 May 2009.

This film explores the spiritual and intellectual journey of Leopold Weiss whose life spanned most of the 20th century. He was born in 1900 in the city of Lemberg (then in Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire but now known as Lviv in the Ukraine). His grandfather was an Orthodox rabbi from Czernowitz (now Chernovtsi). At the beginning of the First World War his family moved to Vienna where Weiss attended high school before enrolling at the university in 1918 to study Philosophy and Art History. By this time however he had begun to drift from his Jewish religion and immerse himself in the intellectual and literary life of Vienna. He frequented Café Herrenhof where he got to know people like Milan Dubrovic (later Editor of *Die Presse*) and Otto Gross, the psychoanalyst and social revolutionary. After the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire he moved to Berlin in the early 1920s where he continued his Bohemian lifestyle and met people like Bertolt Brecht, Max Reinhardt and Marlene Dietrich. He found work as an assistant on one of Friedrich W. Murnau's films (Murnau was the director of the seminal *Nosferatu*) and wrote screenplays with Anton Kuh. Mixing with artists and writers associated with Expressionism and orientalism and having been largely formed through the culture of Austro-Hungary, he developed an interest in the Arab world.

In 1922 he visited Palestine and stayed with his maternal uncle in Jerusalem, Dorian Feigenbaum, a psychoanalyst and pupil of Freud. Although Dorian was not a Zionist, another uncle, Aryeh Feigenbaum (1885-1981) was a committed Zionist who had moved to Palestine in 1913 (Aryeh was to figure again in his life at a later stage). Weiss had visited Palestine with the intention of studying the Arab world at first hand but he quickly came to view Zionism as a gross injustice on the Arab majority population. "*I conceived from the outset a strong objection to Zionism*", he would later record, "*I considered it immoral that immigrants, assisted by a foreign Great Power, should come from abroad with the avowed intention of attaining to majority in the country and thus to dispossess the people whose country it had been from time immemorial*" ("Road to Mecca", p.93, 1954). While in Jerusalem he used every opportunity to confront the Zionist leaders with the reality of their project, even risking alienation from his Jewish relatives by

raising the issue with the likes of Menahem Ussishkin (1863-1941) and Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952).

In Palestine he also became friends with the Dutch Jewish homosexual writer and journalist, Jacob Israel de Haan. De Haan at one time had been a socialist agitator before becoming a Zionist. He moved to Palestine where he came into contact with the indigenous orthodox Jewish community whose presence in the country pre-dated Zionist immigration. Under their influence he became an anti-Zionist and used his journalism to publicise the existence in Palestine of a Jewish community which opposed the Zionist project. His articles were published in Holland and in the *Daily Express* in London and caused severe embarrassment to the Zionist leadership who did not want to confuse the British public regarding their project. A general awareness of the existence of a significant anti-Zionist body of Jewish opinion in Palestine at this time was a dangerous thing for the Zionists. In Palestine de Haan was warned off, reporting under pain of death, but he persisted in his activities. On 30th June 1924, after dispatching his last *Daily Express* piece he made his way to the synagogue in the Sha'arei Sedeq Hospital where he was in the habit of praying twice a day. After finishing his prayers he was shot dead while leaving the synagogue at the gates of the hospital. His death had been ordered by the Haganah but was mourned by many orthodox Jews who continue to view him as one of their heroes to this day.

It was through de Haan's press contacts that Weiss had managed to get work with the German press and began to write articles for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. His articles from Palestine and Egypt were highly critical of Zionist and British policies. He had already begun to learn Arabic and studied the Koran before undertaking a second journey through the East which this time included Iran and Afghanistan. This second journey resulted in the publication of his first work *Unromantisches Morgenland* ("The Unromantic Orient") in 1924. He converted to Islam in 1926 and took the name Muhammed Asad.

After his first pilgrimage to Mecca (during which he travelled for months by camel) he stayed on in Saudi Arabia for several years under the protection of King Abd al-Aziz Al Saud (also known as Ibn Saud), who founded the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At this time he was also working as a correspondent in the Middle East for newspapers in Germany and Austria. In the early 1930s he went to India where, under the influence of the poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, he became a supporter of the concept of Pakistan as a separate Islamic state. During the Second World War he was interned by the British as an enemy alien and at the end of the war, with the birth of Pakistan, he was appointed director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction and later head of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East Department. In 1952 he became the Pakistani representative at the United Nations. After being forced out of his position within the year (of which more later) Asad remained in the USA where, in 1954, he published a biographical account of his life under the title *The Road To Mecca*. He subsequently moved to the Lebanon and then Switzerland where he began working on an English translation of the Koran in Geneva in 1960. The translation of the

Koran was published in 1980 by which time he was living in Tangiers. In 1982 he moved to a village outside Lisbon before going to Mijas in Granada in Spain where he died in 1992. He is buried in the Muslim cemetery in Granada.

#### THE FILM

Such are the basic facts of his life. Georg Misch's film provides a sympathetic account of Asad's life, which takes the form of a discussion on a number of levels —between history and the present, between Islam and the West, and within Islam itself.

At the outset we are shown a film clip of an interview in what seems to be a Ukrainian TV studio between a Jew and a Muslim, presumably after Asad's death in 1992 (the Ukraine is now anxious to reclaim him as one of their own). Both are asked to give an account of Weiss's significance to their respective religions. While the Muslim applauds his life as one which teaches tolerance and understanding between the West and Islam, the Jew cannot see beyond the equation of Islam with terrorism. The use of counter-balancing situations and viewpoints is utilized excellently throughout the film. The Director also restricts any voice-over to an absolute minimum and allows the people themselves to drive the narrative in their own words and predicaments. This is a very effective device and gives it great natural impact in terms of tragedy and humour.

One of the most effective series of scenes centres upon a Bedouin tribesman living in the West Bank. He and his family are restricted to a small enclosed encampment where the traditional freedom to roam the desert is denied them by the presence of the Israeli Wall and Israeli troops. He is shown bewailing the fact that in the days of Asad he could ride a camel from there to Mecca without any hindrance, whereas nowadays . . . The poignancy of his situation is amplified by his failed attempt to mount one of his last remaining two camels. When he falls off he exclaims to God that he has forgotten how to ride a camel—the ultimate failure for the Bedouin. The impact of this scene is enhanced by the following scene in which a leading Israeli academic demographer (whose name I failed to catch), standing on the Jewish side of the Wall, unapologetically declares that the Wall was his idea several years previously. He quite openly states that the intention of the Wall was the separation of Jews on one side and Arabs on the other. Its realization, however, had to wait on Ariel Sharon's decision to begin the construction. On the question of Muhammad Asad, of whom he said he knew a little, he said he knows what the film's Director is attempting to do—he is trying to depict Asad as a bridge between the Jews and the Arabs and using the Wall as a graphic illustration of the alternative. This project, he says, is an impossibility as the Arabs have no actual power to change history. He illustrates the argument by pointing to the fate of the Jews in Germany and Poland. Even they could not change history he says. "He" meaning the Bedouin tribesman, "cannot change history and will end up keeping his camels purely for the tourists".

The film then moves to the open deserts of Saudi Arabia and a meeting of Bedouin elders in a tent. This provides a graphic counter-positioning of the open spaces of the Bedouin's life outside Israel's occupied territories with the restricted enclosures of the Bedouin in the West Bank. There then follows a discussion

about Muhammed Asad with a number of the Bedouin elders present. He is well known to several of them as he lived among their fathers for some time in the 1920s and knowledge of Asad has been passed down to them. One of the elders is handed a copy of *Road To Mecca* which he immediately begins to read. In the meantime outside the tent the others continue to talk and joke while two manage to mount a camel (illustrating the difference between their fate and that of their Palestinian kinsman) and pretend to head off towards Mecca. All through this scene several camera shots continue to refer back to the elder inside the tent oblivious to what is happening around him as he remains engrossed in the contents of Asad's book. At the end of the scene he asks the Director if he can have a copy of the book.

The physical difficulties of attempting to retrace Asad's first pilgrimage to Mecca generates another scene at an Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank where pilgrims are being held up for hours. One man approaches the camera and asks what it is about. When told it is a film about Muhammed Asad he immediately reveals a profound knowledge of the man and his works, even to the extent of knowing that he was originally an Austrian Jew. The camera crew share part of the bus journey with these pilgrims until they are arrested at another Israeli checkpoint because they are not travelling on a pilgrim's visa. Later, as we approach Mecca along the modern highway in Saudi Arabia, the exit road signs display directions for a 'Muslims only' and 'Non Muslims' symbolically illustrates the divergence between Islam and the West.

While many travel to Mecca by road most pilgrims arrive at Riyadh Airport. Here, several of them talk to camera about Asad and his works. However, there is one discordant voice from an Arab Muslim who says that there was something suspicious about Asad and that he was not a good Muslim. Further scenes in Saudi Arabia include a discussion by two Saudi writers, one of whom was a journalist, in what looks like the Royal coach on a train travelling through the desert. As they sit in opulent armchairs they proclaim about the importance of Asad to Islam. The journalist's attitude was that, although Asad was an important figure, his teachings were directed towards the elite and tended to be irrelevant to the poor. In another scene, Ahmed Zaki Yamani (Saudi Minister of Oil, 1962-1986) also gives his views about Asad's legacy. Asad, he says, had pointed to a different path for Saudi Arabia to develop as a Muslim state. At the beginning of the state, when Asad was the friend of King Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, and the character of the society had not yet solidified, if Asad's path been followed the current preoccupation with things like the forcible wearing of headscarfs by women and other unreasonable restrictions would not have happened.

The next stage of the journey was Pakistan where we are introduced to a group of intellectuals who call themselves "Asadians". The "Asadians" appear to consist of a small group of Western-educated individuals who, for the most part, seemed to be employed by Western universities. At a meeting in Lahore one of them was almost in tears as he proclaimed his sorrow as an emigrant at the current state of Pakistan. It was unclear what he was referring to as the film was shot when Musharraf was

still in power, but he was probably referring to the power battle between the Pakistani judiciary and the state. The one woman in the group vouched for Asad's superior translation of the Koran using his account of the role of women as an example. While Asad translated the relevant passage as saying that man must be the provider for the woman, previous translations had claimed it said man must have dominance over the woman. A bookshop is also visited to confirm the ongoing popularity of Asad's books in the country.

Asad's role in Pakistan's early history is linked to the fact that the filming took place on and around the country's Independence Day (14 August). His official position in its early Government is mentioned but the manner of his dismissal as the country's UN representative is not explained, beyond the fact that it was the result of enemies plotting against him. This is probably the most disingenuous part of the film. Although there is no official account of why he was dismissed, there is enough circumstantial evidence to point to a logical explanation. The film does not reveal this but it seems that, while he was working as the Pakistani UN representative in New York, he renewed contact with his Israeli Jewish family. It is not known who initiated the contact but Aryeh Feigenbaum (whom we came across earlier), had a daughter, Hemdah (1916-1989) who was living in the city at the same time. Her husband was Harry (Zvi) Zindar (1909-1991) who was Press Officer at the Israeli Information Office (he later became Director of the Voice of Israel). Zindar was in regular touch with Mossad and would dine with Asad in "*out of the way*" restaurants and regularly entertained him to dinner in their Forest Hills home (Asad even attended their son's Bar Mitzvah). The conversations at these events were conveyed by Zindar to Mossad. Although he knew Asad remained an unequivocal enemy of Israel, Zindar believed that it might be possible to get him to soften his stance. Mossad felt that, given Asad's positive standing within the Pakistani Foreign Ministry, it would be worthwhile making an attempt to recruit him. An ideological inducement was out of the question but perhaps a monetary one would bear fruit. Zindar concluded that this would be a waste of time and would only alienate him. Although there is no evidence that Asad ever consciously assisted Zindar in providing information useful to the Israelis, the mere fact of his regular contact with someone associated with Mossad would have compromised him as far as the Pakistani authorities were concerned. This provides the only logical explanation of why he was cast adrift by Pakistan in late 1952. He never returned to Pakistan.

Asad's subsequent travels to the Lebanon, Switzerland, Morocco, Portugal and Spain are passed over fairly quickly. His stay in Tangiers (where he completed his English translation of the Koran after 15 years work) is recounted by two elderly women who are part of the Jewish community in the city. It appears that he regularly visited one of them and would bring cake in true Viennese fashion. They knew he had been an Islamic convert from Judaism but struggled to know what motivated his conversion. His time in Spain at the end of his life is hardly touched upon beyond the fact of his burial in the Muslim cemetery in Granada. The final scene where his old driver/secretary visits

his grave is designed to encapsulate the entire story of Asad's struggle to overcome rigid Islamic interpretation of the Koran. The Muslim keeper of the graveyard objects to the height of Asad's gravestone claiming it infringes Islamic law. We are left with Asad's secretary dismissing such an interpretation, claiming it says no such thing in the Koran. He replaces the headstone to its original height—in death it would appear that Asad's struggle with Islamic orthodoxy continues.

#### THE OUTCOME

Overall, Georg Misch's film is enjoyable, informative, moving, humorous and certainly worth seeing. The film is constructed around the casting of Muhammad Asad as the tragic figure who managed to develop and explore Islam in a way that provides a pathway for a better understanding between Islam and the West. Unfortunately, nobody is listening, the implication being that Islam has been hijacked by an orthodoxy which distorts the Koran to its own ends and the West, responding to the results of actions based on that distorted orthodoxy, refuses to properly engage with the Muslim world. According to this model, it is the Muslims who must bear the greatest responsibility for the situation.

Although the film stimulates a sympathy for Asad and takes us some way towards understanding the plight of Muslims at the hands of the West, it falls short of providing any real insight into why Asad's type of liberal Islamic teaching fails to find root in the Muslim world. Asad's finished template was one that was inevitably forged within the sensibilities of Western values and was the result of his own journey within Islam.

The question: did Muslims desert Asad or did Asad desert the Muslims was one that deserved an exploration within the terms of the film. Yet it was avoided and in the process of its avoidance made it impossible to formulate any coherent understanding of the man or the reason for the breakdown of relations between him and the world he claimed to have embraced.

The evidence of the growing rift is not hard to find. This is a Pakistani Muslim teacher writing in 1961:

"I have great respect for [Asad's] exposition of Islamic ideas and especially his criticism of Western culture and its materialistic philosophies. I am sorry to say however, that although in the early days of his conversion, he was a staunch, practicing Muslim, gradually he drifted close to the ways of the so-called 'progressive' Muslim just like the 'reformed' Jews. Recently his divorce from his Arab wife and marriage to a modern American girl hastened this process of deviation more definitely... Once a man begins to live the life of a true Muslim, all his capabilities lose their 'market value.' He is the same sad story with Muhammad Asad, who has always been accustomed to a high and modern standard of living and after embracing Islam, had to face the severest financial difficulties. As a result, he was forced to make one compromise after another." (Maududi (Lahore) to Margaret Marcus (Maryam Jameelah), 25 Feb. 1961. In Maryam Jameelah, *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Delhi, Crescent Publicity, 1969).

As early as 1961 there was a growing dis-

illusion on the part of leading Islamic scholars with Asad. The feeling was that he was drifting from them. Asad's first printed exploration of Islamic thought was his pamphlet *Islam At The Crossroads*, which was published in March 1934. In this work Asad made the case for Islam against the West. He refers to the historical echoes of Imperialism and the Crusades and blames Western orientalists for their distortions of Islam. The pamphlet was very influential in its day and went through several reprints in the course of the 1940s and 1950s. In some quarters it is claimed to have influenced certain threads of what has now become known as Islamic fundamentalist thought—particularly in the area of 'Crusaderism'.

In later years, as he refined his interpretation of Islam, he was to distance himself from the political contents of this pamphlet describing it as a "harsh book". Increasingly, he had nothing political to say to the Muslim world and what he did say was not designed to bridge any gaps. For instance, when commenting on the toppling of the Shah of Iran in 1979, he described Khomeini as being worse than the Shah. Again, the conflicts caused by the expansionist policies of the Israeli state did not appear to exercise him and in 1981 he was quoted as saying "*it is possible that if I would come into contact with Arabs today for the first time, I would not be attracted to them*". The irony was that, as Asad's thinking went in one direction, the world went in another. As his refinement of Islamic thought became less politically critical of the West, the more aggressively anti-Islamic did the West become. Asad's search became one of a purely spiritual odyssey at the expense of his original political understanding of the relationship between Islam and the West. The answer to the question "*did Muslims desert Asad or did Asad desert the Muslims?*" is that it was probably a combination of both.

The shortcoming of the film is that these aspects of Asad's life and personality are not explored. If they were, the central facts of the failure of understanding between Islam and the West would very quickly become obvious. The popularity of Islamic fundamentalism today is the direct result of the Middle Eastern policies of the West driven by the USA and Israel. It is these policies which have created the conditions on the ground for the emergence of an Islamic fundamentalism capable of calling to action significant numbers of Muslims in all parts of the world. Asad's increasing concentration upon his own spiritual journey meant a loss of any political understanding he once possessed. This loss meant that he could not comprehend the forces that were providing the fertile soil for the development of a form of Islam to which he had nothing to say. In the end all he saw was a people who had turned their back on him and did not deserve his teaching. He ended as a tragic solitary figure moving ever Westward both politically and geographically.

A DVD of the film will be out later in the year available via the Amazon German website.

**Eamon Dyas**

## Judicial Swipes (Part 3)

The following letter was submitted to the *Irish Times* but did not find publication

And then the other thing. This traditionalist set all have the jibs of their cowardly sick political progenitors (yea....their auld fellas) who engaged in the nexus of cover up and protection of pedophiles, who raped and committed acts of necrophilia on those children, made the living dead through dehumanising brutality in a church-state mind-murder complex. Irish poverty culture, with the depraved power class, judicial progenitors (including...yea.....their auld fellas), perpetuated the totalitarian complex with all citizenry reduced into a State of Nature and behaviourally contained into a socialised guilt complex of ignorant and sexually self-hating complicity. The writer's mother walked by a local institution in the 1940. She was 9 years old and was told that, "it's where they keep bastards". The writer saw such mindsets in 1980s in his home town and was lucky not to be physically dehumanized. National life as death-cult? Fear-driven amoral idolatry? They didn't commit mass rape (or rapes at masses) after the Famine, and that was a pretty bad time to be about the place.

The above reality reads like Constitutional subversion and seditious conspiracy to the writer, with the power and economic classes acting like enemies of the people. A disgrace of our civilization, comparable to the debasement of the old colonial masters. But the Constitution protects the Nation's Sovereign Body, and the other emanations of state, not so much the people (or women's right to work, or children, or queers, or queens, or lesbians, or single mothers). It references Jesus Christ and a church demeaned by its functionaries as church of Anti-Christ. One cannot subvert or be convicted for seditious conspiracy against the people the writer understands. Tough luck. Why they did not put that in? It might have come to be known as a "Constitutional oxymoron"? I suppose they might have lost their jobs in the Executive more easily too. That sounds like a good idea at this stage in our generation's history. Our generation.

The BBC have gone more native than usual and started using the term "the people". Like an auld Times tendency, they too instinctually are going for a more power-centrist executive angle, reporting that the "*mother of all Parliaments*" has been over democratised over the last 20 years. Here in the Republic, Irish punditry and the media haven't a clue what is going on or what to say about the sick State functioning and practice in concise deconstruction. Even the *Irish Times* is grasping at where to put its feet, whether to go native with the anti-liberal traditionalist religious power centrist statisticians,

or to go with the rest of us. Tough call. They think we don't want a State! The people's mood is one like a Romanian crowd chanting "*Freedom, Democracy*" over and over again and it is 1991. We are bounded into a traditionalist State of Nature here as far as the writer's generation can see. Political Primitivism theory rules the ephemeral of the Cabinet. How could you even join a political party?

Civilised citizenry, respectful of quality law in spirit, want environmentally progressive social economic cohesion through a disparate democratic state administration i.e. direct democratic access to power decisions and legislation creation systems. This would modernize business regulation beyond all competitors' legislative bodies. Regulation will be kingmaker for the writer's kind of political leader. All the Devil gives us are idle democratic statist executive propagandists and a centrist power-obsessed executive through poster democrats who use democracy as a poster story plaything perpetuating the other national weakness of Irish political party patronage. They are supported in this by all elements of the Irish media, particularly the loyal Statist *Irish Times*, which along with the *IPR*, is the only paper the writer buys. He should get it for free, and probably read other papers too. Ireland's current democracy is a power diversionary trick. Only the courts give people an idea of justice and faith in what we Irish call our democracy. But it will be good to get the current crowd out within the next 6-12 months.

It is the Parliament that should be enabled to hold the executive by the neck. The Senate should round out the State ensuring the frolics of the junior emanations are matured and seasoned. Currently the Senate is perceived as a dumping ground for the colourful and useless. It is effectively, by actor allocation, and student parental voting, and obvious administrative systems structuring deficit, powerless. Our State should not be this way. The body executive bites its smiles smugly when talking about popular modern participatory democracy as people power. Modern power distribution systems exist in modern European countries, but not here.

The Irish Parliament is under-democratised, and will be superfluous in the oncoming economic NAMA war theatre. The power goal of the actors is to own the recovery for political posterity. That is all that matters to the traditionalist statisticians. The unemployment body count that this war causes is just free market cyclical collateral to them. Containment of the situation until the next cycle comes around is primary. Society does not seem to exist to them. It is economic modelling and the Irish-American Chamber of Commerce they are interesting in.

The National Sovereign Body Parliament being bounded and constricted coupled with an excessively handed and real national democratic inertia provides sustenance to administrative asymmetric power traditional-

ism within the State machinations. In the past, this distracted from, assisted in and sustained the nexus of support for institutionalized mass rape. Societal Genocide. Who will take the Irish State to the war crimes tribunal in The Hague? Can the Vatican as State be brought to International Justice? The writer would guess they have the legal risks of such a challenge wrapped up already after 2000 years. However, Nazis did have a justice placed upon their heads.

These dire paradigms continue today in Ireland into a totalitarian type of leadership projectism currently manifest and presented as liberal micro business proliferation via American electronic technology corporate focus. This is not intrinsically negative as it creates liberalised employment infrastructures and broadly speaking, is socially positive.

What should also be happening is an immediate Cabinet-driven environmentally-sustainable National energy project for completeness of energy independence. Current Green policy and effect is only scratching the surface. The Greens in cabinet are political minnows. All-Ireland energy engineering projects on a scale not seen before in the State's history must be initiated. Energy security and environmental sustainability on a global scale is a problem of object reality.

Also, a totality of agrarian expansion is needed as food security policy for all citizens sustainably into the next 70 years without the need to import foodstuff commodities which can be grown here. This can save the farming communities being strangled within the EEA, within CAP mere marketeering. Their problems are serious and real. Food security, pricing regulation, and supply-chain economic distortions, on a global scale, are problems of objective reality.

The cabinet's energy, focus of determination and old-fashioned concentration, taught to the writer by a good christian brother, should be directed intently to such great National projects with deep deliverance of citizenry participation. Not merely the privateers. Generational and societal consolidation is required.

The Parliamentary under-democratisation creates a sick curse which riddles the State, the body politic and public life. The diseased State cries out: "A new Constitutional Settlement, Reform the Constitution, Reform the Parliament, Reform the Executive, Reform the Senate, Reform the state administrative bodies!" REFORM! REFORM! REFORM! Traditionalists are dumb to this and tactic through the gaps in their silence. The old man's back again. The Long Fella. He is an expansionist and he consumes. The Constitution protects the sick executive power complex. They won't let go. Right now they are called Fianna Fail. This time their church is full of child rapists. Dr. Woods let them off in twenty minutes. Who is raping who, young man? You are the guilty.

Tom Sheridan 2009, Copyright

**Does  
It  
Up  
?**

**Stack**

**LAW REFORM**

The Law Reform Commission is still labouring on. Lawyers have a gift of keeping themselves occupied *ad aeternum* with whatever project is entrusted to their care and law reform in Ireland seems to be a perpetually ongoing process. A person of commonsense might think of a simple way to get rid of old laws such as 'all laws made prior to 1921 by the UK Parliament are hereby declared to be of no force or effect from the date of the passing of this act'.

But no. That would be too simple for the lawyers. Yet there are thousands of UK laws of ancient vintage still "*on the Statute Book*", even though they are considered obsolete, and the Law Reform Commission is going through them one by one. It could take forever, especially as the available staff of competent lawyers is small. Recently, a heave was discerned and there is movement with a proposal to repeal about 4,800 obsolete laws which are described by the Department of the Taoiseach as "*technically still on the Statute Book but have become irrelevant over the centuries*".

Hopefully, among the irrelevant statutes to be abolished is the enactment which empowers the English Prince of Wales to declare himself Chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin. This power was thought to be appropriate 300 years ago when TCD was a seminary for clergy for the new Protestant Church of which the King or Queen of England was the Head. As I write, the present Prince of Wales, Charles Windsor has still the power. Still on the Irish Statute Book are the laws under which Roger Casement, an Irishman, was held in an English Court to be guilty of treason under *The Treason Act of 1351*—also of 1695, 1795, and 1848—even though the Rising in Ireland in 1916 could not have been "...to compass, imagine, invent, devise, or intend death or destruction or any bodily harm tending to death or destruction, maiming or wounding, imprisonment or restraint of the person of the Sovereign..." (i.e. Sovereign of England.)

Also still on the Statute Book in Ireland are laws prohibiting Catholics from owning land and holding certain important positions.

It is good to have these laws repealed now but how can politicians expect to be treated as professionals when each of the main political parties did nothing in the previous eighty years about these patently repressive and nationally insulting Acts?

It is not that the Ministers and Taoisigh did not know. They must have known because a great many of them were and are lawyers. Voices in the wilderness were Judge Charles Gavin Duffy and John Kelly TD who did draw attention to the awful situation, only to be ignored by politicians and lawyers who seem to prefer to hide behind the thicket of obfuscation provided by obsolete UK Acts.

**RTE**

RTE has done it wrong again. On 30th June 2009, the national broadcaster attempted to pay tribute to the late Sean Lemass, former Taoiseach. He was not a lawyer. He started off as a soldier in Oglach na hEireann, the national army. He later became a TD and a very pragmatic and capable Minister and Taoiseach. When the economy rapidly improved in the 1960s and 1970s he self-deprecatingly said "*the rising tide (of international trade) lifts all boats*". The RTE programme opened with the narrator saying Lemass was a "*gun-man*". This, and the way in which it was said, was a travesty. As was the picture of the death of a British soldier accompanying the statement implying Lemass shot him. Lemass is one of our major important personalities of the past century. Why does RTE have to treat Irish history and the Irish people with such insolence and such casual insults?

**THE RYAN REPORT**

The Ryan Report has renewed the baying of the herd for blood. The media are feeding on it like pigs when food is thrown before them. The truth is trampled underfoot and it is not allowed to get in the way of a good story.

Truth, such as that Industrial Schools were State institutions under the supervision of the Department of Justice and Education. The religious Brothers and Nuns took on the job in an attempt to "save the souls" of those children committed to the Schools by the State's Courts usually because the case was made that the children had got out of control of their parents. For a myriad of social reasons—a lot to do with poverty which was widespread all over Europe in those days—the children ended up in these Schools. One person said that they already were damaged before they ever entered these institutions and he was bayed down—yet he spoke the truth. And parents too were sometimes complicit in their children's removal—again for many reasons.

Truth, like the religious orders were underpaid and the schools were underfunded. Advantage was taken by the State of the desire of the Orders to do the work as "God's Work". The archives are full of begging letters from Brothers, Priests, and Nuns asking the State for funding—mostly ignored by the State on behalf of its citizens. One can argue that the State

hadn't the funds and that too is unarguably true. But try saying that to a baying mob!

Truth such as that on occasions the children were committed for misbehaviour. One man told me that he, as a child, was "*a blackguard and that his mother in Court said she could not control him and so the Judge put him in the Reformatory*". Another man told me his fellow-inmates were the worst abusers of each other. "*The Brothers were always trying to keep order*". I am satisfied that in the long run, Truth will be again established. All the Orders kept records and so did the Courts. The present emphasis on 'the extraordinary' suggests a complex reflex in our own present society, added to which of course there is pure greed about *money*—a huge motivating factor for some in tall tales of strange abusive nature. Some suggest that the more awful the accounts are, the more money the victims got, but it was the lawyers who gained the most. It has been suggested that The Ryan Report will eventually cost the State up to €100 million. Furthermore, it has been reported that four members of that commission remain *in situ*, in unexplained circumstances.

It is true to say that people in the cities knew that there were Reformatories: youngsters were threatened with being sent to where *bad children went*.

In some cases orphans also ended up in some of the Schools if there were no family able to keep them.

The Protestant community had these Institutions also and Protestants are keeping their heads down in case the mob comes for them next. But the lawyers are rapacious and already I have heard stories in West Cork that some former Protestant children sent to Homes, now grown up, are beginning to talk about their own injustice. It seems ominous. Just now it is the time for kicking the Catholic Church and The Ryan Report is another handy cudgel to do it with. But why should it be Catholics who get all the money? It seems some of that might now have to be earmarked for the Protestants.

**Michael Stack**

**The IFA should issue an invite to the Palestinians**

The following letter by **David Morrison** appeared in the *Irish News* and the *Andersonstown News*

One thing is sure about the forthcoming football match between Northern Ireland and Israel on August 12: the certain winner will be the Israeli government's propaganda machine.

Israel craves the cloak of respectability that participation in sporting and cultural events gives it, much as the Apartheid regime in South Africa did during its dark

heyday. Unfortunately, the IFA is helping them in that process by staging this "friendly" game.

## VERDICT continued

### CORK

Of the 31 Councillors elected to Cork City hall: four are Sinn Fein.

Mick Barry of the Socialist Party recorded the biggest per centage first preference vote in either the city or county, over 26% of the vote.

Ted Tynan, Workers' Party, is back in City Hall after an absence of 25 years, along with four Independent Councillors.

Fianna Fail is now down to six Councillors, their lowest representation ever in Cork City hall.

In the Cork City South West ward, John Buttmer of Fine Gael polled 2,070 whilst his Fine Gael running mate, Lord Mayor Brian 'Poppy' Bermingham got a poor 575 first preference votes and had to wait for the completion of the 4th count to be re-elected on the elimination of another Fine Gael minnow.

Meanwhile, over in the seven-seater Cork South East ward, ex-Lord Mayor and Poppy bearer, Donal Counihan could only garner half a quota, 729 first preferences and was booted out after the 5th count, his voted dropped to half the level of 2004.

"After 24 years service on Cork City Council, I'm disappointed," he said. "It was hard work but little flamboyancy," said Donal.

His only flamboyant gesture (apart from an invite to John Major), was that of a Fianna Fail Lord Mayor wearing a Royal British Legion poppy. Surely a political quiz question for years to come.

*"From Flanders Field to the South East ward, they're cutting the generals down".*

### INDEPENDENTS

In the North Tipperary constituency, candidates from the Michael 'Offshore' Lowry camp won four County Council seats and three Town Council seats.

Lowry claimed "...his party was now bigger than the Green Party nationally".

The former campaign manager for

In 1967, Israel invaded and occupied Palestinian lands. 42 years later these lands are still under Israeli military occupation. What is more, contrary to international law, Israel has built numerous Jewish settlements there on land expropriated from Palestinians. The building continues today and now there are around 500,000 Jewish settlers living on the West Bank. Israel has simply ignored United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding that it cease settlement building and remove its settlers from Palestinian lands.

That is the behaviour of the state, whose football team the IFA has invited to play in Belfast. Northern Ireland fans, and the IFA, should spare a thought for the

Deputy Finian McGrath, Damian O'Farrell, polled the highest number of first preference votes in the city ward of Clontarf in Dublin, 4,194 votes.

Mr. O'Farrell openly spoke about the abuse he suffered at a Christian Brothers school.

Another victim of clerical abuse, writer and actor Mannix Flynn took a seat in the South East inner city in Dublin.

His campaign was "*advised and partly run*" by former PD member, Senator Fiona O'Malley.

### EUROPEAN ELECTIONS (5.6.2009)

*% of first preferences votes by parties*

#### **Turnout: 57.6%**

Fine Gael: 29.1%—(4 seats)

Fianna Fail: 24.1%—(3 seats)

Labour: 13.9%—(3 seats)

Sinn Fein: 11.2% (0 seats)

Green Party: 1.9% (0 seats)

Other: 19.7%—(2 seats)

### LOCAL ELECTIONS (5.6.2009)

*% of first preferences votes by parties*

#### **Turnout: 57.7%**

Fine Gael: 32.3%—+3.8% (340 seats)

Fianna Fail: 24.4%—7.8% (219 seats)

Labour: 14.6%—+2.7% (132 seats)

Sinn Fein: 7.3%—0.1% (55 seats)

Green Party: 2.3%—1.5% (3 seats)

Other: 18.0%—+3.7% (134 seats)

### THE DAIL

#### **166 seats**

The Ceann Comhairle (Fianna Fail) (1)

#### **The Government:** 84 TDs\*

Fianna Fail: 75

Green Party: 6

Progressive Dem: 2 (Harney, Greaham)

Independents: 2 (Lowry, Healy-Rae)

\* Pat "The Cope" Gallagher elected MEP, resigns

#### **The Opposition:** 80 TDs

Fine Gael: 52

Labour: 20

Sinn Fein: 4

Independents: 4 (Behan, McDaid, McGrath, O'Sullivan)

## Real Minimum Wage Already Cut By 4%

The following letter was published by the *Sunday Business Post* on July 26, 2009, but with the titled altered by the editor to *read Minimum Rate Already Frozen*

The clarion cry from Dr. Peter Bacon for a cut in the minimum wage is based on an "analysis" which, if it exists at all, is decidedly faulty. The minimum wage was equivalent to €5.59 per hour when first introduced in April 2000. In the meantime, average industrial earnings for manual workers increased by 60 percent up to the final quarter of last year. If there had been a pro rata adjustment in the minimum wage, it would have been set at €8.95 from this January.

As we all know, or should know, it has in fact been frozen for the past two years at €8.65 since July 2007. From May of this year, the Minister for Finance subjected it to a 2 percent income levy, reducing the take-home minimum wage to €8.48 per hour. On top of that, the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices increased by 1.8 percent between July 2007 and June of this year. Minimum wage earners have accordingly, already suffered a 4 percent cut in their living standards.

There is no evidence that a single job has been lost because of the minimum wage. Small wonder. The latest CSO data shows that the percentage of industrial workers covered by that rate fell from 25 percent in the first quarter of 2007 to 1.6 percent in the final quarter of last year. The call by Dr. Bacon for still further minimum wage cuts, accompanied by a variety of "good cop, bad cop" echoes from assorted Government Ministers, is as economically ignorant as it is ethically indecent.

**Manus O'Riordan**

Head of Research

SIPTU

Liberty Hall

Palestinian football team, which has to operate under the severe restrictions of Israeli occupation – and little or no financial resources. Apart from one match against Jordan, it has never played a game at home. It is next to impossible to organise training at home for the entire squad because of travel restrictions between the West Bank and Gaza imposed by Israel, or abroad, because of the denial of exit visas by Israel. The Palestine Football Federation was recognised by FIFA in 1998 and entered for the 2002, 2006 and 2010 World Cups. Qualification for the 2006 finals was greatly hampered by Israel's refusal of exit visas to almost half the squad for a match against Uzbekistan, which led to a

3-0 defeat for Palestine. Worse was to follow in the 2010 qualifying when the second leg of a play-off against Singapore had to be called off because of Israeli travel restrictions on players.

If the IFA is interested in "sport for all", it should organise a friendly match with Palestine at Windsor Park and donate the whole gate money to the Palestine Football Federation. But the IFA would be well advised to get an assurance from Israel in advance that it will not deny the Palestinian players exit visas, lest the match have to be cancelled at the last minute.

**David Morrison,**  
National Committee,  
Ireland Palestine Solidarity

## VERDICT continued

desire of the Labour Party to take a seat in North Tipperary, the obvious candidate is Alan Kelly, but can HQ persuade him to leave Brussels and at what price?

Alan Kelly's replacement candidates are Councillor Arthur J. Spring, Tralee; Senator Phil Prendergast, Clonmel; Cllr. Joe Leddin, Limerick; Cllr. Virginia O'Dowd, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary and Mark Khan from Cork city.

### DISCLOSURE OF DONATIONS

Disclosure of donations to political parties fell to the lowest level in 12 years. The 2008 figure was €96,523.

The maximum value of donations which a political party can accept from the same donor in the same year is €6,348.69.

No amounts for 2008 were disclosed by the Labour Party or Fine Gael or other smaller parties. Individual donations were disclosed by Sinn Féin and Green Party representatives.

### SINN FEIN

"At a time when the crisis is having a big impact on Sinn Féin's target communities, it gained no new seats. With the post-election resignation of Christy Burke from the party, it is today actually weaker than it was five years ago.

"Taken together with the other setbacks of the disappointing 2007 general election, the loss of Mary Lou McDonald's European seat and the failure of European candidate Pádraig MacLochlainn to win a seat, Sinn Féin is at a low point" (*Sunday Business Post*, 21.6.2009).

"Sinn Féin is now arguably less relevant in the Republic than at any time since it was founded in 1905 by Arthur Griffith" (*Irish Independent*, 9.6.2009).

So the *Irish Independent* has finally conceded, after years of denial, that Provisional Sinn Féin are the genuine lineal descendants of the party founded by Arthur Griffith. Well done!

"And although I think that it would have been better if all those elected to the European Parliament has been supporters of the Lisbon Treaty, I am glad that it was Joe Higgins (about whom I was happy to hear some of his opponents speaking most warmly on Sunday night), who won the seat rather than the Sinn Féin candidate" (Garret FitzGerald, *Irish Times*, 10.6.2009).

"Clearly the gloss has gone off Sinn Féin in our part of Ireland: they are no longer flavour of the month and may in the period ahead see their share of the national vote declining further" (Garret FitzGerald, *Irish Times*, 13.6.2009).

On Dublin City Council, Sinn Féin lost 3 seats and another seat in Fingal.

Despite the loss of Mary Lou Mc

Donald's seat in Dublin, Toireasa Ferris received the third highest first preference vote in Ireland South and was eliminated on the 7th of eight counts.

### THE GREENS

*"The opposition don't need them and voters don't want them"* (*Irish Examiner*, 8.6.2009).

Would the Green Party retain even one of their six Dail seats if we had a General Election in the morning?

While Fianna Fáil has been reduced to its core vote, the Green Party must be wondering if it even has a core any longer.

The party has lost all its city and county Council seats in Dublin, as well as single seats in Carlow and in Galway city. In all they lost 15 of their 18 Councillors.

### THE LEFT

The force behind the People Before Profit Alliance, Richard Boyd Barrett, has said the left-wing swing in the Local Elections can be a springboard for a new political movement.

Across the country almost one in five people backed a candidate outside the main political parties.

The PBP Alliance won five Council seats in three Dublin Local Authorities, including one for Mr. Boyd Barrett, crowning significant victories for left-wing groups nationally.

In Dublin, independent by-election candidate Maureen O'Sullivan scored a stunning victory and Socialist Party leader Joe Higgins polled impressively in the city's European elections.

Mr. Higgins' party won three Council seats in Dublin and in Cork city party colleague Mick Barry was elected on the first count.

Separately, Damien Farrell was elected under the banner of Independent TD Finian McGrath in Dublin.

Sinn Féin, while suffering in Dublin, made gains in Limerick.

In Leitrim Sinn Féin held two seats, as did a pair of independents.

Mr. Boyd Barrett said if the swell of support behind alternative candidates could be harnessed there is potential for a national alliance which could become a force in the Dáil.

"People Before Profit is our attempt to bring principled left-wing political groups together in a way that people understand and we are open to discussions with other groups.

"Although it is modest, what we have achieved in winning five seats shows there is a brand of left-wing politics there and it is possible to create a new model.

"We want to build quickly on that and if we can do that we are in a position to win half a dozen seats and become a significant force in the Dáil," he said.

In Fingal County Council in North Dublin, traditionally a FG and Fianna Fáil

stronghold, a further swing to the left has emerged, with 16 of the 33 seats in the area under the control of left-leaning parties.

Speaking after the gains, Joe Higgins of the Socialist Party, who was also elected in Castleknock, said the result signalled a new dawn in Irish politics.

"It's clear that working people and unemployed people and pensioners are taking their revenge on Fianna Fáil and the Green party for saddling them with the burden of a jobs crisis and a crash that Fianna Fáil's economy caused, that those people had absolutely nothing to do with."

"People haven't just voted for establishment parties in opposition to the Government, they've also voted for the left in increasing numbers showing the search for an alternative economic and social policy," he said.

### SOCIALIST PARTY

Following the dramatic victory of Joe Higgins, the Socialist Party leader, over both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin to take a Euro seat in Dublin, an old comrade remarked that: *"Joe will probably enjoy the somewhat sterile atmosphere of Strasbourg"*: the present writer believes Joe won't be in Strasbourg for very long, he will be back to fight the next General Election and that is for sure!

His first two replacements: Clare Daly and Ruth Coppinger won't be filling his boots, they are local Councillors and they too will have their eye on a Dail seat.

But Mick Murphy, a sitting SP Councillor in Tallaght Central who surprisingly lost his seat could answer the call!

### INDEPENDENTS

More than 100 Independents have taken seats on City and County Councils—this is a significant portion out of a total of 883 seats.

In the Dunshaughlin electorate of Meath County Council, the former Labour Party TD and SIPTU official, Brian Fitzgerald, an opponent of the Labour Party/Democratic Left merger polled a whopping 2,410 votes to take the first seat.

In Tipperary South, the Workers' and Unemployed Action Group led by former TD Seamus Healy took five out of 12 seats in Clonmel town Council, (43.3% of first preferences).

Healy lost his seat in the General Election to Martin Mansergh but now has a solid platform for a return to Leinster House.

Declan Bree, the former Sligo Labour T.D. topped the poll in his Sligo borough Council and was also elected to Sligo County Council on the first count.

### REPUBLICAN SNN FEIN

Tomas O Curraoin gained Republican Sinn Féin's only public authority seat for the Connemara area on Galway County Council. An unemployed man, Tomas took the sixth seat with 2,050 votes.

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its intelligent vote management strategy despite a veritable 'civil war' between the Blaney and McDaid camps.

Overall, Fine Gael increased its vote by 7% in Donegal but gained only a single seat.

The Labour Party increased its vote to 7%—a jump of just over 6% since 2004. It secured two seats on Donegal County Council, including Frank McBrearty, Jnr. who was framed by the Garda in 1996.

Despite a drop in their vote Sinn Féin have now four County Councillors in Donegal, up one seat.

### FIANNA FAIL

Fianna Fail lost more than 80 seats since the 2004 Local Elections, which itself represented a loss of 80 on that result of five years earlier. The party now has approximately 220 local Councillors, down nearly half of what the party had 20 years ago.

The Fianna Fail vote was 25.4%, down from the 32% of the 2004 Local Elections.

Nearly one quarter of all electoral areas in the four Dublin Local Authority areas will now be without Fianna Fail representation, whilst the Labour Party claims to be the biggest party in the capital.

Fianna Fail have lost control of all but seven Local Authorities: Leitrim, Donegal, Limerick, North Tipperary, Meath, Kerry and Clare, all but one you could describe as being West of the Shannon: or an old Fianna Fail veteran might hum "... to hell or to ...!"

40 ex-Fianna Fail candidates who stood as Independents gained seats despite being rejected by Party HQ for selection.

"I had come to the view that it would take something akin to a revolution to drop the Fianna Fail core vote to below about 33%. But it happened. The biggest question has to be—is there a way back?" (Fergus Finlay, *Irish Examiner*, 8.6.2009).

### LABOUR PARTY

"Labour was also a big winner—in fact, you could argue that it has gained the greatest momentum from the elections because it has finally put in place a set of young and credible candidates to replace ageing TDs, and to target pick-ups."

"Eamon Gilmore—who was once a student firebrand as well as a leading member in Sinn Féin the Workers' Party and its successors—is proving to be a very effective leader."

"What he seems to understand is that, first and foremost, Labour must be visible on the ground. A big effort to increase leafleting and support candidates has had an undoubted impact. Then there has been the decision to take a solidly populist

stand on major decisions, such as the deposit guarantee and public sector levy.

"Whenever possible support for tough decisions has been withheld and the magic formula of "the rich should pay more" has been deployed with increasing abandon.

"Unlike the 1980s and 1990s, Labour has worked hard to leave as little room as possible on its left flank for a significant protest party to emerge. This was the role Sinn Féin saw for itself and, five years ago, it was seen by many as an almost unstoppable machine" (*Sunday Business Post*, 21.6.2009).

The Labour Party secured a 15.7% share in the Local Elections with an exceptionally good result in Dublin.

Labour leader Eamon Gilmore hailed it as its best Local Election result.

The Labour Party trebled its number of Euro Parliamentary seats. Proinsias de Rossa, the former leader of the Workers' Party retained his Dublin seat; Nessa Childers, a former Green Party Councillor, was elected for Ireland East and Senator Alan Kelly of Nenagh had a dramatic victory in Munster (Ireland South).

"Eamon Gilmore described Nessa Childers, the successful Euro Labour Party candidate in Ireland East as a person 'whom he would like to see carry the Labour Party values' into the European Parliament" (*Irish Times*, 9.6.2009).

A Labour resurgence in Kerry North, marked by a poll-topping performance by Arthur J. Spring, a nephew of Dick Spring, could provide a serious challenge to Sinn Féin in the Kerry North Dail seat.

Young Spring topped the poll in both the Tralee County and Town electorates. However, Toireasa Ferris was hot on his heels on both occasions—getting elected on the first count in each poll.

*"His opinion isn't outdated like lino in kitchens*

*And women like to say he looks like Brian O'Driscoll".*

That was new Ireland South Labour MEP, Senator Alan Kelly's rap song launched on YouTube the week before his election to Brussels.

Senator Alan Kelly's success was undoubtedly one of the great achievements for the Labour Party in these elections. He was a rank outsider weeks before the June 5th elections. Labour hadn't held a seat in Munster since Eileen Desmond lost her seat, after one term in 1981. And last time out, the Labour vote dropped to a pathetic four per cent.

Kelly's 64,152 first preference vote made party history by being the largest ever secured by a Labour party candidate in Munster.

The original intention was that Kelly's European campaign was a prelude for a run in North Tipperary in the next General Election, where he would succeed Kath-

leen O'Meara as Labour's candidate in the constituency.

Kelly, a 33-year old native of Portroe, North Tipperary is a University College Cork graduate, with a BA in English and History; a Masters in Political History and an MBS in eCommerce from University College, Cork.

"His brother, Declan is a public relations executive in New York and campaigned for Hillary Clinton last year" (*Irish Times*, 9.6.2009).

Senator Alan Kelly hit the headlines when he topped last year's Standards in Public Office Commission list for dislosable political donations.

"Mr. Kelly is running an uncharacteristically well-resourced campaign for a Labour Party candidate. He topped the donations league table in the Oireachtas last year, taking in €35,310 or nearly a quarter of all the declared donations.

"But he has spent the money wisely, establishing his name as a brand with the public. The interaction with Labour's local election campaign on the ground has also proved fruitful" (*Irish Independent*, 14.5.2009).

"Looking at the European election campaign, it has to be said that Senator Kelly ran one of the most high-profile, high-visibility—and expensive—campaigns" (*Evening Echo*, Cork, 6.6.2009).

"When Alan Kelly held off Dick Spring's nephew Arthur to secure the Labour nomination last autumn, it appeared he didn't have a hope.

"But Mr. Kelly fought a superb campaign, coordinated well with the local organisation across Munster, but it was also well-resourced" (*Irish Independent*, 9.6.2009).

"He even remembered to thank the media for their coverage of the campaign.

"There was stoney silence, as the media were hardly going to applaud themselves, and too many ordinary party members and canvassers view the media with deep suspicion.

"But the new MEP, who ran an extremely successful PR campaign, knows what side his bread is buttered on" (*Evening Echo*, Cork, 13.6.2009).

Alan Kelly had more posters than potholes in Munster. Nobody was more surprised to win a seat than Alan himself : bar one, perhaps, his millionaire brother, Declan Kelly, the former *Cork Examiner* reporter and now a resident Madison Avenue media guru.

An opposing candidate, Ned O'Keeffe of Fianna Fail, has referred to the massive expenditure in the Labour campaign in Munster.

In 2004, Fine Gael spent €225,139 getting their celebrity media candidate Mairead McGuinness elected.

A leading question here has to be the continued on page 28

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as he appeared.

"The self-made billionaire had, and presumably still has, a house in Ireland, (apparently a very pretty house) although it is not clear if he is resident here for tax purposes, and until the Libertas campaign, his was never a very noticeable presence in this country" (21.6.2009).

"So does he see himself as Europe's answer to Barack Obama. "No. Absolutely not", he replied swiftly. "I'm from Glenamaddy for God's sake", he roared with laughter at the very idea" (*Irish Independent*, 2.5.2009).

"The treatment of Libertas founder Declan Ganley by the media raises "very fundamental questions" about Irish journalism, Minister for European Affairs Dick Roche has said.

"Mr Roche said that, notwithstanding the work of two journalists—Colm Keena of *The Irish Times* and RTÉ's Katie Hannon—Mr Ganley's background in business was not "properly probed".

"He suckered a lot of senior journalists all over this country", Mr Roche said. "All you have to do is look at the simple improbability of his biography and at the suggestions that he was, at 20, 22 years of age, running the largest forestry operation in the former Soviet Union. You just have to look at any of these so-called facts and you could begin to ask serious questions"..." (*Irish Times*, 10.6.2009).

Maybe we should set up another tribunal, Dick! Ganley's CV reads like a successful Irish Celtic Tiger cub, these were the sort of achievements that were regarded as a badge of honour 12 months ago.

Dick didn't mention Ganley's US military contracts, he was wise not to, being a state minister of some sort in a Government that is totally supine to US foreign policy and entirely dependent on U.S. multi-nationals to provide the jobs that the native establishment renege on providing: they prefer to put their wealth into property instead of their own people.

"Mr Roche also asked what had happened to the funds Libertas had collected over the past year.

"A Libertas spokesman said: "I have never known anybody in politics who doesn't think that the other side is getting off too easily from the media, which probably implies to me that they [journalists] do a reasonably good job.

"Anybody who thinks that Declan got fair or positive treatment from the media for the last six months to a year is just deluding themselves, and that's really not a first for Dick Roche".

"He said Libertas did not expect to have funds left over once its campaign

bills were paid. He added that Mr Roche was a senior member of Fianna Fáil in the mid-1990s when Mr Ganley donated \$25,000 to the party, "and his background was never of concern to Dick then"..." (*Irish Times*, 10.6.2009).

Enda Kenny, Gay Mitchell, John Gormley have all attacked Ganley, even Cohn-Bendit had a 'go', making allegations about CIA connections!

"Dick Roche is still looking. He has found nothing

"Declan Ganley was the most successful Irish politician of 2008. He won the Lisbon Treaty referendum, throwing the Government and opposition into chaotic confusion. He did this democratically. This irritated the losers, particularly Dick Roche. As Minister for Europe, Roche was significantly at fault for the defeat. He was well-versed in EU Lisbon Treaty intricacies, so this was inexcusable.

"The campaign points made by Ganley throughout 2008 have been consistently ignored; instead, personal attacks have been launched. Among actions taken was an unbalanced, ill-researched and, in my view, malicious 'Prime Time' programme. The 'Irish Times' has published exclusively negative stories. There have been 'Village' magazine attacks, the latest of these provoking legal action by Ganley, now partly resolved.

"Dick Roche was a significant contributor in 'Village' magazine, quoted as saying: "Declan Ganley is a liar, a self-employed mythologiser, a snake oil salesman"..." (Bruce Arnold, *Irish Independent*, 14.2.2009).

"Europe has an abundance of traditional Catholics unhappy with much of the EU's modern social legislation, a view that Mr Ganley, a man with a similar outlook, endorses and advocates." says Sam Smyth.

If the EU had stuck to many of the traditional Catholic social principles, it wouldn't be in the political quagmire it now finds itself. It was principally old Christian Democratic values that established a unique political vision. And to think that it is predominately the forces of 'progress', the so-called New Socialists and Social Democrats who are unravelling the entire concept.

Ganley was the son of Irish emigrants, he made good! He never forgot his roots, he decided to involve himself in the politics of the old country! But he discovered that the old "wink and nod" game had to be played if one was to succeed, he wouldn't play! Why didn't he just subscribe a million or two of his 'dirty' money to Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael and he was made.

Even a couple hundred thousand, would have bought him the leadership of the defunct Progressive Democrats!

Another mistake he made, he fervently remained steadfast to the "Faith of his Fathers"! And that really bugs the Dublin

4 set.

### FINE GAEL

"The largest winner in seats terms was Fine Gael, a party which hasn't had an ideology since it stopped trying to be more Catholic than the hierarchy 30 years ago. It is a comfortable, middle-class and farming party which has learned the art of expressing anger even when it basically agrees with the policy it is attacking" (*Sunday Business Post*, 21.6.2009).

Fine Gael has overtaken Fianna Fail as the biggest party in Local Government for the first time in its history.

The party obtained 38% of all Local Authority seats off 32% of the vote, according to Garret Fitzgerald.

"Having said that, it is possible to make some kind of an estimate as to how at this moment a general election might go. And, looking individually at each constituency, it is difficult to see how Fianna Fáil could at this moment secure more than 55 seats. Fine Gael could win 65 or more seats, and Labour almost 30—which would give a coalition of these two parties a very substantial Dáil majority. Sinn Féin would be likely to lose one or two seats, and despite what I have just said, there could be as many Independents as in the present Dáil" (*Irish Times*, 10.6.2009).

"*Back Room*": *Inside Politics*, in the *Sunday Business Post* (14.6.2009) was all praise for the backroom boys in the political parties. He specifically referred to the Fine Gael luminaries: Frank Flannery, Tom Curran and Peter Prendergast.

"They are logistics specialists", he writes.

The present writer singled out two Counties: Cork and Donegal and quickly discovered that the Fine Gael 'logistic specialists' in those two counties made a right hames of the job.

On Cork County Council, despite increasing their share of the vote by 2.6%, Fine Gael ended up losing three seats—dropping their 2004 majority of 25 down to 22.

Fianna Fail are down from 16 to 12 seats in Cork County hall.

The Labour Party vote increased by 3.2% to gain two extra seats—their representation has increased from five to seven seats.

Sinn Fein has one seat on Cork County Council and the Independents increased from one to six.

### DONEGAL

In Letterkenny, the five Fine Gael candidates polled over 1,600 first preferences and elected just one Councillor. In stark contrast, Fianna Fail with the same number of candidates and 2,000 first preferences managed to elect four Councillors due to

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your vote you end up voting for political parties you have absolutely no belief in.

### SPOILED VOTES

In the Ireland South Euro constituency, there was more than 11,000 votes spoiled (2.3% of the total cast). Many of them were deliberately spoiled in protest against the phoney politics which pertain at the moment.

For the majority, people just hadn't a clue! Where is this great Irish education system they keep telling us about?

Another farcical aspect of the June 5th Euro ballot was the use of a single ballot box for both Local and European elections. It's amazing that Brussels allowed this—there was an overwhelming media focus on Europe at the expense of local democracy.

For all the media hype about the ballot box and local democracy, election coverage by the national broadcasting stations was one of the worst ever. The *RTE* television role was scurrilous, it showed nothing but contempt for the entire local process. In the past, there were graphs and analysis—not this time. Because both ballot paper were in a single box, Europe prevailed over the Local Government election, when in fact, the Euro boxes should not have been opened until 9.00 p.m. on the Sunday night as in the rest of the EU.

It was all summed up by one of their leading political commentators, Sean O'Rourke, who had condescendingly written Joe Higgins (Socialist Party) off as a serious Euro contender on the Sunday (7.6.2009): he was corrected by Higgins who went on to take Fianna Fail's Euro seat in Dublin.

### ELECTORAL REFORM

Take Maureen O'Sullivan, the successful 'Gregory' candidate in Dublin Central, she also topped the poll in the North Inner City ward in the Local Elections, she will now have to forego her seat; similarly with Joe Higgins in Castleknock. But they don't really lose their seats at all, they just pass them on to a buddy.

Would it not be far more democratic that the seat goes to the candidate with the next highest vote? or simply hold a local by-election within 30 days.

One of the most contemptible actions of the entire election was the Euro nomination of Pat "The Cope" Gallagher (FF). This man was elected to Brussels in 1999, resigned in 2002 to contest the General Election when it looked as if Pearse Doherty (SF) would take a seat in Donegal South-West. For this, Gallagher was given a junior ministry by Bertie Ahern. When Cowen gained the leadership of Fianna Fail, "The Cope" got the boot, but then

Ganley of Libertas entered the fray and the fear that Libertas would get a huge vote in Donegal, where the highest "No" vote in the first Lisbon Referendum was recorded, meant the need for a high 'profile' Fianna Fail candidate.

"Long-serving MEP Brian Crowley was last night sacked as Fianna Fail's leader in the European Parliament and replaced by newly elected MEP Pat 'The Cope' Gallagher, writes Aine Kerr" (*Irish Independent*, 1.7.2009).

The appointment came as Fianna Fail held its first meeting with its new European grouping—the Alliance for Liberal Democrats in Europe.

And the by-election to fill "The Cope's" seat, ah well, it might be held next Spring—surely after a death or resignation of a TD, it should be compulsory to hold the by-election 90 days after. And they wonder why people are cynical!

"...people basically do not care about local elections, because they perceive them as making little difference" (*Irish Times*, 13.6.2009).

The political 'craic' was mighty but at the end of the day, very few people take Local Government politics very seriously—it has been completely denuded of financial support, it is denied fund-raising capacity and is under the whip and whim of a suffocating managerial system.

A very valid concern here is that if Local Democracy does not undergo serious reform and continues to be a joke, it may not be long before national politics heads for the same destination.

Some would say it already has!

### GANLEY AND LIBERTAS

Great media play has been made of Declan Ganley's demand for a recount in the Ireland North West Euro constituency:

"Declan Ganley is a spit-the-dummy loser, a spoilt child of a candidate who confronts imminent failure by halting an entire election count for some real or imagined procedural handling of his votes" (Sam Smyth, *Irish Independent*, 9.6.2009).

"... it has emerged that Ganley lost 3,000 votes in the poll after his demand for an investigation into the allocation of ballots embarrassingly backfired" (*Evening Echo*, Cork, 9.6.2009).

It isn't Ganley who should have been embarrassed, its the daft voting system that we cling onto! How many votes go missing and we don't know about it? This wasn't a reflection on Ganley—this is a reflection on us. And where is the almighty investigative powers of the Irish media that they refuse to look into this scandal.

Right to the end, Ganley showed up the political system for the sham that it is! The main parties and the likes of Pat Cox have breathed a sigh of relief that he is gone. He

ran rings around them—and refused to play the game their way.

He got 67,638 votes in Ireland North West. Labour media candidate, Susan O'Keeffe got 28,708. He took his beating and bowed out. If the truth be known, he probably felt that as a reformer, albeit a conservative reformer, he was casting corn on rocks. "I have to go back to work", he said. No seat in the Seanad or a Brussels quango chairmanship, or even a nominal position with Alan Dukes on the Anglo Irish bank board.

"Mr. Ganley talked up his strong Galway roots as he talked in his strong British accent, so the likely rebuff from voters in the sprawling North West constituency would come all the harder" (*Irish Examiner*, 8.6.2009).

This political bile was written by Shaun Connolly, himself an exile from Britain and of Irish extraction. No, I don't know if he has a strong or weak British accent but he has certainly adopted to the incestuous cesspool of Dublin journalism. He's now one of the boys!

Another one of the Dublin boyos, the former editor of the *Spotlight* pop magazine, Belfast-born, Sam Smyth of the *Independent* had a go:

"This message would be difficult to absorb for anyone with a healthy ego. It's particularly tricky for a multimillionaire who is fundamentally convinced that he is right about everything.

"Still, 14% of the electorate—an astonishing 67,000 people—gave him their number one and Mr Ganley will hold up their votes as vindication of himself and his dream.

"He is a successful businessman but probably not nearly as rich as his lifestyle and demeanour suggests." (Sam Smyth, *ibid.*).

But it gets even better! Play it, Sam:

"He has built a chapel, complete with the Stations of the Cross, pews and a bellow organ in the spacious grounds of his period home near Tuam in Co Galway.

"He is a family man who espouses family values and is a conservative and traditional Irish Catholic, although he has a distinct 'Jack The Lad' London accent. He is driven by a fierce ambition and the certainty of his argument. He is vain and the certainty of his self-belief is a monumental conceit. Last night, he told reporters the dedication of his campaign staff and the support he received from ordinary people had made it a "humbling experience". In more ways than one" (Sam Smyth, *Irish Independent*, 9.6.2009)

Then Emer O'Kelly of the *Sunday Independent* had a 'go':

"Now that it is all over, Declan Ganley, the leader of the now apparently defunct 'pan-European' Libertas party, looks set to disappear as quickly and mysteriously



**LABOUR**

# Comment

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## People's Verdict

**"Fianna Fail has lost its self-proclaimed status as national movement"** says the headline to an article by Professor Diarmuid Ferriter in the *Irish Times* (13.6.2009).

If it has, that status was lost long before 5th June 2009.

Yes, the June election was a disaster. The party ceded control of the majority of the state's 114 Local Authorities and for the first time have been overtaken by Fine Gael.

'Tis only when you examine the results for cities like Limerick and Waterford and discover that Fianna Fail has a sole Councillor on both that you begin to realise the extent of the disaster. The town of Midleton in East Cork failed to elect a single Fianna Fail Councillor—the heart of Martin Corry country.

In Cork city, the party now has six out of 31 Councillors.

In Dublin, the party vote collapsed and this was then compounded by the loss of its only Euro seat in the capital to a member of the Socialist Party.

On top of that, two disastrous by-election defeats in Dublin where FF secured less than 20% of the vote. In Dublin Central, the brother of former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, failed to be elected and also lost his City Council seat while in Dublin South, the son of a former Cabinet Minister and party logistics specialist bit the dust. Shay Brennan, the Fianna Fail candidate was an employee of Anglo Irish Bank Corporation. Baffled, Yes!

In all, Fianna Fail lost 84 Local Authority seats.

Brian Cowen and his party may not be standing on the burning deck but there is a very distinct hum of burning oil and there is not a port in sight. If there was, would the captain know which was the safest port? Lisbon, perhaps!

Senator Harris, that political cuckold, is now advising Fianna Fail that "Unless, it renews its traditional relationship with the Irish people, it will be in terminal trouble at the next General election" (*Sunday Independent*, 7.6.2009).

He then advocated Fianna Fail taking on the public sector, thus with a single stroke renewing "*its traditional links to the majority of Irish workers... Fianna Fail has three years to renew its old relationship with the men and women of no property in the private sector*".

A single stroke! Does he know what he is talking about? The Public Sector is now the core vote of Fianna Fail! Doesn't he ever think that is the very reason why they are so well provided for—Teachers, Garda and Nurses!

As for the "*men and women of no property*"—the problem here is that too many of the "*men and women of no property*" have now too much property. When the Taoiseach tells you that there are deposits of €62 billion in the Anglo Irish Bank Corporation, half the bloody population must be telling us porkies!

By all means let Fianna Fail have a renewal of the traditional relationship with the Irish people. We agree! But not I'm afraid for the same reasons as the Senator.

Go back to the Arms Trial and the role of Jack Lynch: that was the first breach of that "*traditional relationship*", then came

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the Progressive Democrats, who set out to destroy Fianna Fail—they didn't achieve that aim, but they managed to turn a substantial enough body of the party into a likeness of the Progressive Democrats themselves, in fact the root of our modern economic problems emanated from the philosophy of the PDs.

The sight of a viper like Des O'Malley giving the oration at the grave of a Fianna Fail leader said it all.

Fianna Fail won't win the next election but if Cowen has the courage he can immediately ensure that they will win the following election by introducing serious reform. He has nothing to lose.

He can start by introducing a Property Tax on the lines of the old Domestic Rates and in a progressive fashion. He should also abolish the Seanad and introduce serious electoral reforms including the voting system.

### THE VOTING SYSTEM

The June 5th elections again highlighted the discrepancies in the Multi-seat system as against single seat wards or constituencies.

In an earlier *Labour Comment* we highlighted this but reflecting on the Local Government elections, the political negativity of the system is even more glaring—it encourages political cop-out!

The present writer is an old Labour voter in a five-seat ward, but the party had only two candidates, I have never voted Fianna Fail or Fine Gael, so I forego the right to be involved in the destiny of the other three seats.

The voter is not compelled to think, he may be an honest to goodness Fianna Fail voter but to fully exercise his vote, and fill the five seats he has to vote in three other candidates whose political philosophy he detests.

If the five-seater was divided into five single wards, it would compel people to make a more conscious political decision, similar to a by-election—in the current multiple system to obtain full value for

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