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## British Party Debate

### Unionists Left Out!

The British in Northern Ireland want to take part in the British Election in Britain, and the British in Britain don't know what to make of it.

The Northern Ireland British agreed to be excluded from British political life in return for being 'connected' with the British state in other ways. They made that agreement as the "supreme sacrifice" for the British Empire, in 1921, to help it in its manoeuvring against the elected Republican Government of Ireland at the time. Now, three generations later, they are feeling left out in the cold.

Their exclusion from British political life has become an issue in British politics—a very minor one—because the Prime Minister refused to take part in a television debate with the leader of the Opposition, and with his Coalition partner, along with the leader of the UK Independence Party—unless the leader of the Green Party also took part. The Greens have just one seat in Westminster. The television authorities regarded the Greens as a protest movement, rather than a component of the party system by which the state is governed. The Tory ultimatum was taken to be a refusal to debate policy in the run-up to the May General Election.

The reason Prime Minister David Cameron refused to take part in a Leaders' Debate without the Green Party was that he didn't want a television debate at all. The economy was beginning to move in a way that will benefit the Government and he wanted to let it have its political effect without the distraction of a high profile debate with the Labour leader in which he was likely to put his foot in it. More to the point, however, is that he would have to confront UKIP's Nigel Farage, a very acute debater. His critique of British adventures in the Middle East, baiting of the Russian Bear, and above all the large-scale immigration which EU membership makes inevitable is a very powerful one—one which resonates with the Tory electorate and which Cameron cannot answer.

But the ploy of insisting that the Greens be part of the debate, in order to kill the debate, didn't work. The BBC agreed to have the Greens. And that led to other parties, that were proper political parties, demanding that they should be part of the debate too—the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists.

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### Humour and Satire— *Catholic Irish in Britain; Algerian Muslims in France*

On 8th January, in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings in Paris, someone by the name of Mufassil Islam posted a video on his Facebook page. The title of that video was "F\*\*\*k Paris Shooters", and within 72 hours it had been viewed by over 2 million people and shared by over 60,000. Mufassil Islam is someone I had not heard of but on investigation I found that he was a Muslim from Bangladesh who currently works as a PhD researcher on Sharia and Human Rights Law at Trinity College Dublin. He has been active for some years in the UK in attempting to explain Islam to the West: he is to be the Chief Guest Speaker at a seminar in Belfast in mid-February.

Mufassil Islam is an engaging and effective speaker and his video in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings struck a chord with liberal opinion in the aftermath of those killings. In substance here was a Muslim telling his fellow Muslims that they should stop bleating about being offended by media attitudes

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### Bravehearts and the Banking Enquiry

A subject which has not really been touched on to date by the banking enquiry, and which has not featured greatly in the various reports published by the Commission of Enquiry into the Banking Crisis, nor in much media commentary either, is the role/fate of the subsidiaries of foreign banks which decided to participate actively in the Irish real estate bubble and which suffered just as grievously from its excesses as the indigenous banking institutions.

Two institutions stand out in this respect, both because of the aggressive expansionary ethos which characterised them and the fact that their subsidiaries' initially unquantifiable losses in Ireland were major reasons behind the loss of credit and subsequent collapse/restructuring of the two foreign parent banks. They were *Royal Bank of Scotland* (RBS) (via its Irish subsidiary *Ulster Bank*) and *HBOS* through its *Bank of Scotland (Ireland)* subsidiary.

Although a large number of other foreign banks had a presence in Ireland, particularly through the IFSC in Dublin, most did not have a significant retail banking business in Ireland, and it must be said, have also not collapsed.

The two Scottish banks expanded out of Scotland at the beginning of the millennium by taking over or merging with larger English rivals. RBS won a takeover battle against Bank of Scotland to buy *Natwest* in 2000 (thereby also acquiring

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## Irish And Muslims

continued

in the West. They have chosen to live in a country where the state provides a level of protection that they as individuals would not possess in their home country. They have also chosen to come to a country where Sharia law does not exist and they should respect and give thanks to the rule of law. If they find themselves offended by something they should take the issue up in the courts; and if individual Muslims do not like certain aspects of the Western countries in which they have chosen to live they should "Fuck Off" back to their own country. That basically was the message he was sending out to his fellow Muslims.

Many of the people I knew felt that this was something that needed saying from within the Muslim community, even if those same people were repelled when basically the same argument came from the National Front or other right-wing groups.

What Mufassil Islam is demanding is that French Muslims exercise toleration of the most offensive imagery and sentiments simply because this material was an

There were sound political reasons for the original BBC decision to have only the two governing parties, the Opposition and UKIP. It can hardly be denied that UKIP, though not seeking a mandate to govern, is likely to be a strong influence in determining how government will be conducted. (The relationship with the EU is a serious matter on which the three major parties do not want to commit themselves.)

The Scottish and Welsh Parties do not seek a mandate to govern the state, but they have policies relevant to the state which concern the state at least as much as the relationship of the state with the EU: They want to leave the British state and set up independent states in Scotland and Wales—and it is reasonable that they should be facilitated in putting their case directly to an English audience.

When the Scots and Welsh were included in the debate, the DUP wanted in. It said it was the fourth largest Party in the state. And it's true—but politically irrelevant.

Nigel Dodds was brought on Andrew Neill's Politics programme on BBC to put the DUP case. It was an interesting con-

frontation. Neill knew in his bones that the DUP demand was absurd but couldn't quite put his finger on the reason why. Every objection he raised was easily knocked down by Dodds, and he gave up.

The revisionists have recently been berating the Irish in the South for forgetting things they should remember—but in fact the Irish never did forget that they were duped into supplying cannonfodder for Britain's Great War, while well-informed British political commentators have genuinely forgotten why Westminster set up Northern Ireland, and what it is.

The Tory, Labour and Liberal Parties want to govern the British state. The Scots and Welsh Parties want to leave it. But the Ulster Unionists do not want either to govern it or leave it. So what do they want? They want to belong to it. But they do belong to it! So what do they want? They want what they've got. And none of the British Parties is trying to deprive them of what they've got—a semi-detached connection with Britain in which it enjoys all the services of the British state while being disengaged from its politics.

Thirty years ago we made a great effort to persuade the British in Northern Ireland

to enter the politics of the British state—from which they withdrew in 1886. We established that they did not want to be part of the political system of the British state. Their choice was to engage in communal conflict with the large and growing minority Nationalist community outside the British political system. It was a foolish choice, but it was their choice.

We notice that many of those who actively opposed our efforts to bring the Six Counties within the democratic politics of the British state are now beginning to whinge about exclusion—eg, Liam Clarke of the Official Republican *Sunday World* of those days, who is now an important person on the *Belfast Telegraph*.

Well, they made their bed so they can lie in it. Or, as Moliere put it, *Vous l'avez voulu, George Dandin*. What they've got is what they asked for.

Sinn Fein and the SDLP also said they want to take part in the Debate. It seems unlikely that the SDLP would have anything intelligible to say to the English electorate. But Sinn Fein clearly has a right to take part on the same grounds as the SNP—it wants to leave. ■

expression of the age-old art of Western satire. Although his video was produced in response to the Muslims involved in the killings at the Charlie Hebdo office, the main target of the video was the natural response of the French Muslim community to these vile images. He explained that satire was a strong component of Western societies and Muslims should accept that and swallow any feeling of offence that it may cause.

But is it reasonable to expect immigrant communities to accept everything that the host country throws at them in terms of the denigration of their identities, simply because it is done within the protective cloak of satire or humour? Is it appropriate, in these circumstances, to expect the immigrant minority to ignore all provocation and simply knuckle down and get on with things? And what if the host country is the old colonial Power in which there continues to exist significant negative sentiment against your community?

As an immigrant in Britain in the 1970s, this expectation was a given and on more than one occasion I found myself having to knuckle down and accept an attitude which depicted the Irish as stupid and untrustworthy. In fact when I was interviewed by a panel of three people for a job as a lowly book porter in the British Library, one of the questions I was asked was how I felt about Irish jokes. Everyone in the room, including myself, interpreted the question as more of a statement that "you realize that by working with us you will be entering a particular atmosphere which you might find uncomfortable". Of course nobody would describe such an atmosphere as being anti-Irish in nature. After all, a joke is only a joke isn't it? At this point I had to decide to either knuckle down and accept such an atmosphere or to "fuck off".

Having come from (what was then) a poor country with few work prospects, I decided to knuckle down and accept the reality of a work situation where I would be regularly subject to jokes and banter surrounding my nationality. My response to the question of how I felt about Irish jokes was "it depends on how funny they are". In that reply I felt I was preserving at least some of my integrity.

In some ways for me taking a job with the British Library (that bastion of civilized values), with its Irish joking atmosphere, was a more acceptable situation to the one I experienced while working for Lucas Engineering in Finchley where in 1974 I had been manhandled by some of my English 'colleagues' after arriving for work

## Free Speech?

I saw Miriam O'Callaghan on 8th January *Primetime* interviewing a Muslim cleric from London who refused to condemn the Paris attacks. I thought O'Callaghan was really pathetic in her illusions about the West and freedom of speech.

On a personal note I remember being interviewed on *Newstalk* by Tommy Graham (Editor of *History Ireland*) about my book on the *Irish Times*. I was instructed not to mention the word "nigger" in the interview, even though the "white nigger" letter was a key part of the book in connection with Major McDowell of the *Irish Times*. I was happy to comply, but inadvertently mentioned the word in the course of the interview.

The point about this is that I have no problem with the idea of certain words being taboo. I think it is a good thing that racial groups, gays, travellers etc should be spared what they consider derogatory words. But please, Miriam, don't try to tell us that we have absolute freedom of speech and part of that involves the right to offend whoever we want.

**John Martin**

## Charlies?

I happen to be reading the Robert Harris novel on Dreyfus and there was then an anti-Jewish mania as well as an anti-Catholic one in France and it seems very *deja vu* for France with their current Islamophobia. I am beginning to wonder about the French Revolution! Was it led by *Charlies*?

**Jack Lane**

the day after the IRA Birmingham bombing. If it was not for a decent Trade Union Shop Steward intervening, I have no doubt that I would have been subjected to a good spanking (something that many other Irish people had experienced at the time including the Arsenal footballer Liam Brady).

Similarly, Muslims in France have had to do just that. They have knuckled down and accepted all that has been thrown at them as an impoverished minority because France offers them a somewhat better life than they would have in their home country.

But what is their home country? Marseilles is the home of the biggest concentration of Muslims in Europe, with most of them emanating from Algeria. Many of them were born in France but understandably retain a strong connection with Algeria and carried with them an understanding of the old colonial attitudes of France towards that country. They also experience the daily grind of economic hardship, discrimination and marginalization to which modern France subjects them. In such circumstances, something like the Charlie Hebdo scurrilous cartoons will be interpreted differently by different Muslims. Most of them will see it as just another thing to which they need to knuckle down but others will inevitably see it not only in the context of France's contem-

porary treatment of its Muslims and the historical association between France and Algeria but also in the context of the ongoing war being waged by France in the Middle East also against Muslims and will react accordingly.

Satire is designed to give offence but it is an offence that normally impacts on the opinions of individuals. In this context a distinction, not normally evident, is important. While political opinions are the main targets of satirists in the West, in this instance what they are targeting is a system of belief. Islam is an all-pervading belief system that is beyond religion and embraces every aspect of the lives of its adherents. Political opinions are fluid and an individual can change or adjust them over time. Such opinion does not call forth the same stability of commitment as a religion in which reason plays second fiddle to matters of faith. But, likewise, while other belief systems, such as modern Christianity, exist as religion, they do not hold sway over the daily lives of its adherents in the same way that Islam does. Islam defines its adherents in ways which Christianity does not—to Muslims it is what makes them, in a very real sense, who they are.

There is no justification for the actions of the killings at Charlie Hebdo. The perpetrators were zealots and zealots by

their nature act in ways that are beyond normal human comprehension or morality. The satire of Charlie Hebdo was designed to provoke offence among individuals but unfortunately they either did not understand Islam or they did understand it and didn't care about the consequences. Either way, when they decided to embark on the publication of imagery, they set out to offend more than individuals and instead offended a community in a very profound way. Were the killed cartoonists martyrs in the cause of freedom of expression? Well, they were—or at least in the cause of certain freedoms of expression.

The existence of such a thing as an absolute freedom of expression is a myth that is exploited when and how our liberal secular establishment chose to utilize it. We only have to look at the way in which the footballer Nicolas Anelka was forced out of British football when his club attached unacceptable conditions for his return to the sport after his suspension for a hand gesture called the "*Quenelle*" during a football match in 2013. Such was the hysteria surrounding this issue that in France pressure was brought to bear on Roger Cukierman, head of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, to recant his earlier view that the "*Quenelle*" was not necessarily an anti-Semitic gesture.

The Anelka experience, together with the way in which the French comedian Dieudonné was hounded and silenced for his satire on the exploitation of the holocaust for political purposes last year, shows that the so-called right to freedom of expression is a right that is turned on and off when it suits prevailing interests.

The way humour was used to denigrate the Irish in Britain in the 1970s to the 1990s coincided with the fact that the State was then at war in the North of Ireland. By casting the Irish in Britain in this way, it removed the need to deal with them as human beings and removed the war on them in the North of Ireland from the threat of any normal rational analysis among the British electorate. The Irish were just plain stupid and the Troubles in the North of Ireland became associated with this fact in the public's mind. If it had been possible for the humour industry to depict the Irish at this time in a less benign light than stupid, it would have been done, but because the Irish were more like the British physically and had a long association of integration this was just not possible, so stupid it had to be. In France, however, the Muslims are clearly not similar to the French and the integration of the Algerian immigrant community

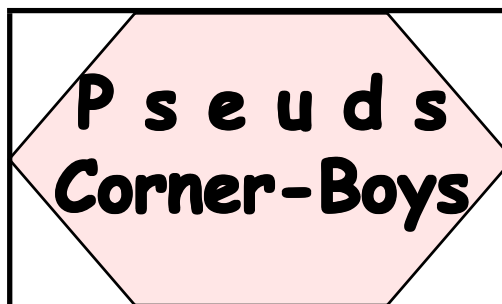
with the host nation not so extensive, so in this instance the sense of otherness can be depicted in far more virulent imagery in magazines like *Charlie Hebdo*.

Nowadays of course the depiction of the Irish as stupid is not acceptable in the mainstream and has not been since the 1990s when the War in the North of Ireland came to a close. We even have the media promoting positive television drama images of Irish characters holding senior positions in the British police force. (For instance the Irish actress Victoria Smurfit, who played the fictional policewoman Detective Chief Inspector Roisin Connor in the series *Trial and Retribution* between 2003 and 2009, and the Irish actor Steve Wall playing Chief Superintendent Robert Drake in the first two episodes of the new series of *Silent Witness*).

But the Muslim community in France is not so lucky. They are still at the centre of the never-ending War on Terror and so must continue to be depicted in a negative

way through ridicule disguised as humour as part of the legitimization of that War. Fanatical terrorists are also crucial to the sustenance of that War. It is no easy feat sustaining a never-ending War, particularly when that War is taking place far abroad. Wars are more easily sustained when the will of the civilian population is underpinned by the action of the enemy at home. The bombings and killings sustained by the civilian populations in Britain during its two World Wars were critical ingredients in ensuring that the focus of the civilians remained on the need to perpetuate the War. But the modern never-ending War on Terror, which justifies Western adventures in the far away Middle East, is problematic. It does not possess an enemy which can so easily oblige in this regard and so the actions at home of fanatical domestic terrorists are not always unwelcome: I'm sure that there are those in the security apparatus who "*always look on the bright side of life*".

**Eamon Dyas**



## 2. GAY BYRNE

In a corner of a foreign field, the Embassy of the sovereign Irish State in Brussels recently hosted Gay Byrne and a film made by the Irish State Radio and Television station to blacken the name of the Irish insurgents of Easter 1916, to belittle the nation which endorsed the short-lived Republic of that week, and to misrepresent two generations in Ireland in its train.

Gay Byrne, by chairing RTE's *Late Late Show*, has exercised more uninterrupted power than any other Irishman or woman in modern history. Neither the combined Benches of Catholic and Church of Ireland Bishops nor Fianna Fail and their rivals have exerted such continuous influence over Irish minds. He has been highly paid for it. Yet he bears a grudge against the nation he fattened on. He cherishes that grudge above all the other treasures of his Irish heritage.

It seems his father was a Begrudger of truly heroic stature. He considered the 1916 Rising a mere skirmish, though it took nearly a week, many thousands of

British troops with artillery and machine-guns and no qualms about using them on civilians, to persuade the insurgent leaders to surrender.

No insurgent garrison had been overrun by the British.

The insurgents had inflicted more casualties on the enemy than they sustained, and they still had the ammunition and the appetite to use it. Knowing that they most probably would be shot by the British if they surrendered, they had the discipline to do so when ordered, by their leaders, in order to save the lives of Dublin's citizens. In the House of Commons on 11th May 1916, hours before his Firing Squads shot the prisoners—Sean Mc Dermott and the wounded James Connolly, to death, Herbert Asquith, Britain's Prime Minister said the rebels had fought a fair fight.

It appears that, like many a better man, Gay Byrne's father was serving with the British forces in France or Belgium at the time. Two of my mother's brothers and the husbands of her two sisters also served in that War in the British forces and there probably were few families in Ireland without any members similarly involved. I could show you on Howth Summit and in the Dublin suburb of Killester "*Soldiers' Cottages*" built for some of the survivors. Those survivors were not despised by their neighbours, nor were their children outcasts, nor were the cottages burned or damaged, as they surely would have been, had the Revisionist narrative of recent decades had any basis in fact.

I was born in 1941 in Dublin, about 6 years after Gay Byrne. About six weeks later my mother's youngest brother was killed, serving with the British Army in Singapore. (Another brother was wounded serving with the British Navy off Jutland in May 1916, and another was badly gassed in Flanders in 1918.) The eldest brother had joined the Irish Christian Brothers before the Great War, the Order which taught both Gay Byrne and myself.

According to Gay Byrne's narrative, Irish Great War veterans were hard done by, by their fellow-countrymen on their return and written out of history. That is an untruth. The Irish Army, whose nucleus was the Insurgent Force of Easter Week, paraded to "*The Foggy Dew*", a march whose lyric had been changed to honour the insurgents of 1916 and to salute also their brothers who had joined the British Army in the belief that they were furthering the rights of small nations. For at least four decades Carty's *History of Ireland* was a standard textbook in Irish schools and newspapers such as Fianna Fail's *Irish Press* and Sinn Fein's *United Irishman* carried stories of Irish heroism in the Great War.

Neither the Irish Free State nor its successor discriminated against Irishmen who had served in the Great War. But, following the Civil War, veterans from the losing side were not favoured during Cosgrave's decade in control. My father had a friend who had been on the losing side in the Irish Civil war and thought his life and his livelihood would be better preserved and enhanced by a spell across the ocean. He came back to Ireland in the 1930s after Cosgrave's party had been swept from Office, and took his California-born son out to Dublin's Phoenix Park. Then,

*"Like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise  
Upon a peak in Darien"*

the child beheld the 1,752 green acres, and asked— "**But, Dad, who waters it all?**"

I'd surmise that Gay Byrne's much put-upon Dad did, not with his blood, nor his sweat, nor his tears. For Gaybo tells us that he returned from a battle of Ypres or three, sound of wind and limb, to a guaranteed job for life with Arthur Guinness.

Like the braggart fantasist Cap'n Boyle— "*The Paycock*" in O'Casey's play, he voyaged on a barge from St James's Gate to Custom House Quay, and back, and exulted in the lifting and the lowering of uncounted barrels of porter, whereas my father's friend had to endure Prohibition in California, which obviously suffered from drought.

Gay Byrne has earned the title of Pseud's *Corner Boy* together with the right to be recognised as one of Pseud's *History Boys*.

**Donal Kennedy**

## Bravehearts

continued

*Ulster Bank*, a Natwest subsidiary and the third largest banking group in Ireland) while Bank of Scotland in 2001 merged with the *Halifax Group*, formerly the largest building society in the UK which had de-mutualised in 1997, to form HBOS. Bank of Scotland had previously established a presence in Ireland through the takeover of *Equity* bank in 1999, expanding further through the purchase of *ICC* (formerly the Industrial Credit Corporation) from the Irish State in 2001. It later acquired the *ESB's* retail chain in 2005 to give it a nationwide branch network, displacing *National Irish Bank* (also foreign owned—by National Australia Bank and later Danske Bank) as the fourth largest bank in the state.

The aggressive and highly risky activities of these two failed mega-banks were investigated by the UK *Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards* in 2012, which had no hesitation in criticising the fundamentally dangerous and incompetent lending practices at the banks and their reckless expansionism, which led to RBS at one point becoming, briefly, the biggest bank in the world.

The various reports on the crisis which have been produced in Ireland, and the Banking Enquiry itself so far, have been rather cagey on this subject. Central Bank Governor, Professor Patrick Honohan in his 2010 preliminary report into the banking crisis does mention HBOS briefly:

"2.21 Competitive pressure on the leading banks to protect their market share was driven especially by the unprecedentedly rapid expansion of one bank, Anglo Irish (whose market share soared from 3 per cent to 18 per cent in a decade, growing its loan portfolio at an annual average rate of 36 per cent). **Foreign controlled banks, especially the local subsidiary of HBOS, also contributed to increased competition.**" (my emphasis S.O.)

Very briefly in fact. And we are left in no doubt about who the main culprit was.

Yet the peculiar thing about *Anglo* was that it was very much a developers' and speculators' bank. It had few branches, and over half the value of its loans in Ireland was to just 20 'top' customers. Although it may have had ambitions to become a 'big' bank, at the time of the crisis it was a simple 'monoline' (i.e. specialised) lender to a specific sector. A

considerable part of its loan book was not even for property in Ireland and included a great deal of premium hotel and commercial real estate in London, the US and elsewhere. It would have been a competitor for deposits certainly, and its expansion was remarkable, but the expansion of the financial sector in Ireland as a whole was remarkable during the period from 2000 onwards. While *Anglo* may have taken market share, it does not follow that it reduced thereby the size of the market for others, as the market overall was expanding so rapidly.

The Banking Commission's Nyberg Report in 2011, '*Misjudging Risks: the Causes of the Systemic Banking Crisis in Ireland*' 'gave slightly more detail regarding the UK institutions:

"Competition in the residential mortgage market was traditionally intense with each of the covered banks (**with the exception of Anglo, which did not offer residential mortgages**) fighting for market share. The entry of Bank of Scotland into the Irish mortgage market in 1999 led to increased lending competition and reduced profit margins as it offered mortgages at substantially lower interest rates than domestic banks at that time. Furthermore, the acquisition of First Active by Ulster Bank (part of the RBS Group) in January 2004 increased its share of residential mortgages to 15%, giving Ulster Bank the scale to be a significant lender. **The foreign-owned institutions competed aggressively with the domestic players for market share offering not only more attractive terms but also new residential mortgage products (e.g. high/100% loan-to-value mortgages, interest only mortgages, tracker mortgages etc)... These new products, however, also posed new risks for both the borrower and the lender.**" (My emphasis S.O.)

This is more to the point. The UK banks introduced their more aggressive lending practices into what had been a hitherto rather 'staid' and 'traditional' banking model, and the Irish banks were obliged either to follow suit or be left behind.

The business model which resulted for most of the banks depended on their being able to access cheap short term funding with which they would convert into more expensive longer term loans. This proved to be an unsustainable model for Northern Rock in Britain in 2007, and all the other banks dependent on similar funding should have sat up and taken note, but it seems that by then it was probably already too late for many. Short term liquidity for the banking system started to ebb later in 2007, particularly for those banks over-exposed

to real estate. This certainly applied to HBOS which specialised in mortgage lending, but even RBS, the bulk of whose profits came from its investment banking and business banking divisions, suffered. The post-crash CEO of RBS, Stephen Hester, later admitted that it was real estate that had finally done for RBS in the end too.

But what brought all this about? Why did not one but two major Scottish banks 'lose the run of themselves' in such a manner? In *'Making It Happen: Fred Goodwin, RBS and the Men Who Blew up the British Economy'* author Iain Martin, a former Editor of *The Scotsman*, describes how RBS was transformed during the early 1990s from a sleepy, near bankrupt, provincial bank by a team led by George Mathewson, an engineer and committed Scottish nationalist. The transformation was known as *'Project Columbus'* and an English member of the team, Steve Rick, is quoted as saying, in all seriousness:

"I blame Braveheart, I really do. I think it had a lot to answer for when it came out. Braveheart gave those guys in the Scottish banks too much confidence."

Another, described as the architect of Project Columbus, Cameron McPhail, said to friends:

"A 'sales culture' had been created, with many employees in the bank now measured according to rigorous targets dictating how much they must sell in the way of products to customers. 'We created a monster...'"

The *monster*, under Mathewson's successor Fred 'the Shred' Goodwin, succeeded in taking over Natwest, and at the AGM following the takeover the London financial journalists who had had to make their way up to Edinburgh reportedly also had to endure the theme music from *'Braveheart'* being played over the sound system . . .

After Natwest and the 'shredding' of some 180,00 jobs, the monster kept on growing through more acquisitions, but the acquisition of Dutch bank *AbnAmro* as part of a consortium in 2007, placed too much strain on its balance sheet just as global liquidity was beginning to dry up. Losses started to accumulate in its various subsidiaries, the confidence of the markets was lost and the bank collapsed into effective nationalisation in 2008-9. 'Sir' Fred Goodwin as he had then become was later reduced to simple 'Fred', due to public outcry. Unlike the real William Wallace however, he was not drawn and quartered, but agreed after a considerable struggle that his pension could be halved, from something like £700 000 a year to £342 000.

At HBOS the pattern was somewhat different. It did not focus on international expansion, but mainly on the domestic market (plus Ireland and Australia). After the merger between Halifax and Bank of Scotland it was actually the English CEO of Halifax, James Crosby (later 'Sir' James and later still plain James again) who became CEO of the merged entity. According to the 2012 Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards Report HBOS was *"An Accident Waiting to Happen"*:

"The strategy set by the Board from the creation of the new Group sowed the seeds of its destruction. HBOS set a strategy for aggressive, asset-led growth across divisions over a sustained period. This involved accepting more risk across all divisions of the Group. Although many of the strengths of the two brands within HBOS largely persisted at branch level, the strategy created a new culture in the higher echelons of the bank. This culture was brash, underpinned by a belief that the growing market share was due to a special set of skills which HBOS possessed and which its competitors lacked."

Much has been made in the various reports and enquiries and media expostulations concerning the Irish banking crisis of the various weaknesses of Irish banking 'culture', its regulatory mechanisms, and so forth. But banking 'culture' in Ireland is not produced in Ireland. It is a derivative, imported thing, just like the money that was used to finance it during the boom. And the distilled essence of that banking culture, together with its money, produced in Ireland Anglo-Irish Bank.

Thanks to the crisis however, a thorough examination is now being made of these things, action is being taken at home and a range of new institutions have been established at a European level which may help to prevent such a thing from happening again. The *Irish Times* recently reprinted an unusually serious piece written by Myles na gCopaleen in 1950 on the subject of a bank strike. After lambasting the so-called 'Irish' banks of the day which exported their Irish depositors capital to their London, or worse still Belfast headquarters, he ends:

"Let no reader think the foregoing is written in any chauvin interest, or is an outburst of nationalistic histrionics. It is a plain question of bread and butter for those who live in this land. The brazen xenophilia of those who control Irish banks has, in these particular days, become an acute danger."

The *"xenophilia"* seems to apply to many of those who write about Irish banks also.

**Sean Owens**

## Russia Warns Of War With The US

"If there is no banking relationship, it means the countries are on the verge of war."

So said the head of a leading Kremlin-owned bank, VTB, Andrei Kostin, regarding a mooted exclusion from the Swift banking system, a secure means of moving money across borders.

If it were to happen, Kostin told a session on the Russian economy at the World Economic Forum in Davos, *"ambassadors can leave capitals. It means Russia and America might have no relationship after that"*.

"If there is no banking relationship, it means the countries are on the verge of war, or definitely in the cold war... a very dangerous situation."

He said that if Russia were excluded from the Swift system, it would make the US/Russia relationship akin to the US/Iran one. He made the comments after noting that Russia had recently created its own alternative to Swift.

See: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article40790.htm>

## Ukraine & Sanctions On Russia

Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov in mid-December:

"As Joe Biden publicly said, it was the United States which ordered Europe to join sanctions against Russia, and frankly, it's really a pity that we for some previous years overestimated the independence of the European Union and even big European countries. So, it's geopolitics".

"The latest portion of sanctions which was voted in the European Union last September was introduced the next day after the Minsk protocol was signed. This is a very interesting logic, you know, to stimulate the political process. So the next morning after the huge achievement was reached, which was praised by everyone, the gentleman, what was his name, Van Rompuy, declared that there was a new portion of sanctions being introduced in Russia. If this is the European choice, if this is what Europe has as a reaction to something positive, then I once again can only say that we hugely overestimated European independence in foreign policy."

<http://rt.com/politics/official-word/214923-russia-eu-independence-lavrov/>

# Shorts

from  
*the Long Fellow*

## FRENCH TRAUMA

The Long Fellow knows a few French people that were understandably upset at events in Paris. A total of twenty were killed including the three perpetrators over a period of three days. Can we in this Republic empathise with their trauma?

Comparisons can be invidious but on 17th May 1974 thirty-three civilians plus an unborn child were killed and almost 300 were injured in the Dublin and Monaghan Bombings. But there the similarity ends. The Irish public, unlike the French, did not experience the catharsis of the perpetrators being killed within a short time of the terrible deeds being committed. Indeed to this day nobody has been brought to justice for the bombings. Neither was there an outpouring of international solidarity, especially from our nearest neighbour which refuses to this day to co-operate with the investigations into these acts of terrorism.

## THREE MINUTES OF SILENCE

The Long Fellow's sister teaches in a French State school. Her students are about 12 years of age. About 40% of them are Muslims in a class of just under 30 students.

On the morning following the first attack French schools were obliged to observe three minutes of silence. The Principal of her school went around to every class that morning explaining that the three minutes of silence was to defend the values of the Republic. After she had delivered her pep talk, one child of about twelve asked why we didn't observe three minutes of silence for the deaths of Palestinians. The Principal replied that the deaths occurred on French soil. (On this question, it was remarked in the French media about a week later that the victims of the attack on the Kosher Supermarket were buried in Israel.)

The Long Fellow's sister was told that a bell would ring at 11.57 am. All students would stand and observe the three minutes of silence. A second bell would sound at 12 noon to signal the end of the three minutes. She wondered why it could not have been just one minute. Three minutes is an eternity for adolescents.

Before the appointed time, a boy of Turkish Muslim origin asked her in the most polite way possible if he could be excused from doing the three minutes.

She acceded to his request on condition that he did not make noise outside in the corridor. Two other students—the class messengers—decided that they wanted to be excused as well. Unlike the Turkish Muslim boy they couldn't resist abusing their three minutes of freedom.

In her 25 years living in France she has never bought *Charlie Hebdo*, but on this occasion decided to see what the fuss was about. In her view it is an anti Islamic magazine and very unfunny. The front page of the celebrated issue is actually quite offensive. She says that her views might be coloured by years of teaching adolescents, but in her opinion Muhammad is depicted literally as a prick. The turban is drawn like two testicles and the long face . . . (an explanation is superfluous) In her opinion that is the first thing a Muslim teenager will see and that is what he is supposed to see.

Perhaps the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky was right when he said:

"Socialism... is in the first instance a problem of atheism, of the contemporary embodiment of atheism, the problem of the Tower of Babel, constructed expressly without God, not for the attainment of heaven from earth, but for the abasement of heaven to earth".

## THE OTHER CHARLIE

The three part series on Charlie Haughey shown on RTE had its virtues and flaws. It showed his role in initiating the Peace Process; his attempts to revitalise the economy; the Gregory Deal; his key role in supporting the unification of Germany; the independent foreign policy in relation to the Falklands/Malvinas and the opposition of pro-British elements within the Department of Foreign Affairs.

With the passing of time his flaws don't seem of any historical significance. The Long Fellow has always felt that the tapping of journalists' phones in order to establish the source of Cabinet leaks was completely justified. However, it was inexcusable for senior politicians to have access to the transcripts. These should have been kept by the Garda. There is little doubt that Sean Doherty didn't understand the principle of Separation of Powers. He thought that he was still a Special Branch man. The series portrayed Haughey as wanting to take a hands-off approach to this issue, although there was a scene where Doherty—unsolicited—showed him a file of the transcripts.

Unfortunately there were numerous silly flaws in the series: the scene where O' Malley is wielding an Iraqi 'Republican' sword to defend Jim Gibbons (it never happened); the "ortolan" scene with Mitterrand; Haughey's soliloquy on

sandcastles; the sandcastle washing away at the end. But the most ridiculous scene was the final one in which someone delivers to Haughey a file on the Arms Trial, suggesting that this was the real reason for Haughey's resignation, rather than the phone-tapping scandal. The ensuing dialogue suggests that the scriptwriter had been watching too many mafia films.

## THE MAHON TRIBUNAL

The Mahon Tribunal has had to reverse its original findings of corruption against George Redmond, the former Dublin City and County Manager, and against the property developers Michael Bailey and Joseph Murphy. Also the original finding that these people obstructed the Tribunal has been removed from the final report. The Tribunal has also issued an apology to Ray Burke for saying that he hindered their work. The Tribunal will pay the legal costs of these individuals as well as the legal costs of Oliver Barry and James Stafford of Century Radio (*The Irish Times*, 15.1.15).

Ray Burke served 6 months in jail for failing to make a proper tax return (not corruption). George Redmond, who is now 90, received a 12 months sentence in 2003 for a corruption charge. This was overturned on appeal. Two further charges of corruption were unsuccessful: there was a hung jury in one case; and he was acquitted in the other. There is no doubt that Redmond received "*consultancy fees*" from developers. His defence was that he gave them advice, but that in no case was this to the disadvantage of the State.

Des Richardson, a fundraiser for Fianna Fáil, is appealing to the Supreme Court a finding of the Mahon Tribunal that he refused to inform the Tribunal of the source of a 39,000 pound bank draft given to Bertie Ahern. On the face of it Richardson's case is very strong. His argument is that he couldn't have refused the information, since he was not asked about it. The Tribunal doesn't dispute this!

The Tribunal's problems arose from relying on the evidence of James Gogarty as well as other dubious witnesses. In a court case brought by Joseph Murphy it was revealed that the Tribunal suppressed evidence of Gogarty which would have cast doubt on his credibility.

These recent developments are not only an embarrassment to the Tribunal, but also an embarrassment to the media who lionised Gogarty and other "*star witnesses*". The 159 million euro monstrosity is ending with a whimper.

## BANKING INQUIRY

The media gave a distorted view of the testimony of the Central Bank Governor

Patrick Honohan at the Banking inquiry, but Honohan did not make it difficult for them to do this. He began by giving the impression that the Bank Guarantee cost 40 billion euro and this is what the media picked up on. In response to forensic questioning by Michael McGrath of Fianna Fáil, he then rowed back and said that the source of the losses long preceded the Guarantee.

However, he claimed that the 40 billion could have been whittled down if subordinated debt was not covered. But then he admitted that the amount of subordinated debt for Anglo-Irish Bank was relatively small and even a large proportion of this was not paid back by the State. So, it was unclear how much could have been saved if an alternative policy to the Guarantee had been selected.

McGrath made the point that, at the expiration of the Guarantee in September 2010, there was still about 40 billion of Senior Bonds on the books of the main banks, which was subsequently paid even though it was not covered by the Guarantee. Honohan countered by saying that only 16 billion was not covered by assets. So the balance was held against assets that were effectively owned by the bondholders. Of the 16 billion of unsecured bonds about 5 billion related to Anglo and Irish Nationwide.

Honohan's current position appears to be that Anglo-Irish Bank should have been let go in September 2008. Instead of introducing the Guarantee, the State should have pumped Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) into the system and then negotiated with our European partners a deal for sharing the losses. This is a change from his original position, which was that it was necessary to save Anglo in order to ensure an orderly wind down. It should be remembered that it was our dependence on ELA that forced us into a Bailout in November 2010. How pumping ELA into the Irish banks would have given us a negotiating position in 2008 with our European partners is difficult to see.

McGrath made the point that at the time that the Guarantee was introduced the value of deposits held by Anglo was 52 billion. (There was also another 20 billion in deposits from other banks.) So, if Anglo was let go at the time of the Guarantee, deposit holders would have been burned; otherwise the exercise would have been pointless. There was very little analysis of the consequences of this for the remaining banks. In the Long Fellow's view there would have been a collapse in the banking system with catastrophic knock-on effects on the economy.

Honohan conceded that it was unclear what the consequences of letting Anglo

go in September 2008 would have been in the absence of Bank Resolution legislation. Britain only introduced such legislation in 2009, two years after the collapse of Northern Rock.

Honohan admits that letting Anglo go would have given the State "pariah" status, but indicated that that was not a reason for not doing it. Nevertheless, when asked by the Chairman about British accusations of a "beggarthy neighbour" approach following the introduction of the Guarantee, he doesn't dissent from the British criticism at all. In this regard he concludes:

"That is why I refer to being put on the back foot by irritating one's neighbours. It certainly worked against the Government's negotiating position and bridges had to be built subsequently."

We should have risked pariah status in letting Anglo go but on no account offend the British?!

#### WHERE DID IT ALL GO?

A brief discussion took place on where all the money went. Honohan said part of the money went on the labour and material costs in building houses that nobody wanted to buy. But this was surely a fraction of the overall losses incurred by the banks. Most of the losses occurred through a transfer of wealth from those who bought land and other assets before the bust to those who sold them. The losses found their way into the banking system because the losers either could not absorb the losses or could avoid them (e.g. non-recourse loans)

The Long Fellow has advocated in the past that there should have been a retrospective super capital gains tax (at least 80%) on the winners. But the mindless focus on "*burning the bondholders*" meant that such a proposal was never put on the political agenda.

On a related topic: Michael McGrath asked about dividends paid by the main Irish banks. In the first 9 months of 2008 these amounted to 1.25 billion, including 270 million euro on 26th of September four days before the Guarantee. This was a declaration that the banks were solvent, which with the benefit of hindsight was not true. The bank shareholders, which included a large swathe of the Irish middle class, received dividends that were not strictly due to them. Dividends, which had been paid in 2008, should have been subject to a super tax levy close to 100%.

#### NATIONALISATION?

Another vignette that the media picked up from Honohan's testimony was the view that Lenihan initially favoured nationalisation but was overruled by the senior

politician (i.e. Brian Cowen) on the fateful night. Honohan also mentioned this in his essay in the book *Brian Lenihan: In Calm and Crisis*. The significance of this is not clear since it does not appear that Honohan himself favoured this option. And Lenihan became an enthusiastic advocate of the Guarantee when he saw the inflow of foreign funds to Irish Banks.

If nationalisation had been chosen, the shareholders of Anglo would have had a strong case for some form of compensation which would have added to the taxpayers' bill. It was not until months later that the true financial position of Anglo was established.

#### DEPFA

Another side issue raised by Pearse Doherty (SF) was Depfa Bank, which was operating from the Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC). There seems to be a view that the light touch regulation applying to the IFSC had affected regulation of the domestic banks. However, there is no evidence of a connection. The group that Depfa belonged to cost the German tax payer 100 billion, although this might yet be whittled down. Interestingly, Honohan was of the view that the losses had more to do with Depfa's parent company, Hypo Real Estate, which gambled heavily in the sub prime market, than with what Depfa was doing in the IFSC.

#### SAVING LIVES

British airstrikes against Islamic State militants are being conducted in Iraq since by morale-sapped pilots, still unrepentant, though only eating cheese sandwiches before the blood fest, at their Akrotiri, Cyprus pitch. Their Tornado fighter-bombers are not the best. They say: No more vegetarian curries before into the clouds we soar. No more dodgy aircraft that gives us worries. And don't tell us we are killing when we are saving lives, and that's thrilling. Mr Cameron told us so and the nation is in co. Now, can we see a decent menu and some aircraft brand-new.

Wilson John Haire  
6 December, 2014



# The Stormont House Agreement and the UK Financial Package to Northern Ireland – swapping public sector jobs for Corporation Tax giveaway?

The UK Government Financial Package to Northern Ireland, annexed to the Stormont House Agreement<sup>1</sup> claims "The total value of the Government's package is additional spending power of about £2 billion" In practice, there is a lot of 'smoke and mirrors' surrounding this big claim and it is not self-evident that this "additional spending power" has made any difference to the final Departmental

revenue budgets published by the Executive in January 2014.

This article borrows from statistical analysis undertaken by the Trade Union funded economic research centre, the Nevin Centre.<sup>2</sup>

**The £2 Billion Explained:** First, the £2 billion figure broken down as set out in the Table below.

Element	Amount	Comment
Capital Funding for Shared Education	£500m	This represents 'new' money, (and subject to schemes that 'stack up' being brought forward)
Bodies for dealing with "The Past"	£150m	This represents 'new' money
Extra RRI <sup>3</sup> Allowance	£350m	New Borrowing sanctioned
Voluntary Redundancy Scheme	£700m	Permitted Borrowing from RRI (normally Capital Projects only) ie from the Block Grant
Repayment of Treasury loan	£100m	As above, from Block Grant
Payment of Welfare fine	£114m	As above, from Block Grant

**Notes on the £2 billion:** In reality RRI borrowing will be £350m less! The Executive will give up £700m of capital borrowing to fund public sector redundancies, and are enabled to borrow a further £350m for capital spending. As such, up to £350m which would have been available for infrastructure/capital projects, such as new school or college buildings, will not now be available.

The 2015-16 Executive budget makes no allowance for the payment of £114m welfare fine, so the ability to utilise funds from the sales of assets will not make any impact on the 2015-16 budget. The Draft 2015-16 budget also set aside £100m to repay the more recent Treasury loan, so funds raised from asset sales that alleviate that burden will return to the capital budget.

The £650m of additional funds are narrowly focussed on the TBUC theme (Together Building a United Community) projects and initiatives to address 'The Past'. These pale in comparison to reductions in the Block Grant since 2010. These capital sums include:

- £50m a year over 10 years to fund capital investment for shared education (TBUC funding can be used for both housing and education)
- £30m per annum over 5 years (£150m) to fund various Commissions and bodies dealing with 'The Past'

**Asset Sales:** The Stormont House Agreement allows for funds from state assets can be used to pay the £100m loan granted by the Treasury to the NI Executive in late 2014; it can also pay for whatever portion of the £114 welfare fine is liable after the successful passage of an UK-compliant NI Welfare Reform Bill. No detail is given as to what asset sales are likely, but press speculation has identified the sale of Belfast Harbour, Translink (and more particularly the NI Transport Holding Company's land and asset base), the sale of NI Water – potentially opening the door to increasing costs of living (in increased public transport costs, water rates etc).

**RRI borrowing:** The RRI is essentially a borrowing facility that was set up in 2002 to support the Northern Ireland

Executive's infrastructure investment programme. It allows the executive to borrow up to £200m a year over and above the public expenditure controls determined by the Barnett formula, used to set spending in Northern Ireland as well as Scotland and Wales. The ceiling for this borrowing is £3bn and the loans are generally repaid over a period of 25 years. The interest rates applied on the principal sums are at standard rates set by the Treasury. These rates are very low, given the UK Government can currently borrow at very low rates – but are almost invariably undertaken through PPP-PFI initiatives that remove public sector jobs associated with maintenance over the contractual period (usually 25-30 years).

RRI cash borrowing to date is around £2bn, with the 2012-13 annual cost of repayments being in excess of £100m. The estimated costs of RRI repayments continue to increase and will peak at just over £140m a year from 2016 to 2022. Although the RRI was only supposed to be for infrastructure spending, this has not been strictly adhered to. In the 2010-11 financial year, £36.9m was borrowed over a 25-year term to assist with the payment of liabilities arising from equal pay awards. The Secretary of State and the Treasury both deemed the expenditure was capital in nature, but the Northern Ireland Audit Office disagreed, saying the move overrode "the original spirit of the RRI". The RRI was also used indirectly to bail out the failed Presbyterian Mutual Society. So, within the Stormont House Agreement, it appears the UK Prime Minister has given permission for the rules to be bent again, this time to pay for a major redundancy scheme across the public sector – in line with the George Osborne ideological mission to "shrink the state".

RRI borrowing under the Stormont House Agreement will allow for £700m over 4 years to fund a public sector Voluntary Redundancy Scheme. It is by no means self-evident that sufficient "volunteers" will present. Executive Ministers stress that the redundancy programme, termed a voluntary exit scheme will not require compulsory redundancies. The scale of Departmental cuts suggests otherwise. Time will tell. The £700m for redundancies is made up of £350m of existing RRI borrowing allowance, plus £350m extra borrowing allowance from Treasury as set out in the table below (there is no extra £700m coming from the Treasury in either borrowing or increased contributions)

On-line sales of books,  
pamphlets and magazines:

[https://  
www.atholbooks-  
sales.org](https://www.atholbooks-sales.org)

Element	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total (£ms)
Existing RRI	£200m	£200m	£200m	£200m	£800m
TBUC <sup>4</sup>	£64m	£26m	£10m	-	£100m
Extra Borrowing powers	+£100m	+£100m	+£100m	+£50m	+£350m
Redundancy Scheme	-£200m	-£200m	-£200m	-£100m	-£700m
RRI Allowance (post VRS, excludes TBUC)	£100m	£100m	£100m	£150m	£450m

**Voluntary Redundancy Scheme:** If all the £700m borrowing is used, savings to the NI Executive (net of interest payments) could be in the region of £330m per annum. There is no prescribed or proposed destination for this £330m, but this £330m would be consistent with the estimates made by various economists<sup>5</sup> for the cost to the NI block grant of implementing Corporation Tax at a rate similar to that of the Republic of Ireland.

Should the whole £700m be used, the estimate of jobs to be lost across the public service is initially estimated at 20,000 to 25,000 FT-Equivalents<sup>6</sup>. This may translate into 30,000+ actual job losses (taking account of Part Time positions), with untold further redundancies in the private sector as a consequence of lessened personal and family consumer spending within the local economy. This should be borne in mind when considering the determined settled will of NI Executive to proceed with the corporate welfare scheme that lowering corporation tax represents. The £330m per annum savings would neatly pay for the costs of implementing Corporation Tax.

**Corporation Tax:** The devolution of Corporation Tax will be for the rate of tax

only (as opposed to the fuller battery of tax secrecy measures that the sovereign state of the Republic of Ireland has at its disposal) and may, therefore, have a nugatory impact in attracting inward investment. The impact on the Stormont block grant, however, is certain and far from nugatory. The Stormont House Agreement makes clear that any reductions made to the rate of Corporation tax in Northern Ireland, both direct and behavioural effects of such a change will be borne by the NI Block Grant. Essentially this opens the door to unforeseen further reductions to the NI block grant if GB based companies (typically 'fly-by-night' or 'brass-plate' type companies) move operations to NI for tax purposes. That the NI Executive have negotiated an agreement with such loopholes—with open-ended, negative consequences—appears little short of reckless.

**Welfare Reform:** the agreement provides for the full implementation of Welfare Reform. To mitigate the consequences of welfare reform, an allowance has been made for a Hardship Fund of £70m in 2015-16, taken from the NI Block Grant.

The Agreement has achieved, for now, the political goal of saving the Good Friday institutions. Many agendas remained

untouched, such as flags and emblems, marching, an Irish Language Act, but time has been bought. Sinn Fein, in particular, appear to have stretched the extra mile, swallowing the Coalition welfare bill with only the sweetener of a locally administered Hardship Fund as cover. Their decision is best understood as primarily political to save the institutions. That is understandable. At first glance, however, Trade Unions would say – "At the cost of a very bad deal indeed".

(Footnotes)

1 Stormont House Agreement and Financial Annex - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-stormont-house-agreement>

2 Trade unions across Ireland contribute to the Nevin Economic Research Institute, see <http://www.nerinstitute.net/>, and this analysis is based on NERI research

3 RRI, the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative – see [http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/a-to-z.htm/report\\_archive\\_2006\\_publicinfrastructure](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/a-to-z.htm/report_archive_2006_publicinfrastructure)

4 TBUC (Together Building a United Community), the OFMDFM community relations strategy - <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community> which (eventually) replaced the earlier 2005 Direct Rule policy, A Sharfed Future – see at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/a-shared-future-strategy>

5 The cost of Corporation Tax, Treasury estimates at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/81554/rebalancing\\_the\\_northern\\_ireland\\_economy\\_consultation.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/81554/rebalancing_the_northern_ireland_economy_consultation.pdf) or Richard Murphy (for ICTU) at <http://www.ictuni.org/publications/the-case-against-cutting-corporation-tax/>

6 There is inconsistency, across Departments and DFP, in the measure to calculate the cost of redundancies, making accurate assessment of job losses difficult.

## The Equality Problem

Gerry Adams recently referred to the fact that Ulster Unionists have a big problem with equality. The question must therefore be asked, why?

Unionism seems uninterested in equality even when and where there is numerical equality between the communities in the North. It is determined to fly the flag over "Fenians" as much as it can and Unionism must be seen to predominate in what it sees as its territory, given to it to rule by Britain in 1921. Of course, it no longer rules but the pretence must continue, it seems.

Certainly Unionism has always had a supremacist character which was accentuated by the character of British Imperialism. In the 19th Century Imperialism held there to be a strict division between "great governing races" and "lesser breeds", or

natives. Ulster Unionists saw themselves as the former and the Irish as the latter. When the demand for Home Rule came to the fore, it was the thought that the Unionist might become a minority and be governed by an Irish majority that was the driving force behind opposition to even a Home Rule parliament in Dublin.

However, it was what Britain did in 1921 that really enhanced the supremacist character of Ulster Unionism. When confronted by the Irish democracy in the 1918 election and the demand for a Republic the British Government decided to construct against it a pseudo-state in the Six Counties with its own parliament. Nobody on the island, Nationalist or Unionist had ever called for such a thing.

The Unionists had simply wanted the maintenance of the Union by Britain—or failing that the 6 Counties remaining as they were in the Union. However, West-

minster decided that what they called "Northern Ireland" must be constructed, as a place apart.

The thing called "Northern Ireland" had a devious political purpose. Britain still had its eyes on the bulk of the island and decided to construct something the Irish independence movement would feel it could ultimately possess if it did not go too far in being independent. After the Treaty was signed governments in the 26 County State had to be on their best behaviour in order to ever get a chance of regaining the 6 Counties. As a result, and faced with this dilemma, De Valera and his successors abandoned the Northern Catholics and concentrated on making their own State as independent as possible.

However, the detachment of the province from Britain had a big impact on Ulster Unionism. Life was now of a much more modest and insular character. Being once

part of a world-wide Empire the Ulster Unionist was now constricted into the single role of mastering the natives in the 6 Counties, doing Britain's dirty work, whilst the province was kept "at arm's length".

The Ulster Protestants wanted to be a normal part of the British State but British policy did not allow it. Westminster said they must govern the large body of Nationalists in their territory, from a separate parliament, outside the democratic structures of the State.

This is what made the Civil Rights movement so successful. Ulster Unionism could not concede simple democratic demands without combusting. Its mass base, which elected the Unionist government in Stormont, had to feel a superiority over Catholics or it would replace its leaders. Caught between the need for reform and its need for supremacy O'Neill, Chichester Clark and Faulkner all failed and Stormont fell.

Despite gaining the 6 Counties the Union was reduced to the mere symbols of the State—the Crown, the Queen, the Union flag, etc. And one of the chief concerns of Unionists became the flying of flags, in the face of Fenians, presumably to show who still has the upper hand. Flag-waving is actually a sign of insecurity as it has to be done to reassure Unionists that they are still "British" and still top-dog. It is no surprise then that it has increased since the Good Friday Agreement.

Unless it has predominant rights over marching and the marking of territory Unionism refuses to engage with Nationalists. But in resisting the equality agenda Unionism is helping to fragment the Unionist bloc and produce further withdrawal from politics from its middle-class component, accentuating Unionism's "yahoo" and the fundamentalist character that embarrass it.

The Unionist predicament lies in the fact that they are being edged out of the Union. They are in political limbo and Unionism has been unable to resist this process. So its politics has been reduced to simply maintaining the remaining inequality that persists between the communities. That is a losing game.

The only place the Ulster Protestant community can obtain real state politics is within a new Irish state, constructed on the basis of equality for all its citizens. In the current situation all that can be done is defending inequality and defending the indefensible.

**Pat Walsh**

**(Dr. Pat Walsh is author of *Catastrophe and Resurgence; the Catholic Predicament in Northern Ireland*.**

This article first appeared in the January *An Phoblacht*.)

## Concerning The Pedigrees Of Haughey And His Opponents!

On January 19th the *Irish Times* featured *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd's denunciation of artistic distortion of the historical record. Dowd charged in respect of *Selma*, the new film about Martin Luther King, that its portrayal of US President Lyndon B Johnston is a "*dangerous distortion*", adding that "*artful falsehood is more dangerous than artless falsehood because fewer people see through it*". She continued:

"The 'Hey, it's just a movie' excuse doesn't wash. Film makers love to talk about their artistic licence to distort the truth, as they bank on authenticity to boost them at awards season."

Dowd's column has met with some strong ripostes in the USA itself, her opponents arguing that the film's 'licence' regarding actual conversations succeeded in highlighting more fundamental core truths. It is an argument that I myself have endorsed in support of the film *Philomena*. Each case must be judged on its merits. There's licence and licence. If 'creative' characterisation crosses over to character assassinating caricature, it is a core falsehood rather than a core truth that is being served. What is particularly noteworthy about the *Irish Times* publication of this Dowd article, however, is that it was accompanied in the very same issue by a contrasting article from one of its own columnists, Donald Clarke, under the heading of "*Analysis: So what if some of Charlie is made up? Dramatic distortions risk being mistaken for historical truths*". Writing in respect of RTE's three-part drama about former Taoiseach Charles Haughey, Clarke argued:

"For a journalist, the highest priorities must always be truth and accuracy. Reporters rarely find themselves in court (alas) for misplacing an adjective. Drama is a different business. ... One of the most controversial elaborations saw Desmond O'Malley, assaulted by drunken *Charlissas*, defending his own cadre with a scimitar donated by the Iraqi government. It seems that somebody may have wielded such a weapon, but it probably wasn't Des and it probably didn't come from Saddam Hussein. No matter. It's a striking, amusing scene that catches the spirit of the moment. The young Henry V didn't really get drunk with a fat man called Falstaff... The surprising underperformance of Ava DuVernay's *Selma*, a tale of the US civil rights struggle, at last week's

Oscar nominations has been partially blamed on alleged misrepresentations of Lyndon Johnson... However, the most fanatical evangelist for quasi-factual drama would understand if the living models for characters in *Charlie*—or their surviving relatives—objected to supposed slights or misrepresentations... {But} should a writer care if distortions are mistaken for historical truths? Anybody who learns his or her history from telly drama (or Shakespeare's history plays, for that matter) probably deserves to be misinformed. There are books out there, you know."

Clarke, however, missed the point under his very own nose. It is less the *Charlie* drama itself than the journalistic commentary it has provoked that has replaced historical truths with distortions. In a letter to the *Irish Times* on January 15th, Haughey's advisor, Martin Mansergh, observed:

"I saw Charles Haughey in his office, on each of the three occasions that he left it with dignity, when he ceased to be Taoiseach: on June 30th, 1981, after 18 months in office; on December 14th, 1982, after just nine months; and finally on February 9th, 1992, after five years. This was not the behaviour of a Latin American dictator. Some of us are getting a little weary of the continuing whingefest of mature journalists and former politicians. Charles Haughey's real crime, and it is easy to forget that he was convicted of none, was that up until 1992 he succeeded in surmounting all the challenges made to him. He survived the many attacks of such estimable people as Jack Lynch, Conor Cruise O'Brien, George Colley, Desmond O'Malley, Garret FitzGerald, not to mention the Workers' Party, and Mrs Thatcher, to the understandable but lasting resentment of most of them, their admirers and their supporters. While not disputing that Charles Haughey had serious failings and made some bad choices, both personal and political, they are in my opinion outweighed by the more lasting benefit of his many achievements."

What Donald Clarke has failed to observe is that the Queen of "*the continuing whingefest of mature journalists*", as described by Mansergh, has been Clarke's own fellow *Irish Times* columnist Kathy Sheridan, who was at her most hysterical on January 7th, with a column whose heading and subheading read: "*Charlie's devils: How a Haughey era poisonous culture lingers on. The RTE series is described as 'fascinating'. But Charlie*

*Haughey's corrupt, thuggish little power play will always elicit other adjectives that will always begin with an emphatic F.*" She proceeded to throw up the following:

"Forty-eight hours on, the nausea triggered by 90 minutes of Charlie still lingers... It helped to have put in some training for the viewing. A reading of Dessie O'Malley's memoirs did the trick, a book permeated with Charlie's shade and full of terms such as 'sinister' and 'malignant force'. 'I came from a different sort of period in a sense', O'Malley said in a recent interview with this newspaper. 'The great dividing point is the beginning of December 1979 (when Haughey won the Fianna Fáil leadership) . . . All the rules and conventions that existed prior to that changed overnight!'. Which happens to be the central event in the first episode of *Charlie*. A quick character wrap is delivered in the charged vignette of Charlie and his mother marching along the corridors of Leinster House towards the Dáil chamber and his destiny as Taoiseach, while snatches of speeches about him are heard from political opponents : Garret FitzGerald (*flawed pedigree*) ..."

Let's just stop right there. Charlie Haughey died on 13th June 2006. Under the heading of "*Garret regrets calling CJH's pedigree 'flawed'*", the *Irish Independent* carried the following report on 27th August 2006:

"Former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald says he is happy he went to see his old adversary Charles Haughey before he died—because the pair were actually good friends. The former politician, who has just celebrated his 80th birthday, says despite their legendary disagreements, he and Haughey had a great personal relationship. 'I met him because we had known each other for 63 years and he was very ill... I was very glad I went as we had a nice chat about the past. We never had any difficulty with our personal relationship and I always found him courteous. We had a very good private relationship but I still hold the view that he was not the right person to be the prime minister or Taoiseach. But that never affected our ordinary relationship which was always straightforward', he says. Dr FitzGerald does, however, regret saying that Haughey had a 'flawed pedigree' when he was first elected Taoiseach. 'They were badly chosen words. That speech was written at 4.30 in the morning. But the wording was completely misunderstood. I just wanted to point out that he was different from previous Taoisigh in that he didn't have the support of a large amount of his own party. But nobody noticed that context.'"

FitzGerald was a fool in thinking that any other context would spring to the imagination of the general public than that

prompted by how such language was commonly understood. Having had my own personal friendship with Garret from the time I had been one of his students in the late 1960s, I do, of course, accept his *bona fides* that he was not casting any aspersions on Haughey's parentage. (That would be done by quite a different leading politician.) In any case, Garret was in no position to throw stones in that regard. He himself recognised that, as a Government Minister, his own father, Desmond FitzGerald, had been a semi-judicial murderer during the Irish Civil War, a self-acknowledged anti-Semite in the late 1920s to mid-1930s, and a Fascist activist and polemicist from the early to mid-1930s. So, there was no question of FitzGerald having a go off Haughey's parents!

In the final, third volume of his collected essays, published in 2010, FitzGerald attempted to explain his "*flawed pedigree*" speech in greater detail:

"The long acquaintance between us could not, however, be allowed to inhibit me from stating in the Dáil before his election as Taoiseach why at that moment I and so many others in all parties regarded him as unsuitable to be head of the Irish government. This, we felt, had to be put firmly on the record. Thereafter, if, as seemed almost certain, he was chosen as Taoiseach, he would have to be accorded the respect due to his office... Because of the inhibitions that would necessarily limit what members of the government party opposed to Charles Haughey could say publicly, I knew that I would have to speak for them as well as for the Opposition. (A number of Fianna Fáil members later thanked me privately for having done so.) Then, having explained the background of my long relationship with Charles Haughey and having acknowledged his talents—the political skills and competence he had shown in the departments in which he had served as minister, which were important qualities in a Taoiseach—I said that in this role these were not enough. All his six predecessors—three of his party and three of mine—had been united by a common bond. They had all come into public life to serve their country, and even their severest enemies had never accused any of them of taking up politics for any motive other than the highest. All had thus commanded the trust of those close to them. Charles Haughey came to the job of Taoiseach, I went on to say, with a flawed pedigree, because he differed from all his predecessors in that his motives had been and were widely impugned, most notably, although not exclusively, by people close to him within his own party. Having observed his actions for many years, these people ... attributed to him an overwhelming ambition not simply to serve the state but to dominate

it, and even to own it. The phrase 'flawed pedigree', an oratorical embellishment that must have owed something to the hour of the night at which I had finally drafted my remarks, achieved lasting fame, being described almost invariably since then as 'that infamous comment'. Although the contrast between him and predecessors that I had been making was justifiable, I should of course have recognised the danger of using a colourful phrase that could easily be distorted by being taken completely out of the specific context of a comparison between Charles Haughey's and his predecessors' repute among their peers" (*Just Garret—Tales from the Political Front Line*, pp 287-8.)

Following that *apologia pro vitam suam*, as lame as it was long-winded, FitzGerald proceeded to provide a vignette that enabled the reader to arrive at a character assessment of the calibre of opposition within his own Fianna Fáil party to Taoiseach Charles Haughey, that was being "led" by Tanaiste George Colley:

"Six months later, in connection with an article on 11 May 1980 on the Arms Trial, we put down a motion, seeking for clarification of matters raised there. Shortly afterwards I was approached on behalf of George Colley by a mutual friend, with the suggestion that we amend our motion so as to include a more distinct reference to the clash of sworn testimony of the Arms Trial, in such a form that the motion would have to be rejected by the Taoiseach. If we did this, George Colley and a number of others would, I was told, abstain, and the motion would be carried. Those concerned felt that such an amendment would provide the last possible opportunity to show their feelings... While the prospect of winning such a vote naturally interested me, I saw many difficulties, which I put to the intermediary... I met George Colley at a party, and he confirmed the proposal, saying that about twenty members would abstain. There followed further contacts through Alexis FitzGersld, but when, at Alexis's suggestion, I put the matter to the test by inviting George Colley to draft the amendment himself—which seemed to me the best way of enduring that the abstentions would in fact occur—he backed away from the proposal. I felt that my caution had been justified." (pp 289.)

Garret FitzGerald died on 19th May 2011. It had been twelve months previously, in May 2010, when he was interviewed along with his daughter Mary on Miriam O'Callaghan's radio show, that the following telling—and ultimately shame-faced—exchange took place:

O'Callaghan: "*You regretted the 'flawed pedigree' didn't you?*"

FitzGerald: "*It was a perfectly valid*

remark but it was totally misinterpreted. I simply said that unlike previous Taoiseach he didn't enjoy the full support of his party."

Daughter: "It was really the wrong word to use. I mean it immediately raised all kinds of connotations which were completely hijacked."

FitzGerald: "I mean I wrote the speech at 4.30 in the morning."

Daughter: "'Pedigree' is an obnoxious word. How you could have used the word 'pedigree'! It wasn't very bright."

FitzGerald: "No, it wasn't."

There was, however, one Fianna Fáil elder statesman who, from the very outset, believed Haughey to have had a "flawed pedigree", and he consequently became the foremost champion of George Colley's inept pursuit of George's own ambitions.

*Frank Aiken—Nationalist and Internationalist*, edited by Bryce Evans and Stephen Kelly, was completed in 2013 and published in 2014. In the concluding chapter, Evans and Kelly together opined as well as related:

"Aiken belonged to the first generation of post-independence Irish politicians, the majority of whom placed political principles before material benefits. He was a man of integrity and sternness, driven by the conviction of his beliefs. As such, he was the ostensible antithesis to one of the leading members of the second generation of mainstream Irish republicans, Charles J Haughey. If Haughey—power-hungry, ruthless and ostentatious—epitomised the 'ambition' that his father-in-law and Aiken's long-term colleague Seán Lemass sought to inculcate into 1960s Ireland, then Aiken's outlook remained relatively puritan. In the words of his *protégé*, George Colley, Aiken was 'one of the giants' of Irish parliamentary politics, a man of 'rock-like integrity and dedication to principle'. (Colley's oration at Aiken's 1983 funeral) ... Under Lemass's premiership, the link between Fianna Fáil and business was institutionalised through the establishment of Taca... In Aiken's eyes, Taca was indicative of the party's moral collapse. He was gravely concerned by accusations that some senior Fianna Fáil figures had abused planning laws, with inside information easing the accumulation of substantial private fortunes."

"Aiken's concerns over the direction that the Fianna Fáil organisation was taking came to a head when Lemass announced his decision to retire as Taoiseach in November 1966. He was caught off guard by Lemass's decision, and was fearful for the future of Fianna Fáil if Charles J Haughey secured the party leadership. Aiken {the then Tanaiste—MOR} made it known that he was in favour of rival candidate George Colley, and he tried his utmost to persuade Lemass to carry on for another few years in order

to allow Colley sufficient time to gain further ministerial experience and to raise his national profile. At a gathering of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party, on 9 November 1966, a vote was taken on Lemass's successor in order to avoid 'acrimonious discussions and intemperate statements that could cause unnecessary division in the party'. Aiken 'spoke at length', and said that 'the decision that day would be a momentous one'. Having groomed George Colley as Lemass's successor, Aiken objected to what he called the 'tyranny of consensus' through which Cork TD Jack Lynch was elected as a candidate for Taoiseach {surely giving Lynch himself a 'flawed pedigree' in terms of leadership achievement—MOR}, and formally proposed Colley as the new leader of the party... Although initially disappointed by Colley's failure to secure the Fianna Fáil leadership, Aiken offered his unconditional support during Lynch's premiership thereafter."

"Following Fianna Fáil's general election victory in June 1969, however, Lynch effectively sacked a surprised Aiken from the government... When the Arms Crisis erupted in May 1970, Aiken strongly advised Lynch to sack ministers Haughey and Blaney and throw them out of the Fianna Fáil organisation. In a meeting with the Taoiseach at government buildings, at which Lynch supplied him with 'files on the two' ministers, Aiken demanded that the whip be withdrawn from both men, instructing Lynch 'you are the leader of the Irish people—not just the Fianna Fáil Party'... Aiken's mistrust of Haughey remained so intense that he informed Lynch that he would not stand at the 1973 general election if Haughey were ratified as a Fianna Fáil candidate. Aiken made it clear that ... he would write a letter to the newspapers explaining his reasons for resigning. On 12 February, Aiken learned that Haughey had been ratified, and immediately withdrew his nomination. It was only after Lynch mobilised the services of Seán MacEntee, George Colley (*et al*) ... that Aiken agreed not to record publicly his reasons for retiring from mainstream politics. He would not, however, waver from his decision to bow out of Irish public life. The following day, 13 February, at a meeting in Dundalk Town Hall to mark Aiken's seventy-fifth birthday, Lynch announced the former's retirement from politics on 'doctors' orders'. Further outraged and bemused by Lynch bringing Haughey back to the opposition front bench in January 1975, in the last ten years of his life Aiken never attended a Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis, or any other party event. These last years pained him greatly as he watched from afar as the Fianna Fáil organisation almost tore itself apart under Haughey's leadership" (pp 313-4 and 328-9).

As a ruthless IRA leader Aiken had always been committed to thoroughgoing

organisational discipline, and he would be the IRA Chief-of-Staff to bring the Civil War to an end. He believed that such organisational discipline should also have been applied in the Fianna Fáil Party. He was the sternest proponent of the "*uno duce, una voce*" principle! Although Haughey had been acquitted by a jury of his peers of the charges of illegally importing arms, once Lynch himself had done a *volte face* on the matter, Aiken would have expected Haughey to knuckle under the discipline of the new party line, and his failure to do so, and the timidity of Lynch in response to Haughey, led Aiken to view Lynch as a wimp of a leader. This contempt for Lynch is shared by Aiken's son, Frank Aiken Jnr, in his Preface to the Evans-Kelly volume, and ranks second only to their shared loathing of Haughey. Referring to his father's threat to go public on the reasons for his 1973 resignation, he writes of how "Lynch panicked" and asked President de Valera to try "to persuade his old colleague and friend, whom he wished to be the next president, to reconsider".

"Instead, in the unconvincing words of Jack Lynch, my father's retirement from active politics was attributed to 'health grounds'... In our view, Mr Lynch was weak, as he had been in 1970 on the arms importation issue." (p xix).

And what of Kathy Sheridan's knight in shining armour, Des O'Malley, and his attempts to slay the Haughey dragon? In her January 7th rant, she quoted O'Malley "in a recent interview with this newspaper". She was in fact talking about herself and her interview with O'Malley published on October 25th last:

"After more than ten years of writing, former Progressive Democrats leader Des O'Malley has published his autobiography... As Minister for Justice at the height of the Troubles he got used to sleeping with a gun under his pillow... Des O'Malley's long career in high office began on May 4th, 1970, the day he was summoned out of the bath by Jack Lynch and invited to become Minister for Justice... Having said yes he listened slack-jawed as Lynch dropped the bombshell that he was about to sack Charles Haughey and Niall Blaney. The young country solicitor had unwittingly stepped into the ground zero of the Arms Crisis. 'Jazes, I was kind of knocked for six, I can tell you. They were big beasts.'"

But what of the pedigree of Des O'Malley himself? In April 2001 RTÉ began to broadcast a shamelessly hagiographic four-part series on O'Malley that it had commissioned from film producer Gerry Gregg, the ex-Workers' Party *protégé* of Eoghan Harris. That April

29th, under the heading of "*The loser who won*", Gregg plugged his own series in the *Sunday Independent*:

"Recent revelations about the Arms Trial have called into question the role played by the then Justice Minister Dessie O'Malley. In a four-part series on his political career beginning on RTÉ tonight, O'Malley argues passionately about his role in those events... His uncle Tommy McLaughlin was the sort of hero the young Des O'Malley looked up to. He dreamt of harnessing the power of the Shannon to provide light and heat and energy for the new Ireland. The hydro-electric station at Ardnacrusha just outside Limerick is his enduring legacy. These themes of political violence, practical patriotism and public duty recur in the controversial career of Des O'Malley... Until now there is a broad consensus that acknowledges O'Malley's courage in facing down the threat to the state posed by the advocates of physical force, and his pluck in supporting Jack Lynch against the political delinquents in Fianna Fáil. In 1970 Des O'Malley stood by the republic built by de Valera and Lemass and recklessly endangered by Neil Blaney and Charles Haughey."

In a period prior to total Anne Harris control of the *Sunday Independent*, that newspaper did allow me to question, a week later on May 5th, the precise character of the O'Malley pedigree that Gregg had held up for our admiration:

"Previewing his own Des O'Malley documentary last Sunday, Gerry Gregg wrote:

*'His uncle Tommy McLaughlin was the sort of hero the young Des O'Malley looked up to.'* In November 1924 the same Thomas McLaughlin had been a founding member of the Organising Committee of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party. John M Regan's 1999 book *The Irish Counter-Revolution* reveals that in November 1923 McLaughlin had written from Berlin to his fellow Committee member Michael Tierney: *'We have had some bad rioting and plundering, the Jews meeting their deserts. If things don't improve I imagine we will see them hanging from lamp posts shortly.'* Regan describes such an expression of opinion for proto-Nazi pogroms against German Jews as a rare example of rabid anti-Semitism in Irish public life."

For whatever reason, the *Sunday Independent* letters editor decided to embellish Uncle Tommy's murderous anti-Semitism by giving my letter the heading of "*Just Deserts*".

Returning to Stephen Kelly's onslaught on Haughey in the Frank Aiken book, such a narrative of Aiken championing Colley over Haughey obscures the fact that anti-Haughey preferences and

prejudices on Aiken's part had long preceded the 1960s and, furthermore, had next to nothing to do with any 1970s differences on Northern policy. Kelly's failings as a historian in that particular book are all the more glaring in the light of the quality of his scholarship in the book that had immediately preceded it. In his 2013 book *Fianna Fáil, Partition and Northern Ireland, 1926-1971*, whereas Kelly did establish the probability of Haughey's partial co-authorship of a 1955 Fianna Fáil *cumann* memorandum advocating armed struggle in the North, far more noteworthy was the fact that he further established the near certainty that Colley was that memorandum's primary author. The latter's father, Harry Colley, was also party to that memorandum. As it later transpired, it would be Charles Haughey, as the Minister of Justice responsible in 1961 for setting up the Special Military Courts in order to crush the IRA, who would finally force the IRA to bring its Border military campaign to an end. But to return to the Colley family pedigree. Harry Colley had been a veteran IRA fighter throughout the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War, as well as becoming long serving Fianna Fáil TD. All this gave his son George a perfect pedigree as far as Aiken was concerned. Haughey's pedigree, however, was quite a different matter. In that book Kelly explicitly stated of Haughey:

"Both his parents came from Swatragh, Co Derry. His father, Seán joined the IRA after 1916 and was involved in the War of Independence in Ulster. He subsequently fought on the pro-Treaty side during the Civil War, later joining the Free State army in the early 1920s. Speaking in 2006, shortly before his death, Haughey admitted that his father had been 'a committed supporter of Cumann na nGaedheal', and that he was 'very (Michael Collins)'. Seán Haughey's allegiance to the pro-Treaty side was something which Frank Aiken, a founding father of Fianna Fáil, had never forgiven him. This greatly influenced Aiken's detestation of his son, whom he saw as a 'Free-Stater' opportunist in Fianna Fáil clothes" (pp 170-1).

In the light of the non-disclosure of this prejudice in the Aiken book, the presentation of Aiken vs Haughey as some sort of Virtue vs Vice conflict, was quite unconscionable. But perhaps Stephen Kelly has since had somewhat of a rethink. In a letter published in the *Irish Times* this past September 2nd, under the heading of "*Foundations of Peace Process*", Kelly argued:

"Stephen Collins's opinion piece

(Judging the performance of our political leaders', Opinion & Analysis, August 22nd) regarding the late Albert Reynolds's political legacy focuses on the latter's contribution to laying 'the foundations' of the peace process in Northern Ireland. This point has been reiterated far and wide by the political class and media in recent days. Indeed, no one can argue that Reynolds did not take huge risks in his dealings with the British government, and in particular in his personal discussions with republican and loyalist terrorists. However, it is ahistorical to say that Reynolds laid the 'foundations' for the early stage of the peace process—this honour belongs to the controversial Charles J Haughey. It was Haughey, while Taoiseach in the late 1980s, who initiated secret discussions with Gerry Adams, using John Hume as a go between. Haughey did not make these discussions public as he was afraid of reaction from within Fianna Fáil and the public at large. Nonetheless, the fact remains that it was Haughey not Reynolds who first took the tentative steps towards laying the foundations of the peace process in Northern Ireland."

Stephen Kelly has announced, in articles by him on the Haughey/Thatcher relationship that have been published in both the *Irish Times* on December 24th and *History Ireland* this January-February, that his next publication will be entitled *Charles J Haughey and Northern Ireland, 1945-1992*. We must wait and see what that will produce.

**Manus O'Riordan**

LIBERTÉ EGALITÉ FRATERNITÉ  
(C'est pour vous?)

Merkel helps to light the fire in Paris,  
and tries to put it out in Berlin.  
Mahmoud Abbas isn't embarrassed to be with Netanyahu though it could be his banana skin.  
They who murdered journalists and imprisoned them were there,  
they who destroyed Libya and Iraq were there  
in the media glare as democracy at work,  
they who killed millions were there,  
though their visit to Paris was a quirk  
they met up with Hell's Angels USA to ride pillion.

**Wilson John Haire**  
15 January 2015

## A Trinity Professor Squints At Connolly

The Founding Conference of the Irish Labour History Society was held in Belfast in May 1974, when the city was in the grip of a General Strike. I went up to the University, where the Conference was being held, and found it seething with resentment against the Strike. After that I took no further interest in the ILHS.

The Strike was regarded as invalid because it was not authorised by the official leadership of the Trade Union movement. The leader of the TUC (British), Len Murray, was called over from London to break the Strike with a Back To Work March. The top official of the Trade Union movement crossed the picket line, but the Strike continued.

It was an unofficial strike organised by the Union leaders on the ground, the shop stewards. That was nothing extraordinary in the great era of unofficial shop steward militancy.

The other thing that made the Strike invalid was that it was not about wages and conditions but had a political object. Yet the ILHS was celebrating Strikes for political objects held during the War of Independence.

So what was wrong with it in fact was that it had the wrong political object—Unionist instead of Anti-Partitionist.

The great bulk of the organised workers in Northern Ireland were Unionist and they participated in British Trade Union affairs, yet the top level of Trade Unionism in the North had been connected with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. That made no economic sense in a situation in which so much of the economic medium in which Trade Unionism functioned was determined by the State, and the State determining economic circumstances in the North was unarguably the London one and not the Dublin one.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU was a political construct established against the grain of Trade Union rationality. And, although this was officially denied, it was acknowledged when it was the leader of the TUC, not the leader of the ICTU, who was called on to break the Strike. The leader of the TUC failed to take more than a few stragglers with him. If the leader of the ICTU had been brought, he would have been treated as an agent of the Dublin sovereignty claim over the North, and would have boosted the Strike.

The 40th anniversary of the Strike was noticed by a meeting at Queen's University in June 2014. Two senior Stormont civil servants of the period, Kenneth Bloomfield and Maurice Hayes, spoke at it, but didn't seem to have ever thought about what state they were in. None of the Shop Stewards who formulated the demands of the Strike and made it effective was present. Like most of the citizen soldiers of the Irish War of Independence, they disbanded once they had carried their point. The specific demand on which they called the Strike was not mentioned by anybody on the platform or by anybody in the small audience except myself. There was a general assumption or pretence that the Strike was about anything else than the measured terms of the strike demand.

Anyhow the 1974 Labour History Conference hated it and would take no interest in its details. And so I took no further interest in the Labour History Society until I found that John Horne, an Australian History Professor in Trinity who took on an Irish *persona* and revealed that Britain's First World War of the 20th century was "*Our War*", was a founding member, and a one-time Editor of the ILHS magazine *Saothar*, and a permanent member of the Committee. So I looked up *Saothar*. I have not been able to get to see No. 1, but I read in No. 2 that the first Conference, sponsored by the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's, was held on 16th to 18th of May 1974 in Belfast, but—

"unfortunately the symposium coincided with the Ulster Workers' Council Lock Out and the papers were read and discussions held in a bizarre environment of power-cuts, transport closures and increasing failure of all essential supplies".

So not a Strike but a Lock-Out, with the shop=stewards playing the part played by William Martin Murphy in Dublin in 1913!

(I expected the Strike, of which two months' official notice was given, to be a rowdy fiasco, as William Craig's Vanguard Strikes had been, and I bought a supply of candles with the intention of reading novels until it was over. But, on the second day, I saw that an actual Strike organised by the Trade Unions at ground level. And then I saw Craig etc. trying to get on the bandwagon and being kept at a distance.)

I have now looked through over thirty years of *Saothar* and find, what I should

have guessed from the start, that Horne, the discoverer of *Our War*, comes from Marxism. Indeed, where else can the Right come from in our era but from the University Marxism which destroyed every other medium of thought in the early seventies, except for a few eccentric Tories like Trevero Roper.

My relationship with Marxism as a philosophy was strictly conditional. I had read Kant in the intellectual environment of Slieve Luacra before I read Marx. I also read *Capital* in Slieve Luacra before I had ever come across Marxist literature. When I came across the notion that there was a self-sufficient philosophy inherent in a companion work to *Capital*—in the Preface to the *Critique Of Political Economy*—I was sceptical. And when I came across it, in tangible form in the person of Lord Bew on the Belfast battlefield of the early seventies, I was certain that there wasn't. Marx analysed the functioning of the capitalist market, and that analysis stands. The philosophy drawn from the Preface to the *Critique* by the New Left and others does not.

There is a pathetic story about Bukharin, who philosophised Marxism, scrutinising the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3, in Vienna in the late 1930s, coming to the brief, aborted, chapter on Classes, and turning over the page in case something might have been written on the book which previous Editors had overlooked. He couldn't believe that Marx had stopped writing at such a vital point.

Anyhow, well before 1974 I concluded that I was right in refusing to ditch Kant and trying to comprehend the world philosophically by means of a closed circle of notions drawn from the Preface to the *Critique*. And that Kautsky was right when he held that what Lenin was doing was not sanctioned by what Marx had written, but that Lenin was right when he quoted Goethe against Kautsky on the relationship between theory and life. And, as to class—it wasn't an intellectual problem for me as it was for intellectuals. I was an unskilled labourer, at the bottom of the heap. In Slieve Luacra the heap was not stratified culturally, as was the case in England, where systematic proletarianisation was disabling—which explained why the Irish were disproportionately active in English working class affairs.

The Marxist scheme of historical progression, through a sequence of modes of production caused by the lower class in each displacing the upper class, might have worked if the Irish element in the English working class had predominated,

but it could not work with the proletarianised mass of the English working class, with the weight of generations behind it, as the motive force of the final transition. I saw this during my first year in London, both by participation in a Strike and by observation of the painful efforts a normal of a normal proletarianised English worker to acquire what he thought of as culture, which in practice only meant middle class attitudes.

Lenin's remark that socialism was an alien intrusion into the working class movement therefore made sense to me. The idea that the thorough proletarian negation of the working class ripened it for a revolutionary transition to Socialism made no sense at all, except on the assumption of a party of Lenin's kind being established, with a membership largely drawn from the proletariat but controlled by a professional revolutionary elite, which would take command of the negated proletariat in the event of social breakdown and remake society with it. And I saw little possibility of that in England.

The Bullock Commission on Industrial Democracy of the mid-1970s opened up the possibility of a kind of syndicalist development by proposing that the organised workers in an enterprise should have representation on Boards of Management on a par with shareholders' representatives. BICO took that up with enthusiasm, but the entire Marxist spectrum opposed it, condemning it as workers' capitalism. And the proletarianised workers didn't want to be bothered with it. What they wanted was to be employees on good wages and short hours.

The Communist Party seemed to have lost belief in the Marxist scheme of revolution, but kept going through the motions. It held many important Trade Union positions, but it had damaged itself by unnecessary ballot-rigging. Gerry Healy's Trotskyist Socialist Labour League did its best to maintain a revolutionary elite while waiting for the revolutionary situation, but the waiting period was too long. (Lenin himself was beginning to think that the situation for which he had prepared was not going to happen, and he was getting ready to emigrate to America when the Tsar mobilised his army and sparked off the World War.) Tony Cliff's *International Socialist* group, which became the Socialist Workers' Party, seemed to be designed for middle class intellectuals who wanted to combine revolution with a career in the bourgeois press. And Ted Grant's Revolutionary Socialist League was almost a secret

society, hidden within the Labour Party and sowing the seeds of Marxism, to ferment there.

Reading *Saothar* put me in mind of this English Marxist world of forty years ago. The world of Irish Labour was not like that, but somehow Labour History got itself written from that vantage point. It was, I suppose, the universal University vantage point of the early 1970s.

Bukharin was an intellectual who found himself adrift in real life. He did not live in the world, as part of the world, he lived in thought—in theoretical thought. A theory is a closed circle of thought. Bukharin took a theory constructed through analysis to be a picture of society as it existed, forgetting that society, unlike the rest of the world, is human, and that human existence is a very peculiar sort of existence indeed. He was a non-Kantian Marxist. Lenin must have irritated him greatly with his repetitious quoting of Goethe: "*Theory is grey, my friend, / But the eternal tree of life is green.* What use is theory if things keep sprouting up without regard to it? In effect Bukharin took it that classes were real elements of society, which had existence prior to their combination with other elements to form a society. How then could purposeful class consciousness not be the norm? How did the abnormality of unconscious classes come about? That was the kind of thing that Bukharin was still worrying about after he became one of the Triumvirate of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. And the Historians of Irish Labour in *Saothar* worried about that too. James Connolly was therefore beyond their comprehension.

Connolly was a Marxist up to a point, but beyond that point he would not go. I don't recall that he ever mentioned the Preface to the *Critique*. And whoever the socialist was in O'Casey's play, who bumbled about Jenevsky's Thesis, he wasn't Connolly. (It is obvious that Connolly and O'Casey detested each other, and it is 'Casey who was the doctrinaire.)

Wage workers are born into national societies or Imperial societies which are capitalist and must live as part of those societies, even as they become conscious in a class sense of how capitalism functions and try to act against it. Connolly took that for granted.

*Saothar* circles cautiously around Connolly—like a cat round a bowl of hot porridge, as we used to say. It cannot disregard him, and it cannot just say what he was.

That his European affinity was with

Pilsudsky's Polish Socialist Party (condemned by both Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg) is not mentioned in any of the articles I have seen, even though it is expressed in both runs of *The Workers' Republic*, 1898 and 1915. Nor is it mentioned that he supported Germany in the Great War and published much pro-German material. Horne could write an article on *James Connolly and the Great Divide: Ireland, Europe and the First World War* without mention of it.

Connolly said the British Empire made war on Germany because it could not compete commercially with German capitalism, which was made more efficient by the better conditions of the working class in it. Horne says the War was—

"the point where Europe and the world entered the 'short twentieth century' proposed by Eric Hobsbawm, whose inner dynamic and coherence—made up of war and ideological conflict—only became visible after the collapse of Communism in 1989" (*Saothair* 2006).

Many things happened as a result of the World War that was brought about in 1914. The consequences of some of those things have not yet worked themselves out. We are still dealing with the consequences of the war of destruction on the Ottoman State, the fostering of Arab nationalism against the Ottomans, the swindling of the Arab nationalists when the Ottomans were defeated, and the introduction of an alien population to Palestine to be a thorn in the sides of the weak subordinate states set up in the Middle East, chiefly to ensure Western control of Arab oil.

Another consequence is the rejection by the United States of Washington's advice against involvement in European conflicts, and possibly the delaying of its destined war on Japan.

And there was the accelerated democratisation of Britain, which was a major influence against the making of a pragmatic Peace Settlement after the War.

But these long-term effects of the War and of the catastrophic Peace are not what caused the War in August 1914, which is what Connolly wrote about. He did not speculate about future developments: he took a stand on current events. Horne can hardly have failed to notice what that stand was, but he does not say what it was:

"Connolly made the nation the framework of socialism...

"Connolly saw the war... as caused by 'imperialism'... and thus by class exploitation on an international scale. In fact, the conflict was first and foremost about the consolidation and creation of nation-states in Europe...



"Connolly rejected the war, however, because it was extraneous and opposed to his understanding of both class and nation...

:"...he was devastated by the failure of international socialism to prevent the conflict... Yet... Connolly did not advocate international action to force peace between the warring camps nor did he condemn each side equally... —the point of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal meetings... Instead he saw the war (and its violence) through the prism of his reinforced hostility to Britain and British imperialism. He held the latter to be the real cause of the conflict... Connolly's few references to Germany describe it as a civilised, ordered country, more modern than Britain and likely to overtake it once Britain was divested of its empire. Germany's major role in the outbreak of the war was simply not discussed. Moreover, Connolly refuted the evidence of brutality to civilians during the invasion of Belgium... Connolly saw little to choose between the two camps, but if anything, Germany was the injured party.

"Most significantly of all, Connolly argued that the violence engaged in by the great powers had stripped the illusions from European civilisation, and that in consequence, the forces arrayed against the war would themselves have to use violence...

"Something of the violence and brutality of war was thus incorporated into Connolly's own analysis. It may have been more rhetorical than real. Certainly, in defending himself at his court martial, he was concerned to prove that he had not mistreated military prisoners during the rising. But the legacy would be found in the War of Independence..."

If Connolly was "*devastated*" by the collapse of the Socialist International in the face of the declaration of war, he soon pulled himself together and aligned himself clearly with Germany: the War was Britain's "*War Upon The German Nation*", and Germany was where the workers were best placed as a class within the capitalist system. Horne could not bring himself to state either of these things in his summary of Connolly's position.

He rambles on in other parts of the article about Connolly and the Syndicalist myth, but does not relate this to the admiration of the German system that is lavishly expressed in the *Workers' Republic*. Surely that would have been to the point, in view of the fact that the distinctiveness of the capitalist system in Germany—which Connolly appreciated—survived defeat in the World War, and in Britain's next World War too, and is having to bear the burden of Europe today.

Connolly did not discuss "*Germany's*

*major role in the outbreak of the war*". True enough. He did not review the British diplomatic manoeuvres of late July and early August. He noted them from day to day and drew a conclusion from them. But Horne does not discuss them any more than Connolly did, even though his readers cannot be expected to be as familiar with them as Connolly's were. And Horne does not actually say that Germany caused the War—which was what the British Government and Opposition and Parliamentary Labour Party, and John Redmond, and the Congress of Victors at Versailles said. No doubt it doesn't need saying in Trinity, and if it doesn't need saying it is best not said. But Connolly's position on the War cannot be subjected to coherent criticism if it is not said plainly and disputed.

Horne gives no reference for his suggestion that Connolly advocated the maltreatment of prisoners of war. The unreferenced reference for the clear implication that the Republicans did so in 1921–21 is, no doubt, Peter Hart.

Horne, while obviously disagreeing with Connolly's view without saying what it was, does not himself give an explicit opinion about who caused the War, but he says what he thinks it was about—which is very much Not the same thing:

"In fact, the conflict was first and foremost about the consolidation and creation of nation-states in Europe, which helps to explain the passions that drove the war efforts in all the belligerent countries. Despite pre-war episodes of labour unrest... the longer-term trend in the more advanced industrial societies had been towards the integration of both trade unionism and socialists into national politics. This makes labour support for the war in 1914 less surprising in retrospect than it was to many at the time, including Connolly, who remained appalled that the 'socialist proletariat... in all belligerent countries'... had marched 'against their brothers'..."

The supposed fact that the War was for the creation and consolidation of nation-states produced a pro-War socialist reformism—

"that used the wartime "*sacrifice*" of the workers to demand a new national compact in which 'labour' and the socialist project would have pride of place. In Britain, Germany and even France, this new reformism proved more powerful than the radical alternative."

And "*war reformism... by 1918 had led the British Labour Party to its first socialist programme*".

I seem to recall that the Labour election

programme for 1918 was drawn up by Arthur Henderson, who in 1916 had killed Connolly for doing what he was urging Italians in the Austrian Empire to do—engage in treason against the Empire in the name of nationality.

Henderson was a member of the War Coalition. He had committed the Parliamentary Party to the War in 1914 in opposition to the Party Leader, Ramsay MacDonald.

Active participation by British Labour leaders in war for the Empire in 1914 did not come as a bolt from the blue. Some of the most influential Socialists became Imperialists a generation earlier when it was brought home to them that the standard of living of British workers, such as it was, depended on what the Empire brought to them. The most influential socialist writer, Blatchford, had been demanding an even bigger Navy for many years. And the Fabian Society had been Imperialist at least since the Boer War. Imperialism had become a popular ideology in England, and it was this awareness of the populace that it had an interest in the Empire that made the project of democratisation appear safe to the upper classes.

Horne's notion that the War was for the creation of nation states echoes Nicholas Mansergh, who said that the Austro-Hungarian Empire needed war to make its component nations into states, and yet, by convoluted argument, he held that Germany caused the War, and blamed it for it, even though it was necessary.

The cause of the War, as asserted by British and Redmondite propaganda in 1914, and by the Versailles Conference in 1919, and by British propaganda last year, is different in kind from developments that occurred because the world had been thrown into a condition of war.

Britain made the European War into a World War, in order to prevent Germany becoming a World Power like itself by developing a Navy capable of protecting the international trade on which, like Britain, it had become dependent, and in order to destroy the Ottoman Empire which Germany was helping to consolidate itself. Britain's first action in the War—begun even before the declaration of war—was to cut off Germany from the sea. And within weeks the Government was urging British capitalists to go and seize German markets.

Horne has a section on Empires, in which he tries to conjure them away. Britain in 1914 had no doubt about the reality of Imperialism. It went to war as the top dog Empire in order to consolidate

its dominance. It did not go to war in order to break up the Austrian Empire, which it only decided to do in 1917-18.

(Isn't it strange that the oppressed peoples of the Austrian Empire, about which British Imperial hearts bled, did not rebel, and that the only anti-Imperialist act of war committed during the War was by the Irish, whom Horne obviously thinks were not oppressed at all.)

Britain's World War got out of hand. Its outcome bears little resemblance to its cause. It did not go to war to make the USA the major creditor in the world and itself a bankrupt but for the USA, any more than it went to war in 1939 to bring Bolshevism to central Europe.

**Brendan Clifford**

To be continued

## Reserve Currencies

Valentin Katasonov has pointed out that Sterling improved its position as a world reserve currency after the Great War. The figures are as follows:

" in 1913 on the eve of WWI (%): the pound sterling - 47; the French franc - 30; the German mark - 16; the US Dollar - 2; other currencies - 5 (Officer, Lawrence H. *Between the Dollar-Sterling Gold Points: Exchange Rates, Parity, and Market Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)...

"In 1928, the world's foreign-exchange reserves were distributed as follows (%): the pound sterling - 77; the US dollar - 21; and the French franc - 2" (ibid).

"On the eve of World War I, America ... owed enormous foreign debts (primarily to Great Britain)." [After it] "the US became the largest net international creditor."

(See: *War And The Dollar* at: <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/01/21/war-and-the-dollar.html>)

(We are indebted to **Tim O'Sullivan** for bringing this to our attention.)

## "Ethnic Cleansing And Genocide In Eire

Report

### MORE FACTS ON THE FAMINE

	1841	1847	1848	1867
(a) Holdings not exceeding an acre	571,814	62,447	41,262	
(b) Farms from 1 to 5 acres	306,915	125,926	101,779	
(c) Farms from 5 to 15 acres	251,128	253,360	225,251	
(d) (a) + (b) + (c)	1,129,857	441,733	371,291	307,000
(e) Farms from 15 to 30 acres	78,954	150,999	146,725	
(f) Farms above 30 acres	48,312	137,147	140,817	
(g) (e) + (f)	127,266	288,146	287,542	300,000
(h) GRAND TOTAL (d) + (g)	1,257,123	729,879	658,334	607,000

(*Journal Of The Statistical Society* for various years)

Half of Ireland's rural households disappeared between 1841 and 1848. That means half of Ireland's total rural population. Those who vanished were poor, native Irish, Catholic, Irish-speaking and potato-eating. Many of those who survived, and indeed prospered, were well-off, settler-Irish. Protestant, English-speaking, and who enjoyed a more varied diet.

- 1) Poor native Irish people got into the habit of growing potatoes because that was the only crop that marauding English soldiers could not destroy.
- 2) Potato blight spread remarkably quickly from England to even the smallest and most remote farms in Ireland.
- 3.) England's vicious Gregory Clause of the 1847 Poor Relief (Ireland) Act deprived people who continued to hang on to their land of any form of public relief.

The Famine, or, more accurately, the Starvation, amounted to a deliberate combination of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

In his address to the Statistical Section of the British Association at Birmingham, in 1849 G.R. Porter said:

"It was ascertained, at the census of 1841, that, in Great Britain, 1000 persons engaged, as occupiers and labourers, in raising food, provided for the wants in that respect, of themselves and of 2,984 other persons, while in Ireland, the like number of persons, viz, 1000, so engaged provided for no more than 511 persons beyond themselves" (*Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 13 No. 1, February 1850, pp 25-29).

Simple arithmetic shows that the Famine pushed the 511 up to about 2,203 in 1848. Poor people producing food only for themselves were problems to be eliminated, like the Tasmanian and Australian aborigines and the native Americans.

Suggested further reading - "*The History and Social Influence of the Potato*", Redcliffe N. Salaman, Cambridge University Press, 1989."

Issued by England Branch of the Celtic League, 72 Compton Street, London, EC1V 0BN"

## Material For A Satire?

It is reported that the scriptwriter Hugh Travers has been commissioned to write a satire based on what is called the Famine. Satire in such a situation can only be amusing and effective if it is directed towards the perpetrators and the cause of such a catastrophe. It would be perverse and not amusing if directed towards the victims. For his background reading Mr. Travers might consider a contemporary American, non-Irish, non-Catholic view of the situation here during 'Famine'. It is: "*Ireland, as I Saw it: The Character, Condition, and Prospects of the People*" (1850. currently available on the Internet) by William Stevens Balch and we publish a short extract below. Balch (1806-1887) was an American Unitarian preacher who toured Ireland in 1848.

### MILLSTREET

"At Millstreet we stopped a few minutes, and most of the passengers took a lunch. A loaf of bread, the shell of half a cheese and a huge piece of cold baked beef were set upon the table in the dirty bar-room. Each went and cut for himself, filling mouth, hands and pockets as he chose. Those who took meat paid a shilling; for the bread and cheese, a sixpence. The Englishmen had their beer, the Irishmen their whiskey, the Americans cold water. Our party came out with hands full, but the host of wretches about the coach, who seemed to need it more than we, soon begged it all away from us,

and then besought us, "*Plase, sir, a ha'-penny, oond may God raward ye in heaven*". A woman lifted up her sick child, in which was barely the breath of life, muttering, "*Pray, yer honor, give me a mite for my poor childer, a single penny, oond may God save yer shoul*." Several deformed creatures stationed themselves along the street, and shouted after us in the most pitiful tones. Others ran beside the coach for half a mile, yelling in the most doleful manner for a "*ha'-penny*", promising us eternal life if we would but give them one.

We observed that the Englishmen gave nothing, but looked at them and spoke in the most contemptuous manner. We could not give to all, but our hearts bled for them. We may become more callous by a longer acquaintance with these scenes of destitution and misery; but at present the beauty of the Green Isle is greatly maimed, and our journey, at every advance, made painful by the sight of such an amount of degradation and suffering.

At one place, we saw a company of twenty or thirty men, women and children, hovering about the mouth of an old lime-kiln, to shelter themselves from the cold wind and rain. The driver pointed them out as a sample of what was common in these parts a year ago. As we approached, ascending a hill at a slow pace, about half of them came from the kiln, which stood in a pasture some rods from the road. Such lean specimens of humanity I never before thought the world could present. They were mere skeletons, wrapped up in the coarsest rags. Not one of them had on a decent garment. The legs and arms of some were entirely naked. Others had tattered rags dangling down to their knees and elbows. And patches of all sorts and colors made up what garments they had about their bodies. They stretched out their lean hands, fastened upon arms of skin and bone, turned their wan, ghastly faces, and sunken, lifeless eyes imploringly up to us, with feeble words of entreaty, which went to our deepest heart. The Englishmen made some cold remarks about their indolence and worthlessness, and gave them nothing.

I never regretted more sincerely my own poverty than in that hour. Such objects of complete destitution and misery; such countenances of dejection and woe I had not believed could be found on earth. Not a gleam of hope springing from their crushed spirits; the pangs of poverty gnawing at the very fountains of their life. All darkness, deep, settled gloom! Not a ray of light for them from any point of heaven or earth! Starvation, the most horrid of deaths, staring them full in the face, let them turn whither they will. The cold grave offering their only

relief, and that, perhaps, to be denied them, till picked up from the way-side, many days after death, by some stranger passing that way, who will feel compassion enough to cover up their mouldering bones with a few shovels-full of earth!

And this a christian country! a part of the great empire of Great Britain, on whose domain the "*sun never sets*", boastful of its enlightenment, its liberty, its humanity, its compassion for the poor slaves of our land, its lively interest in whatever civilizes, refines, and elevates mankind! Yet here in this beautiful Island, formed by nature with such superior advantages, more than a score of human beings, shivering under the walls of a lime-kiln, and actually starving to death!

Oh, England! in thy rush for greatness, thou hast forgotten to be good! Bedazzled with the glittering glory of thy armies and navies, thou hast neglected the sources of thy real strength! Giddy in admiration of the tinselled trappings in which thou hast bedecked thy queen, and her royal bantlings and nobility, thou hast become blind to the misery which lies festering in thy bosom. Stunned and hoarse with the shoutings of thy own praise, thou art deaf to the voice of justice, humanity, and religion, and sufferest thy own kinsmen to be wronged, insulted, cheated of the very sources of subsistence, and denied even the hope of redemption! What hast thou done—what art thou doing—for thy millions of true and loyal Irish subjects, whom thou hast subdued to thy authority! which is worthy a great and christian nation? Talk not longer of thy humanity, of thy religion, of thy concern for poor slaves, thy keen sense of justice and right, whilst so many are wronged, and wretched at home! The world will not believe thee sincere nor honest, but cold and heartless in thy pretensions, supremely selfish in the arrangement of thy public and domestic affairs, and anxious only to obtain a great name, without the trouble of deserving it!

But these Englishmen tell us "*England has exhausted her ability and patience in attempts to improve the condition of Ireland; that she can do no more; Irishmen are a miserable race, destitute of enterprise, industry, and economy; lazy, suspicious, ungrateful; hopelessly lost in their blind adherence to their old ways, and the superstitions of their religion*." Is it so? Can England conquer India, humble China, rule the sea, and regulate the commerce of the world, and not be able to devise and apply the means to improve the condition of so small a portion of her dominions as Ireland; to keep its inhabitants from beggary and starvation? Then are her statesmen destitute

of the higher qualities of real greatness—the knowledge and disposition to do good—"to deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God".

I have not yet seen enough of this country to form a safe opinion of the causes of the misery and degradation we meet at every step, nor to suggest a remedy; but so much wretchedness is not without a cause, for "the curse causeless shall not come". It seems strange to me that the philosophers, and statesmen, and priests of religion, and political economists, and financiers, of which England boasts a full and honorable share should not have found out some method to apply its vast resources of practical knowledge, and active capital, and boasted philanthropy, to prevent the ignorance, and crime, and suffering, which prevail so extensively in this region.

They tell us "*the famine, a visitation from God, which fell so severely upon this part of the Island, last year, was the principal cause of the misery we still see; the failure of the potato crop, upon which many thousand depended for their subsistence, prevented those in possession of little properties from meeting their rents and taxes, and supporting themselves!*" Indeed! That begins to let us into the secret. The rents and taxes must be paid to support landlords in ease and luxury, and the government in its ability to oppress this and other nations, even though wives and children perish of starvation! In default of payment the bailiff is directed to distrain and take from the poor tenant the last resource of life and comfort, and then evict him, and send him out penniless and ragged, to seek by beggary a chance to live, or a place to die.

The country, it is said, is overstocked with laborers, and there is no chance left for this new reinforcement, and so they are compelled to wander about with the hosts of idlers, about whose indolence landlords and Englishmen prate so much. They can find nothing to do, and so they do nothing but beg or steal—the former failing to support life, we could hardly find it in our hearts to blame them for the latter. Their condition is indeed deplorable. I never understood the depth of their miseries before. I shall hereafter feel more compassion for the poor, ignorant, suspicious Irish, than I have ever felt for those who seek an asylum in our blessed land. Instead of blame and reproach, they deserve the sincerest pity for their untoward fate. They have been reduced to a state of dejection and helplessness from which it is impossible for them to deliver themselves.

But these are only our initiatory lessons, and I will forbear any further reflections, till better informed concerning the causes of their pitiable condition. (19th May 1848)

(Contributed by Jack Lane)

## Thoughts About Theatre

As the author states in his preface:

"This book is based on a series of articles which I wrote twenty years ago for Joe Keenan's magazine, *The Heresiarch*, about Reformationist suppression of theatre in England, and the volcanic eruption of theatrical activity to become the universal medium of life in later generations.:

He then immediately starts with a quick look at the English Revolution of the 1640s (to be developed later in the book) and finds it wanting with its vague ideas of what should be done. He points out how a whole library of books and articles have been written about it, including the Marxist approach but how they have all averted their eyes from the abolition of the theatre.

Brendan Clifford goes on to mention Unity Theatre, a small leftist theatre positioned between Kings Cross and Mornington Crescent, London. He describes it as an amateur theatre but that is an image of cricket grounds and bowling greens with the mostly lower middle class finding something to do in the Winter evenings by engaging with their local drama league. What it was was a semi-professional dynamic theatre turning out a lot of talent with the help of caring seasoned actors, designers and directors from the mainstream London Theatre, most of whom were sick of the commercialisation they came from. You could walk off the street and be auditioned within an hour, and if suitable have a script trust into your hands and told to go away and learn the lines underlined in red. Others could be directed to building and painting the sets, while others became assistants to the Directors, and others with draughtsmanship talent would work on posters for the latest play.

I was very involved with Unity for a number of years. Though it could be called a socialist theatre, most of those there didn't seem interested in politics. The Management Committee did have the odd Labour supporter on it. They certainly knew of the illustrious past history of Unity Theatre: it started back in the early 1930s as an agit-prop theatre in the streets of the East End of London. It went on to invent the Living Newspaper which updated daily on stage the news of what

was happening during WW2 and, after that, what was going on with the Cold War.

Various Management Committees always knew what Unity wanted and needed and kept up the tradition of producing the works of radical playwrights and agitating on behalf of the International Brigade during its fight against fascism in the 1930s. For a few years it was fully-professional, full-time, theatre that toured England. Now in the Cold War things had changed dramatically. The theatre was boycotted by former wartime friends of the USSR and by the British media.

There were occasions when there were breakthroughs in the PR world when Jennie Lee, Arts Minister in the Wilson Government, made a visit. The media had to say something about that and Unity Theatre. On another occasion I contacted Siobhan McKenna and invited her to see a play of mine. It was a complete shot in the dark and I didn't think she would even take me under her notice but she must have read the script I sent her for she came with quite a well-dressed group of friends to this dilapidated cold theatre, with poor seating and outdoor toilets. She had already outraged the usually uninhibited English theatrical scene with her alcoholism and bi-sexual promiscuity and was now finding that work was drying up in England. They were scared of her and also objected to her Irish Nationalist attitude. But what a sharp, clever mind and what a fine actor. Successive Irish governments gave her back her dignity by including her in the Prime Minister's entourage when they used to go on trips to New York for St Patrick's Day. The Irish media gave Unity Theatre a good spread as a result of her visit.

Of course the CPGB did have control of Unity Theatre but they made very few decisions on policy or what should be produced. That was being done perfectly well by the MC who knew what Unity Theatre was for. No, what bothered the CPGB was the threat of a take-over by an ensemble already in the theatre, admittedly doing good work for Unity by their sharp analysis of everyday life in England and presenting it on stage in a cartoon manner. But they were becoming too ambitious and wanted the whole theatre to themselves which they felt could be made to bring in

more finance. The theatre was already receiving an annual subsidy from the London Borough of Camden plus we had a live-wire fund raiser who was extracting money from private donators and the Trade Union movement. Also involved in the attempted take-over was someone about to form a theatrical agency for actors whilst herself acting at the theatre. This person had acquaintances with a financial reach, so it was suspected that the ensemble, the would-be theatrical agent and her financial friends would, and were, making a bid to take over the MC, and eventually turn Unity into a West-End try-out theatre.

Being a member of the CPGB I was on the Cultural Committee, with special attention being paid to Unity Theatre. We met secretly with five other members and sat down to discuss this danger like a unit of the KGB. Surveillance tactics were discussed, infiltration tactics, security, meaning no reports to be conveyed by phone, no notes to written, memory aids to be practised and the importance of being socially accepted by your prey. It was decided I would infiltrate the ensemble group as I was active in the theatre while they weren't.

This meant meeting and discussing with some members the false idea that Unity needed bucking up in some way. After a number of weeks I was invited to a meeting in a private house where I met the plotters. After a series of meeting stretching over a few months I had all the information I required, and reported back to the Cultural Committee and gave my report. A general meeting in the theatre was arranged a week later and the plotters were named and denounced. They all left the theatre.

They saw Unity as the goose that kept laying the golden egg, and they were right. Lionel Bart had developed at Unity Theatre and had gone on to write a number of successful musicals which ran in the West End and were eventually made into films. Unity of course didn't approve of his commercial success and would have preferred he stayed and remained the political catalyst he had been for the Left, with his love of the Soviet Union. His parents were Russian Jews who had fled Russia under the Tsar and now approved of the Soviet Union for its protection of the Jews.

(Zionists at the time were saying that Jews weren't allowed out of the Soviet Union when the fact was no one without extra special permission was allowed out)

Also, a lot of actors made the big-time

after proving their talents at Unity, one of whom unashamedly eventually accepted a knighthood though he had been an devoted altar boy in the Irish community. Born in Dublin and reared in London, he later became an apprentice fitter. But he genuinely wasn't interested in politics of any kind and wasn't interested in Ireland, and England didn't mean much to him either. Now elderly he forgets his lines and collapses on stage through fright. He forgets about Unity Theatre which gave him his chance, like so many others who passed through its doors.

The contradictory fact is that until you make it in that hated commercial world you won't get the recognition from the keepers of that other world they dream about.

Admittedly the Cold War and its boycott of communists, and of those thought to be fellow travellers because they used what was seen as communist premises, did inhibit most of them. Unity was marked as it was recognised as a talent pool by communist Czechoslovakia and a number of Unity members received free study and training at drama schools there without being pressured by communist politics.. But, when they qualified and made their way in the UK market, they were not to acknowledge or have any gratitude towards their mentors nor to go back to Unity Theatre and share their knowledge. One of the biggest theatre directors in the UK today will even deny he studied in Prague. Even as a multi-millionaire and getting on in years, with little to lose, he will still not admit this. With a knighthood now he never will. Another former Unity member who received an education in theatre in Prague became a professor of theatre at an Australian University. This Irishman too keeps dark his true origins in theatre.

My name eventually leaked out and I could only think that somebody on the Cultural Committee had done it. I stuck to my guns for I knew I had done the right thing, and as time went on and I watched the antics of the would-be-hijackers I knew for sure I had done the right thing.

The ensemble did manage eventually to take over a well-know old historic theatre in Hackney but, instead of trying to make a brave-new-world, they indulged themselves mostly in a sort of very early Britain Has Talent for the stage. They somehow had this notion that the black community around them needed their help because they seemed culturally deprived. They didn't seem to realise that Hackney

then had two black pirate radio stations pouring out locally-composed music, poetry and monologues.

The ensemble tried to emulate Unity Theatre by letting people step off the street on to their stage but it was mostly a matter of poor singing and poor jokes with some of the participants having to be manhandled off stage when they thought their so-called talents weren't being appreciated. In order to make the manhandling of people off the stage into a comic act, a large pole was used with a hook at the end. Someone would stand out-of-sight at the edge of the stage and hook the person by the arm or by the leg to get them off. This was the kind of people who wanted to take over the historic Unity Theatre.

The other plotter formed her theatrical agency but could only attract supporting actors. By a coincidence, she had attended the Brighton University whose drama section had accepted a play of mine to be produced. On a visit down there looking for would-be actors she spun them some tale about me with the result they cancelled the production. But that was her limit for she had no influence in mainstream theatre which I eventually entered.

In the early hours of the 8th of November 1975 a fire broke out in the theatre. It took two hours for the Fire Service to put out the flames. By 6 am it was smouldering ruin.

The CPGB lost interest in Unity Theatre after that and the veterans of the theatre, disheartened, also lost interest. There was talk of re-building but it came to nothing. Unity Theatre then began to live again in rooms above pubs but the heart had gone out of it all. Those who would occasionally be allowed to do Old Time Music Hall at Unity now took over to do Old Time Music Hall forever but that couldn't revive Unity Theatre, so it died. There is a very good archive of Unity's history which can be seen on the Internet. .

The Cold War period was a pretty exciting time to be in Unity Theatre where you could express your true feelings about the world. In the meantime Harold Pinter was being obscurantist about the world around him. When asked about the meaning of his plays he would fly into a rage. Later in life he claimed his plays did mean more than he was letting on, but he didn't go on to explain but only to fly into that proverbial rage of his. He then wrote a couple of new ones about dictators in unnamed countries, which didn't do very

well in theatre land, and some very bad poetry about human and civil rights. I think he meant to write something different but the Cold War was the inhibitor. Now it was too late, with his health failing, and his wish to write something meaningful, the Nobel Prize for Literature proved not to be the magic bullet but the silver bullet.

Brendan puts out the notion that actors are: "*blank spaces waiting to be filled*".

Acting is like any profession, it needs to be learned. Some manage to get to drama school for a couple of years while others, like some of those appearing on the Unity Theatre stage, had natural talent that was then fine-tuned over a period of time.

I read an article once in which an American psychologist/sociologist put out a list of professions and trades and the reasons, in his opinion, for people choosing their jobs. One profession I remember vividly was the suggestion that a surgeon became a surgeon to prevent his murderous instincts for getting out of control. Firemen were just boys again urinating up a wall to drop a fly. And so on. What was missing was the question of why psychologist/sociologists became that.

Actors like the glamour and the social bearing of their work. Most work incredibly hard, sometimes learning hundreds of lines and appearing in a play for months on end giving maybe eight performances a week. .

This book is so rich in thought that it is difficult what to highlight for special attention.

Back in December, 2004 a Sikh playwright, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, had to flee her home after abduction and murder threats had been made against her from some members of the Sikh community in Birmingham. She had written a play—Behzti (dishonour)—showing rape and murder in a *gurdwara* (temple). The community felt it demeaned Sikhism. Elders initially asked the playwright to transfer the drama's setting to a community centre. Negotiations broke down after several weeks and the peaceful demonstrations outside the theatre, which had been able to only put on one performance, turned to violence. it was now too late for any compromise and Ms Bhatti become a hate figure and a haunted and hunted one.

Brendan sees this play as a vehicle to damage Sikh culture. I disagree. We don't know anything about Sikh culture and here was someone from inside of the Sikh

community wanting to explain something about it, but a highly conservative ghettoised community killed the project off with violence and the threat of rape and murder. But the main point for me was that was the end of risk in the English theatre. The Royal Court Theatre in London prides itself on being a writer's theatre. Their slogan used to be: '*The right to fail*'. Every production didn't have to high marks from the critics and then be transferred to the West End. A number of theatres in London looked at this play, including the National Theatre, but decided against a production. That was the end of risk and probably the end of original works by playwrights.

I liked the piece on Shakespeare. I agree with the author on his take on him—he says all his plays are set before the Reformation, thus avoiding comment on Elizabethan England, which was in the process of a brutal human engineering. A good account of this period is the autobiography: *The Haunted Priest*. by John Gerard, a Jesuit, educated on the Continent, and now back in England to comfort converts, living his sixteen years undercover. Shakespeare is hollow beside this human story.

If you are yourself writing for the theatre you can't always knock other playwrights, even those from the past, it looks like envy. A good account is given of the difference between Shakespeare and Moliere, and why Moliere is true theatre but Shakespeare takes the world as his stage.

It is interesting how little realistic analytic work there is on Shakespeare. This lack is often put down to patriotism. Some reviewers will deal with the violence in most of his plays but I have read none which asks the question if this could be a reflection on Elizabethan England. England is still too caught up IN the Reformation and Elizabeth to make any such judgement. Some write that Shakespeare has said all there is to be said on the human condition, other say he was a secret Catholic and that some of his work reflects this in his criticism of oppression. (I would have thought he gloried in it)

I can't claim to be a great Shakespeare scholar, fortunately, but I have failed to see any supposed Catholicism in his work. Brendan Behan once said that Shakespeare was a Catholic and left it at that, possibly with a nod and a wink. Until I read this book I have never seen Shakespeare put so bluntly. I may be going down too low

here but Shakespeare and his avoidance of commenting on his times is much like writing the English soap *Eastenders* while the Israelis bomb Gaza.

Oddly enough it is through the ability to perform at breakneck speech (to let the audience catch the last buses and trains in London) that some actors gain their knighthoods. I can think of one Belfast-born actor who happened to be acting out Richard the Third and who caught the eye of Prince Charles for the delivery of his war-like speeches. England, being constantly at war with someone, does require some blood-raising harangues at times to get justify their murderous actions. The said actor eventually gained his knighthood.

Most Shakespeare plays would normally take five to six hours to deliver at a leisurely pace, but Laurence Olivier managed to squeeze these lengthy plays into three hours. For a time he was satirised by some comedians but he still ended up in the House of Lords.

The book goes into *Playboy of the Western World* by J.M. Synge. I have read the author's comments on Synge before. I will admit that the speeches in the play by some of the characters made me feel embarrassed. I put it down to the Irish language not translating too well into English. I think the crux of the play is around Christy's supposed killing of his father and the adoration he gets especially from the females. That reminds me of some of those women who write to murderers, and even serial-killers in the prisons of the UK and the USA, sometimes even marrying them. Could there be something in the female psyche that we are unaware of, though most murders are carried out by men while serial-killers are very rare indeed among women. That is what fascinates me about *Playboy*.

There are good revelations about some members of the Synge family, especially about his brother Edward, the land agent and his brutal evictions, and the attitudes of J.M himself and his wife to the growing Nationalism of Ireland. Of course that would make you wonder about his work but such writers as Samuel Butler, in his novel *The Way of all Flesh*, cannot, despite his own reactionary outlook, approve of the terrible plight of the people of rural England in their poverty. It makes him wish for the French Revolution to descend on the country.

Generally I find in all of Synge's play something of an insight that probably

propelled his work more than the dialogue. In *The Tinker's Wedding* it is the tinkers who don't give a tinker's curse for the priest. But when the priest shouts at them in Latin they flee.

I remember watching *Riders to the Sea* on Television with English relations and feeling embarrassed again by the florid dialogue but they were struck by the terrible fatalism of the play when Maurya, speaks of her drowned menfolk:

"They're all gone now, and there isn't anymore the sea can do to me..."

That agony of the heart can be applied to so much in contemporary life.

If the word '*shift*' can shift an audience from their seats on the 26th of January, 1907, then it's not an audience I would care to among. Though claiming to be Nationalist, I would think they were the up and coming middle-class, feigning respectability, and going on after the War of Independence to settle in the best parts of Dublin to ape their betters the English middle-class but in a manner fifty years behind the times.

I don't think they were protesting on behalf of the people of the West but more saying that is not us, yes, we are Irish but not of that kind. Rural Ireland has been castigated over a long period of time by the urban dwellers of all classes.

Finally, I would like to deal as best as I can with English contemporary theatre. It certainly has changed since I was active in it, or allowed to be active in it. It is now more than ever market-consumerist orientated. Private companies have seen fit to put money into government-subsidised companies like Jerwood, based in the money-laundering Liechtenstein, claiming to be a philanthropic charity and who put 75 millions into the UK arts since the 1990s. They open portrait galleries in various seaside towns. An important London theatre has been in receipt of millions for the refurbishment of its premises and the building of an underground restaurant. This historic theatre has had to be marketed as a Jerwood theatre now. It has been said they will even demand to see the play-scripts before they are produced. It is hard to understand why they are putting so much money into the UK arts if not to exert control on behalf of the Establishment.

There is always a great suspicion over all playscripts arriving at a theatre, and even more suspicion when it is decided a

play will be produced. The playwright is sometimes asked specifically what the character intends doing when the play is over, as if a fictitious character becomes a real person when they leave the theatre and could be up to something. So you get the feeling you are in a straitjacket and that contemporary English theatre is under tight control by all sorts of government agencies.

A character in a play of mine has become disenchanted with the social life and sectarianism of Northern Ireland and with armed British troops patrolling the street. At the end of the play the character is about to leave home. He promises his mother he will be back. What the artistic director of the theatre wants to know is does the young man go off and join the Provincial IRA, though he doesn't say those words but merely hints, using words like 'hothead' or this 'disaffected youth' and the answer this artistic director gets from me is that the young man is about out go to England and try life there. That was my intention for this young man and most of the enquirers seem satisfied, but with a couple not satisfied at all and wanting the production cancelled. The majority won.

Generally now contemporary English theatre is consumer-orientated, as I have already said, but even more so now. I know it is no good writing a play an audience might hate, as theatre is still a bourgeois thing but a couple of playwrights seem to have sewn up what the English liberal-Imperialist middle-class likes to hear, and to hear over and over again, which brought one of them a knighthood from the Blair Government. For many years he had been on the life-support machine of the National Theatre and been attended to by a Director who had also gone to Cambridge. On getting his knighthood he asks not to be addressed as Sir D.

But all is not well with him spiritually for he knows he is a fraud. He was once an admirer of Maoist China and wrote a play praising that country. He also wrote a number of sketches on the Irish situation. In one a Northern Irishman is confronting an English audience with some truisms about the recent outbreak of war in N.I. The audience sit glumly, not listening to this image of an Irishman his audience doesn't want to see. The Irish actor has another look at his career and is reborn as a stage-Irishman. This delights his audience as he has re-created himself in the image of an Irishman they can now listen to and applaud.

One last more sinister note: A leading

Unpublished letter to Irish Times

## Voltaire?

Dr. John Doherty (Irish Times 17th January 2015) quotes Voltaire "*to learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticise*". I guess so that means we are ruled over by The Fourth Estate.

Nick Folley

Letter not published by Irish Times, 12th January 2015,  
but published in Irish Examiner

## Haughey was not one-dimensional comic figure that Charlie portrays

The RTE drama, *Charlie*, was entertaining, if more Callan's Kicks than history. Despite its portrayal of Mr Haughey as venal, shallow and one-dimensional, many of the incidents seem based on truth.

It stylised Mr Haughey's 1979 meeting with Helmut Schmidt, at which the German Chancellor told how his annual meeting with Union leaders to agree wage and economic policy was "*the most important date in his calendar*". It portrayed—in rather comic-opera fashion—Mr Haughey's subsequent meeting with Irish Union leaders. The source for this, I presume, is a paper Haughey wrote—or dictated, as he was too ill to write—some months before his death. He always regarded Social Partnership, along with redirecting policy on the North, as his "*greatest achievement*". For research I am undertaking at DCU, I acquired a copy of that Haughey paper.

I also checked the State Papers for 1979 and these, indeed, confirm the centrality of State-Union relations during that meeting with Mr Schmidt. But Mr Haughey was no simple opportunist, and had always been interested in this question.

Union leaders, such as John Carroll and Charles McCarthy, as well as 'back-room' Union strategists, like Manus O'Riordan, had themselves been urging such a direction for Irish Trade Unionism for some time. It should be remembered that in the 1970s Ireland lost more days in strikes—mostly unofficial—than any European country, apart from Italy, and even more than Britain during the 1978-9 '*winter of discontent*'. But it was Mr. Haughey's reading of the Schmidt formula of 1979 that became the basis of the National Understandings of 1980-2, and the 1987 Social Partnership '*Programme for National Recovery*' that was to transform this country.

The drama portrays Mr Haughey's relationship with his constituents in crude terms. The 'stories' are not untrue: for example, his distribution of hams to needy families at Christmas. I lived for many years in that area; at the time, I was a political opponent of Mr Haughey. But he was never other than a gentleman in his dealings with local people. During his time, Fianna Fáil had members on every street and a web of *cummain* throughout the area. These were mostly fine, committed people, at the heart of the many wonderful, local community, sport and self-help organisations that characterized working-class Dublin. Working-class life was dignified by this community life and was far from the supplicant existence portrayed by RTE.

Philip O'Connor

member of the National Theatre recently asked MI5 if it was all right to produce a play which they liked, and which had recently come into the theatre for consideration. I don't know what the play was about or if it was by a Muslim. The fact is theatre is a small world and there are constant checks, and information is shared about actors, directors and playwrights.

In the past I discovered, through his obituary, that an artistic director of a certain theatre had previously served in

Military Intelligence. That may not have mattered but he was a bit goading when I was on a delegation from the now defunct Theatre Writer's Union asking for an upping of the fees. He used the word *provisional* quite a lot in a sneering sort of way whenever I was giving a case for the Union. As for Irish theatre North and South, it's no better if you have something real to say about society outside the propaganda machine.

Wilson John Haire  
24th August, 2014

Does  
It  
Up

Stack  
?

#### IRISH WATER

This present Government in Ireland must be the most politically inept Government ever in the State. And that is a considerable achievement—we have had some bad Governments. This Government appears to think that, just because it has a majority in the Dáil, it can do what it likes with the country. The Government has been arrogant from its formation. Even the Fine Gael and Labour backbenchers are treated as mere voting pawns and the citizen—taxpayers—are outraged at the reports of mismanagement, lies and greed which are regularly being exposed in the media.

The protest marchers are targeting 'Irish Water' for very good reasons: but it is not just the Irish Water business which is motivating the protesters but the whole attitude of this Government in withdrawing support from the disabled and the elderly to make miserly savings while allowing culpable regulators to resign on princely lump sums and pensions, allowing Irish Water executives to be paid massive bonuses before they had done anything about water problems, and employing 4,000 people when 2,000 may be more than enough.

Setting up 'Irish Water' was a cosy deal done behind closed doors and behind the taxpayers' backs between the Cabinet, the Trade Unions, top Civil Servants and the Local Authority public servants. And, it is thought, a secret deal has been done with private capitalists who will take over the whole of 'Irish Water' later when it has been packaged suitably. There is a strong smell of big-scale corruption from it all. There are not many votes in all of this for the Government and so if there are not votes, what is there? Altruism? It just does not stack up.

And now we have 'another leak' from a source in the Cabinet "that the Government would not be able to continue in office if the Eurostat Agency rules in April that the utility—Irish Water—is not financially independent. Why Eurostat is the ruling body is not being explained and nor is the delay on ruling until next April. But it seems Irish Water may not pass the so-called Market Corporation Test because it is not independent of the Government and

also because of the political interference in Irish Water's charging policy. We have known since this political football was thrown into play that waterworks and waste disposal were going to cost a lot of borrowed money and that the borrowing was planned so as to be off the Government's balance sheet. That is, a figleaf was to be invented to pretend that the Government did not borrow the money.

Now, charges are to be frozen, and at a lower level, until 2018 and so Irish Water will not be independently viable and will not be self-funding for the foreseeable future.

In short, the football is going flat and a lot of own-goals have been scored by Fine Gael and Labour and all quite unnecessarily. What should have been done was not done and that was to stop, one by one the leaks of the 40% of treated water which is being leaked from pipes which are the property of Local Authorities. But that would have been too mundane and too commonplace and also perhaps there was no money for the elite in that solution.

In the meantime, Ervia owns Irish Water and it seems billions of Euros are being shuttled back and forth depending on the levels of protests and reductions. They, whoever they are, are playing with our money. We the taxpayers are paying for all until the political rules are changed and it looks like change will not happen until the people protest enough as is happening in Greece through the ballot box.

#### EQUALITY, LIBERTY AND FRATERNITY

This is the motto under which the French Revolution changed the system of Government in France from being a Monarchy to being a Republic. However, the three *desiderata* are sadly lacking in Paris where Muslims are discriminated against on a daily basis and where 'Charlie Hebdo', the satirical magazine was lauded for its pictures caricaturing the Prophet Mohammed in the vilest way, which inevitably drew down a savage response from a repressed people who had been asking since 2006 for the attacks to stop. But the journalists in 'Charlie Hebdo', by behaving like the most awful adolescents doling out school-yard taunts, bullying a minority religion were feted by the elite for their "daring satire" and so they continued their *crusade* until they finally met their fateful end. And even now those left behind insist on their *right to free speech* and so continue kicking the enemy—who let's face it, wink wink—can't get the joke because they are a bit thick and slow on the uptake, somewhat like the Irish in those infamous 18th-19th century 'Punch' cartoons.

The only journalist fired from this oh-so-cool/hip magazine was a luckless soul whose work hinted at anti-Semitism in 2011 and he was out the door in record time. And yet no-one raised the *right to free speech* back then, so therefore we can deduce from that that only certain people could get the verbal/visual kicks like—well the Muslims—and that was just fine and we could all wear our 'Je suis Charlie' badges to illustrate how marvellously liberal and tolerant we were.

Perhaps the worst of this kind of carpet-bagging was the so-called irony-free 'march of unity', launched by the French President Hollande—where the front line of marchers were the most nauseating hypocritical bunch of politicians that were gathered together in a very long time, including our very own Taoiseach Enda Kenny, TD. 'Private Eye' in its front page (No. 1384, 23rd January—5th February 2015) caught the perfect headline, in my opinion:

#### World Leaders March For Free Speech. 'Je Suis Charlatan'!

And, of course, where would we be without our Hollywood friends gathering for the Annual Golden Globes in Beverly Hills, resplendent in their designer gowns and jewels, with Dame Helen Mirren and her 'Je suis Charlie' brooch in the form of a pen, George and Amal Clooney with their stickers, and other freedom lovers hoping the camera would catch their sign slogans—which duly happened. Isn't it a pity that these people couldn't find it in their hearts to give a shout-out to poor gay American whistle-blower Pte. Manning when, behind closed doors, he was court martialled and given 30 years in a special security military gaol and whose freedom of speech hasn't been spoken about since.

Indeed, back in France, whose policies are returning more and more to those of the colonial era, as they strike out in Mali, Syria and you name it—the French are there fomenting terror and killing just like back in the good old days. Those killed in Paris were always going to come from the blow-back when it came and of course deserve our sympathy but why not have demonstrations also for those hundreds of thousands of men/women/children killed by the West in all those theatres of war. Is it really as basic as Equality, Liberty and Fraternity for some but not for *certain others*?

And why on earth did our Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD jump on the Government jet to Paris to take part in the 'Charlie Hebdo' sympathy walk? Does the Taoi-



search support the sort of racist journalism by which 'Charlie Hebdo' attempts to boost its circulation? Or did he go because Ireland has troops (8) now serving in Mali under UK officers?

**EQUALITY AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

Nobody I have conversed with has managed to define "equality" in this context. I suggest that equality does not come into it at all. Equal to what? A man getting married to another man is not equal to a man and a woman getting married to each other. Nor are a man and woman getting married to each other equal to two women getting married to each other. I cannot see where equality comes into it at all. Men and women are different from each other; they are not the same gender. They are not the same. No more than an orange is equal to an apple. As far back as human recorded history goes, it has been recognised and accepted that marriage was and is a societal institution between woman and man for the purpose of begetting and rearing children and providing a stable (mostly) unit as a basis of human society.

There have been societies which valued homosexual relationships, as in classical Greece where it was a mentoring system, or tolerated *sub-rosa* in Public Schools in the UK as the fagging system. But nowhere ever was homosexual marriage considered to be legal.

The Roman Emperor Caligula wanted to be married to his horse but everyone considered him to be completely mad. There have always been prohibitions against certain people marrying each other, such as fathers and mothers are banned from marrying their offspring, no matter how fond of each other they may be. A person is not permitted to marry a widowed brother-in-law or sister-in-law. All of these rules are there for the security and safety of society.

Another very big question is Article 41.3 of the Constitution of Ireland which states:

"The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack".

And Article 41.1 states:

"The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society and as a moral institution..." and "The State therefore guarantees to protect the Family ..."

The Constitution therefore seems to prohibit the State from doing anything other than protecting the "Family" and "Marriage", in the sense that these words

had when the Constitution was adopted in 1937.

**DAN HARVEY**

In '*Peacekeepers: Irish Soldiers in the Lebanon*. (2001), Dan Harvey describes a face-off between an Irish battalion and an Israeli army convoy accompanying local militia leaders who were travelling towards a checkpoint at high speed:

"27th April 1985.

... Despite the fact that we were clearly visible in the centre of the road, the driver of the M113 paid no attention to my upraised hand and did not slow his pace. Not to move would be madness, yet to do so would somehow be a defeat. This was not grand-standing for the sake of those newly arrived, but an expression which gave effect to the principle of minimum force—a microcosm of the entire peacekeeping effort—by literally standing up to intimidation.

Options were being lost by the second. It was fast approaching commitment point, that threshold when the driver of the lead vehicle would either have to slow or be unable to slow in time to avoid us. But there was no sign of deceleration. It was a matter of wills and a matter of pride.

Soldiers are human, and on the front page of my local newspaper at home, with the headline 'Peacekeeper flattened' flashed into my mind and curiously fortified my faltering courage as an idea struck me.

'We're moving,' I said.

'We're not, Sir', came Sergeant Paddy's reply. 'At least not backwards, or sideways—but forward. He won't be expecting that.'

He smiled a satisfied smile and together, we took three paces forward.

It was the last thing the driver expected, and his sheer reflex reaction brought the M113 to a sudden, jerky halt, causing it to veer sideways amid a cloud of dirt, dust and debris. We were almost deafened, not by the noise of the skid but by the cheers of the platoon members, both new and old. It was a chastening experience but we'd won. At least it was a kind of victory in a typical cat and mouse situation, playing out a deeper conflict and testing our level of resolve. It was important to remind them of the fact."

(From: '*Lord of the Files: Working for the Government. An Anthology*'. Ed. by Michael Mulreany and Denis O'Brien. IPA. (Institute of Public Administration) 2011. Dublin.

**Michael Stack ©**

**Gregg's Irish Shorthand!**

Readers might be interested in the advertisement on the end page of the 1930 edition of the *Gregg Shorthand Manual*. It reads:

"Adaptations of Gregg Shorthand To ..... French....Russian... Spanish...Italian...Irish: Luathscribhinn Gregg. By Kathleen Cruise O'Brien, M.A. 93 + vii pages, full cloth. 5s. net."

The English version of the Manual gives shorthand outlines for major towns and cities in Northern Ireland and Eire—carefully distinguished. Kathleen must be the mother of Conor C. O'B!

*Le gach dea-ghui. Agus go mbeannai Dia dhuit agus a mhathair naofa!*


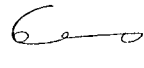
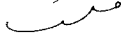


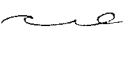





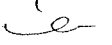
**Niall Cusack**

**Irish.**


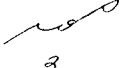



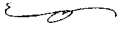



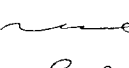



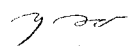
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**NORTHERN IRELAND**

Belfast		Ballymena	
Londonderry		Armagh	
Lisburn		Coleraine	
Lurgan		Enniskillen	
Newry		Banbridge	
Portadown		Larne	

**EIRE**

Dublin		Drogheda	
Waterford		Wexford	
Cork		Sligo	
Limerick		Kilkenny	
{Dun Laoghaire }Kingstown		Clonmel	
Galway		Tralee	
Dundalk		{Cobh }Queenstown	

## CO-OPs continued

system by gradually working back to the Middle-Age conception of industry, in which practically every worker would be a capitalist and labourer at the same time? Or ought private ownership to be abolished entirely, and an experiment be made with collective ownership?... The former alternative if favoured not only by Catholics, who have definite ethical considerations to guide them, but also by a large body of non-Catholic social reformers. No one wants to revert to the industrial conditions of the Middle Ages. That would be obviously an absurd policy in view of the developments of science and machinery. What is aimed at is to bring our present industrial system into line with the more humane conception of industry, which obtained in those days. With this end in view social reformers have from time to time put forward various more or less tentative schemes, such as cooperation, co-partnership and profit-sharing.

"Cooperation would bind together in groups the small capitalists, that is the men who are at once the owners and workers of their business, and would thereby give them the economic advantages enjoyed by the large unit of capital. The system has been adopted with great success in the case of agriculture, and the consumers' cooperative stores. *Co-partnership* is meant to apply chiefly to great industrial concerns, in which the development of machinery and the specialisation of functions have rendered it necessary for great numbers of workers to cooperate in the manufacture of specific articles. The idea is to give all such workers a share in the capital and profits of the concern, so that the worker will no longer be a mere wage-earner, but will have a personal interest in the success of the business.

"The second alternative, that of collective ownership, is proposed by Socialism and a number of other more or less extreme policies which have developed from Socialism... The ideal of every collectivist policy is a social organisation, in which there will be but one owner, the Community, and in which every citizen will be merely a wage-earner. The ideal of the Catholic social reformer on the other hand is an equitable distribution of wealth in a community in which every labourer will be owner, or at least part-owner of the business in which he works" (6).

### CHRISTIAN GUILD SYSTEM

The aim, then, of an ideal Christian Guild system, applied to our modern economic developments, is to enable every man, as far as possible, to be an owner of productive property, not by a meaningless collectivism under a Socialist bureaucracy,

but by a strictly private ownership, such as every individual Guildsman enjoyed in the Middle Ages, and every apprentice and journeyman could reasonably hope to acquire in his own good time. In this way alone can society be stabilised and rendered immune from revolution and social unrest. Vastly significant is the fact that the only organisations that were able successfully to withstand all the forces of Bolshevism, were the Russian cooperative societies. They had been big enough to provision the great armies after the corrupt Czarist Government had ceased to function, says the *New York Evening Post*, and they were not to be shaken by even a Bolshevik revolution. So too the *Weekly Freeman* reports the remarks of the Rev. T.A. Finlay S.J., at the annual meeting of the cooperative Irish Agricultural Organisation Society:

"It was a remarkable thing that even in Russia, where revolution seemed to have broken into the wildest orgies, the Co-operative Society had held its own and seemed to be increasing daily in favour. Cooperative societies have been favoured by all the Governments that had succeeded one another in that disturbed country."

The Guild idea reached its most perfect modern expression, so far attained, in the cooperative productive societies. It shall be the purpose of another chapter to outline the future of society were this ideal still more fully and more adequately realised.

Attention may here be called to the wide system of socialisation, combined with private productive ownership, carried out by the farmers of North Dakota. Thus Bill No. 20 declared the purpose of the State of North Dakota to engage in the business of manufacturing and marketing farm products and to establish a warehouse, elevator and flour-mill system. To make State institutions independent of private capital, the State engaged in the banking business, without however closing the private banks. There was also a State insurance department and a State home-building association established. All these laws were passed in January and February, 1919.

The principle itself of private productive ownership was not attacked, but the purpose rather was to safeguard it for the farmers by socialising certain institutions where cooperation had been employed in other countries. It all helps to make plain the trend of the times: collectivism or cooperation. We do not object to a limited State ownership, provided it does not exceed the demands of the public good;

but we oppose the principles of Socialist collectivism and favour cooperation.

(To be continued)

1. *The Carpenter*. U.S.A. It must be understood that the productive enterprises themselves, enumerated above, were not ordinarily conducted cooperatively. Thus the various factories were still usually operated on the wage-system.
2. *Central-Blatt and Social Justice*, November, 1918, p.239.
3. March, 1919, p.82.
4. "The Cooperative International," April 5, 1919.
5. *Ibid.*
6. W. Moran, April, 1919.

## YOU ARE ALWAYS ON MY MIND

Life is just one big military highway  
when looking down the tarmac,  
for somewhere down there Maggie loved  
Pinochet  
as Bobby Sands died on the rack.  
Looking further on it becomes  
muddy,  
giant rats, gaseous bodies, human and  
horse,  
shell-holes, road clogged,  
waiting for help from their USA  
buddies.  
It's the WW1 show again with the media  
patriotically blogged.  
Fuck me! Here comes Gallipoli  
with its 200,000 casualties,  
cholera, gangrene, feral dogs gorging,  
25th May, 1915 – 9th January, 1916,  
remember those dates. Bitterly?  
No no! Keenly,  
celebrate it like Lloyd George.  
Hurry, it's 1916 and eggs splatter the  
road,  
smashed-in Easter eggs.  
All the King's men put things together  
again  
with a government off-the-peg?  
Quickly! The binoculars!  
Can that be King Billy on a bike!  
Though still jocular  
he's got a puncture caused by a  
pike.  
End this road right here at the sign  
saying crime-scene  
where so many were once alive.  
Lessons could still be learnt  
before pay-back-time  
and European cities are burnt.  
Nations who export *peace* and *democracy*  
also import their own decline.

Wilson John Haire  
29 December 2014

## CO-OPs continued

binding themselves to buy or sell to their own cooperatives only for a definite number of years in order to overcome the competition of capitalist rivals who for the first year might offer their goods at a lower rate than the cooperative in order to withdraw the men from their own undertakings, and later raise the prices at their own pleasure. In the meantime the farmers could fairly judge whether their cooperative was sound and safe. (2) Hence the great success of the Danish cooperative movement. Cooperative trading has proved successful in small countries and large, in Finland and Russia.

The question of cooperation has been sufficiently dealt with by the present writer in previous studies gathered together in *"The World Problems"*. It is further developed here to show the possibility of applying the Guild idea on a scale commensurate with our modern civilisation. From the above illustration we can perhaps surmise what may yet be accomplished in the more difficult field of cooperative production as well as in the highly successful trading and banking enterprises of the workingmen. The latter are an education for labour. This the Catholic Bishops of the United States pointed out in their *"Social Reconstruction"*, January, 1919, as also the American Federation of Labor in its own *"Reconstruction Program"*. The following passages express the Federation's hearty endorsement of consumers' cooperative societies:

"There is almost limitless field for the consumers in which to establish cooperative buying and selling and in this necessary development the trade unionists should take an immediate and active part... Participation in these cooperative agencies must of necessity prepare the mass of the people to participate more effectively in the solution of the industrial, commercial, social and political problems which continually arise.

"With the American National Cooperative Convention, held at Springfield, Illinois, September, 1918, the United States may be said to have definitely entered upon the new era of cooperation, as the last of the great world Powers to realise the importance of this movement. Best of all, it was a workingman's convention, in which the speeches and discussions were by workingmen mainly. Its purpose was "the formation of a national cooperative wholesale house as a medium of supply to upward of 1,000 retail cooperatives in the United States". By this wider cooperation the various

stores hoped more effectively to overcome the competition of wholesalers and jobbers. The comprehensive plans of the American workingmen were thus outlined at the time in the Catholic Charities Review:

"This will supply the special abilities of the best men of each group—men qualified for organising being placed in one group, financial men in another, expert accountants in another, and shrewd buyers in others—who will give the seven groups concerned the immediate benefit of their collective experience. The organisation will finally resemble that of labor unions, which are formed into State federations, with national and international bodies above them. Owned from below and managed democratically from below, the warehouses supervised by the national organisation will ultimately be erected in every important centre of the country" (3).

In these now historic events we behold a true Guild idea applied and carried out, as it should be, on a broad democratic basis. Shares were usually placed at the reasonable valuation of from \$5 to \$25, within the easy reach of every workingman. The more a family buys the more is the money returned to it in *"dividends"*, but really as savings. It is a movement away from Socialism and back to the Guilds with their sound tenet of wide private ownership and management by the workers in place of ownership and management by a communistic state. It is our first Guild lesson.

The very beginnings of this movement remind us of the origin of the mediaeval Craft Guilds which in their early struggle effectively ended the capitalistic system of their day. It was the cradle exploit of a youthful Hercules whose labours were to be devoted to the good of mankind. *"The cooperative movement, as we know it today"*, wrote Lewis S. Gannett in the *Survey*, *"began with more or less spontaneity among small groups of weavers, mechanics, peasants, here and there, in Ireland, Russia, Denmark, France, England, and Germany—almost everywhere except in America"*. (4) When it finally arose in America, it began in exactly the same manner. The Church at once welcomed this movement and took it into her arms. Her priests, like their predecessors a thousand years before, not merely encouraged it but gave to it their hearty support. Everywhere cooperative credit banks, in particular, were started for the rural populations by the parish priests. Even in distant India we find them successfully controlling or inspiring the cooperative trading and credit movement

among the natives. A large and interesting volume could be written showing the active interest taken by the Catholic Church in the system of cooperation.

### SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE?

It is not a revolutionary movement, in the Socialist and Bolshevik sense, but a gradual and far more lasting transformation of society and of the entire economic order, without violence or injustice, provided the common good and the Gospel teachings are not lost to sight.

*"While the Socialists have been talking State ownership, and then, once having control of the states, have become afraid of the thing they preached"*, says the writer just quoted, *"the cooperatives have, relatively unnoticed, been building up a form of industry which, more peacefully but no less certainly, challenges the pre-war irresponsible capitalist system of production"* (5).

To this system we all are opposed and the Socialist vote has to a great extent implied no more than a protest against it. So far all can heartily agree. But men have failed to see the equally pernicious principles of the Socialist movement and the dangerous power given by it into the hands of men who are opposed alike to religion and to Christian morality, while their communistic dreams can only prove economically ruinous in the end. What men really desire is the solution offered by a Christian system of cooperation. Unfortunately cooperatives are constantly confused with Socialists by careless journalists, and even Bishop Ketteler and Pope Leo XIII, as well as the first Christians in the Apostolic Church, have been called Socialists.

The word itself is perfectly innocent, and we might willingly claim it for ourselves, if its root-meaning were alone to be considered. But words often lose their primitive significance and gather about them a variety of associations in which they are clothed. Hence the wise insistence of Pope Pius X that the Christian popular movement be known as *Christian Democracy* and not as *Social Democracy*. There is an essential difference between the two. The former acknowledges all just rights of property, and seeks to bring about, not the abolition of private ownership in the means of production, but its widest distribution. The case has been clearly stated by a writer in the *Irish Theological Quarterly*. He asks:

"Ought we try to remedy our present

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**LABOUR**

# Comment

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MONDRAGON 38

## The Triumph of Workingmen's Cooperatives (1919)

(Joseph Husslein, SJ, PhD, *Democratic Industry, A Practical Study in Social History*, New York, P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1919).

The basis of all true social reconstruction is the Guild concept. The ideal social order will be that which most perfectly applies it. The mediaeval Guilds continued in their usefulness for many centuries. There is no reason why a new Guild development, as perfectly adapted to our own times, should not continue in existence for as many centuries to come, stabilising our economic conditions, ending class-conflict and securing social peace and welfare. Minor adjustments can readily be made with changing circumstances, as the old Guildsmen constantly adapted their sane and approved principles, based on the Gospel and the natural law, to the newly arising needs of the day.

Lest it be imagined that we are here dealing with empty illusions, it may be well to begin by showing how the Guild idea is already practically and successfully applied in what may be called the Merchant Guilds of our day {1919}. Like the mediaeval English Guilds of that name, they are not the outgrowth of high finance, but the achievements of simple workingmen. The economic Guild idea, as conceived in its perfection, is a movement of the workingmen, by the workingmen, for their own and the common good, understanding by "*workingmen*" all those who labour either with hand or brain, provided their purpose is not the amassing of their own individual profits. They must seek the common good no less than their own advantages.

### ROCHDALE PIONEERS

It was in 1844 that twenty-eight poor weavers organised in England a cooperative store, dealing in four commodities only, the *Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society*. The movement prospered with

never a failure or a single lean year. Within three quarters of a century it embraced one-third of the total population of Great Britain and annually distributed to its members commodities amounting in worth to \$1,000,000,000. Its profits were then \$100,000,000 a year, of which \$65,000,000 were returned in dividends to the members, the remaining portion being used for interest on capital or for education, propaganda and welfare purposes. Dividends represented the worker's savings on his purchases which had been made at market prices.

The full meaning of its "*dividends*" to the workingman will be made clear when it is stated in concrete terms that they ordinarily amounted to a sum large enough to pay the entire rent bill for the enrolled labourer and his family. Membership, therefore, in a cooperative trading society was equivalent for him, to the free gift of a home. Surely no small consideration.

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The figures here quoted are offered on the authority of Mr. James P. Warbasse, President of the Cooperative League for America in 1919, who thus describes the state of the Cooperative British Wholesale Society at the close of the war:

"The British Wholesale Society supplies 1,200 societies. It owns its own steamships. It has fourteen great warehouses. It gives lavishly of its great resources towards welfare work. It is the largest purchaser of Canadian wheat in the world. Its eight flour mills are the largest in Great Britain. These mills produce thirty-five tons of flour every hour for the people who own the mills. The cooperators of Glasgow own the largest bakery in the world. The British Cooperative Wholesale Society owns sixty-five factories. Their soap works make 500 tons of soap a week. They produce 5,000,000 pairs of boots annually. They conduct three great printing plants. Their 24,000 acres of farms in England produce vast quantities of dairy products, fruit and vegetables. They have recently purchased 100,000 acres of the best wheat lands in Canada. They own their own coal mines. They own 3,200 acres of tea plantations in Ceylon and vineyards in Spain. In Africa, they control vast tracts of land for production of olives, from which oil for their soap factories is produced" (1).

Rather a fair development from the modest beginnings made by the twenty-eight weavers with apparently no prospects in life but the poorhouse! It illustrates what can be accomplished by an organisation owned and controlled by workingmen.

### INTERNATIONAL CO-OPS

In a similar manner Danish farmers have shown their power of self-control by

continued on page 27