

# IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW

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## China And Greece

Is the capitalist development of the world endangering its existence? We don't know. It might be that Climategate has exposed the whole thing as a scientific sham. Or it might be that the world is being destroyed by capitalism. If capitalism is destroying the world, the nature of the system is such that there is little prospect that it will stop doing it.

For many centuries China was the biggest and most economically developed civilisation in the world. It never endangered the existence of the world. It never even interfered with the way of life of other societies with the object of making the whole world a replica of China. It let the rest of the world be and it was not tormented by the thought that there were great differences in it. It was content to live its own life and let others live theirs.

Napoleon, who has often been depicted as a megalomaniac, advised Europe to let China be. But Napoleon lost and Britain won, and so China could not be let be. The pacific giant had to be poked and kicked and tormented so that England might achieve the destiny, set for it by Milton, of teaching nations how to live.

It has taken China a long time to recover from the destruction wrought on it by Britain, and by others following its example, and to establish a viable existence for itself in the destructive world order pioneered by Britain and consolidated by Britain's offspring, the United States.

The first Opium War on China was launched 170 years ago by the great liberal ideologue, T.B. Macaulay, the British Minister for War. China was compelled to become part of the world market being established by Britain—in the first instance by opening itself to the sale of opium by British merchants in India under a State monopoly established by the Imperial masters of India.

Having gone through many experiments, China has now opted for a kind of capitalism. And it is militarily secure. That means it has the capacity to destroy the world by nuclear bombings. A capacity to destroy the world by nuclear weapons has been the only sure means of defence ever since the wanton nuclear bombing of Japan by the USA

*continued on page 2*

## Budget 2010

The 2010 Budget was a daring political move. The *Irish Political Review* does not agree with everything contained within it, but has not seen any viable alternative from the opposition parties. The most notable feature was the cuts in Public sector pay and Social Welfare. From the late 1980s up until 2009 Irish Budgets had no losers. Social Partnership had ensured that the low paid would receive tax concessions in exchange for industrial peace. The Progressive Democrat influence on Governments gave high earners a reduction in the top marginal tax rate. However, the closing off of tax loopholes reduced the value of this benefit.

Cheap credit from Germany and low interest rates within the Euro zone lifted the economy and the Celtic Tiger began to roar. The dizziness of success led to policy errors. Our tax system became too dependent on the property bubble and this weakness was cruelly exposed when the bubble burst. In 2009 GDP dropped by 7.5% and a further fall of 1.25% is expected for 2010. The bubble was inflated by the

*continued on page 5*

## Copenhagen— *déjà vu* all over again!

The climate change conference in Copenhagen has a certain *déjà vu* about it. In the end it resembled the end of the World Trade Organisation Doha Round talks. It petered out when the major developing countries made it clear they would not accept the proposals from the USUK—the self-proclaimed 'international community'. This scenario is the main feature of all such world conferences. The WTO wanted to impose rules of economic behaviour made up by this 'international community' on the rest of the world. The rest said *no* and made it clear that they will only accept rules that suit them. The rules proposed have since caused a recession within the 'international community' itself

but never mind—the world should still do as it is told by this community of two and ignore what this community actually does.

This time the dynamic duo attempted a repeat performance with another set of rules for the economic behaviour of the rest of the world. This 'international community' had ignored the legally binding rules agreed at Kyoto but that's their privilege, not anybody else's.

Also, it is this 'international community' that has historically created whatever problem there is with carbon emissions. It was called Progress and Development and wonderful in every way—when they did it. Now it's harmful for all when the rest of the world follows suit. Hundreds of millions in the developing countries have a carbon footprint the size of the nail of one's small toe, while the 'international community' has created one the size of the

Himalayans—yet the duo are now crying foul when others want similar progress and development. They claim that it could lead—quite literally—to the end of the world. What a load of rubbish!

The 'international community' try to put on a very generous face with offers of millions and billions of their ever devaluing money to help the developing world 'cope' with progress. But this largess is a poisoned chalice: what is offered is simply more of their money for more of their investments in the economies of the developing countries, in other words, more exploitation.

This so-called 'international community' just don't seem able to accept the simple fact that the world can take care of itself if they would butt out. Will that penny ever drop?

Jack Lane

## CONTENTS

<b>China And Greece.</b> Editorial	1
<b>Budget 2010.</b> Editorial	1
<b>Copenhagen,</b> <i>Deja vu</i> all over again. Jack Lane	1
<b>Readers' Letters: European Jewish Nation.</b> Ivor Kenna	3
<b>Charlie McCreevy Doesn't Get It.</b> Editorial	3
<b>China On Climate Change.</b> Ambassador Liu Biwei	4
<b>No Birth Control For Mayon.</b> Wilson John Haire (poem)	4
<b>Editorial Digest.</b> (Border Deveopment; Cold War; Paisley Book; Flower Power; Historical Baggage; Low-Grade Operations)	4
<b>David McWilliams And The Crisis.</b> John Martin replies to Malachi Lawless	6
<b>Inevitable Failure In Afghanistan.</b> Edward Longwil	7
<b>UN Authority For Afghan War?</b> David Morrison (unpublished letter)	8
<b>Save €1/4m By Withdrawing Irish Troops From Afghanistan.</b> PANA (report)	8
<b>Libya &amp; Megrahi.</b> David Morrison (unpublished letter)	8
<b>Kilmichael And First Dail.</b> Dr. Ruan O'Donnell (report)	8
<b>Shorts from <i>the Long Fellow</i></b> (Church Establishment; New High Priest?; Legal Establishment; RTE Establishment)	9
<b>Nina Fishman.</b> Brendan Clifford. Philip O'Connor (Obituary)	10
<b>An Antidote To Remembrance.</b> Pat Walsh	11
<b>Es Ahora.</b> Julianne Herlihy (Bernard O'Donoghue; Ruth Gilligan Ordained; Warmongering; Irish State Coach?)	12
<b>The Londonderry Line.</b> Editorial	13
<b>The Cynical <i>Sindo</i> Hijacking Of Joe Sherlock.</b> Manus O'Riordan	14
<b>Biteback: Bashing Israel?</b> David Morrison (two unpublished letters)	17
<b>Does It Stack Up?</b> Michael Stack (Dictionary Of Irish Biography; Climate Change; The Economy)	18
<b>Johnston And The Lost Revolution.</b> Brendan Clifford	19
<b>The Great Hunger.</b> An tAthar Peadar O Laoghaire (introduced: Conor Lynch)	21

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

Unions Fail To Save Social Partnership

(back page)

in August 1945 in a war that it had already won.

China could only establish its independence by breaking with the capitalism that had been implanted in it by the imperialists. It withdrew from the world market in order to become sovereign. But such a vast proportion of the world's population living outside the Ameranglian system was seen as intolerable by capitalist civilisation. China in that phase was not seen as a rival by the West but as a force of evil which there could be no relations of normal hostility with. It is not very long since the chances of taking out China in a first-strike nuclear war, using Formosa/Taiwan as the moral detonator, was being seriously thought about. But now China has reshaped itself into a rival within the capitalist world market, and so the fundamentalist fervour of the capitalist West, which compelled it to become capitalist, is no longer functional against it.

Capitalist China now has a capitalist grip on the heartland of imperialist capitalism and the West is in a dilemma.

Twenty years ago, when Japanese capitalism was doing too well in the world market, the USA ordered it to row back. And the American car unions seconded

the virtual ultimatum issued by Washington. They reminded the Japanese of what they had already done to it once, and indicated that they were ready to do it again. And, since Japan was a helpless Cold War construction in world affairs (disarmed in defeat, but only lightly punished, and provided with a hot-house economic environment so that it might be a bastion against Communism), it rowed back.

Many other States, less spectacularly successful than Japan, who had been accorded 'corruption' and protectionist privileges for Cold War purposes, had those privileges withdrawn when the Cold War ended in a capitalist victory. Indonesia is the outstanding case in point. A Cold War regime was established there in the mid-1960s, in which a million people were killed with the active support of the USA and Britain. Then in the 1990s it was told that the party was over; a comparatively stable regime which had been built on the ultra-violent *coup* of 1960 was subverted, and the country was thrown into turmoil.

The dilemma facing the West now is that it cannot deal with the unexpected development of the evil Cold War enemies as it dealt with the buffer states constructed

against those enemies.

China is safeguarded by nuclear weapons and capitalism. The same kind of moralising fundamentalist fervour cannot be hyped up against a trade rival as it could against the Evil Empire. At least not on the spur of the moment. (It is true that it was done against Germany by Britain in 1914 and by the USA against Japan in 1941, but that was before the West went through the traumatic experience of seeing half the world taken away from its market, and campaigning for half a century to convert its Communist enemies to trade rivals.)

China *will have* the capitalist development that the West insisted on. So will Russia. And so will every country that does not see its destiny as being a passive victim of Western capitalism.

And, if that means the destruction of the planet, so be it. Capitalism is incapable of self-restraint. It exists in a medium of competition internally and internationally. The market must expand, regardless of the degree of development of the productive forces, otherwise there will be catastrophic economic collapse. Marx has not yet been proved wrong. Expanded reproduction of capital in the medium of the "*universal equivalent*" of all values (money)—which tends to reduce all values to market values, and to accord a market value to every feature of human life—that is how it works. And, if the planet is not robust enough to survive general market competition—well, Poor Planet!

The Copenhagen Climate Change Summit highlighted the fact that the world now hinges on two great capitalist Powers, the USA and China. The USA, which is still the driving force, will not diminish itself. And China will not forgo the development into which Britain and the USA forced it.

And Europe whimpers in the sidelines, moralising about the awfulness of things, and trying to patch up the problems threatening its own little world, problems which it has brought on itself.

Greece is not balancing its books. Why not? Because it invested in the new capitalist States in Eastern Europe which the West retrieved from Russian hegemony at the end of the Cold War and used as frontier states in the attempt to destroy Russia. Those States had their mushroom growth of externally-driven capitalism. The Greek banks invested in them. There is no such thing as Saving in mature capitalism, only Consumption and Investment. Saving that is not invested withers. So the Greek banks invested in the boomtown capitalism of anti-Russian Eastern Europe. And financial links developed between Greece and Dubai, one of the pseudo-states set up by Britain and maintained by the USA on the Arabian side of the Gulf.

And Dubai, spending its unearned income too lavishly on frivolous projects which collapsed because of the recession in the West—such as the artificial island in the shape of Ireland as a novelty tourist resort for the stinking rich—collapsed financially. And the facade called the United Arab Emirates, which it took to be its guarantor, refused to bail it out. After this abyss opened, a rescuer appeared in the shape of Abu Dhabi, but it was too late: 'investor confidence' was badly damaged.

So Greece suffered through having participated in two mirages projected by the West. It failed to balance its books. It got into a scale of deficit financing exceeding the limits set by Germany for countries in the Euro zone.

It was run by a capitalist Government until this Autumn. When a Socialist Government took over, it found that its predecessor had cooked the books, and that the actual deficit was much bigger than was said. The European Union demanded drastic cuts in wages and public spending. The Greeks refused to comply fully. So the Euro finds itself in a dilemma. What will happen to it if the EU lets Greece go bust? And how does a Euro-State go bust?

Ireland gave a bad example to the EU by surrendering to the demand that it hold a second Lisbon Referendum to reverse the results of the first, and then by cutting to order. Of course, the case of Ireland is not at all comparable to that of Greece. Ireland had been through ten years of a wild and reckless boom—though a kind of necessary recklessness—and had built up fat which might be reduced while leaving a substantial net gain. It had to concede to EU demands, but it was advantageous for it to concede. Nevertheless, it gave bad example to the European centre about what to expect from States on the margin.

Greece behaved prudently by comparison with Ireland. But prudence is not a reliable virtue in lottery capitalism. So Greece is in trouble. But Greece is a more substantial society than Ireland—it is more substantially itself—so there is a possibility that it might defy the EU to do its worst.

A class factor is now clearly visible in the EU. What is required from States is clear signs of action against wages and social services.

The EU itself now has a kind of existential problem. It no longer knows what it is. It now has an incoherent triple or quadruple structure:

- A. the core States,
- B. the Euro-States,
- C. the States added at the same time as Britain, which are Euro-States,
- D. the States added at the same time as Britain, which are not Euro-States,
- E. Britain, and
- F. the more recently added States which are not Euro-States.

## European Jewish Nation

I am convinced by Brendan Clifford's contention that much of the middle class in pre-1914 Central and Eastern Europe was Jewish.

When the formerly existing empires in that area split up into much smaller countries, the Jewish middle class in each individual country was forced into competition with each country's aspiring native middle class.

Brendan Clifford would appear to have made an important contribution to the discussion on the national question.

The Jews, prior to settling in Central and Eastern Europe, were a wandering nation. They came into countries when the land had all been divided up and the social structures settled. They did not seek to take the land off the natives or to destroy or enslave the natives.

Consequently, the Jews were compelled to this and that for a living. Educated Jews became a middle class.

Jews lived in a definable territory in Central and Eastern Europe. They had a national language—Yiddish. According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, published in Jerusalem in 1971, a Jew is "A child of a Jewish mother". Jews are therefore objectively defined. The Jews had a common psychological make-up and a common economic life.

The Jews were therefore a settled European nation. The fact that they had to share their national territory with other nations who were there first did not make the Jews any less a European nation. Nor are they any less a European nation because a large number of them moved out or were exterminated or settled in Palestine where they did grab the natives' land and destroy the natives' social structures and often the natives themselves.

**Ivor Kenna**

Many of the latter are in economic collapse, but that does not affect the Euro.

But the outstanding anomaly is that the core States have admitted Britain to the core, while allowing it to be outside the Euro.

Currencies will speculate against each other. It's natural where currencies are convertible. If the market is accepted as the medium in which the world must exist, there can be no reasonable complaint about speculation. When the EU constructed the Euro and allowed Britain to opt out, it accepted an enemy within the Union—a legitimate Quisling.

It is Ireland that suffers particularly from British currency autarky. It is the only European country with a land border with Britain, which has targetted it as an easy market. It makes no sense that the Irish economy should have to compete within the EU against an EU economy which is free to engage in currency devaluation against it. What is required is an EU ultimatum to dissolve Sterling into the Euro in short order, or face EU tariffs in the Euro-States.

### Charlie McCreevy Doesn't Get It

Charlie McCreevy is the outgoing EU Commissioner for the Internal Market. In this job he has facilitated the rampage of the 'Anglo' version of capitalism in the Union. He is to be replaced by Michel Barnier, nominated by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. This appointment was certainly a blow to the Anglos. Prime

Minister Gordon Brown took his eye off the ball in the recent jockeying for positions. He tried to get the Presidency for Blair and further/or in the alternative tried to get the post of Foreign High Representative for either Baroness Ashton or Peter Mandelson. He paid less attention to the Commissioner posts. As a result Britain failed to get any of the vital economic portfolios. When Brown realised that a Frenchman was to get the Internal Market portfolio, he is said to have rung Commission President Barroso and begged him to strip out the financial services element of the job. Barroso wavered, but it is quite likely that France and Germany told him that such an innovation was unacceptable. Brown had to rest content with having officials of British origin prominent in Barnier's team.

In a speech to the Association of European Journalists in Dublin on 18th December, McCreevy lambasted Sarkozy for describing the appointment of Barnier as "*a defeat for Anglo Saxon capitalism*". He continued:

"President Sarkozy has laid to rest once and for all the myth that EU commissioners, certainly French ones, when they go to Brussels, are expected to leave aside their home member state national interests and political priorities and act exclusively in the community interest... like many of his fellow countrymen, he does not see the European Commission as a commission for the advancement of European interests. He sees it as a commission for the advancement of French interests..." (19.12.09 IT).

What McCreevy has missed is that a

defeat for Anglo-capitalism is not necessarily just a French gain: it is a gain for European Social Capitalism, based on Christian-Democratic ideals, on which the EU was founded. Anglo Capitalism has run the world into deep financial crisis, and that has given France, Germany and the rest the self-confidence to call a halt to its rampage through the Union. To put it into the prevailing shorthand: the appointment of Barnier represents a victory of Berlin over Boston.

## China On Climate Change

**The Chinese Ambassador to Ireland sent a spirited response to a Climate Conference report in the *Irish Times*. Extracts from it appear below**

"...To help the conference achieve tangible results, the Chinese government has recently announced its targets for 2020 based on 2005 levels. They include: bringing down CO2 per unit of GDP by 40-45 per cent, increasing the ratio of non-fossil energy to 15 per cent, and expanding forest coverage by 40 million hectares.

...China is a developing country with per capita GDP just exceeding \$3,000. According to the UN standard, there are still 150 million people living in poverty. Meanwhile, China's energy structure is dominated by coal, which puts huge pressure on the country and makes it especially difficult for it to control greenhouse gas emissions.

China's targets are no less ambitious than those of any developed country. From 1990 to 2005, CO2 emission intensity per unit of GDP of all developed countries dropped only by 26 per cent, China dropped by 46 per cent.

The issue of climate change is the common challenge now facing the international community. It is the Chinese government's position that the basic principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" should be upheld by the international community to tackle the challenge.

It should be understood that the long period of industrialisation of the developed countries is the root cause of today's climate change. During the 155 years from 1850 to 2005, the world has discharged 1.122 trillion tons of CO2, of which, 806.5 billion tons or 72 per cent, came from developed countries. According to 2006 survey of global emission, the per capita emission by developed countries is almost four times that of developing countries. The Kyoto Protocol stipulates that developed countries must reduce emissions collectively by 5.2 per cent during the period of 2008-2012 on 1990 basis.

In fact, most developed countries have increased, not reduced emissions. On the other hand, the developed countries have promised funds and technology transfer to developing countries, but for the past 20 years little or no action has been taken.

Whether from the point of view of

historical responsibility, or reality, whether in terms of treaty obligations or capability, the developed countries should unconditionally continue to take the lead to cut emission by a big margin after 2012, and fulfil their obligations in providing funds and transferring technology to developing countries so as to increase the developing countries' ability to cope with climate change. Empty talk about international co-operation, in disregard of historical responsibility and facts, or talk only about the so-called shared responsibility, will not convince the world. Developing countries should make a contribution within their own powers by implementing sustainable development strategies.

To make the Copenhagen conference a success, we must adhere to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, stick to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and follow the Bali roadmap mandate.

...China's voluntary reduction targets do not attach any conditions; it is not linked to any other country's action. China will never, ever, renew the old-road "pollute first, correct later" and "luxurious emissions" of developed countries. We will reach our emission reduction targets and achieve sustainable development with a responsible attitude to the environment and mankind."

**Liu Biwei**

**Editorial Note:** Whether climate change is man-made or not, reducing pollution must be beneficial to urbanised societies—and the Chinese are intent on doing so. Whether the Climate change activists are as serious remains in doubt: the organisers of the Copenhagen Conference required 1,200 limousines for the assembled delegations. As there were not enough in Denmark itself, the gas guzzlers were driven in from Sweden and Germany!

## NO BIRTH-CONTROL FOR MAYON

Mount Mayon in the central Philippines burped but wasn't heard in Copenhagen by developed nations with their fagins, speechmakers, five-star hotels, limousines, while Mayon grows more pregnant with magma.

Her twenty-one sisters await the birth. Angst controls humanity, not the earth which will change forever despite dogma. Now that others manufacture their needs

—  
Rhonda Valley a low-carbon region, no Clyde shipbuilding for the Glaswegian—  
they see the curse of the consumer creed. Mount Mayon threatens pyroclastic hell. It's time to hop off that carousel.

**Wilson John Haire.** 20 December, 2009

**The 21 sisters are of course those volcanoes in the Philippines that can activate.**

## Editorial Digest

**Border Development** The border between Derry and Donegal could soon be a thing of the past! A Southern based firm, Emerald Holdings, has secured finance and permission to extend the borders of Derry City into Donegal, building retail parks and other facilities along the road to Buncrana with plans for about 4,000 homes, with work beginning in 2010. So soon people will be able to give their addresses as—Derry City, Co. Donegal!

**Cold War** A continuing feature of attacks by the *Irish News* on Sinn Fein over the last few months has been the almost lurid accounts of the fates of the "disappeared"—informers shot during the war by the IRA. Even the name of Captain Nairac has been dragged up—the man now generally accepted as having led the UDR patrol which massacred the members of the Miami Showband. Another tack has been to claim that the Hunger Strike could have been called off after the first three deaths, as the prisoners' demands were already accepted, and that the outside leadership insisted on going ahead. But this allegation has been comprehensively refuted by ex-prisoners and others.

**Paisley Book** David Gordon, late of this parish, recently launched a book—*The Fall Of The House Of Paisley*—at Queens University Bookshop. It was largely based on a series of articles he has been writing in the *Belfast Telegraph* exposing the doings of Ian Óg Paisley and his relatively trivial financial shenanigans—trivial certainly by the standards practised in the Mother of Parliaments over the water. The serious effect, however, was to bring down his father. Big Ian may be considered to have been a bit of a hooligan over the years. But his abiding legacy has been his relationship with Martin McGuinness in recent times—the so-called "*chuckle brothers*". By sharing power at Stormont, he made Republicans an acceptable and trustworthy body to a substantial body of Protestant. Untrustworthiness was a particularly strong prejudice when it came to the Protestant view of Catholics. (And Martin looked a nice clean lad as well!!!)

**Flower Power** The Students' Union at the Coleraine Campus of the University of Ulster has reversed its decision to allow the Easter Lily to be sold there as well as the Poppy. The was under pressure from the so-called Equality Commission which said the ruling was made to promote "*a good harmonious working environment*". The Young Unionist group there said it was a "**small victory for its protect the poppy campaign**".

**Historical Baggage** Less than two years ago the Historical Enquiries Team was set up to investigate unsolved killings—especially those involving collusion with the RUC Special Branch. In that short time it has arrested 12 men—far more than the RUC ever did. Now new Chief Constable Baggot has decided to abolish it and hand the "investigations" back to the police—the very people who were themselves largely under suspicion.

**Low Grade Operations.** It would seem the supposedly defunct Special Branch is on some kind of a rampage of intimidation against Republicans—mostly in the Border Counties, but also in Belfast—where they arrested Marion Price recently. The system is to pick people up, with no intention of charging them, and then let them go after a few days. Well, that will garner support for the peace process, won't it? But then the peace process was hardly top of the Special Branch's priorities. It is also harassing Provos, especially Sean Hughes, who the *Irish News* has decided to "out" or felon-set as a member of the IRA's Army Council. Even Sinn Fein's Minister for Rural Development, Conor Murphy, has been moved to express outrage at the raids, Prisoners in the jails are also being given a hard time.

**Carmel Hanna** is to resign as SDLP MLA member for South Belfast. She is being replaced by Conall McDevitt, Managing Director of public relations firm Weber Shandwick. Mr McDevitt is favourable to Fianna Fail.

## Budget 2010

continued

expansion of credit, but the Government did not want to spoil the party—making the economic hangover all the more severe. Fianna Fáil must bear the lion's share of responsibility for the demise of the Tiger, but no political party advocated policies, which would have averted the crisis. There were no calls for property taxes or control of credit. No one wanted to spoil the party when it was in full flow.

Now that the Tiger is dead, it should at least be given a decent burial. It was not all about excess. In the last 12 years Social Welfare dependants received significant benefits well over the rate of inflation. Unemployment Benefit increased by 130%. There was a dramatic increase in Child Benefit (330%). Pensioners were also big winners (120%). The buoyant economy led to increases in private sector pay; and the public sector was certainly not left behind. There is no doubt that the Benchmarking process was flawed but

there were positive aspects to it. It prevented a brain drain from the public sector. The generous pay rates prevented greater inequality in our society. Although public sector professionals and executive staff received remuneration packages far greater than their counterparts in other European countries, it was also true that the low-paid benefited.

But that was then and this is now . . .

While the bubble had its positive effects, it created an illusion about the true extent of economic wealth being generated in the economy. We have been consuming more than we have been producing in recent years. The good news is that, unlike other European countries such as Spain, Ireland is likely to have a balance of payments surplus this year. Nevertheless, the challenge of reducing accumulated private and public debt needs to be—and is being—tackled. In short, we need to produce more and consume less.

A small open economy cannot spend its way out of a recession since the domestic market is not large enough and the effect of the stimulus is to increase spending on imports exacerbating the crisis. Also, such an economy dependent on foreign borrowing must give its creditors confidence in its ability to pay its way. At present there is a doubt about the ability of the Irish State to repay its loans. We have had to pay a premium to compensate such creditors for the risk of lending to the Irish State. At the beginning of the crisis, the Irish State was borrowing at interest rates equal to 3 percentage points higher than the Germans. Since the beginning of last year the budgetary adjustments have reduced the risk premium to less than 1.5 percentage points.

We are fortunate that interest rates are at a historic low, but if there is any recovery in the world economy they will rise. This is all the more reason for the national debt to be addressed sooner rather than later.

The *Irish Political Review* does not regret that Lenihan has ruled out devaluation. Even if it were practical to leave the Euro—which this magazine does not believe—we would be against such a policy. Devaluation is a cowardly apolitical solution. It aims to restore competitiveness by making everyone equally poorer in relation to the rest of the world. It takes no account of who is better able to bear the burden of resolving the crisis.

One can agree or disagree with Lenihan's Budget, but it cannot be denied that hard political choices have been made. The Government has decided that public sector workers are better able to bear the brunt of this crisis. An ESRI report last September suggests that public sector workers earn 26% more than their private

sector counterparts. SIPTU as well as the Central Statistics Office have questioned this analysis, but there is no doubt that there is a substantial difference between the respective sectors.

The economic downturn has resulted in a dramatic increase in unemployment within the private sector. This has put downward pressure on the wages of existing employees. Some employment surveys suggest that the decrease in wages has not been that dramatic, but this is misleading. While some existing employees have had only small reductions in pay, any employer in a position to recruit new employees is paying far less than the employees who have been replaced. This writer knows of a factory manager who was on 100k before being laid off. The person in question has a very good reputation but was happy to join a new company on a salary of 50k.

In such circumstances it would have been unjust for a greater burden to have been placed on the private sector. Accordingly, Lenihan cut public sector pay with the higher paid enduring the largest cuts.

For higher paid public sector employees the cuts will be:

- 8% for salaries between 125k to 165k.
- 12% for those earning between 165k to 200k
- 15% for those on greater than 200k

The salary of the Taoiseach will be reduced by 20%.

For constitutional reasons the judiciary has been asked to make a voluntary contribution. But it is by no means clear that the Attorney General's advice on this matter is correct. There is a view that the Constitution only prevents the Government from reducing the salaries of individual judges (as a sanction for judicial decisions which displease the Government) but there is no restriction on reducing the salaries of all the judiciary especially in the context of a general reduction in public sector pay.

Lower paid public servants will have a 5% reduction in the first 30k of pay; a 7.5% reduction on the next 40k; and a 10% reduction on the next 55k. In this writer's view this is a realistic reflection of what has been happening in the wider economy with the exception that the lower-paid have received greater protection.

Many will consider the cuts in Social Welfare particularly harsh. For those of working age the overall reduction will be just over 4%. The Minister defended this measure by claiming that the cost of living had reduced by 6.2% over the last year. It was noticeable that the State Pension remained unchanged. The Minister explained this preferential treatment by claiming that the drop in the cost of living benefited pensioners by less than other social groups.

There have been great strides in the payments for Child Benefit. In the last 12 years it has more than trebled, but this year it will be reduced by 9.6% for the lower rate and 7.9% for the higher rate. The Minister hinted that a more focussed approach benefiting the low paid will be adopted in the future.

There will be savings of 400 million in Health. The Minister claims that this will be largely due to improved efficiencies rather than a diminution in services. As part of these savings a prescription charge of 50 cent per item will be imposed for medicines covered by the medical card scheme. Some have argued that this is unfair because it is the doctor alone who determines the prescriptions, but there has always been a suspicion that this is not entirely true.

Overall the Government is expected to save 4 billion in 2010: 3 billion will be saved on the current and the remainder on the capital side. The Minister claims that part of the 1 billion reduction in the Capital side will be as a result of a reduction in prices. By international standards total capital investment at 6.4 billion or 5% of GNP is quite high.

The Minister intends to abolish mortgage interest relief by the end of 2017. This is reasonable. People who bought homes at the peak of the property boom will be able to avail of it until then.

There were not many incentives for employment, but there is a limit to what a budget can do. However, employers will be given a PRSI exemption for new employees. There will be an increase in funding of 136 million to provide an additional 26,000 training places and supports.

The Minister will also set up Credit Review Committees to ensure that the banks fulfil their side of the bargain and allow credit flow to enterprises.

There was also a reduction in consumption taxes. This is welcome. Consumption taxes are a regressive form of tax because low income earners spend a higher proportion of their income than high earners. In Ireland the loss of tax revenue from cross-border shopping is a further reason to reduce such taxes on consumption. The Minister believes that the key driver for cross border shopping is the price of drink. Accordingly he has made the following reductions:

- 12 cent per pint of beer and cider;
- 14 cent per half glass of spirits; and
- 60 cent per standard bottle of wine.

There is an even stronger case for reducing duties on cigarettes, a very high proportion of which are bought illegally,

but the Minister decided not to confront the powerful anti-smoking lobby.

The reversal of the Minister's previous VAT increase of 0.5% will provide cold comfort to people in the retail sector. We are back to a standard rate of 21% which is still well above the UK equivalent of 17.5%.

The Minister introduced a very modest car scrappage scheme for 2010. It will give VRT relief of up to 1,500 for cars older than 10 years. While the Motor Trade has had a horrendous time in the last couple of years, encouraging people to buy more new German and Japanese cars will not solve our economic problems.

Probably the most significant aspect of the Budget was that private sector employees were left unscathed. However, the Minister intends to impose taxes on the very wealthy. Irish non-resident but domiciled individuals with a worldwide income of over 1 million and who have capital located in Ireland of greater than €5 million will be required to pay a levy of

200k a year regardless of where they are tax resident. This is to be welcomed.

Despite what the Minister said there probably was room for increasing the top rate of tax, even if the Income Levies he imposed at the beginning of 2009 bring the marginal rate above 50% for high earners.

#### CONCLUSION

This was a harsh Budget which was difficult for Trade Unions to support. However it would be wrong to say that it was "*Thatcherite*". It was a reasonable attempt to deal with the economic crisis. Lenihan has indicated that there will be a need for greater reform in the coming years: including the introduction of a Property Tax; consolidation of Social Insurance levies; and reform of pension provision. The Trade Union movement must have an input into these important reforms.

The 2010 Budget for all its shortcomings does not justify the abandonment of Social Partnership.

## David McWilliams And The Crisis:

### a reply to Malachi Lawless

I have the disadvantage of not having read any of McWilliams's books or, unlike Malachi, having attended any of his political cabarets. However, I have read numerous newspaper articles by him and have seen some of his previous television series and all of his most recent *Addicted To Money* series, which I paid particular attention to.

Up until recently I have been in agreement with his analysis and supported his solution to the banking crisis of September 2008, which was the Bank Guarantee Scheme. (Incidentally, Brian Lenihan says that McWilliams does not hold the patent on the Bank Guarantee Scheme as there were other economists who also proposed this policy). However, in my opinion the high quality of his commentary has deteriorated in the last twelve months and has been replaced by a populist rhetoric. The cabaret and show biz used to have the purpose of bringing his analysis to a wider audience but now has become an end in itself.

I am not sure whether the analogy of John Redmond's disastrous support for the First World War with the Government's support for the Euro is Malachi's or McWilliams's: either way it is, in my opinion, a false analogy. If one wants to persist with 1916 analogies, I would say that our joining of the Euro was an attempt to reconnect with our "*gallant allies*" on the Continent; abandonment of the Euro

and reversion to the punt would return us to the British economic sphere.

Malachi has the following revealing quote from McWilliams:

"The Euro made the crazy Irish boom possible and now that we are in the bust our membership of the Euro is making any recovery virtually impossible."

So the Euro made our boom possible! That is some admission for a Euro sceptic! And why call the Irish boom "*crazy*"? It resulted in a real increase in the standard of living for the mass of the people and the achievement of full employment. We have experienced a severe set-back in the last 18 months but we have not suddenly become a poor country.

If the Euro made the Irish boom possible, I would suggest that we would want to have a very good reason to leave it. Mc Williams says that by being part of the Euro we are depriving ourselves of the policy option of devaluation.

If we devalue, our Euro-denominated and other foreign currency borrowing will increase our debt relative to the new domestic currency. I gather from Malachi's analysis that McWilliams thinks we should renege on this debt. I also recall reading an article by McWilliams in which he said that international lenders only think of the future and not the past. Notwithstanding his banking experience, I don't believe him. I am pretty sure that international lenders would be reluctant to lend to a

State with a record of defaulting on its loans. Any future loans to a defaulting State would have a very high risk premium.

Our 1993 devaluation was a special case. Firstly we didn't default on any loans. Secondly, it was clear that this would be our last devaluation because we had committed to the Euro. By contrast, International lenders looking at Ireland *leaving* the Euro could not assume that any devaluation would be our last one. As well as a credit risk we would have to pay an exchange rate risk premium, with all the problems that would cause for Irish companies exporting to the rest of the world. Finally, McWilliams seems to forget that in 1993 there were continual speculative attacks against our currency. This was something that we no longer had to worry about on joining the Euro.

But even if there were none of these disadvantages I would still be against leaving the Euro in order to have a weak currency. A devaluation makes a country's industry competitive by making everyone—in theory—poorer in relation to the rest of the world. (Of course, wealthy citizens of that country holding foreign assets will be less affected than other citizens by the devaluation.) In my view this is an apolitical way of dealing with the crisis. The wealthy should bear the brunt of the crisis.

In my view Brian Lenihan's budget was an honest attempt to deal with our economic problems. Higher civil servants had their salaries cut by more than lower paid civil servants. A devaluation would have cut the purchasing power of all wages earners: both in the public and private sector by the same percentage. This would not be an equitable solution to the crisis.

I have found McWilliams's articles on NAMA to be full of empty rhetoric and devoid of reasoned analysis. Judging by Malachi's review, the book does not seem to be much better. I don't accept that NAMA is a "*con job of criminal proportions*" or that we are the "*VietNAMA of the EU German/French Empire*". Neither do I accept that the assets that NAMA will buy are worth "*near to nothing*". There will be an independent valuation of the loans that will be transferred to NAMA. My information is that the independent valuations will err on the conservative side. It might be the case that NAMA will pay at a discount of 40% rather than the projected 30% discount. If this is the case, our banks may need to be nationalised. By then at least we will have a far better idea of what they are worth than we had back in September 2008.

In conclusion, David McWilliams was a great act, but he has gone on for far too long! There are already too many clowns in the Irish media!

**John Martin**

## Inevitable Failure in Afghanistan

Edward Longwill examines whether or not the political and military objectives of coalition forces are achievable

Prior to the British Army's departure from Basra, General Sir Richard Dannatt publicly stated he believed that British troops in Iraq needed to leave "*sometime soon*" because their presence was counter-productive. Dannatt caused further controversy when he openly criticised the British Government's decision to deploy many soldiers from Iraq into Afghanistan without the necessary equipment to perform their duties.

President Barack Obama authorised similar measures for the US Army by withdrawing soldiers from Iraq only to re-deploy them to Afghanistan. In fact the quantity of US troops doubled this year and many European NATO member states have increased their personnel levels in the country. With a combined force of approximately 100,000 soldiers, 60% of whom are US, coalition forces have a formidable military capability to fight the Taliban.

Figures from the Ministry of Defence show that, compared to the level of combat injuries sustained by British troops serving in Afghanistan during 2006, the 2009 casualty rate has more than tripled. How is this possible? More coalition soldiers simply equate to more available targets. Taliban fighters have proved extremely adaptive in response to increased coalition strength.

Using classic guerrilla tactics the Taliban will never occupy a stationary position or attempt to attack coalition troops in locations which leave them vulnerable to airstrikes. Although coalition forces have increasingly used armoured transport vehicles, some specifically designed to withstand blasts from roadside bombs, the Taliban have adapted by luring troops into areas inaccessible by such vehicles and forcing troops to conduct foot patrols.

After soldiers conduct medium to large-scale operations to 'retake' a Taliban held area, the country is too vast to maintain a permanent garrison and when troops withdraw the Taliban return. Clearly the military objectives have not been achieved and the recent elections in Afghanistan, which many hoped would strengthen Afghani political institutions, proved unsuccessful.

Recently, US Army General Stanley McChrystal warned the entire mission could end in failure. He made the stark comment that if coalition forces could not reorganise in response to the Taliban's recent successes the coalition would face

an "*outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible*". However McChrystal acknowledged that simply sending more troops would not reverse the deteriorating situation. He accepted that, without a new military strategy, the deployment of additional soldiers could not allow forces to retake the initiative from the Taliban. Irrespective of his judgement, the US will send more troops and pressurise other NATO member states to follow suit.

In early September 2009, Eric Joyce, a former Major in the British Army and parliamentary aide to Bob Ainsworth, the British Defence Secretary, resigned over policy on Afghanistan. He favours a phased withdrawal and questions the entire rationale for British involvement with the coalition by rejecting the claim that "*losses can be justified by simply referring to the risk of greater terrorism on our streets*".

A British opinion poll conducted in mid August found that two-thirds would support a decision to bring British troops home. The Canadian Government has already indicated it intends to withdraw nearly 3,000 of its soldiers from Kandahar province within 18 months and the Dutch Government set a similar withdrawal timetable. Most Governments of European contributors are facing mounting public opposition to their involvement. This prompted Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary-General of NATO, to recently admit that European states would not send more combat troops.

With US forces stretched to the limit it is difficult to envisage where extra troops will come from. Although European member states in NATO have received increasing pressure from the US to deploy additional numbers, casualties and hostile domestic public opinion will make this unlikely. An alternative is to expand the Afghan Army which already has 100,000 soldiers and in March 2009 President Obama revealed plans to enlarge the force to 260,000 over as many as seven years at a potential cost of \$20 billion.

However the Afghan Army is notoriously unmotivated to engage the Taliban and many of its soldiers serve the army to make a living and are not driven by ideological loyalty to the Afghan state. Furthermore the Soviet Union attempted similar measures during their presence in the country. After failing to defeat the Mujahideen, the Soviets completely withdrew their military in February 1989 and



left security in the hands of an Afghan Army which they had recruited, trained and armed. Within seven years this army collapsed into tribal militias and by 1996 a group known as the Taliban achieved dominance.

The primary objectives for US/NATO War in Afghanistan were to overthrow the Taliban, end Islamic extremism in the country, and build a western-style democracy. Afghani tribalism will not mould itself to western style democracy because an Afghan national identity is non-existent. Rather than end Islamic extremism, on the contrary foreign intervention has spread it to a number of neighbouring countries, most notably Pakistan which has witnessed severe security problems along its border.

Warnings from General McChrystal and Major (retired) Joyce are clear. Political and military objectives have not been achieved and perhaps it is time for western Governments to realise they are unattainable. The only remaining question now is how many foreign soldiers and Afghans will get killed or maimed before Western Governments accept this and allow coalition forces to withdraw.

On 16th November Gordon Brown announced he wanted to hold an 'international conference' on the Afghan War to discuss strategy. This Conference will take place on 28th January 2010 in London. Unfortunately on 1st December Obama announced the sending of an additional 30,000 troops and is appealing for other countries to provide a further 10,000.

Britain, Poland, Georgia and Slovakia will send 500, 600, 900 and 250 respectively, yet the Netherlands and Canada remain steadfast to withdrawing their troops in 2010-11. President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel will not send additional soldiers until the London Conference is held.

Will reason prevail at this Conference? The US position is dogmatic and Robert Gates, US Defence Secretary, believes that a surge in Afghanistan, akin to the surge in Iraq, will produce a similar "end state". This is hardly an attractive outcome, considering the current political and economic condition of Iraq—not to mention the security situation which on 8th December saw over 500 people either killed or injured in a multiple car bomb attack in Baghdad.

### UN Authority For Afghan War?

This letter was sent to *The Guardian* in December, but it was not published

Timothy Garton Ash writes ('Obama has charted an Afghan course. Britain must lead the way on Pakistan', December 3) that the initial US action against Afghanistan enjoyed international legitimacy, including "endorsement from the UN security council". This is not correct: the Security

## Libya & Megrahi

Text of letter sent to *The Guardian*, but not published

Contrary to your report (Shadow of Megrahi hangs over Libya's mass celebration of Gaddafi's 40 years, September 1), Libya never accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie plane bombing.

It is true that Libya put its name to a form of words that the US and UK governments were willing to interpret as accepting responsibility. The words, contained in a letter to the President of the Security Council in August 2003, were as follows:

"Libya, as a sovereign state, has facilitated the bringing to justice of the two suspects charged with the bombing of Pan Am 103; and accepts responsibility for the actions of its officials".

But Libya never said its "officials" were guilty.

**David Morrison**

PS The full text of the Libyan letter was appended to a press statement issued by Foreign Office Minister, Denis McShane, on 15 August 2003: see

[http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/press-release/2003/08/fco\\_npr\\_150803\\_libya](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/press-release/2003/08/fco_npr_150803_libya)

### Report: Kilmichael Ambush Commemoration

## Kilmichael And First Dail

The following report appeared in the 'County' Supplement of the *Irish Examiner* (8.12.09)

"...Dr Ruan O'Donnell, head of the history department in the University of Limerick, said the position of the Kilmichael ambush and Tom Barry's reputation in Irish history was a question of the overall integrity of the Irish revolution.

The ambush by Tom Barry and his men on November 28, 1921, resulted in the death of 17 members of the British forces and two members of the IRA.

It was absolutely normal in guerrilla warfare for effective and sometimes even brutal ambushes to take place, Dr Ruan O'Donnell told the gathering. While the

Council didn't pass a Chapter VII resolution authorising the US to take military action against Afghanistan. In fact, the US justified its action as self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. It was never obvious to me that Afghanistan deserved to be subjected to US military action because of an attack on the US, largely planned in Hamburg and the US, and carried out mostly by Saudi nationals, trained in US flying schools.

**David Morrison**

IRA forces at Kilmichael were certainly unconventional soldiers in that they were irregular, they were a paramilitary organisation, as were the Auxiliaries he added.

"The technical term for the Auxiliaries would have been mercenaries in that they were not regular members of the armed forces who had been brought into being by a government as a paramilitary force brought to another country, well equipped very well paid highly motivated and under the carte blanche of marshal law. So there is nothing unconventional about Kilmichael except that it was a resounding victory for Tom Barry and the IRA..."

"Discussions about whether or not there had been a false surrender {by some of the British}—and the balance of historical evidence suggests there was—was in any sense irrelevant. It was a red herring. The real issue is why were British forces in Ireland? and why would local men seek to oppose them in arms and in short the answer is that they had the mandate of the first Dáil. The first Dáil had been protected by the overwhelming Sinn Féin victory in December 1918 specifically on a programme of separate unitary Irish Republic and it was the refusal of the British Government to acknowledge that change in Irish mood that led to their militarisation of Ireland and the violent response of the IRA.

"Not everyone is going to like that, but that is simply history"...

Historians "should not be afraid of the truth and in cases where there was untoward actions they should be acknowledged but we need to revise this evenly as far as possible"...

"Part of the particular slant taken in some historiography on Cork during the Tan war was influenced by the political agenda of the 1970s and had very little to do with actual historical understanding", he added."

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### Save Over A Quarter Million Euro By Withdrawing Irish Troops From Afghanistan

In response to a question by Sinn Fein Dail Deputy Caoimhghin O Caolain, the Minister for Defence Mr. Willie O'Dea TD admitted that the annual cost to the Irish people to have 7 Irish soldiers taking part in the war and occupation of Afghanistan was €270,000.

(From Peace & Neutrality Alliance press release by Roger Cole.)



# Shorts

from  
the *Long Fellow*

## THE CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT

The Long Fellow has not learned much more about child abuse from media reports on the Murphy Report than he had learned from the reports on the Ryan Report or the Laffoy Report before.

The Irish Catholic Church is a decadent institution. It stands condemned not because it had sexual perverts in its midst, but because of the manner in which she dealt with them. The power of the institution, which began under British rule and continued under the Treaty settlement, meant that the Church's problems were problems for the society.

In all the orgy of self-flagellation the media has exempted itself alone from the charge of complicity. It is so busy kicking the Church when it is down—something which it never dared to do at the height of the Church's power when such kicking might have had a useful effect—that it has made itself incapable of answering the basic journalistic question: Why?

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was suitably contrite on RTE's *Prime Time* (26.11.09), but if he expected help from the media experts present he was sadly mistaken. The official Church explanation—since abandoned—that the institution was on a "learning curve" in relation to child abuse begs far more questions than it answers about an institution which claims expertise on the difference between right and wrong.

Martin said that the sexual abuse of children was a crime in Civil law and Canon law as well as being a grievous sin. All of this was known. From the 1920s until the 1960s the Church knew how to deal with child abuse, but something happened in the 1960s. He said this on the *Prime Time* programme, but the two journalists present—Miriam O'Callaghan and Mary Raftery—were not interested.

About ten years ago the Long Fellow heard David Quinn, a former *Irish Catholic* Editor, make a similar remark, but Quinn went in to more detail. He said that the problem was with Vatican 2. Before Vatican 2 the sexual abuse of a child was regarded as a sin resulting in immediate laicisation depriving the perpetrator of the Church's protection against the law of the State. After Vatican 2 it was regarded as a sickness in which the priest could be rehabilitated after a period of counselling and resume his duties as before.

That explanation may or may not be correct, but in all the acres of newsprint devoted to the subject it is the most plausible one that the Long Fellow has heard.

## A NEW HIGH PRIEST?

If the Church is a beaten docket, who will replace it? Certainly not *The Irish Times* for all its pretensions.

Miriam O'Callaghan interviewed Fintan O'Toole with his father on RTE radio (5.12.09). O'Toole's father was a bus conductor and his mother worked as a cleaner for the *Irish Press*. The father was something of an intellectual who found the conversation of his work mates tedious and preferred to read Shakespeare during tea breaks, which must have alienated him from his colleagues. He does not seem to have had any interest in politics but was much more engaged with high culture. He said that he always wanted the best for Fintan and his other children and took understandable pride in their achievements.

Fintan said that he was a beneficiary of Donogh O'Malley's free education scheme and was the first person in his family to receive a third level education. Contrasting his own and his father's experience of life, he commented that there had been enormous social progress. This caused an astonished reaction from O'Callaghan who asked if she could write that last comment down. "You mean the *Irish State* wasn't a complete failure?!" O'Toole claimed that he never would suggest such a thing and that his fulminations in *The Irish Times* were born of frustration at how much more could be achieved.

Maybe Fintan is being sincere. But the effect of his columns is to promote demoralisation and indicate the futility of pursuing any worthwhile reform in view of the perennial backwardness of the Irish people and their political representatives.

O'Toole was most interesting on his career path. After leaving university he worked for *Magill* before Conor Brady offered him a job with *The Irish Times*. He agonised very briefly about joining the Establishment but his wife apparently told him to cop himself on.

The Long Fellow has seen an interview that O'Toole gave to a French academic. *The Irish Times* columnist sees himself as something of a rebel—"from a Marxist background" even—whose views are tolerated by an infinitely indulgent and liberal dispensation.

But if *The Irish Times* is indulgent, O'Toole has never given it reason to have any regrets. Unlike John Waters—or even Kevin Myers—O'Toole did not create too much of a fuss over the exorbitant salaries of *The Irish Times* Editor and its Managing Director. In the last financial crisis that the newspaper experienced in 2001, O'Toole gave the most benign interpretation possible of the workings of *The Irish Times Trust* when that institution came under scrutiny. He can be relied upon to review books relating to *The Irish Times* such as James Downey's autobiography or Mark O'Brien's history of the newspaper without revealing any of their controversial

observations of Major McDowell.

*The Irish Times* Establishment has O'Toole's measure.

## THE LEGAL ESTABLISHMENT

But even *The Irish Times* Establishment does not always have its way. The Supreme Court balked at putting the newspaper's Editor Geraldine Kennedy and its journalist Colm Keena in prison following the publication of confidential documents from the Mahon Tribunal, but nevertheless it took umbrage at Kennedy's decision to destroy such documents. This action appeared to the Court as an attempt to preempt its decision. So, despite finding in favour of *The Irish Times*, it felt it necessary to award costs amounting to about 600k against the newspaper.

## THE RTE ESTABLISHMENT

The Long Fellow has remarked before that the media—particularly *The Irish Times* and RTE—pursues its own agenda independently of the rest of the society.

This was illustrated yet again by Pat Kenny on his Budget radio programme with Brian Lenihan. The programme began with a bizarre discussion between Kenny and the Minister for Finance on the subject of Stamp Duty. There was a time that radio presenters were not supposed to express their own opinions but that was a long time ago. Now it seems they can bring up topics close to home, so to speak. Kenny thinks that the Stamp Duty rate of 9% is too high. He began by suggesting that a reduction would help people buy new houses. The perplexed Minister replied that this rate only applied to expensive (trophy?) houses, now that the property bubble had burst. Kenny then suggested helpfully that it might help existing owners trade up because of a growing family.

How can a politician respond sensibly, diplomatically and calmly to such inane questions? The Minister must have thought that of all the problems arising from the budget that was the . . . most curious he had heard!

The programme then moved on to the main event, which was the listeners' phone in.

The national broadcaster seems to see its role as facilitating the 'public' in abusing our democratically elected politicians and State institutions. In the case of Joe Duffy's *Whine Line* there is no evidence of any checking out of the stories. Everything is taken at face value.

Some of the callers questioning the Minister on Pat Kenny's show verged on the abusive and one caller became hysterical. In at least one case the Minister showed that the claims to hardship were bogus. The fact that Lenihan dealt with the calls in a competent manner does not excuse what happened. The office of the Minister for Finance should not be subjected to such indignity. ■

## Nina Fishman

The London *Guardian* of December 13th carried an obituary and photograph of Nina Fishman, who was a member of BICO for about 17 years. The article was by Donald Sassoon. It, along with the photograph, presents Nina as the kind of middle class busybody often encountered on the London Left. Perhaps that is what she became after I knew her. It is not what she was when I met her in 1970, and it is not what she became while I knew her, which was until about 1987.

I think it was in 1987 that she proposed a return to a kind of Lib-Labism. Labour was nurtured under the wing of the Liberal Party before the Great War. The Liberal Party, having launched the Great War in 1914, self-destructed under the stress of it in 1916, causing the Labour Party to emerge from the post-War election as the second Party, and therefore the official Opposition. Some members of the Asquith faction of the Liberals, which came in third in Britain, then joined Labour to prepare it for power. Among them was Lord Haldane, Liberal Minister for War in 1905-12, who re-shaped the British Army in preparation for war on Germany.

Nina said in 1987 that a situation had come about in which Labour could not win an election without forming an alliance with the Liberals. She proposed that BICO should support that alliance and said that she intended to be active in a group that had been formed to bring it about. She was then told by the London Branch that she could not engage in Lib-Lab activity and continue in membership of the Branch. She chose the Lib-Lab activity. I suppose that was tantamount to expulsion. If so, she was, I think, the only person ever expelled from BICO.

I was mostly in Belfast in that period and was unaware that she had developed a Lib-Lab outlook. And I was surprised by it. She prided herself on being an American who understood the English way of politics, but her decision to go for Lib-Labism because the Labour Party could not win another election on its own showed that this understanding had escaped her. English political culture hates Coalition. It is moulded on the two-party system. If the run of luck had favoured the Social Democrats, they might have displaced Labour as the second Party. But, when Labour survived the Social Democratic defection, it was there to take over when the Tories lost. (The misfortune then was that Kinnock was Labour Leader in 1992 and that John Smith was not leader in 1997.)

I was also disappointed that Nina went

Lib-Lab because I thought that she was going to write the biography of Ernest Bevin as the politician who made the working class a force in the state, and had his achievement frittered away by Bevanism. But I notice from the obituary that she involved herself in the Aneurin Bevan Society. So the idea of her given by the obituary may well be accurate for her last twenty years.

When I first met her, she was fairly fresh from America, where she had grown up as a Communist and a Freudian. Her name was Nina Stead then. She had married Rick Stead, a Yorkshire socialist, and the son of a Methodist lay preacher as far as I recall.

She was then very taken with English culture, which was at the time very much a working class culture. She was amazed at the way people could live ordinary lives within it and be satisfied—that they could know that their lives were going to be ordinary, and just want to live them. She admired it. And it seemed to me that she wanted to be part of it.

I suppose the last BICO event she took an active part in was the famous Fulham By-Election of 1986, where a candidate was put forward on the issue of including Britain's Northern Ireland region in the democratic politics of the state. Somebody else who took part in that campaign told me, when we were discussing her *Guardian* obituary, that the canvassers used to meet in a working-men's cafe in Fulham that was run by the friendly owner of the cafe, and that one day Nina commented on him that he was "*a small man with small ideas*". So she must have changed—or failed to realise her 1970 ideal of being satisfyingly unambitious in English working class culture. I suppose it was a perverse, unrealisable ideal for a Californian.

She also thought I was a bit of a dead loss. The thing arose after the Ulster Constitutional Stoppage of 1974. I put a series of leaflets into the Strike, and the later ones circulated in thousands. The Government was trying to provoke the strikers into a kind of anarchy that would enable the Strike to be broken, and I did my best to counter this, to some effect I think. Nina then said I should write a book about the Strike very quickly and get it published. I said it would not be published. She got very impatient with me and asked, didn't I want a book published? Wasn't I supposed to be a propagandist? Obviously I was another of the defeatist no-hopers.

I said I didn't particularly want to have a book published, but I knew that anyway it wouldn't be. She said that was nonsense. She had extensive contacts with influential people in publishing houses and she knew. I said I would prove her wrong. So, because she was Nina, I wrote a substantial synopsis, which could be filled out for a

book in a couple of weeks and gave it to her to do what she could or would with. Not one of the publishers would touch it.

There were two reasons why. One was that *New Left Review* and some Trotskyist groups had a strong presence in publishing affairs and they *hated* BICO. The other was that a Whitehall Department had taken over the governing of Northern Ireland from the ineffectual Unionist Party (which took no part in patronage), and was an active dispenser of patronage, with a capacity for discreet censorship. It acted in Northern Ireland as it would do in a colony. What I had to say, it did not want said, and it never has been said in any commercial publication, except once—in *The Times*.

But, although I was proved right, I think Nina continued to see me as a feckless no-hoper, fit only for "*a rather eccentric quasi-Stalinist group, the British & Irish Communist Organisation*"—which the *Guardian* admits that she was once a member of. It then suggests, with sleight of hand phrasing, that she went on to more useful things: Workers' Control, European Union, and Electoral Reform.

In fact she was involved in the Workers' Control movement in support of the Bullock Proposals against the resistance of Ken Coates' Institute for Workers' Control as a member of BICO, along with Joe Keenan, Conor Lynch, Madawc Williams and many others. And she was active in *Communists for Europe* (not mentioned in the *Guardian*) as a member of BICO. What she did "*later*" was Lib-Lab Electoral Reform.

I do not know who Donald Sassoon is. Nina used to mention the Sassoons, who I took to be a wealthy Anglo-Italian family. It would be interesting to know if the way the obituary is written was prompted by Nina.

Anyway, I'm glad I knew her at a time when that kind of patronising obituary could not have been written about her, and that I only knew her while she was that person.

But, even then, I could not understand why she wasted time and energy on a Thesis about the Communist Party, which she had to revise over many years to please Eric Hobsbawm, her supervisor, who passes the time being a Marxist. I suppose it was a way of remaining connected with her ideal of the English working class, even though by that time it could only be nostalgia.

**Brendan Clifford**

**Editorial Note:** A letter was submitted to the *Guardian* by Philip O'Connor on 15th December, in response to this obituary. Unsurprisingly, the *Guardian* decided not to spoil Sassoon's story with mere factual accuracy:

The obituary by Donald Sassoon in *The Guardian* (13th December) of Nina Fishman describes her as "one of the most outstanding and original personalities of the British left" who promoted a perspective of "revolutionary pragmatism" for the British labour movement. In the turbulent political and industrial times of the 1970s and 1980s Nina energetically supported a resolution of the conflicts in British society in the working class interest through the introduction of industrial democracy (workers' control) along the lines of the German system of *Mitbestimmung* and through constructive British engagement

with the EU. But Sassoon's description of the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B&ICO) in which she was involved at that time (as I was myself) as a "rather eccentric quasi-Stalinist group" does her a disservice. It was through the tumult of contending ideas that characterised that organisation, and in which Nina engaged so energetically, that these very ideas emerged in the first place—as did many others she shared, on nationalism in Britain and Ireland, on the "British Road to Socialism", on the potential of the Bullock Report for British labour, on Europe, Eduard Bernstein, etc. **Philip O'Connor**

be worthless. And it was stressed that anything less would result in a blow to British prestige, from which the Empire, would hardly recover.

It was at this point that E.M.Forster, the writer, wrote the following piece, 'Our Graves In Gallipoli'. Churchill and others were urging a renewal of the war on the basis of the "*sanctity of the graves of Gallipoli*" to encourage the masses to their Imperial duty.

This piece, and the speech by Ataturk that follows it, is something of an antidote to modern Remembrance:

"Our Graves In Gallipoli  
By E. M. Forster (1922)

Scene: the summit of Achi Baba, an exposed spot, looking out across the Dardanelles towards Asia and the East. In a crevice between the rocks lie two graves covered by a single heap of stones. No monument marks them, for they escaped notice during the official survey, and the heap of stones has blended into the desolate and austere outline of the hill. The peninsula is turning towards the sun, and as the rays strike Achi Baba the graves begin to speak:

FIRST GRAVE: We are important again upon earth. Each morning men mention us.

SECOND GRAVE: Yes, after seven years' silence.

FIRST GRAVE: Every day some eminent public man now refers to the "sanctity of our graves in Gallipoli".

SECOND GRAVE: Why do the eminent men speak of "our" graves, as if they were themselves dead? It is we, not they, who lie on Achi Baba.

FIRST GRAVE: They say "our" out of geniality and in order to touch the great heart of our nation more quickly. Punch, the great-hearted jester, showed a picture lately in which the Prime Minister of England, Lloyd George, fertile in counsels, is urged to go to war to protect "the sanctity of our graves in Gallipoli". The elderly artist who designed that picture is not dead and does not mean to die. He hopes to illustrate this war as he did the last, for a sufficient salary. Nevertheless he writes "our" graves, as if he was inside one, and all persons of position now say the same.

SECOND GRAVE: If they go to war, there will be more graves.

FIRST GRAVE: That is what they desire. That is what Lloyd George, prudent in counsels, and lion-hearted Churchill, intend.

SECOND GRAVE: But where will they dig them?

FIRST GRAVE: There is still room over in Chanak. Also, it is well for a nation that would be great to scatter its graves all over the world. Graves in Ireland, graves in Irak, Russia, Persia, India, each with its inscription from the Bible or Rupert Brooke. When England thinks fit, she can launch an expedition to

## An Antidote To Remembrance

It is commonly argued to those who do not wish to engage in Remembrance these days that there can be nothing wrong with this harmless activity, and only a degenerate could oppose it. Of course, Remembrance would be harmless if it had no connection with a political project and carried no implications of support or sympathy with current military adventures with it.

But it is quite obvious that Remembrance brings with it Imperial baggage these days—a fact that was demonstrated quite clearly in the publication of *Our War* last year. 'Our War' was a co-production between RTE and a Trinity College History Professor. Its central intention was to claim ownership of the Great War for Ireland, to generate a sense of pride in its fighting and to present the view that Ireland should not have tried to forget it. It had a big poppy on the cover that had metamorphosed from red to Irish green to make a point. And the Trinity Professor was not a harmless commemorator. He had written a book arguing that the claims of German atrocities in Belgium during the Great War, long seen as poppycock, were, in fact, factual.

These atrocity stories had played a crucial role in cultivating a sense of war-mongering in Ireland under British rule. By the early part of the last century Ireland had become a deeply un-militarist society and had developed a healthy mistrust of Imperial adventures. But the 'babies on bayonets' stories, produced by the Home Rule propagandists, people like Professor Kettle, for the Liberal Press, did the trick. Hundreds of thousands of Irishmen went off to do their duty against the Hun.

I remember as a boy, living in London in the 1960s-70s, that Remembrance had an element to it that has all but disappeared today. That was the '*Never Again*' element.

In those days a lot of the marchers to the Cenotaph were old veterans of the Great War and many of them said: '*Never Again*'. Many did not commemorate, but even

those who did insisted that this was a disastrous thing they had suffered which should be avoided again at all costs. They had seen the catastrophe first-hand and were happy that current generations did not suffer war as they had.

But then came Thatcher and Sons. And with Thatcher, Blair and Brown came war after war after war. And the message began to change. The '*Never Again*' message disappeared from the commentaries and the continuity of Imperial duty with modern adventures replaced it.

I went to many football matches in the 1970s period and I cannot remember even minutes of silence for Remembrance. Now Premier League teams appear with poppies embroidered on their shirts, through military escorts at most grounds and god help those who don't fall in line—even the Germans, Austrians, Turks, Argentinians, Serbs, are forced to go along with it.

Remembrance is celebrated on 11th November, despite the fact that it was only the Great War that finished on the Western Front on that date. Millions died after that point—German civilians starved in the hunger blockade by the Royal Navy that lasted for another six months; Greeks and Turks in the British proxy-war in support of the Treaty of Sevres up until 1923; Moslems across the Middle-East in Imperialist conquest; Russians in the invasion of the Soviet Union; Afghans and Persians in Imperial operations there etc, etc.

In 1922 the world stood on the verge of a renewal of large-scale conflict. The Turks, led by Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) had driven the Greek catspaw from Anatolia, and seen off the French and Italian Imperialists. A British Army was surrounded by Ataturk at Chanak, near the scene of the Gallipoli landings seven years before. Churchill declared to the world that, if the British Empire did not respond with war and defend Chanak and Constantinople, and put the Turks back in their place, the victory of the Great War would

protect the sanctity of her graves, and can follow that by another expedition to protect the sanctity of the additional graves. That is what Lloyd George, prudent in counsels, and lion-hearted Churchill, have planned. Churchill planned this expedition to Gallipoli, where I was killed. He planned the expedition to Antwerp, where my brother was killed. Then he said that Labour is not fit to govern. Rolling his eyes for fresh worlds, he saw Egypt, and fearing that peace might be established there, he intervened and prevented it. Whatever he undertakes is a success. He is Churchill the Fortunate, ever in office, and clouds of dead heroes attend him. Nothing for schools, nothing for houses, nothing for the life of the body, nothing for the spirit. England cannot spare a penny for anything except her heroes' graves.

SECOND GRAVE: Is she really putting herself to so much expense on our account?

FIRST GRAVE: For us, and for the Freedom of the Straits. That water flowing below us now—it must be thoroughly free. What freedom is, great men are uncertain, but all agree that the water must be free for all nations; if in peace, then for all nations in peace; if in war, then for all nations in war.

SECOND GRAVE: So all nations now support England.

FIRST GRAVE: It is almost inexplicable. England stands alone. Of the dozens of nations into which the globe is divided, not a single one follows her banner, and even her own colonies hang back.

SECOND GRAVE: Yes... inexplicable. Perhaps she fights for some other reason.

FIRST GRAVE: Ah, the true reason of a war is never known until all who have fought in it are dead. In a hundred years' time we shall be told. Meanwhile seek not to inquire. There are rumours that rich men desire to be richer, but we cannot know.

SECOND GRAVE: If rich men desire more riches, let them fight. It is reasonable to fight for our desires.

FIRST GRAVE: But they cannot fight. They must not fight. There are too few of them. They would be killed. If a rich man went into the interior of Asia and tried to take more gold or more oil, he might be seriously injured at once. He must persuade poor men, who are numerous, to go there for him. And perhaps this is what Lloyd George, fertile in counsels, has decreed. He has tried to enter Asia by means of the Greeks. It was the Greeks who, seven years ago, failed to join England after they had promised to do so, and our graves in Gallipoli are the result of this. But Churchill the Fortunate, ever in office, ever magnanimous, bore the Greeks no grudge, and he and Lloyd George persuaded their young men to enter Asia. They have mostly been killed there, so English young men must be

persuaded instead. A phrase must be thought of, and "the Gallipoli graves" is the handiest. The clergy must wave their Bibles, the old men their newspapers, the old women their knitting, the unmarried girls must wave white feathers, and all must shout, "Gallipoli graves, Gallipoli graves, Gallipoli, Gally Polly, Gally Polly", until the young men are ashamed and think, What sound can that be but my country's call? And Chanak receives them.

SECOND GRAVE: Chanak is to sanctify Gallipoli.

FIRST GRAVE: It will make our heap of stones for ever England, apparently.

SECOND GRAVE: It can scarcely do that to my portion of it. I was a Turk.

FIRST GRAVE: What! A Turk! You a Turk? And I have lain beside you for seven years and never known!

SECOND GRAVE: How should you have known? What is there to know except that I am your brother?

FIRST GRAVE: I am yours...

SECOND GRAVE: All is dead except that. All graves are one. It is their unity that sanctifies them, and some day even the living will learn this.

FIRST GRAVE: Ah, but why can they not learn it while they are still alive?

His comrade cannot answer this question. Achi Baba passes beneath the sun, and so long as there is light warlike preparations can be seen on the opposite coast. Presently all objects enter into their own shadows, and through the general veil thus formed the stars become apparent."

"SPEECH OF ATATURK (1934)

To the first Australian and New Zealand veterans who returned to Gallipoli in 1934, (now inscribed on a monument in the area.)

Those heroes that shed their blood  
And lost their lives...  
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly  
Country.  
Therefore rest in peace.  
There is no difference between the  
Johnnies  
And the Mehments to us where they lie side  
by side  
Here in this country of ours...  
You, the mothers,  
Who sent their sons from far away  
countries  
Wipe away your tears,  
Your sons are now lying in our bosom  
And are in peace  
After having lost their lives on this land  
They have become our sons as well."

Pat Walsh

Forgotten Aspects Of  
Ireland's Great War On Turkey.

1914-24

by Dr. Pat Walsh.

540pp.

€25, £20.

## es ahora \*

"Unless we learn to know ourselves,  
to stand on our own feet, we shall never  
achieve self-expression."

Synge And Anglo-Irish Literature  
by Daniel Corkery

BERNARD O'DONOGHUE

I suppose when you are a Professor of English at Oxford University and also a poet, it becomes somewhat necessary to scove out a hinterland where you hope your voice can claim authenticity. You can *mine* the region, its past and its people as yours and in that act of *primary claim*, you can give your poetic voice—its locus. Bernard O'Donoghue has achieved fame and honour by seaming the vastly rich heritage of Sliabh Luchra in North Cork. But, unlike the great Gaelic poets of old, Bernard looks to another place altogether for his plaudits and more especially *direction*. This year he was made a fool of in public but the Irish don't much like their poets/writers to be made to look foolish by the Sassenach and so the people didn't comment on it too much. That is not the same thing of course as saying they didn't notice what happened.

O'Donoghue wrote a big review for *The Irish Times*, 25th April 2009, about Colm Toibin's latest novel *Brooklyn*. 'Twas a marvel of a thing altogether, the review that is, a glittering bauble of frosted words stating the work to be "*The clear voice of a master*". But, as Bernard might almost say, he had been sold a 'pig in a poke'. And that sly reference, to those in the literary know, "*the master*" is that idol of Toibin himself—Henry James. And of course Toibin wrote a book called *The Master* about—ah you have guessed—Henry James.

The English writer and critic Anthony Burgess saw James's influence on writers like Elizabeth Bowen as "*bad*" and he—and here he certainly wasn't the only one—thought the whole idea of "*the novel of sensibility*", mannered, fussy: "*those endlessly qualified sentences with their spinsterish scruples*" he saw as awful literature. Burgess went so far as to classify James as a "*female novelist*" and this had nothing to do with the latter's homosexuality but with his style of writing which he claimed "*had served the English novel badly*". When *Brooklyn* withered away, like the equally awful John Banville novel, *The Infinities*, poor Bernard was at a loss as to why. So, when that yearly round up of books were listed, in the TLS, 27th November 2009 especially, Bernard jumped ship. His favourite "*poetry book*" was "*Jane Draycott's subtle and intricate 'Over'*" (*Oxford Poets*) and his favourite

\* It Is Time

novel—amongst others—“was Colm Toibin's 'Brooklyn' which... {as UCD Professor} Declan Kiberd said, I don't think it crossed the Irish sea ... successfully”. Indeed.

The other time Bernard O'Donoghue got it really as wrong was in a very funny way—well yes—there was the awful sucking up to Roy Foster's barking mad *The Irish Story* in the Oxford magazine. But, back in 1999, *Poetry Ireland Review* asked O'Donoghue to contribute something. And he came up with Andrew Motion's *Selected Poems 1976-1977*. Andrew Motion went on to become the *English Poet Laureate*, as O'Donoghue predicted in his piece, and he also openly expressed the opinion that the “*destruction of the Oxford poetry list*” was “*not divinely visited but the result of philistine human intervention*”. He didn't make clear at any stage why this affected *Poetry Ireland*, so I must conclude that he didn't see the Irish sea from his ivory tower or perhaps thought it might affect himself but not his readers obviously.

I spoke above about John Banville and he got great notices too from the Irish media. But from England—he got a well deserved hammering. One of the more inclement reviews noted thus: “*This strange novel is billed by its publishers as a 'comedy' and a 'romp' full of 'bawdy humour'. Which is odd because 'The Infinities' is just daft and dull, as completely humourless as it is bizarre. An exquisitely written and utterly misconceived stinker.*”

#### RUTH GILLIGAN ORDAINED

Keeping with things literary, Ruth Gilligan, a gifted Irish student, recently graduated from Cambridge University. She has also written three books about which I know very little. In an interview, she spoke about her graduation during the 800th birthday of Cambridge University. Apparently the graduating students:

“paraded through town just as tradition decreed. The Japanese tourists couldn't believe their luck as they clicked furiously ... Then it was onto Senate House—the white columned building where the proceedings was to take place... But then the silver-haired men in red robes filed in, and vast quantities of Latin started flying around and the next thing I knew I was down on my knees in front of the Master—no, not about to throw up on his shoes, but being officially ordained a graduate. As we'd been taught, I then stepped back and curtsied, and made my bid for freedom”. *Ordained a graduate?* Isn't life grand in the Church and State of England all the same?

#### WARMONGERING

During the Summer, I read widely as usual. I came across titbits of information here and there. I was taken aback to read the official comments of the Coroner of

Sligo, when he read out his findings on the Mountbatten murder all those years ago—an event from which apparently Prince Charles of Wales hasn't still recovered from according to his Remembrance Day musings. But, back to the Coroner, who officially records the details of death, as that is his area of expertise. Not so on the day though where he stated:

“I believe it is necessary to stress again the great responsibility that parents and teachers of any nation have in the way they interpret history and pass it on to the youth of their country. I believe that if history could be taught in such a fashion that it would help to create harmony among people rather than division and hatred, it would serve this nation and all other nations better.”

Obviously if he meant the way the English have fetishised war and violence, they have taken no heed whatsoever of the poor misguided man. Take for example, the book *Decisions For War, 1914*, Edited by Keith Wilson, University of Leeds Press, 1995, where Professor Sir F.H. Hinsley, OBE, MA, FBA, writing on *The origins of the First World War* wrote unequivocally:

“What caused the First World War was the fact that the resort to them by other states met with, was indeed precipitated by, wilfulness amounting to paranoia on the part of the men who governed Germany. Self-assertive on account of Germany's power, they resented any check to their assertiveness as a hostile act. Insecure in spite of Germany's power, their suspicion blinded them to the threat they posed to the security of others... But sympathy should not exonerate them from responsibility; they were the authors of their predicament, not the victims.”

I was reminded of another historian, much lauded then by the academics in their fields, such as Professor A.J.P. Taylor, *The Observer*; Michael Ratchiffe, *The Observer*; Professor Donald Watt, *The Daily Telegraph*; and *The Guardian*—all gushing in their praise for *The War Path, Hitler's Germany 1933-1939* by David Irving. The latter wrote in his Foreword:

“History since 1945 has been plagued by the effects of the Nuremberg Trials—by the prosecution team's methods of selection of exhibits, by the subsequent publication of the selected documents in neatly printed and indexed volumes, and by the incineration in a Bavarian forest pit of documents that, it was felt, would hinder the Allied prosecution effort. Exhibits were chosen less for their representative nature than because they displayed Axis criminality, or tended to bolster the various propaganda hypotheses employed prior to 1945 to justify western intervention in Hitler's war—they were calculated to prove that Hitler had harboured aggressive designs against Britain and her Empire, that he had plotted war against the United States, and that

the systematic liquidation of the millions of European Jews was all part of the Nazi grand design, to which every one of the defendants was privy. It was all so much more emotive for western appetites than Hitler's mundane territorial ambitions in Central Europe, and the east.”

#### IRISH STATE COACH?

The State Opening of Parliament of the current Labour Party was an extravagant affair. Hello magazine, No. 1100, 30th November 2009, showed sumptuous colour photographs of “Queen Elizabeth 11 and Her consort Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh arriving in the Irish State Coach. Upon arrival in Parliament—the House of Lords” as she is not allowed into the Commons, “the Queen donned the diamond-encrusted Imperial State Crown and took her place upon a gilded throne, from where she delivered her Government's Speech.” Interesting that—the *Irish State Coach* no less. When are we going to be told about what is really going on?

Julianne Herlihy. ©

## The Londonderry Line

Lady Mary Bury, who seems to be the end of the Londonderry dynasty in the North, died in mid-November. The Londonderrys had been pillars of the Ulster Unionist Party, but towards the end of her life, she leaned to the Democratic Unionist Party.

She is described in the *Times* obituary as the “*Chatelaine of Mount Stewart in North Down*” (11.12.09), which is the only Big House of any real consequence to Irish public life.

Her father, Lord Londonderry, is notorious in British political mythology as an arch “*appeaser*”, and Irish comment has followed the British line as usual. The *Times* says that he undertook a “*crusade to extend the policy of appeasement even further than Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet was prepared to contemplate*”.

Appeasement is the wrong name for what Britain did in 1933-1938. It helped the Nazi Government to build up military strength from a starting position of utter weakness. This culminated in awarding the Czech arms industry to Germany in October 1938. Then, in March 1939, it changed tack and prepared for war with Germany. This might be read as Britain wanting another World War because the first one had not concluded in a way it found satisfactory, and encouraging the growth of Nazi military power for that purpose. That reading would at least make as much sense as any other. Londonderry saw no sense in ending “*appeasement*” on the unimportant issue of Danzig.

The *Times* does not mention that in 1921 he decided to take a seat in the Northern Ireland Cabinet in preference to one in Whitehall, leading his cousin, Churchill, to dismiss him as a fool. But, if the Tory Party had acted as he did, Northern Ireland might have worked out differently. When it became clear that Northern Ireland was pointless make-believe, Londonderry returned to the real Government.

## The Cynical *Sindo* Hijacking Of Joe Sherlock

Under the heading of *Labour TD Hits Out At Unions Over Strike Plan*, the *Sunday Tribune* of November 1st carried the following report:

"A Labour Party TD has challenged his party's relationship with trade unions and launched a scathing attack on the unions' plan for days of protest and strike action. In an unprecedented move, Cork East TD Sean Sherlock has criticised the unions for building up 'war chests' and called for an 'assessment of the linkage' between them and his party. He claims that the relationship was largely ignored by the unions when they had 'a direct line to Bertie Ahern... during the halcyon days of social partnership'. Sherlock, who succeeded his father Joe—a former SIPTU official—to the Dáil, told the *Sunday Tribune* that he is 'vehemently opposed' to the idea of a strike or national day of protest by trade unions. It would be 'an affront to anybody who does not have a job and is struggling', he said."

"He also admitted that if the Labour Party gets into power, 'we can't bury our heads in the sand and we will need to actively deal with the public-sector wage bill. What I am trying to do is to nail this lie that we {the Labour Party} only represent workers who are members of trade unions. Yes, there is a strong link between Labour and the trade-union movement. But to my mind that link was weakened over the last number of years by the fact that the trade union movement, during the halcyon days of social partnership had a direct line to Bertie Ahern and didn't need the Labour Party...The unions largely ignored the party when they had the link with Bertie. While I believe in the link with the trade-union movement, I believe that it is incumbent on the Labour Party to represent all workers, both private and public and maybe it is time we had a qualitative assessment of this linkage.' He said he was uncomfortable with the idea that the unions will spend '€1.3m of a war chest' fighting cuts as their members lose their jobs. Some of this money should be used to help recently unemployed members, he said."

As might have been anticipated, Senator Eoghan Harris provided the following benediction in the *Sunday Independent* on November 8th:

"Starting with 'The Week in Politics', Seán Sherlock stood the line. He waited until Brendan Smith of Fianna Fáil and Phil Hogan of Fine Gael finished waffling around public-sector pay cuts. Then he laid it on the line: he was against public-sector strikes and in favour of some cuts in public-sector pay. Sherlock's act of good authority also staked his claim to be a future leader of the Labour Party. As

Brian Cowen realised recently, nothing makes you look like a leader as much as taking a hard line. Alas, good authority is anathema to the left wing of any Labour Party. But even before the Labour Party made distancing noises, Martin Ferris of Sinn Féin shot out a statement saying that Sherlock was dividing the public and private sector workers. (In fact, they are divided by the 26 per cent pay premium.) But Seán was not their sole target. Sinn Féin were also settling scores with the ghost of Seán's father. Joe Sherlock, a good friend of mine, was a real republican, a peace train pioneer, a thorn in the Provos' side and a man who always acted with good authority. Seán Sherlock talks softly but he is a chip from that same hard block."

It is interesting to note which particular details from the Seán Sherlock media outings of the previous week Harris's *Sindo* column chose to ignore. For well over a year, Sir Anthony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers Group has been mounting a sustained hate campaign against public sector workers, with Harris acting as cheerleader and trotting out as Gospel the likes of his misleading "26 per cent".

(See my November 30th SIPTU Research study at [www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/TheEconomy/](http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/TheEconomy/) where I challenge that campaign, under the heading of "Separating Fact from Fiction on Earnings: The Use and Abuse of Statistics". Under the heading of "Biggest rises for the private sector" the Independent Newspapers website carried a report on this study as "Breaking News", but the report was pulled from the print edition and made no appearance whatsoever in the December 1st issue of the *Irish Independent*. Not the only piece of censorship from that quarter, however, since Harris's gushing accolade for Sherlock made no mention of the latter's attack on "the link with Bertie". But we should not be surprised at that, for the most glaring public sector premium link with Bertie has been the infliction of Harris himself on the Seanad as the unelected nominee of the then Taoiseach.)

I do not know to what extent Harris and Joe Sherlock might have had a warm personal friendship in previous decades, nor to what extent it might or might not have survived the complete severing of their political bonds nineteen years ago. I myself know from personal experience that one can indeed survive the other, and I can therefore make no further judgement on Harris's own personal relationships. All that concerns me here, however, is the opportunistic exploitation of Joe Sher-

lock's memory for a current political agenda. But even this does not blind me to recognition of an exception to the general behaviour of a political opportunist on an occasion when he offers a personal expression of sympathy, with no political axe to grind. Such was Harris's statement in the Seanad on 21st October 2007:

"I was very moved by the tributes to Joe Sherlock from his political colleagues here. I did not really know him in that capacity and my knowledge of him is very different. The Joe Sherlock I knew was much more steely, as he helped the republican movement come out of a cul-de-sac and into the broader stream of the socialist and constitutional struggle. I knew him through ten years of very bitter struggle within the republican movement after the split and he was a man of steel in setting his face like flint against the northern campaign of the Provisional IRA. He never feared to stand up to them or say what a real republican should be, a man who wanted to unite Protestant and Catholic and Dissenter. I do not wish him to go to his grave without reminding people that behind the warm public representative, the great man of the soil and the spalpeen—he came from the labouring class—was a man who played a crucial role in Irish politics by helping to bridge the great republican movement away from force. That has only reached its final days in the very welcome decision of the Provisional IRA to call off its campaign and do business in Northern Ireland. In that great, long, tortured, difficult and very noble project, Joe Sherlock played a significant part. I pay tribute to that side of his legacy."

Now that was very different statement from the "let's hit Sinn Féin again" agenda of Harris's *Sindo* column. His Seanad expression of sympathy was heart-felt and agenda-free. Sherlock's break with—and opposition to—the Provisionals was narrated, unembellished, as matter-of-fact history. Moreover, this did not preclude Harris himself from then going on to praise the Provisional IRA, in that very same statement, for their ending of the War. That statement, however, still ignored how long it took for the whole political system in the South to break free from the ideology that had stoked the conditions for such a War in the first place.

As I pointed out in the October issue of *Irish Political Review*, Harris not alone failed to follow the good example of Muriel MacSwiney in challenging that ideology when it mattered, but he was very much a driving force in the Workers' Party/Official IRA attacks on Jim Kemmy and the rest of us who did so. A decade ago I felt it necessary to challenge the revisionist amnesia and myopia that was already emerging concerning the history of that period, in the following letter published in the *Irish Examiner* on December 10th 1999:



"As the Republic's Constitution was finally amended on December 2nd to enshrine the principle of consent, the Minister for Foreign Affairs sang the praises of a litany of historical and contemporary figures. There was one glaring omission from his list, who also went unmentioned in the Dáil statement of the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Brendan Howlin, that '*for the most of us it was unthinkable just a short number of years ago that Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution would be amended with such little fuss.*' The fact is that the present Dáil consensus of little fuss on the issue could not have been reached without somebody being prepared to create a hell of a fuss in order to break the mould of the previous consensus. That somebody was Jim Kemmy, Chairman of the Labour Party at the time of his death two years ago. But it was not as a member of that Party that Kemmy made his most decisive and trenchant contributions to shaking up the Dáil. On the very day that he was first elected as an Independent Socialist TD in June 1981, Kemmy unequivocally told RTE that one of his first priorities would be to campaign in the Dáil against the territorial claim in Articles 2 and 3 which overrode the principle of consent, and he hoped he could win the support of other TDs for that democratic objective. He was, however, to meet an on the spot rebuff from the Workers' Party which reasserted in that same TV programme its continuing commitment to the Republic's claim on the North. In this respect the Workers' Party response was, of course, no worse than that of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour. But neither was it any better. For the sake of the historical record it is necessary to point out that Jim Kemmy was a lone voice in Dáil Eireann assailed from all sides. Such personal courage remained unmatched in Irish politics until the heroic initiative taken by John Hume and Gerry Adams to launch the Peace Process."

These facts were challenged by the veteran ex-President of Sinn Féin the Workers' Party on December 17th, prompting a further letter from myself, published by the *Irish Examiner* that Christmas Eve:

"Further to Tomás Mac Giolla's letter under the heading of '*WP was in accord with Jim Kemmy*', it is necessary to establish the following facts: Jim Kemmy had been campaigning for the removal of the territorial claim on the North (Articles 2 and 3) for a full decade before his election to the Dáil in 1981; When jointly interviewed with Kemmy by RTE TV on June 12th the newly elected Workers' Party TD Joe Sherlock indignantly replied that he would not support Kemmy on this issue because his own party fully supported the claim to the whole of the national territory. Tomás Mac Giolla is correct to recall his own statements opposing the attempt to bomb the North

into a United Ireland and he deserves credit for leading what was then Sinn Féin the Workers Party into agreement with the consensus previously established by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour. But what that consensus failed to follow through on was any Constitutional acknowledgement of the right of a Northern Ireland majority to withhold consent to territorial unification. It was this failure which made the Fine Gael-Labour Government's 'achievement' of the 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement so profoundly undemocratic and which led to Senator Mary Robinson's resignation in protest from the Labour Party. Through last year's Agreement, Irish politics at long last caught up with Kemmy's lone stand."

Kemmy and Sherlock had been both elected to an almost-hung Dáil in June 1981. Kemmy gave conditional support to the newly-formed Fine Gael-Labour Coalition and voted for a harsh August mini-Budget as the logical consequence of supporting that Government. Sherlock opposed the setting up of the Government, wobbled by abstaining on that mini-Budget, but returned to full opposition for the January 1982 Budget. In that fateful Budget, Minister for Finance John Bruton insisted on hitting working class families all the harder by seeking to impose VAT on children's footwear and clothing, while his Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald went to ridiculous extremes in justifying such a measure, on the grounds that it would prevent adult women with small feet "cheating" the system by buying VAT-free children's shoes that might fit them! Kemmy could no longer support a Government trying to ram through such a Budget and voted against it, despite enormous pressure from his Leinster House room mate, Socialist Labour TD Dr Noel Browne, to continue supporting Fitzgerald.

Kemmy's vote against that Budget brought down the Fine Gael-Labour Government, but Fianna Fáil fell just short of obtaining an absolute majority in the ensuing General Election. Independent Socialist TD Tony Gregory personally struck a good deal for his disadvantaged Dublin Central constituency in return for supporting Charlie Haughey for Taoiseach. Haughey sought to buy Kemmy's vote by offering him the position of Ceann Comhairle, but he refused that tempting blandishment. SFWP, however, despite being in a stronger position with Joe Sherlock joined by new TDs Proinsias de Rossa and Paddy Gallagher, supported Haughey for Taoiseach without striking any conditional deal whatsoever on behalf of their working class constituents.

Under the heading of *The Day Of The Leaping Socialists*, the *Irish Times* of 10th

March 1982 recorded the opening proceedings of that new Dáil:

"At 3.25 Joe Sherlock stood up, and his words were awaited literally with baited breath. Down in the hall a knot of Fianna Fáil supporters huddled around a transistor radio on which Albert Reynolds offered his recorded predictions of what would happen this afternoon. A runner came down the stairs with the hot new of Joe Sherlock's princely gift of three votes, and there were roars of delight, a rapid tot and roars of victory ... At 3.55 the motion that Charlie Haughey be nominated as Taoiseach was put, and the division was called. At 4.05 the entire SFWP parliamentary party made the most spectacular entrance in the history of Irish politics. The entire SFWP parliamentary party had got itself locked out. It burst onto the press gallery, and scrambled straight through the startled party from the French Embassy on the Distinguished Strangers Gallery, to get into the Chamber to cast those crucial votes."

Joe Sherlock never did anything by half measures. When he gave his word he kept it. Under the heading of *Going Through The Hoops*, the Stickie-friendly political commentator Dick Walsh explained the *realpolitik* of Sherlock's decision in his March 11th *Irish Times* column:

"Mr. Haughey's margin of victory was comfortable, thanks to the athletic feat of the three SFWP men who literally leapt to his defence on Tuesday. Their bounding entrance to the Dáil, via the press gallery and the distinguished strangers' area, was appropriately spectacular. It reflected the ideological hoops they must have jumped through to get to Mr. Haughey's side. It will take time, and much parsing and analysis, to discover precisely how the SFWP, which has no love for either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael and is busy biting into Labour's support with its superior organisation, came to vote for Mr. Haughey. For the time being we must make do with the more obvious reasons, of which the most obvious is that the SFWP needs time to consolidate its position and sees, in a Fianna Fáil minority Government, the best chance of winning a respite from elections. Paradoxically, because of SFWP's opposition to coalition, it is likely that Labour's decision to reject partnership with Fine Gael was an important factor in determining where the SFWP votes went ... In Mr. Joe Sherlock's words, the lack of cohesion in the coalition was not conducive to winning his party's support. Mr. Sherlock said loudly that the SFWP had not done any deal with Fianna Fáil. Mr. Tony Gregory said even more loudly that he had."

Joe Sherlock also served in those years as Secretary of the ITGWU's Mallow No.2 Branch. When it came to a choice between



Union and Party lines, however, he chose the latter. But at least there was a logic to that, driven by his belief in subordinating any personal agenda to what he believed was best needed to serve the strategic needs of the particular workers' party to which he was so unequivocally committed. Labour Party frontbencher Seán Sherlock also invoked his own membership of SIPTU when setting out to undermine the effectiveness of the Trade Union movement's day of protest. In doing so, however, he acted in such a manner as to disregard the disciplines of both organisations. Labour Party leader Éamon Gilmore, while repeatedly stating that he did not regard the path of industrial action as appropriate, nonetheless gave his support to the November 6th day of protest. But Sean Sherlock's condemnation—in one and the same breath—of both industrial action on November 24th and the day of protest on November 6th, came across quite unambiguously as a pre-emptive attempt to sabotage the earlier event. Whatever its motivation, it evoked a Party reprimand. Whether or not—to quote Harris—Sean Sherlock is "a chip from the same hard block" as his father, remains to be seen. A test of character should certainly involve recognition on his part of the 'health warning' that ought to be associated with any praise from Harris. For Joe Sherlock himself was not at all amenable to Harris's flattery. Indeed, when it came to the crunch, he received anything but.

Notwithstanding the fact that my own Democratic Socialist Party leader, Jim Kemmy, had supported the Fine Gael-Labour mini-Budget of August 1981, as the ITGWU's chief economist I criticised it in the columns of *Liberty* in no less a manner than I would later criticise the January 1982 Budget which led Kemmy to bring down that same Government. Kemmy went on to judge the subsequent Fianna Fáil Budget of March 1982 on its merits, found it to be even worse, and remained consistent in also opposing its measures. A critique of Fianna Fáil's March 1982 Budget, entitled "A worse deal for workers", also appeared as the ITGWU editorial in the April issue of *Liberty*. For reasons that will become more understandable hereunder, however, that particular editorial was not penned by the Editor of *Liberty*, leading SFWP cadre Des Geraghty, but by myself. For the record, I then wrote:

"How has the present Fianna Fáil Budget supposedly improved upon the Coalition one, whose unacceptable features led to its defeat on January 27th? ... It is in the whole area of taxation policy that this Budget is systematically in open conflict with the tax demands raised by the trade union movement during the great PAYE demonstrations of 1979. In our editorial of last August we rightly

criticised the Coalition Government for raising the basic rate of VAT from 10 to 15 percent. This rate has now been further raised to 18 percent. We have long insisted that justice for the PAYE worker should as a minimum ensure that the value of tax-free allowances and tax bands should keep pace with inflation. The 30 percent increase in personal allowances under this Budget is hopelessly inadequate when compared with the 66 percent increase in the cost-of-living since these allowances were last adjusted in 1979. Instead of tax bands keeping pace with inflation, the new Fianna Fáil Government has provided for a 33 percent reduction in the standard 35 percent tax band. What is most disturbing, however, is that the Fianna Fáil Budget is an even greater affront to tax equity and social justice than the defeated Coalition Budget had been. In 1982 capital taxes will now yield £4 million less to Exchequer than the totally inadequate provision made by the Coalition. On the other side, the Fianna Fáil Government has ensured that PAYE workers will actually contribute £9 million more in income tax this year than would have been the case under the Coalition's Budget proposals. It is clear that most of this increased tax contribution will be extracted from the lower paid worker. In the space of two months the burden facing a worker trying to support a family on an income of only £5,000 a year has dramatically increased. If such a worker has 3 children, he will now be compelled to pay £88 more in income tax under the March Budget than would have been the case under the January Budget proposals. The position becomes even worse if that worker has 6 children to support. Under the Coalition Budget he would have paid £32 in income tax. The Fianna Fáil Budget has now increased his tax liability more than six-fold to as much as £225. Such a budget is even more of an affront to social justice than the defeated January one had been. It stands condemned by a trade union movement which led the way in campaigning for tax equity 3 years ago. Let the Government take note."

This ITGWU editorial had in fact also referred to some positive aspects of the March Budget but saw that, on balance, it was indeed worse than the defeated January one. Never one to stop at half measures, however, Joe Sherlock emphasised only the positive, and came to the following overall verdict in his Dáil speech on Budget Day itself, March 25th:

"At the outset, on behalf of my party, we see this as a reasonable, well balanced budget ... There are many things in this budget which are very welcome indeed. It will be seen by the ordinary working class people as a tremendous improvement and benefit. It is nothing more than people deserve ... The benefits accruing under this budget will result in a deficit of £679 million and we will be

looking at this very carefully. The immediate reaction, however, is that it is a reasonably well presented budget and an effort has been made to bring some balance into it".

ITGWU differences with its own Mallow Branch Secretary and SFWP Dáil leader were based on class politics. Harris, however, had already embarked on a trajectory which would later see him end up as spiritual director to Fine Gael's Redmondite Taoiseach, John Bruton. In their 2009 history, *The Lost Revolution—the Official IRA and the Workers' Party*, Brian Hanley and Scott Millar record:

"Their support for the Haughey government was causing some discomfort for the WP. Fine Gael taunted them as 'Fianna Fáil's little party' whose TDs 'broke the furniture and fittings of Dáil Eireann in their haste to vote for Charles J. Haughey for Taoiseach'. Eoghan Harris in a letter to the leadership reported that 'around my own work place and in media circles there was a perception of us being anxious to vote for Fianna Fáil at all costs'. This feeling, he claimed, had 'congealed around Joe Sherlock'. Sherlock's relatively traditional republicanism was not universally popular within the party" (p444).

Normal English-language usage would have said "crystallised around". Harris's use of such a sickening term as "congealed" was designed to show the utmost contempt for Sherlock. Never one to choose his words lightly, and forever anxious to stress the importance of what he called "impact", what was such imagery meant to convey? Some bloody residue in the A&E unit of Mallow Hospital, perhaps?

The contempt shown by Harris's choice of language in respect of Sherlock was itself beneath contempt. Unlike Harris, I would never claim to have been a good friend of Sherlock's. But I valued him as a committed working class activist, with whom I always remained on friendly terms, notwithstanding our sharp political differences. And the universal esteem for Joe Sherlock's personal integrity was rightly evident in the genuine tributes paid to him on his passing by all shades of political opinion.

Harris's expression of contempt, as recorded in *The Lost Revolution*, has been transmitted to, and has infected, his latter day acolytes. It is remarkable that a book that was launched as far back as September 10th, and reviewed almost immediately in so many other papers, remained unmentioned for so long in the *Sunday Independent*, notwithstanding its detailed treatment of Harris's own role. But step forward, two months later, *Sindo* columnist John-Paul McCarthy! Yes, the same John-Paul who pontificates week after week, with a by-line constantly reminding readers that he "teaches Irish history in

*Oxford University*". The very same John-Paul who (whether through incompetent ignorance or incontinent invention, I cannot say) has also peddled a howler of a "historical" lie in his *Sindo* column, and whose Fanning-Harris editors will not allow that lie to be corrected and the Oxford pedlar exposed. On November 8th, in the very same issue in which Harris sought to invoke Joe Sherlock's name to bless Seán's actions, McCarthy unfortunately let the cat out of the bag in revealing the Harris school's real political verdict on Sherlock. McCarthy's portrayal of him as amounting to little more than some common-or-garden ward-healer from Cork East, betrayed total ignorance of the strength of Sherlock's Mallow Hospital campaign. McCarthy must have thought he was actually doing his guru a favour with the following snob dismissal of such key SFWP figures as Ryan and Sherlock:

"Someone called 'Mick Ryan', gets more play here than the Garland faction of the old Workers' Party (the 'Koreans') ... The key figure in this story should have been not 'Mick Ryan' but Eamon Smullen, a hardnosed communist, industrial agitator and critic of Irish nationalism who dominated the WP's internal intellectual discussions. Smullen's enormous importance in the development of what became modern Ireland's most electorally successful socialist party presented Hanley and Millar with a grave problem, however. First, he's dead, and so not around to be taped. Second, Smullen's most formidable lieutenant, Senator Eoghan Harris, refused to talk to them ... The Smullen group, a party within the party in effect, won over huge numbers of middle-class and public-sector votes with an acceptable mix of socialism and anti-nationalist policies enshrined in a dozen influential pamphlets ... While Hanley and Millar devote some chapters to these issues, they are really just tantalising asides in a sea of trivia and gossip, best exemplified by Paddy Woodworth's unintentionally hilarious monologue about Harris's 'factionalism'. 'It was very creepy', Woodworth is quoted as saying. 'I frankly found... the Harris faction a far more frightening phenomenon than the IRA itself' ... But what seems to have most worried the Woodworth/Ryans was the suspicion that Smullen's team in RTE were more interested in supporting Section 31 than in supporting socialism. And the authors seem to agree. Hanley and Millar give the former RTE producer Gerry Gregg (a determined fighter for Section 31) only a few sentences on this matter—Mick Ryan must have nipped to the loo—but Gregg's grim analysis gets swamped by an irrelevant account of Joe Sherlock's devotion to Mallow Hospital ... Gregg's insistence on matching the PIRA juggernaut stride for stride in Montrose may well have failed the

## Bashing Israel ?

The following two letters failed to be published in the *Irish Times*

Referring to the ceasefire arrangements between Israel and Hamas, brokered by Egypt in June 2008, Ambassador Evrony (November 25th ) writes that "during the first part of the 'lull', from June 19th to November 4th, a total of 74 rockets and mortars landed in Israel from Gaza". His figures are not correct.

In its report, *The Six Months of the Lull Arrangement*, the Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), which is often quoted by the Israeli Government, states:

"As of June 19, there was a marked reduction in the extent of attacks on the western Negev population. The lull was sporadically violated by rocket and mortar shell fire, carried out by rogue terrorist organizations, in some instance in defiance of Hamas (especially by Fatah and Al-Qaeda supporters). Hamas was careful to maintain the ceasefire. The IDF refrained from undertaking counterterrorism activities in the Gaza Strip, taking only routine defensive security measures along the border fence. Between June 19 and November 4, 20 rockets (three of which fell inside the Gaza Strip) and 18 mortar shells (five of which fell inside the Gaza Strip) were fired at Israel."

So, only 30 rockets and mortars landed in Israel during this period, none of them fired by Hamas, which stuck religiously to the ceasefire. More significant, in this period, the rate of firing fell by 98% on average compared with the earlier part of 2008, when 1,199 rockets and 1,072 mortars were fired from Gaza.

Israel brought the calm to an end on November 4th, when, contrary to the ceasefire agreement, the IDF entered Gaza for the first time since the ceasefire began and killed 7 members of Hamas. Only then did Hamas resume firing in retaliation.

From the point of view of keeping Israeli citizens safe, Israel's military action against Gaza was totally unnecessary. All Israel had to do to maintain the existing calm was to stick to the terms of the ceasefire agreement. It chose not to do so.

**David Morrison** (25.11.09)

Ronald S Lauder of the World Jewish Congress (December 7th) writes that "Israel-bashing is growing in popularity in many areas". Clearly, he believes that Israel doesn't deserve this treatment.

Regrettably it does. Israel is unique in this world in having been in military occupation of large swathes of territory not its own for more than forty years—the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights. Not only that, it has planted around half a million of its own citizens into the territory it occupies, contrary to Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention, and to Security Council resolutions 446, 452 and 465. And has annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, again contrary to a raft of Security Council resolutions.

To the best of my knowledge, no other state in this world has behaved in this manner.

**David Morrison** (7.12.09)

Woodworth test of openness, accountability and transparency. Gregg's analysis passed a much bigger test, however. We are happily still here to tell the tale. Pity it was not told better here, and with less bile directed at the Smullen group who behaved like good democrats if not good socialists."

Having had McCarthy open the gate for him, Harris himself now claimed his place in history, with his attack on what he called "*the Garland Old Guard*" a week later in the *Sunday Independent* of November 15th:

"After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the Workers' Party was poised to pass out the Labour Party. But by early 1990 it had thrown away its chance by first suppressing my pamphlet, 'The Necessity of Social Democracy', and then disciplining Eamon Smullen for publishing it, causing the first of two

terminal splits... Eamon Smullen finally got sick of the scheming to stick to old-style socialism and published 'The Necessity of Social Democracy' in early 1990. All hell broke loose. The Old Guard and the Student Princes started a purge of the Smullen group. This led to the first of two splits which finished the Workers' Party as a serious force... Eamon Smullen was subjected to two days of diatribes, 'disciplined' and driven from the Workers' Party—the name was his—which he had transformed from a narrow nationalist sect into a successful progressive workers' party. At the time, some myopic historians said the Workers' Party would survive the loss of people like Smullen and those of us who left with him. Fat chance. No party can suppress people with fresh ideas, drive out old idealists and pamper political opportunists without doing itself fatal damage. Within two years the Workers' Party was a hollow shell."

Harris makes no mention of Sherlock's role in all of this. Why not? The Smullen/Harris 'sophisticates' who had made fun of Sherlock once inquiring what exactly was meant by "democratic centralism", used that mechanism to stifle dissent within the WP for as long as they could (including suppressing calls for the dropping of Articles 2 and 3), and then they blew it all apart by themselves proceeding to operate as minority factionalists who could only self-destruct. Joe Sherlock may not have been as up to scratch, as those who have now become "ex-communists" of "the God that failed" variety, on what exactly Lenin had to 'teach' on "democratic centralism" in *What Is To Be Done?* and other works. But Sherlock did know the meaning of organisational discipline and loyalty. As a loyal member of the IRA during the "Border Campaign", he had been arrested under arms in 1961 and imprisoned as a consequence. He went on to actually believe in the transformation of Official Sinn Féin/IRA into a Workers' Party, and he further believed that henceforth his one loyalty should be to open Party structures which, in turn, should be free from the operations of any shadowy Army or Industrial Department trying to pull strings behind the scenes.

At the February 1992 Conference of the Workers' Party—when it split apart due to the de Rossa vote of 241 against the Garland vote of 133 being just 9 votes short of the two thirds constitutionally required to transform the Party—the most noteworthy critic of Garland's paramilitary "Group B" was none other Joe Sherlock. Referring to some members having their own "secret army", Sherlock said that "what was needed now was to eradicate any semblance of this criminal activity". Harris's quarrel with Seán Garland two years previously had nothing to do with such issues. Neither before, then, nor since, did Harris ever criticise Garland in the Sherlock manner. But, in any case, how could he? If the Garland/Goulding "Group B" was operating as a "secret IRA" in manipulating the less streetwise members of the Workers' Party, the Smullen/Harris "Industrial Department" had been similarly operating as a "secret IRB". And, at that stage of his political life, Sherlock was as much opposed to IRBs as IRAs. It is this fact which makes Harris's whingeing about the role of both the "Garland Old Guard" and the "Student Princes", in seeing off Smullen and Harris at the April 1990 WP Conference, all the more difficult to take. For the most effective 'good riddance' speech came from neither group, but from the solid working class tones of Joe Sherlock. He frankly argued out that "there was no harm in having people to help write documents, but in the past people had received too much prominence". Sherlock concluded: "Such people

should never again have a contribution to make and the Party would not have similar problems".

Such was the political parting of the ways between Sherlock and Harris almost two decades ago, as Joe saw off the Harris (but now no longer Irish Republican) Brotherhood. Harris did indeed make a

genuine, agenda-free, speech during the course of the October 2007 Seanad vote of sympathy on Joe Sherlock's death. But Harris should have had the decency to leave it at that, instead of cynically misusing Sherlock's name two years later in an effort to bolster up his current anti-union agenda.

**Manus O'Riordan**

## Does It Up Stack ?

### DICTIONARY OF IRISH BIOGRAPHY

The DIB which was launched in November 2009 in Dublin Castle is a great achievement for its editors James McGuire and James Quinn who are both historians. There are 9 volumes covering over 9000 entries. Among the small samples I referred to, the entries were detailed, with a wealth of historical background detail included. A peculiar omission is a biography of F.T. (Tom) O'Higgins SC, who was also a TD and was a Minister for Health and Social Welfare, a High Court and Supreme Court Judge and twice a candidate for the Presidency of Ireland. He was Chief Justice of Ireland in 1974-1984 and later a Judge of the European Court. That seems enough to deserve an entry in the DIB. But it is not there.

On the other hand the DIB includes some interestingly eccentric people such as Mary Ann Costello 1747-1827 who married and had two children. After her husband died she had five children by Samuel Reddish and in 1783 she married again to Richard Hunn and had five children by him. In between times, she earned her living around England as an actress. Her eldest surviving son George arranged a pension for her, to keep her from interfering in his political career and he became Prime Minister of England a few months after she died. As I said—interesting stuff. Great contents but regrettably, and perhaps because the DIB is available on the Internet, it is not well bound for the weight of it (it weighs in at 2kg per volume). And, because it is printed on heavy limestone-based paper, it needs to be kept in a very dry atmosphere or else it will absorb moisture. It deserves to be printed to last on acid-free paper. But there you are, the computer is king while the electricity is with us. Not every scholar has a computer handy all the time. It is however a really good reference work and also a good read.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

So, at last, someone had the courage to expose the fraudulent academic 'scientists'

who programmed their computers to manipulate and falsify climate data. There is a saying "you couldn't make it up" but these crooked people did. And so did their cronies in Universities across the Amer-anglian world—USA, New Zealand, Australia—yes, those people knew that to be on-message meant big grants from Governments and the corporatists. Once again, it shows we must follow the money to find the dung heap.

There have always been decent honest climatologists and geologists who could and did, tell us the real story of the ebbing and flowing of heat and cold in our Earth for the past 4,500 million years. But the media journalists would not give space to honest decent people. The media, such as *The Irish Times*, lent itself—no, sold itself—to the climate change lobby. Since the honest Brendan McWilliams passed away, *The Irish Times* has used its Bulletin Page to campaign solidly day-by-day in favour of the climate change lobby and the Kyoto Agreement. We can thank *The Irish Times* and other media for spreading a false message and thus enabling the Government to tax "carbon emissions".

### THE ECONOMY

Who is in charge? Certainly not Brian Lenihan, TD and Minister for Finance, as we saw the EU Commission directing AIB to break its contract with the Irish State and not to pay €280 million due to State next May! This just doesn't stack up?

If this sort of thing goes on, Ireland will be to Brussels as the Aran Islands are to Dublin, i.e. of very little importance. We had some bargaining power before we were frightened with Yes for the Lisbon Treaty the second time. Now we're in the back-kitchen washing up the dirty dishes while the big countries are behind our backs doing deals which we are not a part of.

Would they ever tell us what is going on? Would they .....

**Michael Stack ©.**

## Johnston And *The Lost Revolution*

Roy Johnston made comments on Brian Hanley's account of the Stickies *Lost Revolution* in the December issue of *Books Ireland*—or rather his comments on the Stickies while giving general approval to Hanley's account as accurate. (Hanley chose to comment on the B&ICO in the course of his book, and those comments were almost invariably inaccurate, being either free invention or the retailing of gossip. But his account of the Stickies probably is accurate, or is in accordance with what they wanted said, as it is based on interviews with them and the Official IRA has not gone away—a fact of which we were reminded when it announced a couple of weeks ago that it was going on Ceasefire.)

*The Lost Revolution* was a revolution that was never there to be made. It was a mimicry of Lenin's revolution in a situation in which the requisite social materials had been used up through reform generations ago.

Land reform would have eroded the conditions within which Lenin made his revolution. After 1905, land reform was threatened by the new Prime Minister of the Tsar, Stolypin. And, even though Stolypin was assassinated, Lenin had the growing feeling that the possibility of the revolution for which he had been constructing his Party was receding. He was contemplating emigration when Britain engineered the World War which threw the Tsarist State—which had hitherto engaged in civilising operations in Asia with the prospect of conflict with the British Empire there—into war with Austria and Germany with a view to gaining Constantinople, and put the Russian State under a degree of stress that broke it. And then he had the good fortune that a former member of his Party—Alexander Helphand/Parvus—had become a useful millionaire in Germany and was helping with the war effort, and was able to persuade the General Staff that it would be a good thing to enable Lenin to get back to Russia from Switzerland. So, Lenin got home in time to prevent Stalin from consolidating the February Revolution and stabilising it as a bourgeois-democratic arena for socialist politics.

The land question in Ireland had been settled by the reform movement of Canon Sheehan and William O'Brien half a century before the Stickies appeared. And there was a working class organised in Trade Unions which were pillars of the State in place of the concentrated but disfranchised proletariat of Russia. There was, however, a war going on. But the Stickies didn't know what to make of it. They knew too much. They had constructed themselves

too carefully. The knowledge of revolution that they learned got in the way of engagement with the actual opportunity that existed. They were finished Leninists, and were therefore not Leninists at all. They had the Book to guide them—the book written by Lenin in the course of doing things for which there was no book, and which was obsolescent as soon as it had achieved its object.

And so they played the part of Kautsky, who chastised Lenin for doing things for which the Book gave no warrant. People who dealt with the features and opportunities of the actual situation of 1969-70 were criticised either as "ultra-leftists" or "reactionaries"—it didn't seem to matter which—with a strong hint that something more than criticism would be applied to them.

Johnston writes:

"we attempted to develop a non-violent political alternative to the classic Fenian tradition. We ran into problems... For me the problems became insuperable early in 1977, and I resigned, remaining however in reasonably friendly contact with those activists who retained something of our left-republican politicising agenda..."

I recall that, when he resigned, Desmond Fennell commented in the *Sunday Press* that this was an unacknowledged practical submission to the "two-nations" reality of the situation. And that reality remained unacknowledged by Johnston as far as I know.

As to "the classic Fenian tradition", what relevance did it have to post-1922 Ireland? It was an independence tradition in an Ireland governed as a single unit within the UK which recognised the British position, that Irish independence would never be conceded to anything but force, and acted accordingly.

Independence was eventually gained for the part of the country where the bulk of the population supported the use of force for the purpose. In the region where the bulk of the population enrolled *en masse* in a body whose purpose was to prevent Irish independence by force, Britain made a separate arrangement. It divided the country, but it did not simply retain the part where there was a majority against independence as an integral political region of the British state. It set up a separate but subordinate jurisdiction and administration there.

What relevance had the "classic Fenian tradition" to that situation? The Parnellite and Redmondite Home Rule movement had acted in a way that provoked the formation of a mass Unionist movement in

Protestant Ulster, and when nationalist Ireland voted for independence in 1918 Britain based a subordinate local regime on it. The "divide and rule principle" was successfully applied in the North. And it was applied successfully enough in the rest of the country to break up the Sinn Fein movement which had forced Britain to concede something in 1921-2 that it had always assured its stratum of supporters in Ireland that it would never do.

It seemed to me in 1969 that the practical starting point lay in accepting the accomplished fact of Partition as something more than a British device. It was certainly a British device, but it was grounded in a local buffer regime. The Stickies sometimes made cryptic statements which might imply that that was the case, but they never said it intelligibly in a way that was conducive to further thought.

The Stickie position was a kind of working out of the Wolfe Tone Society position, "whose motivation", says Johnston:

"was to attempt to decouple Marxist analysis from the Lenin-Stalin overlay and develop it on the home ground, on a basis wider than the 'proletariat', invoking the Connolly legacy. This led to the development of the Civil Rights movement in the North with a view to providing an environment where republican democratic political objectives might be pursued legally..."

I was not invited to join the Wolfe Tone Society in the late 1960s. I cannot say whether I would or not, if I had been invited. My mind resists hypotheticals and scenarios. I have often explained that what I am able to see is only what's under my nose. But I was drawn into discussion on a number of occasions with people whom I understood to be founders and elders of the Society, and I barely escaped being ordered out of the house because of my opportunist view of Lenin—my view of Lenin as a superb opportunist for whom "theory is grey but the tree of life is green".

The rigorous necessity of things, and a set of principles taken as axioms to be applied rigorously to actual situations, seemed to be of supreme importance to them. I do not recall if they renounced Stalin while holding Lenin sacred. I have always found Leninist criticism of Stalin to be nothing more than ill-informed nonsense, and if they engaged in it, my mind didn't bother to remember it.

If the Wolfe Tone Society had attempted to free Marxism from a Lenin-Stalin overlay I would certainly have remembered. The Marxism which Lenin "overlaid" was Kautsky's. Kautsky was the impeccable Marxist of the era between Engels and Lenin, whose theorising was dissented from by nobody of substance, except I think on the margins by Rosa Luxemburg. And he published a pamphlet on *The Day*. (As far

as I recall, that was its title, *Der Tag*. It was what it was about at any rate.) But when the actual Day came (whether in July-August 1914 or the Winter of 1918-19), Kautsky emerged as apolitical.

I once read a satire, possibly by Anatole France, about a Foreign Secretary who kept himself so well informed about what was going on in the world from day to day that he could never formulate a foreign policy. And I thought that was Kautsky, the perfect Marxist.

I think it was just over forty years ago that I had a discussion with Johnston about Connolly in Liberty Hall after a talk which I had given about Connolly. (Johnston was odd in that Greaves/Wolfe Tone Society company, in that it was possible to engage in open discussion with him.) I was freeing Connolly at the time from Greaves's entanglement of him with Lenin. It was not that I wanted to play one against the other. I had got a hint that Greaves had engaged in chicanery on the matter and I just wanted to find out the truth of it. I recall Johnston telling me that I had taken on a hopeless task: that Greaves had tied Connolly up in a knot with Lenin which could never be disentangled. And he seemed to approve. But I carried on regardless, and uncovered a Connolly who had nothing in common with Leninism except a superb opportunism in a live situation.

I do not recall that Connolly said anything comparable to Lenin's "*Renegade Kautsky*". He just ignored Kautsky and aligned himself with the other wing of German Socialism. And, if he knew of Lenin's position, he ignored that too. Once the Great War got going, and the Socialist International commitment to class war against national war melted away, he decided that the German State, even without a socialist revolution, was the best thing going from a socialist viewpoint. He therefore published the views of German Socialists who actively supported the War and ignored the revolutionary German Socialists who made propaganda against the War.

And the revolutionary German Socialists who opposed the War attacked the German Government for collaborating with the Irish Republicans. Liebknecht exposed the Casement affair in the German Parliament.

In 1898 Connolly declared his affinity with Pilsudski's national socialism. He reasserted this affinity with the Polish Socialist Party in 1915, when Pilsudski was making war on Russia with a Polish Legion raised in Austria and backed by Germany.

This Connolly, the Connolly of the principled German alliance, was unacceptable to Leninism in Ireland, and remains unacceptable to revisionist Ireland. The revisionist mind (so to speak) will not retain the idea of it long enough to consider it. When it is asserted in a revisionist presence there is a reflex recoil from it before it can

become a subject of thought.

And how did Connolly develop a "*wider ground than the 'proletariat'...*"? By going into alliance with the Fenian tradition and insisting that it should go into action with him, or else he would shame it by acting alone in the Fenian manner. Did the Wolfe Tone Society seriously think that conducting a Civil Rights agitation in accordance with Greaves's strategy was of a kind with Connolly's enlisting of the Fenians in 1914-16?

The paradox of Civil Rights lay in the slogan, *British Rights For British Citizens!* Citizenship and Rights amounted to the same thing in Britain. Citizenship (leaving aside the purely formal citizenship of having a passport issued in the name of the Crown that enabled you to travel) was a fact of political activity. The Crown did not have a body of citizens with a Bill of Rights: it had subjects for which it did things in response to political activity which they engaged in. A degree of harmony and equality was established between subjects through the political activity they engaged in. Northern Ireland was excluded from that political activity.

The SDLP was established in 1970 on a programme similar to that of the Wolfe Tone Society as described by Johnston here. I put it to them that 'British Rights For British Citizens' for the purpose of ending Partition was self-contradictory. British Rights were only achievable through British politics, and the development of British politics in the North would not be a step towards the ending of Partition, though it would probably set in motion a process of erosion of communal conflict. But the SDLP persisted with both programmes (British Rights and the ending of Partition) but without acknowledging the conditions required for the achievement of either.

It always opposed the introduction of British politics while demanding British Rights as an absolute. That demand was incomprehensible to British political culture, which had developed through the rejection of absolutes. It knew nothing of absolutes, aside from the momentary absolutes of political expediency given rise to by the extravagant rhetoric of the flux of party-political conflict.

I don't know that it was ever the case in the North that "*republican democratic political objectives*" might not be pursued legally. I don't that the demand was ever pursued at all—if it is not considered that the Nationalist Party pursued it—because it was obviously futile. The Nationalist Party demonstrated its futility. Once the North was set up, along with devolved government and a separate politics from the politics of the State, Republican politics pursued electorally was futile but not illegal. That was generally understood. It was why Sinn Fein would not disown the IRA and make itself legal.

Johnston writes:

"This period {1969-70} coincided with the build-up of the Provisional movement, with covert Fianna Fail support, with the objective of directly taking on British rule and getting rid of the Stormont statelet..."

If there was covert Fianna Fail support for the Provos, it can only have been Lynch's prosecution of John Kelly in the Arms Trials, which disconcerted what might be called the Constitutional Defence Movement in the Northern Catholic community, and drove those who were not willing to revert to acquiescent submission, or limit themselves to futile electoral activity in the statelet, into active physical force Republicanism.

And what is the meaning of "*directly taking on British rule and getting rid of the Stormont statelet*"? Is it that the Provos ought to have recognised Stormont as an Irish state? During the past decade Professor Keogh of Cork has fostered a number of books about "*the Northern Ireland state*". I recall that in the early 1970s there was some dispute about whether Stormont should be preserved or got out of the way. I think Greaves went to and fro between explaining that Stormont was a fig-leaf on total British sovereignty, and urging that it should be preserved as an Irish institution.

Stormont was I suppose the most obnoxious form of British rule there could have been. It was rule by Brits whose political development within the British political system was broken in 1886, who were attached to and controlled the British Unionist Party (a merger of the Tory Party and the social reform Liberals) until 1916, who said in 1920 that they did not want Home Rule for themselves any more than for Ireland, and that they did not want to govern Catholics, but who agreed in 1921 to operate a British Home Rule system outside the politics of the State, one which required them to police the Catholics and return a Unionist majority at every election, British and local.

Theory was very gray when it said that Stormont should be treasured as an Irish institution.

The Provos, with popular Catholic support, caused Stormont to be cancelled with a stroke of the Whitehall pen. And they have gained British Rights for British citizens outside the political life of the British State—British Rights which do not lead to British consequences: British-type Rights which make the North less British than ever.

I took no part in the Civil Rights movement back then. If I had, I think I would be objective enough to see that the Provos have achieved its aims, leaving aside the Utopian flourishes.

It's a pity that Johnston—the only Stickie I ever had any time for—doesn't see that, as a scientist who acknowledges objective events even when they conflict with wishes.

**Brendan Clifford**

# The Great Hunger

by

## An tAthar Peadar O Laoghaire

### INTRODUCTION BY CONOR LYNCH

An tAthar Peadar O Laoghaire (Father Peter O Leary) appeared in almost every Gaelic reader as I went through school. *Seanna* was probably his most famous book. But I am constantly surprised at his huge output—including translations of the four Gospels. He wrote a short autobiography—*Mo Sceal Fein/My Own Story*—in 1915. This was not translated into English until Cyril O Ceirin got around to it in 1969. It was published by Oxford University Press—but I suppose that was in the days before matters Irish were taken in hand by Roy Foster and his historical murder gang. I take the liberty of using a small part of this translation to illustrate the horrors of the Great Hunger (or the Famine as the English would have us call it) by someone who lived through it as a child.

An tAthar Peadar was born in 1839 in that odd part of Cork which is neither north nor west. (Even the IRA, as it organised its brigades in 1920, couldn't work out what to do with the area that ran west from Macroom and took in Kilmichael, Ballyvourney, Inchegeela and Gougane Barra, and on to the Kerry border. To its north was Liam Lynch's 2nd brigade, and to its south was Tom Hales' 3rd brigade. So they stuck it onto McCurtain's 1st brigade based in Cork City!)

An tAthar Peadar died in 1920 on the same day as Terence MacSweeney! He was never a pacifist but opposed uprisings on the ground that they would not work—not least because he had a terror of informers. After all, he witnessed first hand the failures of Young Ireland and the Fenians. For some reason he still had a great *gra* for O'Donovan Rossa. He had a real hatred for the kind of "education" that was foisted on the Irish, disciplining us rather than imparting knowledge, and was much impressed by Pearse's *Murder Machine*—a work that should be compulsory reading for every would-be teacher! But now let's read the man himself.

### THE GREAT HUNGER

A strange thing—it was the big strong farmers who were the first to fall! The man who had only a small farm, the grass of six or seven cows, kept his hold; the man with the big, broad, spacious farm was soon broken when the changed times came. He who had only a little, lost only a little. Before this, there was no big rent or big demands on him. He was accustomed to live without much extravagance. It wasn't too much for him to tighten his belt a little bit more, and to answer the small demands on him without too much hardship. But he, who had a big farm, was

accustomed to the expensive way of life. He was independent as long as his farm responded. When the change came, the returns from the farm came to a sudden stop. The loss, the extravagance, the demands were too great. It was impossible to meet them and they swept him off his feet. I well recall how I would hear the latest news and how it caused amazement: 'Oh! Did you hear? Such a person is burst! His land is up for sale. He's gone. He slipped away. His land is up!'

You would often hear "His land is up!"—but you wouldn't hear at all that time 'His land has been taken by another person'. Nobody had any wish to take land. Things used to be very bad for those who had lost their land. They'd have neither food nor credit and there was nothing they could do but go looking for alms. They would not be long begging when they used to go into decline and they'd die. As they were not accustomed to hunger or hardship, they couldn't stand it long when the hunger and hardship came on them. Often, when the hunger was very severe, they'd have to rise and move out and head for the house of some neighbour (who, perhaps, would be as needy as themselves, or close to it) to see if they could get a mouthful to eat, which might take the frenzy of hunger of them (I seem to remember them).

One day, when I was eight years of age (I seem to remember that was standing at the corner of the haggard), I saw a woman coming up towards me up the hill. She was barefoot, walking very slowly and panting, as if she had been running. She was blowing so much, her mouth was wide open, so that I had sight of her teeth. But the thing that amazed me altogether was her feet. Each foot was so swollen, from the knee down, it was as big and as fat as a gallon-can. That sight took such a grip on my mind that it on my mind now, every bit as clear-cut as it was that day, although it is around three score and five years since I saw it. That woman had been fairly independent and free from adversity until the blackness had come upon the potatoes.

Another day—I can't tell if it was before or after that—I was inside our house, standing on the hearthstone, when a boy came in the door. I saw the face that was on him and the terror that was in his two eyes, the terror of hunger. That face and those two eyes are before my mind now, as clear and as unclouded as the day I gave the one and only look. Somebody gave him a lump of bread. He snatched the bread and turned his back to us and his face to the wall and he started right into eating it so ravenously that you would think he would choke himself. At the time

I did not realise that I was so amazed by him or his voracity, but that sight has stayed in my mind, and will stay as long as I live.

I remember one evening during the period, when the people were running in and out and then walking away. In the winter, it was. The night after the falling. I heard someone saying, "It was down by Carrigananassey I heard the shout!" "There it is again!" said another, and they all ran out. A while afterwards, they came back in with a poor, old fellow between them. They put him standing on the floor—he was hardly able to stand. I was facing him and I had a view of his features. His mouth was wide open and his lips, upper and lower both, were drawn back, so that his teeth—the amount he had of them—were exposed. I saw the two, big, long, yellow eye-teeth in his mouth, the terror in his eyes and the confusion in his face. I can see them now as well as I could see them then. He was a neighbour, it is how the hunger drove him out to see if he could find anything to eat and the poor man went astray in the bog that was below Carrigananassey. When he found himself going astray he became afraid that he would fall into a hole and be drowned. He stopped then and began to shout. That was custom—there was a certain shout for the purpose—for anyone going astray. Each one knew how to send up that *liugh*, so that, when they heard it, everyone would know the meaning of it, and the people would gather and seek the person who was going astray.

There was a little stable at the head of the house. A poor person by the name of Patrick Buckley came and shelter was given to himself, his wife and two children in the stable. They stayed for some weeks there, but they had a small cabin for themselves after that. Sheila was the name of the elder of the two children. We had a serving-boy—Conor was his name—and I overheard Sheila talking to him one day,

"Con", she said, Gaelic.

"Coming, Sheila", Con said.

"I have no speech now", she said,

"*Airiu*, what else have you got, Sheila?"

Con said.

"English", says she.

"*Airiu*, what English could you have?"

Con said.

"Peter's English and Seanin-Philib's English." (Seanin-Philib was another poor person, who lived in a cabin beside the place.)

"But surely English is speech, Sheila?"

"English speech?" She said in amazement. "If it was, surely people would understand it!"

One day, Sheila's mother had a handful of gravel in the little broad-bottomed pot, the griddle-oven they used to call it, as she was going to bake a cake; she was scouring



and scraping the inside of the griddle-oven with the gravel.

"Oh, mam!" Sheila said, is it how you'll put gravel in the cake?" "It is," said her mother.

Out went Sheila. She saw Con.

"Oh, Con," says she, What'll we do? What'll we do at all?"

"What's on you now, Sheila?" Con said.

"The grey-green gravel my mother's putting in the cake for us and I don't know how in the world we'll be able to eat it. All our teeth'll be broken. Some of the stones in the gravel are very big. Not one of us will have a tooth left in his head. It's all right for Little Jeremiah he hasn't got any teeth at all yet."

Little Jeremiah was Sheila's small, young brother. In with Con until he'd see what Sheila's mother was doing. When he saw what the gravel was being used for, they had a great laugh.

The famine came. Sheila and her father and mother and little Jeremiah had to go down to Macroom into the poorhouse. No sooner were they inside than they were all separated from each other. The father was put among the men. The mother was put among the women. Sheila was put among the small girls. And Jeremiah was put among the very young children. The whole house, and all the poor people in it, was smothered in every kind of evil sickness, the people, almost as fast as they'd come in, falling down with a malady and—God bless the hearers!—dying as fast as the fever came on them. There used not be room for half of them in the house. The amount that would not be able to get in could only go and lay themselves on the bank of the river, on the lower side of the bridge. You would see them there every morning, after the night was over, stretched out in rows, some stirring, some quiet enough without any stir at all in them. In a while, certain men would come and they would take those, who were not stirring, and they would put them into trucks. They would take them to a place beside Carrigastyra, where a great, wide, deep hole had been opened for them, and they would put them altogether down into the hole. They would do the same with all who had died in the house after the night.

It was not too long, after their going in and after his separation from his mother, that death came to little Jeremiah. The small body was thrown up on the truck and taken to the big hole, and it was thrown in along with the other bodies. But it was all the same to the child: long before his body was thrown into the hole, his soul was in the presence of God, in the joy of the heavens. It was not long until Sheila followed little Jeremiah. Her young body went into the hole, but her soul went up to where little Jeremiah was, in the presence of God, in the joy of the heavens, where she had solace and the company of the saints and angels, and the company of the Virgin Mary, and

speech that was better by far than Peter's English and Seainin-Philib's English.

The father and mother were asking and questioning as often as they were able about Sheila and little Jeremiah. The children were not long dead when they heard about it. All the poor people had Gaelic. The superiors hadn't got it, or else they spoke it poorly. The poor people could often get word about each other without the superiors knowing it, and a brooding came over them that they could not stay in the place. They were separated from each other, but they found the opportunity of sending word to each other. They decided to steal away from the place. The wife's name was Kit. Patrick first slipped out of the house. He waited for Kit at the top of the Road of the Whisps. In a while, he saw her coming, but she was walking very slowly. The sickness was on her. They pushed on towards Carrigastyra. They came to the place where the big hole was. They knew that the two children were down in the hole with the hundreds of other bodies. They stood beside the hole and wept their fill. Up on Derryleigh to the east of the Caharin was the cabin in which they had been living before they went into the poorhouse. They left the big hole and they headed north-west for Derryleigh, where the cabin was. The place was six miles of a journey from them, and the night was coming, but they pushed on. The hunger was on them and the sickness on Kit. They had to walk very slowly. When they had put a couple of miles of the journey past them, Kit was forced to stop. She was not able to walk any further. A neighbour came across them. Drink and some little bit of food was given to them, but fear would not allow anyone to give them shelter since they were just after coming out of the poorhouse and the evil sickness was on the woman. Patrick only lifted the woman onto his back and pushed on north-westwards for the cabin.

The poor man himself was weak enough. It would have been hard on him to put the journey by him without having any load. With the load, he was often forced to stop and to leave his load down on the ditch of the road for a while. But whatever weariness was on him, he continued to put that journey by him. He did not part with his load. He reached the cabin. The cabin was cold and empty before him, without fire nor heat.

The morning after, some neighbour came to the cabin. He went inside. He saw the pair there and they both dead, and the feet of the woman in Patrick's bosom, as if he had been trying to warm them. It would seem that he had felt the weakness of death coming over Kit and her feet cold, and he put the feet into his own bosom to take the cold from them.

"He was a good, loyal, noble man!" some person might say, perhaps, "and the deed he did was a noble one!"

It is true. But I will tell you this much. Thousands of deeds of the same kind were done in Ireland during that period, and nobody was one whit amazed at the

excellence of the deeds. According to everyone, Patrick Buckley had only done a thing that any man, who was worth calling a Christian, would have done.

That little man-eeen, whose name was Michael O'Leary, was living in a cabin not far from that in which Patrick Buckley and his wife died. Black Michael was a nickname they had on him. Cathleen Purcell was his wife's name. They had the full of the house of children. There wasn't as much as one word of English in themselves or in the children. The famine came hard on them. Tadhg was the name of their eldest son. He saw his father and mother growing weak with the hunger, and the youngest member of the family stretched dead in the corner of the cabin. At nightfall, he took an axe and knife with him and out he went. He went into the cowhouse of one of the neighbours and killed the beast. He took some of the skin from it, stripping the amount of meat he wanted to bring with him. He took away the two hind quarters and came home. They all had a good meal that night. When the hunger had been taken from them, Tadhg took out the body that was in the corner, and made a hole out in the garden and put the body in it.

When the morning came, the people who owned the cow rose and found the cow dead out in the shed, with its two hind quarters gone. The owner went to Macroom and got a search warrant. He had an idea where the meat was brought. He and whatever law-officer he had with him came to Black Michael's cabin. The bones and some of the meat was found. Tadhg was taken prisoner and brought to Macroom and put into prison. When the time came for it, he was tried. He was sentenced without much hesitation and transported. I never heard an report since then of what happened him afterwards nor what end befell him.

Michael and Cathleen and those of the family who still lived left the cabin and took to the roads.

Some days after they had gone away, a neighbour was going past the cabin. He saw a hound, with something in his mouth, in the garden; the hound threw down the thing he had in his mouth and ran away. The neighbour came over and nearly fell with the shock and the horror when he saw that it was a person's hand that the dog had in his mouth! Tadhg hadn't made the hole deep enough before he put the body down into it.

The neighbour found a box or something of the sort. He took the rest of the body from the hole, and brought the box to the nearest graveyard and buried it. It was no cause for wonder at that time to see a person going by himself to a graveyard and a coffin with him in his cart, or on the back of two cattle if he hadn't got a horse nor a cart.

That was the way things were then, ugly



## UNIONS continued

### THE LENIHAN LEGACY

Mind you, politically the family has a lot to prove!

In 1984 Telecom Eireann/Eircom was supposed to be this State's driver on the global technological stage in the 21st century if we were to fully develop and attract new industry.

Then along came Minister for Public Enterprise, Mary O'Rourke *nee* Lenihan, in July, 1999 and privatised the entire operation, conning people into buying those ill-fated shares, which investments—we were assured—would definitely 'go up' unlike the financial adverts 'investments could go either up or down'. Well they didn't 'go up' and sadly neither did the company Eircom, which was sold off, to an Australian consortium, then Tony O'Reilly and is now controlled by a Singapore venture group.

Yes, we were all going to be a 'nation' of share-holders. We paid twice over, once, when we built the company; a second time, when we were foolish enough to buy into it. A sort of forerunner of NAMA if you like!

And then there was Brian, senior, an old gentleman in his own right but who can ever forget the 1990 Presidential election and that famous statement on mass emigration: "*We can't all live on a small island.*"

### THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

Among the public service unions there was clear anger at the collapse of the talks.

According to one, there was "*a clear acceptance*" among Union leaders of the need for public sector reform and they believe they could have delivered a package that would cut the public service pay bill in the long term.

"We might be waiting another 20 years for that now" said one.

We won't—it will be forced on us if we don't wake up, especially if the Public Service Unions don't cop on.

"Union leader Tom Geraghty said his union [Public Service Executive Union] had worked the social partnership process as far as possible to increase pay.

"He said: "In the 20 years of prosperity after 1987, we more than doubled members' real pay and we managed from the mid-1990s on to secure pay increases of a cumulative value of between 20% and 25% over and above the terms of the national agreements for our members in the exchequer-funded public service, through the full use of the available mechanisms in the agreements."

"Mr Geraghty said there could be no dispute about the success of the process for members but suggested that further pay rises could not be expected in the current climate.

""At some stage, we can hope to get back to that type of scenario", he said. "In the meantime, we have an absolute

priority to stabilise our public finances."

"He said the alternative, of handing over financial responsibility to an international body such as the IMF, was "simply terrifying".

"Delegates at the conference backed an emergency motion urging the Government to relieve staff at local social welfare offices following a dramatic 80% rise in their workload" (Irish Independent, 25.4.2009).

It is hard to believe that Tom Geraghty spoke those words just eight months ago, in a few short sentences he summed up our entire problem: thanks to Benchmarking, the public service were the single greatest beneficiary of Social Partnership, now "*we*" must stabilise our public finances; keep the International Monetary Fund at bay and engage a few hundred more staff to help Public Service Executive Union members deal with the half a million dole queue.

And yet, with a Taoiseach and a Tanaiste who were prepared to play ball, the ICTU, effectively the Public Service Sector of it, could not come up with a formula that would have saved the Social Partnership process. It beggars belief, it really does.

The sacrifice of one day's pay for each of the next twelve months would probably have carried the day, without condition or qualification—would that alone not have been a small sacrifice to save Social Partnership?

and hateful and loathsome, round about the area in which I was reared. I understand that the story was exactly the same all about the whole of Ireland. And, to make matters altogether worse, it was not really by the will of God that things were so. It was that way because of the will of people. There was sent out from Ireland that year as much—no! twice as much—corn as would have nourished every person living in the country. The harbours of Ireland were full of ships and the ships full of Irish corn: they were leaving the harbours while the people were dying with the hunger throughout the land.

'Why wasn't the corn kept here?' someone will say, perhaps.

It was not kept because it had to be sold to pay the rent, and the butter and the meat, and every other bit of produce from the land, excepting the potatoes. The blackness took away the potatoes and then there was no food left for the people to eat.

Someone will say, perhaps: 'Why wasn't a law made to protect the people from the injustice that forced the people to sell the corn and not to keep anything for themselves to eat?'

I'm sorry for your want of knowledge! 'A law to protect the people,' you say? Airiu, if you had spoken to the gentlemen

of England at that time of a law to protect the people, they would have said you were mad.

It was not at all for the protection of the people that the English made laws at that time. To crush the people down and to plunder them, to put them to death by famine and by every other kind of injustice—that's why the English made laws in those days. It is a strange story, but the English had a sort of proverb then. Here's the proverb: "*To give the tenant his rights is an injustice to the landlord*".

### POSTSCRIPT BY CONOR LYNCH

I am no fan of rugby—probably because it was a posh person's game in my County. But it is a working class game in Limerick and in parts of Dublin and Ulster. Unlike soccer it is an all-Ireland sport, followed by Protestants and Catholics alike. It has an insipid dirge for an anthem—*Ireland's Call*—of which neither players nor supporters know the words, and it is not the song sung during matches. From start to finish the supporters sing out the Famine song—The Fields Of Athenry. After all, the famine struck hard in Ulster as well—especially in the areas around Enniskillen and Lurgan. It may be no harm to give the words here.

By a lonely prison wall I heard a young girl calling:

"Michael, they have taken you away.  
For you stole Trevelyan's corn so the young might see the morn  
Now a prison ship lies waiting in the bay."

### Chorus

"Low lie the fields of Athenry  
Where once we watched the small free birds fly  
Our love was on the wing, we had dreams and songs to sing,  
It's so lonely round the fields of Athenry."

By a lonely prison wall I heard a young man calling:  
"Nothing matters, Mary, when you're free.  
Against the famine and the crown I rebelled, they cut me down,  
Now you must raise our child with dignity."

By a lonely harbour wall she watched the last star fall  
As the prison ship sailed out against the sky.  
Sure she'll wait and hope and pray for her love in Botany Bay;  
It's so lonely round the fields of Athenry.



## Unions Fail To Save Social Partnership

Brian Lenihan is the man who in the midst of the State's greatest financial crisis senses a leadership killing is possible : his political focus has concentrated on this ambition above all else.

From a national perspective it gets worse, Lenihan believes Fianna Fail can win the General Election in 18 months time, 2012, which means he is not going to start messing around with urgently needed electoral and political reforms.

The perception of him as a 'hard-man' has won him the support of the 'great and good' of the Establishment, particularly the media and it is just a matter of time before the 'prize' falls into his lap.

An *alumnus* of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge (that cradle of the Reformation in England), Lenihan is a Senior Counsel.

"Yesterday's Budget heightened the perception that Lenihan is the tough guy and Brian Cowen the weak and indecisive leader. In 45 minutes on his feet, Lenihan opened as a Clark Kent figure and sat down as Superman, the man of steel. It has taken 14 months and three budgets for the Minister of Finance to come to terms with his job and the country has paid a high price for his training period but in comparison to Cowen and Mary Coughlan he looks competent and in charge... My first prediction for 2010; Brian Lenihan to be Taoiseach before the end of the year" (George Hook, *The Cork News*, 11.12.2009).

Lenihan's opportunity arose through the ham-fisted effort made by the ICTU to sell the "12-day unpaid leave arrangement". In the words of Bernard Harbour of the public service union, IMPACT:

"There has been enough progress to suspend that strike. The Government has said to us that it is satisfied with the progress made over the last few days, which does have the basis to form an agreement on cutting payroll costs next year in a way that doesn't result in a cut in people's pay."

On that same evening, Tuesday, 1st

December 2009, the Cabinet was divided on the proposal by five votes to eight, with one Minister uncommitted.

The Taoiseach, Mr Cowen, Tanaiste Mary Coughlan and Ministers Batt O'Keeffe, Eamon O Cuiv and Brendan Smith were all in favour of continuing the Partnership talks with the unions on the controversial issue.

But opposed to the proposal were ministers Brian Lenihan, Martin Cullen, Mary Hanafin, Willie O'Dea, Dermot Ahern and Mary Harney as well as the two Greens, John Gormley and Eamon Ryan.

Foreign Affairs Minister Micheal Martin was believed not to have come down strongly either way, perhaps prompted by what Jack Lynch did when he 'dummied' his way through Haughey and Colley to gain the Fianna Fail leadership in 1966.

Then a heated Fianna Fail Parliamentary Party meeting took place on the Thursday evening (3.12.2009), where the majority of TDs poured scorn on the ICTU's "Twelve Days", led by Mattie McGrath, Chris Andrews, Noel O'Flynn and Michael Mulcahy.

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A particularly vocal opponent of the ICTU proposal was Health Minister Mary Harney, former leader of the Progressive Democrats, who got so carried away some Cabinet Ministers thought they were attending a PD Executive meeting, not that there is very much to differentiate either party today.

The *Sunday Independent* summed up the anti-trade union media strategy in the current financial crisis:

"After totting up the numbers, ministers and TDs were conscious of the 317,000 public servants against the 1.7 million in the private sector and 428,000 people on the dole." (6.12.2009).

The "divide and conquer" policy of the media, IBEC and the economists was finally bearing results.

As Taoiseach, Cowen ate humble pie, he surely must have sensed that this was much more than a tactical defeat—his leadership is now on the line!

The "Family Lenihan" has some scores to settle with Fianna Fáil and deep down there are some grudges to be settled. The late Brian Lenihan's abandonment as a presidential candidate still rankles; Mary O'Rourke's electoral defeat to Donie Cassidy was always attributed to devious internal tactics; and "baby Conor" would love to get back at those that see him as a figure of fun, the ex-Disc Jockey.

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"Like John Bruton and Michael Noonan before him, Cowen is a tailor's nightmare and always manages to look unkempt and frumpy. In contrast, Lenihan did not miss a step in a myriad of media interviews over a five-hour period. Hair, tie and suit were as sharp at 11pm as they had been in the early afternoon. Ahern learned that "clothes maketh the man" and dumped the anorak after he assumed power. Lenihan I suspect watched and learned" (George Hook, *The Cork News*, 11.12.2009).  
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continued on page 23