

IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW

March 2009

Vol.24, No.3 ISSN 0790-7672

and *Northern Star* incorporating *Workers' Weekly* Vol.23 No.3 ISSN 954-5891

Globalism

Globalism is not a policy but a fact, Bill Clinton said when he was President, laying down a policy.

He also defined Democracy as Liberty plus free markets. Or was it that he defined Liberty as Democracy plus free markets? Does it matter which it was? The essential thing was free markets.

Freedom is an absence of restraint and obstacles relative to something. Strictly speaking it has no meaning in itself. In the matter of Globalism it is in the first place freedom for US capital to be invested anywhere in the world. Next it is freedom of British capital investment. And finally Europe joined the game.

Europe and the US obstruct each other's freedom to some extent, but they are agreed in demanding freedom of economic action in the rest of the world.

The Celtic Tiger is (was?) a phenomenon of the US/EU freedom which dominated the world situation after 1990. Its tigerish qualities were those of a pet in a playground. It flourished briefly in a world which it had done nothing to create.

Ireland developed economically for about half a century through its own resourcefulness in a world which did it no favours. It had a slightly protected market for industrial products at home, but its economy was chiefly agricultural and that had to function in the free world market in agricultural produce which Britain had arranged for itself as a purchaser. Then it gained access to the protected agricultural market of the EU before Europe became globalist. Finally it held a very favoured position in the US/UK/EU development of total Globalism.

What else could it have done? Utopia arrived and offered itself and would not be refused.

But now it transpires that Utopia is subject to the trade cycle of capitalism too.

There was never any real doubt that it was. But how could "any ordinary person—any ordinary business person" (to quote a Labour spokesman on RTE radio recently) take account of the inevitable bust when the boom is going full blast? *Gather ye rosebuds while ye may* is the operative rule in globalist capitalism in its heartlands. If you stop too soon, you lose. If you stop too late, you lose. You must stop at the right time. And the right time is only known after the event, when it is too late.

In pre-Utopian days, when banks were backward and almost parochial, you could make a bit of money and save it and reckon on it holding its value. You could gather some rosebuds and put them by. What a marvel that seems now! Today the rest of the verse applies:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

(Robert Herrick)

The population at large has, as never before, been drawn into the financial manipulations of capital in its Utopian phase of the last
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Cowed By EU Globalism

Brian Cowen came back from Brussels on 12th December 2008 with a package of "legal guarantees" in response to *The Statement of Concerns of the Irish People on the Treaty of Lisbon* which he had brought with him. The deal with Sarkozy was set out in the EU "Presidency Conclusions" which committed the European Council to finding a legal means to enable it, while implementing the Lisbon Treaty, to retain a Commissioner for each member state and provide "protocols" in relation to Irish neutrality, national sovereignty in the area of taxation policy, the "right to life, education and the family" and workers' rights. All of this was on condition of the Irish Government "seeking ratification of the Treaty of the Lisbon by the end of the term of the current Commission". The mechanism offered to secure these "legal guarantees", according to Sarkozy, would be legislation attached to the next enlargement Treaty, presumed to be that for Croatia in 2010 or 2011 (See *Cowen/Sarkozy Lisbon Deal: The Primacy of Politics over Legalism*, *Irish Political Review*, February 2009)

COWEN BLINDED BY EU GLOBALISM

The halt brought to EU expansionism by the Russian stand over Georgia last August and the failure of Mandelson's radical globalism to secure an international deal at the World Trade Talks (followed by Mandelson's hasty exit from the Commission) all added to an illusion of a coming change of course in Brussels. But the adamant refusal of the Government to meet SIPTU demands during the last Lisbon Treaty to legislate for collective bargaining rights or to secure anything meaningful in this area under the tentative "legal guarantees" negotiated with Sarkozy point to the deeper flaw of the Irish Government's essential acceptance of the globalising agenda of Brussels and inability to see that recent events have already undermined that option.

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Labour Comment, edited by **Pat Maloney**:
Now It's Time To Fight For 'Middle Ireland'?
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fifteen or twenty years. And, now that the trade cycle of capital has bitten, we hear futile denunciations of those who were running the banks by the democracy that has been bit.

The Utopian phase of capitalism saw the invention of all sorts of ingenious new financial devices, which have now come to grief, and of a vast increase in the circulation of goods. The increase in the circulation of goods (called prosperity) did not happen despite the ingenious financial devices (which it is now tempting to call chicanery). It happened because of them.

The trade cycle is inherent in the procedure of producing goods by private enterprise for an unknown market. Production increases at an accelerating pace in response to effective demand—demand that can pay—and production meeting demand and demand meeting production have a stimulating effect on each other for a time. But the situation is necessarily uncontrolled. Lack of control is necessary to the evoking of enterprise and ingenuity. Control—at least in the kind of social and political arrangements

which we have got and which there is no realistic prospect of replacing for the time being—stifles enterprise.

So there is no way of knowing when the mutually reinforcing expansion of demand and production achieved by tricky financial devices is reaching the point of breakdown this time round. And if it could be known, what could the bankers, the businessmen and the politicians do about it? The thing is beyond the control of the politicians at that point. A particular businessman with exclusive knowledge—or who happened to guess right—could do something to the advantage of his business. But if all businessmen did it together they would only accelerate the breakdown.

As for the bankers at the cutting edge of capitalism, they have been doing reckless things with the expansion of credit for generations—for centuries—expanding the system and getting caught by it.

There was a time when it might have been meaningful to say: If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen. But today where is there to go?

Ireland has been in the thick of the globalising process for a generation, doing its utmost to expand the system both by participation and exhortation. And in recent weeks John Bruton, whom we had almost forgotten, has emerged as globalist spokesman for the EU. He propounds the only permissible cure for the crisis, which is the hair of dog—more of the same, on an expanded scale.

A decade ago there was a maverick state in Asia that refused to enter the globalist system. Dr. Mahatir in Malaysia kept up a system of controls against the operations of foreign capital, and was denounced. The Editor of the *Irish Times* devoted a number of editorials demanding the removal of this rotten apple from the barrel. The kind of language then very much in use against Haughey was directed at Mahatir—"corruption" and "crony capitalism". But a couple of years later Malaysia coped with the Asian Flu much better than other States that surrendered to propaganda against crony capitalism and went for Utopia. And we do not hear of Malaysia being a basket case today.

Protection works.

The world in its predominant US/UK/EU ideology is committed to making the world a single, uniform society. We cannot understand the attractions in this obsession. The word *peace* is usually used incoherently in connection with it. In Russian the word *mir* means both peace and the world, but the world in question seems to have been the backward village commune where there was peace.

The global village, of which there was much talk thirty years ago, is far from being a reality, and if US/EU persist in trying to realise it, there will be little peace on the way. And, if it should ever be realised, what then? The human race would be at a loose end.

Imperialism is perfected civilisation, according to Oswald Spengler in a thoughtful book written as the Great War was ending: *The Decline Of The West*. Civilisations culminate in Imperialism. Having ceased to develop internally, and to be preoccupied with their own development, they merely expand. And of course in demonstrating their power by merely expanding they must destroy civilisations which are content to live within themselves.

That pretty much describes the position of the West with relation to the rest of the world today. The rest of the world copes with this as best it can, and parts of it seem to be coping in ways that appear ominous for the West.

Not many generations ago Ireland was "*The Alien of the West*". Is it now absolutely aligned with the West in what the West is committed to doing to the rest of the world? ●

The march no one thought would ever happen. On 21st February 210,000 Trade Unionists paraded through Dublin demanding that the Social Partnership be restored and be the basis for the solution of Ireland's economic problems. There was anger, there was gaiety, there was all sorts. But above all there was an environment of common sense. People expressed the thought: "OK we've had a good few years. Now we're in serious trouble. The burden of dealing with the trouble must be shared reasonably equally."

The single most amazing thing about Saturday's Irish Congress of Trade Unions demonstration is that it was a popular mass demonstration demanding the restoration of Social Partnership! The manifesto of the demonstration was the 10-point programme of Congress for a Social Solidarity Pact. Two weeks ago on radio, the President of the Irish National Teachers Organisation, John Carr, said that the Construction Industry Federation had walked out of partnership, the employers' organisation IBEC was agitating in a way designed to collapse the agreement system to exclude Trade Unions from the government of the state, and that Government had walked away from it—the "only man left standing on the ground of partnership", he said, were the Unions.

In the mid-1980s the Trade Unions looked into the abyss—would Ireland go the Thatcherite route? This was the tendency emerging under Garret FitzGerald in 1986, and Alan Duke's "Tallaght Strategy" was proposed as a policy of siding with what he presumed would be a Tory-type regime of 'reform' under Haughey. But Haughey had been talking with Helmut Schmidt, and told his Union friends that the Thatcherite way was not the only option. There was this continental way called Social Partnership. The ICTU responded positively (there was some solid history informing this response)—through the work of Peter Cassells and others—and we got Social Partnership with a Trade Union movement keenly aware that it was an alternative chess game version of class struggle.

It has often been doubted—despite the ringing endorsement of massive majorities of Trade Unionists voting in secret ballot on every Agreement since—that workers give two damns about social partnership. Saturday's demonstration gave the lie to that.

A Government with an ounce of sense would take advantage and put it up to the employers to grow up and bring useful suggestions to the conference table. Or,

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Israel Admits Its War On Gaza Was Unprovoked

On More4 News on 9th January, Israeli spokesman, Mark Regev, was forced to admit that from 19th June until 4th November 2008, during the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, brokered by Egypt, *Hamas fired no rockets or mortars out of Gaza into Israel, absolutely none.* A video clip of this is available on YouTube <<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=SILJxPTqjAM>>.

The More4 News story <<http://link.brightcove.com/services/link/bcpid1554364155/bclid1551132385/bctid6805229001>> demonstrated the effectiveness of the ceasefire in reducing the threat to Israeli civilians to almost nil, despite the fact that Israel failed to honour its commitment in the ceasefire agreement to lift its economic strangulation of Gaza. Israel torpedoed the ceasefire on the evening of 4th November (when the world was watching the election of Barack Obama) by its military action in Gaza, contrary to the terms of the agreement—and, by so doing, increased the threat to its citizens and provoked a '*casus belli*' for its assault on Gaza on 27th December.

A Fact Sheet by me on these matters is available from the *Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign* (contact info@ipsc.ie). It is based on publicly available information from the Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

Might I also draw your attention to two articles by me also for the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign on Israel's assault on Gaza, which have been published in the *Irish Times*:-

(1) *Israel broke ceasefire by killing six* (30 December 2008)

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2008/1230/1230581467173.html> <<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2008/1230/1230581467173.html>>

(2) *Is Israel right to try to destroy Hamas?* (5 January 2009)

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2009/0105/1230936654232.html> (This article provided the No side in a debate question set by the paper: scroll down for my NO answer)

David Morrison

Dr. Goebbels Recalled

It was reported in last month's *Gaza Notes* that Aengus O Snodaigh said the Nazi Goebbels would have been proud of the propagandist defence of Israeli war crimes in Gaza by Ambassador Dr. Zion Evrony. The Ambassador had said: "*Try to imagine Dublin with 8,000 missile attacks day after day, night after night*" (Ir. Exam. 13.1.09). The clear meaning of those words is that Israel was subject to 8,000 missile attacks on a daily basis. But, later, in *Blind Eye Turned To Israel's Plight*, the same Ambassador gave different figures:

"Should Israel have behaved like Hamas and launched one rocket/mortar for each of the 8,000 launched at southern Israel over eight years?" (Irish Times 20.2.09).

Evrony here gives the lie to his own earlier propaganda: It was not 8,000 attacks every day, but launches over a period of 8 years that he is talking about. A very different situation.

A second issue is the Israeli claim to have acted in self-defence. As David Morrison points out above, the 2008 Ceasefire with Hamas had stopped rocket attacks, until Israel broke it deliberately in November 2008.

It is clear that Israel wanted to create an accomplished fact in Gaza before its own General Election, and before President Obama took power, to boost the electoral chances of an unpopular Government. But all the death and devastation was for nothing: the parties primarily responsible were not rewarded by the electorate, which chose even more extreme parties!

A third issue arises: that of proportionality. Ambassador Evrony suggests that Israel's unprovoked attack on Gaza was proportionate to Hamas's earlier attacks and dismisses the idea that it should have responded on a one for one basis:

"can anybody doubt that such indiscriminate fire would have caused much larger numbers of deaths among Gaza civilians? Under international law and state practice, proportionality is not a matter of equality of numbers but a requirement that the force used does not excessively endanger civilians when eliminating a specific target" (ibid)

So, in Israeli-speak the Jewish national state used proportionate force and avoided civilian deaths. However, there are plenty of documented reports of the reverse: deliberate, destructive force being used, murder of individuals, and hate-crimes by individual soldiers.

Fourthly, Evrony suggests that the Gaza destruction was in retaliation for attacks sustained over a period of eight years. However, Israel's punishment of Gaza was ongoing. Every rocket was answered with super-kill. This was not a country that had patiently put up with 8 years of rockets and then retaliated at last. The Gaza War came out of the blue.

Goebbels is put to shame in this defence of the indefensible.

Yet, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Fianna Fail's Dr. Michael Woods, rather than admonishing the Ambassador for giving the Committee misleading evidence, has criticised TD Aengus O Snodaigh of Sinn Fein for using "*inappropriate*" language.

Gerald Kaufman, a long-standing supporter of Israel, who thought the Zionist project was something different from what it turned out to be, went even further than O Snodaigh. In the House of Commons he described the Israeli operation as Nazi and said he would not let his mother's death in Auschwitz be used as cover for it (15.1.09)

EU Globalism

continued

In the coming months in the run-up to the elections to the European Parliament we might yet see the emergence in Europe of a countervailing political agenda. That agenda would be one that would seek to recover a space and project for Europe, that of a "*moralised social order*" as envisioned by Jacques Delors and those who worked with him on that project more than twenty years ago. That would be the only counter to the fanatical pursuit of globalisation of the Commission and the European Court of Justice.

EUROPEAN EMPLOYERS' OFFENSIVE

It looks like the labour dispute in Britain at the Total refinery in Lindsey, near Grimsby, Lincolnshire is over—for the moment. The dispute, over the hiring policies of an on-site Italian (actually Sicilian) contractor IREM, is simply the latest evidence of what has been a decades-long project by European business, to undo the post-war Western European social settlement, the 'European social model' as it came to be known, particularly during the years of the Delors Presidency of the European Community.

The employers' project, a grand and visionary one—if from their point of view—was not particularly hidden although it was not too loudly trumpeted either. Its culmination in a sense was the European law, the *Posted Workers Directive*, in force since December 1996. At the outset the significance of the Directive was perhaps not fully appreciated among the general public and ordinary Trade Unionists. Indeed the professed and purported rationale for the law was to counter the possibility of 'social dumping' in a single labour market. With the passage of time, however, its importance and the oppositeness of the alleged intended effect has come to be appreciated—particularly after the eastward expansion of the EU from the mid 'noughties' and the associated opening up of the entire EU labour market under the free movement rules of the single market. Perhaps the vocal supporters of the European social model did not appreciate what was afoot either. What was under way was nothing less than, in the Irish and British contexts, the restoration of the Taff Vale decision of 1900-01 and in the wider western European context, the undermining of the complex of institutional arrangements, understandings and laws underpinning the systems of social cohesion, Union recognition and collective bargaining.

ESSENCE OF TAFF VALE

In Taff Vale a British court upheld the appeal of an employer (the Taff Vale Railway Company), a private rail operator,

against the actions of a Union (the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, ASRS) in dispute, that the act of striking and picketing was a conspiracy and an act of combination. The issue was Union recognition. So, under the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875 it was held that a Union could besued for damages caused by the actions of its officials in industrial disputes. The court's decision was upheld on appeal to the House of Lords. This decision put a coach and four through collective organisation and industrial action; significantly led to the growth of the British Labour Party; and to the action of a Liberal Government in overturning the effect of the decision through enacting the Trades Disputes Act, 1906, the basis for Trades Union action and collective bargaining for the rest of the century (although some aspects of the legislation were severely curtailed through the Thatcher years, especially as regards secondary action and picketing, balloting and so on).

The so-called 'voluntary' system, however, largely remained intact in both Britain and Ireland. What the 1906 Act did was to put Trade Union action beyond the law on combinations and conspiracy (as 'discovered' by the courts): 1906 was a pragmatic response by government from the societal point of view to the determination by the courts that collective worker behaviour was as much subject to the force of the law as any other act of combination or 'conspiracy'.

THATCHER'S ASSAULT ON EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

The idea that collective organisation and action by workers is—again from the societal point of view—different from other forms of combination became, particularly after WWII, a central plank in the organisation of both the economy and society throughout western Europe. In Britain it was one of the foundations of 'Butskellism' as it came to be called, in Germany a plank of the post-war social market model, and so on. It wasn't all plain sailing, not least in Britain where the Trade Unions contrasted 'voluntarism' and 'free collective bargaining' on the one hand with, on the other, what was implicit in the consensual system as it was evolving: the restrictions, as they argued, of a broad social model of collective functioning represented by 'social contracts', 'social compacts', 'prices and incomes policy', In Place of Strife, the Bullock proposals on industrial democracy and so on, on 'free' collective bargaining.

From the point of view of society in the round, Thatcher saw all of the ensuing chaos of Trade Union (and Labour Party) policy generated by such a perspective as destructive of stability and offering nothing useful in the alternative on offer. Imbued with the market ideology of the Institute

of Economic Affairs, Sir Keith Joseph and ever more confident in her own instincts, she moved: the class stalemate inbuilt in the ideological stance of Unions and Labour simply had to be smashed and eggs broken.

There was no 'need' for what followed other than the necessity to deal with the refusal of the 'left' (whatever the term means and if you could call it that anyway) to deal with the reality of the exercise of power to which it had become party but refused to accept in its consequences: stability and progress, sense in place of unending and insoluble strife. None of this is to dispute or contest the rightness of many individual causes or disputes of the Thatcher and earlier years but in the round a game was thrown and lost.

HAUGHEY'S OPTIONS

In Ireland things were moving in a different direction, if at times fitfully. From a much weaker position organised labour was moving towards a system of national collective bargaining with over time a widening of the scope, the agenda, of that bargaining: its culmination was in the shift towards Social Partnership that was proposed and secured by Haughey with the Congress in the midst of profound financial and economic crisis in the mid 1980s (yes, it's that long ago). Haughey talked with Helmut Schmidt to get at the bottom of the European "*social model*" as an alternative to the Thatcherite solution to the social and economic crisis of Britain. Congress took the offer and thus was born the system of Social Partnership.

COUNTER-OFFENSIVE: THE EUROPEAN ROUND TABLE

In Europe, the continent, there was yet another story: the emergence in the 1980s of a new breed of business leader, who saw and decried 'euro-sclerosis'—slow if steady economic growth, improvement in general living standards, low unemployment, social advance, a stable rural society and economy (under the CAP) and periodic fiscal and currency crises (largely precipitated by US dollar crises, much to do with the consequences of the Vietnam War and its aftermath). They decried all of this, secretly in their quasi-masonic club, the European Round Table, and as they looked to Thatcher's Britain with its privatisations (BA, British Gas, BP, British Telecom and so on); to the likes of the Finnish head of Nokia Kari Kairamo as he led a lumber company into the telecommunications revolution and such as Carlo De Benedetti with his equally radical transformation of Olivetti.

These new gods of enterprise saw the holding back of the development of the Single Market (actually constitutionally enshrined in the Treaty of Rome) in favour of maintaining a socially cohesive, very much nationally-based system as

'sclerotic'—whether through the market's exclusion from vast National and Local government systems of public provision such as telecoms., utilities such as electricity, gas and water or in respect of wider public provision (such as health, transport and so on). They had their icons in the likes of De Benedetti and Kairamo—and others. And they had their inside supporters in the Commission—in the shape of Lord Cockfield, Leon Brittan and Peter Sutherland among others. They had, and continue to have, their agenda and mission:

"European industry cannot flourish unless it can compete in a global economy. This capacity to compete cannot be determined solely by the efforts of individual companies. The prevailing economic and social policy framework is crucially important and must be flexible enough to adapt swiftly to changes in global conditions" (taken from the Round Table website).

Many of these people had, in today's terms and language, a globalist agenda. They had the mantra of 'growth' which they opposed to 'sclerosis'—which was an internal project or agenda, dealing with Europe, to break the consensus model. But there was a wider agenda, including a strong Atlanticist streak, evident in involvement in bodies such as the secretive Bilderberg Group and Trilateral Commission. This was the genesis of 'globalisation'.

THE "SINGLE MARKET" PROJECT

What has this to do with Lindsey Oil Refinery? This much: first the single marketers set about putting the constitutional aspiration on a firm statutory footing through the Single European Act and the Single Market programme. This pushed agendas such as open public procurement—the idea that public services are not providers of such services in their own right but rather the purchasers of various components of provision from the private markets, or if they are not then in law they should be. This agenda has underpinned the pursuit both of outright privatisations and also outsourcing and sub-contracting by public providers of services. The distinction between public and private services has largely been dismantled in law and in fact. Thus companies, such as Violia of France, have taken over the job of public environmental services throughout much of Europe, as well as operating public transport systems (buses, trams and trains) and so on. Workforces disrupted by such tendering and contracting systems have been provided with the figment of 'transfer of engagement' rules—but these only cover the immediate transfer (from public to private employer). They do not secure Union recognition, collective bargaining rights or ongoing terms and conditions (beyond the immediate transfer period).

There is also the slowly-being-dismembered concept of 'services of general interest' (services covering such essential daily realities as energy, telecommunications, transport, radio and television, postal services, schools, health and social services, etc). On the one hand the concept of *service of general interest* was supposed to professedly give comfort to old-fashioned believers in public provision, whereas in fact the agenda is one of the attrition of public provision through further outsourcing and 'procurement' and ultimately in alliance with the US, the extension of this entire model to the rest of the world, through the Doha (Free Trade) Round.

HOW CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HELD THE GROUND

To an extent people like Delors, Mitterand and Kohl (and Haughey) went along with much of this over an extended period, but on strictly defined terms. The counter to liberalisation (within the EU) would be the strengthening of the 'European social model', cohesion, and none of them seem to have believed in the rampant market system. Even the Christian Democrats (or rather, particularly the Christian Democrats) of the old school had little time at all for such an agenda—as evidenced in Eduard Balladur's remark during the 1990s (as an RPR prime Minister in cohabitation with Socialist Mitterand as President), "*What is the market? It is the law of the jungle. And what is civilization? It is the struggle against nature.*"

There is a summation of Delors' mode of thought, contained in *Jacques Delors And European Integration* (George Ross, Polity Press, 1995):

"The 'Delorist' vision saw the market as an indispensable allocator of resources... and source of economic dynamism. The market by itself, could not, however, guarantee equity, a moralised social order, or full economic success. These things depended on 'dialogue' among different groups—employers and labor in particular—to reach clearer understandings of mutual needs about what had to be done and what could be shared. Labor had a stake in economic success and thus good reasons to accept certain responsibilities. Employers had a stake in the predictability which labor's acceptance of responsibilities would bring. 'Dynamic compromise' based on persistent discussion between different groups would be the secret of success. Finally, it was not the state's job to decide for others, but to facilitate negotiations among social partners."

All of this, however, is not what our other visionaries and harbingers of a future had in mind—not at all.

**TROJAN HORSE:
THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE**
And with the passing from power of

Delors—and Mitterand, and Kohl, and indeed Haughey, what came was the market whirlwind those other visionaries sought and with the eastward expansion and the opening up of the labour market came the final push. The object was to further erode, through the *Posted Workers Directive*, the capacity of western European workers to collectively protect their pay and conditions, their standards of living and a "*moralised social order*". In true Orwellian fashion the express purport of the Directive was the opposite of the outcome in fact. Instead of being a bulwark against social dumping it has become a propagator of the phenomenon, being instrumental in the phenomenon of the 'race to the bottom'.

In the new regime, companies from wherever in the expanded EU (or from outside) could propose to, and bid for, work or contracts anywhere in the Union (under the free movement of capital rules) but also to populate these undertakings with imported workforces (from wherever they might and can find them, including their own countries of origin) with, as it has been 'discovered' by the European Court of Justice, no need and every right to ignore collective agreements and to do no more than respect minimum wage legislation—wherever that exists and at whatever level of impoverishment.

There are restrictions, such as they are, for example, that the work is seen as essentially of a temporary nature (whatever that means and which is why so many examples of the problems created turn up in construction projects). It is all in the name of, horrible term, '*flexibilisation*' of the '*European labour market*'. That is what Swedish Trade Unionists found when they tried to put a stop to it in Sweden in a case involving a Latvian company, Laval. Like the Welsh railway workers of over a century ago they found that the courts (in this case the European Court of Justice or ECJ) ruled against the actions of the Swedish Trade Unionists and upheld the employer's right to ignore Swedish collective agreements, even if legally contracted (unlike Irish and British agreements, which are normally negotiated within the 'voluntarist' system).

MYTHS OF ANTI-PROTECTIONISM

With Delors *et al* safely out of the way, the Commission and the ECJ have pursued a muscular contest: who is to be seen as the stalwart of 'free' markets and their unfettered power? There is little to choose between the two of them and the Council of Ministers—which might have been expected to do otherwise—has simply become an extension of the contest, with the European Parliament having very limited power and the system overall, consumed by the Globalisation agenda.

We are bombarded by the media and politicians with 'arguments' in favour of

this great agenda. A cloth-eared, one-eyed Broom [British Prime Minister Gordon Brown] preaches it from his political pulpit, talking rubbish about a world without borders, without countries. John Lennon may have caught the *Zeitgeist* with his world without religion but Broom is no Lennon—and this is, now, the world of the new Great Depression. And, as Larry Elliot, Economics Editor of *The Guardian*, has pointed out to deaf political ears, the 1930s was not triggered by a flight to Protectionism, rather the opposite in fact. In the 4th February edition of the paper he pointed to how the Crash was triggered by a contraction in bank credit and the money supply (much as is now happening) and "no country since the dawning of the modern age has managed to industrialise successfully without protectionism". Britain, the US, the Asian Tigers all emerged through Protectionism, he points out. He might have added Germany—and indeed Ireland of the 1930s.

GUARDIAN RAISES SPECTRE OF "MOB"

And so, back to Grimsby: the media, not least *The Guardian*, have been full of photo coverage as well as the acres of newsprint. The photo journalism is interesting in its own right: pages of big pictures of 'rough looking', unshaven, uncouth-looking men in their hoodies, beanies and (on 4 February in *The Guardian*) a large photo of a man consumed by anger and wearing a Red Army winter hat. What is all this supposed to conjure up if not that great ruling- and middle-class dread, the mob?

The ECJ and EU institutions collectively have brought us to this. There might be an agenda that could find its place and space in the coming months in the run-up to the elections to the European Parliament. As stated at the outset, it is an agenda that could recover a space and project for Europe, that of a "moralised social order", as envisioned by Delors and those who

worked with him on that project more than twenty years ago. That would certainly be a counter to the near-Tebbitite rants of Mandelson with his new version of 'get on yer bike', the pro-Lisbon mouthings of our political leaders and the phantasms of the worst anti-Lisbonites, including the 'free' market Libertas cleverly playing to the phantasmagorical, and the lunatics of the Commission and the Court of Justice with their failed globalisation agenda.

The Protectionist, social Europe project will probably re-emerge in the European Elections in some form. But of it there is little in the way of a spectre in Ireland—except those 120,000 who marched in Dublin on 21st February demanding a restoration of Social Partnership. Is it not blindingly obvious to Fianna Fáil, or even to Eamon Gilmore, that this is a nettle that must be grasped?

Feargus O Raghallaigh

Banking Crisis

"Trusting Banks Is Foolish"

Michael Casey is former Chief Economist at the Central Bank, and currently a member of the Board of the International Monetary Fund. He recently wrote:

"We did put manners on the banks some 15 years ago. At that time, there were quite strict regulations imposed on banks by the Central Bank for economic reasons rather than prudential ones. They included a primary liquidity ratio, a secondary ratio to ensure the banks bought certain amounts of Irish government bonds, a matrix of maximum interest rates which could be charged, and "corsets" which limited the margins banks could impose on their customers.

There was also a period when the banks had to limit their credit growth to a certain percentage every year, and they were obliged to allocate a proportion of that credit to productive business activities.

These regulations were designed primarily to help the economy and they were supervised by the economics side of the Central Bank and not by the Financial Regulator.

These (economic rather than prudential) regulations gave rise to serious lobbying by the banks and gradually they were abolished..." (Irish Times 13.2.09).

This is valuable information: but Casey does not indicate the context of Irish deregulation. Margaret Thatcher's Big Bang in the City of London freed up Banking in Britain, which became the *laissez-faire* financial capital in the world.

American Banks (and those from other countries) established operations in London in order to do things they were prevented by law from doing at home. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown followed the Speculative Finance route, watching the decline of Britain's industrial base with equanimity. Faced with this unfair competition from London, there was pressure in the USA to deregulate, with the consequences we know about.

Michael Casey provides another interesting piece of information:

"Five or six years ago, the Financial Regulator and the Central Bank began to develop contingency plans for possible banking crises. Officials were sent to countries like Sweden, to engage in war-games, i.e. exercises to cope with simulated crises. This was important work, and it is paying some dividends now" (ibid).

Bank Capitalisation

Richard Bruton, the Fine Gael Deputy Leader and Finance Spokesman, has proposed that bank recapitalisation be postponed until a separation is made between the Banks and their toxic debts:

"This would involve separating from within each bank a new bank, with a separate legal structure, which would hold all the State guaranteed deposits and other short-term liabilities and which would buy from the existing parent bank the branch network and all those parts of the loan book which can be easily valued, such as residential mortgages and business overdrafts.

"These would constitute new "good banks" with clean balance sheets. They could be called "New AIB" and "New

Bank of Ireland". Their capital would be provided by the taxpayer, hopefully with other private capital, and some small shareholding could be given to the existing shareholders. These new banks would then be well capitalised with a clean balance sheet and fully open to resume lending.

"A legacy bank would be left behind in each case which would no longer engage in any new lending. Its role would be to manage the remainder of the loan book and recoup maximum value from it over time. It would be managed in the interest of the existing capital owners and other creditors, such as long-term bond investors, that have not received a State guarantee. If enough money is recovered from property developers and other debtors to the banks, they would be fully repaid.

"This model does not require the State to insure the banks against their bad debts, nor to buy bad loans from the banks...

...
In my view, it is only right that bank losses are absorbed first and foremost by those who took on the risk of funding the risky lending policies of the banks.

"These are not just the ordinary shareholders (who could be given an opportunity to participate in the new "good banks" and recover some of their losses), but the professional investors from Dame Street, the City of London and Wall Street who own tens of billions in other forms of capital (such as dated subordinated debt) and long-term bonds in both banks...

"Valuable Irish taxpayers' money, on the other hand, should go into protecting Irish jobs and not into an international financial abyss..." (Irish Times 11.2.09).

A State Of Chassis

The G20 meets in London in March. This will be dominated by the representatives of the economies that have brought us the current credit crunch, recession, depression or whatever you are having yourself. Most of them last met at Davos. There they were not quite sure—or rather were not willing to admit—the cause of the current problems. Though unsure what to do about it, they were absolutely certain about what *not* to do. Every economic guru was at pains to point out the dire need to avoid Protectionism at all costs, in any shape or form. These guys then usually give us a history lesson or a little morality play with this mantra: Protectionism caused the Great Depression and therefore WW II. They are as certain about this as they are uncertain about what to actually do to solve the present problems. One thing they should admit, but will not, is that Protectionism had nothing whatever to do with causing it!

It comes back to philosophies of life. About two decades ago the market was declared to be a self-regulating form of economic behaviour that should be let rip. And so it was. The World Trade Organisation was got off the ground in the mid 1990s by Peter Sutherland to ensure that the market was fully applied to the world after the Soviet Union had come under the sway of idiots and alcoholics—this was before Vladimir Putin took the country in hand.

The idea was that every individual on this earth—from Wall Street to the mountains of China—competes with each other by fair means or foul and produces as much as possible as fast and as frantically as possible. In a recent speech to the Dublin Chamber of Commerce Cowen said the need was to “...*increase productivity, not incrementally but exponentially*”. This is the way to happiness and fulfilment: and in any case it is the future because it is inevitable. Many 'Marxists' became very enthusiastic about this view. They like inevitabilities as they are so reassuring.

Cowen's solution did create, and certainly would create, a lot more economic activity as it developed. But is it a model that people can actually live with? The present crisis says *No*. But the economists continue to say *Yes*.

But to get back to the history lesson. Our economists cum historians should go back a little further than the Great Depression and WWII. Look at the position before World War I, the daddy of all wars since. There was no Depression and there was no Protectionism to cause that war. In fact there was the very

opposite—so where did that War come from? (And while we are at it how come there were never so many 'little wars' as we have had during the recent halcyon era of Free Trade?)

Free Trade was created and reigned supreme from the end of the end 19th century. WWI took place and turned the world upside down and Free Trade carried on regardless. In fact Free Trade had its real glory days in the economic destruction of Germany and other countries during the 1920s. Germany and the world were never so 'free' because they were subjected to what was essentially robbery and plunder under the guise of trade and currency speculation: and these are the ultimate economic freedoms—are they not?

The first World War wrecked the governance of many existing states, leaving their societies defenceless in a situation where their economies were open. Their productive capacity was destroyed by competition from abroad. That led to the economic collapse and Depression of the 30s. Protectionism was the only functional alternative to this right across the world and even England ended its unlimited Free Trade policies to cope.

Keynes suggested a different approach and after the Second World War 'Keynesianism' was the technique used to stimulate the economy: and this was only possible in a national—or protectionist—framework, as remains the case. We must publish a report of Keynes' visit to Dublin in the 30s and his praise for the policies of the time in Ireland. (By the way, he never mentioned comely maidens dancing at crossroads but I suppose that was because of his sexual orientation—because the impression created by our historians is that people spoke of little else in Ireland then).

Protectionists had an alternative world view. Their notion was that, if all countries looked after themselves and made themselves as self-sufficient as possible and only traded in things they could not produce or had a surplus of, that might be a good way to live. This view seemed to allow for economic progress with stability—and also provided a way of avoiding war. That's what actually happened in Ireland.

Then the economy developed into a broader protected market, the EEC. No Depressions in sight for decades. Economic ups and downs, yes, but no Depression. Maybe all this should be the subject of a "Hidden History" project by RTE as it is certainly a well hidden secret by our historians..

There is an attempt in Ireland to use the current economic crisis to pre-judge the debate on the Lisbon referendum. The Lisbon Treaty is the answer to every problem: all that remains to be added is that the weather will be improved by Lisbon. A further argument is that, if Ireland votes against the new Treaty, it will put itself outside the Union—and even outside the Euro currency zone.

But the Lisbon Treaty referendum has nothing to do with whether Ireland remains in Europe and in the Euro or not. Those decisions have been taken and will not be reversed. Suggesting that a 'No' vote in the referendum would amount to a decision to leave the EU is either infantile or moral blackmail. If Europe cannot cope with dissent, and take on board the natural conservatism of members who fear change can only be for the worse, then it will fail to develop to its potential. There is a real basis for opposition to the direction in which the Union is moving: and it bodes ill for European leaders if they prefer to deal with dissent in a Leninist manner.

A quintessential Celtic Tiger man, Niall Fitzgerald of Reuters, was at Davos and could not resist putting his oar in:

"Referring to Ireland's likely second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, Mr Fitzgerald said the country needed "a healthy dose of reality when Ireland takes its view on Europe. If Ireland was not in Europe or the euro zone it would have ended up in a worse position than Iceland." This should be borne in mind in the coming referendum. "You have to understand the consequences of the choice—I am not sure Europe would be as patient with Ireland again" (Irish Times 2.2.09).

Barroso used the same platform to raise the same spectre of Ireland being another Icelandic basket case. At least Cowen reacted against the insult.

People like Mr. Fitzgerald and Barroso are playing a very dangerous game in making the Euro a Lisbon issue (and even EU membership) and making comparisons with Iceland. They are relying on the politics of fear—which actually gives ammunition to the opponents of the EU and the Euro. There's no game that two can't play. Opponents of the Treaty can make other Nordic comparisons—with Norway, for example. Did the lack of Euro membership make them a basket case? Sweden solved its banking crises on its own.

There are other countries with which comparisons could also be made. The argument that Ireland is an especially hopeless and helpless case that needs saving from itself by the Euro makes the country look pathetic. Such an approach would ensure Ireland *will* be at the margins of Europe. Where else should a country be

that cannot manage its own affairs and has to look to the Euro as a refuge from its crazy bankers? Also, this will hardly boost confidence in the Euro—a safe house for basket cases.

Neither will confidence in the EU and the Euro be boosted by the declarations of Trichet and John Bruton that the EU solution to the current crisis is that each Member State, or rather "those that can"—as Bruton specified—do what they can to solve their problems. Does that not suggest that he is advocating a form of 'protectionism' by another name? What a pathetic attitude for people in charge of a currency of 16 states and what it supposed to be a political union of 27.

Despite all the brave talk about resisting 'Protectionism', the EU Commission has done nothing about the Protectionist and anti-Competitive measures introduced by Britain and other countries in order to stave off economic disaster.

The Euro can hardly gain from such an approach when it is more integrative measures that are needed within the currency-union to boost the credibility of the currency—rather than acceptance of centrifugal and divergent tendencies. Developing the currency and nothing else is the prime political issue.

Making Lisbon an EU and Euro currency membership issue could backfire big time if the Referendum is lost. Lisbon has nothing whatever to do with the Euro or EU membership unless it is made so by bankrupt politicians.

Ireland tried to play the Berlin and Boston game for far too long—meaning that it could have a Social Market and a Globalist orientation—and thought the day of choosing between the two would never come. Because it had the best of both worlds for a while, it did not seem to occur to anyone that it also could have the worst of all worlds as well.

Meanwhile, Sarkozy continues to act as if President of the EU and is running around like the proverbial blue-arsed fly changing his policies to suit the moment. Gordon Brown was his salvation a few weeks ago—and not just for the EU but for the world! The French President also did his bit in the European Parliament to help Brown save the City of London from the consequences of Brian Lenihan's measures! Now, suddenly, he sees Gordon's "mistakes" and "failures": France will not follow Brown's prescriptions. What foresight! What acumen! What a clown!

The EU simply does not have a policy for the current crisis. That is the real crisis for Ireland. The Lisbon Treaty and the debate around it is the displacement activity to hide that fact.

Jack Lane

We've Been Here Before

In the dying days of Bill Clinton's presidential term, two acts of financial deregulation legislation were placed on the statute books. On the 12th November 1999 President Bill Clinton signed the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) has become known for the key sponsors of the bill as the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, for Republican Senate Banking Committee Chair Phil Gramm, House Banking Committee chair James Leach, and Virginia Representative Thomas Bliley), and then on December 21st 2000, the Commodity Futures Modernisation Act was signed, within the space of just over a year the last remnants of the Glass-Steagall Act (Banking Act 1933) was consigned to history and with it the last piece of the regulatory framework enacted by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Almost certainly watching was Lawrence Summers. Summers is currently head of the White House's National Economic Council under Barack Obama and as such is one of his key economic advisors responsible for ensuring that the bailout of the US economy works. He said recently that the Obama administration would "move quickly to reform a weak and outdated regulatory system to better protect consumers, investors and businesses". If the regulatory framework was weak then Summers should know, for he was one of its architects.

As Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary he pushed the deregulation legislation through Congress. Summers is an acolyte of Robert Rubin (one time partner at Goldman Sachs), who only a few weeks ago resigned as a director of Citigroup, the huge US financial conglomerate. Rubin, as Bill Clinton's first treasury secretary, initiated much of the deregulation mania that Summers finished (Rubin has apparently been paid more than \$115 million plus stock options at Citigroup and is a close Obama advisor). In a 1995 speech and testimony to congress, Rubin said, "The banking industry is fundamentally different from what it was two decades ago, let alone in 1933." He said the industry has been transformed into a global business of facilitating capital formation through diverse new products, services and markets. "U.S. banks generally engage in a broader range of securities activities abroad than is permitted domestically", said the Treasury secretary. "Even domestically, the separation of investment banking and commercial banking envisioned by Glass-Steagall has eroded significantly."

Three years later Rubin and Summers had a deadline. In 1998, Citicorp Inc bought Traveller's Insurance Group. Under the then existing law, Citigroup had two

years to divest itself of either its banking or insurance arm. Instead it went to work in Washington. Citicorp as it was then had a plan. Instead of offering a particular type of service to a group of clients, such as brokerage or stocks, why not be a one stop shop, as was the model in other parts of the world, most notably here in the UK.

With the passing of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley and the Futures Modernisation Acts, the way was now open for Citicorp Inc to become Citigroup. It could now provide its customers with all sorts of financial products and investment vehicles and risk management away from the prying eyes of Federal regulators. With the demise of the regulatory framework most of the large Wall Street institutions went on a merger binge so they could provide their customers with the same kind of financial products and services.

We are now living through the consequences of these actions with billions being spent on bailing out these failed institutions. Obama gave a major economic address way back on March 27th 2008, he couldn't have been clearer in attacking the kind of deregulation that Rubin and Summers had engineered.

"Unfortunately, instead of establishing a 21st century regulatory framework, we simply dismantled the old one-aided by a legal but corrupt bargain in which campaign money all too often shaped policy and watered down oversight. In doing so, we encouraged a winner-take-all, anything goes environment that helped foster devastating dislocations in our economy". Obama was referring to the deregulation legislation that on the day Clinton signed it into law, Summers hailed it as "a major step forward into the 21st century".

There can be very little doubt that the deregulators in the US took some of their inspiration from Britain where the model being pursued was that of self regulation. In the UK the government and the Financial Services Authority (FSA) simply provided a light touch tiller by which the great juggernaut of finance capitalism sailed into ever more choppy waters, essentially, the banks were left alone to regulate themselves.

Time and again in the US the international dimension was sited as been one of the major concerns of the big New York financial institutions. If these major financial institutions were to compete in a global marketplace they would need to be relieved of the shackles of regulation. At the heart of the US regulatory framework was the Glass-Steagall Act, which had passed the U.S. Congress by overwhelming margins: In June 1933, the U.S. House

of Representatives passed the Act by a vote of 262-19; the Senate, which had been highly contentious on votes on other measures, passed the Act by acclamation. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, along with many others had pushed for the Act, signed it into law on June 16, 1933. The act was a direct response to the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression.

In Roosevelt's inaugural speech he criticised those who he thought responsible: *"The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit."*

He went on

"Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency."

The Glass-Steagall Act was designed to fulfil these commitments.

Brother, Can You Spare Me A Dime.

With the election of President Roosevelt in 1933 the Great Depression was already three years old. A quarter of the working population was out of work. In the big urban centres thousands were living in cardboard encampments called "Hoover-villes". America's banking was in a state of chaos. Over a five year period some 11,000 banks had failed or had to merge, reducing the number by 40% from 25,000 to 14,000. Most of these it has to be said were the small rural independent "unit" banks. Governors in several states had to close the states' banks. The wall street crash had brought an abrupt end to the roaring twenties and people wanted answers.

With the landslide victory of Roosevelt and the slaughter of the Republican incumbents in November of 1932 Roosevelt knew something had to be done, before some of the largest crowds in American political history he spoke of *"the ruthless manipulation of professional gamblers and the corporate system"*. In late February the Banking and Currency committee began a series of hearings on the crash, its chief prosecutor was Ferdinand Pecora, a hard nosed New York prosecutor. The "Pecora hearings" called before it the leading men of Wall Street and uncovered much of the inner workings of Wall Street.

Pecora had done his homework, he knew what to ask. In the first few days Charles Mitchell, President and Chairman of the Board of the National City Bank (today Citicorp) admitted to not having paid tax in 1929, 1930 and 1931. The same

was asked of JP Morgan Jr, *"I cannot remember"* came the answer. They were not alone. Pecora ascertained that many of the wealthy financiers on Wall Street had paid no tax, or at least very little, for a good many years.

They also uncovered stories of dodgy practices and share deals. One such scam was the Anaconda Copper Company. Three board members of the National City Bank Mitchell, John D Ryan and Percy Rockefeller set up a *"joint account"* in nearly a million and a half shares in Anaconda Copper. The stock was then repackaged through a National City affiliate and its salesman. At all time the *"joint account"* was being manipulated by Ryan and Mitchell who ran the stock up from \$28 in 1928 to \$128 in 1929. The trio then dumped the stock and watched it crash in value. The hearings concluded that this one deal alone had cost the public \$150 million alone.

The Pecora hearings added to the already great pressure on Roosevelt to act, the Banking Act of 1933 was his answer to the shambles of the US economy. The primary force behind the Act was Carter Glass, a 75 year old senator, a former treasury secretary and father of the Federal Reserve System. He had for many years been pointing out the inherent weaknesses in the US financial system. In his view banks should have nothing to do with dealing in the inherently risky business of investing in stocks and should stick to looking after their customer's money. Essentially institutions that rely on taking deposits should not subject this money to risk.

As Roosevelt took office he closed all banks for one week, those that were not solvent were closed. With the signing into law of the Glass-Steagall Act banks were given a year to decide whether they would specialise in commercial or investment banking. Glass-Steagall erected a wall between banking and the securities business. Those banks that elected to hold deposits were prevented by law from *"issuing, underwriting, selling or distributing, at wholesaler or retail, or through a syndicate participation, stocks, bonds or debentures, notes or other securities"*. Not only did the act provide for the splitting of the banking sector it also forbade interlocking directorships.

Roosevelt's objective was to ensure that people's hard earned cash was never subject to the risks associated with the Wall Street traders, if people wanted to speculate they would have to participate directly, knowingly.

This was essentially the framework that existed until Clinton, Summers et al, decided to bring it all crashing down. Within ten years Glass-Steagall's repeal the same companies have brought the financial system crashing to its knees. Not only are the same companies in the frame

but they were using much the same methods.

While researching this article I came across a quote from JK Galbraith which in many ways sums up what many are now, belatedly, finding out.

"One of the things you must understand about 1929 and the antecedent years, as about any speculative episode, is the danger...in attributing intelligence to the simple fact that people are associated with large sums of money or large financial institutions. We don't ask whether they're intelligent. We say, they're associated with all this money, so they must be intelligent. We attribute intelligence to association with financial operations. And only afterwards do we discover that error and that people involved can be extremely successful in gulling themselves. That they can in effect, and I use the word advisedly, be marvelously stupid."

Pete Whitelegg

This article first appeared in February Labour & Trade Union Review, which also reproduced President Roosevelt's important inauguration speech, which resonates at this time of financial crisis. It is intended to carry this speech on the Athol Books website, www.atholbooks.org

Editorial Digest

continued

if they lack such proposals, to come along anyway and learn something. So far, employer representatives, Tom Parlon for example, have appeared in interviews as little short of fanatics, and very greedy fanatics at that. The march took place as we were going to press and a full account and analysis will appear in the April *Irish Political Review*.

The numbers on the Dublin march were not disputed in any report, for once. This could have come from the fact that a good number of guards took part. The Guards are well paid and looked after. But in recent years they have got in in a big way at the lower end of the property market. Buying to let. They are not happy bunnies. One expects they will make the extra effort when, as Mary Hanafin has promised, they are set to investigate the bankers. It is unlikely that the Sean Fitzpatrick's of this world will be falling down the stairs or walking into cell doors but why not look on the bright side!

Pension Levy: Kerry Fianna Fail Councillors have criticised the Government over the Pension Levy Scheme as being *"neither fair nor equitable... We call on the Government to engage with the social partners with a view to devising a formula which is fair to all concerned"*. Brian Lenihan has introduced a Bill into the Dail, *Public Interest Bill 2009*, which specifies that the Levy will apply at the

rate of 3% for the first €15,000 of remuneration, 6% for the next €5,000 and 10% on all remuneration above this figure (IT 17 & 19 Feb 09).

State To The Rescue. Because the Irish State has resisted the British privatisation mania to an extent, it still has levers of industrial power which enables it to shape events. The Competition Regulator has consistently demanded that the Electricity Supply Board be broken up in order to reduce prices. (In Britain utility prices, after an initial drop financed by asset-stripping, have risen strongly, despite the spurious competition in the market.) If the ESB had been broke up it would not have been able to save the careers of four hundred redundant electrical apprentices who have been unable to complete their craft qualification because of the economic downturn. They are to be offered an opportunity by ESB to finish their training.

On 10th February the ESB announced that, from next month, the company's Networks Division will begin training a total of 400 apprentices who lost their jobs before they were able to complete their electrical apprenticeships. ESB Chief Executive, Pdraig McManus, said the chance for apprentices to complete their training is critical for their future careers.

"Without full qualifications, apprentices will not be able to work as electricians and their career opportunities will be far more limited. ESB Networks has the expertise and resources to enable the apprentices to complete their training and ESB staff are delighted to be able to assist in this very important initiative."

Another institution which has been on the receiving end of bad publicity from the privatisation lobby, the State-funded training organisation FÁS, arranged for the apprentices to receive training from the ESB. It agreed a programme with FÁS to begin offering on-the-job training opportunities to redundant apprentices from March. FÁS will write to all redundant electrical apprentices on its register, inviting them to apply for places and it is expected that the first 100 apprentices will have commenced the programme by mid April.

It is estimated that a total of 800 electrical apprentices have lost their jobs while training. As a result they are unable to complete the necessary on-the-job training aspect of their apprenticeship and therefore cannot achieve national craft accreditation.

Labour and the First Dáil. The following letter by Seán Redmond appeared in the *Irish Times* of 21st January:

"In your article on January 16th, dealing with the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Labour Party, the old story is repeated that de Valera, in

connection with nominating candidates in the 1918 general election, declared that "Labour must wait". Despite extensive research on this period, I have found no evidence that this was ever said. Those who believe otherwise must confirm where and when. Certainly, the Irish Labour Party came under pressure from Sinn Féin on the issue of abstention from Westminster by successful Labour candidates. But there were already divisions within Labour on the subject, including strong support for abstention. Unable to resolve these differences, which included holding a conference on November 1st, the Irish Labour Party and TUC decided not to contest the election. In the North, some Labour candidates did stand, contrary to the Irish Labour Party-ITUC decision."

The Eames Bradley Consultative Group on the Past in Northern Ireland reported at the end of January. Its main recommendations were:

- * An independent Legacy Commission to last five years with a £100m bursary to tackle the tasks of securing reconciliation, justice and information recovery

- * Reconciliation Forum to help the Legacy Commission and the existing Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland (CVSNI)

- * The nearest relative of each person who died in the conflict should receive a £12,000 "recognition payment"

- * A new Review and Investigation Unit to replace the police Historical Enquiries Team and the Police Ombudsman's unit dealing with historical cases

- * No new public inquiries

- * The Group did not propose an amnesty for crimes linked to the conflict, but recommended the Legacy Commission should make proposals on how a line might be drawn

- * An annual Day of Reflection and Reconciliation and a shared memorial to the conflict

Sinn Féin on Eames/Bradley: "Sinn Féin will now take the report and reflect on its proposals. We will also discuss this matter with victims and survivors organisations and the governments in the time ahead. I want to deal with one issue today. The Consultative Group is proposing the creation of a Legacy Commission appointed by the British government. This is not the independent and international commission, established by a reputable international body like the UN, that Sinn Féin believes is necessary to properly address this issue" (*An Phoblacht*, 29th January)

Reality Check!: Ireland is the world's fifth richest economy. Average income is 43,000 euros a year; incomes are by no means equal but they are a lot more equal than in the UK. An unemployed worker gets €197.80 a week compared to €77 in the North. Pensioners get €225 compared to €90.70 in the North and they get

basic gas, electric and phone charges free, as well as free national travel. The Irish State also gives Northern pensioners free travel to and in the South.

Sinn Féin Councillor Eoin O Broin (Dun Laoghaire) had his new book, *Sinn Féin And The Politics Of Left Republicanism*, launched for him by Party Chairperson Mary Lou MacDonald in Dublin on 16th February. Both MacDonald and the author suggested that it should be the aim of Sinn Féin to position itself with the other Left groups—The Labour Party, the Greens and, believe it or not, the Workers' Party. This was felt to be an "ambition". It displayed a shocking lack of understanding of politics in the South and a suicidal tendency in Sinn Féin. (Why, for example, are either the Green Party or the Labour Party considered to be more socialist than Fianna Fail?) Has the only functioning 32-county party we've got lost all political ambition? Politics is about power. Any challenge for power involves taking on Fianna Fail—whether in opposition to them, in coalition with them, or somewhere in between. The Workers' Party is almost gone. The Greens have shown at least a serious aptitude for power. Is the Labour Party (and those British groups to the left of it) much more than a funk hole for West Brits?

Gerry Adams appeared to support the O'Broin/MacDonald line in his Presidential speech to the Ard Fheis on 21st February: "The dominance in this State of two large conservative parties can be brought to an end if a new alignment in Irish politics, north and south, can be created... In my view the Labour Party has a duty not to prop up either Fianna Fail or Fine Gael... I include parties like Labour, the Greens if they can survive the fall out from their participation in this right-wing government, other smaller parties..." Is this not the type of thing that got the Stickies into the mess they are in? But at least the Stickies, or a wing of them, actually took over the Labour Party.

Referendum. The new President of the European Council, Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, surprised MEPs on 14th January by announcing that if a referendum were held on the Lisbon Treaty in the Czech Republic, the Czechs would reject it like the Irish. Addressing the European Parliament, he described the Treaty as average and "somewhat worse than the Nice Treaty", which outraged many listeners, including Labour MEP for Dublin Proinsias De Rossa. De Rossa declared himself "appalled" by the "disgraceful" comment which would make it harder to ensure a positive outcome from a second referendum in Ireland. However, Sinn Féin MEP Mary Lou McDonald appeared delighted with

Topolanek's comments. Although not in the chamber, she said afterwards that his admission illustrated the massive discrepancy between the political establishment and citizens.

Forgotten Political Prisoners. The Southern wing of the Orange Order has been campaigning for the re-integration of the South into the United Kingdom. It has launched two public displays. The first was the opening meeting of the Reform Movement whose platform included such luminaries and Robin Bury, Brian Girvin and the British Ambassador. The Order thought that because they had the media and academia largely in their pockets, which they had, they were off to a good start. A fairly mild intervention by Pat Murphy changed their minds and their first meeting became, so far, their last.

They then organised the Dublin Love Ulster march in which the Orangemen went to walk from the 1916 Garden of Remembrance, past the GPO, to their spiritual home of Trinity College. Your average passing Dubliner had other ideas and rioting began. Recently the *Sunday Tribune*, long after the event, published a snide account by Ali Bracken. It also included the names of the 26 people finally charged. The comments are from Bracken and the Guards, and their relation to the truth is, as usual in these cases, rather doubtful.

1. Dean Heapes (22), 20 Clonronald Road, Donnycarney, Dublin. Received a four year sentence with two years suspended for his role in the riots. He admitted to setting fire to two Mercedes cars
2. Brendan Grennell, (43), Crossker Hostel, Longford Lane, Dublin. Sentenced to two months and two days for threatening behaviour.
3. John O'Reilly (31) of Harcourt Street, Dublin, threw flagstones at gardaí during the parade. He was jailed for three years.
4. Neil Kennan, Eton Way, Rathcoole, Co Dublin. Was given a €500 fine for his role in the riots.
5. John Saunders (40), Galway Road, Kinnegad. The court heard he was an alcoholic schizophrenic. He threw missiles at gardaí and was given a three year sentence.
6. Jonathan Hawthorne (36), Mount Tallant Avenue, Terenure, was convicted of violent disorder and sentenced to nine months.
7. Daniel Byrne, Ballyfemot Avenue, Dublin, pleaded guilty to violent disorder and was given a suspended sentence.
8. John King (32), Cedar Court, Ball ybrack, pleaded guilty to violent disorder and was given a three year suspended sentence.
9. Seán Murphy (23), previously of Tonleeg Road, Coolock, threw bricks at gardaí and was sentenced to 18 months.
10. Graham Hanapy (25) of Fortlawn Park, Blanchardstown, attacked RTÉ reporter Charlie Bird during the riot. He was sentenced to four years.
11. Declan Ward (24) of Tubberkeen, Dungloe, Donegal. He freely admitted to a radio journalist on the day of the Love Ulster parade riots that he had thrown rocks at gardaí and has been given a two-year sentence.
12. John Coffey (32), Harcourt Terrace, Dublin. A chronic alcoholic who was drinking four bottles of vodka daily received a six-year prison sentence for throwing scaffolding poles at gardaí.
13. Thomas Morley (26), Galway Road, Kinnegad, was given a four-year sentence by Dublin Circuit Criminal Court for assaulting two Chinese shop

workers during the Love Ulster parade riots.

14. Shane Hickey (27), The View, Gleann na Rí, Tower, Blarney, Co Cork. He smashed the window of a garda patrol van outside the GPO during the riots. Was given a three-year sentence.
15. Andrei Diaconu (19), of Seville Place, Dublin 1. He threw between 20 and 30 bottles at riot gardaí during the Love Ulster parade and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.
16. Mark Freer (29), Russell View, Jobstown, Dublin. Was sentenced to two years in prison with one suspended for his involvement. He lost his job as a security man after he appeared on the front page of a newspaper the day after the riots.
17. Ciaran Maguire (19), Kippure Park, Finglas. He set two gardaí alight by throwing petrol bombs during the riots. He was jailed for five years.
18. Ion Brodescu (24), Summerhill, Dublin. The former Moldovan trainee police officer was given a one-year sentence for burglary of two Dublin city centre shops during the riots.
19. Anthony Cosgrove (52), an unemployed father of six, Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly. He was fined €500 for throwing a barrier at gardaí.
20. Ross Farrelly, (23), St John's Gardens, Railway Street, Dublin 1. He pleaded guilty to violent disorder and was sentenced to 18 months.

21. Pierce McComiskey, (29) of Greenfort Close, Clondalkin, Dublin. He pleaded guilty to violent disorder and three counts of criminal damage to cars. He was given a three-year sentence.
22. Vincent McDermott (25), Blanchardstown, Dublin. He destroyed a car and threw a barrier at gardaí. He was sentenced to nine months in prison.
23. Kenneth Farrell (19), Bluebell, Dublin, was recognised by gardaí at his local station when he was shown on the news throwing a bottle at gardaí. He was given community service.
24. Shane Day (20), St Columbanus Place, Milltown, threw rocks and glass bottles at riot police and tied a rope around a fence in an attempt to stop a fire engine getting through. He received a suspended sentence.
25. A 16-year-old from Georgia who took part in looting during the riots was given an eight-month suspended sentence, on condition of good behaviour. The teenager was living in Ireland without any parents. [Was 17 when charged, 16 at the time of incident.]
26. A 16-year-old homeless boy was charged with taking part in looting during the riots. He was charged with burglary of the Footlocker Shop on O'Connell Street but the judge directed he be released without charge.

The Funeral Of Sheila Kelly

On 16th February 2009, the funeral mass for Sheila Kelly was celebrated in St. Mary of the Angels Capuchin Friary Church, Church Street, Dublin by Rev. Fr. Oliver Kelly with Rev. Fr. Martin Kelly and friars of the Capuchin community. It was the Capuchin community who administered to the 1916 Leaders before they were executed by the British army.

Sheila passed away on Thursday 12th February 2009 after a lengthy illness borne with fortitude and feistiness. She was the loving and beloved wife of the late Captain James Kelly who had preceded her on 16th July 2003. He was formerly of Athlone, Dublin and Bailieboro. She had been assistant editor of *The Cavan Leader* and was an accomplished writer. Jim's hobby was bog-oak carving and he exhibited at several art exhibitions. Sheila was an artist who produced some beautiful paintings and her main hobby was as a brilliant and accomplished conversationalist.

After Captain Kelly's death, she overcame her personal grief to continue the fight to clear his name, displaying her political skill and gritty determination.

After a Solemn Mass accompanied by the most beautiful instrumental music, the funeral cortege proceeded to Glasnevin Cemetery where the burial took place among the great and honoured heroes of the Nation.

Captain Kelly has a prominent grave and Sheila's ashes were laid to rest in it.

A Colour party was led by Noel Hughes and the graveside oration was made by Kevin Blaney who represented Sean O'Mahony, President of the 1916-1921 Club.

Graveside Oration by Kevin Blaney

I represent Sean O'Mahony, President of The 1916-1921 Club. who unfortunately

cannot be with us today as he is out of the country.

First of all, on behalf of 1916-1921 Club members, I wish to express our sincere condolences to the Kelly family for the loss of such a wonderful person as Sheila Kelly.

Sheila had a very close connection with our Club. She regularly attended our annual events, in particular, the commemoration of the 1916 Rising at Arbour Hill, and Clune, Clancy, McKee. She also attended our annual dinner including the last one in Dublin Castle just a few months ago.

Even in recent years, she participated in those events despite the obvious deterioration in her health.

Sheila was always a loyal and sincere. She never wavered in her beliefs. Her dedication could never be denied or questioned. She continued the struggle to clear her husband's name, and I now quote from Colonel John Morgan who delivered an oration 2 years ago, at this very place, on the anniversary of Captain Kelly's death.

"Sheila Kelly has continued her husband's fight. His death left her with a mantle.

"Through illness and nauseous treatment, in an extraordinary display of fortitude,

"Loyalty and persistence, and without rancour, she has sought the restoration of her Husband's reputation. The Kelly family is amazingly understanding and forgiving.

"But justice is required.

"Thirty seven years (now thirty nine) have elapsed. The principals have all left the stage. With the stroke of a pen Capt. Kelly's reputation could be rehabilitated, by the simple expedient of a posthumous promotion. Justice, at last. At long, long last.

"He carried state secrets with him. Under great duress—as I heard a former chief of staff recount—he never retaliated by divulging that which might embarrass. He was true, to the very end. His dream—that ageless dream—remains a dream."

Colonel Morgan made this speech 2 years ago and now Sheila has left the stage.

I now call on the Government for an unambiguous statement to clear the cloud that hangs over Captain Kelly's name. He had never been fully exonerated. No court of law ever convicted him. No court of law found that he was doing other than obeying orders. No court of law had evidence to any other effect. Captain Kelly obeyed the legitimate authority in all that he did. All of this has been made crystal clear and is beyond contradiction.

Old Friendships

After the funeral the mourners were invited to join the Kelly family for lunch at the Clontarf Golf Club where a four-course lunch of excellent quality was provided for all and which was a great and fitting occasion in honour of Sheila herself who was a generous hostess to many people.

Many of those attending had come from the length and breadth of Ireland, from the UK and from the USA.

Old friendships were renewed and new friendships established. It was difficult losing Sheila, but she with her husband Captain Jim Kelly will live long in our memories.

Seamus Lantry

The following report appeared in the *Irish Independent* of 17th February 2009

"Mourners salute wife of arms trial captain" By Jason O'Brien

The funeral Mass of the wife of a leading figure in the arms trial that rocked the nation took place yesterday—with the chief celebrant criticising the couple's "victimisation" by the Government over a period of 30 years.

Sheila Kelly was predeceased in 2003 by Captain James Kelly. Capt Kelly was an Irish Army intelligence officer and in 1970, together with former Taoiseach Charles Haughey and two others, faced arms import charges. All were acquitted, but Capt Kelly had to leave the army and said the affair destroyed his life.

His wife, a mother of six, who lived in Athlone, Co Westmeath, died last Thursday from lung cancer. She was in her 70s. "Nothing of Sheila is lost", Fr Martin Kelly, a brother of James, told mourners... "Nothing of her love and dedication to family... nothing of her strength of character shown during the 30

years of victimisation when Jim was framed by government action, and so shabbily treated by the upper echelons of the Army."

The comments drew a round of applause from the congregation, which included junior minister Conor Lenihan, writer Tim Pat Coogan and journalist David Davin Power. Finance Minister Brian Lenihan and Labour leader Eamon Gilmore attended the removal service on Sunday.

Fr. Kelly said that it was appropriate that her funeral Mass was taking place in St Mary's, "near where Jim and Sheila's ordeal began nearly 39 years ago in the Four Courts".

Capt. Kelly oversaw the procurement of an arms consignment from Germany, which prompted the trial, but always claimed he had Government authorisation for the mission.

After his death in 2003, the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, said that "Captain Kelly acted on what he believed were the proper orders of his superiors. For my part, I never found any reason to doubt his integrity".

However, Sheila Kelly dismissed the statement as "mild-mannered" and called for a gesture from Government to exonerate her husband.

That call was repeated at her funeral Mass yesterday.

NON

You were given a democratic vote
but you voted for you and not for us.
Forget the last time you were impious,
let's make that history an anecdote.
Of course you found a leak in the boat
so how could you sail all the way to Lisbon.
But understand the most fatal leak is 'non'.
Fixed now, climb aboard, and repeat by rote:
Floccinaucinihilipilification.
You may not understand that word right now
but many of us here don't either. *Ciao!*
Mark 'ja' and there's no vilification.
Democracy gives you a second chance.
But remember this: It is not *carte blanche*.

Floccinaucinihilipilification: The action or habit of judging something to be worthless.

In the 18th Century, England's Eton College (a free-range chicken run for future leaders of the British Empire) had a grammar book listing a set of Latin words which meant: 'Of little or no value'. The main ones consisted of flocci, nauci, nihili and pili. As a joke someone put these four together and added fication at the end.

Wilson John Haire. 5 January, 2009

Haughey Never Had Army Honour Any Nazi War Dead

The following letter of 9th February failed to find publication in the *Sunday Independent*

In his "sins of the father" article on Charles Haughey (February 8), John-Paul McCarthy maintains that Haughey's "gross instincts were flaunted in other areas while in office", including "the shameful occasion" when the Irish army was supposedly "allowed to attend the Glen of Imaal {sic} ceremony honouring the Nazi war dead". Mr. McCarthy follows up by informing readers that he is "a PhD student in modern history". This is a somewhat ill-timed boast, as there is not the remotest basis in historical fact for any such charge against Haughey. One does, however, remain curious as to Mr. McCarthy's source in regurgitating such a myth.

Manus O'Riordan

Bill Sharkey

It is hoped to carry an obituary of Bill Sharkey in the April issue of *Irish Political Review*

Shorts

from
the *Long Fellow*

THE "WORLD" ECONOMIC CRISIS AND US

It is always important to understand what "we" means. It could be said that "we" have been living beyond our means, but "we" cannot mean the world since that would be an impossibility. The world cannot consume more than it produces for any length of time.

It is more precise to say the West and, in particular, the USA has been living beyond its means. China has been producing more than it has been consuming and has been lending to the West. But China has become concerned about the West's ability to pay.

The current world economic crisis is in some respects not that much different from other world economic crises. In the 1970s America was also consuming more than it was producing. She broke the link with the Gold Standard and began printing money to finance the Vietnam War. Also, OPEC increased the price of oil leading to a transfer of wealth from the West to the oil producing countries in the Middle East.

There is an adjustment process taking place or a transfer of wealth from one part of the world to the other, which will be more severe than the adjustment that took place in the early 1970s.

The process of adjustment was postponed by the proliferation of a bewildering array of financial instruments. But the complicated financial instruments and disreputable accountancy practices did not cause the crisis. They are merely a symptom of the crisis which obscured the true financial position of companies and countries. They exacerbated the crisis by postponing the day of reckoning.

The complicated financial instruments have also become part of the problem. Banks and trading companies will not extend credit even for productive purposes because recent events have made them suspicious of the true financial position of debtors.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

It may be true that "man cannot live on bread alone". It is certainly the case that an economy can't live by financial trickery alone.

The West will have to learn to make things again. The former Chairman of Unilever, Niall FitzGerald, believes that Marx's *Das Kapital* gives insights into the current crisis. Quoting from Marx, the Sligoman points out that the natural instinct of the capitalist classes is to use money to generate profits without going through the inconvenience of production (see *Irish*

Political Review, February 2009). But value can only be generated by production or—to be more precise—labour applied to: growing things (i.e. Agriculture), extracting things (mining) and adding value to things (manufacturing). This is a return to Marxist first principles.

At the world economic forum in Davos the new American Treasury Secretary suggested that China should increase the value of her currency in order to facilitate consumption of imports from the West. That would certainly be helpful to the West, but China does not feel that she is responsible for the West's problems. She will achieve a growth rate of 6.8% in 2008. She is busy developing capitalism under the aegis of the State and using *Das Kapital* as her manual. Her priority is the accumulation of capital at the expense of consumption: a policy, which a democracy would find difficult to pursue. She realises that greater economic power through capital accumulation will lead to greater political power.

In the meantime, as well as learning to produce, the West will have to learn to consume less. The question of which classes in society will have their living standards reduced will be resolved through politics.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN IRELAND?

Before deciding what needs to be done the Long Fellow believes that we need to have some perspective. Niall FitzGerald was asked on *Radio Eireann* where it all went wrong? He replied that before understanding where it all went wrong we must understand where it all went right. The Irish economy has done very well in the last twenty years and perhaps as a nation we overdid things in recent years. We forgot that there is such a thing as a business cycle and now we have to come to terms with that fact. We benefited disproportionately from Globalisation and therefore it shouldn't surprise us that we will suffer disproportionately from the downturn.

Also it should be remembered that we as a nation had a worse crisis in the 1980s. Our national debt reached 125% of GNP, it is now in the low forties: significantly below the debt GNP ratio of France and Germany. Admittedly our debt ratio is set to rise because some revenue sources such as Stamp Duty are drying up, but that problem is being addressed by the Government.

We emerged from that 1980s crisis by means of Social Partnership. Although the current crisis has caused some fraying at the edges in that structure, the Trade Unions are by no means out of the game.

State policy should be orientated towards increasing productivity. That means we should press on with the National Plan. Our transport infrastructure needs to be improved. Above all we as a nation

must accept that in order to safeguard our future there may be a period where the standard of living will decline.

State investment will need to be orientated towards helping the real economy (i.e. growing, extracting, adding value) and not towards trying to stimulate consumer demand. There will be casualties. The motor industry is in crisis. The Long Fellow has heard that the value of unsold new and second-hand cars in this country amounts to billions. Many of these will never be sold. But rescuing the motor industry will not help the Irish economy since the manufacturing of cars is outside the domestic economy.

The Irish economy is headed for difficult times, but if the State with the help of the social partners makes wise (value adding) decisions the long-term damage to the economy could be minimal.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Despite the inane ranting of the media the Government has performed quite well. The Deposit Guarantee was a masterstroke. The Long Fellow is undecided about whether the Government should have let Anglo-Irish go bankrupt or not, but it was right to postpone Bank re-capitalisation until the dust had settled.

With the benefit of hindsight the Government should not have rushed in to implement an early budget. No doubt it was hoping to impress on the public the urgency of the economic situation at the earliest possible time. But if it had stayed its hand until the severity of the crisis became better known, the Long Fellow believes that a much more severe (and necessary) budget would have been implemented. For instance there would have been a significant increase in the higher tax rate.

Brian Cowen showed real leadership by stating that living standards could fall by between 10 and 12%. The Long Fellow has noticed that international commentators have been impressed by the honest business like approach of the Cowen/Lenihan team.

Overall the Long Fellow has been impressed by the competence of our political leaders and the civil service. The same cannot be said of our media who have been flailing around with much sound and fury signifying nothing.

BY ALL MEANS... SHOOT THE MESSENGERS!

Academic and media commentary on the current crisis has been pathetic. With the exception of David McWilliams, our commentariat has acted as the cheerleaders for British Speculative Finance Capitalism. They have accepted without criticism the bets of discredited British speculators that the Irish State is a greater credit risk than Greece. Ireland has one of the lowest debt to GNP ratios while Greece has one of the highest in the EU. But

despite all the recent experience media commentators must express obeisance to the parasitic element of the international capitalist system.

Particularly disgraceful was a Trinity academic who said on Radio Eireann's Drivetime programme that the discredited ratings agency Standard & Poor should downgrade Ireland's credit rating and if they didn't "they wouldn't be doing their job". When Alan Dukes pointed out to him that our National Treasury Agency had a substantial reserve and had no need to issue new Government Bonds, it became clear that the academic was talking through an orifice located nowhere near his brain.

The decadence of the media was revealed on the *Late Late show* (7/2/09) when, in the course of a discussion on the economic crisis, Eamon Dunphy burst into tears on recalling his father being made redundant. He thought that the Government had put €2 billion into Anglo-Irish until a Department of Finance spokesman rang in to say that no State money had been invested. The only point that Dunphy could make was that Brian Cowen earned more than the US President. But since the so-called discussion was the media talking to itself, neither John Waters, Eoghan Harris or Pat Kenny couldn't point out that Dunphy's salary was roughly equal to Cowen's. No one could point out that the Editor of *The Irish Times* was also equal to Cowen's and Pat Kenny earns more than twice as much as Cowen.

NOTES FROM THE FRONT

It's tough out there but we're surviving. The Long Fellow was talking to the General Manager of a large electrical retail outlet. Christmas was dead. The January Sales were pathetic. There has been real fear out there. But by early February business was returning. It was well below the average for 2008, but just about sustainable. It used to be the case that a young fellow and his girlfriend would buy two and a half grand's worth of goods such as a flat screen television, washing machine and tumble dryer etc to kit out their new house: all financed by credit. Those days are gone. But he thought that was not such a bad thing.

A service station owner said he had the worst January in 20 years. But things picked up in February. People need to buy petrol and cigarettes, but the discretionary items such as sweets and magazines have tanked.

A lot of manufacturing industry has had extended Christmas holidays and have been operating three-day weeks in an attempt to clear unsold stock. But in many cases this a temporary adjustment and activity is beginning to return to something like normal, although way below the levels of early 2008.

While the Banks have been tightening

the noose, the Long Fellow has noticed that in recent months Enterprise Ireland has been more amenable to, at least consider, grant-aiding Irish owned export-orientated manufacturing industry. The problem is that the grants are only available for expansion and increasing employment. There are many businesses that are just hoping to maintain existing levels of activity. The Long Fellow can appreciate that the State should not throw money at failed businesses. But many Irish busines-

ses have suffered badly because of the decline in sterling. The State should consider supporting businesses with realistic prospects in other markets with the aim of just preserving existing employment levels rather than insisting on expansion.

The Government must implement the bulk of the national plan. The rest of us have to hold our nerve, do our work well, trust in our own ability . . . and not take the media scare mongering too seriously.

Book Review: *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology Of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945*. Edited by Gerald Dawe. Blackstaff, Belfast 2008

An Anthology of Poems Which May or May Not Mention Various Wars or Conflicts, by Irish Poets (or English Poets Who Will Serve the Purpose) 1907-1994

This book has a cover photo of shattered trees and huts on a bleak smouldering landscape, taken after the first Battle of the Somme. The title suggests that the poetry will be mainly written by soldiers, Irishmen serving in the British forces in the two World Wars. *Earth Voices Whispering*—for me that evokes the famous voice from Flanders fields where poppies grow, the voice of the dead which calls on the living: "Take up our quarrel with the foe!" By all the outward signs, this anthology is part of the campaign to persuade us that World War I was a glorious part of our history, which Ireland ought to be proud of.

And in that respect the outward signs are not misleading. Gerald Dawe's introduction proves this beyond doubt, as do some of his editorial procedures. But it's interesting to see how his book has turned out. Nearly every word in the title could mislead the unwary. Let's begin with the little matter of dates.

This is not a book of poetry written between 1914 and 1945. About a quarter of it was written by poets who were too young to take part in World War II and who didn't have poetry published until after that war ended. Indeed, several of the authors were too young even to have memories of the war years. So it turns out that the '1945' part of 'Irish War Poetry 1914-1945' actually means: by poets who were **born** not later than 1945 (the year of birth of the two youngest, Anthony Glavin and Van Morrison)! And so Michael Longley (b. 1939) takes up as much space as Æ, and Seamas Heaney (b. 1939) has as much as Francis Ledwidge!

The earlier limit of 1914 turns out to be flexible also. At least one of the poems in the selection from Æ appeared in his *Collected Poems*, published in 1913. A number of those by Thomas MacDonagh are from *Songs of Myself*, published in 1907, and they seem to be love poems. Nearly all of the poems included by Joseph

Plunkett appear to be love poems also. But here we must take account of a brilliant discovery which Dawe has made, and which to the best of my knowledge nobody ever made previously: **all** poems written **at any time** by anyone who was involved in the 1916 Rising are war poems! So not only can McDonagh's and Plunkett's love poems be counted as war poems, but there is war even in . . . Patrick Pearse's *The Wayfarer*!

I must confess that this came as a shock to me. I first read *The Wayfarer* in secondary school, I often read it afterwards, but never once had I perceived its militarism. Much of the blame for this must be laid on my English Teachers, because all of them seemed to treat it as a gentle, meditative, melancholy poem of solitary reflection—and I never doubted they were right. I would have sworn that no one could possibly make a war poem of *The Wayfarer*, by any means which would not equally make a war poem of *The Rubaiyat Of Omar Khayyam*. But we live and learn.

Here one might timidly raise the question: what do we mean by war poetry? What kind of poem is a war poem? W. B. Yeats seemed to have something definite in mind when he responded to pressure to write one:

I think it better that in times like these
The poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
We have no gift to set a statesman right.
He has had enough of meddling who can
please
A young girl in the indolence of her youth,
Or an old man upon a winter's night.
(*On Being Asked For A War Poem*)

Is this a refusal to write a war poem? On a first reading one might be inclined to think so; indeed, on a second and third reading too... But no, in actual fact this poem is a war poem! It's in Dawe's anthology!

From the editor's introduction we learn how to see the poem rightly. It is not the

case that Yeats was asked for a war poem and firmly refused; rather, he actually wrote a war poem (the poem just quoted) but felt uneasy about doing so! All this is efficiently communicated in passing in a single phrase: "Yeats's cautionary unease in writing a 'war' poem" (Introduction, page xx).

But why does our editor put those quotation marks round the word 'war', where Yeats doesn't have any? Is he signalling that he knows better than Yeats what a war poem meant ... and means? Or is he in fact suggesting that Yeats's 'war' poems aren't like some other people's war poems? And could that distinction be an important one? But no, it can't be!—because 'war' poems and war poems are all lumped in together as Irish War Poetry.

I would say that Yeats, whenever he touched on war, made poetry out of the war and refused to do the opposite. His other eight pieces included in Dawe's anthology, *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death* and *Easter 1916* being the two best-known, are in harmony with the spirit of the six lines quoted above. Another editor might have felt some unease about throwing him in with the propagandists, with Katherine Tynan, Thomas Carnduff, Lord Dunsany and Winifred M. Letts. But Dawe has no such qualms, and for him it's the point of the exercise.

I am not denying that some of the soldier-poets (e.g. Ledwidge) were principally artists, or that they too could detach themselves from their wars to the advantage of their art. Dawe includes the cold, fascinating poem by Charles Donnelly where he sketches the mechanics of how death might occur to him (*The Tolerance of Crows*). And there's also another poem by Donnelly where he imagines how he'll be sentimentalised after his death. He'll be made into something that he now knows he isn't:

The technique of the public man, the
masked civilities are
Not for you. Master of military trade, you
give
Like Raleigh, Lawrence, Childers, your
services but not yourself.

(Poem)

However, the fact remains that the soldier poet-propagandists of the First World War and their civilian allies are allowed to set the tone of this anthology. (They might not be great poets, but some of them are superbly gifted ideologues. Winifred M. Letts is so good at it, she's spooky. How well this nurse was able to inoculate minds against any humane viruses that might be going around! *The Deserter* is a little masterpiece. No German war poet could have done the job so naturally and fluently. This was part of the secret of maintaining the herd instinct, the thing that Hitler most envied in the British.)

Dawe presents these pro-war propa-

gandist poets in a carefully arranged setting. The anti-war poets who should confront them are not included (more about this later), while others are brought in who do not belong in this context at all (Yeats etc), so that the propagandist-poets have the best possible literary environment.

Now let's look at the 'Irish' part of the title. For the first 100 pages or so it's defensible. The poets all spent some of their mature years in Ireland, whether or not they were born there. But then we encounter such poets as C. S. Lewis, George Buchanan, C. Day Lewis, George Reavey and Seán Jennett. The first three were born in Ireland, but their poetry, including their war poetry, clearly belongs to England. C. Day Lewis was the English Poet Laureate from 1968 to 1972, and I don't see how the pervasive and obvious Englishness of his *Watching Post*, included here, can allow it to bounce between nationalities. Reavey was born in Russia, but his family fled from the Bolsheviks when he was 10 or so and he spent a few years in Belfast before moving to Cambridge and Paris. And Jennett? We are told that he was "of Irish descent" . . . and . . . well, of course . . . his name was Seán!

Dawe had a very good reason for bringing in English reinforcements. His English recruits considerably pad out the quantity of 'Irish War Poetry' from the period 1939-1945, which might otherwise have seemed a bit thin.

The editor identifies his field of interest "in the relatively brief thirty-year period between the First and Second World Wars, that includes the Easter Rising, War of Independence, Irish Civil War and Spanish Civil War". Actually, the anthology is even more varied and richly coloured than this much suggests. There was a war of a different kind intersecting with some of those other wars: the class war. To judge by his introduction Dawe hasn't heard of it, but it enters his anthology in the raw poems of Thomas O'Brien and affects some of the work by other poets. And then when we get to the poems that were written in the 1970s and later, yet another war comes knocking on the door. You can't miss it in John Hewitt's *Nineteen Sixteen*, or *the Terrible Beauty*: whatever the title may say, the most important war here in the one that surfaces in the final verse, the war of the 1970s. Again, *The British Connection* by Padraic Fiacc mentions a sword from some "old half-forgotten war", but the poem has to do with a war going on currently; it's about the weaponry of working-class loyalists in 1970s Belfast. As for Michael Longley's *Ceasefire*, I remember it appearing in the *Irish Times* a few days after the first IRA ceasefire was announced in 1994.

Now, the Provo war is an illegitimate intruder. It's supposed to be out of the bounds of consideration by a good quarter

century; still, with this editor's procedures, nearly anything is liable to turn up. But it nonetheless comes as a shock that the Provo war is nearly as well represented in this book as the War of Independence.

Maybe Gerald Dawe would say that the poetry written between 1919 and 1921 was no good, and he didn't want to spoil his selection by including more than the tiniest pinch of it. But if Thomas Carnduff, Katherine Tynan, Stephen Gwynn, Lord Dunsany, Thomas Kettle and Winifred M. Letts are to be included, one has to have doubts about an editor whose way of maintaining literary standards is to exclude, say, Terence MacSwiney. Did MacSwiney write nothing that is better, or less bad, than Carnduff addressing 'Mr Turk'?

We don't want your bally country
nor your sun-scorched desert land;
you can keep your smug-faced friend-
ship
and your blood-besmeared hand etc.

(Graves of Gallipoli)

But that's not the only major exclusion. The anti-World War poetry is excluded also, and thoroughly. If Dawe has made his selection on the basis of literary quality, then at some stage he must have noticed a striking pattern: a fair amount of the pro-World War poetry is of good literary quality, but **none at all** of the anti-World War poetry is worthy of being published! Now surely this is remarkable. How strange that he never mentions it in his introduction!

The absence of Robert Graves is significant here. Graves concerned himself with Ireland quite as much as the Lewises etc., and by Dawe's normal procedures he could be considered an Irish writer. And if he had been a pro-war writer he would certainly be in the line-up. But there's no question of including *A Dead Boche*—all by itself it would spoil the designed effect! And, while Dawe is otherwise determined to bring in the big names by hook or by crook, there's no sign of Sean O'Casey. Were all of his anti-war ballads from *Songs Of The Wren* (1918) below the level? *We Welcome the Aid of Japan*—that one didn't meet the Carnduff standard? And there's no room for *Salonika*:

Me husband's in Salonika,
I wonder if he's dead;
I wonder if he knows that he
has a son with a foxy head...

But now, to be quite fair, let me quote the words of a leading literary critic, Bernard O'Donoghue (to be found facing the title-page): "What Gerald Dawe has done so movingly in this book is to bring together without any hint of partisan judgement the poems written on all sides by Irish writers in the five—or more—wars in the thirty years of its coverage". After all, if there was any bias wouldn't

this critic have spotted it (he's surely impartial himself)? So maybe we shouldn't rush to judgement on Gerald Dawe. Even if he does exclude all the anti-war poetry, doesn't he give us the 1916 men's poetry instead? As a matter of fact, he bulks out their representation by choosing poems that are quite irrelevant . . . and doesn't this show his . . . generosity?

One has to guess at the thinking behind it all. Seemingly, the idea is that 1916 can now be treated as a special incident within the Great War, a family quarrel provoked by selfish and wrong-headed family members who simply refused to see the big picture. They had to be suppressed and punished, of course, but at this distance in time one admires their spirit and one generously gives them their place in family history. This is why Dawe remarks, after complaining that the soldier-poets Gwynn, Dunsany etc. have been neglected: "*Juxtaposing poems borne out of this experience with the self-sacrificing idealism of Irish nationalism, and the doomed intimacies of the poetry of Padraic H. Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Mary Plunkett—poems and sentiments traditionally regarded as antithetical—is both radical and illuminating.*"

Radical this may be, but new it certainly isn't. The original juxtaposer was Æ in his poem *Salutation*, where he very deliberately, verse beside verse, puts Pearse, MacDonagh and Connolly beside Anderson, Kettle and Will Redmond—the martyrs of another ideal alongside the martyrs of his own. Essentially this is rhetoric, nothing more. You can juxtapose two either-ors as much as you like, but it won't make them complements instead of alternatives. The Easter Rising and Ireland fighting for Britain in the World War were either-ors, as the British authorities had understood instantly.

Let's take the most radical juxtaposition in Dawe's book: the two *Fools*.

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.

(Pearse: *The Fool*)

Know that we fools, now with the foolish
dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a herdsman's
shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.
(Kettle: *To My Daughter Betty,
the Gift of God*)

Traditionally, as Dawe says, these passages would have been thought of as antithetical. And rightly so. The first passage is poetry; the second is political rhetoric, speechifying, more from the

mouth than the heart. The first fool has set himself at odds with official projects, because his heart tells him that his efforts will prepare something better and truer even if it brings him personally no profit. The second fool has committed himself to official projects to the point where he is soon to sacrifice his life, but he declares that he will be dying not for official purposes but for . . . Christianity!

The Pope could have told Kettle how much benefit that particular war was going to bring Christianity. Or even Æ could have told him. Æ, who was a strange mixture of clear mind and crackpot, supported the war because war is human, it's how human beings prove themselves. But he maintained that the nations of Europe should give up their hypocrisy and stop pretending they were Christians, and—especially now that the priests on both sides had taken to preaching hatred of the enemy—they should acknowledge that their true Gods were Zeus and Thor! He himself had a sentimental affection for the gentle Christ and felt bad about how his cult was being swept aside. When the world is a lot older, he reflected, when it's entering its last days, maybe that's when Christianity will come into its own. (*Gods of War 1914*)

"Such tensions are played out," Gerald Dawe maintains, "in the life and poems of Francis Ledwidge. A committed Irish nationalist and a fine pastoral poet, Ledwidge was killed in action during the First World War, and remained for subsequent generations a symbol of Ireland's 'other' history—not the history of cultural nationalism and the struggle for Irish independence, but the history of Irish men who, for a multitude of reasons, fought and died on foreign fields."

In fact, Ledwidge was two poets, not one, in terms of politics and war. His tensions exerted themselves separately in separate poems, and they were not played out. There was no conflict and no resolution. Seamas Heaney, if I understand him, was of the same opinion:

In you, our dead enigma, all the strains
criss-cross in useless equilibrium...
(*In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge*)

Ledwidge has undividedly pro-World War poems like *The Call to Ireland, In the Mediterranean—Going to the War*, and *The Irish in Gallipoli* (whom he sees as modern Crusaders); and then he has poems of undivided praise and respect for the 1916 leaders: *Lament for Thomas MacDonagh, To Mrs Joseph Plunkett, Lament for the Poets: 1916*. He doesn't just neatly put one beside the other, like Æ. Nor is he able to think his way through the complexities as a single-minded artist, as Yeats does in *Easter 1916*. Ledwidge has to affirm the soldier part of him, or he wants to, but another and deeper part of

him is elsewhere. But where? Somewhere in the future or the past?

Ledwidge is dissociated, and one of his finest poems (written after he was court-martialled, late in 1916) shows him aware of it.

After Court Martial

My mind is not my mind, therefore
I take no heed of what men say.
I lived ten thousand years before
God cursed the town of Nineveh.

The Present is a dream I see
Of horror and loud sufferings,
At dawn a bird will waken me
Unto my place among the kings.

And though men called me a vile name,
And all my dream companions gone,
'Tis I the soldier bears the shame,
Not I the king of Babylon.

John Minihane

(To be concluded)

es ahora *

Irish Army Would Mutiny If Circumstances Were Right

In perhaps one of the most astonishing articles ever written, Peter Murtagh, Managing Editor of the *Irish Times*, wrote about his visit to the Balkans last summer in *An Cosantoir* The Defence Forces magazine, December-January 2009. The Irish soldiers are "*in Camp Butmir, in EUFOR, the EU military mission which operates under the United Nations mandate and is tasked with helping implement the Dayton Accords, the US-brokered agreement that ended the war*". But before telling us of his visit, Murtagh first prepared the reader by colouring his piece with a nice bit of Lisbon-related propaganda. According to him, European Minister Dick Roche (Fianna Fail):

"was talking to a group of business people recently when he mentioned he had a photograph in his office that made him think about Europe each time he looked at it. The picture in Minister Roche's shows a young boy, a Jewish child, in the Warsaw ghetto in the middle of the Second World War when Poland was under Nazi occupation. The boy almost certainly went to his death in the gas chambers and furnaces of Auschwitz or Birkenau, the Holocaust extermination camps south of Warsaw, near Krakow. In all probability, the picture is all that is left of him—a haunting image of a child whose life and promise was snuffed out in a spasm of madness."

I presume that the foregoing background was not filled out by Minister Roche but rather by Murtagh himself.

It Is Time

Roche is the kind of political operator that is slick, thick but with enough media savvy that he is used by the Government to be their mouthpiece whenever unpopular causes need ventilating. And if they change policy mid-stream then Dick is your man to go with the flow without so much as blush. For him and indeed much of Fianna Fail now, *ideals* are for losers.

But if Dick Roche has his picture, then so has Peter Murtagh.

"Among the clutter of my desk in the Irish Times, I also have a picture. It has been propped up against by (sic) computer screen since I came back from a visit to the Balkans last summer." {The picture is reproduced in *An Cosantoir*.} "It shows an elfin child with a beautiful face, a nine year- old girl named Azra Mujanovic. She is wearing a blue pull-over and jeans and her arms are stretched above her head, hands leaning against the side of a very large photograph mounted on a wall, at which she is staring."

I feel that Azra was told to pose as it looks quite unnatural and far from staring at the picture she is definitely looking at the photographer instead and looks fine and healthy, though personally I find such exploitation very distasteful. Murtagh goes on to tell us that the

"large photograph is a close up of a pair of hands, they look to be those of a woman perhaps in her 40's. They are clasped across an apron she is wearing. On the apron, there are handwritten names. They are the names of the dead, many of whom are interred in the ground outside the room where the picture being examined by Azra is displayed."

Murtagh goes on to inform us that he likes the contrast of the woman's hands and those of the young girl. I think that is why the little girl was put into the photograph in the first place because it is a powerful contrast and the woman, in my opinion, is not wearing an apron at all but a sheet or poster with the names on it. Murtagh gets a little carried away because he tells us first the dead are outside and then we learn that they are part

"of the several thousand people buried now in the genocide memorial park in Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, scene of the massacre in July 1995 of some 8,300 Muslims who were systematically slaughtered by Serb forces... The massacre at Srebrenica was the worst such atrocity committed in Europe's soil since the end of the Second World War."

Murtagh wants to acknowledge the tremendous work that is being done by the Irish men and women whose "uniforms invariably display our country's flag and also the emblem of the European Union... Our troops are serving both Ireland and Europe with honour and distinction. I felt very proud of what I saw them doing." Did one ever think one would see that

written by an *Irish Times* reporter? No—me neither.)

He goes on to inform us that "*under the offices of the EU Police Mission*" we have "*four members of the Garda Siochana—a garda, two sergeants and an inspector*" who police the area, offering their Bosnian police colleagues advice and inputting "*standards reflective of western European norms in terms of respect for civil and human rights*". (I find this reflective of the old colonial thinking of civilising the natives and we all know how that ended. Recently in an English daily newspaper it was reported how torture began blighting how they themselves started treating *suspects* following on American lines. But this is not news to any Irish political prisoner since way back where we were told to *draw the line and move on!*)

Murtagh went to Bosnia "*with my accomplice Tony Sullivan and ... lashed around on two BMW 1200's an Adventure and a GS. (Anyone who has seen the Charley Boorman/Ewan McGregor motorbike capers on TV will know what that means... great fun. It may be cool driving a Mowag but give me a BMW Adventure any day!)*" (A Mowag is a huge tank—I only know this as there is a photo of one in the magazine.)

Lt. John Boylan and the men of his platoon in C company work by "*patrolling softly-softly, being friendly with local people, building trust little by little, establishing friendships at times*". This is important for Murtagh because he then lashes out at "*some critics back home*" who have their ridiculous fantasies of "*an adolescent cartoon-like caricature, the so-called EU imperial army doing NATO and America's 'dirty work'*".

And finally we come to the real reason for Murtagh's article. He unhesitatingly wants the abandonment of Irish Neutrality and there is real vehemence in his statement. "*If a policy that evolved in another era says that the NATO-led, UN-mandated EU **military mission** to keep and enforce the peace in Kosovo is somehow wrong then, in my view, the policy needs changing*" (my emphasis). But Murtagh isn't just content with stating his own opinion, and I think what follows is the really dangerous part:

"After being on patrol in Kosovo with Lt Boylan and his colleagues, we chatted casually back at Camp Clarke near Lipljan, centre of Irish operations. What had happened at Slovinje, and far worse at Srebrenica, was on my mind. The international community was not to blame for the former but at Srebrenica, the UN was present and then withdrew in the face of Serb aggression, leaving the town's defenceless Muslims to their fate.

If he'd been there, I asked John Boylan, what would he have done?

No soldier willingly disobeys orders

but John Boylan said he had often thought about that and, had he been there, he would have wanted to do the right thing, no matter how difficult that was.

"He didn't state it but we both knew what the 'right thing' was: in Srebrenica it was walking away, as UN troops there were forced to do by virtue of an insufficiently robust mandate. **The right thing was to stay, protect the 8,000+ innocents, enforce the peace and, if necessary, fight the aggressors**" (my emphasis).

Because the Defence Forces didn't correct the latter on going to press, then I must assume that they are in agreement with what Murtagh came up with. This is very serious and needs clarification. We live in a democracy, where our Government **order** our Defence Forces and yet here is the Managing Editor of the *Irish Times* telling us Lt. Boylan wouldn't hesitate to disobey orders and in effect **mutiny**. This is indeed an extraordinary development that deserves a public retraction—with questions asked in the Dail if needs be.

Israel's Naval War On Gaza: Royal Navy Mission Looms In Aftermath

In the magazine, *Warships: International Fleet Review*, Charles Strathdee is very impressed with the way that Israel fought its Gaza war but especially how it deployed its Navy in Operation Cast Lead, which had the twin aims of stopping the firing of rockets into Israel and "*destroying the terrorist infrastructure of the Hamas organisation in the Palestinian territory*". (From the title of this magazine, it is '*out and proud*' of tough military missions and makes no bones about it either.) Strathdee does not do wimps especially those ships that tried during the war to carry humanitarian aid and medical supplies.

But it was not just during the war that Israel used its warships, the IN (Israel Navy)—

"continued to enforce an ongoing naval blockade of the Gaza coast in a bid to stop a resupply of weapons."

"The Greek-flagged SS Arion, also called Spirit of Humanity and chartered by the Free Gaza Movement, sailing from Cyprus, attempted to deliver medical supplies and food to Gaza last month and got caught in the conflict. On January 15th 2009, when around 115 nautical miles from her intended destination, she was intercepted off Lebanon by a number of Israeli warships and forced to turn round. A news release from the Free Gaza Movement said around five Israeli gunboats had surrounded the motor vessel and demanded the ship turn around or they would open fire. The Israeli Navy allegedly told the human rights activists that the IN were prepared to use "any means" to stop the SS Arion. The IDF

later said its warships had warned the vessel to turn back because it was entering a war zone subject to a naval blockade."

What is really stunning about this is how far out the IN were on patrol—115 nautical miles would be like the equivalent of sailing due south off Ireland to the Scillies. That is some claim on jurisdiction. Accompanying the article there are photographs of massive warships in action. These include: "76mm gun of an Israeli warship bombards targets in Gaza during the war. Photo: IDF Spokesperson". In another one "an Israeli Navy gunner stands by a heavy machine gun aboard a warship off Gaza during the war. The Oto Melara 76mm gun of another Israeli warship fires. Photo: IDF Spokesperson."

When Gordon Brown, the UK Prime Minister, went to the resort of Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt, Strathdee claims—

"it was widely reported in the international press that Britain, France and Germany should work together to support Egypt and Israel in tackling the arms trafficking." {But} "in the UK diehard supporters of the Palestinian cause in the ruling Labour Party saw the possible deployment of the Royal Navy from a different perspective, namely in safeguarding aid ships and trawlers going about their business on the high seas in the face of Israeli naval aggression."

In the House of Commons, on 19th of January 2009, the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband told MPs that it was British policy to help Israel and Egypt but "he stressed that the origin of these arms stretched way beyond the Gaza/Egypt border". Immediately, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, William Hague warned about British naval overstretch. Labour MP Gerald Kaufman—

"highlighted the brutal contradictions of any mission by the Royal Navy: "In welcoming the increased aid from the UK to Gaza, may I ask my right honourable Friend to clarify the logic whereby **we can send the Royal Navy to enforce an arms ban on Hamas while continuing to sell arms to Israel, after a conflict in which 1,200 Palestinians were slaughtered and four Israelis were killed by Hamas rockets?** That is an exchange rate of one Israeli life for 300 Palestinian lives"... (my emphasis).

"Frank Dobson Labour MP also sought clarification. But he didn't get it from Miliband who seemed to think the idea of supporting aid was, as he stated, "not necessary... but (he) will look into it".

One of the more striking things about this article was the acceptance of Israeli aggression.

In a insightful comment, Strathdee wrote about how the poor—

"Palestinian fishermen have also found themselves at odds with the IN.

The fishermen claimed that they were constantly harassed and threatened and attacked by Israeli gunboats in violation of international law and maritime law. It is claimed that a fishing boat was rammed by a gunboat at high speed in September 2008."

But even Strathdee finally confesses that "there is a fine line between legitimate interception and unjustified aggression".

So much for the EU, the UN and their guaranteeing of **basic human rights** as Peter Murtagh would have it.

In the same magazine, there is a column called *Odin's Eye*. Odin as the writer explained was the Viking supreme God whose "wrathful gaze" inspires his column. He fulminates against Gordon Brown "and his callow Foreign Secretary" with an attack on the lack of funding for the Royal Navy, stating that "The Royal Navy Cupboard Is Bare". There is a barely concealed hysteria about Odin who rages over the over-stretch of Naval sources. A frigate had to be pulled off Falkland patrols and switched to piracy duty off Somalia. What next? Will the Royal Navy abandon even home waters patrolling? Where will it all end? Odin goes on to write:

"For as we have pointed out before, there is no slack left, what with only seven or eight frigates or destroyers actually immediately available at any one time. With the RN's frigate and destroyer force reduced from 35-22 and maybe fewer this year under yet more defence cuts, it really does beggar belief that the self same people who have denuded the British fleet of much of its strength in numbers now have the audacity to offer a warship or even warships, to clear up the aftermath of the war in Gaza. The cupboard is bare and Brown is sticking with his plan to put Defence spending bottom of his list, for fear of it sucking funds away from his Socialist Project, which aims to redefine and reshape the UK."

What Odin sees happening "is another 9/11—after all who saw that coming?"

Under *Armchair Idiots*, Odin asks: "Who are these idiots who waffle on about the Royal Navy's new Type 45 destroyers not being needed? What do the armchair admirals and sea-blind media pundits suggest the British fleet throws at sophisticated air threats many times more serious than anything faced in either the Falklands War or Desert Storm? Snowballs?"

Odin in heart-attack mode sees "hundreds of billions potentially poured down the drain by the UK Government in recent months in attempting to save various banks from collapse". So why then can't the RN have their Type 45 destroyers? Britain needs way more than 6 Type 45's—£600 million is a small price when contrasted by the amounts the Banks got. (I have the

feeling that Odin might be thinking of other ways to keep banks from falling and none of them would fall under recapitalisation!) He warns that the UK will yet be sorry over the Type 45 fiasco with the RN still being lumbered with an older generation of destroyers unsuited to today's duties.

Eamon de Valera

Denis Wheatley was a British spook. During the Second World War he worked in 'Deception Planning'. In 1959 he wrote a book titled *Stranger Than Fiction*. There is a striking photo of him on the back page in uniform with the description: 'Wing-Commander Denis Wheatley at his desk in the Offices of the War Cabinet'. He was highly influential and the book is really a series of his reports. They really make for fascinating reading and will be dealt with in another issue. But the main things about Wheatley were the powerful friends he made and his ruthlessness. Oh and of course his patronage. One of his major papers was titled 'Total War'. The confidential version of this paper "urged the assassination of Taoiseach Eamon de Valera" and there were several scenarios researched should the need ever come about. But who were his co-conspirators in this planned project?

Julianne Herlihy. ©

Book Review

STOP PRESS:

Elizabeth Bowen Was A Spy!

The latest Irish publication on Elizabeth Bowen accepts that she was a spy for Britain during World War II. It is stated in a contribution by Heather Laird of University College, Cork, in *Elizabeth Bowen*, edited by Eibhear Walshe also of UCC (Irish Academic Press). This is groundbreaking in Irish academia.

I wonder has Ms Laird cleared this with Messrs. Martin Mansergh and Brian Girvin who have argued to the contrary for many years. I think they should be told. Of course, we may then have to endure another bout of Mr. Mansergh's bluff, bluster and blather to try to obscure the obvious. Also, the organisers of the Mitchelstown annual jamboree under her name should be put in the picture: they need to know they are honouring a spy. They had great doubts when Aubane suggested this to them but now that academia confirms Aubane's view they cannot be in any doubt, can they? *The Irish Times* also accepted the description in its review of the book on 31st January 2009—which surely means the end of the argument for our *litterati!*

Despite accepting this obvious fact, Ms Laird cannot tell it straight or put it in its proper context. She says Bowen "justifies

Irish neutrality" in her reports. She does no such thing. She *explains* it to those who needed it explained to, particularly Prime Minister Churchill. Thereby she was doing England a favour by helping it to avoid an extra conflict that would not help its war effort. She summed up her position very succinctly: "*While the rights of Eire's neutrality may be questioned, the conviction behind it must be believed*" (*New Statesman*, 12.4.1941)

Laird says "*these reports now accessible in the National Archives at Kew*". They are not. A tiny handful of the approximately 200 reports produced have survived by accident and none of the verbal reports are available. Surely she knows this very well.

Nowhere does she actually describe Bowen's nationality. It's a pity she and others cannot be as objective and straightforward as a British academic in a recent volume of *Contemporary British History*, which says quite plainly "*Bowen was Irish by birth but English by nature*" (June 2008, page 166). Perfectly and accurately put.

Laird goes on to portray the differences between the Aubane Historical Society and Roy Foster on Bowen as follows:

"While Foster and Lane situate Bowen at opposite ends of the Anglo-Irish hyphen, ethical evaluations of the nature of the historical relationship between Ireland and England and between Anglo-Ireland and the 'native' Irish are of fundamental importance to both commentators' delineations of Irishness. Foster, who as an Irish revisionist historian is far too wary of apportioning blame in an analysis of these relationships, argues that those who believe that "the 'real' Irish experience is that of unrelieved pain" and who consequently focus exclusively on the exploitative nature of Anglo-Irish relations proffer too limited a definition of Irishness. In contrast, Lane, whose sympathies are recognisably (and narrowly) nationalist, suggests that those who ignore the exploitative nature of Anglo-Irish relations and of the relationship between the Anglo-Irish and the 'native' Irish put forward too broad a definition of Irishness. Journalists and academics, some of whom according to Lane go on a pilgrimage to the turnip field where Bowen's Court once stood, lamenting the loss of a house paid for and sustained through the exploitation of the local tenantry, "are trying to redefine Irish culture in a way that makes it meaningless"..."

Blame and ethical evaluations are beside the point and are not the matters of substance that define the relationship between the groupings mentioned. The basic facts suffice. The Anglo-Irish were a useless, nasty, sectarian, parasitical socio-political grouping that ruled the

country across two centuries. That is proved by what they could *not* do and did not do. The role of any similar grouping put in charge of a country in modern times is to develop it into a nation. The Anglo-Irish could not do so. They never produced a nation broad or narrow, long or short, big or small on which Ms Laird, Mr. Foster and the rest of their ilk could pass their easy judgements from on high. The Anglo-Irish could not broaden themselves to even make an attempt to form a nation.

It is not as if the Anglo-Irish did not know what they were not doing. Thomas Davis put it plainly and passionately to them in their serried ranks at Trinity College, Dublin, when he implored them to realise that "*Gentlemen, you have a country*". But the gentlemen did not give a toss for the country he meant. They despised it. He had to go back and make a nation with the 'mob' that was then Catholic Ireland, as Patrick Pearse described it. Davis's project succeeded and he is forever given the credit that is his due within that nation whose imagination he captured and helped form. But perhaps Davis might also be described nowadays as a narrow nationalist and maybe his TCD audience would be regarded as having the broader

version?

Nation-making automatically involves broadening out to include various different groupings—whether of religion, region, language, tribe, race, social system, culture, etc. etc. The 'natives' in Ireland, when forced eventually onto their own resources to make a nation, incorporated any and every Anglo-Irishman/Protestant/Planter/Jew/Pagan who made any effort to broaden out from their own grouping. Hence the heroes of Irish nationalism include Tone, Emmett, Davis, Butt, Parnell, 'Pagan' O'Leary, Casement, Childers, Hyde, Yeats, etc. etc.

It is a strange experience for a 'two nationalist' to be described as "*narrow nationalist*". If the Anglo-Irish had done their job we would have avoided two nations emerging in Ireland. They should have incorporated both elements—and many others—in a new nation. But they were too narrow and incompetent to do so and so disappeared into the dustbin of history. Nations decide matters in the modern world and I submit that accepting the fact of two nations on the island of Ireland is as narrow or as broad as it is sensible and practical to be in these matters.

Jack Lane

Dooley & Rural Ireland

"It is often difficult to appreciate or sympathise with the Irish psyche that attaches an almost obsessive importance to the ownership of land" (Terence Dooley, *The Land For The People*, UCD, 2004, p1).

No explanation is given as to why it should be hard to sympathise with it. Land was the main form of property then, and unless one is out of sympathy with the desire to own property, I cannot see why one should be out of a sympathy with the desire to own land in a situation where land is the main form of property. We are usually told on authority that the desire to own property is the mainspring of civilisation, and that the ultimate reason why Communism cannot work is that it sets itself against property ownership by individuals. For my part I have little or no sense of property and no desire for ownership, so in that respect Communism would suit me very well, and since I first thought about the matter, over fifty years ago, I have described myself as a Communist, but acknowledged that my lack of a sense of property makes me an eccentric.

But I doubt that Dooley's disdainful remark about ownership means that *he* is a Communist. It only means that he doesn't care for what goes on in the

countryside amongst people he calls peasants.

It seems that he doesn't care for nationality either. That follows from his distaste for the owners of land—but only the owners of small bits of land, I think—because he equates Irish nationality with the peasant obsession to own land:

"...the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of the ideology that promoted land as the basis of the nation, where landownership became indelibly related to the other grave national issues of identity and independence... R.V. Comerford has concluded that 'Much of the rhetoric of nationality is concerned with justifying possession of the land' and that in the Irish case: 'the myth of migratory origins sits side by side in silent contradiction to that of the indigenous people, which in turn is explicitly juxtaposed with the myth of the alien settlers... As with the Magyars, the Poles and the French, so too in modern Ireland, the lords of the soil were supposed to be of different stock from the rest of the population. In the 1880s, the Irish nation was re-imagined so as to exclude them'... Thus the development of nationality and of nationalism in Ireland was specifically bound up with the struggle for land" (p2-3).

This idea, that Irish nationalism was not the expression of a durable sense of nationality embracing a wide social spectrum, but was essentially the expression of a sense of grievance about the ownership of the land by a landlord class "of different stock", was put to the test in the first two decades of the 20th century. The (British) Unionist Party which governed Ireland from 1895 to 1905 held the opinion that Dooley sets out here: Irish nationalism was an agrarian grievance, and would decline when that grievance was removed. So it removed the grievance by means of a subsidised hire-purchase buy-out of landlord property by the tenant farmers. This established what Dooley prefers to call "*peasant proprietorship*". The British Tory ideal of a property-owning democracy was realised in substance in much of rural Ireland after 1903.

It is a remarkable thing that books can be written about Ireland in that era in which the name of A.J. Balfour does not appear. In Dooley's many books, all of which have a direct bearing on what Balfour did in Ireland, I noticed only one mention of Balfour (*The Big House* p222), and that is not in connection with land. But in writing Balfour out of Irish history Dooley only does what all 'modern' Irish academics do.

About 30 years ago I heard a Radio Eireann programme in which local people in some area of Donegal were interviewed. One old man (a "*peasant*") was asked who he thought was the greatest man there had been in his lifetime. Without hesitation, he said: Arthur Balfour. The interviewer didn't know what to make of it.

Balfour was Irish Secretary around 1890 and Prime Minister in the early 1900s. As Irish Secretary he imprisoned William O'Brien, the agrarian agitator. As Prime Minister he collaborated with O'Brien to arrange for the ending of landlordism.

Balfour's strategy was to "*Kill Home Rule With Kindness*". O'Brien's strategy was to get the landlord grievance out of the way so that nationality might flourish.

The leadership of the Home Rule Party at the time was in agreement with Balfour's analysis. It feared that Home Rule would be killed by Balfour's kindness. The Home Rule press did its utmost to persuade the tenant-farmers that the deal O'Brien made with the Government for subsidised land-purchase was an attempt to swindle them out of their money. Despite the discouragement of the Party, O'Brien and his colleagues got land-purchase going in Munster in 1904, and then it spread rapidly around the country. But the hostility of the Party meant that it was not carried through as thoroughly as it might have been, especially in areas where there was not a clear-cut tenant farmer/landlord relationship.

Dooley engages in the fashionable revisionist discussion of whether what happened in 1919-21 was or was not a revolution. He says little about 1903 and what followed from it. And, as far as I know, there is no history of the 1903 Act and its consequences. But, if one looks for a social revolution, that is where it is to be found.

"With the achievement of peasant proprietorship after a long bitter struggle that dominated the social and much of the political life of Ireland from the 1880s, the primordial impulse to own land was arguably heightened; land-ownership became the only guaranteed access to social standing within the local rural community" (Dooley, *ibid* p3).

I can only say that this does not tally with my experience of growing up in a landless family—which was also neither professional nor commercial—in a rural community where land purchase was carried out so thoroughly that not the flimsiest remnant of landlordism remained. What existed there was a profoundly egalitarian social culture which in the matter of "*social standing*" over-rode property differences, and personal qualities counted for more than anywhere else I have lived.

The floodgates of land-purchase were opened there, in defiance of Home Rule Party discouragement, largely through the efforts of the Land and Labour Association. In terms of English sociological stereotypes, which seem to have taken over in 'modern' Irish academia, Land and Labour is an absurdity—a contradiction in terms. The particularity of Irish development is set aside. Ireland is crammed into a straitjacket that doesn't fit and is mutilated ideologically for the purpose.

"...the achievement of peasant proprietorship for over two-thirds of Irish tenants on the eve of the First World War should not be accepted as the solution to agrarian ills. The point has earlier been made that the legacy of the British land purchase acts was the creation of a mass of peasant proprietors, many of whom did not have the qualifications to cope with proprietorship" (*ibid*, p29).

This brings us back to Balfour. When he became Irish Secretary he applied the law against the Land League agitation and jailed William O'Brien. That was *Bloody Balfour*. But he saw that applying the law in the Irish social situation would not engender social harmony because landlordism was dysfunctional in Ireland.

The Tory Party at this time had made a working alliance leading to merger with Joseph Chamberlain's social reform Liberals, who were convinced that the *laissez-faire* capitalism of the Liberal leadership was not sustainable. In their stronghold of Birmingham Chamberlain's

group of Liberals had established a kind of municipal socialism. They conducted their own election campaign in 1885 with a programme strongly at variance with the official Liberal Party programme. One of their slogans was: "*Four acres and a cow*". They split with the Liberal Party over the first Home Rule Bill, formed an alliance with the Tory Party, and merged with it in the 1890s to form the Unionist Party.

The Liberal Party was the party of unrestricted capitalism. The Tory Party secured its future after the 1832 Reform—a reform brought about by the agitation of the *laissez-faire* capitalist middle class—by advocating restrictions on free enterprise (by Factory Acts in the first instance). And the ideal of a property-owning democracy was set out in the 1880s.

Seeing that rural Ireland would not settle down under landlordism, as rural England had done, Bloody Balfour looked for an alternative. The obvious alternative owner to the landlord was the tenant. In the 1890s Balfour slipped out of Dublin Castle unknown to the Home Rulers and went around the North-west to size up the possibilities for himself. He concluded that the peasants were not really "*primordial*" at all, and that they would make competent owners of the farms which they worked as tenants. Dooley begs to differ.

Towards the end of his life, in the late 1920s, it was put to Balfour that he had failed in Ireland. He replied that the Ireland they had lost was the Ireland he made. With the qualification that he made it in collaboration with Land & Labour, William O'Brien, Canon Sheehan, and with the multitudes of his enemies of 1890, it is a fair enough statement.

Dooley (quoting Comerford presumably because he agrees with him) writes of the "*myth of the alien settlers*", and how "*in the 1880s, the Irish nation was re-imagined so as to exclude them*". The word "*myth*" in revisionist usage has a slippery meaning. It has no definite content. Each writer can use it as he pleases, and can deny, if put to it, that it means simply a false or groundless idea. But in fact it always carries with it the suggestion of falseness.

It was widely taken to be the case that the landlord class of the 18th and 19th centuries consisted of settlers put in place by the Elizabethan, Cromwellian and Williamite conquests, and that they treated the general population of the country as aliens (as was done in the USA). Is that not the meaning of the Penal Law system that was perfected on the basis of the Williamite conquest?

In the late 18th century that settler class

demand, and was conceded, legislative independence in Ireland by Britain. It declared itself to be a nation, and if it had the will to take Ireland in hand and give it national shape, it had the means of doing so. But it did not have the will. It maintained the Penal Law system, except when Britain compelled it to make some reforms. It misruled the country and brought about the chaos of the late 1790s. The British Government saved it from the consequences of its misrule in 1798 and in return insisted on the abolition of the exclusive Irish Parliament. And that Parliament of the Protestant Irish nation, when desperately trying to ward off the Union in 1798-1800, still refused to save itself by opening up its nation to the excluded three quarters of the population.

For some years after the Union the Ascendancy Corporation of Dublin kept up a demand for the return of the Irish Parliament. But, after Emmet's Rebellion, and especially after the emergence of a nationalist movement amongst the politically excluded majority population around 1810, it no longer demanded Repeal of the Union. It became Unionist and relied on the Union Parliament to maintain its Ascendancy position in Ireland.

O'Connell in the early 1800s took part in the Repeal movement of the Ascendancy, even though it was postulated on the maintenance of Protestant privilege. When he launched his own Repeal movement a generation later, following Catholic Emancipation, he appealed to Protestant gentry to join him. They did not respond to his appeal. Nor did they respond to the appeal of Young Ireland in the 1840s. So what reality in historical fact is there to warrant the statement: "*In the 1880s, the Irish nation was re-imagined so as to exclude*" Protestant gentry?

If they had wanted to join in in the 1880s, who would have said "No!" to them? Davitt? Parnell? William O'Brien?

A generation later William O'Brien criticised the Home Rule Party under John Redmond's leadership for taking on an exclusively Catholic character and structure. On the initiative of the *Land & Labour Association* he took part in a political movement to restore non-sectarian nationalism. This movement, called the *All-For-Ireland League* broke Redmond's Home Rule Party in Cork County and City in the 1910 elections and damaged it in other parts of Munster.

The charge was that Redmondism was damaging the national cause by hindering the progress of land purchase by weaving a Catholic secret society, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, into the structure of the Home Rule party.

In the mid-1960s I met a Longford man, Tom Skelly, who told me he had led a land agitation in Longford in the late 1940s. In terms of my experience of North Cork this made no sense to me. But Skelly was an entirely honest man and his word could not be doubted. A few years later in Belfast I came across the explanation while investigating the social development of Partition. Redmond's Party discouraged land purchase in order to preserve nationality, while O'Brien's movement—the movement which arose independently of him and insisted that he come back from Italy to be its leader—was intent on getting the landlord issue out of the way so that nationality might flourish.

The enactment of land reform so as to produce property-owning democracy in the countryside seems to have been slow in the Midlands because the structure of the rural economy was different there than it was in Munster and because Redmond's Party was very much a nationalist party and was doubtful about the matter of social reform through British politics.

In 1923 the Treaty Government, having won the Civil War, brought in a Land Act with the object of sorting out the residue of the land problem. And, in its moment of conclusive military victory, it held a General Election. Dooley says that the fact that the Treaty Government committed itself to land reform caused areas in which there was an ongoing land problem to vote Treatyite even though they had been Republican in the Civil War. I have no reason to doubt it. But this passage strikes me as confused:

"Cumann na nGaedheal... polled a higher percentage of first preference votes than the Republicans... in eight of the 11 constituencies that were coterminous with the designated congested areas, the very areas most associated with republicanism during the Civil War. The exception included Cork North. Here the Republican share of the first preference votes was double that of Cumann na nGaedheal but more significantly the Farmers' Union Party polled almost seven per cent more first preferences than the Republicans. Cork North was "cow country", an area dominated by large predominantly dairy farmers who presumably did not want to see the break up of their farms" (p55).

The absence from academia of a history of the 1903 Land Act and the political development connected with it is in evidence here.

I began to notice the world about twenty years after that Election. I grew up in a roving house—a house where people gathered in the evening to play Jacobite

card games and discuss the world at home and abroad. The roving house, or rambling house, was a purely informal fact. I don't know how it happened that one house in particular out of all its neighbours came to be a rambling house. There was no money involved. And there was no grouping according to class. Two regulars at our house were a big farmer by the standards of the area and a casual labourer who owned a labourer's cottage. Another rambling house nearby was a labourer's cottage. I cannot recall any house of a bigish farmer that was a rambling house.

Neither there nor anywhere else did I ever hear mention of the land war. The landlords had been disposed of forty years earlier and were forgotten. There does not seem to have been any subsequent friction over land. Dooley quotes from a speech in the Dail in 1923 by Daniel Vaughan, a local IRA leader in the War of Independence, criticising the Government in June 1923 for giving military support to bailiffs who were seizing cattle from farms at the site of the Clonbanin Ambush "*for arrears of rent due to English landlords*". It surprises me that in 1923 in Clonbanin there were still tenant-farmers paying rent to English landlords. Dooley does not explain it. If it actually was rent that they defaulted on, they must have neglected to avail of the subsidised land purchase twenty years earlier, though they were within the core area of the land-purchase movement, which was spearheaded by D.D. Sheehan of Dromtarriffe, a couple of miles away.

Dooley quotes Sean Moylan in 1949:

"I know that within the parish where I have lived for the past twenty years, it would be impossible for any outsider to buy a farm in it—the bidding is so keen". Moylan was probably concealing the fact, in a diplomatic sort of way, that an outsider dare not bid for land that local wanted for themselves: 'no outsider need apply' was an adage as well worn in Ireland at this time as "no Irish need apply" had been in New York in the 19th century. When, for example, a wealthy businessman Davy Frame (a Scottish entrepreneur associated with Hammond Lane Foundry in Dublin, a firm which specialised in the demolition of big houses during the 1940s and 1950s) bought a large farm of land in County Laois in the mid-1940s, Oliver J. Flanagan... vehemently denounced him in the Dail: "Is it not a disgraceful state of affairs when we see huge estates... being allowed to be grabbed like a monster like this gentleman who comes plundering through the country as Cromwell came"... (p7).

I don't know what parish Moylan had been living in since 1949. I thought he lived in Dublin. But he represented North Cork. I often saw him. His manner was abrasive. A less diplomatic and concilia-

tory politician in a democracy would be hard to envisage. If he had meant that trade in land was being prevented by intimidation I think he would have said it straight out.

In the group of parishes with which I was reasonably familiar—I lived in them into my twenties—there was indeed little trade in land. And I never thought it strange that there wasn't. Land was not seen as being primarily a commodity. But there was no prohibition, formal or informal, on any farmer treating his land as a commodity and selling.

Under the British system there were legal obstacles to the sale of land. One of the revolutions precipitated by the British Famine policy for the modernising of Ireland was the de-sanctifying of land-ownership. Legislation was brought in to allow landlords, bankrupted by the starvation of their tenants, to sell their estates and move on. Land then became a commodity to be bought and sold as part of the capitalist system. But the new capitalist landlordism was no more effective and was much less durable than the old landlordism under which land was sacred. So the British Unionist Party decided to end it.

That British Unionism, which lasted from the late 1880s to the Great War, came about through a merger between the Tory Party which, based on the landed interest, had acted as a curb on the *laissez faire* capitalist Liberalism of the 1832 Reform, and the social reform Liberalism of Joseph Chamberlain, a successful but thoughtful manufacturing capitalist in Birmingham who concluded that unalleviated capitalism would not last. Chamberlain established a kind of municipal socialism in Birmingham, and his group fought the 1885 Election on an "Unauthorised Programme" which pre-figured the welfare state. The occasion of the formal split between Chamberlain and Gladstone was the Irish Home Rule Bill, but the substance of it was social policy. And it was in Ireland that this policy was put into effect.

The Liberal ideal was of a freely operating capitalism under which the interests of the small class of property owners and the vast proletarian mass would be harmonised if the Government did not interfere. The Unionist ideal—taking it for granted that *laissez faire* would not produce harmony—was a property-owning democracy.

The Unionist ideal was realised to a considerable extent in rural Ireland in the first decade of the 20th century. The Unionists believed that the ending of the landlord grievance would send nationalism into decline. The Redmondites shared that belief and therefore obstructed land purchase. The movement led by Canon

Sheen and (the other) William O'Brien believed that nationality would flourish once the grievance was removed.

It was the property-owning democracy (within which labour was not entirely propertyless because of the Labourers' Cottages with their acre of land) that saw off British rule in most of Ireland in 1918-21.

Land And Labour, a self-contradiction in British terms, was a reality in parts of Ireland for a couple of generations. In North Cork, as I was becoming aware of the world there, the three Dail seats were shared between the three parties. The Labour TD lived in a Labourer's Cottage, and was therefore to some extent a land-owner.

As I was told about it—and I know about the area only from living in it and hearing what was said—the Treaty split was eased into a party-division almost without warfare. The constituency was predominantly Anti-Treaty, but not sufficiently so to ensure two of the three seats to Fianna Fail.

The part played by the Land And Labour Association in the drive against landlordism after 1903, and against Redmondism in 1910, made Labour an integral part of political life.

I cannot see that the election of a Farmers' candidate there some time earlier signified concern at the possibility of some new land war. The farming interest was a major interest in the new State, and I assume that Farmers' Candidates contested elections until the system settled down and that interest was secure in either of the major parties.

The ICMSA [Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association] does not appear in Dooley's Index. It seemed to me to be a basic socio-economic institution.

I worked for some years as a labourer in a Co-op Creamery. For about three hours in the morning I unloaded milk from about 120 farms. Some of it came on small donkey cars with one twenty gallon tank. I can think of only two that came on a tractor and trailer with perhaps a dozen tanks. I would say that most came with about five.

All had shares in the Co-op, and there were monthly meetings of the shareholders to tell the Manager how to run it. Supposing the 12 tank farmers had more shares pro-rata than those with the donkey-cars—and I don't know if it was the case—there were not enough of them to determine policy.

The outcome of that factor and of others was a remarkably egalitarian society.

One of 12 tank farmers, whom I knew fairly well, was very, very industrious. If I overslept in the morning he'd be there waiting to have his milk dealt with so that he could get down to work. The scale of

his milk supply was due in part to industry and not just to the size of his farm. And I recall that 20 acres would be a small farm and 100 big.

According to the proper works of the market, as Dooley seems to conceive it, the gentleman of leisure with one tank on a donkey-car should have been bought out by the industrious 12 tank man. But the gentleman of leisure saw no reason to sell. His commodity was the milk and he produced enough to get by on. And the 12 tanker got no extension to his farm while I lived there.

I can recall only two farms that changed hands. One was at the end of a bohereen off a bohereen in the townland of Doireleigh where rushes grew vigorously. I forget why it was sold, but I know that the purchaser came from about 30 miles away, and there was no hint of ostracism.

The other was a much bigger farm of much better land in Stakehill. It was owned by the Minister of an Anglican Church in Dromagh, about seven miles away, outside Slieve Luacra. The purchaser was one of two brothers who had worked a farm of about 30 acres industriously and thriftily. Everyone in the locality went there to help with the first threshing and have a look at the Big House accoutrements which were preserved for the occasion.

I suppose the atrophy of the Anglican congregation at Dromagh would now be seen by RTE and the *Sunday Independent* as ethnic cleansing. I went to see the Church about 25 years ago and found it abandoned. I was vaguely aware of it when I lived there. I often passed it on a Sunday when cycling to a football match. There was a remote, forbidding atmosphere about it which discouraged interest even though I was thoroughly out of joint with the Catholic Church.

That was rural Ireland in all its backwardness of the 1950s. Sean Moylan was quite impatient with it and so he figures quite a bit in Dooley's book.

Michael Davitt does not figure at all in it. If Dooley had a proper grip on his theme, Davitt would have been his central reference point.

As an unskilled labourer in the culture of Slieve Luacra where the mental/manual division of labour central to English capitalism did not exist, I got a grasp of the economic process of capitalism by reading Marx's *Capital*—which I happened to order off a book list, thinking I was getting a book about capital cities. I understood that landlordism, for all that it was denounced as parasitic—including much of the time by Marx himself—had an economic function within capitalism. It equalised

the rates of profit on capital invested in different qualities of land.

It did not perform that function in Ireland. After 1903 the farmers were no longer entrepreneurs who invested capital on rented land. They were absolute owners of land, subject to no condition which compelled them to equal measures of industriousness. The man who came to the Creamery with his tank on a donkey car had a different interest in life to the 12-tank man, and he could indulge it.

That is not what Davitt had wanted at all. Davitt was a political economist with an English world view modified by a strong sentimental memory of his evicted Irish family. He was against the landlords but he was for landlordism. William O'Brien remarked somewhere that, if the tenant-farmers had taken in earnest what he said to them, they would have been inclined to string him up.

Davitt had a case on both counts. The landlords in Ireland were a disaster. And landlordism had a function in capitalism which would not be performed if the tenant-farmers became absolute owners of the land which they farmed. So he proposed that there should be landlordism without a class of landlords, with the state performing the economic function for capitalism that the landlords performed in England.

But O'Brien prevailed. And rural Ireland became a property-owning democracy. It lasted in its prime for two to three generations, which is a *very* long time by modern standards—behold the rise and fall of the Celtic Tiger—and is still not extinct.

Dooley approvingly quotes McEntee's dismissal of this rural social phenomenon as "*one man's dream*". It was a life that was lived by millions for a considerable time. And Dev was its product, not its creator. He could not have destroyed it if he had wanted to. And, as for Moylan, North Cork ignored this side of him, as of Davitt.

(Davitt returned to England at a certain point and tried to do with the English proletariat what he had enabled the Irish tenant-farmers to do for themselves by discounting what they did not approve of. He did not see why workers in industry should not organise to take over industry as the Irish tenant-farmers organised to take over the land. But they could not see their way to doing it, and he gave up.)

That was the Ireland that, according to Professor Garvin, *Prevented The Future*. Well, that prevented the future becoming our present: and except where it has some roots in the past that we were invited to despise *its* future seems precarious.

Brendan Clifford

Does It Stack Up ?

'LEAD POISONING' used to be something the bad cowboys got in the Wild West films, when they were shot full of lead. Now you may get it from tap water in Ireland. In Galway city, where there was badly infected water from the Corrib River a few years ago, it seems they cured their water problem by adding some chemicals to the water which killed off the bugs—at the price of dissolving lead from lead water pipes and lead water storage tanks in the older buildings. Lead water pipes are also still in use for some public water supplies. Up to about 1970 lead piping was used and at present Limerick Council estimates it has about 16% lead piping. A Dublin spokesperson said they add lime to the water supply to counteract lead from lead pipes.

No investigative journalism seems to have been done into what chemicals exactly are coming out of our water. Some times when the water taps are turned on in Cork, the smell of chlorine is so bad that one suspects that if one sniffed it one could easily get high. We have been told that the astronauts in the space station are processing their waste to yield, they say, 97% drinking water. New York City boasts they reprocess their waste: they say their drinking water goes through at least eight pairs of kidneys. In Ireland, people want to know exactly what is in our drinking water but are fobbed off by officials with various ruses and even the Green party—that-oh-so-achingly-environmentally-friendly-party—won't discuss it.

SCIENCE AND JOBS Irish science graduates are being given little opportunity for jobs at home as I mentioned in my last column. According to Marie O'Connor, author of *Emergency: Irish hospitals In Chaos*, several firms in the USA—who have been given contracts by Minister of Health, Mary Harney's HSE—are prepared to pay enormous fines and damages to patients where they have cocked up in their various test results by wrongly analysing them. Quest Diagnostics has said it has set aside €179 million to settle allegations it violated criminal and civil laws. Other companies employed by HSE are Fresenius, UPMC, Triad (the former occupant of the Beacon Hospital). These companies have paid more than \$2 billion in fraud fines to the US Government and yet the HSE has said it is satisfied to deal with them. The USA private health system is widely acknowledged to be corrupt. Is it any different in Ireland? Over 300,000 smear

tests for cancer will be sent annually from HSE to Quest. If Quest operates on the basis that what they charge for the tests overall greatly exceeds the fines/damages they pay for mistakes or negligence, then what chance have the cancer victims of being correctly diagnosed in time? When it is lives v. money, the money seems to win every time. We should do all these tests in Ireland where they have a better chance of being done properly, and where the responsibility can be pinned down, but Harney's dictum of *Boston v. Berlin* seems to have won out. Perhaps Minister of Education, Batt O'Keefe will have a chat to the Health Minister Mary Harney to set up proper laboratories in Ireland and keep our science graduates at home and in employment. This will save a lot of money by getting the testing done correctly.

CORK DOCKLANDS: A BRIDGE TOO FAR? Despite Cork City Council and the Irish Government being very short of money, the "Cork Docklands" saga rolls onwards. Cork City Manager Joe Gavin is really eager to develop what he calls the "*Cork Docklands*" area. The trouble is, it is not the Docklands at all—it is downriver of the actual docks and in an area of great beauty and public amenity. The annual Cork Summer Show has to be closed down because the showgrounds are needed for the *grand plan*. It was possible to walk—yes walk—to the Show from the city. But in future, if there is to be a Cork Summer Show, it will be necessary to drive to it somewhere yet to be designated. And the Port will have to move downstream ten or fifteen kilometres from the city for which the port initially made. The Port does not want to go but Joe Gavin is determined to close it out by building, not one but two unnecessary bridges. He says the bridges will have opening spans but everybody knows the bridges will not be opened or will malfunction or be too expensive to man. So now we know, *inter alia*, why Cork city was not allowed to have a boat marina—one of the only tidal cities in Europe not to have a marina—and Cork city was not allowed to have a water-taxi service into the city from the many communities around Cork Harbour.

The votes of the city councillors and county councillors count for nothing. It seems they are powerless. It is a fight between Titans: the bureaucrats of City Hall, County Hall, Port Authority, Planning Board and Department of the Environment Inspectors who seem to favour some developer's plans over the good of the citizen. Joe Gavin was reported as saying we needed more retail/residential developments in the Dockland area, but the Port of Cork Authority is fighting the plans at this moment in time. There are already too many empty shops and too many empty apartments and too many empty offices in Cork city itself. The city

needs the "Docklands" development and its bridges like a hole in the head and not just because the economy has tanked.

Dublin has this sort of madness also. Dublin's tourism is ruined by the developer Sean Dunne, whose companies bought up four of Dublin's premier hotels to form a site for new developments and then, in an excess of foolishness, gutted all the fittings and furnishing and kitchens and bars **before** he had got planning permission for the new developments. Now the hotels are being used for B&Bs and Sean Dunne is as quoted in the papers as "insolvent". *Quelle surprise!*

THE BANKS Nobody knows whether the Irish Banks are in difficulty or not. Both the Financial Regulator and the Governor of the Central Bank are on record as declaring the banks to be sound. The banks are certainly sailing too close to the wind according to their published balance sheets. And the fraudulent and possibly criminal matters in Anglo-Irish Bank have led to it being taken over by the State. But Anglo-Irish is still trading and so are Bank of Ireland and AIB. It will take the three banks at least two years and possibly five years to find out the bottom line in the borrowers to whom banks have lent their depositors' monies. If the banks survive for the five years that is. In the meantime, it is reasonable for us to assume that bank directors, managers, and auditors have, over the past few years overstated bank profits. Huge bonuses were paid on the basis of huge overstated profits and overstated Balance Sheets. Will we see the bonuses repaid? Was fraud involved? And is it continuing?

SPRING WATCH Dick Spring will be one of those who now will have a duty to find out in regard to AIB. Last March in the *Irish Political Review*, I foretold his second coming when, last February, he addressed the Cork Chamber on various subjects but mostly on matters of dangerous sub-prime mortgages in the USA. Now he will know a lot more about them at even closer quarters perhaps than from his non-executive directorship of Fexco in Tralee. Recently, he has been co-opted by the Government as a non-executive Director of AIB to use the financial expertise he gained from his role in Fexco—which is really surprising given that his role there was as 'hands off' as could be. But the Government in its wisdom has also made him Chairman of what is called by the media as *Bord Snip Nua*. It is the agency the Government has set up and tasked to look into the wage/salary structure of the whole civil service—including that of the Government itself. Dick of course has a stake here as he has a huge pension from his time in office as TD and Tánaiste. Now there are even whispers of him running for the office of President after MacAleese

Prof. Ilan Pappé and Mr Alan Shatter TD

The following letter of 12th February failed to appear in the *Irish Times*

Deaglán de Bréadún's report on the presentation by a delegation from the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (of which I was a part) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs (The Irish Times, 12th February) contains two inaccuracies which need to be corrected.

Firstly, as you report, Professor Ilan Pappé—who was present as a guest witness of the IPSC delegation—was attacked in a very personalised way by Deputy Alan Shatter. In responding, however, Pappé did not accuse Mr Shatter of "a personal sneering campaign" (whatever that is). What he did say was that he was well used to the "personalised smear campaign" against him.

Secondly, and far more importantly, Pappé did not say that the aim of the Israeli onslaught in Gaza was "the 'genocidal' elimination of Hamas and Hizbullah" but instead described the slow but relentless attrition of the Palestinian people from the land of Palestine since 1948 as a crime akin to genocide, of which Gaza was merely the latest, planned episode.

I would also add that to describe Ilan Pappé as an "Israeli-born academic" and "an anti-Zionist historian from the University of Exeter" is misleading. He is an Israeli historian who had to leave Israel due to death threats and now works in Exeter, but still travels regularly to Israel. **Philip O'Connor**

Israel: Land Grab

The following letter of 11th February failed to find publication in the *Irish Times*

As someone who signed the letter to which Oliver Donohoe refers (letter 11 February) I have no wish to be even-handed in allocating blame for what is taking place in the Middle East. Any honest appraisal of that situation cannot fail to see who is to blame. It should not matter a jot if Israel is a state which looks after its workers (itself a contentious point as many Arab workers would testify), if that state is founded upon, and continues to be involved in, the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian population. Instead of hiding behind homilies Mr. Donohoe should deal with the arguments. Would Mr. O'Donohoe agree that the history of Israel has been marked by a series of land grabs and aggressive expansion? Has Israel ever shown any evidence of understanding the impact of its behaviour on the indigenous population and what that behaviour was likely to provoke? Does it not continue to create illegal settlements on Palestinian land? Has it not blatantly ignored numerous United Nations resolutions regarding its expanding land borders? Has it ever entered into honest negotiations with the political representatives of the Palestinian people where there was the remotest possibility of a functional Palestinian state as the possible outcome?

Regarding the argument that equal condemnation should be placed at the door of Hamas. I will admit that such condemnation might be appropriate if there was equality of weaponry. Until that time I view the military response of Hamas as one of desperation from a people with no place left to go. As it stands they are confronted by one of the most sophisticated armies in the world which includes in its ranks many leaders with an openly racist attitude towards the Arabs.

It does strike me as particularly odd that someone who condemns an armed response from the Palestinians, also condemns a peaceful action such as a boycott. If you are to deprive the Palestinians of an armed response to their subjugation and also deprive them of the chance of a peaceful boycott what do you suggest they do Mr. Donohoe?

Whether a boycott would have a significant detrimental effect on Irish workers and consumers is, to say the least, questionable. However, to consider issues of international law, ethnic cleansing and world instability as issues that should be ignored because a response might have a marginal impact on our well-being surely demeans us all. In my opinion a more important question of self-interest is to confront the single most dangerous and de-stabilising issue in the world today—the one injustice that continues to feed into a myriad of causes in that part of the world. Israel has shown ever since its inception in 1948 that it is not capable of adopting a just position towards the Palestinian people. This situation has been compounded by the financial and moral blank cheque which America and the west continues to provide—a cheque that insures that Israel never has to face the full implication of its actions. It is time to call a halt for all our sakes, Palestinian, Israeli and the rest of humanity. **Eamon Dyas**

steps down. Again watch this space as we tail his newly emerging role. His golf-playing with pals will be severely curtailed if he takes his new roles seriously and uses them as a springboard to greater things.

THE COURTS Talking of which, we were surprised to see at the Annual Mass for the Courts, that Judges John O'Hagan, Richard Johnson and Peter Smithwick all wore *Morning Dress* and *Silk Stovepipe Top-Hats*. Are they in touch with the common man and woman?

Michael Stack

Gaza: A Disgusting Spectacle

What the EU policy on the Israeli assault on Gaza should have been is easy to summarise: end the privileged treatment of Israel by the EU and deal directly with Hamas as the elected Government of Palestine. All else is posturing and hand wringing while condoning Israel's actions. Far from the EU doing this, it did the opposite during the assault on Gaza. It had the power to do something in the situation and when it did not use that power it was automatically supporting Israel's one-sided war.

Like the US, the EU is now liaising with the Muslim world (and a wider world) via Israel and occupied Palestine. That is where they both leave their calling cards. What an absurd position for the EU to be in.

The Irish Government has dissociated itself from the Israeli stance. No doubt a number of other Governments think

similarly. But what does that matter? They stay ineffectual when and where it matters. Is it beyond their collective wit to find a way of going beyond words? Mumbling reservations is contemptible. Why does it not establish a counter-grouping within the Union of those States that are unhappy with the prevailing tendency of EU policy on the Middle East. There is plenty such a group can do: from delivering humanitarian assistance direct to those who need it to having talks with elected representatives in the region.

Those opposing Israel's actions should copy the Member States who endorse Israel and who show great initiative in showing how to do so. For example, immediately after the typically cynical ceasefire—that showed even more contempt of the UN than normal by Israel—the leaders of these countries (UK, France, Germany, etc.) rushed at breakneck speed to show off their endorsement of Israel in a manner that even surprised Israel:

"In an effort to shore up the ceasefire, the leaders of France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Czech Republic, and UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon, attended a summit hosted by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh, and then met Israeli leaders in Jerusalem. French president Nicolas Sarkozy said: "We have pledged to help Israel and Egypt... end the smuggling of weapons into Gaza." The European leaders also stressed the need for a speedy Israeli troop withdrawal and to open the borders to allow in humanitarian assistance" (Irish Times, 19 Jan).

In other words, as with the credit crisis, another *ad hoc* sub-grouping of Member States immediately formed itself to speak for the EU. This Grouping saw the need to

rush to Egypt and Jerusalem but not to Gaza. And Israel's breaking of their ceasefire, for instance, by shelling Palestinian fishermen is politely ignored—as is the genocidal blockade of Gaza.

Then to follow up, all 27 Member States met Israel on 21st January, following up with a meeting with Middle East countries on 25th January. But Hamas was left in the cold: everybody and anybody but the people that matter. The aim no doubt to do exactly what Israel wants—isolate the democratic representatives on the Palestinians and continue the terror against the people.

No doubt if and when the US decides on a push against Iran or pursues a crazy escalation against Pakistan and Afghanistan, or indulges in some other new escapade, we will have another grouping of Member States forming itself with the familiar faces and silence by those who might, allegedly, disagree.

What a disgusting spectacle the EU has become in its dealing with the rest of the world.

The only thing worse was the irony of the Irish Government hating all this in an ineffectual way and at the very same time commemorating the First Dail. The election to that Dail was also ignored, and the new Irish Government isolated by the 'international community' of the day—the representatives of which met at Versailles. As with Hamas, war was declared on the Irish Democracy. But those brave men and women were true to themselves, were not daunted by the greatest Empire in the world, had the courage of their convictions, and eventually won. They have worthy successors in Hamas but the Irish Cabinet is not living up to them, we regret to say.

Bob Doyle And General Lister's Last Stand

I met Enrique Lister
And I took him by the hand
"Adelante! Comandante!
To the front, your last command!"
Though one commander, Alexander
—Captain Bill—tried to deny
Bob, Mick and Peter hugged their leader
—General Lister's last goodbye.

[air: *The Wearing of the Green*: "I met with Napper Tandy and I took him by the hand"]

Bob Doyle, the last surviving Connolly Column veteran and Irish International Brigade combatant in Spain, died this January 22. I had sung the above verse in tribute to Bob in Dublin's Liberty Hall on June 27, 2006, on the occasion of the launch of his autobiography, *Brigadista: An Irishman's Fight Against Fascism*.

This was only a month since my father's death and I related how, after the death of Eugene Downing in 2003, both Bob and himself were both mutually and bemusedly aware that they were now seen to be engaged in the equivalent of a slow bicycle race as to which of them would be recorded as the very last Irish *brigadista* fighter. I accordingly introduced myself as the son of the runner-up and conveyed what had been my father's death-bed best wishes: "Good luck to Bob Doyle! He's the last man standing!"

See pages 172-173 of Bob's book for a description of his feelings about the 1994 Spanish event to which my verse refers:

"On Saturday 8 October, together with some 700-800 other men and women from many countries, I stood in the cemetery of Morata de Tajuña to watch and listen as a platform of representatives of the Comunidad de Madrid supported by other 'important personages' dedicated a memorial at the former

rubbish tip where lie scattered the remains of the 5,000 Spanish Republican militia men and International Brigaders who were killed here in 1937 (including nineteen Irish *brigadistas*). The fact that I and others of the Jarama Memorial Association who had campaigned for many years to bring about this result were but apart of the crowd of onlookers, while on the 'official platform' there were those who bitterly opposed us, brought only a wry smile. Maybe it has been and always will be so. When the cause which the rebel has for so long held to his heart becomes 'policy' there is no shortage of important personages to jump on the bandwagon. This is the time for the rebel to move on to a new cause."

See also pages 160-165 and 170-173 for the following account by Bob's editor, Harry Owens:

"François Mazou (of France) ... had been a political commissar in Spain and

was wounded in Jarama ... He'd recruited Bob and me into a new campaign of his own ... In the small town of Morata de Tajuña, south of Madrid, where in 1937 he was based during the battle of Jarama, François had located the rubbish pit on the edge of the cemetery where the remains of the Republican war dead had been gathered and dumped under broken pots, dead flowers and assorted junk. Through his own efforts ... from his tiny apartment in Pau across the border, François had achieved a lot ... In London Bob and Walter Greenhalgh formed the Jarama Memorial Association to campaign for the restoration of the graves ... A typed sheet in Spanish on plain notepaper from the Republican veterans' association in Madrid (finally) announced the imminent unveiling of an inscribed plaque over 'El Corral' in Morata cemetery on Saturday 8 October 1994 ..."

"Despite their (Honorary Secretary's) condemnation of Walter's and Bob's Jarama Memorial Association as 'redundant and divisive', now that there was going to be a ceremony, the UK's veterans' association organised a large delegation and a speaker [International Brigade Association Hon. Sec. Bill Alexander, formerly Assistant General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain – MO'R]. By that time Bob had been excluded from Association membership ... (but) the last Irish survivor from Jarama, Peter O'Connor from Waterford, was to speak for the Irish. Mick O'Riordan came. At the last moment François agreed to travel ..."

"We strolled out to the edge of the town and got our first sight of the cemetery with a huge covered marble plaque ready to be unveiled, right along the top wall looking down on the graves of generations of Morata's worthy families. Manus recognised an elderly man at the back being approached respectfully by people in the crowd. It was the legendary Republican General Lister, aged and feeble, on his own today. Gently, Manus approached and asked if he could bring him through the crowds. Lister assented and, for the last time, with Manus guiding, Lister 'went to the Front'. [Lister was now in his 88th year and suffering from Parkinson's disease. I brought the veteran General up front by one hand, while carrying his stool in the other, pushing through the gathering in order to seat Lister adjacent to the memorial itself, alongside the Connolly Column banner being held by Irish brigadistas Peter O'Connor and my father Mick O'Riordan, who warmly embraced their heroic frontline leader – MO'R] He died two months later (to the very day, on 8 December 1994). Peter's speech recalled that his native Waterford had sent ten volunteers to Spain, five had fought in this spot and one, Mossie Quinlan, was buried here. He added the only lines spoken in all the day's events

recognising the key role of François ... Bob and François were deeply moved. Both of them were here only as onlookers in the crowd ..."

"After the gleaming plaque with its gold lettering had been unveiled, we had a huge meal in the *El Cid*, the local restaurant. It was a noisy banquet, packed with famous guests, visitors, local friends of François and their families, and the gravediggers who'd first helped him to locate the grave site. [As Enrique Lister had not been well enough to stay on for the banquet, and as Bill Alexander hadn't met him at all that day, Bill insisted that no other veterans could possibly have met him, writing to one correspondent that 'Manus O'Riordan was wrong' in stating that General Lister had been present at the unveiling ceremony! – MO'R] ... Bob dined at a distance from the UK association. During the visit he never spoke in public, but when we got the next day's papers there was his photo on the back cover of *The Sunday Times*, alone a veteran lost in the crowd, his head in his hand, by a tombstone at the emotional climax in the graveyard. The story in a picture."

Manus O'Riordan

Bob Doyle's Belfast Last Stand

[Introduction: Bob Doyle lived his life as an activist to the very end. His three best speeches in recent years – short but succinct – were delivered in Belfast. The first of these, reproduced in full below, was delivered on the occasion of his Belfast book launch on September 16, 2006. The second, on October 13, 2007—as he jointly unveiled the Belfast International Brigade memorial in Writers' Square with fellow Spanish Civil War veteran and outstanding British trade union leader Jack James Larkin Jones—largely repeated the wording of the first speech. But his final speech, at the rededication of the Belfast memorial on November 8, 2008, was a powerful restatement of activist commitment to the very end, and is also reproduced in full. Suffering from pneumonia on that cold, wet and windy Belfast day, Bob died in London two months later on January 22, 2009, just three weeks' short of his 93rd birthday. His cremation took place in London on February 10 and his ashes were brought back by his family to his native Dublin for a commemorative procession on February 14 from the Garden of Remembrance to Liberty Hall, where a celebration of his life took place. **Manus O'Riordan]**

[1] SEPTEMBER 16, 2006:

Hello Everyone,
I have prepared something to say to you all, but I'm not as strong as I used to be, so I will read what I can, but please bear with

me if I hand over to my comrade Harry Owens, should I need to. I'd like to tell why I'm here.

Some of you may wonder why a 90 year old veteran of a war that happened a long time ago in a far off country is here speaking to you today. Some of you who know a little about the Spanish Civil War may see it as a glamorous episode in working class history, when young poets, like Byron in Greece, fought and died in a foreign land for a noble cause. Perhaps you have come to see me, a decrepit romantic relic. But I am not here to indulge in emotional memories, though I have many memories of comrades and events that affect me deeply.

I am not here to make you sad with tragic recollections of a heroically fought war, or to make you happy with my survival into old age.

I am here to make you boil with anger; the powers that supported Franco in Spain are still active, and today their reach is global. The same US corporations that supplied the fascists with oil in Spain are today pilfering the oil of the Iraqi people.

The British government—that lied to the people while secretly giving financial credits and hypocritically allowing arms to be smuggled to the Spanish fascists—is the same government that lied about weapons of mass destruction and led the British people into a war that they did not want. Those who lie and cheat in order to hold on to power, who exploit child and slave labour in the third world to make yet more profits, who torture, murder and massacre in defence of 'their interests'—they are still in control.

When I am told that Spain was the last noble cause, I know that I am speaking to someone who doesn't want to see the obvious truth. In 1936 there were many apologists for racism and oppression who did not want to see fascism for what it was. Today the fight against those who put profit before people is just as intense, and the stakes are higher than ever. We must make common cause with those in the third world who are now in the front line, as Spain once was.

No more Kenyan peasants must be forced off their land and into urban slums so that supermarkets can sell cheap roses and out-of-season strawberries.

No more Congolese child soldiers must kill and be killed so that Nokia can sell ever cheaper mobile phones. Those who stand up to corporate global capitalism, like Chavez in Venezuela and Castro in Cuba, must be defended.

Those whose greed would destroy our environment, with catastrophic consequences for humanity, must be defeated. It is indeed a noble struggle and it will not be over until the liberation of the entire human race.

La lucha continua. [The struggle continues]

[2] OCTOBER 13, 2007:

It is grand that the efforts and the often heroic sacrifices made by our comrades in the past are remembered here today. It is right and fitting that we should honour the part that they played in the fight against fascism. But let us not fall into the trap of romanticising the past and isolating it from events today ...

So while we pay our respects to those who fought in the past, let their sacrifice also be an inspiration to us today. Let us honour their memory by carrying on the struggle against those who put profit before people: the ongoing struggle for the liberation of mankind.

La lucha continua.

[3] NOVEMBER 8, 2008:

We are here in Belfast at a most significant moment to honour the memory of those who fought fascism and militarism beside the Spanish people.

Despite the allied victory in 1945, Spain was abandoned to a fascist dictatorship for a further 30 years by the western democracies. This was no accident, no oversight by our governments.

It reflected exactly the policies and the interests of the classes which had earlier organised the arms blockade which brought about the defeat of the Spanish Republic.

Their post war policies showed they cared little about democracy in Europe. While they expanded their economic empires under the shelter of the NATO cold war alliance.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, these right wing forces have increased in violence and their policies have lost all pretence of defending democracy. Today NATO forces fight in Afghanistan, and US and British forces occupy Iraq.

Their multi-nationals use the World Trade Organisation and the European Union to force countries to open up for economic exploitation.

Now we are suddenly faced by capitalism's worst crisis caused by their speculation and borrowing, and by the ruling that when banks made millions of profits, governments were told not to interfere. But now they have bankrupted themselves, we find there is no end to the public's money which is given to bail them out.

Billions which were never there for education, for health or for the Third World, have been thrown into the ocean of debts. And more will follow unless we all, both my generation and those of all of you, act together.

Banking is too important to be left to private enterprise and the money which our governments are giving the banks is taken away from our public funds.

The last time this happened in the 1930s we ended up at war because we left it all to the Ruling Classes. This time we have

to unite, and act to protect ourselves. The rich must pay for their own mistakes, and we must make our governments use our money for our own needs and that of the poor everywhere.

La lucha continua.

Bob Doyle [1916-2009]

In Memoriam: **Bob Doyle**

The last surviving Irish combatant on the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War has died.

Bob Doyle passed away in London on Thursday, 22nd January, aged 92, after a short illness.

He was born in Dublin on 12th February 1916, shortly before the Easter Rising, and became politically active himself in the 1930s, joining the IRA after being beaten up in street fights with the Blueshirts which left him with permanent damage in one eye.

But he quickly became more interested in social issues and, in 1937, decided to volunteer for the International Brigade, motivated in part by the fact that his former flat-mate Kit Conway had been killed in action at the Battle of Jarama on Doyle's 21st birthday.

He was foiled in his initial attempts, arrested and expelled from Valencia after he had stowed away on a boat. Undeterred, he eventually made it back to Spain later that year by crossing the Pyrenees.

Initially deployed to train new volunteers, as a result of his IRA experience, he disobeyed orders in order to join a group heading for the front line. After engaging in battle at Belchite, he was taken prisoner by Italian fascist troops on the Aragon front in March 1938, along with Irish International Brigade leader Frank Ryan.

He was imprisoned for 11 months in a concentration camp established in the disused monastery of San Pedro, near Burgos, where he was regularly tortured by Spanish fascist guards and interrogated by the German Gestapo and, once, taken out to be shot.

Released as part of a prisoner exchange deal, Doyle enlisted in the British Merchant Navy for the duration of the Second World War before settling in London with his Spanish wife Lola.

Active until the very end, Doyle was a regular visitor to both his native Ireland and to Spain for International Brigade commemorations and, in 1996, along with all other survivors of the Brigades, was offered Spanish citizenship. He delivered his last speech at the rededication of Belfast's International Brigade memorial on November 8.

He published an account of his experiences in *Brigadista—An Irishman's Fight Against Fascism* in June 2006, launched by Michael D Higgins and Ronnie Drew.

Since Michael O'Riordan's passing in May of that year, Doyle had been the last surviving Irish combatant in the International Brigade.

Doyle is survived by his sons Bob and Julian, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Further information: www.geocities.com/irelandscw/ibvol-BobDoyle.htm for extensive material on Bob Doyle's life and times on Ciaran Crossey's excellent "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War" website.

FIGHT continued

4. **Maintenance of the last pay agreement.** ICTU says the Construction Industry Federation, IBEC and the Government have reneged on the terms of the agreement even though 60-plus companies in the private sector have paid it and other companies have indicated their willingness.

5. **Fairness in taxation.** Income from all sources should be taxed in the same way. Rules should be enforced on tax exiles. Tax shelters that do not have a proven economic purpose to be eliminated. A tax on all houses other than the primary home. A rate of taxation of 48% introduced for higher earners.

6. **Restore consumer confidence** by having stimulus in the economy through mortgage protection etc.

7. **An overhaul of the public service Pension Levy.**

8. **Private sector pensions.** Introduction of a pension protection fund. Unlike in Britain, the State does not guarantee that workers will be paid if their pension schemes go bust. The Unions wanted an enhanced form of pension protection in return for signing up to spending cuts.

9. **Employment rights legislation** to be progressed through the Oireachtas as soon as possible.

10. **National Recovery Bonds** to deal with Government borrowing.

The cover of the *Newsweek* magazine in one of its January issues carried the headline "*We are all Socialists now*"—how wrong could they be! "*We are all Capitalists now*"—that's what!

P.S.: "*ALL Irish banks will be nationalised within the next three months according to union leader David Begg, who said the recapitalisation of Bank of Ireland and AIB is bound to fail.*"

"The ICTU general secretary said the 'disaffected population' of Ireland is living in fear and anger and urged the Government not to ignore the unions' proposed 10-point plan for economic recovery.

"I guarantee within three months, all the Irish banks will be nationalised.

"The difficulty with what the Government have been doing in trying to recapitalise the banks is that the banks' first priority is to shore up their capital base and, in doing that, it is saving money.

"It is the direct opposite to the Keynesian approach where you want to try to put money into the economy to try to have it spent"... (Irish Examiner, 23.2.2009).

FIGHT continued

ICTU general secretary, David Begg stated.

"I think all our colleagues are aware of what the state of the economy is at the moment. These are not normal circumstances in which the pursuit of industrial action could bring forward a positive result for everyone. This is a very negative situation and we have to be conscious of that. However, no trade union leader will ever surrender the requirement to defend the interests of a particular group of workers." (*Irish Examiner*, 4.2.2009).

Informed sources said the ICTU executive was likely to consider moves which would involve all Unions balloting members on industrial action. Sources said this would not necessarily mean there would be mass strikes but rather that the Unions would be equipped with a mandate if this should prove necessary in the future.

On Thursday, 26th February 13,000 lower-paid civil servants who are members of the Civil and Public Services Union (CPSU) held a one-day stoppage against the Government's new pension Levy.

From 28th February 2009, staff at Dublin Bus began what could be an opened-ended strike at cutbacks planned by the company.

On the same day, the NBRU, will stage a one-day strike. On Sunday, the other main Union at the company, SIPTU, will begin a continuous all-out strike.

The moves are in protest at cutback plans drawn up by the company which would involve about 290 job losses, including those of 160 drivers.

The company is also to reduce its fleet by 120 buses.

Separately, tens of thousands of other public service staff are currently balloting for industrial action.

This includes members of the three teaching Unions, INTO, ASTI and TUI, as well as 10,000 members of the PSEU, which represents mid-ranking civil servants.

The Psychiatric Nurses Association is also carrying out a ballot of members on industrial action.

On 24th February the Executive of the ICTU is expected to consider whether constituent Unions should ballot members in both the public and private sectors on industrial action in support of what it says would be a fairer way to deal with the economic crisis.

A decision by IMPACT to press ahead with a ballot would be highly significant. It prides itself on having members who accept economic realities and are prepared to share the pain of recovery. For its Executive to even consider industrial action indicates Government is truly losing the support of the country's 2.1m workers.

The fact that SIPTU has not declared a ballot may be because, even though it has 70,000 public service members who will be affected by the Levy, it also has 130,000 private sector members who must have their considerable grievances addressed. The Union has been exceptionally vocal on the need to avoid focusing solely on the Pensions Levy. It insists that the workforce as a whole must not be forced to carry the economic burden of recovery when those responsible for the collapse—the construction, banking and business sectors—are left to reap the benefits. Therefore it wants to ensure any action is in protest at the overall betrayal of workers by the Government concessions to business interests.

The big question which no one seems prepared to answer is when all these ballots will be activated.

However, time is pressing. Whether private sector Unions are prepared to accept it or not, the introduction of the Levy will be the first step that will precipitate an ICTU response—and that will happen within two weeks—1st March 2009.

The end goal is a return to the Social Partnership table they left so ominously two weeks ago. There they will continue to press for a social solidarity pact which will make all sections of society contribute to the rigours of economic recovery while at the same time insulating those worst equipped to handle the recession.

However, at the same time the Unions cannot appear to be going cap-in-hand to Government.

"There is no point in us going back to Government with a wing and a prayer that this will fix itself," said IMPACT general secretary Peter McLoone.

"There has to be clear evidence that we will engage as we committed to do under the framework document. We won't get too many chances to engage. There is no plan. The only remedies are those putting the entire burden on working people. We are only going to get one more chance to do this."

Nevertheless, a failure to secure a return to discussions at Government Buildings this time round could be disastrous. It will set a precedent that Government and employers can set the agenda from now on in any Social Partnership process. It will leave Unions as a marginalised bit-player in discussions.

WELFARE CUTS

SIPTU General President Jack O' Connor has warned that unless the Government, employers and the financial elite are prepared to face up to the need for a Social Solidarity Pact, rather than expect PAYE workers to pay for the current crisis "there is every possibility the situation will escalate dramatically out of

control" within a matter of weeks.

He was

"dismayed at the Goodbody report proposing welfare cuts to reduce public expenditure levels. It is appalling that people threatened with unemployment, and in many cases with the loss of their homes and occupational pension entitlements as well, can expect nothing better from the elite of the financial services industry than the suggestion that their meagre social welfare benefit may be reduced; and all this while not one additional cent has been raised from the wealthy in our society.

"At the very least the big players in the financial services industry, which played a key role in creating the global crisis, should have the decency to refrain from commenting and frightening people. It is precisely this reign of psychological terror waged on PAYE workers that has contributed so much to undermining consumer confidence which, according to Goodbody's, will result in the economy contracting by six per cent this year.

"It is now past time that those at the top in our society, be they Government, employers or the elite in the financial services industry face up to the reality that the only prospect of navigating our way out of this debacle is that offered by a Social Solidarity Pact to which all sectors of society contribute in accordance to their capacity. It is neither equitable nor financially sustainable to place the entire burden on the PAYE sector, including those joining the ranks of the unemployed.

"Unless the concept of a pact is grasped within the next few days, and certainly at the latest within a few weeks, there is every possibility that the situation will escalate dramatically out of control" (16.2.2009).

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY PACT

Below, in abridged form are the 10 points the Irish Congress of Trade Unions believes must be addressed as part of the economic recovery.

1. **Unemployment.** Preserve employment wherever possible and ensure redundancy is not the first option. Share work and where it is reduced, fill time through the training and upskilling of workers through the flex security model.

2. **The banking system.** If €7 billion is to be pumped into the banking system from the National Pensions Reserve Fund, the public interest must be the only consideration for Government. People responsible for the banking crisis to be removed. Remuneration of the top executives to be cut.

3. **Competitiveness.** Moves to respond to the weakness of Sterling. Energy prices should be reduced.

continued on page 27

FIGHT continued

time runs out." (Maurice Hayes, *Irish Independent*, 23.2.2009).

THE LOW-PAID AND THE GREY REVOLT

Unions have reacted angrily to a suggestion by a Government minister that the minimum wage should be reduced in light of the current recession.

On 10th February 2009, Labour Affairs Minister, Billy Kelleher said that the review of the minimum wage, which is currently before the Labour Court, needs to take account of the changed economic environment.

He said that while it was important people were rewarded for a fair day's work, the minimum wage of €8.65 per hour should not become a barrier to employment.

As a junior minister, Mr Kelleher earns €139,266 a year—before the imposition of the new public service pension Levy.

The ICTU said it was "quite ridiculous" to suggest that low-paid workers were the cause of the economic downturn.

It accused Mr Kelleher of acting in a "very underhand manner".

"To suggest that low-paid workers were the cause of our economic woes is quite ridiculous, particularly when the Government is taking €7 billion to €8 billion from the National Pension Reserve Fund to back high-paid bankers.

Mr. Kelleher was speaking at Dublin Castle at the launch of the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) annual review.

The authority found that almost one in 10 workers were not being paid the minimum wage. Over 3,000 inspections were carried out last year with regard to the minimum wage, with 9% of employers found to be in breach.

The Labour Court is due to make a decision shortly and business groups have called for a reduction of €1 an hour.

NERA director Ger Deering warned that some rogue employers were using the recession as an excuse not to pay the minimum wage.

More than €3 million in unpaid wages was recovered from bosses last year by the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA).

Most unpaid wages were owed to workers in the hotel and catering, retail, contract cleaning, security, construction and agriculture industries.

It's a grand old country all the same—following the mass Protests last November over the proposed removal of the medical cards for the Over-70s, the Government compromised with a new threshold of €700 a week for a single person or €1,400 for a couple before being subject to a

means test.

In annual terms that would work out at €36,000 plus and €72,000 plus annual pensions.

A worker rearing a family on the Minimum Wage for a 40-hour week would barely earn €18,000 a year—never mind €36,000 from a pension.

The Single Contributory Old Age pension is €230 a week or €12,000 a year approx. Double that for a man and wife.

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP STILL KICKING

"Following the correct decision to press ahead with the cuts, Cowen insisted that social partnership was not dead. This sounds a bit like his remark that it was business as usual at Anglo Irish Bank.

"Cowen may mean that, by having the discussions on the cuts, even though they failed, the social partnership apparatus is still intact. But the whole premise on which social partnership was based has evaporated" (*Sunday Business Post*, 8.2.2009).

"SIPTU general president and joint vice president of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Jack O'Connor, said it was not too late to agree a social solidarity pact to avoid catastrophe" (*Irish Independent*, 9.2.2009).

However, the Social Partners failed to bring everyone together. The partnership process in this case has suffered a serious arrest and its heart threatens to stop beating. The Government has been left with free rein to implement its 2 billion cost-cutting plan. Maybe in the current economic climate it needs to be unencumbered in its governance and it feels freed from the shackles of partnership.

Should Unions accept the potential collapse of partnership is their fault? It would be easy to say that their inertia was to blame, especially given the long lead-in time to this process. Also they will now find it exceptionally hard to gain any concessions on the other areas for which they were pressing such as protection for those facing mortgage arrears and pension protection for workers such as those in Waterford Crystal.

Those are major losses for which members will not thank them.

THE LABOUR PARTY

Labour Party leader, Eamon Gilmore warned Unions that strikes against the pension Levy could backfire.

Speaking before SIPTU President, Jack O'Connor threatened that industrial action "on a very dramatic scale" could be needed to fight against what he described as an ongoing attack on workers, Mr Gilmore said that:

"this... is not a time for industrial relations tactics which may have worked

for you in the past but which now will only further alienate a wider public who are worried about the security of their own jobs and businesses".

"By refusing to accept that simple reality, ICTU engages in self-delusion on a grand scale. It is joined, unfortunately, by Eamonn Gilmore, the leader of the Labour Party, who is cresting a wave of popularity.

"Mr Gilmore, who now presents himself as an alternative Taoiseach, seems to believe that his popularity will be further enhanced if he, too, runs from reality. He will not accept that the public sector wage bill must fall and on a day when he should have been in Dublin to talk some much-needed sense to the crowds on the streets, his main business of the day was down the country at another protest, this time against the closure of a local hospital in Tipperary.

"Mr Gilmore wants his cake, and he wants to eat it too—which is normal practice for an opposition politician, but these are not normal times." (*Sunday Independent*, 22.2.2009)

LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT

"Meanwhile, the Labour Party has moved to a position just short of class-war rhetoric.

"The rhetoric of the left has been angry, incautious, indiscriminate. But Labour knows that, in Government, it would have no choice but to cut public spending; even the unions concede that this has to be done.

"If there's any certainty in our politics at the moment, it's that Labour will be part of the next Government. They'll have to govern then. It's reasonable—if not quite the full story—for people to think the current predicament is entirely the fault of the Government. But that doesn't mean that getting rid of the Government will fix the problem. The massive hole in the public finances will have to be closed, no matter who is in charge.

"Labour is playing smart politics with those feelings, and recent polls show it's reaping the rewards. Fair enough; God knows, the party must be fed up with opposition. But when its TDs are finished with their nostalgia tour of the 1960s, they'll find that they have to govern. And reckless rhetoric will make that more difficult." (*Sunday Business Post*, 22.2.2009).

WHAT IS TO BE DONE ?

Now that the Government has unilaterally imposed its position without a by-your-leave. How workers will react in the days and weeks ahead is unclear. As the situation stands, the Unions can no longer claim to be masters of their own destiny.

"Of course if something is imposed that [industrial action] is always a risk,"

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the main public sector Union, show that a worker on €39,000 will pay €2,120 a year after tax, while a worker on €48,000 will pay €2,094.50 a year, because tax relief is higher for the better-paid employee.

Public service Unions are deeply concerned that the level of job losses being seen in the private sector could seep into the public service. Unions are predicting up to 1,000 local authority jobs being lost.

The data below appeared in the *Irish Independent* on Wednesday, 4th February 2009. The information is authentic and it is best that workers understand all the factors involved in this issue! It is amazing the number of 'experts' who believe that public sector workers also receive the normal state pension on top of their public or civil service payment.

Do all public sector workers pay towards the cost of their pensions?

Those who joined the public service before 1995 have to make a contribution to their basic pension of between zero and 3.5%. Those who joined after 1995 make a 5% contribution, but they were given a special 5% pay rise to take account of this, meaning that they suffered no net loss.

What will happen now?

The Government is bringing in a new Pensions Levy for all public sector workers. It will apply on a graded basis with public sector workers on higher salaries contributing more and those on lower incomes contributing less. It will account for the bulk of the €1.4 billion in savings from this year's payroll. Although public sector workers will continue to earn the same, their take home pay will drop.

How many people are entitled to a public sector pension?

There are around 357,000 workers employed in the civil service, the education sector, the justice sector, the health sector, the local authorities, the non-commercial agencies and the commercial semi-state bodies. (Some of these are on contracts, which do not carry the same pension entitlements.) Some 90,000 retired public sector workers receive pensions.

What is the basic public sector pension and when can public sector workers claim it?

All public servants can look forward to a pension of 50% of final income, as well as a tax-free lump sum of 150% of their salary when they retire.

Those who joined before 1st April 2004 can retire at the age of 60 on a full pension, but those who joined after that date can only retire at 65. There are exceptions for gardai, firemen, and the Defence Forces. [Garda and Firemen can retire on full pension after 30 years service. Indeed,

since the 1970s, Garda and Teachers have paid 6.5% of their salary for their pensions].

What are the key advantages of a public sector pension compared to a private sector pension?

All public sector pensions are guaranteed by the State whereas private sector pensions are not (as workers in Waterford Crystal have found out). Due to their "defined benefit" schemes, public sector workers are guaranteed 50% of their final salary when they retire. Many private sector workers are on "defined contribution" schemes which don't provide a guaranteed level of retirement income.

Any other advantages?

The size of the pension payment is linked directly to the salary scale of a pensioner's former employment. This means that as wages rise for public sector workers, there are also similar rises in the pensions of retired public sector workers. (Indexed linked.)

How much are public sector workers' pensions worth compared to the private sector?

This is one of the most controversial questions, and various reports have come up with different figures.

The benchmarking body awarded a "zero increase" to most public servants in 2007 because it concluded that public sector pensions were worth an additional 12% on top of their salaries.

But last December, the 'Pension Insecurity in Ireland' study released by UCD academics Dr. Shane Whelan and Michael Moloney disputed this. They said the true figure was 30% when the one million private sector workers without a pension were taken into account. They said a civil servant with an average salary of €45,240 was getting a State-guaranteed pension worth €13,572 a year (in salary terms).

How much is the exchequer spending on public sector pensions?

Around €1.7 billion out of the €20 billion set aside for public sector pay this year.

ICTU RESPONSE!

"I have no doubt that unemployment will feature far higher than any other issue in any plan put together by the ICTU executive council," said IMPACT General Secretary Peter McLoone.

His members, as well as the rest of the 350,000 workers in the public sector, fear swingeing job cuts, given the ongoing evaluation by An Bord Snip Nua, officially titled the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes.

Unions are trying to maintain a united approach at a time when, they say, there are concerted attempts by employers and Government to play public and private sector workers against each other.

"But the thrust of the protest {Sat.

Feb. 21, 2009} was vague and ill-directed. The grievances of the public sector dominated the proceedings." (*Irish Independent* editorial, 23.2.2009).

"The ICTU had taken special care to ensure the private sector were highly visible and the march did not appear to be solely about the levy" (*Irish Independent*, p8, 23.2.2009).

"Much of the preparation and many of the placards printed for Saturday's protest had focused on the public sector Pension Levy but it warranted only one brief mention in the rousing speeches of the Union leaders who were keen to promote unity above all else among those split between state and private sector pay rolls.

"ICTU general secretary David Begg stated: 'Although huge efforts have been made to divide us one from another, the public from the private, in recent months, nothing we have experienced so far or anything which is yet to come, not any effort by business or the people who serve it, not any effort by any political party or Government or any strategy by the media barons, not any adversity or trial we have to face, will ever succeed in dividing us from one another'..." (*Irish Examiner*, 23.2.2009).

SIPTU President Jack O'Connor said the Government move was part of an employer agenda to drive down wages across the workforce. He said the pensions Levy was only one of a number of issues against which Unions must fight.

Mr. O'Connor said this attack on workers "owes its origins to the announcement by the construction industry employers, the people who did best during the boom, that they intended to cut the wage of building workers by 10%. Now we have that developing across the economy".

He said the Government's approach was "about correcting the problem in the public finances while ensuring that the wealthy contribute nothing".

On the likelihood of industrial action he said no form could be excluded.

"I have no doubt in my mind that this is going to entail industrial action on a very dramatic scale much more than the walk around town that some people are focused on. We will not be taking industrial action on a dramatic scale except in support of a plan that addresses the issues of working people across the economy. If that plan is endorsed we won't be stopping." (*Irish Examiner*, 11.2.2009).

"The trade union vision of a national Government incorporate guise through the Social Partnership seems to ignore the earlier failure of the Partnership to deliver in lengthy discussions, with no great hope it would be better, even as

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FIGHT continued

abrogation of a leader's responsibility in the politics of this country", he told the Dáil.

The plan announced on February 4, 2009, came against a background of further disastrous exchequer figures for January which show tax receipts €900 million down on the first month of last year.

Unemployment figures released last month showed another steep increase for January. Currently standing at 327,000, they could reach 400,000 by year's end.

Mr. Cowen told the Dáil that while the social partners had endorsed a framework for economic renewal, they had not been able to agree to a Pension Levy which would save €1.4 billion a year.

"While this is regrettable, it does not mean that the engagement with the social partners was a failure: the overall framework has been agreed, the need for an immediate adjustment of €2 billion on a credible basis was also agreed", he said.

However, it was not just the Levy but also the lack of any substantive progress on a range of other issues of Union concern in regard to private sector pensions, mortgage protection and executive pay that ultimately led to the collapse of the process.

The talks appeared to be going smoothly enough until chaos broke out in Waterford Crystal in the last week of January with the announcement of the company's closure and suddenly the issue of a pension protection fund for workers became a priority for the Trade Unions.

CUTBACKS:

- + €1.4 billion to be cut from the public service pay bill
- + €300 million will be cut from capital spending, roads, etc.
- + €95 million will be cut from Overseas Development Aid
- + €75 million will be saved through cuts to the Early Childcare Supplement
- + €80 million reduction in professional fees: legal, medical, veterinary, etc.
- + €140 million on General Administrative Reductions: advertising, etc.

Sources said that the ICTU executive had sought in the course of the process not to let the expenditure talks get too far ahead of the non-expenditure elements.

The Unions had in effect divided up their resources for the talks with the Public Sector Committee of the ICTU, with its chairman Peter McLoone and Dan Murphy of the Public Service Executive Union (PSEU) involved in talks on the expend-

iture cuts.

Other senior Union leaders from the ICTU's General Purposes Committee dealt with the other issues.

On the Government side, the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach, Dermot McCarthy, had a key role in the whole process.

Taoiseach Brian Cowen was in attendance at Government Buildings all day before finally leaving shortly after 4 a.m. on Wednesday (4.2.2009) just after the talks collapsed, with the ICTU delegation withdrawing from the talks.

One source said that some of the non-expenditure areas such as pension protection—highly important in the wake of the Waterford Crystal closure—were highly complex and that the slow pace in relation to these topics left the expenditure strand squeezed for time as the Government's deadline approached.

The reason for the Unions not seeking to deal with the €2 billion cuts immediately was that their overall strategy was to push the Government to indicate what other groups were going to contribute.

The Unions were determined that the process could not be solely about public sector pay. They wanted to see "pain-sharing" across all sectors.

This was essentially a code for tax rises either through income tax or through a new form of property tax. The Unions wanted tax changes to be introduced this year.

THE POLITICS OF IT!

Was the Irish model of Social Partnership merely a pragmatic remedy for a period of boom but of little defence to workers' interests in a period of recession?

Another question which arises : the whole purpose of the September "Pay 2008", surely both sides anticipated the economic quagmire we were about to enter?

There must be questions raised too, about how this whole matter was handled. For several weeks, the dogs in the street have known there was €2 billion to be saved in 2009 and €16.5 billion over the next five years.

In 2010, the Government aims for savings of €4 billion—where do they aim to secure these cuts?

The talks collapsed on Wednesday, 4th February 2009, yet as late as the previous Wednesday, the Social Partners had not even agreed on a set of areas that could be probed for the necessary savings and where economic recovery could be inspired. The following days saw discussions on a variety of areas such as cuts in energy costs and the unemployment support mechanism, flexsecurity. However, the key area, the area 357,000 people were waiting for with baited breath, was not

discussed until as late as the Monday afternoon (2.2.2009). One would assume, one would hope even, that the Government knew cuts in the public service pay bill of up to 1.4 billion would be a key part of the overall 2 billion savings.

Why did the Government leave it so late to share that information with the Unions? Did it fully expect the proposals would be met with opposition and proceed on the basis it could claim intransigence and press ahead with its own agenda?

ICTU POSITION

ICTU General Secretary, David Begg claimed negotiations had "run out of road basically" and would have needed a magic potion to succeed in such a short space of time.

"We made a little progress in some areas but really not enough overall to build a platform from which we could construct an agreement", he stated.

"We needed everyone to be involved if there was to be a social solidarity pact and we had the difficulty of the public finance issue in terms of the requirements of the Government as laid out by the Department of Finance.

"That proved to be very onerous indeed, particularly for workers concentrated in the low middle income groups and we felt that what was set out in the proposals tabled were more really than the tractor could bear."

"However, anyone who listened to the tone of David Begg as he delivered his assessment would realise that the words stuck in his craw. He had been determined to reach a deal and seemed genuinely disturbed that the process had failed. However, he said Unions may not have been able to sell the package to their members as the pension Levy would have been a huge cross to bear for a number of middle and lower income groups.

"We felt this would cause such a shock to the system that we would not have been able to sustain it," he said. "We would really have the worst of both worlds. People may have rebelled against it. If you were to do something like this it would require a lot more time, finesse and subtlety to be able to get something that could command support among the 350,000 in the public service" (*Irish Examiner*, 4.2.2009).

THE LEVY

The Levy ranges from 3% to 9.6% of overall salary, on top of current contributions of up to 6.5%, and will come into force from 1st March 2009.

It means take-home pay is slashed, although the value of workers' state-guaranteed pensions is not affected.

Unions have argued that the Levy is weighted against the lower paid. Figures supplied by the IMPACT Trade Union,

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Now it's time to fight for 'middle Ireland'?

IMPACT Trade Union advertisement, 13.2.2009

After 20 years of Social Partnership, are we heading back to the days of adversarial industrial relations? Taoiseach Brian Cowen pressed ahead last month with his plans for €2 billion in cuts in the Public Service, after failing to get the backing of the Trade Unions. Pay rises under the "Pay 2008" agreement negotiated last September will also be deferred.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) admits that the Government measures to correct the economic deficit will entail reducing public expenditure, however, it should be shared by all sectors of the community alike and not just public sector workers.

Congress is right to get the parameters correct first time—the 2009 €2 billion savings will be a doodle compared to the €4 billion for 2010 and the ultimate Government target of €15 billion for five years.

On February 21, 2009, over 100,000 workers marched in Dublin to protest at the Government decision.

There was fury at the Government's move to impose a Pension Levy but some relief that the €1.4 billion savings required from workers did not come in the form of a 10% across-the-board pay cut.

Although take-home pay will be slashed, the value of the State-guaranteed pensions will not be affected, which would have resulted from a pay cut.

Mr. Cowen has said he will move to introduce legislation on the new Pension Levy as soon as possible but also insisted he would engage with the social partners on implementing it.

However, it is unclear whether he is willing to renegotiate the terms of the Levy or restart talks on a social solidarity pact that would see all members of society contribute according to their means.

Unions were open to discuss an increase in pension contributions before talks collapsed, but ICTU general secretary David Begg said he faced "a revolution" if he accepted the proposed terms.

As *Labour Comment* goes to press, informal contacts have been continuing between senior Union leaders and Government and business representatives on a possible resumption of Social Partnership talks on an economic recovery plan. "The back channel is alive and well", Government sources said last night.

"At the same time, senior union leaders confirmed last night that informal contacts had been taking place both with the Government and employers in recent days over a possible resumption of talks on a national economic recovery plan" (*Irish Times*, 23.2.2009).

DISPROPORTIONATE

The ICTU is deeply concerned that workers on the lowest wages were not spared from the Levy and claims it discriminates disproportionately against them, particularly workers who rely on overtime and shift payments.

SIPTU said the Levy is based on full earnings, which might include overtime, but the final State-guaranteed pension was only based on basic pay.

Hospital Consultants will be hit badly even before they get their higher salaries

for switching to a new hospital contract. Those on a top salary of €240,000 will pay a Levy of 9.4% which will amount to a contribution of over €21,000 to their pension.

The average public servant will pay an extra 7.6% contribution on top of their current contribution of up to 6.5%.

Deductions range from €450 for someone on €15,000, who pays 3% of their overall salary, to €2,250 for someone on €35,000 and €4,750 for workers earning €60,000.

Higher-paid workers on €100,000 would pay €8,750, while at the top end, workers on €300,000 would pay a 9.6% contribution of €28,750.

"Last night, the Irish Nurses Organisation general secretary, Liam Doran said the pension levy would not necessarily be viewed as a pay cut and admitted it was a "lesser evil". (*Irish Independent*, 4.2.2009).

The Government needs to borrow €20 billion a year for the next three years. Already they are paying back €55 million a day at three per centage points higher than our EU partners, Germany.

Cowen made it clear to Unions they would face a 10% public sector pay cut across the board if they did not accept his proposals. The Taoiseach also sought a precondition from the ICTU that he wanted agreement from all the Union leaders, that they would recommend the final deal to members.

The Taoiseach added that while breakdown of talks with Unions had been "regrettable", it did not signal the end of Social Partnership.

Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny stated: "It is the first time that a plan has been put forward in front of the Dail that has already been rejected by the social partners".

Kenny accused the Taoiseach of putting the people of the country into suspended animation while he sought a consensus. "For the past two months, the Government outsourced decision-making to the social partners. It is a most disgraceful

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Bray, Co. Wicklow or

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PO Box 6589, London, N7 6SG, or

Labour Comment,

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