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## Northern Ireland

### Is This All There Is?

The Good Friday Agreement improved the position of the Northern Catholic (or Nationalist) community in its conflict with the Protestant (or Unionist) community in the conflict of communities, which is what politics in Northern Ireland is all about. It has never been anything else, and the GFA did not establish the conditions in which something else could emerge from it.

Nationalist Ireland, in all its varieties, is, as it always has been, profoundly reluctant to see Northern Ireland for what it is, and to see the Protestant, or Unionist, community for what it is.

The Unionist community knew very well that it had been out-manoeuvred on Good Friday 1998. David Trimble signed the GFA under duress—or did not actually sign it, but did not strongly contradict the assumption that he did. He immediately set about preventing the Agreement from becoming operative, but had to make a minimalist capitulation to it after about two years, and thereafter was chiefly interested in finding ways of making Whitehall suspend it. But that long conflict over the implementation of the GFA provided a useful distraction from the truth about its content. The Unionist community was compelled to give ground inch by inch, sometimes managing to take a step backwards but always being obliged to retrace it, and that gave satisfaction to the Nationalist community.

Through this procedure Trimble lost ground to Paisley. When he was eventually displaced by Paisley, Paisley was left without the hinterland (at once threatening and protective) that he had provided for Trimble, and the *realpolitik* of the situation left him with no choice but to work the Agreement with Sinn Fein. His lieutenants felt he was working it with too good a spirit and they ousted him, thinking they could stall it. They found it impractical to do so.

The GFA has been functional only since Paisley agreed to work it, or even since he was ousted by Peter Robinson who found he had no realistic choice but to work it. That was only a couple of years ago, but already a feeling of *ennui* has set in amongst the Nationalist community. It is far better placed in the conflict of communal attrition with the Unionist community than it ever was before, and there is little prospect of being put back under the rule of the Unionist community, but there is also little prospect of its being able to do anything in politics but stalemate the Unionist community, and it is beginning to find that unsatisfactory.

We are describing the objective situation, not condemning Sinn Fein for functioning within it. Upholding your own side in the inevitable conflict with the other community always seemed to us to be the only effective thing that could be done within the parameters of 'Northern Ireland'. The SDLP, the architect of the GFA under John Hume, did that very badly under Seamus Mallon and Mark Durkan. Sinn Fein has done it rather well since it took over. But, when the DUP took over from the UUP and agreed to operate the GFA, our comment was that Northern Ireland had been put back in the box. And that is how it is now being experienced.

Ten years ago, in our analysis of the GFA, we said we could not see in it the possibility of any dynamic of internal development. And that is proving to be the case. What exists is an arrangement of stalemate. The 'parties' (actually communities) negative each other in a strange constitutional entity, which is certainly not a state—though many books emanating from Cork University under the influence of Professor Dermot Keogh describe it as "*the Northern Irish state*"—but neither is it a local government body of the State in the proper sense, nor a devolved legislative/administrative arrangement of the state, free to deal with a limited range of issues as it sees fit.

### Some Benefits Of The Lisbon Campaign

The Lisbon Referendum campaign will do untold good, whatever the outcome of the actual referendum itself, because it has forced some critical thought to emerge about the EU in Ireland. Hitherto it was a Panglossian attitude by the majority. All will always be for the best with the EU. As an ideal the European one is perfect, like all others. But what is it in reality and what is the Lisbon Treaty in particular? There was a Conference of legal experts held on 11th May in Dublin to help clarify this. It was reported that:

"The Lisbon Treaty will do nothing to change the nature of the EU, according to the Professor of European Law at the University of Cambridge, Alan Dashwood. He characterised the EU as 'a federation of sovereign states'. Speaking at a conference on the law of the Lisbon Treaty organised by the Irish Centre for European Law in Dublin yesterday he described the treaty as 'a sheep in sheep's clothing'" (Irish Times, 12 May).

What in the world is all the fuss about then? If it is effectively pointless to the Professor, it is clearly not pointless to the politicians of the EU. They need and they need it badly as a vote of confidence in what they are doing.

Expanding on his description of the EU, Professor Dashwood said:

"The entities that compose the union are sovereign states (as distinct from the states of the USA or the German Lander). Nobody questions their standing as full subjects of the international order, while they remain the principal focus of their citizens' collective loyalty and the principal forum of democratic political activity" (ibid.).

This makes the existing EU an invisible, ethereal thing, but that hardly fits the reality. The nation states have given a wide variety of competences to a central authority, i.e., they have conceded

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<b>Is This All There Is?</b> Editorial (Northern Ireland)	1
<b>Some Benefits Of The Lisbon Campaign.</b> Jack Lane	1
<b>Readers' Letters: Figuring Out The Famine.</b> Ivor Kenna, Jack Lane; <b>Palestine: Two Into One?</b> Eamon Dyas; <b>WWI Hypocrisy.</b> Jack Coldrick	3, 17
<b>Guess Who's Not Coming To Dinner.</b> Wilson John Haire (Poem)	4
<b>Elizabeth's Reports.</b> Jack Lane	5
<b>Shorts from the Long Fellow</b> (The World Trade Imbalance; The Automobile Industry; Never Write Off The Germans! . . . ; Or The Irish!; The Media Is The Problem; NAMA; State Industrial Policy; The Late Late Show	6
<b>When Did Western Civilisation End?</b> Desmond Fennell	7
<b>Arms Conspiracy Trial.</b> Suzanne Kelly's Speech	8
<b>The Rising.</b> John Morgan's Oration at Arbour Hill	9
<b>Pat Murphy In Mind.</b> P.H. Pearse's <i>The Fool</i>	10
<b>Rebel Cork's Fighting Story</b> ( <i>ongoing</i> ). Jack Lane	11
<b>The Myers Obsession With The Recently Dead.</b> Manus O'Riordan	12
<b>Prize Nonsense.</b> Seán McGouran	13
<b>Public Meeting On <i>The Irish Times</i>.</b> John Martin	14
<b>Queen Elizabeth And Pockets Of Resistance.</b> Niall Meehan	14
<b>Coolcrease Again.</b> Brendan Clifford	15
<b>Propaganda With Your Laxatives.</b> Jack Lane	16
<b>Biteback: Judicial Swipes.</b> Tom Sheridan	18

**Labour Comment**, edited by **Pat Maloney:**  
**The Ballot Is The Thing?**

(back page)

Denis Bradley, a former priest who played an active part as an intermediary in bringing about the present arrangement, commented on it in his *Irish News* column on May 1st. (Bradley and Brian Feeney, also an *Irish News* columnist, write political comment that is a couple of leagues above anything that appears in the Dublin and Cork papers.) He wrote:

"Unionists may be fractured but, at least, they have political representation in the halls of power. Their representatives get on planes on a Tuesday and fly off to Westminster to argue their case and feel some sense of political purpose. The SDLP are on the same planes but must be feeling an increasing political disorientation. They are flying to the wrong parliament.

"Nationalists have no representation in the Dail. Eoghan Harris is in the Senate as the spokesman on Northern Ireland. Eoghan has not been well for the last year but at the height of his health he has been a conduit for the unionist position.

"I think nationalists are feeling, once again, lonely and unwanted. And that is not a healthy position. It hasn't reached a critical condition but it could do with

some tending to. There are many interpretations of how the 'Troubles' came to an end but the critical one was the realisation that nationalism could not defeat unionism and unionism could not defeat nationalism. It took years to get that into the heads of republicans and even more years to get it into the heads of the DUP. Now it seems that they need reminding of it from time to time. All our political institutions are posited on the reality that each community has a veto. That is not a natural form of government. But it is the price we paid for peace. That, in turn, is posited on the reality that each community looks to a different government for its identity and its authority. Always looking to a higher authority weakens and demeans the status of our assembly and executive but it is the only thing that provides an alternative to the dangerous undertow of British/Irish history. It means that both governments need to attend to the needs and the fears of the respective community for some period yet.

"It seems that the SDLP is incapable of merging with Fianna Fail or with any of the Irish parties. Fianna Fail will pick its own time to organise in the north and that time will be to Fianna Fail's best interest

and not that of the nationalist community. The best solution would be a merger of Sinn Fein and the SDLP—anathema to both parties at the moment but not outside the bounds of possibility in the future.

"In the meantime and in this period of uncertainty and nervousness, the onus is on the Irish government to devise and provide a comfort blanket to northern nationalism. If that means more representation in the Dail and Senate then better it happen soon."

All of this is fine as far as it goes—leaving aside some misleading terminology. But it does not address why the Dublin Government has been actively distancing itself from the North recently, leaving the GFA in the doldrums.

In 1998 there was a difference of opinion within a kind of Unionist think tank (which affected not to be Unionist) called the Cadogan Group over the nature of the GFA. The issue was whether or not it was a "settlement". It seems that Dennis Kennedy (a former EU functionary who wrote occasionally for the *Irish Times*) saw that it did not provide for a settlement and was unhappy about it, while Professor Bew, the future Lord, saw it as a settlement and supported it. It hardly seems conceivable that Bew actually did see it as a settlement. It seems more likely that he played the part of a missionary to the Ulster Unionists on behalf of Whitehall. The GFA was patently a transitional arrangement.

Professor Dermot Keogh, the hagiographer of Jack Lynch, took up the Lord Professor's view from 30 years ago that Northern Ireland was a state, and he has been fostering an academic literature about "the Northern Irish state". In his history of 20th Century Ireland he wrote that the "Northern Irish state" was set up on the basis of "institutional sectarianism" in 1921. It wasn't. It was given the form of democracy, though entirely lacking the substance. The institutional sectarianism came with the GFA. The reality underlying the spurious democracy of 1921-72 was brought to the fore by the arrangement which discounted the superficial 'parties', gave the two communities places in the Government as a right, and gave them a mutual veto on each other in the Assembly. The formal establishment of institutional sectarianism under strict, legally enforceable, rules was the means by which the war that began in 1970 was brought to an end, for the time being. But that arrangement precluded the development of party politics as generally understood. The communities were taken to be the components of the system.

There were parties of a kind within each community, but these parties were treated as subordinate parts of the com-

continued on page 4

## Figuring Out The Famine

Jack Lane's article "Figuring out the Famine" in *Irish Political Review*, April 2009, got me thinking. I dug out an article from the 'Journal of the Statistical Society of London' Vol.13; No.1 (Feb. 1850, p25-29) entitled 'Agricultural Statistics of Ireland' by G.R. Porter which bears out much of what you wrote.

The Census Returns did not give the number of holdings not exceeding an acre in 1841. What sort of census was that?

A quick inspection of the figures on page 25 shows that the number of holdings of under an acre must have decreased by a surprising amount in order that holdings above 30 acres increased by 88,835 between 1841 and 1847. The Gregory Act stipulated that no one holding land of more than one-quarter of a statute acre would be eligible for relief.

Taking an average family of 5, untold millions must have been forced off the land. They probably had not wanted to be counted in 1841, the enumerators could not be bothered to count them and they were probably Irish-speaking.

England had always had plans for getting rid of the native population of Ireland. The Irish came to depend upon the potato which could not be destroyed by marauding soldiers. You might be interested to read the 'The history and social influence of the Potato' by Redcliffe Salaman, a Cambridge University Press publication for more details of the Famine though he accepts the 1841 Census figure of 8.2 million.

**Ivor Kenna**

### Comment by Jack Lane

This letter was very useful for the sources provided. I followed up the reference to the 'Journal of the Statistical Society of London' and discovered a very interesting item in the 1844 edition, Vol. VII, by Henry Hallam. He was a leading light in the Whig/Liberal aristocracy and famous as a constitutional historian with his work on the subject running to some dozens of editions. He was also a Trustee of the Statistical Society itself so, no doubt, he took his sums seriously. But he was enough of a man of the world to know, long before Disraeli, that there was more to statistics than the statistics. He found some extraordinary conclusions in the 'Report of the Irish Commissioners' on the Census of 1841.

First of all, he found:

"That less than one-tenth of the male adult population (that is, above the age of 17) and only one-fifth of the female, should be married by the time they attain the age

of 25, is so contrary to the experience of almost every country, and especially to all that which we have heard of the habits of the Irish people, that when I first read a précis of the Report in the last number of the Statistical Journal, I was exceedingly staggered by the statement, and have endeavoured to trace the origin of what seemed to be an evident mistake."

I will not bore the reader with the details of how Hallam explained the quite arbitrary categorisations, approximations and deductions by which these absurd conclusions were arrived at.

He also discovered the most outlandish conclusions about births, marriages and deaths and quoted the report itself to show that even the Commissioners themselves could not believe the conclusions they had to draw!

The Report contained a table which it explained was—

"showing the general result of the branches of vital statistics, birth, marriages, and deaths, in the ratio which they bear to the community. It will be seen that the births average one to three, which is so near to the result obtained in other countries, as to make it probable that they are very near the truth. The marriages are obviously much too few, being by the table only 1 to 181; whereas they can scarcely be in reality, less than 1 to 128. The deaths we have already shown from other sources, to be in defect about one-fourth."

The report goes on:

"these results can only be considered as approximations. The returns are incomplete, and the causes of the fluctuations are so numerous and so uncertain, that we abstain from various interesting deductions which the subject invites; still trusting that these tables as well as those on vital statistics generally will be found to afford, even in their present state, much curious material to the general statist" (p51).

Take away the understatement and this is the people in charge of the Census of 1841 saying that they cannot make head nor tail of the figures they gathered and that they were good for a laugh but for nothing much else. It could not occur to them that they could have got the basic figures completely wrong in the first place—yet all the evidence points that way.

Hallam comments on this in his own wonderfully understated way but his contempt for the Report and the Census shines through—more damning for the restraint of language:

"I should be very sorry to dispute what is so modestly urged; yet I cannot help observing, that while it is most true that, in statistics we must often satisfy ourselves with approximations, it seem an excessive use of that word to cover errors of 25 or 30 per cent. The deaths and marriages, as the

Report admits are in defect, at least, to that degree.

"The returns of births, the Commissioners hope, 'are very near the truth, since they average one to three, which is near the result obtained in other countries.' I can annex no meaning to births averaging one to three, and after much consideration, can only presume it to be a mis-print. It certainly does not relate to the ratio of births to marriages, which is greater than three to one in every entire country known to us, though it may be less in particular localities. In fact, the calculations of births made in the Report, p.40, compared with the table of marriages, would give considerably more than four births to a marriage, perhaps as high a figure as high as 4.6, which is that of Belgium. But as the marriages in Ireland are supposed by the Commissioners to be very defectively returned, we cannot rely at all upon this. Yet the age of marriage in Ireland appears to be rather earlier than in England and general opinion does not favour the notice of any peculiar curse of barrenness in Irish women.

"We find, indeed, a startling assertion in a note on p.12 of the Report, that the average number of children in an Irish family is considerably lower than in a Scotch or English one, 'in accordance with the well known law, that the most marrying race have the lowest cypher of fecundity.'

"But as we cannot admit that such a law is well known, or see the slightest ground for believing it to be a law of nature at all, it seems much more reasonable to presume error in the particular tables from which the assertion is derived.

"It is evident that if the number of children in Irish families were to those in English or Scotch as 2.34 to 3, we must account for it by some extraordinary mortality in the first years of life, nothing of which has been reported, and it would be inconsistent with the rate of increase of the Irish population, which, in the judgment of the Commissioners, has not been less during the last decennial period than before, though, through the effects of emigration it has shown itself so favourably in the Census.

"I am, dear Sir, Faithfully yours, Henry Hallam."

In other words, the 1841 Census was a travesty with laws being postulated and assumptions being made to fit facts that just did not make sense. If Hallam saw this so clearly in 1844 why has it taken so long to be generally acknowledged? Even the Census Commissioners themselves realised this!

Is that Census of 1841 the longest standing Irish joke of all? I believe it is and my personal hope is that the Irish Government would use its resources to put an end to it, once and for all. Then the Famine could be put in a proper perspective.

## Is This All There Is?

continued

munities. UUP and DUP were alternative representatives of the Protestant community, and similarly with the SDLP and Sinn Fein in the Catholic community. This was the *de facto* position before 1998. It was made Constitutional in 1998.

It was implicit in the arrangement that London would in the last analysis be the patron of the Unionist community and Dublin of the Nationalist community. Of course there was no parity between the two because Whitehall was the actual Government of the North, while Dublin had little more than observer status.

As the actual Government, Whitehall had to present itself as acting evenhandedly towards all subjects of the Queen in the North, and in order to keep the devolved arrangements functional it had to make good this pretension occasionally. Whichever party was in power, the Government represented no constituency in the Northern Ireland region of its state.

In 1921 it had disowned responsibility for this region of its state while maintaining undisputed sovereignty over it. Its purpose in doing this was never explained, but it requires little insight to see that its effect was to retain leverage on the affairs of the South at the expense of bad government in the North—government which any worthwhile British politician would see, after a moment's thought, as systematically bad. When the scale of the trouble caused by the bad government which it had set up for the North became so great in 1972 that the only thing to do was to abolish it, Whitehall immediately set about trying to restore it in modified form. This took 27 years, and then a few years longer as Trimble's Unionist Party tried to prevent the functioning of the system to which it had been obliged, under duress, to agree in principle.

Two quite distinct things might be meant by the word 'Unionism'. Denis Bradley does not distinguish between them. In the actual life of the North Unionism means the Protestant community, sometimes referred to as the *Unionist Family*, which ran the devolved system for 50 years.

Unionism might also refer to the fact that the North is part of the British State—or has a "connection" with the British State. This is a rather abstract usage, as the political system by which the British state is governed was withheld from the Six Counties from the moment they were set up as Northern Ireland.

Professor Fitzpatrick of Trinity, one of the godfathers of revisionism, published a history of Ireland as two states set up in 1921, and asserted that both of them were

strongly resistant to social welfare reform. The degree of ignorance in Southern academia about Northern affairs is really impressive. The British social welfare system exists in the North as part of the British state. One might call that Unionism, but it is not what is usually meant by Unionism.

The North was excluded from the political process of the state through which that social welfare reform was brought about. The North was communally governed by the Unionist Family while the issue of social welfare reform was fought out in the party politics of the state. The outcome of British party conflict was then applied in the North.

The trouble that erupted in the North in 1969 was not provoked by Unionism, meaning the common institutions of the British state which exist in the North. It was provoked by Unionism in the sense of a form of politics deliberately separated by the British Establishment from the political life of the state—the politics of the Unionist Family ruling a large Catholic community in semi-detachment from Britain.

The Catholic minority after 1921 did not refuse to take part in British politics. It was excluded from British politics.

The Unionist—ie, Unionist Family—MPs fly off to Westminster every week, and that makes them happy, even though they are little more than spectators there. There are long historical reasons why the Ulster Protestant community is profoundly unpolitical, and is content to be part of the ceremonial of the British state while having no part in its political substance.

It is likely that the Catholic community would have participated vigorously in the political substance of the British state if that had been open to it after 1921, but the Jingo ceremonials do not attract it at all.

The Catholic community is very political by disposition. Excluded from British politics and placed under communal Protestant rule, it kept on looking to Dublin.

Dublin used to see the condition of the Northern Catholics as its particular concern—though it never did much about it, and certainly did not cause the insurrection of 1969. But since 1998 the Irish Government has developed pretensions.

Forty years ago, St. T.K. Whitaker urged Jack Lynch in all his public statements to be careful not to speak as if the Catholic community was his particular concern. He should be careful in his phrasing to appear to be speaking for all the people of the North. Lynch never succeeded in doing that. It could not be done. If seriously attempted nothing but hollow debating points would emerge. All Lynch did was abandon the Northern Catholic community in the Summer of 1970, and revoke the working arrangements he had

made with the Catholic Defence Committees since the preceding August, thus facilitating—or provoking—the transition from the defensive insurrection of August 1969 into the offensive insurrection which took off in 1970 and lasted for a quarter of a century.

In recent years Dublin Governments have been busily merging celebrations of the 1916 Insurrection, which led to the formation of the Irish State, with celebrations of the Great War fought by the Army that suppressed that Insurrection. They have deliberately set about making nonsense of the history of the state which they govern. They seem to imagine that, if they make nonsense of themselves, they will get the Ulster Unionists. The Protestants are unimpressed. The effect is in some degree to generate Catholic discontent with the GFA.

Bertie Ahern, while merging the celebration of profoundly antagonistic events, at least set in motion measures to accord Northern representatives some right to sit in the Oireachtas. He was stymied by Fine Gael and Labour. He then set about giving Northerners representation via the party system, by proposing to organise Fianna Fail in Northern Ireland. If he had proceeded, the other Irish parties would have been obliged to follow. Brian Cowen has revoked Ahern's measures. We cannot see what opportunist advantage he thought it would give him.

Denis Bradley's stricture was deserved.

### GUESS WHO'S NOT COMING TO DINNER

Big, strong, manic, hungry, he eats the earth.

The Monroe Doctrine is his main menu.

European waiters his retinue.

A la carte, guzzling nations to subvert.

Chopper gunships are his mode of travel.

Phosphorus, cluster bombs, the award stars,

hot ashes in crematorium jars.

But the noodles begins to unravel,

a Far East nation will not be eaten.

It has its own hors d'oeuvre, its own course.

Shout? The oven is lit. Shout until hoarse,

they don't walk on eggs but like them beaten,

avoiding the jaws of the carnivore.

Its bloody footprints signs some other shore.

**Wilson John Haire.**  
28th May, 2009

# Lisbon

continued

sovereignty in certain areas to the Commission. But that body has been deprived of the moral authority to act in accordance with the power it accordingly should have—it only has the devolved power in legal theory.

The Member States concede competences and then retrieve them by dominating the Commission. This was most clearly and crudely expressed by Sarkozy, especially over the Doha Round WTO [World Trade Organisation] negotiations. The Commission has full competence in Trade and these negotiations were to reshape the world economy with the EU in the lead. Could anything have been more important for the Commission? But the Commission was really the tool of the UK in this area. Against this, Sarkozy put the French case and won. He did not bother too much to persuade the Commission of his reasoning—he simply overruled it. The fact that he was right in the particular issue is a separate matter.

Sarkozy could do this because the Commission was broken in spirit by Pat Cox and the European Liberals to bring about this state of affairs by the use of spurious corruption charges (though it is probably giving them too much credit to say that they knew what they were doing or undoing: they were being used as tools by opponents of a social Europe).

Up to that point, the Commission had a competence of its own: and the way it was constructed meant that small countries like Ireland had a full contribution to make. But, once the President of the Commission was ousted, the way was cleared for the down-grading of the Commission as a guiding force in the shaping of Europe. In practice this means a few of the larger states dominate and play games with the Commission, and other smaller Member States—as they see fit.

The result is that Europe is now neither a unitary state, nor a federation, nor a 'road map' to either—nor does it correspond to the original plan of the EU founders. The real gainers in this mish-mash are the lawyers. They will be in Paradise in this Europe. And as this conference showed—with law you pay your money and take your choice.

Dr. Gavin Barrett of UCD raised the Treaty proposal to elect a president of the Council of Ministers: *'This is not a president of the EU, as the Libertas website states'* (ibid.). This hardly clarifies matters and begs the question—what is this new President, President of? There will be two competing Presidents but neither will be President of the EU? This adds further to

the mess. It is not just Martians who will be asking "Take me to your leader?" if they drop in. All citizens across Europe will be doing it and will not get clear answers. That is a sure recipe for political alienation and/or worse.

Next it was reported that Professor Dermot Walsh of the University of Limerick warned that major changes in the criminal justice system of member states had been brought in by membership of the EU and these would be given a significant boost by the Lisbon Treaty. *"These changes are unprecedented in speed and scope since the demise of the Brehon law system"* (ibid).

So, from meaning nothing at all, the Lisbon Treaty suddenly changes things very fundamentally indeed. I think it would be useful to have a report of any summary that was made of the Conference presentations and discussions.

If this is the best that some top legal experts can come up with to enlighten us, then the EU is in a sorry state and will get sorrier whatever happens in the coming Lisbon Referendum

Another positive outcome of the Lisbon Referendum could be the emergence for the first time of a real EU party across the EU based solely on EU issues, i.e., Libertas. Its policies are quite secondary to the significance of such a party coming into existence. That could lead to a renewed EU and in its own way make a distinctive positive Irish contribution to Europe that would make up for the negative effects of the last distinctive Irish 'contribution' by Pat Cox.

Jack Lane

**Report:** Address by Jack Lane to Bowen/Trevor Summer School, Mitchelstown, 1 May 2009

## Elizabeth's Reports

I want to thank Liam Cusack and the Organising Committee for giving me an opportunity to introduce this latest collection of espionage reports by Elizabeth Bowen\*. They are a small number of reports brought to our attention recently and are published here for the first time. Though small in number they are significant in a number of ways,

First, they show the regularity with which she wrote her reports, about one per fortnight which confirms what a biographer, Heather Bryant Jordan, has estimated. This means about 200 in total were produced as well as verbal reports that she would not commit to writing. This shows the enormous amount of effort she put into these reports, and that this work was her main preoccupation during the war years which in themselves were crucial years for her and everyone in Britain.

Secondly, we have included background material that shows they were read by Churchill who they were intended for, the crucial ones at least, and discussed by the War Cabinet and we have both Churchill's acknowledgement and a report on a War Cabinet discussion about them

included in the pamphlet.

They are therefore important historical documents and their importance to Bowen herself and to the War Cabinet is clearly established.

Also, she was very successful in what she set out to do, she influenced Churchill and the War Cabinet, her cover was never blown and even now, over 30 years after it was first established that she was engaged in espionage there are people who insist on maintaining her cover. This is a rare achievement. In fact it must be some sort of record in the espionage world.

Espionage has been dramatised and hyped up out of all recognition by people like Ian Fleming and John le Carre—both ex-practitioners. The reality is usually very humdrum work, collecting valuable information just as Bowen did; indeed it is probably 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. But vital activity nonetheless especially in time of war. And especially in time of war in a country whose invasion is being very seriously contemplated. It was quite important that those contemplating such an invasion know the thinking in this country. There was no need to inform Ireland or the Irish Government about how they felt but there was a great need indeed to inform Whitehall.

But the most important thing about all this is the insights she provides on what the War itself was about. Nowadays, we have a retrospective view of the war launched by Britain in 1939, which is that it was about Fascism, Jews, Poland or all three. To Elizabeth Bowen it was not about any of those things—Britain had gone to war again against Germany and that was sufficient reason for the war. She was quite correct. This is the reality of the war launched by Britain in 1939.

She illustrates very well in these reports that it was a war against Germany and nothing else—whatever its political system was. The Irish politician she cultivated most was James Dillon, later leader of Fine Gael. She did so because he was the most prominent politician who wanted Ireland to join the war against Germany. She studied him very closely and acutely and concluded he was a fascist but that made no difference whatever to his credentials as an ally in the war against Germany. Fascists willing to fight against Germany were no mystery at all to her.

Her reports are seminal documents. I would submit that Elizabeth Bowen cannot be fully understood or evaluated unless all her reports during the war years are properly assessed and evaluated and this has not yet been done. Schools like this have a useful job to do in this regard and we are making our contribution by publishing those reports we can find.

Jack Lane

*Elizabeth Bowen: more of her espionage reports from Ireland to Winston Churchill.* 40pp. ISBN 978 1 903497 54 8, Aubane Historical Society, 2009. **€5, £4**

**Elizabeth Bowen: "Notes On Eire".** Espionage Reports To Winston Churchill, 1940-42; With an extended Review of Irish Neutrality in World War 2 by Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford. Third edition with extra reports. 266pp. Bibliog. Index. ISBN 978-1-903497-55-5. AHS, 2009. **€20, £15**

# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## THE WORLD TRADE IMBALANCE

The world economy is going through an adjustment process and this is causing the recession.

The principal element in the adjustment process is the correction of the imbalance in world trade. For the last twenty years or more manufacturing production has transferred from the West to the East (particularly China and India). Advances in information technology have also enabled services ancillary to the manufacturing process to be transferred to the East.

In the past the West had a neo-colonial relationship with Asia. Although wealth was created in the East, the West extracted surplus value or profits from the East so that the West's standard of living could be maintained.

When Deng Xiaoping opened up China to capitalist reforms the West must have thought that the vast Chinese market was the final frontier, with an endless supply of cheap labour to be exploited.

But the capitalist reforms did not represent a collapse of the Chinese State. China remained a State with interests in the World and did not become a capitalist colony. On the contrary it became a player in the world with extensive interests in Africa. And China herself is transferring production to countries with cheaper labour such as Vietnam.

So an increasing proportion of the world's productive resources had transferred to China, but—unlike in former times—the wealth that was created did not return in the form of profits expropriated by the West. The wealth did indeed return to the West, but this time it was in the form of capital owned by China. And the capital has been sloshing around the western banking system enabling the West to continue to buy Chinese commodities.

But that situation was not sustainable in the long term. In the absence of a neo-colonial relationship with China, a transfer of the World's productive resources from the West will necessarily lead to a diminution in the West's consumption. The financial system postponed that day of reckoning and therefore made the adjustment all the more severe when that day arrived.

## THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

The adjustment of the trade imbalance is not the only adjustment that is taking place. The world is moving from a carbon-

based economy to an economy based on wind and sunlight. The biggest casualty in this adjustment process has been the automobile industry. An American free market economist recently said that there were two instances when State intervention was justified. One was in developing economies. The State should support emerging industries until they can compete on the world market. The second instance was in mature economies to facilitate the winding down of declining industries. President Obama is subsidising the American automobile industry so that the necessary downsizing will take place with the minimum of social disruption.

## NEVER WRITE OFF THE GERMANS ! . . .

The general consensus at this year's Hanover exhibition on renewable energy is that the Germans are about ten years ahead of everyone else. Germany has never lost the capacity to make things and remains the largest exporter in the world. She has an impressive ability to mobilise the society to develop the economy. Local communities can generate electricity because the State has invested in the electricity infrastructure. The national grid can receive electricity as well as dispense it.

The problem with moving away from a carbon-based economy is that billions have been invested in the new industry, but the benefit will only be in the future. This has added to the strain placed on the world economy by reducing the capacity for current consumption.

## . . . OR THE IRISH!

It is very encouraging to see Irish entrepreneurs thinking about this new industry. They, of course, will need help from the State. Ireland has a plentiful supply of wind but one of the problems of wind energy is that it is difficult to store the electricity. One storage method is to use the wind energy to pump water to a height and when the electricity is needed by the consumer, the falling water is used to generate electricity. The ESB station at Turlough Hill stores electricity in this way. At off-peak periods water is pumped (not by wind power) from a lower reservoir to an upper reservoir. And at peak times the water from the upper reservoir is released.

An Eastern European geologist has noticed that Ireland has an ideal geological structure. Our mountains "*sweep down to the sea*". He thinks we could use wind energy to pump sea water to reservoirs on the top of hills enabling us to increase our capacity to generate such non-carbon based electricity. Many of the best sites for generating electricity in this way are in remote areas, which could give an impetus to de-centralisation policies.

## THE MEDIA IS THE PROBLEM

One of the problems in Ireland is the

negativity of the media. This has created a very damaging perception abroad.

Our economic situation is grim, but we have not suddenly become a poor country as some would have us believe. During the Celtic Tiger era there was over-employment. We had practically full employment and many people were working overtime. Now the extent of unemployment is understated. People on a three-day week do not show up on the statistics even though they sign on. If a person is in paid employment for over an hour a week he is not classified as being unemployed.

But the news is not all bad. C. & F. Tooling, an Irish-owned company based in Athenry, Co. Galway, is planning to recruit an extra 250 people over the next two years. It has invented a wind turbine, which will generate electricity at wind speeds of 1.5m per second compared to an industry norm of 3.5. This should allow the C&F product to generate energy on 350 days a year, over 100 days more than the current average. Another Irish-owned company, Moffat Engineering, which is also involved in renewable energy, plans to recruit an extra 100 people. But these items of news were reported in the print media days after they were announced and then only in the business sections of *The Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*.

## NAMA

The media believes that every silver lining must have a cloud. At the Public Accounts Committee on 14th May Michael Somers, the head of the National Treasury Management Agency, expressed doubt about the ability of that body to run with existing resources the newly created National Asset Management Agency. This was very understandable given that the terms of reference of the new body have yet to be worked out.

The NTMA is widely regarded as a highly competent organisation with responsibility for management of the National Debt; Claims against the State; Finance of State projects over €30 million; and the National Pension Reserve. It often happens that a body or an individual within an organisation that is performing well finds that he is overloaded with new responsibilities. This seems to be the concern of Somers and the NTMA. This is a matter that can be resolved and does not warrant the extent of the media coverage that it has received.

On the other hand, another NTMA executive John Corrigan thought there was merit in the idea of bringing the impaired loans under one roof because many of the large Developers have loans outstanding from more than one bank.

There were many positive aspects to the deliberations of the Public Accounts

Committee. Although the National Debt has risen dramatically over the last year, prudent management of the State finances in the past means that the State can weather the deterioration in the world economic environment. In 2007 Irish debt to GDP ratio was 23.8%. This rose to 43.2% in 2008. By 2012 it will be 79%. But will still be less than the EU average, which is predicted to be 83.8% by 2010. Also, Irish pension reserves as well as cash balances held by the NTMA amount to 20% of GDP, which could be deducted from the official National Debt figure to give a more realistic and more reassuring view of our State Finances.

The problem that we have is that, although there has been prudent management of the Public finances, Irish Banks have been lending recklessly. Private sector debt has risen from €18 billion to between €400 and €500 billion. It appears that this increase in debt has been concentrated among a small group of individuals. Irish society, in general, has not gone on a spending spree. The Banks have been competing with the State for loans and domestic savings are not adequate to meet this demand. So about 85% of the State Debt is from abroad. The NTMA thinks that, if our banks decided to renege on amounts owed to foreign bond holders — as Fine Gael advocates — the State's ability to borrow from abroad will be seriously impaired.

At present the State has no problem raising money from abroad. The risk premium that lenders require over and above German interest rates has been declining since the middle of March.

#### STATE INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Although the State has managed its finances competently the same could not be said of the Banks. This has created a big problem for Irish industry. *Enterprise Ireland*, the State body responsible for Irish-owned industry, has been placed in the position of compensating for the defects of the banking system. *The Long Fellow* is forming a favourable impression of this body. Its approach to lending is completely different from the banks. Manufacturing companies find that they will be dealing with a person with an engineering background, rather than a financial background. Such a person has a much better understanding of the business and its customers. In many cases the Enterprise Ireland official will have had dealings with the company's customers and will be better able to assess the loan applicant's sales projections. The relationship is more organic whereas the banks' decisions are made by head office employees fiddling around with spreadsheets.

#### THE LATE LATE SHOW

The "Correctorate" — to use Desmond

Fennell's expression — was out in force on the *Late Late Show* of 8th May. Pat Kenny gave a platform to Fintan O'Toole, Nell McCafferty and John Crown (a *Sunday Independent* columnist and eminent oncologist) to lecture our democratic representatives.

Kenny introduced the item by saying that we had gone from boom to being the "poor men of Europe"?!

O'Toole in his sermon from the pulpit urged us to "grow up" and denounced our system for being "decrepit and self indulgent". "Above all" we should have "a realignment of Irish politics". The problem for Fintan and *The Irish Times* is that Irish people just don't vote the way they are supposed to.

The politicians were placed in rows at the front of the audience like recalcitrant children being called to account for themselves. Pat Kenny lectured the politicians on their failings pointing his finger at them. At one point he suggested that the people voted blindly for politicians with a surname beginning with "A" or merely for family names. He then asked Sean Sherlock if this comment was patronising towards politicians. The Labour TD said it was patronising towards the people.

But the representatives of the "Correctorate" were very unimpressive, despite the format of the show being set up for them. Nell McCafferty thought that Social Welfare expenditure was €40 billion rather than €20 billion. There then followed a bizarre exchange with Leo

Varadkar (Fine Gael) in which the latter said that Fine Gael policy was to invest €10 billion in State enterprises. McCafferty then asked where he was going to get the other €10 billion? She seemed to think that there was some relationship between the proposed €10 billion State investment and the €20 billion social welfare bill! She then claimed that she knew more about finance than politicians who didn't know what "Government corporate bonds" were. But there is no such thing as "Government corporate bonds". Government Bonds and Corporate Bonds are two distinct items.

It is clear from her autobiography that McCafferty disengaged from politics in the 1980s. Since then she has been nothing more than the court jester of Dublin 4.

If there was any sense that could be made from the "Correctorate", it was that we should abandon our parliamentary system in favour of the American system of separation of powers between the Government, the Legislature and the Judiciary. O'Toole urged Fianna Fail backbenchers to vote against their Government to show their independence. This, of course, would make the functioning of government impossible.

Yet again 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.

## When Did Western Civilisation End?

During the question-and-answer session at the launch of my new book *Ireland After the End of Western Civilisation* (published by Athol Books), Jack Lane asked a question which I answered briefly. But since Jack was putting forward a view which I have encountered more than once in the *Irish Political Review*, I should like to give a fuller response.

At the launch I had been saying, as my book argues, that Western or European civilisation ended in the years 1945 to the 1970s. Jack asked was it not rather the case that European civilisation ended with the First World War; that that war brought to an end Europe as it had been known to history.

For me, a civilisation means, among other things, a set of essential rules of behaviour that provides an agreed framework for the life of the community concerned. I accept that the First World War gave a shuddering shock to the European or Western framework of rules. If we imagine the European civilisation

as a vase containing the collective life of the western peoples, that war cracked that vase all over. But I argue that it left it nevertheless formally intact until 1945.

Up to that year, except in Bolshevik Russia and Nazi Germany, the inherited European rules governing the behaviour of states, communication with the supernatural, international relations in peace and war, dealings among persons and between age and youth and men and women — those rules remained formally intact (even if occasionally breached in practice as they had often been before).

Then in 1945 the United States formally justified the atomic massacres carried out in Japan, the West generally acquiesced, and the construction of weapons for indiscriminate massacre proceeded in the USA, Britain and France. A breach had been opened, and in the USA in the 1960s-70s, under the guidance of the left-liberals — a new brand of liberals replacing the 'classical' sort which we knew in Ireland since Daniel O'Connell — a broad replacement of European rules of behaviour took place, with the rulers' legislative support.

Imperially, the USA induced its West European satellites to follow suit, with 'Swinging London' providing the main European base of operations. First in the USA, then in each West European nation,

a body of left-liberal ideologues—which I call the 'Correctorate'—preached and administered the new, post-European rules; mainly through the mass media which they came to dominate (but also through leading universities). With the acquiescence of the governments and the backing of legislation, these correctorates in effect replaced the Protestant or Catholic clergies as the principal ethical teachers.

Working in tandem with commerce and its advertising campaigns, they paralleled the Communist parties in the Soviet Union and its East European satellites. As in the public language of the Communist countries the words 'communist' and 'socialist' were made to mean 'morally correct', so, too, in the English-speaking

West with 'liberal' (as the left-liberals of American vintage described themselves).

In the Republic of Ireland, *The Irish Times*, which had been in danger of foundering, found new life and commercial success as the main organ of the Irish (left-)liberal correctorate. After the establishment of Irish television in the 1960s, RTE as a whole took its ideological lead from *The Irish Times* and has continued to do so for the moral edification of the nation.

**Desmond Fennell**

### Ireland After The End Of Western Civilisation

by *Desmond Fennell*.

102 pp. Index. ISBN 978-1-085034-12-1. Athol Books, 2009. **€10, £7.50**

Report: **Suzanne Kelly's** Speech at the Launch of *The Arms Conspiracy Trial* (Author: Angela Clifford) on Friday 8th May 2009

## Arms Conspiracy Trial

There is a forensic detective programme on TV called *Bones*, where a group of hip anthropologists, when presented with a very old corpse, keep prodding it and analysing it and allowing the corpse to tell its story.

The Arms Crisis is almost a forty-year old corpse, and there are still rich pickings to be had in prodding and analysing it, so as to allow the old corpse to tell its true story.

In simple terms, the Irish Government decided to import arms. The Irish Government changed its mind. In the process the Irish Government sought to cover up any attempt to import arms by alleging a covert conspiracy on the part of what are called 'the accused'. The accused were found Not Guilty by the Irish courts.

The Irish Government decided that it did not like the outcome of the court case. So, it started a campaign to politically overturn the court's verdict. In an attempt to explain away the verdict journalists and historians were briefed with the *real story*: *You know the jury was got to! A not-guilty verdict does not mean innocence! You know it is all about money!* and so on. Even the original official court report of the trial was destroyed whilst in Government hands. The tapes of the trial, which the judge ordered to be kept, disappeared whilst stored in the Department of Justice.

Angela Clifford, like the *Bones* anthropologist, has prodded, pulled, dragged and analysed the Arms Trial corpse in an attempt to get at the truth of what actually occurred. She has crawled through all the minutiae of the underlying paperwork and notes. It is a fascinating piece of detective work, made all the more fascinating for me, because my father Captain Jim Kelly was one of the accused and because most of the characters, I

either knew directly or indirectly or I knew their children.

Just as fascinating as it is, it is also frightening for me as a lawyer to see the lengths the Government did go to destroy individuals. It is as if the Government or some of the politicians of the day were more comfortable hiding the truth than revealing it. The maintenance of the *official lie* became an end in itself.

The story of the Arms Trial is a story of a massive Government cover-up, where all the resources of the State were used to achieve that objective. It was such a big lie that it was difficult for many to believe the extent of the cover-up for years. Each new fact, as it emerged was disputed by the Government with the same intensity as if it was fighting a war. Fortunately,

time passes and the deaths of various parties allowed for the exposure of facts which were previously kept hidden.

Most of the Arms Trial characters are now dead, with the exception of Mr. Dessie O'Malley. It is said that he still holds trenchant views that the Government of the day, of which he was a member, was right to prosecute the Arms Trial although his audience of believers have diminished in numbers.

Angela Clifford has done a fantastic job in unearthing a lot of the lesser known facts. She forensically examines them in encyclopaedic detail. It means that you cannot speed read *The Arms Conspiracy Trial*. You have to read it slowly. You are forced to consider it.

There are two companion, slimmer volumes of interest:

*August 1969 – Ireland's only appeal to the UN* and

*Military Aspects of Ireland's Arms Crisis of 1969/70*.

It is kind of eerie for me, as a daughter, to watch my father moving from parent to historical figure, in my own life time. My mother's recent death has underlined that process. It was her lifelong ambition to have my father's name cleared and have him posthumously promoted to the rank he would have achieved if his army career had not been cut short. The problem was that she required courageous politicians to assist her, where the nature of the politician in power is to maintain the *status-quo* and do nothing. Moral courage and politician are not happy bed fellows in the one sentence.

In the end, I am quite convinced that history will get it right! Angela's books will add to all other books including Kevin Boland's and my father's, for future interested parties. The interested will get to know the truth. The *corpse* will have told its story.

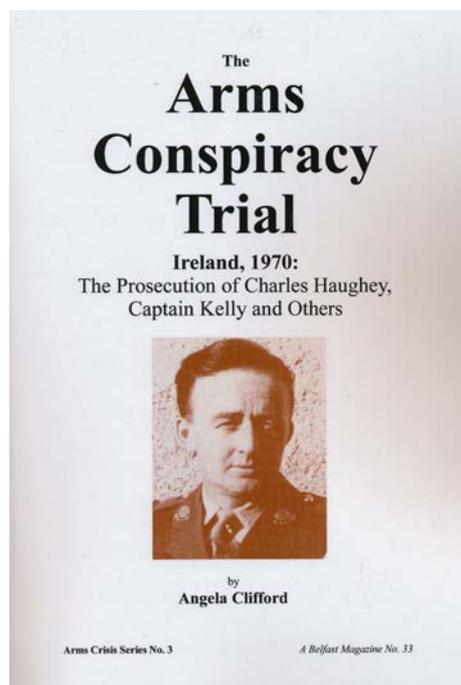
### The Arms Conspiracy Trial.

Ireland 1970: the Prosecution of Charles Haughey, Capt. Kelly & Others by *Angela Clifford*. 720pp. Index. ISBN 978-1-874158-20-8. A Belfast Magazine No. 33, 2009. **€30, £25**.

**The Arms Crisis: What Was It About?** by *Angela Clifford*. 40 pp. ISBN 978-1-874158-22-6. ABM No. 34. May 2009. **€5, £4**.

**Military Aspects Of Ireland's Arms Crisis Of 1969-70** by *Angela Clifford*. Index. 164pp. ISBN 1 874 157 16 2. ABM No.29. 2006. **€10, £7.50**.

**August 1969: Ireland's Only Appeal To The United Nations:** a cautionary tale of humiliation and moral collapse by *Angela Clifford*. ISBN 1 874157 13 8. 96pp. ABM No. 26, March 2006. **€7.50, £5**.



## The Rising

It is with some trepidation that I speak in this august place called Arbour Hill. Like the Execution Yard in Kilmainham Goal, it is heavy with sadness. Like The Hermitage in Rathfarnham, it evokes memories and conjures up ghosts. But, it is a place apart. Here is present Redemption, a sense of peace and an air of achievement.

Yet, somehow, there is not present a sense of completion. At this, the nation's shrine, the vision of the Easter Rising heroes is incomplete. Here it was intended that their ideals would lie hidden, buried and forgotten. Like their bodies. Instead, there is renewal.

Buried here are:

Thomas Clarke, Patrick Pearse, Thomas McDonagh, executed 3rd May.

William Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan, executed 4th May.

John McBride, executed 5th May.

Con Colbert, Sean Heuston, Eamonn Ceannt, Michael Mallin, executed 8th May.

James Connolly, Sean McDermott, executed 12th May.

All were executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Goal. All, but one, were led out, on their own, to the Stonebreakers' Yard, blindfolded, hands tied, with a white aiming-mark pinned over the heart. They were put sitting on a soap-box and shot. The exception was the wounded James Connolly, who was brought out tied to a chair.

They were shot at dawn and their bodies were quickly moved to Arbour Hill and buried, coffin-less, in quick-lime graves. Consigned to oblivion, but later elevated to the national pantheon.

Thomas Kent was also executed by firing-squad in Cork on 9th May. Then, in a last act of vengeance, the Crown hanged Roger Casement in Pentonville Prison on 3rd August. That, they felt, was that.

Irish Parliamentarians had split the Volunteers and supported the Empire in the War of the Saxons. Home Rule, they said, would follow. The blood-shed of Easter Week would be avoided. Instead, Irishmen would shed their blood, and German blood, for the Empire. Then, they would have self-rule and remain united, as they had been for the previous seven hundred years; in a British context, of course.

After the Easter Rising, the Survivors were uncritical of the leadership, with one notable exception and he was scornful of it. But it is a misconception to view the

Rising as a one-dimensional military grand-stand. In fact it was much more. It was seminal. The Proclamation was the nation's canon. History was altered. A paradigm was set. Other nations followed. The Empire had dug the first sod of its own grave.

Militarily, the Rising failed for several reasons. The German arms consignment, on the Aud, was bungled. Communication was poor between the Military Council and Germany. There was an erroneous belief that a U-Boat could patrol Dublin Bay and intercept British re-inforcements. McNeill's counter-manding order produced chaos. Volunteer turn-out was depleted. The provinces failed to respond, sufficiently. Confusion was wide-spread.

Most important, the RCP, or Relative Combat Power, lay overwhelmingly with the British. The Volunteers and Citizen Army were armed with assorted rifles, shot-guns, revolvers, pistols and homemade grenades and bombs. Some insurgents were weapon-less. The British had small arms, light and medium machine-guns and artillery, which included field-guns and howitzers. These could pour high-explosive and incendiary shells on targets. They also had motorised transport, armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers. Plus, of course, full logistical back-up. On the other hand, the Irish were often hungry, cold, sodden and without rest.

The British, too, ruled the seas. Their re-inforcement capability was immense. The huge military mobilisation in Britain ensured this. Their military had virtual *carte blanche*. Their main problem, initially, was to identify the Irish positions. Then they could bring their vastly superior RCP to bear. If they had to lay waste to Dublin, then they would. And did. They devastated O'Connell Street and adjacent streets with a rare abandon, destroying and setting alight to buildings, without inhibition. The city century lay in ruins.

The Rising began on Easter Monday, 24th April. The Irish deployment had a military rationale. It satisfied, in the main, the principles of defence. It achieved defence in depth; mutual support, to a degree, and all-round defence, to a degree. (All of these are seldom completely achievable, especially when resources are inadequate.)

They also took the high-ground (in an urban setting, usually buildings), with the inexplicable exception of St. Stephen's Green, from which they had to quickly withdraw. However, the low availability

of personnel meant they didn't take the Railway Stations at Kingsbridge, Amiens St., Broadstone and Westland Row. They failed to cut the railway lines and, most vitally, they didn't take the landing-pier in Kingstown.

The garrisons throughout the city sent forward patrols and set up some FDLs, or Forward Defended Localities. But they had inadequate resources, which meant a Screen of sufficient strength could not be established. Therefore, they were unable to force the British to deploy, attack, regroup, deploy etc. They were unable to buy time, prevent British forward movement, maintain their own positions unidentified and generally frustrate the enemy.

This permitted a rapid British Advance to Contact, an early identification of the main Irish positions in the city, and a quick engagement with same. The superior British combat power dictated there be but one result. It was now a matter of time.

As a General Headquarters, the GPO was an inspired choice. It was strongly built and dominant. It became a synonym for the Rising. It gained iconic status. Here the Military Council was *in situ*. The fighting was fierce, the resistance heroic. But the shelling and the wide-spread fires forced the defenders, men and women, into an impossible position. It was now 8 pm, Friday 28th April. Still fighting, they withdrew in groups. Some tunnelled through walls to Moore Street, after a final speech by Pearse, which was followed by defiant singing of the Soldiers' Song. Then, alone, Pearse searched the building and departed. The last man out.

The Military Council—Pearse, McDermott, Clarke, Plunkett and Connolly—regrouped in a house in Moore Street. There, amidst the tumult, they conferred. Pearse attended to a wounded British soldier, lying there, who had cried out. They considered a break-out; bringing the fight into the streets; gaining the Dublin mountains. The decision was to seek terms in order to save civilians' and insurgents' lives. Negotiations followed contacts. These resulted in unconditional surrender, as insisted upon by the British.

At the Moore Street-Parnell Street junction, Commandant General Pearse, on behalf of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and the Army, surrendered to Brigadier General Lowe, the General Officer Commanding British forces in Dublin. One must wonder at Pearse's state of mind, in this final act in the tragedy. He hadn't slept for five days. His hopes seemed dashed. He'd led from the front. He'd endured with others. He'd seen men fight and die. Now, in this last moment, it all fell to him. He presented himself calmly, uniformed, slouch-hatted, neat and tidy, and cutting a dash. He was dignified, to the last. He politely

reprimanded the British General when he'd had his word doubted. But it was the end. Or was it?

Surrender orders were dispatched to the garrisons. By Sunday, reluctantly, the last surrenders were made. British Courts Martial formed. Firing Squads stood by. Incarceration awaited—prisons in England and Scotland and Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales.

But it wasn't over at all. This was the end of the First Act. A Second Act awaited. As does an Epilogue, now.

And so we stand at this tranquil place. We overlook the final resting-place of visionaries, their vision unfulfilled. But the nation will rise again. Others, more inspiring, will emerge. They will negotiate the completion of the dream. The dream of freedom.

Pearse wrote to his mother, from his cell, on the night before his execution, when all was dark and gloomy, when all seemed lost:

"We have done right. People will say hard things of us now, but later on they will praise us."

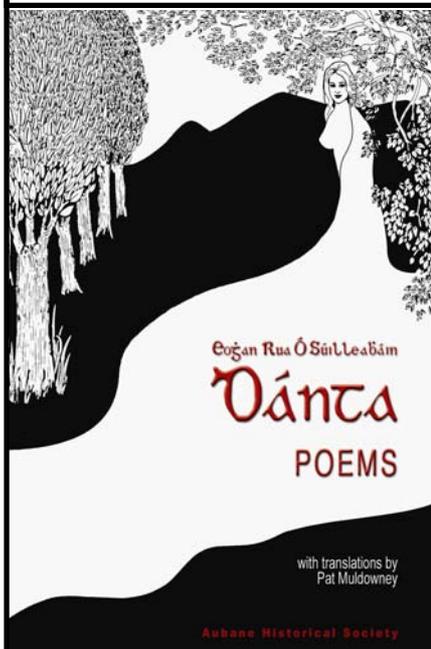
In his poem, *The Fool*, he wrote:

"O wise men riddle me this: what if the dream come true?"

In pursuance of the dream—the universal dream—perhaps we should apologize to all those nations which Irishmen, in British uniforms, helped to suppress, often with a violent hand.

All publications mentioned in this magazine can be obtained from the addresses on the back page or from:

[www.atholbooks.org](http://www.atholbooks.org)



## Pat Murphy In Mind

Patrick Henry Murphy died on April 1, April Fool's Day. This term had been worn as a badge of honour by Patrick Henry Pearse, President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic proclaimed by the Easter Rising of 1916. As Pat's funeral service took place just a week short of this year's Easter Rising commemorations, it was particularly appropriate to reflect on the words of Pearse's own poem on this theme. For, to quote the words of the German poet Goethe: "*Poetry is secular prayer*".

### THE FOOL

Since the wise men have not spoken, I speak that am only a fool;  
A fool that hath loved his folly,  
Yea, more than the wise men their books or their counting houses,  
Or their quiet homes,  
Or their fame in men's mouths;  
A fool that in all his days hath done never a prudent thing,  
Never hath counted the cost, nor recked if another reaped  
The fruit of his mighty sowing, content to scatter the seed;  
A fool that is unrepentant, and that soon at the end of all  
Shall laugh in his lonely heart as the ripe ears fall to the reaping-hooks  
And the poor are filled that were empty,  
Tho' he go hungry.

I have squandered the splendid years that the Lord God gave to my youth  
In attempting impossible things, deeming them alone worth the toil.  
Was it folly or grace? Not men shall judge me, but God.

I have squandered the splendid years;  
Lord, if I had the years I would squander them over again,  
Aye, fling them from me!  
For this I have heard in my heart, that a man shall scatter, not hoard,  
Shall do the deed of to-day, nor take thought of to-morrow's teen,  
Shall not bargain or huxter with God; or was it a jest of Christ's  
And is this my sin before men, to have taken Him at His word?

The lawyers have sat in council, the men with the keen, long faces,  
And said "This man is a fool", and others have said, "He blasphemeth";  
And the wise have pitied the fool that hath striven to give a life  
In the world of time and space among the bulks of actual things,  
To a dream that was dreamed in the heart, and that only the heart could hold.

O wise men, riddle me this: what if the dream come true?  
What if the dream come true? And if millions unborn shall dwell  
In the house that I shaped in my heart, the noble house of my thoughts?  
Lord, I have staked my soul, I have staked the lives of my kin  
On the truth of Thy dreadful word. Do not remember my failures,  
But remember this my faith.

And so I speak.  
Yea, ere my hot youth pass, I speak to my people and say:  
Ye shall be foolish as I; ye shall scatter, not save;  
Ye shall venture your all, lest ye lose what is more than all;  
Ye shall call for a miracle, taking Christ at His word.  
And for this I will answer, O people, answer here and hereafter,  
O people that I have loved shall we not answer together?

by P.H. Pearse

## Book Launch by Pádraig Ó Fiannachta

Friday, 7th August, 7.30 pm

Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin  
DÁNTA/Poems

MALTON HOTEL, KILLARNEY

## Rebel Cork's Fighting Story (ongoing)

*Rebel Cork's Fighting Story* was part of a series of paperbacks on the War of Independence published by Anvil Press, Tralee, in the late 1940s. It and the others in the series became classics because of the detailed information they provided on the major engagements of the War at a time when most of the participants were still alive and able to contribute.

Anvil Press was acquired by Mercier Press recently and it is to republish this and other books in the series. All very encouraging but there is a major drawback. Apparently Peter Hart will be providing the introduction to the Cork book on this occasion. This seems almost a sick joke as Mercier has published a major refutation of Hart by Meda Ryan. Do this publisher what it puts out?

Hart has sought to discredit the War of Independence by every means possible—and particularly the War in Cork—including the interviewing the dead to make his case.

He specifically denies the legitimacy of the Irish Independence movement as he explained in the *Irish Times*:

"...the Dail had no legal standing and was never recognised by any foreign government. Nor did the IRA, as a guerrilla force acting without uniforms and depending on their civilian status for secrecy, meet the requirements of international law. The British government was therefore within its rights to give courts-martial the power to order executions" (23 June 1998).

And furthermore:

"Nor were members of the IRA protected by the Hague Convention, the basis for the law of war on land. The British government and its forces were not at war in this sense. To be recognised as belligerent soldiers, the guerillas would have had to be fighting for a responsible established state, wear a recognisable uniform or emblem, carry their arms openly, and not disguise themselves as civilians. None of these conditions applied. It is of course true that international law favours established states, but if any group can claim belligerent status when using political violence, then so can the INLA or the LVF. The Oklahoma bombers would also conceivably have a right to POW status" (Irish Times, 22 July 1998).

The Mercier Press, which has published excellent material on Irish history over a long period, must surely see some incongruity in having a person who sees the whole Independence War as criminal activity introduce accounts of the Independence movement. It will damage its reputation beyond measure despite what-

ever *frisson* of publicity and notoriety it might achieve by doing this.

The following letter was sent to the Series Editor and to Mercier Press:

AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Aubane, Millstreet, Co. Cork.

30 April 2009

To: Brian.OConchubhair.1@nd.edu

Dear Dr. Ó Conchubhair,

RE-PUBLICATION OF 'REBEL CORK'S  
FIGHTING STORY'

It has come to our attention that you are editing a series of books for Mercier Press, Cork, that involves separate republication of Cork's, Dublin's, Kerry's and Limerick's Fighting Story, originally published on various dates by Anvil Press (whose titles are now taken over by Mercier). This is an excellent initiative that will re-acquaint a modern audience with these classic texts on the War of Independence. The decision to provide a contemporary introduction that puts these works in context is also a good one. The selection of an appropriate historian to write the introduction is important.

In that context the choice of Professor Peter Hart of Memorial University, Newfoundland to introduce 'Cork's Fighting Story' is surprising. Professor Hart is a controversial choice. That is not a problem in itself. The historical society on whose behalf I write also has a reputation for controversy. Controversy stirs debate, focuses attention and clarifies thinking.

The concern with Professor Hart concerns not controversy, but credibility. The credibility of Peter Hart's research is the controversy that surrounds him. In that regard, our society published in 2008, 'Troubled History, a 10th anniversary critique of Peter Hart's The IRA and its Enemies' by Brian Murphy and Niall Meehan. We also published in 2006 Dr Murphy's 'The Origin and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920'. Both publications raised issues of interpretation, distortion and censorship, arising out of Professor Hart's use of historical sources (do you have them? If not I will forward them to you). The criticisms are not exclusive to our Society, far from it. They have been brought into the academic mainstream, albeit too slowly in our view. I detail summarised examples, that relate to credibility, (matters of interpretation are secondary in this context) below:

\* Hart claimed to have interviewed a veteran of the November 28 Kilmichael Ambush six days after the last veteran died;

\* Hart claimed to have interviewed two veterans of the ambush when only one was alive (aged 97), though medically

incapacitated and incapable of sustained speech;

\* Hart claimed in his 1992 thesis (on which his 1998 book is based) to have been given a tour of the Kilmichael ambush site by the person who was interviewed six days after the last veteran died. This revelation was omitted from the 1998 book, which mentioned but did not specifically identify Hart's tour-guide;

\* Hart cited a British assessment of loyalist informing in his 1998 commentary on April 1922 killings near Dunmanway in a way that directly contradicted the source's conclusion. A relevant section immediately following and directly qualifying the sentence he cited was censored;

\* In his later editorship (CUP, 2002) of the British Record of the Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area, from which the assessment above was taken, Hart failed to explain his censorship of the source. Hart then proceeded to omit an entire section, 'The People', from this important assessment, but without informing the reader. It contained relevant information on British assessments of Irish people that contradicted the view Hart promoted.

These issues (that are not exhaustive of the credibility issues) have undergone public scrutiny in 1998 (Brian Murphy, *The Month*); 2003 (Meda Ryan, Mercier Press); 2005 (Peter Hart, Murphy, Ryan, Niall Meehan, Andres Boldt, Sean Kelleher and Manus O'Riordan, *Mar-Apr to Sep-Oct 05, History Ireland*, four issues); 2006 (John Regan, *History Vol. 91* (301), Jan 06; Meehan, Hart, John Borgonovo, (*Irish Times*, Jun 23, 28, Jul 3, 14, 06); 2007 (Ryan, *History Vol. 92* (306), Apr 07; Murphy, Aubane; Borgonovo, *IAP and History Ireland*, (May-Jun 07); 2008 (Meehan and Murphy, Aubane, Brendan O'Leary, *Dublin Review of Books*); 2009 (Joost Augusteijn, *Jan-Feb 09, History Ireland*).

In the two publications in which Hart participated (*History Ireland*, 05, *Irish Times* 06), he failed to address the criticisms - please see Andres Boldt's comment on this aspect in the *Sep-Oct 05 History Ireland*. In the *Irish Times* in June 2006, in reply to Niall Meehan, Hart stated that he had never used the term 'ethnic cleansing' with regard to the War of Independence in the South of Ireland. It had to be pointed out to Hart that he indeed had used this term in 1997 and in 20003.

Joost Augusteijn, in the *Jan-Feb 2009 History Ireland*, made the point that Hart has not answered the serious criticisms and that he has taken them too lightly. Professor Brendan O'Leary made the same point in the *Dublin Review of Books*. O'Leary wondered how 'this ghost', Hart's Kilmichael tour guide, 'walked the walk', and 'talk[ed] the talk' ('A Long March', [http://www.drb.ie/more\\_details/08-09-25/a\\_long\\_march.aspx](http://www.drb.ie/more_details/08-09-25/a_long_march.aspx), see notes 72, 73).

While these criticisms relate mainly to matters of fact, Hart's interpretation of sectarian intent within the Irish War of Independence largely depends on the matters of fact in dispute that he has failed to address adequately. Hart has promised on various occasions, both public and private, to address them. No response that directly addresses the points in contention has emerged.

In such circumstances your decision to choose a scholar whose work has been discredited without response is a strange one. We ask you and Mercier Press to reconsider it. Work produced by this author will be tainted by his inability to address serious criticisms. The decision undermines public confidence in the profession of history and it will bring Mercier Press into disrepute. It will surprise serious scholars of history. It may be that, in these circumstances, you might impose on Professor Hart a requirement to address the criticisms prior to permission being granted to publish his introductory remarks. That would be inadequate in

our view - there are other historians whose work is not tainted to this extreme degree. The choice of historian is yours, or perhaps Mercier's (please clarify). That is not our business. However, we reserve the right to comment on the adequacy of the choice made, as in this case.

As I have explained, the choice made at this juncture by you/Mercier in the context of this book will be regarded widely as unacceptable and unwise. We suggest that a historian is chosen who has not made impossible claims and one who has not engaged in systematic censorship.

I await your response and that of Mercier Press with great interest.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Lane

cc Eoin Purcell,

[commissioning@mercierpress.ie](mailto:commissioning@mercierpress.ie)

Sharon O'Donovan,

[info@mercierpress.ie](mailto:info@mercierpress.ie)

We will keep readers in touch with what response is received.

in honestly presenting the full horrors of war, but without relish. On 2nd May 1995 I submitted the following letter to the Editor of the *Irish Times*:

"Fifty-two years ago a new ballad spread like wildfire through the Vilna Ghetto. It had been anonymously composed by one of only thirty who had managed to escape from a massacre of over four thousand Lithuanian Jews at Ponar on a single-day—April 4, 1943. One of its lines tells us: *'Alongside the Jewish dead there also lay several Germans, bitten to death'*. Yes, the victims had fought back, and a number of SS mass murderers met an undoubtedly grotesque but hardly undeserved end. *'Fight fair! D'ye want us to come out in our skins an' throw stones?'*, asked Fluther in 1916 of a British soldier in Seán O'Casey's play, *'The Plough and the Stars'*—a question that can be posed with very much greater validity on behalf of the victims of Nazism. For they indeed had every right to fight back with any weapon to hand that might serve as a defence against their own annihilation, be it bullet or bomb, teeth or knife."

"Why, then, the caricature of an obituary for Milovan Djilas penned by Kevin Myers? ... Why does Myers maintain that Djilas not only *'used to boast in old age how he slit the throat of a captured German soldier before clubbing him to death'* but that he also *'lived in the mountains beyond reprisal'*? By definition, a dead man—no matter how recent his demise—cannot be libelled. Nor, for the most part, can the dead answer back. Djilas's own reply is, however, contained in his 1977 memoirs, entitled *'Wartime'*. There is no boasting in this book of the incident concerned. Instead we are given a painfully honest narrative of a day of horrors—June 13, 1943. Djilas had been among a group of Yugoslav Partisans effectively trapped by a German SS Division on that day. They had been fighting since the crack of dawn with heavy casualties. Among the dead was his own young cousin. On retreating into the forest they stumbled on two SS men. In response to a question from Djilas, one of the SS boasted that their Division was indeed all around them. Djilas continues: *'Unslung my rifle. Since I didn't dare fire, because the Germans were some forty yards above—we could hear them shouting—I hit the German over the head. The rifle butt broke, and the German fell on his back. I pulled out my knife and with one motion cut his throat'*. Survival had required silence, hence the knife. And Djilas recalled the remainder of that day as follows: *'We stationed guards around us, and could hear the Germans killing our wounded and non-combatants along the Sujestka, and on the road which we had travelled that morning. It was then that a husband answered the plea of his gravely wounded wife to kill her, seizing his opportunity while she was dozing. I had known them*

## The Myers Obsession With The Recently Dead

The July 2008 issue of *Irish Political Review* carried an article of mine entitled: *"Haughey in the Service of the Nazis? Myers, Damned Lies and Statistics"*. I observed:

"The Myers predilection for telling whoppers of lies about the not-so-long dead (knowing that, being dead, they cannot sue for libel) is just as strongly alive and kicking today as when I first drew attention to it thirteen years ago."

April 20th, 1995 saw the death of the Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas. Even though Djilas had been an anti-Communist polemicist for many decades—breaking alike with both Stalin and Tito, and serving a period of imprisonment under the latter's regime—Myers found his earlier wartime Communism unforgivable. With Djilas less than a week cold, Myers penned an "Irishman's Diary" that was wholly and explicitly devoted to consigning him to Hell's flames. Published by the *Irish Times* on April 27th, a week to the very day after his death, Myers portrayed Djilas as *"an unrepentant killer with the blood of hundreds on his hands", who "revelled in killing Germans... killing them by hand, with knife or hammer, or by strangling them"*.

Lest there be any confusion on the subject, Myers had absolutely no qualms about killing Germans as such, particularly in World War One, as long as such killings were carried out by the right sort of people. Four years later, on 11th September 1999, the *Irish Times* published his hymn of praise to Rudyard Kipling, in which Myers gushed about that imperialist propagand-

ist's *"quite magnificent two volume history of the Irish Guards—a masterpiece of military literature, its every line beating with a passionate pride in the feats of Irish soldiers"*. By whom, of course, Myers meant those who had taken the King's shilling in 1914 to fight in Britain's war upon the German nation. Here is how Kipling described the manner in which Michael O'Leary had won his VC on 1st February 1914:

"The Germans were too well posted to be moved by bomb or rifle, so our big guns were called upon to shell for ten minutes, with shrapnel, the hollow where they lay. The spectacle was sickening, but the results were satisfactory... It was here that Lance-Corporal O'Leary... won his VC. He rushed up along the railway embankment above the trenches, shot down 5 Germans behind their first barricade in the trench, then 3 more trying to work a machine-gun at the next barricade fifty yards further along the trench, and took a couple of prisoners. Eye-witnesses report that he did his work quite leisurely and wandered out into the open, visible for any distance around, intent upon killing another German to whom he had taken a dislike."

The relish with which Kipling proceeded to narrate the bloodlust of O'Leary in casually proceeding to kill a ninth German, whom he did not want to be bothered taking as a third prisoner—triggered by the *"very good"* reason that he had just *"taken a dislike"* to him—is quite chilling in its understated delivery. By contrast, Djilas was to be quite explicit

since 1941. It was then also that a father fulfilled the same request by his daughter. I knew that father too. He survived the war, withered and sombre. We counted the shots the Germans above fired as signals and knew they spoke of our annihilation.' When Kevin Myers prays that 'God has consigned Djilas to where the hottest flames linger', it is sufficient to recall that Djilas came through the hell just described."

I had submitted the above letter with the following covering note to the *Irish Times* Letters Editor:

"As the recently-deceased Milovan Djilas is no longer in position to reply on his own behalf to Kevin Myers... I hope it will be possible to publish Djilas's own account, from his 1977 Memoirs, of the incident referred to."

Readers will not be surprised to learn that this letter was not, in fact, published.

Necrophilia is rightly regarded as a product of a sick and twisted mind. But what are we to make of such passionate necrophobia, expressed so immediately after the death of the targeted victim? And what are we to make of various newspaper editors who have seen fit to indulge a serial offender in his pursuit of such perverted and cowardly predilections? Irish International Brigader Bob Doyle died in London this past January 22nd. His remains were cremated on February 10th and his ashes brought back to Dublin by his family on February 14th. Meanwhile, on February 6th, the *Irish Independent* published the following diatribe penned by Kevin Myers:

"Bob Doyle was no democrat. In the 1930s, he was a member of the Dublin IRA, the slogan of which was put elegantly by Frank Ryan: 'While we have fists, hands and boots to use, and guns if necessary, we will not allow free speech to traitors.' And 'traitors' in this context meant the democratically accountable political party, Cumann na nGaedheal. But Bob Doyle was also a member of the Communist Party, which took its orders from Joe Stalin. The International Brigade that he served in was merely a tool of the Soviet Union—which at the time of the Spanish war, was simultaneously conducting a great purge, three of whose fatal victims were actually Irish (see *Left to the Wolves—Irish victims of the Stalinist Terror*, Barry McLoughlin, Irish Academic Press)."

"So, there isn't a single part of Bob Doyle's political agenda which was dedicated to democracy and the rule of the ballot box... But naturally, he is to be remembered with a public march from the Garden of Remembrance to Liberty Hall tomorrow week, and no doubt will be celebrated as a defender of democracy and freedom, just as Frank Ryan and Sean Russell, IRA men who threw their lot in with the Nazis, came to be so feted. There's nothing anyone can do about this ..."

Indeed there was nothing that Myers could do about it. But the *Irish Independent* Editor could—and did—suppress the following letter which I submitted in reply on February 11:

"I refer to the column of vituperation directed against the late Bob Doyle by Kevin Myers. As an Irish Republican volunteer Bob confronted the Blueshirt menace in Ireland, fought courageously against international Fascism on the battlefields of Spain and enlisted in the British merchant navy for World War Two. Having faced down far more substantial foes—from the Spanish fascist guards who regularly and viciously beat him with clubs, to the Nazi German Gestapo who interrogated him during his year of concentration camp incarceration—Bob would have nothing but contempt for the journalistic 'courage' of such a 'kick him when he has just died' column rushed off before his family even had a chance to conduct his funeral service... But it was the honour bestowed upon him by Spanish democracy that particularly warmed his heart. For it was a cross-Party Spanish Parliament that unanimously voted in 1996 to grant the right of Spanish citizenship to Bob and his fellow International Brigade volunteers. The verdict of the Spanish people themselves was his ultimate vindication. Citizens of Dublin can also show their appreciation at the Garden of Remembrance this Saturday when his ashes will be carried by his family in procession to Liberty Hall for a celebration of Bob Doyle's life."

See [www.indymedia.ie/article/91124](http://www.indymedia.ie/article/91124) for a report and video footage of the vindication of Bob Doyle by the 600 citizens who participated in those Dublin ceremonies on February 14th. In my own remarks at Liberty Hall I proceeded to point out:

"I will also mention one more family, because it is a fitting answer to what Kevin Myers has written. He sought to exploit the Irish dead, including the Irish dead of the Soviet Gulag. One of those was Patrick Breslin, a founding member of the 1920s Communist Party of Ireland, who went to work in the Soviet Union and was unjustly charged with anti-Soviet activities. But his family can be proud of the fact that he maintained his innocence to the very end. Bob, who had himself suffered at the hands of Fascist imprisonment, would have had nothing but admiration for a man who devoted his life to the Soviet Union and who rightly maintained his innocence of any anti-Soviet activities, but who nonetheless perished. And it is a tribute to the horizons of people who are inspired by Bob, that Patrick Breslin's daughter (Mairéad Patrikovna Breslin Kelly) and his granddaughter (Lara) are here today to honour Bob Doyle, in spite of the likes of Kevin Myers (Applause). Needless to say, the *Irish Independent* published that

attack on Bob, but did not allow me a right of reply. But when we remember the hallowed ground where we are at present—this is Liberty Hall; this is where the 1916 Proclamation was printed; this is where those Leaders met to give effect to that 1916 Rising; this is where the statue of James Connolly was unveiled in the presence of Bob Doyle and his fellow brigadistas—when we remember that Kevin Myers was published in a paper that actually called for Connolly's execution, we can say to Bob: By Christ, you're in good company!"

And so he was.

**Manus O'Riordan**

## Prize Nonsense

It is time for the *IPR* to institute its own Prize. There's a Prize for everything these days. One for the most tortured attack on Republicanism in the media is a prime need. The reader might respond that 'Major' K. Myers would walk away with it. Even if offered on a weekly basis.

In the *Irish Times* (Fri. 16.01.09) Paddy Agnew's weekly *Rome Letter* was entitled *No Oscar in prospect for realistic portrayal of Mafia brutality*. It was a (slightly pointless) whinge about the film *Gomorra* being nixed by 'Hollywood' for an Oscar. *Gomorra*, Agnew claims, is too gritty and realistic about the Mafia.

He sneers at the "huge success" of *The Sopranos*, whose "hero was a violent godfather and the underlying protagonist was organised crime". Can an abstraction like "organised crime" be a "protagonist"? It reads reasonable enough.

The next paragraph is Prize-winning material: "How would Irish viewers react to a soap opera about the Murphys in mid-80s Belfast and the difficulties they faced in trying to resolve the conflicting requirements of home life and being effective Provo operatives?"

The Mafia / IRA comparison is a bit passé. A bit 'Indo' and unsubtle. The people 'Provo operatives' were allegedly 'terrorising' have been voting, in increasing numbers, for them for a quarter century. Paddy Agnew is living in Italy but surely he must be familiar with the election results?

'Provo operatives' might have to be put in context. The British Army (and Navy, and Air Force), a large (armed) police force, two large (and many smallish) Loyalist paramilitary groups would have to be factored in. It might get a wee bit too complicated for simple soap treatment. Viewers might even start thinking.

**Seán McGouran**

## Public Meeting on The Irish Times

On April 22nd the National Library Society had a talk on *The Irish Times* by Mark O'Brien, the author of a recent book on the subject. I have described in the *Irish Political Review* the book as being "overly sympathetic", but nevertheless containing valuable information. And O'Brien's speech was a reflection of his book. He referred to the Unionism of the newspaper before the Treaty and the relationship between the newspaper and the emerging State after the Treaty. O'Brien described the distrust which the State had for the newspaper, but the impression was given that the State was being irrational and the newspaper's motives were beyond reproach.

Nevertheless, O'Brien reproduced some of the cartoons of the period after independence, which give an authentic flavour of the culture of *The Irish Times*. One of the most famous cartoons was the *Odearest* advertisement depicting the fire in the *Irish Times* premises of 1951. It shows in the background the editor Bertie Smyllie emerging from the premises with three treasured possessions.

And it is an interesting question. If there were a fire in your house or office, what three possessions would you attempt to salvage? The choice could be very revealing. *The Irish Times* in its recent 150th commemoration magazine also reproduced the cartoon, but only referred to one of those possessions: a roll of newsprint precariously balanced on Smyllie's head. The second possession is a typewriter carried under the Editor's left arm. But the third possession is the most interesting and revealing of all. It is carried under Smyllie's left arm and could easily be missed. But, as O'Brien said in his lecture, a close examination reveals that it is in fact a Union Jack.

Of course, the cartoon was only an advertisement and the focus was on another *Irish Times* character—the *Quidnunc* columnist Seamus Kelly—who is worried that his *Odearest* mattress, "his most cherished possession", would be lost in the fire. The advertisement was part of a long running advertising campaign in *The Irish Times* and certainly was not intended as satire. In my opinion the cartoonist got Smyllie just about right.

O'Brien went on to describe briefly *The Irish Times Trust* of 1974 and remarked on the extraordinary powers accorded to Major McDowell. He thought that the Bank of Ireland wanted those powers to be given to the Major. But there is no evidence of this. The most that can be said is that the bank acquiesced and, as Andrew Whittaker says in his book *Bright Brilliant*

*Days*, the Bank regretted three years later that McDowell was placed in such an impregnable position.

O'Brien concluded by suggesting that the Trust arrangement indicated that *The Irish Times* was a public service rather than a commercial enterprise. Following O'Brien's speech there was a speech by a Mr. Ian Dalton, who reflected the Protestant view. The newspaper reflected Protestant values. These values were quite conservative. The Protestants population had diminished substantially since independence, but the remaining population was over-represented in the banking, legal, accountancy and insurance professions. He thought that Fintan O'Toole had a rather rose-tinted view of the matter. If *The Irish Times* occasionally embarked on a liberal cause, it couldn't rely on its infantry to follow it.

The meeting was then opened to the floor. I was trying to assess the audience. There were about 80 in attendance. They were middle class and the majority was probably over 60. My impression was that they were *Irish Times* readers. One of them said he loved the newspaper and was particularly impressed by the standard of photography. A younger man felt that some of Smyllie's writings should be republished. I was surprised at this because in his largely uncritical biography *Mr Smyllie, Sir*, Tony Gray suggested that Smyllie's writing style was pompous. His *Nichevo* column was dubbed by some people "Famous People who know me". The impression given was that the famous *Irish Times* Editor was something of a pub bore.

But there were a number of people that were quite critical of the newspaper. A few speakers thought there was a conflict between its high moral tone and the commercial objectives of the newspaper. The disastrous purchase of Myhome.ie was mentioned. One person criticised O'Brien for having too benign a view of the relationship between Major McDowell and Douglas Gageby. This person referred to the "white nigger" letter, which gave a very different picture of that relationship.

I asked if the author had received any explanation as to why it was necessary for *The Irish Times Trust* and *Irish Times Ltd.* Directors to swear an oath of secrecy. The author stumbled over this question and the audience burst out laughing when he said that he didn't know why there was an "oath of allegiance". He compounded the Freudian slip when he suggested that a possible explanation was "cabinet confidentiality". I replied that "cabinet confidentiality" was not something that

*The Irish Times* respected when it related to the Irish State.

The final question came from a long time *Irish Times* employee who praised the integrity of Douglas Gageby and thought that Fintan O'Toole's moral denunciation of Michael Lowry of the previous day was admirable. He further suggested that, now that adherence to the Catholic Church had declined, the values of *The Irish Times* could provide a substitute. There was embarrassed laughter as the audience's gaze turned to the Chairman of the meeting, who happened to be a Catholic priest. After a few seconds pause, the cleric responded with a terse "no comment".

I have not a religious bone in my body, but the news that the values of Rome may be replaced with the values of Bishop O'Toole and his fellow moralists in *The Irish Times* was no cause for celebration!

**John Martin**

***The Irish Times: Past And Present***, a record of the journal since 1859,

by *John Martin*.

Index. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-872078-13-7.

BHES. 2008. £20, £15.

## Queen Elizabeth and pockets of resistance

Rugby player Ronan O'Gara caused a mini-sensation when he kept his hands in his pockets when the team was presented to Queen Elizabeth. The following letter was submitted to the *Irish Times* on 12th May, but did not find publication

### O'Gara's stance: the pocketbook history

On December 1, 1920, the RIC auxiliary division based at Macroom Castle in Co Cork ordered that "all male inhabitants of Macroom and all males passing through Macroom shall not appear in public with their hands in their pockets. Any male infringing this order is liable to be shot on sight".

It has been the habit of Corkmen to assert a right to keep their hands in their pockets in the presence of British authority figures ever since. The more often it happens, the more it should reassure British personages no harm will come to them and so it is not necessary to shoot Irishmen with deficient deportment.

This may explain why Ireland and Munster rugby star Ronan O'Gara, from Cork, kept his hands in his pockets when he met Queen Elizabeth, from London, recently.

Whether the historical basis for O'Gara's stance was part of the IRFU's defence of his actions (Irish Examiner, May 9) is another matter.

**Niall Meehan**

## Coolacrease Again

The *Aubane* book which refutes the broadcast RTE account of the executions at Coolacrease in June 1921 has been reviewed in four commercial publications. It was rubbished in the *Sunday Business Post* in a review which was itself rubbish (see *Irish Political Review*, Jan. 09; *Church & State* No. 95). Then it was reviewed in *History Ireland* by Joost Augusteijn, who was trained as an academic historian within the revisionist school which was the source of the RTE travesty of the *Coolacrease* event. Augusteijn conceded the substance of the *Aubane* case against RTE in a couple of quick sentences before hurrying on to a couple of pages of silly comment on the *Aubane* book on marginal points. Then there was a review in the *Dublin Review of Books* (see *Church & State* No. 96). And now the book is reviewed in the May issue of *Books Ireland* by John Kircaldy, about whom no information is given.

My understanding of a book review, acquired in a by-gone era, is that it should give the reader some idea of what the book says and assess its accuracy, before going on—if the reviewer must—to entertain himself with irrelevancies. I stopped reading book reviews as a matter of course long ago when they stopped doing this. And I particularly stopped reading *Books Ireland* reviews when I saw Stickies (Official Republicans) commending each other's books in it without acknowledging their relationships. It therefore came as a surprise to find that Kircaldy's review of *Coolacrease* was almost a genuine review.

The title of the review is *Not Proven*, but the following amounts to a verdict of Guilty against RTE:

"Looking at the evidence as presented here, the following to my mind stand up: the family was not shot as Protestants but because they were seen as enemies of the IRA (all other families in the area were left alone). There seems no evidence that their membership of a small religious sect had anything to do with their killing. It was their involvement during the war that was their undoing; this was underlined by the evidence that the family was integrated into the community before world war one. The idea that the motive for the killings was the grabbing of land also does not seem to hold water."

Kircaldy says he knows Offaly and knows that the incident "*still reverberates there*". He does not suggest that "*the evidence as presented*" is faulty. By taking the book as being sound on those points, he damns the RTE programme in substance but is prudent in his form of expressing it. (RTE reaches millions: *Aubane* only thousands.)

In the final paragraph the review lets itself down, hedging its bets:

"Having said all that, I must pause. All of this depends on your views on nationalism, physical force, legality and politics. None of those involved are now living. The authors of this book are clearly in favour of the IRA of those times. Although critical of the accuracy of their opponents, they are not above making mistakes of their own. Suffolk, for instance, is not one of the home counties. There is a case here and the makers of the programme should answer it. Having strong County Offaly connections, I very much enjoyed reading it but I was not convinced."

What was Kircaldy not entirely convinced of? Was he suddenly overcome by a doubt of his own assessments in a preceding paragraph that the incident was not an act of religious antagonism in pursuit of a land grab? That RTE was right after all, and that there WAS "*Ethnic Cleansing In The Midlands*"?

I do not understand why "*all of this depends on your views of nationalism*" etc. One might be an Imperialist and still assess the evidence with a degree of objectivity and reach the conclusion that *Aubane* reached. Indeed, some of the people connected with *Aubane* were roundly denounced as Imperialists by the effective maker of the RTE programme, Senator Harris—Bertie's bequest to the nation. One does not need "*to be in favour of the IRA of those times*", or to think that nationalist Ireland was entitled to take by force what the Empire had refused to concede to its vote, in order to be able to see that the incident at Coolacrease was not a sectarian land grab.

I am the author of a small part of the book. Am I "*clearly in favour of the IRA of those times*"? I never felt an urgent need to decide. In 1969 I made the strongest case I could for Ulster Unionism. Was I in favour of it? It was there, and my estimate was that it was going to stay there. The general nationalist estimate was that it was a base-less remnant of the past and would crumble under pressure. (I recall in particular debating this question with a Fine Gael Front Bencher.) If it was going to last, I saw no sense in describing it as it was being described. (Martin Mansergh holds me responsible for keeping it in being when it was about to crumble, because I described it as having the quality of a durable nationality, but with uncharacteristic modesty I must say that he exaggerates my influence.)

The Coolacrease incident happened

after the country had been Partitioned, and after no Home Ruler—and no advocate of remaining within the UK and the Empire on any basis—had even contested the 26 County Election, aside from the elite University electorate. The Ulster Unionist complication had been hived off. But, in the face of a sweeping 26 County endorsement of the Dail, the British Government still stood firm against the democracy. Do I think that Whitehall/Westminster had a reasonable case, in terms of legitimacy, in the era of the League of Nations, for refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Dail? I don't. And nobody who does has argued the case. The preference is to discuss the legitimacy of the 1916 Insurrection—a wartime event in a situation where neither the Insurrectionists nor the Government that defeated them was democratically elected—and to pass over the Elections of 1918, 1920 and 1921 as if they were somehow subordinate to the Rising, rather than being distinct events of a different kind from the Rising. The Rising and the mode of its suppression undoubtedly influenced what happened in the electoral process when it was restored (in democratised form) after the Great War. But that does not make the War of Independence a continuation of the Rising. It was a continuation of the Election in the face of British refusal to heed the electoral mandate in Ireland.

Kircaldy reviews *Coolacrease* along with two other books: *The Provisional Irish Republican Army And The Morality Of Terrorism* by Timothy Shanahan (Edinburgh University Press), and *The Burnings Of 1920* by Pearse Lawlor (Mercier). He remarks with regard to the former:

"The justification for violence by the IRA has always been simple. It believes in a united Ireland and feels that, if this is achieved, history will absolve it. Surrounding this are notions of martyrdom, blood sacrifice and minority activists. Violence is justified because a part of Ireland is occupied by the British..."

This is a blinkered 26 County view of what has happened in the North over the past 40 years. The Provo campaign has long since been "*justified*" in the only place that counts, which is the Catholic community that had to put up with the bizarre form of government that Westminster set up for the 6 Counties in 1921. The right-thinking middle class of the Republic, which never troubled to understand the particularity of Northern Ireland, switched off from the North in the mid 1970s and moralised at it in a way that made no sense in terms of Northern Catholic experience.

There was war in 1919-21 because

Westminster decided to ride rough-shod over the majority in Ireland. There was war in the North in 1970-1998 because the Catholic third in the North was deprived of an outlet in the democratic politics of the state and was subjected to communal rule by the two-thirds. The Provo war effort would have been impossible without very substantial support by the Catholic community from the start, and increasing support as pressure was applied against it. And social communities do not denounce themselves — not unless they are shattered.

The Provos were not an anti-Treaty remnant of Southern politics. They were a new development, of 1969-70, out of the predicament in which the system of misgovernment that Britain devised for the North had placed the Catholic community. They were not there at all in July 1969. They arose out of the community after the events of August. They did not exist over against the community. They were a communal response to undemocratic government, and that was their "justification". They stood in no need of subsequent absolution from a transcendental "history"—a history serving external interests.

I tried to direct events onto a very different course after August 1969. I failed chiefly because Unionism did not have the will to substantiate its slogan, "Ulster is British" by insisting on making it so within the political life of the state. There was a degree of willingness within the Catholic community to go in that direction, but it depended on the Protestant majority. And, faced with the choice, Unionism decided for Ulsterism and all that it involved.

Kircaldy attributes to the Northern Catholic community—which in the great majority supported Sinn Fein—the view that "Violence is justified because a part of Ireland is occupied by the British". That would certainly be the conventional statement made for the record by spokesmen. But the cause of the long military campaign sustained in very difficult circumstances does not lie in the justification of it once it has happened. The turn to Republicanism in 1969-70 did not happen because people suddenly realised that they were "occupied by the British" and thought they would be justified in fighting them. It happened because the part of Ireland which the British state continued to hold after 1921 was subjected to a perverse mode of government by Britain, disconnected from the democratic process of the British state. Violence was generated by the provocations of an indefensible and unviable governing system. The morality of it is connected with its source.

**Brendan Clifford**

## Propaganda With Your Laxatives

It is high time there was an Irish history of World War II. The War is painted as one continuous event but that was not the case in reality. The original war declared by Britain over Poland was effectively over before the major one between Germany and Russia began, and the US-Japan War had its own quite separate *raison d'être*. There are therefore at least three wars involved with different histories as each war meant radically different things to the different nations involved. It meant something else to the neutrals and something different again to those who were neutral and then became engaged. And it was different again for neutrals according to where they were geographically located. The issue became one of who was neutral for whom and who was neutral against whom. There is no doubt that Britain regarded Ireland as being neutral against it and Switzerland as being neutral in its favour. It is therefore inevitable and correct that all real histories will be national histories in relation to the conflict and any other approach will become abstract and artificial.

The writing of any Irish history would concentrate essentially on the relationship with the UK and a very important part of the practicalities of that relationship centred on the work of the Ministry of Information. It sought to collect information from across the Empire and elsewhere and use this to do propaganda work in Britain's favour across the world. It was a very extensive operation and its very extent shows the need there was to convince people of Britain's case for war. It was not self-evident to many.

It sought to influence opinion by all possible means and its work might well be illustrated by just one area of its work in Ireland—the attempt to use commercial channels as a means for propaganda. Bits and pieces of archive material indicating the Ministry's efforts in this area have been released and are now available—but not the full story.

The first attempt seems to have been to set up an organisation of businessmen who would use their influence to promote Britain's case. It had a working title of "The Ireland Forever Association".

The idea was "to get hold of a group of Irishmen who would do propaganda work in Ireland by the Irish for the Irish and paid for by the Irish". However it was plain to all involved that the only people who would do this were members of the Anglo-Irish minority—and that would be the kiss of death for the scheme in view of the fact that there would be no way of hiding who was behind it.

Nicholas Mansergh, from personal knowledge of the people being considered

(Sir John Kane, Judge Wylie, the Managing Director of Guinness's, etc), confirmed these reservations. As one functionary, Professor Harlow, bluntly put it: "their work would be stultified by the fact that in these days the Anglo-Irish cut no ice whatever" (PRO, Kew, 16/6/1941). He contrasted that with the work being done: "in the closest consultation with the Dominions Office and various departments of the British Intelligence Service (where) we are working steadily and not without success through Mr John Betjeman in a variety of ways of which it would not be wise to describe in detail" (ibid). The proposal died a death.

However, other proposals were forthcoming. Nichols Mansergh pursued a suggestion made—

"at a recent meeting in the Dominions Office that tea and other commodities supplied by this country to Eire should be packed in containers indicating that the contents have been furnished to Eire from an United Kingdom source or alternatively that they have been brought from overseas in the UK on Allied ships" (12/12/1941).

A straightforward attempt at blackmail with tea! The assumption appears to be that people might suddenly consider this neutrality lark was not worth the certainty of their cup of tea! That seems to be the level of it. (Whatever happened to Free Trade?)

Apart from the crudity of the approach, there was a practical problem that Nicholas soon discovered. Tea was not sold in packets as it is today (and of course tea bags were not heard of). Shops sold what was called 'loose tea': I earned pocket money weighing this 'loose' tea into pound and half pound bags from huge chests. The chests were recycled as toddlers' play pens. So it would have been necessary to get the small shopkeepers of Ireland (and their assistants) to stick a leaflet from the British Government into every bag they weighed and sold! This was a bigger non-starter than the "The Forever Ireland" proposal.

But Nicholas was nothing if not persistent and industrious. His next proposal was to investigate the possibility of inserting "leaflets in packets of (a) soap, (b) toothpaste, and/or tooth brushes (c) cocoa, coffee or Bovril. We are very anxious that these leaflets should circulate more widely than at present in Eire" (30/12/1941).

So the details of the distributors of the following products were procured so that they could be approached with the plan:

Rhyno (pig and poultry feed)  
Dr. Witts catarrh cure  
Bile Beans (laxative)  
Phillips Dental Magnesia (toothpaste)

Phillips Milk of Magnesia (indigestion)  
 California syrup of figs (laxative)  
 Zam-buk (ointment)  
 Doans backache pills  
 Phensic (pain killer)  
 Germoline (ointment)  
 Birds Jelly de Luxe  
 Fynnon salt (laxative)

Clarke's blood mixture (which was once advertised as follows:

"It never fails to cure Scrofula, Scurvy, Scrofulous Sores, Glandular Swellings and Sores, Cancerous Ulcers, Bad Legs, Secondary Symptoms, Syphilis, Piles, Rheumatism, Gout, Dropsy, Black-heads or Pimples on the Face, Sore Eyes, Eruptions of the Skin and Blood, and Skin Diseases of every description".

(I hope this list does not activate associated symptoms or induce nausea amongst readers.)

Nicholas later minuted his superiors that: "*I shall take steps to ensure that each piece of propaganda is submitted for our consideration before any action is taken*" (27 January 1943). He was so keen! It seems that this scheme had no more success than the tea planting plan. But Nicholas was not to be deterred. He was as busy as a bee.

His next scheme was to influence local newspapers by withdrawing British advertising in them. A long list of the culprits was procured with copies of the papers and he assessed them in a secret minute to John Betjeman who gloried in signing himself Seán O'Betjemán at this stage:

"You will remember that you divided the papers into two categories. From the former you were anxious that all British advertisements should be removed, but in the case of the latter you suggested that we should take no action until they offend again. In the former category appear the 'Carlow Nationalist', the 'Kerry Champion' and the 'Dundalk Examiner'. We have listed the advertisements of British origin appearing in the papers. In the case of the 'Carlow Nationalist' there are five advertisements; in the case of the 'Kerry Champion' there is one; and in the case of the 'Dundalk Examiner' there are none. Since the list is so brief we would very much like to have further details, if available, from you before going ahead.

"I understand that advertisements of British origin appearing in these provincial papers may be divided into categories (a) advertisements commissioned directly by large firms (b) advertisements of firms who do not conduct their own advertising in Eire, but follow the normal practice of allowing a percentage of the purchase price for advertising and (c) firms who have their own advertising done through agents in Dublin and elsewhere. In the case of (a) action will be comparatively simple; in the case of (b) it will be virtually impossible because it would mean that retailers in Ireland would have to be advised accordingly; and in the case of (c) action is possible, but it may be slow since it would be desirable to wait until some number [sic] of the firm in question

## Palestine: Two Into One?

The debate over Palestine is often on the issue of one state or two states. I've never quite understood why these were considered mutually exclusive positions. If there was evidence of a meaningful movement among the Palestinians for a one-state solution then this would obviously be something to support but I don't see this at present. The Palestinians know instinctively that their only chance of freeing themselves from the oppression of the Israeli regime is for them to have their own state and that to expect the Zionists to relinquish control of their own state is not a realistic prospect.

This does not mean that the concept of a secular non-Jewish Israel/Palestine with full and equal rights for Palestinians should not be something to be supported—far from it, but it should only be advocated as a possible two-stage evolution in the course of time.

Whatever the chances of an eventual one-state solution occurring in the fullness of time it would only happen if there was first a separate Palestinian state that made the decision to amalgamate under its own terms with what is now Israel. Although the main energy driving the current Palestinian resistance is Islamic, there remains a strong secular component within its broader community and a separate Palestinian state would not necessarily be one that remains Islamic.

A one-state solution by all means, but also a recognition that an essential pre-requisite of this ever happening is a separate Palestinian state in the interim. It's then up to both the Israelis and Palestinians to decide how they evolve.

Eamon Dyas

## WWI Hypocrisy

Sometimes the screen of propaganda which conceals a genuine understanding of WW1 slips momentarily to reveal something that doesn't quite fit into the perceived 'wisdom'. The *Sun* newspaper on the 6th May last published a report on the exhumation of a WW1 mass grave in France. The grave is located near the village of Fromelles in northern France. The battle took place in 1916 about 50 miles to the north of the Somme where the main thrust of the British assault on German lines was taking place and was meant to divert German attention from that area. The report in *The Sun* goes on:

"But, like much of the fighting on the Western Front, planning and execution were pitiful. A charge at dusk over open ground raked with machine-gun fire was doomed to failure. Within 24 hours, 5,533 men from the 5th Australian Division were killed, wounded or missing. The 61st British Division suffered 1,547 casualties.

Honours

The Germans offered a truce so bodies could be recovered. But Allied commanders turned it down—so German troops hastily dug eight pits and laid out the corpses in neat rows.

Researchers discovered the mass graves a year ago after studying aerial photos taken by the British days after the carnage.

Yesterday Australian soldiers watched as the dig began at a ceremony attended by French, Aussie and British dignitaries including defence minister Quentin Davies."

The episode tells us something of the attitude of the British military command towards their troops—an attitude that displays a huge divergence from the sentiments subsequently displayed during commemorations in the aftermath of victory when the sacrifices have to be justified. An offer by the Germans of a cease-fire to enable both sides to bury their dead (and presumably an opportunity to treat living casualties on the battlefield) was rejected by the British. Then, to compound matters, in the wake of all the sentimental hand-wringing at every Armistice Day commemoration for the past 89 years, the British ignore the presence of this mass grave of its dead soldiers. The article claims that this grave has only recently been discovered but admits that aerial photographs of the site were taken only days after the battle. The record and details of the battle also surely existed but it would be too much to reveal that, while the British ignored their casualties of this battle for 93 years, it was left to the Germans, under the most difficult circumstances, to bury the dead of their enemy and thus provide some dignity to these soldiers of the British army abandoned by their own.

Jack Coldrick

is visiting Ireland and can acquaint the local advertising agents verbally with the wishes of his firm. Yours sincerely, P.N.S. Mansergh" (22 January 1942).

It is not clear how successful this escapade was but soon Nicholas was on another tack. Writing on 14th March 1943, he noted that "*At a meeting at the Dominions Office on 23 February, it was suggested that films might provide a suitable medium for the circulation of propaganda leaflets in Eire*". And being ever diligent he reported that:

"We have now considered this proposal

with representatives of Kodak Ltd., who were sympathetic in principle, but emphasised the very considerable practical difficulties involved. In their view it is not possible to arrange for the fixing of labels at this end, but that it could be done if we could arrange to deliver propaganda labels to the Dublin branch of the Kodak Company. Their representative in Dublin would arrange to insert labels with the film before distribution."

However, Nicholas was sceptical of the practicalities of doing this and doubtful

continued on page 18

## Judicial Swipes

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

*Irish Times* 21st May, Page 7: Fianna Fail's Minister Martin Mansergh (son of Nicholas Mansergh, knight of the realm), recently used Irish Parliamentary Privilege as his shield when he commented that the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Judiciary were "unseemly gleeful" over-literal, or close reasoning when it came to technicalities. His criticism may have also been interpreted as a criticism of broad legal interpretations. Was it at the lower and/or upper legal body? No-one knows just what he was at. Let him explain.

It is reported he intimated that "some" Judges, when it comes to the spirit of the law, are applying double standards of personal legal applicative tendency and legal logic theory-interpretation (broadly called interpreting the spirit of legal provisions and Acts) as between technical defects to applications of the European Arrest Warrant, but yet they do not apply the same or consistent interpretation of such spirit in other domestic legislation. He also reminded the Dail about past "impeachments" and "capricious judges". Now that is very serious... Don't you think?

There are many examples of such parliamentary obtuse oblique on judicial findings in many different state machinations across Republican State histories. So, while from one perspective his comments could plausibly be viewed as business as usual, in the light of these extraordinary times his utterances are worth comment.

Is the Irish body judiciary the veiled sword of the Executive? Is the judiciary behaving in a rather irregular manner? Worse than that, is the Fianna Fail Minister suggesting their application and interpretation of the spirit of law contradicts Cabinet policy on legal spirit and technicalities? On the one hand you have the principle of the Separation of State, on the other the principle of Parliamentary Privilege. The Minister is obviously not subverting in content or delivery. So, what's the problem with the few inches of copy in the *Irish Times* this week?

The Parliament and the Senate should not be the Executive's plaything. The traditionalist power asymmetric of the Irish State is traditionally Executive-centered. In a word, traditionalist. The 'concentration of power tendency' has always been

advantageous to executive actors who seem beyond and above the power reach of the Nation's Sovereign Body, Parliament. So tell us something we do not know.

What is the Minister's politicking tactic? By obtuse oblique he blew hot air across the (Four) Courts' sails to have their legal horizon line adjusted? This would raise a professional man's antennae and make him listen up. Many years ago itinerant ladies in Swinford, living in dire conditions, used to prick their babies with a needle when begging so as to make them cry, thus attempting to coerce the sympathy of passers-by. Every actor was corrupted. Cabinet Ministers do not rule in an Irish State of Nature.....no? The coarse lack of sensibility of the Minister's outburst is bad form, debasing the bodies of State. Such an engagement should have occurred within formally dedicated Government structures and normal systems of State administration available for review under FOI [Freedom of Information] legislation. So why the big public gesture by the honourable gentleman?

Looking at the context around the Minister's outburst, the Executive and the Department of Education/Finance mandarins must have been very annoyed over the recent Supreme Court findings regarding the costs in this child abuse case where, due to the exceptional circumstances of the case and "the complexities of the state-church-school relationship", the State failed to get its costs though it won the case. The church-State personality-driven relationship is indeed complicated. The shame of the State to pursue the costs in the abuse case speaks for itself. The legislative framework effectively nullifies the State from responsibility for children in Church-managed schools (where all school board meetings start with an evocation of the Lord, Jesus Christ). Notwithstanding the legal risk analysis provided to the State by solicitors and Counsel prior to the proceeding, the exceptional judicial effect was to turn this legislative position on its head.

The Catholic Church's Constitutional placement has existed since the veritable inception of the State. It is definitely reasonable to say and plausible to argue that the attitude within State mandarin circles is that the judicial effect of the Supreme Court common law finding has hammered a wedge into this primary fundamental grain of legislative and Constitu-

tional power "integrity". The integrity of the State's progenitor conceptual framework, though ephemeral, is now cracked and the genie is trying to get out. Genies are big trouble. Ali Baba will confirm this. From their history the Germans call it the "Mythos of the uncontrollable".

The resulting voids undermine the sovereignty of the Nation's Body. There are more and more abuse proceedings to come. The Dublin Diocesan sex abuse report is too be released soon. It will be very bad. The judicial effect has been to put the relevant Department(s) under admonishment and costs. Some professional servants of State might take that very personally and do so in an objectively historical sense too. It is not so much that the rot has set in, but that the rot has been exposed for all to see.

In a similar manner to the Minister's outburst, the judicial body's reasoning in the case, by way of its finding, did not subvert in construction or delivery, loyalty and honour. They provided as just an outcome as was possible. Contrast this to Dr. Woods ineptitude of letting the *religieuse* off the hook. Was that just ineptitude? Why was there such a state of inept Fianna Fail degeneration in 2002? On a Radio One weekend show, Dr. Woods explained the negotiation meeting took 20 minutes for it to be agreed that religious bodies would contribute EUR 125,000,000 towards making compensation payments to abuse victims—the total of which had ended up to be EUR 1,200,000,000! What is the cost of either amount per second of the meeting?

Minister Dr. Woods and Bertie Aherm slit the throats of their own political legacies. They did this by way of their own hands. Look at the blood. It is on their hands. Institutionalised blood of children. The blood of the Nation's Sovereign Body! Cowards? Idiots? Slaves? Expediency? For the victims? How many ways can you talk around the problem? Such ducking and diving is galling. Hope is a Theological precept, and there is little hope as regards charity and mercy, because they have killed vocation and charism, now left to the X-posé TV dining set.

Immediacy is king. On to the next frontier—the real politic polemic.

**Tom Sheridan (Copyright)**

**To be continued**

of the benefits to be derived. Kodak also wrote to the Ministry confirming their scepticism.

All in all, Nicholas was frustrated that his schemes seemed to be getting nowhere. The British diplomatic staff in Dublin were sceptical of them, and he vented his feelings against Dublin:

"At present the situation is thoroughly unsatisfactory, since every proposal put forward at this end is torpedoed on the ground of policy, at the other. At our meeting at the Dominions Office it appeared to be generally agreed that 'convoy' leaflets should be inserted in

packets, if it was practicable, and I know that the Dominions Office still take that view. Clearly it is not shared by the Dublin Office." (10 February 1942)

The assumptions here are astounding. The Dominions Office in Whitehall thought it knew better than those on the ground in Dublin how practical and beneficial it was to carry out these schemes, and Nicholas, despite his alleged Irish expertise, agreed with the Dominions Office. He seems to have been such an uncritical and subservient functionary that he allowed common sense to go out the window. By comparison Sean O'Beitjeman

appears as a rock of common sense and full of worldly wisdom.

The fact that all these efforts came to nought was not really due to the technical difficulties involved. The real problem for the Ministry was the conviction for neutrality amongst the people. The generation that lived through WW II was a generation that had gone through the Home Rule conflict, WW I, the Easter Rising, the War of Independence, the Treaty War, the Economic War and the Blueshirt/Fianna Fail conflict. (And their fathers had experienced the land war).

One of the most profound and settled

*continued on page 19*

## BALLOT continued

function that it really serves." (1928).

*Abu to Dev!*

Why can't the leader of the Labour Party and say the same and stop blathering about so-called reforms of the parliamentary system.

"The brother of Ceann Comhairle, John O'Donoghue has called for the abolition of the Seanad.

"Fianna Fail councillor Paul O'Donoghue said "that august body Seanad Eireann" is costing the country millions and should be closed.

"It serves no purpose. It should be abolished", said the Kerry councillor. His comments come as his brother John is looking at ways of cutting costs in the Houses of the Oireachtas in his role as Ceann Comhairle" (*Irish Independent*, 10.3.2009).

Unicameral (Single Chamber) National legislative bodies exist in many European countries, China and several Latin American countries.

Unicameral legislatures today include Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Israel, New Zealand, Luxembourg, Sri Lanka.

The Scottish Parliament is a single chamber and yes, the Northern Ireland Assembly is likewise.

The state legislature in Queensland, Australia has a unicameral parliament, the Upper House having voted itself out of existence in 1922.

The Australian Capital Territory has a single chamber.

In Nebraska, a West-Central state in the United States, the same has existed since 1937, the year the Constitution of Ireland was enacted by De Valera.

Ironically, in their respective jurisdictions Queensland and Nebraska would have been admired as territories where people lived off "the sweat of their brow" i.e. they worked for a living.

### THE PR MULTIPLE SEAT SHAM!

The Proportional Representation (PR) system was chosen for elections in the Free State during negotiations leading to the Anglo-Irish treaty of December, 1921, again on the basis that it favoured a system best suited to providing representation for minorities (Unionists).

Its first use in a General Election was for the new 'parliament' in the Six Counties in May, 1921. However, it was soon abandoned there: 1929, and the constituencies re-organised under the straight-vote system and with it, the abandonment of the nationalist minority, not

that Dublin gave a damn.

The PR system operates by means of the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies. Each constituency elects at least three deputies, and all constituencies have approximately the same ratio of voters to seats.

There have been two unsuccessful attempts by Fianna Fail Governments to abolish PR and replace it with a single non-transferable vote in single-member constituencies. In the referendum of 1959, the result was 48 per cent in favour of change and 52 per cent against. In the second referendum, 1968, the result was 39 per cent in favour of change and 61 per cent against.

Back to Johnny Fallon again!

"Geography and local knowledge are the key but it also requires a firm understanding of proportional representation (PR). We viewed Ireland's voting system with a certain amount of distrust" (*Party Time* p99).

"The great thing about it, though, is that if you do manage to understand our system and the use of the single transferable vote (STV), then you can go anywhere in the world and their electoral system will seem like child's play. We undoubtedly operate one of the most complex voting mechanisms possible, and in truth we are forced to admit that many of our own voters don't even know how it works" (*Party Time* p100).

Bear with me, reader:

"The voter marks his candidates 1, 2, 3, 4 on the ballot in order of preference, and all the No. 1 votes are counted first. Let's imagine that one candidate polls well over the quota; now there is a surplus which must be distributed. Our hypothetical candidate is 2,000 votes over the quota, so his No. 2 votes are looked at and counted, and if another candidate gets, let's say 50 per cent of the total No. 2 votes then 1,000 votes are added to his first preferences. In reality, not every vote can be counted a second time, so this figure is arrived at by checking random batches and counting the No. 2 votes in these batches." (*Party Time* p101, Mercier, 2006).

What the hell is this?— "*not every vote can be counted a second time*"; pick out a bunch of "*random batches*" and Bob is your TD

"I'm a big fan of electronic voting, even if it kills the fun of the counts. It's more accurate; simple as that. Our paper system can't count every vote in a surplus or elimination, they just take a sample. It's usually an accurate guess but, let's face it, if you lose a seat by three votes you want to know every possible vote has been counted" (ibid. p169).

Imagine how Dick Spring must have felt in his Kerry North constituency in the 1987 General Election when he won by four votes, after the preferences of 10 other candidates were redistributed in 11 counts? Hell, can you imagine how Tom McEllistrim, FF felt after losing by four votes!

The soft underbelly of the PR system is the calculation of a surplus.

For the first count surplus, votes are allocated in strict proportion (10 per cent of the total means you get 10 per cent of the surplus) as calculated by adding up the total number of second preferences. Non-transferable votes are not used for the purpose of calculation.

The problem arises because bundles of votes are physically moved to the booths of other candidates. No attempt is made to calculate what proportion of third, fourth, or further preferences have been allocated.

As the papers are thoroughly mixed before counting begins, this should, in theory, give a random sample of voters' preference all the way down the line. The potential errors this creates become amplified by the transfer of surpluses on later counts.

When a candidate is elected on the second and subsequent counts, his surplus is calculated not on second preferences, but on the transfer of the bundle of votes on top of his pile.

### THE E-VOTING MACHINES

The 7,700 machines were bought five years ago for €52 million and have cost a further €3 million to store in a required environment. Following pilot trials in a few constituencies, they were deemed unreliable for the 2004 General Election.

Last year, in advance of the US Presidential election, an investigation found that most of the electronic voting machines, which had been widely adopted since the disputed 2000 Presidential election when George W. Bush stumbled into office via Florida and the infamous hanging chads, posed "*a real danger to the integrity of national, state and local elections*" (*Irish Independent*, 11.2.2009).

We're described by the Irish Development Association as '*The Silicon Valley of Europe*': we really demonstrate our faith in technology by ensuring that it is kept a 1,000 miles away from our electoral system—after the recent fiasco, it will be a million miles—so much for our zest for reform

Yet, day in, day out, we transact business and monetary arrangements going into millions of Euros a day through a "hole-in-the-hole"-ATM machines—with a paper receipt confirming a secure electronic transaction!

Do the powers that be live in the real world at all?

conclusions they had reached from these bitter experiences was that they were not going to join another war launched by Britain against Germany or anyone else. To think or imagine that they might be swayed from this conviction by a leaflet enclosed with their tea or their laxative showed the most pathetic and patronising contempt that it is possible to imagine. The typical functionaries in Whitehall can hardly be blamed for their ignorance and for promoting these pointless efforts.

Neither can Nicholas be blamed for doing his best for his country in time of war. However, since he is designated as the Irish expert at the Ministry, it is amazing that he was he so ill-informed on the situation in Ireland. And it simply beggars belief that he could have been lauded, and still is, as an 'Irish historian' in view of his assumptions and of the judgements he makes about the country.

It is to be hoped that Nicholas Mansergh's diaries of those years will

soon see the light of day as they no doubt would cast more light on these events and the mentality of those who hatched the various propaganda plans, commercial and otherwise. These diaries might well be the fullest story we could get of the whole period on the propaganda front in the UK as regards Ireland and would make fascinating reading and might well become the primary source on the subject. Let's have them!

Jack Lane

## BALLOT continued

Fianna Fáil ranks.

It calls for "an ambitious reform of the common agricultural policy" (CAP) in the framework of the World Trade Organisation talks and a continuing reduction of the Cap budget post-2013.

It also calls for "*major new efforts*" to strengthen and extend the European security and defence policy, while demanding respect for all the fundamental freedoms guaranteed within the EU, such as upholding the rights of minorities.

Ms Neyts said there was general acknowledgement that on ethical issues Irish political parties took positions that were not necessarily the mainstream EU position, but she said the Liberals had always allowed the party's MEPs to vote freely following their own freedom of conscience on such issues.

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**"If voting changed anything, they'd abolish it" (Ken Livingstone)**

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### JUST CANVASS FODDER?

Below is an interesting analysis from a former member of the Fianna Fail National Executive, Johnny Fallon, a Longford man. The first reflection is written in April last year, it is followed up by another article written in February of this year—if anything the problems facing the Fianna Fail organisation have been compounded over that period.

"But Ahern set to the long task of reform. {1994}. Starting in opposition, he had far more front bench positions to offer. The Reynolds cabinet ministers were accommodated with posts as were old Haughey figures like Burke along with some new faces such as Micheal Martin.

"Ahern has led a change within Fianna Fail. That change has seen a far more professional approach. Fianna Fail today is a much more media savvy organisation. Electoral tactics are strictly imposed. As regards the organisation itself, Ahern can point to unprecedented electoral success, over 3,000 registered cumann and in the region of 65,000 members.

"Eight thousand of these were recruited in the last year as part of a membership drive.

"The party was also helped by the sale of its headquarters building generating enough funds to leave it in secure financial standing and alleviate the debt burden.

"Bertie has united the party and left a strong organisation, but there are problems simmering under the surface.

"The 2004 {Euro and Local} elections showed a disconnect between Fianna Fail at a national level and its local roots and an inability to get its message across

when it could not be controlled centrally.

"Fianna Fail has modernised at pace. Part of the price it has paid is in the involvement, structure and indeed power of its local units. Nowadays politics is all about the TV image and popular appeal.

"Such changes are inevitable, but nonetheless they must be managed.

"Fianna Fail has become used to Bertie Ahern and his consensus style, but in large sections there was a noticeable tiring too. Brian Cowen is a different man. Fianna Fail will look to him to defend the party and its members, finding new ways of encouraging and involving them.

"That's not always easy to do when you are leader of the country as well as the party. But with just over a year to go to the first major electoral test of Brian Cowen's leadership, he will have extensive work to carry out internally to solidify and build upon the bright facade Bertie Ahern has left" (Johnny Fallon, *Irish Independent*, 7.4.2008).

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***That was April last year, now Johnny Fallon, the former Fianna Fail Ard Comhairle member takes a leap to February this year.***

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"Fianna Fail has undergone some dramatic changes in the last decade. Many of its procedures have changed. From candidate selection to the media-focussed party gatherings. All of this is a necessary evil as the party's electoral success has shown. However, Fianna Fail has singularly failed to find new ways of involving and rewarding membership. As powers are removed in certain areas it is important that these are replaced with something else.

"The difficulty now is that members have, in reality, only one function: canvassing. And membership does not bestow any extra benefits, such as access, information or policy influence, that cannot be obtained by anyone else from outside the party. Therefore, in tough times, when the wind is in your face, only the staunchest of members will decide that continued involvement is still worth it.

"Following this, Cowen needs a complete root and branch overhaul of Fianna Fail in advance of the next general election, finding ways of making membership attractive.

"People should, however, be careful what they wish for. It is not inconceivable that without action Fianna Fail could one day disappear. Now, more than ever, people will look for a populist and radical approach to problems. But radical is not necessarily right. This poll may in time be seen as no more than a blip, but that will only happen if Fianna Fail lead the public in facing some harsh realities.

"If the country needs anything right now it is political parties ready to serve their country, to say tough things, to offend people and groups and to do what is necessary. Fianna Fail must not be

tempted for electoral gain to do what people might like them to do. Is this the greatest test so far for Fianna Fail? In a word, No. Fianna Fail is used, for the last 40 years, to people saying it's a party in demise. Once upon a time people who would follow Fianna Fail were willing to give up their lives if necessary.

"Fianna Fail and this country have faced far bigger challenges and far worse crises than the current monetary ones. The question is, are the current generation of Fianna Fail followers up to the task, do they possess the will of their forefathers, the conviction and unrelenting desire? Are they willing to take pain personally in order to achieve a greater good? Or are they to be easily swayed by the first tough calls that come their way.

"Dick Walsh once said that for members, "Fianna Fail is Ireland itself in microcosm". As we watch events unfold, we could hardly disagree" (Johnny Fallon, *Irish Independent*, 16.2.2009).

### POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

We get the government we voted for. The government is the choice of the majority—well, is it?

Just a small example! Take the 2002 General Election which resulted in a Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat coalition.

The total population in 2002 was 3,917,203.

Of those, over 2.9 million were eligible to vote in the General Election that year. However, only 1,788,985 did so.

One million voters did not vote at all.

The combined Fianna Fail/PD vote of 787,447 votes in that election represented only 27% of the will of the eligible voters.

Another way of putting it is that 73% of the electorate did not agree to be governed by a Fianna Fail/PD coalition.

In effect, the coalition reflected the will of only 20% of the total population when it was elected.

Put another way, only one in five people in Ireland agreed.

So 3,138,000 citizens who wanted no hand or part of that government had to like it or lump it?

### SEANAD EIREANN

Seanad Eireann, the Senate or secondary house of the Oireachtas as it is formally described is nothing more than a political dosshouse and that's stating it mildly.

It was another imposition from the Empire intended to placate Unionist interests in the new Free State. Its function and powers were modelled on the House of Lords.

Eamon de Valera summed its effectiveness up in 1928:

"We think the proper thing to do is to end the Senate and not attempt to mend it. It is costly, and we do not see any useful

continued on page 19

## BALLOT continued

attended the launch.

"Dr. McDaid admitted that 'frictions' remain with the party ever since the return of the Blaney organisation to the fold almost three years ago" (*Donegal News*, 27.4.2009).

Clonakilty in West Cork has seen the resignation of four officers of the local cumann.

Four Fianna Fail candidates who were selected to contest seats on Clonakilty Town Council resigned prior to this month's elections.

The four candidates withdrew their names from the race as a direct result of the 'parachuting' of a fifth candidate, Anne Cullinane, on to the team by Fianna Fail headquarters. Ms Cullinane is a step-daughter of the party's Cork South West sitting TD, Christy O'Sullivan.

Former Fianna Fail Mayor of Clonakilty, Jer White, spoke passionately about the long tradition of Fianna Fail in the town, the loyalty of past and present members, and said it was a very sad day for local politics, for local democracy and for Clonakilty town.

In the north of Cork county, John Murphy, Fianna Fail's longest serving councillor in Fermoy, has decided to run as an Independent despite being nominated as a Fianna Fail party candidate. He has served 30 years on Fermoy Town Council.

A battle is currently raging in the town over the setting up of a second Fianna Fail cumann—the proposed cumann was recently ruled out of order by Fianna Fail headquarters because of a procedural infringement.

In Sligo, former Fianna Fail members Michael Clarke and Tommy Cummins will both run as Independents.

In the Ballymahon area of County Longford, John Nolan and Mark Casey and former Councillor Brian Lynch in the Granard area have flown the Fianna Fail coop and are standing as Independent.

In Dingle/Daingean Ui Chuis, John Hanifan has left the party after over 30 years membership and is running for Labour.

At the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis held in March last, a motion to abolish the new centralised interview selection process was carried unanimously and then a 'referral back' was put in, which has caused no end of discontent among cumann members.

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"Over two thousand years the myth has arisen that the bureaucracy in the centre knows how to run the affairs of a world-wide institution. The more I see of it the more I attribute to chance—or the Holy Ghost." *Bob Santamaria*.  
~~~~~

The 2004 local elections were Fianna Fail's worst ever result, and the party failed to win Council seats in 16 local election wards—the first time in the State's history that the party had failed to win representation in every ward.

A similar set-back this month would be really serious, and unprecedented!. Fianna Fail always come back but a substantial loss of seats at these elections, two consecutive reverses, would have to set the alarm bells ringing. Fianna Fail's problems also seem to coincide with the electorates loss of faith in the democratic process itself.

A small qualification : Fianna Fail will probably avoid carnage in the local elections, simply because of the multi-member seat configuration and their hardcore vote. After that, Fine Gael and Labour might start taking seriously the merits of single seat wards and constituencies following polling day—but don't draw your breath!

### TIME-SERVING POLITICIANS!

One of the most astute and streetwise of the old Fianna Fail organisation is Ned O'Keeffe, the party TD for Cork East, and now a surprise runner for the South Ireland European constituency, along with sitting member, Brian Crowley. With only three seats, this could be the "*mother of all political battles*". But it is Ned O'Keeffe's thoughts on contemporary politics that bear out the concerns of many party political activists.

"Fianna Fail Cork East TD, Ned O'Keeffe, has said ministers are now more concerned about their pensions and salaries than the national interest.

"Speaking on *Newstalk* yesterday Deputy O'Keeffe said: "The problem with the party now is that it has gone down to money, pensions and salaries, if that is more important than the national interest that is regrettable. It is all about getting a job, getting a pension and getting a big salary and status. It is not in the national interest as it should be", he said" (*Evening Echo*, Cork, 15.11.2008).

"He said there were far too many chairmen in Government. "I think we have 21 committees and they are overlapping all over the place and there is a huge cost factor there. We have 21 ministers of state, what are they doing I often wonder. I was one myself and did not have an awful lot to do. There is need for reform here"."

### FIANNA FAIL—THE LIBERAL PARTY

Fianna Fáil has officially joined the Liberal group in Europe.

Fianna Fail MEPs are upset by the move, however, as for the past five years Ireland South MEP Brian Crowley has been the co-President of the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) group and a

big number of its staff, including its Secretary General, has been Irish.

But the UEN is unlikely to survive after June's elections with the decision by the British Conservatives to quit the European People's Party and form their own group in the parliament.

Many are predicting that the next European Parliament will continue to have the two large groups, the centre right EPP and the Socialists at its core, but the usual batch of smaller groups will be composed of MEPs of more extreme right and left.

At least with Fianna Fail safely in out of the cold with the Liberals, the party is less likely to find itself in a group with Libertas or the Tories simply to qualify for status and funding.

Euro candidate Ned O'Keeffe said he was "*shocked*" to see fellow party MEP Brian Crowley still expressing opposition to the party's move to join the liberal group in the European Parliament.

But Taoiseach Brian Cowen went over Crowley's head to negotiate FF's entry into the vastly more influential, European Liberal Democrat party (ELDR)—the third largest political group in Europe.

Mr. O'Keeffe has joined Mr. Crowley on the Fianna Fail ticket in Ireland South. Mr. O'Keeffe says Fianna Fail's decision to join the liberals is an important move and dismissed Mr. Crowley's stance.

"I'm delighted Fianna Fail is joining that group. We will be removed from any taints from that UEN group," he said.

Mr. Crowley has expressed concerns about Fianna Fail's stance on issues, such as abortion, being compromised by joining the liberals.

But Mr. Cowen has firmly dismissed this suggestion and says Fianna Fail will retain its policy position in these moral areas.

Mr. Crowley, the sitting Munster MEP, said he had no comment about Mr. O'Keeffe's views.

"No. I always knew Ned was a great liberal," he joked.

Fianna Fail won't be joining the ELDR in the European Parliament until after the European elections.

### THE EUROPEAN LIBERALS

The European Liberals have launched their manifesto for the European elections and included Fianna Fáil on a 700-strong list of candidates.

Liberals President Annemie Neyts stated: "*We are happy that an important party like Fianna Fáil has found us sufficiently attractive to join us*", at the launch of the Liberals' manifesto, which prioritises 15 key issues for the electoral campaign.

The Liberal manifesto includes several points that may cause some unease in

continued on page 20

## BONUS continued

Recently, in a submission on Local Government reform, the Councillors proposed salaries of at least €50,000 a year and State pensions as well as office accommodation, secretarial assistance and financial resources.

In 2007, the cost of representation by our 883 councillors amounted to €29 million. The average sum received by an individual, including the representative payment was in excess of €33,000. The highest-earning councillor received €80,000.

Councillors who fail to get re-elected in this month's local elections will share a bumper pay-off worth more than €10 million and will still be free to contest future local elections.

The country's cash-strapped 34 county and city councils made provision for the new 'retirement gratuities' in their budgets for the Local Elections.

The payout of €10 million could be more than three times what the former Minister for the Environment Dick Roche estimated would be the cost of the scheme when he announced it in December 2006.

Figures revealed by the *Irish Independent* last year showed that councillors now take home more than the average industrial income in wages, allowances and expenses, with the average councillor receiving over €33,300 in 2007.

### REVENUE WARNING

Local politicians have been warned by the Revenue that they face being taxed on their expenses amid ever soaring costs for hard-pressed taxpayers.

The country's part-time politicians are entitled to claim thousands of Euro each year for a range of ad hoc expenses—including travel and subsistence for conferences, foreign trips and training courses—under expense allowances approved by the Revenue in 2006.

Under the retirement gratuity scheme, Councillors who resign, retire, or lose their seat are entitled to a retirement payment, which goes to a dependent in the event of death in service. Some long-serving councillors who bow out this summer will be entitled to lump sums of over €30,000.

### ECONOMICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Authorities are owed a staggering €271 million in unpaid waste and water charges, development levies and litter and parking fines.

A new crackdown on offenders is promised after City and County Councils saw their funding slashed in the toughest Budgets in years.

Councils are now employing debt collectors to chase developers who owe

€130 million in levies and businesses which owe €77 million in unpaid water charges.

Local Authority tenants owe over €33 million in unpaid housing rents, with Councils owed €28.7 million in unpaid bin charges. Over €1.5 million is owed in unpaid litter and parking fines.

A survey of local authorities found:

\* One developer owes €813,000 to Monaghan County Council in unpaid levies;

\* Some 173 are being taken to court in Wexford over the unpaid charges which are used to pay for roads, footpaths and water services;

Dublin City is owed the most (€55.25 million), followed by South Dublin (€33.35 million), Fingal (€33.215 million) and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (€33.04 million).

Cork County Council is owed over €15 million, while Limerick City is owed over €4 million. Wexford County Council is owed almost €24.3 million, while Kerry County Council is owed €5.4 million.

### CANDIDATE SPENDING

Spending limits for the local elections were enforced from 7th April 2009.

Environment Minister John Gormley signed the polling day order for the June 5th local elections, which for the first time limits the amount of money that candidates may spend pursuing their political ambitions to a maximum of €15,000.

The order also imposed a restriction on when posters could be put up. Candidates were not allowed to place posters until 6th May 30 days in advance of polling day, and will have to remove them seven days after polls close.

The spending limit comes because of concerns about excessive amounts of money being spent on elections.

At least one candidate in the 2004 local elections in Dublin spent more than €80,000 on the campaign.

For the 34 County and City councils, a sliding scale will apply, with four separate spending limits, based on the population within each individual electoral area.

A top limit of €15,000 will apply in the most populated areas, with limits of €13,000, €11,500 and €9,750 to apply to candidates in other areas.

A standard spending limit of €7,500 will apply to all 80 of the borough and town councils.

### VOTING REGISTER SCANDAL

Major inaccuracies in the electoral register were revealed in a Dail report and weren't corrected in time for the elections and the forthcoming referendum on Lisbon later this year.

Most parts of the country have more people on the register than are eligible to

vote, according to a study by the Houses of the Oireachtas which shows problems in numerous constituencies across the country.

The figures showing the problem in every part of the country are contained in constituency profiles developed by the Oireachtas research unit and are based on Census 2006 Figures.

Before the 2007 General Election, the Department of the Environment spent €6 million for the upkeep and maintenance of the register and this sum was matched by local authority funding. Another €1 million was spent on a high profile advertising campaign.

Environment Minister Gormley (Green Party) is planning to set up an Electoral Commission, which would be responsible for compiling the register nationally.

Mr. Gormley's spokesman accepted there were problems with the register but pointed to the planned reforms.

"Clearly there is still a gap. The fundamental issue of a more effective way to compile the register lies within the establishment of an Electoral Commission. The register could be better," he said.

Oddly enough, the disgraceful exclusion of people who should be on the register is not the chief problem.

Everywhere, people who have died or moved away from the relevant district have remained on the lists, often in their thousands.

The worst case is the Donegal South West constituency, where the proportion of excess registrations is 17 per cent.

The worst for exclusion is Dublin South East, with a register 8 per cent under the population figure.

In both instances, the opportunities for fraud are obvious. In tight races, it could affect election results and even the line-up of incoming governments. The state of registers is an indictment of lack of care for democracy.

### FIANNA FAIL—PARTY MAYHEM

In recent months, mayhem has broken out in several electoral areas approaching the Euro and Local Elections on 5th June 2009, even the Taoiseach's own constituency Laois/Offaly has not been spared.

Three Fianna Fail members have chosen to run as independents candidates because they were not selected.

"Dr. James McDaid, TD told the *Donegal News* that party officials in Dublin were ruining Fianna Fail in Donegal North-East. His comments come just days after Minister for Education Batt O'Keeffe attended the official Fianna Fail election launch for the local elections in Letterkenny.

"However, neither Deputy McDaid nor any of his loyal band of supporters...

continued on page 21

## BALLOT continued

and 74 per cent of Czechs say they aren't interested while 61 per cent of Irish citizens say they were interested in the upcoming elections.

Irish people are more likely to vote in the elections than most Europeans, with 45 per cent of citizens saying they would probably vote in June compared to an EU average of 34 per cent. But this would represent a sharp fall from the last European election in 2004 when turnout was 59 per cent.

Even before the Eurobarometer results were known the EU institutions launched new initiatives to spur voter interest such as broadcasting adverts on MTV and using the internet to woo young voters.

The survey highlights a lack of knowledge about the fundamental workings of the parliament among many citizens. For example, just over half of people (53 per cent) say they know the parliament is directly elected by the citizens of all member states while the same number (53 per cent) say they know that EU laws are decided jointly by the parliament and member states. The awareness of co-decision was least known in Ireland, where just 43 per cent of people said they knew laws were agreed jointly with the parliament.

The survey shows a drop in public support for three EU institutions—the parliament, commission and the European Central Bank.

### IRISH VOTERS

A large proportion of the Irish electorate will vote, certainly compared with elections elsewhere in Europe. In 2004, turnout was 59%, just 3% lower than the proportion voting in the historical 2008 US presidential election.

Fianna Fail needs these elections like a hole in the head.

There were no Local Elections for eight years in the 1990s; did anyone give a damn? Indeed, it may come as a surprise to many that local elections were postponed here on 15 occasions over the previous 76 years.

The Twentieth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1999 now provides constitutional recognition of the role of Local Government and that local elections are held at least every five years.

Although directly-elected Mayors have been promised for many years (i.e. Mayors which the electorate would have the chance to choose for themselves), it is still the councillors who pick a Mayor from among themselves. In Cork, we have a "You step in, I step out arrangement" between Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour—or as Councillor Mick Barry calls it: "*pass the parcel between the pact parties*".

But with so little power, they have to be seen to do something.

In recent years, more and more power has been taken from elected Councillors and given to the Management of Local Authorities—in particular, the setting of refuse charges, and the rates charged to local businesses by the local authority.

But, as two academics from University College Cork, Liam Weeks and Aodh Quinlivan, point out in their new book: *All Politics is Local: A Guide to Local Elections in Ireland*:

"... local councils here compare pretty poorly to local authorities abroad.

"Local authorities in Ireland have no role in education or transport or tourism or health or policing. All of that would be considered standard fare abroad.

"Nor do they have general competence, where they are allowed to manage their own affairs. We operate under the *ultra vires* system, where you cannot do anything unless it's prescribed.

"They have no autonomy. They are financially centralised. They do not have their own tax base. Local authorities still need the permission of the relevant minister for many things. There is a begging-bowl mentality."

Quinlivan believes the system needs reform and that proper financing will be the litmus test.

Relying on Central Government and on dwindling development levies is not satisfactory, he says.

"While nobody wants to have a lot of local taxes, people across Europe are staggered that we are not paying for domestic water. Local authorities are struggling for cash and there is a lack of connection with citizens as well. If they were to pay tax to the local authority, and seeing it come back in services, it would be helpful."

Following this month's Local Elections, Councillors will face an even more straitened financial circumstances after Local Government funding was slashed in the recent Budget. "*Since October, £131 million has been slashed from the Local Government Fund which helps pay for Council services*" (*Irish Independent*, 14.4.2009).

The ultimate power to vote on the Budget still lies with the elected Councillors, but it is merely a rubber-stamp job.

### FIRST LOCAL ELECTIONS

On April 6th last, County Councils across the country celebrated the 110th anniversary of the first local elections held in Ireland.

The local elections of 6th April 1899, also marked the first time women in Ireland could vote.

"The 1899 elections brought politics

into every household in the country for the first time," said Liam Kenny, director of the Association of County and City Councils. "The first Irish local elections were called by Westminster to deal with the unwieldy and unrepresentative actions of the Grand Juries and Poor Law Guardians who had governed locally up to this."

The formation of elected County Councils extended the voting franchise to people who owned a minimum of property as well as granting voting rights for women; however, they had to be over 30 years of age and head of the household.

Local democracy has since degenerated into near farce, particularly with the decision by Taoiseach Jack Lynch to abolish Domestic Rates in 1978 which starved Local Authorities of their main source of revenue. The Lynch decision was probably the greatest single and most irresponsible blow to Local Government, a fact glossed over by many commentators who are still in awe of 'Saint Jack'.

Rates on domestic property still pertain in the Six Counties.

Another aspect of the democratic process has been raised by former Fianna Fail TD for Cork North-Central, Danny Wallace:

"One surprising aspect of this election so far is the small number of candidates prepared to put their name before the electorate—only nine candidates for six seats in the South-West ward and just 11 candidates for seven seats in the South-East.

"In the North-West, there's only eight candidates for four seats.

"When I first stood for the Corporation in 1979, 14 or 15 candidates per ward was the norm. I've been looking at the record for the 1999 elections, and there were 14 and 15 candidates per ward then as well.

"There's a trend there, with less people making themselves available, and we have to ask why" (*Evening Echo*, Cork, 23.5.2009).

### AND NOW—

#### THE PERKS—SORRY, GRATUITIES!

In 2002, when the Exchequer was awash with money, the Government introduced a "*representative payment*" of €16,600 a year for local Councillors. It wasn't a great deal of money. The payment—and a related retirement bonus—was designed to bring new blood into local politics and to mark an end to Oireachtas members holding Council seats. But it also signalled a transition from the concept of the volunteer local representative who engaged in politics for altruistic purposes to a paid representative. Since then, the impetus towards salaried full-time local politicians has gathered pace.

continued on page 22



*Then keep your heads, I say, my boys; your comrades in the town  
 Will help you yet to win a vote and put your tyrants down.  
 Throw your old guns aside, my boys; the ballot is a thing  
 They did not have to reckon with when George the Fourth was king.  
 The ballot is the thing, my boys, the ballot is the thing  
 Will show these men how long it is since George the Fourth was king.*  
 (William Kidston, Queensland Labour man, 1890s.)

## The Ballot Is the Thing?

"When Macdonell stood unsuccessfully for the Barwon {1901, New South Wales} two men rode 70 miles to vote for him. Even more dedicated was the aged bushman who staggered into an outback hut during one election; penniless, hungry, weak and ill, he was desperate to get to a polling booth and vote for Longwell. 'I want to give Hughie a vote', he said, 'I suppose it will be my last'. Sadly, his quest failed, as that night he died" (*The Light on the Hill, The Australian Labor Party 1891, 1991*, Ross McMullin, Oxford, 1991).

The 2009 European and Local Elections take place on 5th June 2009—on that day people will go to the polls to elect 1,627 councillors to the 34 city and county councils, five borough councils and 75 town councils in the State and 12 members to the European Parliament.

"It is a cliché of Irish political comment over the years that our elected leaders are often poor quality but our senior civil servants are top class. Yet the two groups have such similar backgrounds that they are almost indistinguishable, except that one is elected, the other appointed.

"Perhaps it's the political system and even democracy itself that holds back our politicians from displaying their true talents whereas the unelected officials in the "permanent Government" are not encumbered in the same way by the claims and clamour of the public" (Deaglan de Breadun, *Irish Times*, 7.2.2009).

Surely it is about much more than that, in reality power resides with the bureaucracy which too frequently makes its bargains with economic pressure groups and which is subject to merely marginal control by political parties.

Was this ever more evident than in the present controversy over the justice and compensation claims for child abuse victims?

Modern sociology has dispelled the egalitarian ideology of earlier times. It tells us that all societies, whether democratic or otherwise, are conducted by elites which exert hegemony over the mass. It is not a view of things which we care for, but it is the prevailing view of these times. And its implication is that, in certain situations, majorities don't count because they are only waiting to be hegemonised. Majorities only count when the active minority has established a functioning system, and the different tendencies within it have agreed that there is so little at issue between them that the majority can be allowed to choose between them" Brendan Clifford, *Labour & Trade Union Review*, August, 2004.

Less than a third of European citizens say they will definitely vote in the European elections, prompting fears of a record low turnout in June. Fianna Fail will be only praying that a similar turn-out

will happen here.

An EU-wide survey published on April 14th last, shows 28 per cent of EU citizens saying they would definitely vote in the elections while a further 6 per cent say they would probably vote. British voters are the least likely in Europe to turn out, with just 21 per cent saying they would definitely or probably vote compared to 30 per cent who say they definitely would not vote.

The results contained in the latest Eurobarometer survey are causing real concern in Brussels that voter turnout could slump to a record low. Since the first direct European parliament elections in 1979, voter turnout has steadily declined. In the last elections in 2004, just 45.5 per cent of citizens cast a ballot, compared to 63 per cent in 1979. The survey says previous research indicates that only people who say they will definitely or probably vote in elections are likely to show up at the polls.

The reasons for not voting are: not knowing enough about the role of the parliament (64 per cent); thinking voting will not change anything (62 per cent); not being sufficiently informed to vote (59 per cent); believing that the parliament does not deal with problems that concern them (55 per cent); and being against Europe, the EU or European construction (20 per cent).

Young people are the least likely to vote in the elections, with 27 per cent of students saying they definitely wouldn't vote in June. People who have gained a third-level educational qualification are among the most likely to vote, with 40 per cent of those surveyed saying they would definitely vote.

Some 53 per cent of EU citizens say they are not interested in the European elections, compared to 44 per cent who say they are. Some 79 per cent of Latvians

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