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"Our War" And Its Consequences

Our War was the theme of Radio Eireann's Thomas Davis Lectures this year. The War with which Britain convulsed the world in 1914, and from which the world has not yet recovered, has now been made *Our War*—and in the name of Thomas Davis!

Britain was at war when Davis launched *The Nation*. (When has it not been at war!) It was, as Davis put it, "*At war with everybody*". And Davis undoubtedly had a martial spirit. No pacifist could have written *Clare's Dragoons*. And yet he did not support Britain's war against everybody—though it was the war that gave us the modern world of perpetual progress. He did not rejoice that the greatest state in the world in those times—the most populous and the most civilised—was forced to open itself to opium and the West. What he rejoiced in was the fact that a British Army of 10,000—or was it 20,000—marched into Afghanistan, took Kabul, and was done away with while it was trying to get out again.

We are not allowed to rejoice in such things nowadays. We must lament that two young soldiers had their lives snatched away from them before they had the chance to go off to Afghanistan and snatch other lives away.

{Gerry Adams told Radio Eireann that it was wrong politically. But isn't that lacking in compassion, Gerry? Doesn't it make you sick in the stomach that these young men were deprived of their chance to kill, Aine gushed. Apparently it didn't. So there's still hope for Sinn Fein.}

One of the Thomas Davis Lectures was given by Professor David Fitzpatrick, an Australian who hatched out a brood of revisionist operatives in Trinity College around 1990 but has only recently begun to appear in his own right as a public figure in the media. Here is the peroration of his lecture:

"If the world had remained at peace between 1914 and 1918 the Irish people would surely have been poorer, less employable and more troubled with class and sectarian conflict. To that extent Ireland did well out of the war."

It is useful to be supplied, from the highest authority, with this kind of standard for judging wars. Forget about causes and purposes. Forget about the reasons given by the British Government for launching that World War, in which over 10 million were killed. And forget about the reasons given by the Home Rulers for supporting it. Forget—but who remembers—Sinn Fein has forgotten, and doesn't want to know. It lives in accomplished fact, and doesn't presume to judge the accomplishers of the facts in which it lives—except in one marginal instance. And in this it shows itself to be wise and prudent. It swallows the Great War and is itself justified by Professor Fitzpatrick's justification of it in terms of its social consequences for one of the parties to it.

If the Provos had remained at peace, the people of West Belfast and the Bogside and Crossmaglen would have been poorer, less employable, and more troubled by sectarianism.

Professor Fitzpatrick gives the answer to those who argue pedantically that Good Friday terms were available under the Sunningdale Agreement in 1974, and that rejection of Sunningdale led to a wasteful quarter of a century of warfare. Leaving aside the factual detail that it was not the Provos but the Unionists who broke the Sunningdale arrangement, it is an observable reality that West Belfast etc. benefitted from that further quarter century of war in the way that Professor Fitzpatrick says that Ireland profitted from the Great War. They were better places in 1998 than they had been in 1974.

And the improvement had nothing to do with the formality of terms. The temper and character of the community changed utterly between 1974 and 1998. War was good for

EU — RIP ?

Sarkozy's decision to fully engage in the military structure of NATO will have the most serious consequences for Europe and the EU. France is obviously entitled to have any relationship it wants with NATO. However, Sarkozy assumes in making his case that he is doing so for Europe's benefit as well. France is accepted as a permanent leader of the EU and Sarkozy clearly feels free to commit Europe when he commits France to such a policy. They appear as one and the same to him—they are interchangeable and no Member State has objected to his case for France's full integration into NATO. That is why it is worth looking at his reasoning in some detail.

He began by saying that "*...what I discovered, with the Prime Minister and government, is that whilst we are in NATO—since we are in it—very few people know this*" (11 March 2009). This sounds hardly credible but he kept repeating that the French public does not know what it is doing as a member of NATO despite its military involvement in Afghanistan and elsewhere. He claims to be informing them of this!

If the French are so ignorant of NATO he should then have explained what NATO actually is, why it was founded, why it still exists seeing as its original *raison d'etre* no longer exists and give an honest description of who controls it which is the US and nobody else. Despite his long speech he never poses or answers these questions. If he did his case would collapse.

The next most obvious question he needed to answer was why join NATO's military command now. He acknowledges that the most obvious reason for a new military arrangement, a military reason, is missing: "*Today France is no longer threatened by a military invasion, perhaps for the first time in her history.*"

But he then offers a series of other reasons that must, in his mind, be just as serious as military invasion:

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Societalism not Socialism?

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it. If "sectarianism" remained, that was not its doing. When Britain set up Northern Ireland as a place apart, it determined that "sectarianism" would be the medium of public life in the Six Counties. The great change produced by the war was that Catholic participation in the necessary sectarianism ceased to express itself in the sullen whinging of the victim. Victimhood was overcome. And in that sense sectarianism was overcome. (It was transferred to the other side. That's the thing about war. Everybody can't win. But in modern Ireland, under the tutelage of the British Council, the British Ambassador, Mary McAleese, Trinity College etc., we have set aside the pacifism, the old sense of affinity with the wretched of the Earth, and become Darwinian in outlook. We no longer upset ourselves by dwelling on the awfulness of war and sympathising with the condition of the defeated.)

The Catholics in the North, incited to insurrection by Jack Lynch in 1969 and abandoned by him in 1970, fought their own war. They are now more at peace with themselves than they ever were before. They are more prosperous. They are not only more employable, but more

employing. And, as for class, it is now something that exists amongst themselves, rather than in relations with others.

Professor the Lord Bew, a fragment of the old gentry who was for a generation a lost soul amongst the Stickies, has finally found his home. And he gave the Noble Lord This and the Noble Lord That, a sermon on the only sacred text of contemporary England, *The Origin Of Species*. He also gave a Thomas Davis lecture on *Our War*. Here is his peroration:

"What about Redmond's hope that a common sacrifice might have softened Nationalist/Unionist enmity? Death at the Front was non-sectarian, and apolitical in its targeting. In the early morning of the 7th of June 1917 the Catholic and Nationalist 16th Irish Division advanced side by side with the Protestant and Unionist 36th Ulster Division to take the Messines Ridge... The last clergyman that the devout Catholic Willie Redmond talked to was actually a Belfast Protestant Church of Ireland chaplain, the Rev. John Redmond... But look beyond this moment. In 1920 to 1922 the same Rev. John Redmond as Vicar of Ballymacarrett found himself centre of the bitter

conflict of that epoch, and even found it necessary, for fear of something more undisciplined, to play a role in setting up the B Specials. Context is everything."

The Home Rule vision of peace and harmony, set out in August/September 1914, was realised on the battlefield. But only on the battlefield. Come home from the battlefield and the fighting starts.

But where can we find this context of peace and harmony today? How can Britain do for us now what it did for us in 1914? Maybe if the war on Afghanistan and Pakistan is escalated as Obama promises, those good old days will return.

The Lord Bew says no more than Professor Fitzpatrick about the reasons why Britain launched the Great War, "*Our War*". Ours not to reason why. It should be enough for us to know that Britain declared war. Then:

"John Redmond offered Irish support for the British war effort in exchange for Home rule being placed on the Statute Book... Redmond was operating from within the tradition of Constitutional nationalism that had always assured Britain that in the face of an international crisis a self-governing Ireland would be a Loyal Ally. As a man of honour... he found it difficult to escape the obligation when the time came".

We cannot say it wasn't so. This is the first hint we have had that the Home Rule Party had a Manifesto commitment to fight in Britain's wars. We will check up on it and tell the reader what we find—even though we know that it is in bad taste to do such things. Wars are too serious, and confer too much benefit on humanity, for them to be tampered with like that. Belief that the victor was right in some higher sense, and did not merely win because of a more effective organisation of violence, and that the moving spirit was Truth rather than Propaganda, is good for the spirit of the victorious populace. So it is thought by those in authority who manage such things.

The world in which we live was brought about by a series of Great Wars fought over the last three centuries, in all of which the moving force was Britain, which, by one means and another always managed to end up on the winning side. And the methods by which Britain did all of this are at the source of the present economic crisis.

This series of wars began immediately after the Glorious Revolution, which we now seem to have decided was *Our Revolution* as the 1914 war was *Our War*, as we celebrate the Boyne along with the Somme.

Britain, around 1690, adopted the deliberate policy of manipulating conflict

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Gerald Dawe And Robert Graves

John Minihane, in his review of Gerald Dawe's 'Anthology of Irish War poetry' (IPR March), refers to the omission of Robert Graves. The following quotations from Laura Riding and Robert Graves' 'A Pamphlet Against Anthologies' (London, Cape, 1928) suggest—quite apart from Graves' poems—just how serious that deliberate omission is.

Riding and Graves are discussing 'Anthologies and the Book Market':

"Even Dr Bridges' 'Spirit of Man' must be classed as a trade anthology, if not as a publisher's anthology, for though the gross commercial view was probably absent from his mind, it was at any rate a public utility volume compiled for a national occasion. It came out in the middle of the War and was dedicated to 'His Majesty the King, by His Poet Laureate'. The preface makes rather sad reading now, when it informs us: 'Prussia's scheme for the destruction of her neighbours was, above all question and debate, long laid and scientifically elaborated to the smallest detail'; and when it suggests that Englishmen should 'turn to seek comfort in the contemplation of spiritual things... happy even in the death of our beloved who fell in the fight. They die nobly as saints and heroes, with hearts and minds unstained by hatred or wrong.' and that they should find 'joy in the thought that our Country is called of God to stand for the truth of man's hope and that it has not shrunk from the call.'

"To support such sentiments, the ghosts of the Elizabethans and the Romantic Revivalists are summoned to present their usual verse-offerings, but because of the seriousness of the occasion, the reader is asked 'to bathe rather than fish in these waters'." (Carcanet reprint, London, 2002, p.167)

Later on, in discussing the devaluation of language, Graves offers an anecdote:

"A rather worse case was that of a lecturer during the War who was employed by the War Office to address troops on the subject of 'Our War Aims'. It was at first, in 1914, quite a good lecture. The lecturer did not let it harden into a formula until late in the Spring of 1915, when he nevertheless gave it accurately and with conviction and without personal strain. In 1916 it was still word-perfect, but the lecturer had lost reality: he looked dim on the platform. Late in 1917 it had begun to fray: there was no actual break of sense, but the words were strangely clipped and slurred and the lecturer was in a complete state of self-hypnosis. Shortly before the Armistice there was a nervous breakdown. There had been some violent disturbance during the lecture (an Australian audience had begun to barrack) and the hypnosis had been interrupted. The lecturer had tried to get into familiar touch again with his own lecture, but the result was a bad short-circuit. The catenation broke and the lecture degenerated into a recurring sequence of three sentences, including the joke (always sure of a laugh) about the Entente Cordiale and King Edward VII's 'love of French Institutions'." (ibid. p.195)

Finally and most explicitly:

"A third type of Living-Poet anthology deals in the marketable sentiment aroused by some event of public importance—the murder of President McKinley, the death of Edward the Peace-Maker, the sinking of the Titanic, the Outbreak of War, the Victory. That President McKinley, the puppet-nominee of the Trusts at their most cynically corrupt stage, was murdered by a maniac; that Edward the Peace-Maker, personally responsible for the English Entente with France and therefore for the destruction of the Anglo-German alliance which was keeping the peace of Europe, died after a life not particularly distinguished for the qualities which his idealistic German mother and father had tried to inculcate in him; that the Titanic was sunk as a result of culpable negligence on the part of the staff and that its sinking was attended by scenes that, to say the least of it, compared unfavourably with those at the sinking of the Birkenhead; that the English Liberal Government was able to justify by the German invasion of Belgium its own secret commitments to and preparations for a war that had as its object the crippling of a commercial rival; and finally that this War was technically won by weight of numbers and munitions after a gross display of atrocities on both sides—all this is history. But the anthologist and his poet have no more respect for history than for poetry, for public than for personal truth." (ibid. p. 240)

With views like these, it is clear enough why a soldier with impeccable Anglo-Irish credentials who had fought at the Somme, been seriously wounded and highly decorated, simply had to be omitted from Dawe's Anthology.

Why, he sounds (writing in 1928) for all the world like a nutter from Aubane *avant la lettre!* Nor, given his views set out in the pamphlet *passim*, would Graves have expressed chagrin or surprise at his exclusion. But that last sentence of his really ought to make Mr Dawe's ears burn.

Niall Cusack

PS Anyone who would like to hear Robert Graves reading his own poems should hasten to Claddagh Records in Temple Bar in Dublin where they may still obtain an LP called 'The Green Sailed Vessel'. However, they had better be prepared for the following remarks in the Introduction, delivered in Graves' pure, plummy, English Public School accent:

"I admit I've rarely been to Ireland...but I once went to Limerick disguised as a Welsh soldier in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, and I refused to take any part in the hunting of Sinn Féin, and I said to my Colonel (who was also an Irishman) Would you have me do this sort of thing? And he said, No, Graves, you're excused. So that was all right."

Now, that was recorded in April 1972. Graves was 77 and secure in whatever reputation he coveted, which was an honest one. I most emphatically do not recall an equivalent honesty from Michael Longley or Séamus Heaney who were and are Official Poetry. I am just old enough to recognise that it really was not fashionable to treat Sinn Féin with respect in 1972. Graves had no interest in fashion, and what true poet does?

in Europe to its own advantage. By means of Balance of Power strategy it kept Europe in a permanently unsettled condition, and ensured that it should itself be a free, unbalanced Power. It was able to do this with much smaller resources than any of the major European Powers by virtue of being an island (defined by Oliver St. John Gogarty as a country surrounded by a Navy) and by establishing a new form of state ruled by a combination of landed gentry, financiers, military men, and propagandists.

All of these wars were financed by the magic of credit. Credit means debt. And it meant the circulation of a kind of money without physical existence that was always liable to collapse and evaporate. The National Debt expanded enormously with every war. It was opposed by Tories, with Jonathan Swift pre-eminent among them, on the ground that it tended to dissolve all social values, leaving money as the only value. But the financing of war by credit, raised by the state using tricky financial devices that did not bear too much thinking about, was a stabilising influence on the regime in that it implicated the property-owning populace in the war for which it had lent its money.

The greater the National Debt, the more awful was the prospect of losing the war. Hence the rule of British political life that a Government has only to start a war to have national support for it. The last war that was stopped by English public opinion was almost 300 years ago. It was the war for which Swift wrote his still famous, though unread, pamphlet, *The Conduct Of The Allies* (often referred to as a satire because Swift is known for *Gulliver's Travels*, but was nothing of the kind).

The Tory Party, that stopped the war, was the Government. A British Government might start a war in the face of public opinion, but stopping a war was a different matter. Swift's argument was that Britain had done well enough out of the war to end it, and that continuing it to the utter destruction of the enemy was inadvisable. He said that the Whig radicals, Addison being their ideologue, who thought that Britain could be free of enemies by utterly destroying the current enemy, were pursuing a delusion—this was a delusion that was laid low until 1914.

The financial measures adopted and developed by Britain after 1688 were borrowed from Amsterdam. The Dutch had by this time been chastened by Britain and were resigned to the role of a secondary Power.

The first Great War against France (1688-97) cost £49 million, of which a third was raised by credit. The second (1703-13) cost £93m, of which 31% was credit. A minor war (Jenkins Ear, 1739-48) cost £96m, of which 31% was credit.

The fourth (7 Years War, 1756-63) cost £160m of which 37.4% was credit. The American War (1776-83) cost £236m of which 40% was credit. The War against the French Revolution (1793-1815) cost £1,657m, of which 26% was credit. (Figures from P.G.M. Dickson: *The Financial Revolution In England*).

What 1688 did was establish freedom of the gentry. It freed them from the monarchy, which had maintained an internal state apparatus to which they were subject. In the 18th century the gentry ruled in their localities as JPs, and assembled in Parliament to pass Enclosure Acts for one another against the peasantry and to see to the maintenance of a strong and disciplined Navy as an instrument of foreign policy (even subjecting themselves to severe discipline for that purpose).

That era of liberty went into decline at the end of the century under Pitt and George III (a King who spoke English). An internal apparatus of state began to be restored and Income Tax was introduced, in addition the Land Tax and Import duties. Hence the fall in the proportion of credit in the war of 1793. But there was never any question of going back to the old order of paying for wars out of revenue.

The first major credit crisis came a few years after the end of the Glorious Revolution was against Louis XIV (1688-1713). It took the form of the South Sea Bubble of 1720, and it came about through devices connected with an attempt to handle indebtedness. Then, as now, when the bubble burst people could not understand how they had ever come to participate in it, but while it was going it was irresistible.

Walpole took over in 1721 and for twenty years he settled down the new regime by means of other financial devices, graft and corruption, so that it was ready for new adventures on credit by the 1740s.

In 1720 the effective international market was small. The Bubble directly affected Britain, France, Holland and one or two of the hundreds of German states. The foundation of the world market was laid during the following decades. As Swift pointed out in his pamphlet, Britain had got one very substantial gain from the war in 1712: the Slave Trade monopoly. Some time before this—as one of the first liberations of the Glorious Revolution—slave trade by Englishmen was freed from Monarchical restrictions and thrown open to unsupervised free enterprise. And the Triangular Trade, which was the major source of English prosperity and the foundation of the world market, had slavery at two of its three points. English traders bought slaves in West Africa, shipped them to the Caribbean and the American Colonies, where they were sold

and the products of the Caribbean slave labour camps—the chief of which was sugar—were bought and shipped to England, where they were sold and pots and pans made by the new capitalist manufacturers were bought and shipped to West Africa, etc.

The other great source of English prosperity was India, which seems to have been simply plundered.

The major addition to the world market in the 19th century was China. In the 1840s it was compelled to allow English merchants in India to sell opium to Chinese subjects so that the English upper classes might buy Chinese porcelain without using up their gold and silver. The Chinese market for such English goods as the Chinese would buy was at first limited to a couple of ports, but China as a whole was systematically broken open during the following decades.

The world market could not have been established by commerce on its own, or by military power on its own, or by political acumen on its own. It required an operative combination of all three, along with a driving sense of mission provided by ideology.

And commerce is not a single element. There was a time when producers sold their goods directly to consumers. Then intermediaries of various kinds stepped in. Wholesalers appeared between the makers and sellers of goods. And financiers appeared to facilitate commerce without taking part in it. And 'bills'—which were receipts for money in its indestructible form of gold—appeared, and began to circulate out of contact with gold. After that, financial devices grew and multiplied.

The shattering experience of the South Sea Bubble led to a proposal in Parliament that financiers and merchants should be excluded from Parliament. This was in accordance with a provision of the democracy of ancient Greece that merchants might enrich themselves to their heart's content, but were excluded from the body politic and should live apart in gated apartments. It was a choice between that and embracing the financiers so that the new financial devices which had proved so useful in the War might be grasped and handled with expertise. The latter course was adopted.

The 18th century English Parliament was a sovereign assembly in which Finance was represented by financiers, the Navy by Admirals, the Army by Generals, Progress by ideologists, and there was a ballast of stick-in-the-mud Tory country gentlemen who didn't know if they approved of any of it. That Parliament which changed the world was as different as could be from the Dail, which has the

task of keeping the country afloat in the world created by that Parliament of coordinated vested interests, to which the ideal of government detached from vested interests and corruption appeared as remote as Eden before the Fall.

It used to be argued by political economists that international trade was, of necessity, mutually beneficial because, if it was not, the party to whom it was not beneficial would not engage in it. That view was perhaps valid in the century before last. It presumed that both parties were basically self-sufficient, were free to trade or not to trade, and therefore would only engage in trade from which they benefitted. But that is not the case in the globalised market.

The states formed after the 2nd World War, in the era of the United Nations, were born into a globalised world hegemonised by Western capitalism. They did not decide to enter the world market. Their only choice in the matter was whether to wrench themselves out of it. That was not easily done, but it was at least possible while the Soviet bloc existed as a major part of the world in antagonism with the West. China could do it because it was so big, and the national force which came to dominance in its Civil War was the Communist Party. But, when China became Communist, it was excluded from the UN for a generation, during which the Chinese seat was held by the defeated fringe group in Formosa/Taiwan.

When the Soviet system collapsed in 1990 (not because it was economically unviable, but because of ideological deficiencies) and the Cold War ended, the US/UK set about subordinating the entire world to the globalist market which it operated. During the 1990s the supreme object was to render the entire world suitable for the investment of Western capital. It was frankly stated that the primary function of 'national' Government was to establish a legal/commercial/police framework which facilitated Western investment and made it secure. Those who ran the WTO/IMF were confident that, once this was done, they would have ample power to punish rogue states who tried to step out of line. At a number of WTO meetings the system seemed to be on the verge of being finalised, but somehow the opportunity was always missed.

Protectionist arrangements in Asian countries which had served the Amer-anglian interest during the Cold War were now declared to be intolerable and corrupt. The outstanding case was Indonesia. General Suharto had saved that sprawling complex of islands from Chinese Communism in the mid-1960s by killing a million people, supervised by the British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, who

was then transferred to Dublin to handle the Irish. Indonesia was stable under Suharto's regime for a quarter of a century. But then Ameranglia decided that Indonesia must prostrate itself before Western capital. It must become open and democratic. Suharto must go. And it had the means to make Suharto go. He went, and 'Islamic terrorism' came.

One Asian state refused to prostrate itself: Malaysia. An international campaign was launched against Dr. Mahatir, and in support of a free marketeer, Anwar Ibrahim, who also happened to be an Islamist. It would of course have been preferable if he had been a liberal secularist, but the primary thing was to end protectionism, and the instrument that was available had to be used.

The *Irish Times* threw itself vigorously into the campaign against Dr. Mahatir's 'corrupt crony capitalism'. But he survived. And Malaysia did not succumb to the financial crisis called the 'Asian flue' a few years later. And it is not the usual basket case today.

The *Irish Times* is now celebrating the 150th anniversary of itself and of Ireland. In the Manifesto which it issued for the occasion it is said that Ireland did not exist as a country until 1859, which is when the first issue of the *Irish Times* appeared. It makes sense. The other Ireland seems to have thrown itself away. At least there is nothing in official life to remind one that it ever existed. The *Irish Times* alone remains, boundless and bare.

But the *Irish Times* did not only create Ireland. It created this world in which we live in. It was a segment of the fiscal-military force that made this world. And the fact that it has nothing coherent to say about the present crisis is a reflection of the origins of our Creator. It is waiting on England, while England waits on America.

Europe too is incoherent and inarticulate. A generation of Anglo influence from within has made it so, with *Irish Times* Ireland playing a critical part as England's catspaw. Pat Cox, the party colleague of the Editor of the *Irish Times*, had his moment of glory when he played the figurehead part in subverting the old European Commission on the issue of a French Commissioner giving a job to her hairdresser.

The EU succumbed to the *laissez-faire* Utopian vision sold to it by Britain, in which Britain itself does not believe—or believes only insofar as it corresponds with its interests which are not European, and which remain considerable. And it expanded recklessly to the East with a view to squeezing post-Communist Russia, making delusory promises to bring in a line of new member states which it is now leaving in the lurch.

In our little affairs the PDs have come

and gone. They presented themselves to us as a vigorous beast, fitted to flourish in the capitalist jungle. And now they have gone and dissolved themselves—just in time!—leaving Mary Harney as a non-party remnant attached to the party she once hoped to destroy.

The Labour Party has gone most of the way, under Stickey guidance, towards making itself a tightly centralised Liberal party of the vacuous stratum of the middle class. It is now trying to remember some of the things it used to say long ago. But it is too late. Its achievement during the past generation has been to refuse Coalition with Fianna Fail, which is the party of the realistic and national element of the working class, and make it dependent on the PDs.

Fine Gael remains a niche party.

So we are left with Fianna Fail, which remains a representative party of the society to a considerable degree, despite its efforts to turn itself into a detached, centralised Liberal party. And there remains some substantial survivals of the nationalised sector established by Fianna Fail in the past (when it was still Sinn Fein), which it has not entirely succeeded in dismantling.

Ireland floated itself a generation ago on the Globalism which has failed to carry itself through to consistent dominance. Ireland let go of itself then, to general approval. All it can do now, while the world is betwixt and between, is try to hang on until it is seen how the world is sorted out. And then it might learn once again what Arthur Griffith saw over a century ago, that between the individual and the globe there is a chasm that can only be filled by the active nation.

Share Dealing

Here's an interesting little fact. Apparently the 1929 crash was partly blamed on short selling. In 1934 the Securities Exchange Commission enacted rule Rule 10a-1, also known as the uptick rule. This basically banned short selling. Here's a short explanation.

A former rule established by the SEC that requires that every short sale transaction be entered at a price that is higher than the price of the previous trade. This rule was introduced in the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 as Rule 10a-1. The uptick rule prevents short sellers from adding to the downward momentum when the price of an asset is already experiencing sharp declines. The SEC eliminated the rule on July 6, 2007.

As you can see it was abolished in 2007. Well I never.

Pete Whitelegg

EU — RIP ?

continued

"Other threats have taken its place; these are linked to globalization, terrorism, proliferation and attacks against space systems and the IT systems our technological societies are heavily dependent on. The crises hitting the world affect our values, our interests and the security of the French. Competition for access to water, energy and raw materials, the deterioration of the environment, pandemics and uncontrolled migrations, are fraught with consequences for our security. And tomorrow, a totally unexpected strategic development can literally wreak havoc on the conditions of our security. The global financial crisis clearly illustrates the degree to which the world can radically change, and not necessarily for the better. These threats can seem remote. But let's make no mistake here: our national territory can be hit tomorrow, as can that of our Allies. The distinction we used to rely on between internal and external security could be said to be fading altogether. And France's defence is decided now as much on our territory as thousands of kilometres away, in space or on IT networks."

This is crazy logic and sheer demagoguery. NATO is needed to meet a whole range of non-military 'threats'! If he is serious it is a recipe for an escalation of military conflicts worldwide imitated by NATO!

Then he says: *"A single State, a nation on its own is a nation with no influence at all. And if we want to carry weight, we have to know how to get allies to join us and forge friendships."* There is truth in this but is the only alternative full integration with NATO? This is ridiculous counterposing. There is a European Union that would surely be the most obvious group of allies to develop to carry weight in the world. The message is that the only real influence that matters in the world is military influence.

For him, Europe and the EU appear and disappear according to whatever argument he makes. It is clearly not central to his thinking, just an adjunct.

He goes on: *"And France knows too who her allies and her friends are: and I'm not afraid of saying that our allies and our friends are first and foremost the family of Western nations."* This clearly includes the US and no doubt Israel. When you talk like that you are declaring who your enemies are as well as your friends. And that means France's potential enemies are the rest of the world.

The whole point of Gaullism was that France and Europe would be open to have friends and allies everywhere as it decides. This is what gave them both moral authority in the world. To Sarkozy there are only potential enemies outside the 'family'. This is a clear break with the approach that existed in France and Europe and it poses the issue—what is the EU now for in the world?

There is a ridiculous claim that *"... the Georgia problem was in the first place resolved by Europe's policy. And, to my mind, this counts."* One would need to be blind deaf and senile not to know that it was Russia that resolved the Georgia issue, that Europe waited until it had done so and then was the vehicle for Russia's diplomatic mopping up after it had done the business. If Sarkozy actually believes what he says about the Georgian situation he is living in cloud cuckoo land and it becomes worrying that such a fantasist is in charge of any State.

He elaborates the fantasy: *"I'd like to compare what Europe did in the case of Georgia and what happened a few years ago, in Europe, in that of Bosnia. Secretary-General, I'm not insulting anyone at all by saying that the Bosnian problem was in the first place resolved by the American forces."* It's news to me that the Bosnia issue and related issues are solved. I thought they were exacerbated beyond measure by the Balkan war. Europe's contribution to that conflict was to initiate it by encouraging the break-up of the FRY and then concoct issues to escalate it.

He asks: *"But we can, all the same, ask ourselves one thing: why is the concept of Defence Europe making such slow progress, as if everything were fine in the best of all worlds. And why hasn't it been developed? I have a clear idea about the reason for this",* which was that *"because our American allies didn't agree to a more equitable sharing of responsibilities in the military structure of the time. What I'm saying isn't a value judgement, it's a truth disputed by no one."*

But there is no evidence whatever that the Americans are now in some power-sharing mode that they were not in some years ago.. What has changed is that Sarkozy has bent the knee to the American demands that they remain in control on NATO and that previous French leaders were not prepared to do this.

Defence Europe has not caught on big time because the vast majority of Europeans do not feel threatened by the rest of the world in any military sense. No doubt, if they did, there would be no problem with Defence Europe gaining momentum

and rightly so. But Sarkozy sees a different world.

He puts the Lisbon Treaty firmly in the context of his new policy. He explains:

"The situation was hamstrung first of all because of France who, through her "no" in the 2005 referendum, had contributed to plunging Europe into gridlock. This is why our first initiative, with the government, was to get it moving again because, frankly, after the referendum we weren't capable of rallying the whole of Europe around us. Europe was at a standstill, but France wasn't in a position to lead the way out of the gridlock."

But Lisbon is not yet agreed and he still carries on regardless! What he assumes is that what he is doing is the only way of moving Europe forward!

At least it puts the Lisbon Treaty in its real military perspective and there should no longer be any doubt about its military implications: "The Lisbon Treaty itself establishes the link between European defence and the Atlantic Alliance. It stipulates that the Allies' collective defence will be conducted in the Alliance framework. And this link, I would remind you, was formally noted in 2003, by the Convention on the Future of Europe, and then by the foreign affairs ministers at the Intergovernmental Conference." That should be written in bold letters.

There is then a lot of waffle about how this new departure will improve France and Europe's independence, strength, etc. etc. One need only look at America's special friend, the UK, and see how much independence it has in military matters with the US. Zero. The UK does not have the means of using its own nuclear bombs—it is simply not allowed to do so. Will the US allow France and the EU more independence than it does the UK.? The question does not need asking.

Sarkozy cannot even envisage an independent position. He says "If we present Defence Europe as an alternative to the Alliance with the United States we are sure to kill off the idea of Defence Europe. If we present Defence Europe as an action complementary to the Alliance with the United States we will push Defence Europe forward."

European independence is not an option for him and as he is representative of the current Member States this means it's time to write the EU's epitaph and let it rest in peace. That's the best place for illusions. That is what the EU has become as a political entity.

Jack Lane

Editorial Digest

Rejoining The Commonwealth? Roy Garland has reported on a Dublin meeting held on 21st March (*Irish News* 30.3.2009). It was sponsored by a new group which has been established to campaign for Ireland to join the Commonwealth. Though small, it spans a wide range of Unionist opinion from members of the Progressive Unionist Party to the Alliance Party in the North and people around the Reform Society of Robin Bury and Eoghan Harris in the South. Actually Garland's 'report' was really a piece to promote the proposition, as was all that he had say while supposedly chairing the debate. He described the event as "*outstanding*".

This meeting, well flagged up to West Britain, was in fact a miserable affair. This writer was one of only 26 people attending—most of whom had nothing at all to say. Speaking in favour was Geoffrey Roberts, one-time sidekick to Monty Johnson in the Communist Party Of Great Britain and now some kind of Thatcherite operating out of University College, Cork. A newspaper letter heralding the advent of the Group gave its address as being the History Department of the University of Cork.

Garland claims in the *Irish News* that Roberts' case was "*almost unassailable*" but was being held up by "*emotional baggage and misinformation*". This was how he explained away the case against joining the Commonwealth put by John Waters of the *Irish Times*. Waters recalled his grandparents' origins in the Gaeltacht and said that he had made an effort to re-learn the Irish language and that his daughter had earned her Fainne. Essentially he was saying that, among most Irish people, who were more rather than less connecting with their roots, the whole thing was a no-brainer. The proposition was also opposed by Martin Mansergh. Garland wasn't a million miles from the truth when he sneeringly implied that Mansergh's opposition was about votes. Rejoining the Commonwealth would be a non-runner in the South Tipperary constituency he represents. He has stood in two elections there getting around 15% of the vote on each occasion but being elected on transfers the second time.

A serious problem with this issue is that many Republicans, of all persuasions, seem unable to deal with it and shy away from it. The fact is rejoining the Com-

monwealth would not help to bring about a United Ireland, although that is the disingenuous impression which has been created: Unionism requires Ireland accepts the sovereignty of Westminster as the price of unity. The serious issue facing Ireland these days is not the question of a united Ireland, but what kind of a united Ireland.

British policy since Partition has been to keep Northern Ireland in an unstable condition such as to constantly excite demands for a unity that can at any time be granted as a welcome home gift to 26 prodigal Counties. The agenda is: Coming home to the United Kingdom; Coming home to the Empire; Coming home to the Commonwealth. Some difference in emphasis as time has passed, but the same strategy.

The Northern Ireland question is certainly still on the boil. How long that will last, or how widespread it becomes no one can say. But the rioters in Lurgan were the real thing. One of the people charged with killing a policeman is only 17 years old. Whether he did it or not, the PSNI believes that it is dealing with another generation of armed republicans and not just with so-called dissidents. The police have also said there are "*no more the 300*" of these people. Did they ever admit that there were even that many Provos?

Two Soldiers were shot at their Army base in NI shortly before leaving to make war on the people of Afghanistan. Presumably the particular targets were chosen by republican dissidents with that in mind, even though the motivation was to do with Northern Ireland. It would have been understandable if Martin M'Guinness considered it politic to murmur some words of sympathy in line with his Assembly position and his support for new policing. But he was over-simplifying when suggested that the perpetrators were 'traitors to Ireland'. Gerry Adams took a more measured approach.

This column suggested some time ago that it was British policy to see a return to a "*state of nature*" in Catholic areas in the absence of either IRA or acceptable (or even unacceptable) police patrols. In the Lower Falls this process began very quickly and people, especially republicans, were being beaten up and shot on a regular basis. The IRA, without ceremony, began patrolling again, and the place quietened down.

Late March was the first time in thirty years that this writer had been back to Ballymurphy and the first time ever to Whiterock and Turf Lodge. These are

well built estates at the foot of the Belfast Hills. But they are barren. Drugs are providing an escape for teenagers who might formerly have been learning the innards of the AK47. The Agreement and all the rest of the baloney have given them nothing. It is a credit to the community spirit that exists there that people haven't turned in on themselves. The position is different on the Falls Road, with community this and community that providing nice little earners. And there's money to be made up at Stormont and in the various local authorities as well.

The absence of real politics corrodes society, so it ill behoves the Deputy First Minister to hurl abuse about the place.

ICTU 'boycott Israel' campaign gets underway. The ICTU National Executive met on 18th March and discussed various issues in relation to Palestine. However, the plan to have the head of the Palestinian TUC (PGFTU) address the next ICTU Biennial Conference (July 2009) will not be going ahead (it was countered by a call for "balance" by also inviting a Histadrut speaker—the upshot is that no-one is now being invited). On the other hand, Congress has established a high-powered committee to develop an active boycott strategy, based on a comprehensive proposal from Trade Union Friends of Palestine. The committee includes Patricia McKeown (Pres., ICTU), Peter McLoone (Gen. Sec. IMPACT), David Joyce (Global Solidarity officer, ICTU), Eamon McMahon and Mags O'Brien (TUFP), as well as Sally Anne Kinahan (Asst. Gen. Sec., ICTU). A special conference of ICTU on Palestine (agreed by the last ICTU Conference)—planned for mid-June, with international speakers and to be opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheal Martin—is not now to take place in Dublin Castle and is in doubt. However, a special Congress appeal to members on Gaza collected an amazing €80,000.

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Shorts

from
the Long Fellow

GAMBLING

"I'm shocked, shocked that there is gambling going on in here."

So said Captain Renault (played by Claude Rains) the Vichy-appointed Prefect of Police in the classic Hollywood Film *Casablanca*. Of course his "shock" didn't prevent him from collecting his winnings before closing Rick's café.

The *Long Fellow* gathers that Noel Dempsey of Fianna Fail is shocked at the gambling that went on in *Anglo-Irish Bank*. But the gambling was facilitated. *Irish Permanent TSB* transferred €7.45 billion to *Anglo-Irish* just before the latter's financial year end and it notified the Financial Regulator of the fact before it did so. So, *Anglo-Irish's* bluffing was State policy.

And, of course, *Anglo* wasn't the only Bank at it. In an interview with Eamon Dunphy on *Radio Eireann* (21.3.09) the retired *Bank of Ireland* Chief Executive Michael Soden gave the following interesting statistics. In his time at the bank (2001 to 2004) the assets of the bank (i.e. its loans to customers) had increased from €85 billion to €100 billion. But from 2004 to 2008 the figure had jumped from €100 billion to €200 billion. The bank was founded in the 1780s. So it took over 200 years for it to reach its first €100 billion and another 4 years to reach its second.

Soden said that he had been very impressed with *Anglo-Irish's* financial results and used to ring Sean FitzPatrick up to congratulate him on the performance. Soden said that *Bank of Ireland* executives spent a lot of time analysing *Anglo's* results and concluded that it had a different business model to *Bank of Ireland*. The latter, first of all, assessed a customer's ability to repay; then his willingness to repay; and examined cash flow projections submitted by the loan applicant. *Anglo*, on the other hand, dispensed with such a tedious process. It said to loan applicants: "You know your business better than us. Here's the money". It appears that *Bank of Ireland* moved closer to the *Anglo* model after 2004.

Like Captain Renault we as a nation collected our winnings when times were good. Back in the 1980s Charlie Haughey saw which way the world was heading and set up a giant casino in the Dublin docks. And we brought jobs into the

country that were created elsewhere.

We played the game very well but sooner or later the roulette ball was bound to land on zero. And there are now empty apartments and office space around the IFSC. Many of the jobs, which were not ours in the first place, have transferred to Eastern Europe.

The rules of the game have changed and Ireland will have to adapt.

NATIONAL SELF BELIEF

The *Long Fellow* has always believed that politics must precede economics. No economic policy will be successful without the political will to implement it. In this country Social Partnership remains the most effective way of implementing policy. But in the current crisis we must also have self belief. We must believe in ourselves as a nation especially since there are others who want us to fail. Senator Shane Ross recently described a meeting he had with some "City types" in London and gave a revealing picture of the view from across the water:

"...the Brits are salivating at our discomfort. They are delighted to see the swagger wiped off the backside of Ireland. Some of them see us as an upstart nation, a bit like how we perceive *Anglo* as a bank. Too big for our boots. Rich on the back of a fantasy economy" (*Sunday Independent*, 1.3.09).

They have never accepted our political independence. And Haughey's decision to join the EMS [European Monetary System] in 1979 without asking the Brits for permission was considered unforgivable. Unfortunately, their sentiments are loudly echoed by the West Brit element in the Irish media.

LENIHAN AND LENIN

Lenihan is no Lenin. And Lenin was no anarchist!

The anarchists believed that the State was by its nature oppressive and should be destroyed. Lenin, on the other hand, thought that it should be used in the working class interest and that only its bourgeois character should be destroyed. Lenin noticed that the Russian peasants experienced the Tsarist State as an oppressive force because of the high taxes it imposed on them in order to fund the high salaries of senior civil servants. The State paid these higher civil servants such salaries so that they would have a lifestyle which would enable them to identify with the class which they served. Lenin's solution was to pay all civil servants an average worker's salary.

Brian Lenihan thinks that Bankers' salaries should be capped at €500,000. And since the Banks have become dependent on the State, Lenihan is perfectly entitled to express an opinion on the matter. The *Long Fellow* thinks that

Lenihan does not go far enough. And he should also look to cap the salaries of higher civil servants. The last few years have shown that there is no direct correlation between high salaries and competence. Indeed, if there is a relationship it might be an inverse one.

THE BOURGEOISIFICATION OF IRISH STATE

About twenty years ago the *Long Fellow* heard a description by a businessman of an annual IBEC Conference in Killarney. The latter spoke in contemptuous terms of the higher Civil Servants who attended and whose puritanism prevented them from joining in the champagne celebrations.

The *Long Fellow* thought at the time that stern Republican Virtue was something to be recommended within the State's highest echelons. And it was the State of the 1980s—which was not a bourgeois State—that created the Celtic Tiger.

But about 10 years ago all of that changed. It was decided that people could not be motivated by patriotism. And money was the measure of all things. Therefore the higher civil servants had to have similar salaries to executives in the private sector. However, the new dispensation did not coincide with greater prestige or an increase in the State's responsibilities, but the opposite. As Lenin would have predicted it resulted in a subordination of the State to bourgeois interests. We had the disastrous privatisation of Eircom; the proliferation of private consultants feeding off the State; the introduction of Public Private Partnership schemes; the glorious HSE, which is accountable to no one.

And most recently, instead of a conscientious pioneer-pin-wearing civil servant regulating the financial sector, we had a highly paid "executive", who probably attends the same cocktail parties as the bankers he was supposed to be scrutinising; and whose job was not to "regulate" but to do as he was told.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The first thing to be done is that we should stop feeling sorry for ourselves. We (including the working class) did very well in the last twenty years. We have experienced success and the society will not tolerate failure now. It is true that we are in the midst of a severe crisis but the game is not lost yet.

And our crisis is less severe than some would have us believe. It is true that the discredited *Standard & Poor* has downgraded our credit rating, but other external commentators take a more benign view including *J.P. Morgan* and the *Economist*. The *Economist* in an article (possibly written by Dan O'Brien) has commented that some of the opinions on the Credit worthiness of the Irish State are based on wrong information. For example

the Government's Bank Guarantee covers deposits worth between 2 and 3 times GDP and not the 7 to 8 times quoted by some commentators (who included deposits in Foreign banks in the IFSC not covered by the guarantee).

As the *Economist* article pointed out, the Irish State has a track record of emerging from crises. However, if it is to emerge from this crisis, the State will have to reassert itself. It should regain control of our infrastructure. Serious consideration should be given to re-nationalising Eircom. The State should endeavour to preserve the skills that we have obtained over the last twenty years. That might mean investing in Irish private sector companies that have run into cash flow problems, but have a long term future.

The *Long Fellow* thinks that the State should declare its confidence in the future by persisting with the National Plan. However, it should take measures to minimise leakage from the economy. Employment in projects should be restricted to the Irish (including the "new Irish" who have settled here in recent years). An end should be put to cheap transient labour from foreign recruitment agencies. The EU is not in a position to prevent such policies. If it objects, the State should insist that the EU sanction the UK Government whose weak currency has undermined our competitiveness.

THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

The recent crisis shows the importance of the financial sector. In Latvia the economy has been at the mercy of Scandinavian banks and has been damaged

irreparably. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the British-owned banks operating in this country have taken a much harder line on extending credit than their Irish counterparts. It seems that the Irish Banks are more amenable to State and social pressure.

The *Long Fellow* believes that the Irish State must retain a strategic interest in the financial sector in this country. He is disappointed that the Government has appointed Peter Bacon, a right wing ideologue, to look into the matter. A few years ago Bacon advocated a free market solution to the problem of house prices even though the free market and unregulated credit was the problem.

The Irish State should be very wary of proposals to create a "bad bank". If a bank needs money that no private sector investor in their right mind would give it, there should be only two options: let the bank fail or nationalise it with minimal or no compensation to shareholders. Attempts by the banks to offload their bad debts on to the State is a bad solution for the taxpayer.

BRITISH SOLUTIONS

We in Ireland should certainly not follow the example of the Brits. The British State has underwritten toxic debt to the tune of £600 billion!!!!. This is on top of the billions it has already put up to re-capitalise their banks and its guarantee to depositors.

Apart from the *Financial Times* there has been very little comment on this within the British media. BBC's *Newsnight* preferred to have a lengthy discussion of

the £16 million pension payoff to RBS's former Chief Executive Fred Goodwin. It looks like the British Government orchestrated this controversy to distract attention away from its massive bailout of Bank shareholders.

This is something that we in Ireland should beware of. An obsession with the details of Fitzpatrick *et al* is in danger of swamping serious thinking about the political options re: the Bank sector.

AMERICAN SOLUTIONS

The *Long Fellow's* foreign network of spies have told him that the talk among big manufacturing capitalists in the USA is to create a new dollar linked to the gold standard. This raises the question of what to do with the old dollar. It appears that countries holding billions of old dollars such as China will have a worthless asset. Perhaps the USA will pay a percentage of the value.

This sounds like a nuclear option. It would herald the end of Globalisation and the beginning of Protectionism. All bets would be off and the Americans would start again. It's more radical than the Good Bank/Bad Bank model (where toxic debts are isolated). Instead we have the Good Economy/Bad Economy model.

The *Long Fellow's Deep Throat* says that the thinking is that it would be a direct "hit" to the vein. And nothing less is required to stimulate the economy.

It might never happen. If it does, you won't hear about it in the *Wall Street Journal* until after the event.

In today's uncertain world no option can be ruled out.

Obituary

Bill Sharkey

Urris on the Inis Owen Peninsula on January 22nd was a bleak and freezing place as family, friends and political comrades lowered the tricolour-draped coffin of Irish Political Review Group member Bill Sharkey into the ground. Several fine tributes were paid. This month we reproduce the words of his son Keith. Further tributes will be reproduced next month.

I would like to start by thanking everyone for coming today, I know many have travelled great distances, from all over the UK, Ireland and Europe. My Dad would have been proud and humbled. So why are we here in Urris chapel today? Our Dad, Bill, Billy's essence was always here in Urris. In the rocks and stones of Slodán, the top of Dunaff, the Carricks and big kunntunn, the gap, the pier, a storm coming in over Cathin, the fields of Micky Boyle's. He found a magic in the local names; the Joes, the Boyles, Mc

Gonagles, Tams, Morrison, Copens, John Neds, the Poots, the Farrens, John Phillips, the Dunnaheys, the Barrs. "They're all our tribe" he would say.

He would tell us of sitting at his granny's knee speaking Gaelic, the roaring hearth, her shawl wrapped around him, sharing a bed with his beloved Grandmother. He would tell us of his first day at school, new shoes on feet seldom shod during the summer. He took them off and hid them under a bush as he crossed the fields from Pat Canny's armed with his sod of turf. And after school returning, never finding the shoes, much to his mother's disbelief. Maybe they're still there. He was a free and un-tameable spirit then and so he was for the rest of his life.

Then, to Derry. Where he began two great love affairs. The first was with books. Many of his early years were spent ill due to rheumatic fever, scarlet fever and TB. This confined him to bed for months at a time, books were his only escape, he would have a love of reading for the rest of his life. Later when talking

to his Grandchildren about a history degree he would say "why would you do that?? You can just read the books in the evening!". All his friends and family will know that any visit would be accompanied by perusal of the bookshelves and liberation of material thought fit for further investigation.

His second love affair was with a green bicycle and with health restored this took him off the Lecky road, away from Oakfield, up to Holly well and Grianán and often back to Urris and other adventures with his friend Charlie Hearn.

Dad was part of a group of eleven-plus boys at St. Columbs that included John Hume, Joe Coulter, Willie Dean and Sean Fox. He finished top of his class. And went on to Maynoth to start what would be a life-long passion for the study of all things Celtic and Gaelic.

The bright lights of Dublin lured him away and there he met, fell in love with and married my Mother. He also caused his first international incident when, following a student night of excess, a duck was enticed and lured from the famous

pond at Stephen's Green and plucked, cooked and eaten. Days later in the *Irish Times* a report asked what happened to the rare Emperor Duck given as a gift by Chairmen Mao's Chinese Embassy. Knowing that he was wanted by the Chinese Communist Party, I am unclear as to whether it was at this point he decided to become a Marxist.

Like many, emigration, exile and a life in England followed. However he loved London and was in the heart of it in the Sixties. The Kinks lived upstairs, Soho was 30 yards away. Great friends were made and lifelong friendships were further cemented with Frank Tormey, James Daley, Frank McCauley, The Morans and Dave Fennell to name but a few. So also began a career in advertising and market research. By the time he was in his late 30s he was Managing Director of a big American Advertising Agency in London. But my Dad's heart was never in it. With his job he was presented with a state of the art Bang and Olafson TV with a new "remote control device".

This was so that he could watch, analyse and report the adverts as part of his job. But, armed with the new invention of a remote control, as soon as the adverts appeared Dad would change the channel. Many years later, living in Stoke Newington when his remote control had broken he repaired it by strapping a long bamboo cane to it and using the cane to press the button and continue to blank out the adverts.

Later Dad would add Roofer, Social Worker and Teacher to his list of jobs. Some may think this was a waste of talent but my father was a deeply un-material man, he didn't measure himself by wealth or status. For example in the 70s, when he returned to Urris in a Daimler, within a year chickens were being kept in it. Many of you will know that four years ago my Dad commenced a battle with cancer, he survived but lost a lung. My sister Sarah ensured from then on that he was kept close by and forged a strong bond of support and love which meant he was secure in always knowing; help and love were at hand. He was also given a new lease of life by the birth of two young Grandsons; Patrick and Niall, echoing the pride he felt in the birth of his first two grandchildren Liam and Hannah.

Latterly he moved to Glasgow with my sister's family and at the age of 71 enrolled to do an Master's Degree in Celtic Studies. He rediscovered the joy of learning and gained an outlet for his expertise in East Ulster Gaelic. My Brother-in-law described my Dad's university experience: it was like having a third schoolboy in the house, busy doing homework in the evening and talking excitedly about what he had studied during the day. He wrote to one of his Professors when applying for the course

and here's an extract from that letter:

"When the cancer was discovered in my lung some four years ago the Consultant wrote to my G.P. saying that his patient (me) could have as little as two months to live. Well, I'm still here and while only a fool would think "cured", I am quite well and keen to do something to confirm that the intellect is supreme. Had I not got ill, it had been my resolve to put into practice a long held faith in what an t-Athair Donnchadh O Floinn called the "*Res Gadelica*".

"Kinsale and Culloden Moor and their linguistic sequellae are irreversible. I have been allowed to travel by air for over a year now and last year I was in the heart of every Irish Gaeltacht. Not once did I hear Gaelic spoken in public .e.g. Post Office, hotel, café, pubor street. Gone, like the man from my parish said "like snow off the ditches". My view of the *Res Gadelica* is that the Gaelic language is our Sacred Language as distinct from the English which is our profane language; further, and analogously, Ireland is our Promised Land. And consequently that the texts in Old Irish are sacred texts. Need we look past the "Lebor Gabala Erenn" for our own "bible"? the language must be preserved by scholars and, I say, "Ni scolaire Gaeilge gan Sean-Gaelig". So there you have it, Professor! Imagine my delight on looking around and there it was in Glasgow where I'm going to live in a couple of months!"

So at age 71 he was coming home to his beloved Irish and Gaelic heritage. But what of the man, all of you knew him and a number have said independently "*he wasn't an easy man*". My aunt Sathie wonderfully described him like a "*rough-edged stone on the shore which rubs against the other stones making each of them smooth, complete and beautiful in themselves*".

Someone wrote to me saying "*may he sit at the right hand side of God*" and I thought he might have to queue a little before getting close but if I know my father he'll be looking for the queue for IRISH Catholics and will certainly be looking to get there quicker than any other Catholics.

He had many virtues:

- * Loyalty to friends and family, he wouldn't have a bad word said.
- * Loving Father and Grandfather
- * Pleasure in the smallest things
- * Tremendous company and a Great Storyteller
- * Fantastic intellect
- * Generosity of Spirit

We had always thought him indestructible in nature, spirit and body. In the end the body gave out, but his spirit lives on in this room, through our memories of him, part of a sacred circle which includes family friends, as he would say

"*near in and far out*".

He was one of a kind, born in to Old Ireland, living the exile life and now returning to the soil that he loved and the warmth of his childhood.

In his own words translated from a Gaelic poem he wrote:

"What'll we do without the real Irish?
The children of Eibhir being dumped overseas
The Green Fields being stuffed with rubbish
From Malin Head to County Clare.
Farewell to the man who could cut turf!
Farewell to the man who could thatch a house!
Farewell to the man who could still the barley!
And a hundred farewells to my darling Ireland."

And so from all of us farewell to you Dad.

Obituary

James O'Driscoll

"*James O'Driscoll*: From Bowl-Playing in his boyhood days along the roads around Kilcrea Abbey, a dozen miles west of Cork city, James (Jim) O'Driscoll SC, who has died aged 68, went on to become a senior barrister and one of the most popular members of the legal profession...

"In his legal capacity, his name was mentioned in one of the most controversial academic and media debates of recent times, namely as a signatory to an affidavit relating to the Kilmichael Ambush of 1920.....His name was mentioned last year in a critique of the controversial book *The IRA and its Enemies* by Newfoundland historian Peter Hart. Though it won the Ewart-Biggs prize, the book was widely criticised as depicting the War of Independence as a sectarian conflict involving ethnic cleansing. Included in the book was a purported interview with Ned Young, known as the last of "the boys of Kilmichael", the sole surviving veteran of the Kilmichael Ambush in November 1920. However, in an affidavit signed in 2007 by O'Driscoll, Ned's son, John Young, stated that his father had suffered a debilitating stroke affecting speech and mobility prior to the claimed interview. He also stated that Hart did not interview his father." (Irish Times, March 21, 2009).

Will this also serve as an obituary for Professor Hart's thesis about the War of Independence in West Cork? We think it will unless he can tell us, once and for all, who he interviewed on 19 November 1989, 6 days after Ned Young died.

It is not just us who are awaiting an answer to that question. So are the readers of *History Ireland* as Joost Augusteijn poses the question in the current issue (March-April, 2009): "*The serious questions over Hart's use of source material which he has unfortunately too lightly dismissed, are raised again here. It would indeed be helpful if Hart gave a systematic answer to these questions.*"

And so say all of us. But we are not holding our breath.

Minister of State Martin Mansergh goes North for Economic Talent

Martin Mansergh continues the activities of his father Sir Nicholas Mansergh by seeking active collusion with the *unionist* tradition in the North. Like his father, who had little real time for Irish cultural thought, our tax-paid Minister asked Nigel Dodds for “*experts from the North’s Department of Finance*” (I must have missed their last budget) according to the admiring article in *The Irish Times* (6th March, 2009). Nicholas Mansergh was knighted for his war-work for Britain, he held the ‘Irish post’ in the Ministry of Information and there is a record of him bitching about his proposals for blackguarding Ireland via propaganda being continually blocked by the British legation in Dublin and in particular by Sir John Maffey and John Betjeman. In a very recent account of more espionage reports by ‘Elizabeth Bowen to Winston Churchill’ brought out by the Aubane Historical Society, Jack Lane reports that Mansergh fulminated against “*the danger of putting fresh life into the Gaelic speaking movement which must always by its nature be anti-British. It was agreed that this danger existed but it was felt that while effective encouragement should be avoided superficial encouragement would be valuable*”. And in a book which is backed by Cambridge University and the UK State, there is again evidence showing Nicholas Mansergh complaining at the attitude of Maffey’s office because “*every proposal put forward at this end is torpedoed on the ground of policy at the other*”. (*British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland 1916-1945*, Paul McMahan, The Boydell Press, 2008—this was McMahan’s PhD and in the Acknowledgements he thanks his supervisors in Cambridge—Professor Christopher Andrew (Historian of M16) and Dr. Neville Wylie, and an earlier mentor in Dublin, Dr. Richard Aldous).

Minister Martin Mansergh wrote to Dodds “*asking if I could have loan of an expert from the Department of Finance and Personnel and he wrote back and said we could*” Mansergh told BBC’s Northern Ireland ‘*Hearts and Minds*’ programme. The New National Public Procurement Operation Unit “*will improve value for money outcomes from procurement through better purchasing and targeted savings*” according to the Office of Public Works. This did not go down well with our own experts as one can imagine. Brian Lucey, associate professor of finance at Trinity College, Dublin said that “*while*

there was an extraordinary dearth of qualified economists in the Civil Service... there was an untapped resource in Irish academia.” Garret Fitzgerald waded into the issue and blamed the Minister of Finance, Brian Lenihan, TD, for not employing enough economists stating that when he was Taoiseach there were 17 and that had fallen to 3 a few years ago... “*And this has contributed significantly to our current economic difficulties*”. If I was Garret Fitzgerald I wouldn’t be reminding the Irish electorate of his term in office as it was so disastrous but then there is no fear of the Irish Times reminding us of that.

Cork and Lord Jeffrey Archer

The economy might be going down the proverbial swanee but the great and the good of Cork city have been in a state of excitement not seen since well—away back when. Thomas Crosby Holdings paid Lord Archer to attend a Black-tie Ball in its impressive headquarters in South Mall. But who was to get the invites and of course pay for the pleasure of being in the presence of a true British Lord? That question excited many of societies’ finest and it is rumoured that those who didn’t make the grade exited the city and its environment claiming prior engagements elsewhere. The next morning there was a “*breakfast to aid St. Laurence Cheshire Home*” at the Clarion Hotel and at the two events Lord Archer sold his new book ‘*Paths of Glory*’ taking advantage commercially of the eejits present. In the local paper the Evening Echo, (Crosbie owned) there were many pictures of our elite grinning beside Lord Archer. Ted Crosbie of the Examiner dynasty crowed about how humbled Lord Archer was by life’s cruel blows offering an account of his incarceration in gaol as “*being truly inspirational*”.

Jeffrey Archer was a Tory MP and the English papers make no bones about the fact that this particular unpleasant wheeler and dealer had to leave Parliament as a bankrupt in very murky circumstances. But I remember his gaol time and there was an Irish tragic dimension to it. Archer was caught in a tabloid paper sting, having got caught with a prostitute in a London hotel. But in the fall-out, Archer got a friend to alibi him on the night in question, and so he won his action against the papers for slander. Several years passed and then his friend retracted his version and Archer was caught and jailed for perjury. The prostitute in question was an Irish girl called Monica Coughlan and she was quite beautiful but oh so lost. The passing years had not been kind to Ms Coughlan but eventually the tabloid paper tracked her down and told her she was vindicated as her original account now stood. Before Monica came to London again from the

Northern town she was living in—she was killed by a hit and run car accident. No one was ever brought to justice for her death and her killer is still unknown. A more decent Cork would never have had anything to do with the likes of Archer but this is now and that was then. But I want the citizens of Cork who paid tribute to Archer to remember a young vulnerable Irish girl and then tell me yarns of being in an English Lord’s company.

And what about you Minister of Education Batt O’Keefe? Gurning in the Echo’s picture tribute and then to cap it off—telling us that he is a “*huge lover of Jeffrey Archer’s works*” (Evening Echo, March 5th 2009). This is, I repeat, our Minister of Education.

Barnardos and Fergus Finlay

As the advertisements in the Irish media continue apace, Barnardos’ chief executive tells us why “*Investing in children is good business.*” And he means every word of it. In the article, he advocates that lobby groups must put pressure on the Government for more money to be spent on poverty and its’ alleviation. Well no-one can argue with that. But where does the money go to exactly? The media have almost hounded the Catholic Church out of looking after children, or so they like to pretend. Except for the likes of Father Peter McVerry and Sister Stan and all the other un-named nuns and priests who still work away at the coal face of poverty and education without fanfare.

In Limerick, in one of the worst estates, a group of American /Irish Franciscan brothers have initiated a programme and while the media do not report on them, I know they are doing great things. They have been out to Glenstal Abbey, the upmarket boarder’s school and have obtained the help of one of Ireland’s foremost authorities on gardening—(and incidentally a great scholar on Irish history) Father Brian Murphy, osb. Father Brian’s garden is world-famous especially his Bible-garden which contains every plant and flower mentioned in it, and he has been advising the brothers about planting and giving seeds etc for their project with the estate children who—contrary to reports—are not all in gangs. The brothers survive on what local people/parents give them despite terrible disadvantages. There is no great advertising blitz or lobbying Dublin for funds—they survive on what they can get and can give. So what does Chief Executive Finlay live on? Somewhere between €100,200—€100,500 p.a. Barnardos employ a director of advocacy, Ms Norah Gibbons and other professionals who are all well paid. In fact, Barnardos receives €13.5 million from statutory sources i.e. our taxes—€9 million of this from the HSE—every year. And these payments constitute 62% and 42%

respectively of Barnardos income. (It may have gone up since I obtained these figures.) And how fare children now? Well “20 youngsters died in care over a six-year period”. Figures released by the Health Service Executive show that nine of the deaths between 2000 and 2006 were due to “medical issues”. Two were due to death by suicide, two as a result of assault, two in road traffic accidents and “two drug-related deaths”.

Were these **deaths** flagged by newspaper headlines as they should have been? Were they what? In those headlines about “Catholic institutional abuse”—tell me again how many deaths by neglect there were?

Tony Blair & Israeli Blood Money

As the *Phoenix* (13th March 2009) reported there has been surprisingly little international attention to the news that the former British Prime Minister has received \$1 million award for “exceptional leadership” from the Israeli Dan David Foundation. “The PR guff surrounding this reward for Blair’s shameless support for virtually anything Israel inflicts on the Palestinian people makes much of Blair’s peace initiative in Ireland and Kosovo. But the reality is that Blair is being rewarded for his long time support for Israel.” Blair, if we can still recall, is supposed to be the representative of the Middle East Quartet. But the *Phoenix* wants to probe the “Dan David Foundation” and what a good job they make of it. The foundation has its headquarters in Tel Aviv University and was founded by Dan David, a life long Zionist who joined the Zionist Movement aged 16 in his native Romania and who has since made millions in instant photography. And while the foundation makes much of its criteria for awards being based on academic excellence, “the presence of such as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger” (who was memorably called a war criminal by Jeremy Paxman, when the latter had left power of course) on its board—Kissinger was a joint founder, with David—indicates a less innocent, non-academic agenda. The foundation was created in 2000 with \$100 million endowment from David, divides its awards into three categories—archaeology, performing arts and material science—and also into past, present and future. However, in 2004, in what appears to be a move into the political arena, an award for “present ... leadership was made to Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum. (WEF)”. More digging from the *Phoenix* found controversy on Schwab regarding his investments but nevertheless he is a trustee also of the Tel Aviv based Peres Centre for Peace founded by Shimon Peres.

Blair is in serious money according to the *Phoenix*. €2m plus annual fee from JP

Morgan Chase, €200,000 circafee for each lecture in the US academic circuit and the “all-expenses paid international show-boating as the utterly ineffectual (deliberately so) Quartet Middle East Envoy. The latter fees can be “dressed up as payments from relatively independent, if largely western oriented sources. But for this ‘peace’ envoy to take a million dollars from a blatantly Zionist propaganda outlet like the Dan David

Foundation just weeks after the Israelis butchered defenceless men, women and children in Gaza reveals a politician who has been bought and sold” (All the above can be accessed in the *Phoenix*, 13th March, 2009, who after a fallow period has begun real investigative journalism for the last while and is to be highly commended in these days of celebrity flotsam and jetsam.

Julianne Herlihy.

The Poetry Of Neutral Ireland

Concluding a review of *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry* ed. Gerald Dawe, Blackstaff, Belfast 2008

In the first part of this review I showed that Dawe’s anthology is misnamed, that his selection is biased, that many of the poems do not belong in this context and some of the inclusions are absurd, that all sorts of issues are confused and that the pro-war poet-propagandists of 1914-1918 are given a status they do not deserve. There is little more to be added, except to take a brief look at the ‘Irish war poetry’ of 1939-1945.

The first question is: where is it? Ulster, of course, provides some. But for the greater part of Ireland war poetry, in the sense of poetry expressing involvement in the war, seems to be non-existent. Kettle, Ledwidge, Gwynn, MacGill, MacGreevy—where are their successors? Had the Ireland that produced them disappeared? One can show that a mainly Catholic, rural, nationalist Ireland still existed; one can prove that men were still leaving it to fight in Great Britain’s great wars. But their experience was untouched by poetry second time round. Or else Gerald Dawe has failed to find their poems, and I think he must have searched hard.

Dawe’s anthology reveals this interesting fact, though the editor makes a valiant effort to conceal it. He drags in British war poets and naturalises them to make Irish war-poet substitutes. (See Part I of this review.) And being desperate anyhow to include Samuel Beckett, he has the bright idea of rounding off his poetic with a piece of Beckett’s prose—his radio script on the Irish Hospital at Saint-Lô in Normandy, which was commissioned by Radio Éireann but never actually broadcast.

It is often said that this was a coded attack on Irish neutrality, but if so the code seems unnecessarily subtle. There’s another message which Beckett conveys quite clearly. He doesn’t hide his opinion that the people who had commissioned his script were posturing frauds. Obviously they expected him to describe the work of the Irish at the Hospital, the difficulties they faced, how they successfully overcame them, and so on; and this information would then be used to boast and crow and

promote Irish self-satisfaction. In Beckett’s view, what was much more significant was how the French dealt with their own problems and how the Irish related to them. He concludes (with a jolt) by saying that Europe’s traditional culture is in ruins, some other kind of culture will be needed and he has some ideas about producing it. But he’d never have known about any of this in Ireland: it could only have been learnt in France.

The fury and scorn in this piece of writing bring it alive—the indignation that the French are being given less respect than their due. Beckett’s misanthropy is less noticeable here than in his plays and novels. Nevertheless, there is something about his script that is infuriating. The prose style he employs—that chilly, ironic, formally lucid, supercilious rhetoric—is associated with the history of colonialism in Ireland. It is a style that was mastered by any number of public schoolboys (one finds it, for example, in the lengthy letter Bomber Harris composed, when Churchill privately and briefly condemned the massacre at Dresden). This impersonal, scornful style is a literary suit of armour; you can launch severe attacks and then tell anyone who complains: “If the cap fits, wear it!” I don’t know whether Beckett expected his targets to broadcast his attack on them. It’s more interesting than most things that he wrote, but what it’s doing in Dawe’s book only Dawe might be able to explain.

Dawe has found a few fine poems inspired by World War Two, but (except for Louis MacNiece in particular) the poets have other things in mind besides condemning those who did not take part in the carnage. Hiroshima inspired two ambitious long poems, by Eoghan Ó Tuairisc and Anthony Glavin; Ó Tuairisc’s *Aifreann na Marbh* (Mass for the Dead) is outstanding. Brian Coffey’s *The Death of Hector* has surprising power. This is a poet who was impelled by the need to say things. (Coffey’s poem is in sharp contrast to Michael Longley’s *Ceasefire*, also composed of thoughts on the death of Hector, which is dominated by the poet’s

self-conscious posing.) The few short lyrics that Francis Stuart composed in Berlin are slight compared to what Yeats did, but they too show an artist who made art out of world war.

Much more than the actual World War, what left an impression on Irish poetry was the experience of neutrality – not being in the war, staying out of the war, though aware that at any moment one might be dragged unwillingly into it. From this point of view one could even make a case for including Patrick Kavanagh. To call anything he ever wrote a war poem would be downright absurd, but he does have a few neutrality poems. In *Epic and Beyond the Headlines* he defends his own personal neutrality: one isn't obliged to be caught up in great wars in order to be a good poet. To be sure, he could be rather sour about other people's neutrality. *No Social Conscience* comments sourly on the neutral psychology, without actually condemning the neutral policy. (Why, I wonder, has Dawe not included that poem? Is it just because Kavanagh matter-of-factly reveals that neutrality was popular?)

There were young men who were just barely of military age by the time World War Two ended and were feeling bad about not having gone to war, or alternatively they felt bad about being expected to go to war as their fathers, grandfathers, etc., had gone before them, though they themselves didn't actually want to. Two of them, Anthony Cronin and Richard Murphy respectively, wrote interesting poems about it afterwards. Eavan Boland (b. 1944) has an exuberant poem called *We were Neutral in the War*; it's about a woman in wartime who has quite other priorities besides war.

The Corkman Patrick Galvin was under military age but he signed on anyway and served, we are told, "with Bomber Command in the UK, Middle East and Africa". However, his wartime experience produced no poetry, or none that Dawe felt able to print. Of the two poems included in the anthology, the shorter one is the more successful. It expresses Galvin's feeling of being culturally torn. His father had served in India with the Royal Munster Fusiliers; his mother revered Pearse and Connolly. These two founded a family but remained, it seems, spiritually worlds apart. In old age his father was a lonely man who used to walk by the banks of the Lee, talking to the swans and remembering the Ganges.

My mother wore green till she died
My father died with swans.

Only the rivers remain
Slow bleeding.

In the other poem Galvin imagines the feelings of people living their ordinary lives, quite uninvolved in war, when suddenly they find themselves wounded

and bleeding and dying, as a result... no, not of the activities of Bomber Command, but... of stray gunfire during Easter Week! The poem is some sort of protest against the Ireland where Galvin finds himself. It is incoherent.

Even the Ulster contingent made some of their best poems about neutrality. Louis MacNiece's memorable *Neutrality* is, among other things, a lament for the lost Ireland of Kettle, Gwynn and Ledwidge. In a different vein, without bitterness, there is Roy McFadden's vivid description of *Dublin to Belfast: Wartime*. And Derek Mahon does a fascinating tour of the mind of Elizabeth Bowen. In *the Shelbourne* (Elizabeth Bowen, Nov. 1940) presents the lady *in situ*:

where at an Empire writing-table, I set down
my situation reports for the Dominions Office,
pen-sketches of MacEntee, James Dillon and
the rest...

She does have some mixed feelings
about what she's doing:

the Mata Hari of the austerity age,
I feel like a traitor spying on my own past.

But who would she be a traitor to? She has a house in North Cork, but nothing to do with the people there. Where is home? England? She has a house in Gower St. too; even England, though, the way things are going, may no longer have much to do with her. But there's still one bastion in a corner of St. Stephen's Green – her true home is *the Shelbourne Hotel*:

though this is home really, a place of warmth
and light,
a house of artifice neither here nor there
between the patrician past and the egalitarian
future,
tempting one always to prolong one's visit...

In some ways Gerald Dawe has done the anthologist's real work. He has collected many poems which, while not being war poetry in the normal sense, the 'war poetry' which Yeats explicitly refused to write, nonetheless do have something to say about war or wartime and are well worth reading. This only makes his ideological bias and distortions all the more damnable. It is outrageous that such poems should be made to serve such a cause. One of the jewels is by Francis Stuart, thinking of Ireland in Berlin 1943:

Over you falls the sea light, festive yet pale,
As though from the trees hung candles alight in
a gale
To fill with shadows your days, as the distant
beat
Of waves fills the lonely width of many a
western street.
Bare and grey and hung with berries of moun-
tain ash,
Drifting through ages with tilted fields awash,
Steeped with your few lost lights in the long
Atlantic dark,
Sea-birds' shelter, our shelter and ark.

(From *We Have Kept the Faith: Poems 1918-1992*, Raven Arts Press, 1992)

John Minahane

The Irish who fought in the Spanish Civil War

An Adult Gallery talk on the 1938 Memorial Banner to the Irish International Brigaders who gave their lives in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, given by **Manus O'Riordan** on 7th March 2009 in the National Museum, Collins Barracks, at the *"Soldiers and Chiefs Exhibition: the Irish at War at Home and Abroad"*.

It is a great honour to be asked to give this talk on the Memorial Banner of the Irish Volunteers of the 15th International Brigade, which is wonderfully displayed in the cabinet behind me. I will briefly detail the story of the Banner itself, before proceeding to talk about what it represents. *En route*, I will make a distinction between memorialising and remembrance. If some would consider what I say about that distinction a bit too harsh, perhaps I might then surprise you with another piece of information about one particular item in the adjoining display cabinet, whose provenance is not so clearly evident.

This Memorial Banner was produced during the Spanish War itself, and unveiled in 1938 by Father Michael O'Flanagan (1876-1942). Earlier this year we commemorated the 90th anniversary of the opening sitting—on January 21st,

1919—of the very First Dáil Éireann to be freely chosen by the Irish people in the General Election of December 1918 and which, in turn, ratified the Irish Republic proclaimed by the Easter Rising of 1916.

Fr. O'Flanagan had been called upon by Cathal Brugha to pronounce the opening prayer of that historic session, hailing him as "the staunchest priest who ever lived in Ireland". Michael O'Flanagan was required to be even stauncher still in character two decades later, when in fact he was the one and only Irish priest prepared to support the Spanish Republic and the Government that had been freely chosen by the majority of the Spanish people in that country's General Election of 1936. O'Flanagan stood alone in the Church against an Irish Hierarchy that was unanimous in its denunciation of the Spanish Republic. Cardinal McRory went even further and

encouraged the Irish Fascist leader Eoin O'Duffy to raise a Brigade of 700 to support Franco's revolt against that Republic, a revolt that was backed to the hilt, both politically and militarily, by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

O'Duffy's Brigade lasted only six months in Spain and suffered no more casualties than can be counted on the fingers of both hands. On the other side of the political divide, about 300 Irish volunteered to serve in the ranks of the International Brigades in defence of the Spanish Republic. As many as 60 of them laid down their lives, beginning with Tommy Patten from the Co. Mayo Gaeltacht of Achill Island, who was killed defending Madrid in December 1936, and ending with Dubliners Liam McGregor and Jack Nalty, who gave their lives on the Ebro front in September 1938, during the final combat engagement involving the International Brigaders before they were withdrawn a month later.

This Memorial Banner was painted at the back of Kelly's shop in Dublin's Amiens Street. It was executed by a group of art students led by Maurice Cogan, acting under the supervision and according to the design of the artistic daughter-of-the-house, Aida Kelly (1915-1979). Aida's husband, Maurice MacGonigal, would become an internationally acclaimed artist. Their son, Muiris Mac Conghail, became a renowned documentary film maker, while his son, Fiach Mac Conghail, is currently Director of the Abbey Theatre.

The 1938 Irish International Brigade Memorial Banner has been on display here in the Collins Barracks National Museum since 2006, having been carefully repaired and restored by Rachel Phelan. Before that, it had been on display in the Irish Labour History Society Museum. It is now on joint loan from that Museum and the International Brigade Memorial Trust, of which I am the Executive Member for Ireland. By two pleasant but appropriate coincidences, the ILHS President who authorised that loan, Brendan Byrne, is both a former Union colleague of mine in SIPTU, Liberty Hall, and a nephew of International Brigader Eugene Downing (1913-2003), who fought side-by-side with my own father Micheál O'Riordan (1917-2006) in the 1938 battle of the Ebro.

It was my father who, on behalf of his fellow International Brigade veterans, had been custodian of that Banner since the 1940s, preserving it in James Connolly House. Its awkward size and vulnerability rendered it unsuitable for use in commemorative events. Instead, we use a smaller banner made by Jer O'Leary, which I have brought along to show you, and which suitably consists of the red, yellow and purple flag of the Spanish Republic,



bearing the words—in Gaelic script—*connolly column XV brigada internacional*. The last such occasion on which it was used was exactly a fortnight ago, 14th February, for the 600-strong memorial procession through Dublin City centre to Liberty Hall, following behind the ashes of Bob Doyle (1916-2009), the very last of Ireland's International Brigade fighters.

I do, however, know of at least two occasions on which the larger Memorial Banner was used for outside commemorations. The first was in November 1987, when I gave a lecture on Irish and Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, as the Banner stood beside the Ark of the former synagogue of the Irish Jewish Museum, located off the Dublin street where I myself grew up and near the childhood home of Irish Jewish International Brigader Maurice Levitas (1917-2001). The second occasion was outside Liberty Hall in May 1991, as the Memorial Plaque was unveiled to those Irish who had given their lives in defence of the Spanish Republic, and as Maurice Levitas read out the roll of honour.

Six months later, in November 1991, the Memorial Banner was presented by my father to the Irish Labour History Society Museum, in a moving ceremony at which the last Irish survivor of the 1937 battle of Jarama, Peter O'Connor (1912-1999), also spoke. The family of Aida Kelly was represented by her now deceased brother, Arthur Kelly. Arthur had served with me with me in Liberty Hall as an official of the ITGWU. So also did his daughter, my friend and SIPTU colleague Barbara, who is the owner of an original scene from that War painted by the world-famous Catalan Republican artist, Sim. It

is precisely a reproduction of that same Sim painting that is featured as a panel in this Banner, centred directly under the names of the dead and the memorial invocation "*Democracy Remembers Her Sons*". This is not, however, a complete list of all those who gave their lives in Spain. Indeed, it contains the name of one Volunteer, presumed dead, who had gone missing in action behind enemy lines on the Aragon front, but who eventually made his way back to his own lines, fought again on the Ebro front—and lived to tell the tale.

In the first row of this Banner you can see that the second name is that of the Reverend Robert Hilliard, introduced by Christy Moore's song "*Viva la Quince Brigada!*" in the following manner:

"Bob Hilliard was a Church of Ireland pastor. From Killarney across the Pyrenees he came. From Derry came a brave young Christian Brother. Side by side they fought and died in Spain."

Beside him is the London-Jewish volunteer Samuel Lee who chose to fight in the ranks of the Irish, although he may in fact have had his own connection here during part of his childhood, as he had also been known to some of his fellow-volunteers as "Dubliner David Levy".

In the second row is the Co. Tyrone poet, Charlie Donnelly, famous for the very last words he is reputed to have uttered before being shot—"Even the Olives Are Bleeding!" On the same line is Liam Tumilson of Belfast, formerly Billy, a one-time member of the Orange Order before being persuaded of the need for cross-community unity among workers

by the Communist Party of Ireland. In the fourth row is another Belfastman, Bill Henry, a First World War veteran. In the fifth row are Eamon McGrotty of Derry, the former Christian Brother referred to in Christy Moore's song, and Achill Islander Tommy Pattern. In the sixth row is John O'Shea of Waterford—the man who came back from the dead! In the seventh row is Kit Conway, a Flying Column hero in his native Tipperary during our own War of Independence, and who would be killed in action in the February 1937 battle of Jarama as he commanded three separate companies. As I wrote in some additional verses in his honour that I've attached to the song "*The Galtee Mountain Boy*":

"So gathered here let's raise a cheer for
Burncourt's native sons,
Jack Ryan and Michael Guerin defending with
their guns
The Republic and Dáil Éireann, the Irish
people's choice,
First in the fray, brave Kit Conway, with John
Kearney and the Boys."

And:

"'36 the year, defying fear, saw the Spanish
people vote
A Republic for the Rights of Man, but Franco
would revolt.
Gernika ablaze from Hitler's planes, the Re-
public overthrown,
Despite the brave 15th Brigade, Kit Conway to
the fore."

In the final line of the Banner's list you can see the name of Tommy Wood. To again quote from Christy Moore's song:

"Tommy Wood, aged 17, died in Cordoba.
With na Fianna he learned to hold his gun.
From Dublin to the Villa del Rio
Where he fought and died beneath the Spanish
sun."

Before departing for Spain, Tommy had left a letter for his mother: "*I am going to Spain to fight with the International Column. I left a message to be delivered on Sunday. We are going out to fight for the working class. It is not a religious war, that is all propaganda. God Bless you.*" This Republican youth was a nephew of Patrick Doyle, hanged by the British in Mountjoy Jail in 1920, and not reburied in Glasnevin cemetery until more than eight decades later, along with Kevin Barry. Two months after Patrick had been hanged, his brother Seán was killed in action—during the War of Independence battle of the Custom House.

Liam McGregor's father had perished when serving in the British Army during World War One, but neither he nor his mother Esther—whom I had the honour of knowing throughout the 1970s and up to her death in the 1980s—ever wore

Poppies or participated in British Legion commemorations. Esther knew that the twin personal tragedies in her life resulted from the deaths of both her husband and her son in two very different wars. She fully concurred with Frank Ryan's statement from Spain: "*Our 50,000 who died in the Great War were sacrificed uselessly; no life here is given in vain.*"

These were sentiments also shared by Achill Islander Tommy Patten. This former IRA volunteer had gone to Spain inspired by James Connolly. So also had Bill Scott, one of the very first Irish International Brigaders, whose Spanish identity card is on display here in the adjoining cabinet. Bill Scott hailed from a radical Dublin Protestant working class tradition that had previously seen his father join the Irish Citizen Army and fight alongside James Connolly in the GPO during the 1916 Rising. It was not Armistice Day nor Remembrance Sunday that was commemorated by the Irish volunteers in Spain—not even by the World War One veterans among them—but the anniversaries of Tone and Connolly. And that is why Father O'Flanagan, when unveiling this Banner in 1938, said of the Irish anti-Fascist dead in Spain: "*Their deed was as noble as that of the men of 1916.*"

Tommy Pattern is individually commemorated by a magnificent memorial on his native island. He is collectively commemorated with his comrades-in-arms both in this Memorial Banner and on the Liberty Hall Memorial Plaque. But the memory of the Republicanism he stood for has been traduced by the addition last year of his name to the self-proclaimed Mayo Peace Park Memorial. This is not at all a memorial to all Mayomen who died in warfare, for it specifically excludes all those Mayomen who gave their lives for their own country in the War of Independence, as well as excluding Mayo's Major John McBride, who had been executed in 1916 for his leadership in the Easter Rising. The primary purpose of that memorial is to honour not only the Mayo lives uselessly sacrificed in the Imperialist War of 1914-18 but also those Mayomen who served in America's imperialist war against the National Liberation Front of Vietnam.

Let there be no misunderstanding here. I believe the British Legion has every right to honour its dead. I myself have felt a very definite sense of family sorrow as I opened the Book of the Dead at the British War Memorial in Islandbridge to read the name of my grandfather's first cousin John Sheehy, who was killed on the Somme Front in 1918. But the name of the Irish Republican Tommy Patten should not have been so outrageously hijacked

for a British Legion agenda in Mayo.

This all brings me to the need to appreciate the difference between memorialising and remembrance. I remember with sorrow the name of John Sheehy, while rejecting the cause for which his life was sacrificed. But I honour both the names on this International Brigade Memorial Banner and the cause for which they fought. The names of those Irishmen who volunteered to either defend or attack the Spanish Republic are indeed remembered here in the same adjoining display cabinet. But here there is nothing resembling a Mayo sleight-of-hand. It is made perfectly clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that those volunteers were on opposite sides of the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, as they are on opposite sides of the cabinet itself.

My family, in one way or another has been responsible for all the International Brigade artefacts on display here: myself, on behalf of the IBMT, for the Memorial Banner itself; my son Neil for the Spanish Republican Army cap my father wore during the battle of the Ebro; my late father himself, shortly before his death, for the loan of Bill Scott's Catalan identity card.

On display on the opposite side of that cabinet is the leather autograph book, complete with the Nazi swastika among its embossed decorative insignia, of Tom Hyde of O'Duffy's Brigade. Hyde had followed the Blueshirt O'Duffy's political trajectory all the way—from Fine Gael to the unequivocally Fascist National Corporate Party. Tom Hyde has been one of O'Duffy's few casualties in Spain—being killed in a shootout with troops from their own Francoist side, a regiment of Canary Islanders, in what would nowadays be euphemistically categorised as "friendly fire".

His nephew and namesake, Tom Hyde, has been a friend of mine for almost forty years, but views his uncle as having fought on the wrong side. Many of you will already have seen the historical Tom Hyde on screen, without realising who he was. But the next time you view the documentary film footage of the start of the Irish Civil War, as the Free State Army opens up artillery fire on the Republican garrison in the Four Courts, you will now know that the officer seen covering his ears was Tom Hyde.

The loan source for Tom Hyde's autograph book is left anonymous in this display cabinet. It might otherwise have caused confusion! For I am its owner, having been entrusted with it a decade ago by his nephew Tom. But when this exhibition was first mooted, I had a

problem of conscience. Having loaned the artefacts on the International Brigade side, should I leave that autograph book from the Fascist side buried at home in a drawer, or should I allow Hyde's name to be remembered? I could not make such a decision on my own. I felt my father had every entitlement to exercise a right of veto. It was, after all, his War! No sooner had I raised the matter, however, than his response came unhesitatingly and unequivocally: "Put it on display. He was probably the best of them!" For my father also remembered the role of Tom Hyde at an earlier stage of his life, one who had served bravely in the East Cork IRA during the War of Independence.

I too honour Tom Hyde's role in our war, while deploring his role in Spain. But like my father, I agree he should be remembered. It is, however, Hyde's opponents, the men on this International Brigade Memorial Banner whom I honour. I will therefore conclude with a poem which the late Arthur Kelly, brother of the Banner's designer Aida Kelly Mac Gonigal, composed and read out on the occasion of its presentation to the Irish Labour History Society Museum in 1991:

We Will Remember Them

In memory of the Irish Brigade of the Spanish Civil War

We read the names over and over

We read the names of places where so many died

On arid plains and on the cold sierras

Visioned faces imaging before my eyes

And now they are dead and we are alive

And we cannot bring them back

The once warm and laughing faces dying

In too many far-off places

In defence of a cherished freedom

The brittle sun splinters into a million facets

Of bright pieces—each one glancing shaft of light

On lonely graves of our fallen comrades

In the said Iberian peninsula

This now a solemn vow a promise to those

Now silent images that in their number we will rekindle and keep alight

The candle of freedom and liberty

The orange and lemon groves still blossom and grow

The olives still bleed and we still hope

And not in vain for freedoms' light

We will not forget them

We will remember them.

Arthur Kelly [1917-2007]

We will indeed not only remember but also honour their names by virtue of this 1938 Memorial Banner. Thank you for your attention.

Irish Neutrality

An Unpublished Letter

The London local papers the *Hampstead & Highgate Express* and *The Camden New Journal* failed to publish this letter. I targeted these two papers because of their non-critical attitude to a play: *Berlin Hanover Express*, a theatre play about Irish neutrality during WW2. Later the *Guardian* newspaper in London reviewed this play and gave it four stars out of five. They also failed to publish my letter.

The play concerns two Irish diplomats in wartime Germany. One wishes Germany to win in order to avenge Britain's domination over Ireland for the past centuries. The other, having discovered the concentration camps, argues against this notion. He wonders how a country can be neutral in such a war. Though it isn't stated outright, he is obviously pro-British. It seems that Ireland should not have a mind of her own but should go along with whatever big brother appears on the scene.

To the best of my knowledge the Irish Embassy in London failed to make any comment, unlike most other embassies here when their country is being insulted.

My letter begins:

Unfortunately Ireland is a country about which some people have no hesitation in making badly researched and at times illiterate statements. This malaise seems to affect a considerable number from university professors to the average citizen.

Berlin Hanover Express by Ian Kennedy Martin (Hampstead Theatre) was reviewed in the *Camden New Journal* and the *Hampstead & Highgate Express* (12 Feb) and is about Irish neutrality during WW2. Kennedy has the idea that a country though neutral should have been loyal to Churchill's Britain and in not being so must have been loyal to Hitler's Germany.

It is asking a lot for a small country to be loyal to an empire which it had to throw off at a great cost to itself during the years 1916 - 1921.

At the beginning of WW2 Ireland had two potential enemies—Britain and Germany. Either country could have invaded. Up to a quarter of a million US troops passed through the North Ireland during the war. It was feared south of the border that these troops would invade at Britain's insistence.

It's got to be remembered that Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Spain, Norway, Iceland and Turkey were also neutral. Iceland was invaded by Britain and marked on the map as her ally. It was later handed to the USA by its captors. Neutral Norway was next on the list for invasion but the Germans got there first. Neutral Sweden of all the neutral countries had more to export than anyone else—steel. It exported this mainly to Germany. If Britain had been successful in capturing Norway then it would be possible that Sweden was next on the list.

Yes, Eamon de Valera, then the prime minister of Ireland, did express his condolences on Hitler's death to the German Ambassador in Dublin. He also expressed condolences on the death of Neville Chamberlain in 1940. He had more reason for doing this than being diplomatic about Hitler's death—Chamberlain during his premiership had handed back the three British Treaty Ports to Ireland in 1938.

Winston Churchill on becoming prime minister criticised Chamberlain's action. His idea was to have Ireland on the British side despite Eamon de Valera's wishes. Still, if Winston Churchill had died at the end of the war, de Valera would no doubt have also expressed his condolences to the British Government. That is despite Churchill's insulting speech about Ireland on the 8th of May, 1945 for Victory in Europe Day.

Today the Republic of Ireland is still basically neutral (with a few hiccups) though her allies would like to see her properly in NATO and thus engaged totally in their dirty wars, for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Atrophied thinking on Ireland's WW2 neutrality harks back to the anti-Irish racist attitudes that existed in post-war Britain.

Wilson John Haire

LIVING IN GLASS HOUSES

1

Once more it is Irish Neutrality,
a fine punch ball for those who will encroach.
What other nation suffers this reproach
from warriors of incredulity.

Fight Germany cries the cruel empire.
An empire we cracked and watched it ooze
gore.
Just forget history it is folklore.
Join us or become a funeral pyre.

You will get back the Six Counties said he.
Chamberlain handed you the Treaty Ports
though his politics was kind of all-sorts,
butterfly collar but without the V.

The Taoiseach of the day wisely said no.
Past promises brought Ireland lots of woe.

2

You want to be like Switzerland, Turkey.
Of course Iceland tried that—we invaded.
Next Norway, except, Germany made it.
Salazar, Franco, our friends, though murky.

And so they won, riding the Russian bear.
Hitler was dead. Did democracy win
when neutrality was a bigger sin.
A small nation defied the hostile glare.

It was protocol at the embassy
of a nation in ashes and scorched earth.
But who hid colonies beneath her skirt
while moral rage fuelled her odyssey.

That high ground is forever occupied
with the weapons of war oversubscribed.

Wilson John Haire (28.3.2009)

Does
It
Up

Stack
?

TREASON?

Ireland has been raped and pillaged by treasonous politicians and officials ever since Ireland joined the European Union. It has to be stopped now. Professor Joe Lee has shown that in the ten years leading up to Ireland's accession in 1973, the Irish economy progressed at a faster rate than in the ten years after accession. Ireland had a vigorous agricultural sector, a vigorous fishing industry, an indigenous manufacturing industry and a food industry. Where has it all gone? It was mostly given away to other EU countries.

Treasonous politicians and officials negotiated away Ireland's fishing industry on a promise that the farmers would be favoured. They were, initially, while the fishermen were mostly put out of business. Then, when the EU had got hold of our fishing, the farmers also began to be put out of business. The price of milk paid to the farmer has not increased in recent years. The Irish market is flooded with cheeses and yoghurts from the UK, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy and others. Fruit and vegetables previously grown in Ireland are now hugely imported from other EU countries and from Nigeria, New Zealand, China, Cyprus and South Africa. The EU also has a favourable trading relationship with the Israeli State and so stolen Palestinian fruits are rebranded and sold on as "*produce of South Africa*".

Irish farmers meanwhile are being paid to "set aside" land and leave it fallow. Sugar-beet growing has been abolished—it was a very valuable crop not only for itself but as a part of the system of crop rotation giving the land more natural nutrients. The grants and compensation monies being paid to farmers are a small proportion of our valuable marine resources which were given away by our political ruling classes. Over-regulation has also damaged our tourism industry; restrictions on salmon and trout fishing and on game shooting have badly damaged that sector of tourism. Also the planning restrictions on "*Special Areas of Conservation*" imposed on us by the EU and our successive colluding governments have resulted in major tourism projects being aborted or put on the long finger. The other EU states have no problem with granting permission for major tourism projects on their sea-coasts and in scenic mountain resorts provided special care

and best practise are strictly adhered to—though I have seen parts of Spain and Portugal and what has been done in some places amounts to national vandalism. Ireland is shooting itself in the proverbial foot by over-protecting the environment but is that the case with *all* such projects?

Royal Dutch Shell has been very fortunate in its dealing with our government especially the Fianna Fail and Green parties.

How now sails the Ship of State Minister of the Environment, and leader of the Green party—John Gormley?

Shell to Sea is a small protest-group in a community torn apart by what is happening in Rosspoint, County Mayo. Royal Dutch Shell have left the fertile Niger Delta with the kind of environmental eco-damage that is a bitter legacy for its inhabitants. Some top world eco-scientists estimate that the damage left by Shell might never be rectified. Yet, here in Ireland, the red-carpet was rolled out for these same people. Secret deals with our government enabled Shell to *keep all its profits and share nothing of its drilling with our people*. In other words, Shell gets to keep all *our gas* and other natural resources except the post-Shell cleanup which is what the Rosspoint people will have to deal with. Shell has shown no care about Bog-slips. Even the ESB which has had several mishaps with slippery bogs could have told them that bringing a high-pressure gas-pipe on shore from the sea in an area full of boggy land is a time-bomb of catastrophic proportions. When the little people say so, they are intimidated and bunged into prison. Our great national media is complicity silent. Our little democracy sneers at the kind of people that made this land theirs. And Minister Gormley—our Green leader *pretends that nothing is amiss*. As does local Minister O' Cuiv and his merry co-horts. As does Fine Gael TD and leader of the Opposition Mayo-man Enda Kenny. And all this in the great Michael Davitt country.

"Break open your hearts and bleed."

And there is more. An endangered species of bird was in the inconvenient habit of nesting in large numbers on a cliff-face at Rosspoint. They were a beautiful sight locally and were much visited to be seen and marvelled at. Shell solved what they saw as *their problem* by covering the whole extent of the cliff-face with green netting, thus denying their habitat to the nesting birds.

In the UK, France, Italy, Spain et cetera, every possible cove and harbour has its marina for small fishing boats and pleasure boats—thus giving a boost to the local economy even in the most out-of-the-way places. Likewise, every beach and strand

is tastefully exploited with small family owned hotels, bistros and bars for the locals enjoyed by the quieter, more discerning tourists. (I am not talking obviously about the trash British/Irish drinking/binging/ places in the sun like Porto Banus etc.) In Ireland such tourism developments are objected to by those people with good incomes from elsewhere in the economy, and who are mainly objecting because of their holiday homes and *their vistas*. Like the likes of Neil Jordan in Castletownbere which ended up with no marina because he needed his restful vista and then he went off to Italy! But the damage was done. All along the south coast of England, the west coast of Scotland and the north coast of France, there are towns and villages making a good living from tourism, particularly water-related tourism in climates no different from our climate in Ireland. There are some glorious golden strands in East Cork and West Waterford which deserve to be known world-wide. (West-Cork is very well known as is Kerry.) All the stretches should be rezoned for appropriate tourism development. And not just what benefits the Duke of Devonshire and his infamous "Magna Carta" claims. We—the people are entitled to these assets—we actually own them and all that is needed is *policies* that effectively enable the local communities to develop tourism infrastructures. The only difference is that our government has no long-term policy of using the assets we have got and what mighty "*green*" ones they are. This will only be rectified by putting our need for a Ministry for the Marine and Tourism into a reality and then making policies that pay attention to this all-important area of our economy.

BANKING FRAUDS

Irresponsible and often downright crooked bankers and para-bankers in the USA have caused the present recession. OK there may have been subsidiary causes such as the Irish building far more houses and offices than were necessary and the Chinese producing far more manufactured goods than the USA and others could pay for. But basically, it was all fuelled by fictitious money. Money is a medium of exchange and a store of value. But the bankers invented unearned money. Billions of US dollars were invented just as surely as if they were printing forged dollar notes.

It is like this: If I sell your house, which I do not own, to a third party, there are then two houses in existence—the real house you live in and the fictional house I have sold. In due course, the buyer of the fictional house will want a real house delivered. And so I have to buy a real house identical to the one I purported to

sell, so that I can deliver it to the buyer. So I buy your house at a lower price and hand it over to the buyer. You are with me so far and you can see the snag. The address of the fictional house I sold in the first place will not be the address (i.e. the identity) of the real house I delivered to the buyer. Yes, to do this trick it is necessary to do it without specifying the exact address at any stage of the transaction. Sounds crazy—doesn't it? Yes it does and it is. Furthermore it is regarded by society as dishonest and fraudulent to sell houses without owning them.

But that is exactly what "*short sellers*" do with shares. "*Short selling*" is mostly done by bankers, and by para-bankers and so-called "*financiers*". Every single share in every single incorporated company has its own individual number, i.e. its own distinct identity.

The Stock Market will not accept a Sell order from you or me unless we hand over our Share Certificate which identifies the exact shares we wish to sell. On the other hand, the Stock Market will accept a Sell order from a bank or similar institution **without** an identification of the exact shares to be sold. All the banker has to say (electronically) is "*Sell two million shares in General Motors*" or perhaps "*Sell five million shares in AIB*" etc etc. without identifying precisely which shares in General Motors or AIB are to be sold. They don't even have to state that they own the shares, and they know it is a fraud, but it is a fraud which banking and stock-broking society has accepted and has been perpetrating at least as far back as before 1929.

It is a fraud the victims of which are legitimate shareholders such as innocent people like you and me and such as Pension Trust Funds.

Some Governments have tried to stamp out the practice of "*short selling*" by making it illegal to sell shares not owned by the purported sellers. However, in those jurisdictions where "*short selling*" is prohibited, the bankers and "*financiers*" came up with another strategy which is fraudulent. They borrowed or "*rented*" the shares which they wished to sell. Now, the whole purpose of such selling is to "*short*" the shares. That is, to put so many of a certain type of share up for sale that the price will fall and then the banker or "*financier*" buys shares and hands them back to the owner from whom the sold shares were borrowed. The results of this transaction are:

- (1) the banker/financier makes a profit
- (2) the owner/lender of the shares gets back different shares than were lent and

now valued at less because the market price has fallen due to the market-manipulation-effect of the transaction.

You may ask why should anyone who owns shares lend them even at a "*rent*" so as to facilitate "*short selling*". The answer is they don't really. No one person owns enough shares to move the market. But "*Pension Trust Funds*" do own huge holdings of shares in nearly all public quoted companies. The **Managers** of the Pension Trust Funds lent out the shares under their management. A nominal "*rent*" was received by the Pension Trust Fund and, in my opinion, the Managers who did this unethical lending received a big kickback—a bribe—for doing the lending of pension assets.

Thus the values of Pension Trust Funds fell and fell heavily. The fraud deprived millions of workers of their pension funds.

For example, the biggest pension funds in the world were the CALTRS and CALPERS in California, USA. These two pension funds, holding teachers' and public servants' funds lost a huge proportion of their values because their managers 'lent out' their enormous shareholdings in Stock Market shares to hedge-fund operators/speculators. The hedge-fund operators were out to make quick bucks and they did not know where to stop and it ran out of control. CALTRS and CALPERS had big holdings in Bank of Ireland and AIB shares which were almost wiped out in value.

And yet this criminal business of short-selling is still supported by writers in the *Wall Street Journal* and in the *Financial Times*. Are they mad? No, they just want their stock broker friends to continue making enormous commissions on the transactions which the out-lawing of hedge-funds would abolish.

Another criminal activity supported by the financial journals is the trade in derivatives and credit default swaps. Derivatives dealing is purely gambling and should be controlled by Gambling Laws rather than Financial Service's Laws. While Stock Markets are rising, it is easy enough to make money in Derivatives which move up or down in multiples of the underlying share prices. So that when the short-sellers collapsed the share prices, the Derivatives based on shares fell in multiples tenfold. Incredibly, many banks permitted or even encouraged their traders to spend in Derivatives. Like gambling on a 'certainty' in the Grand National or in the Kentucky Derby. Why did the Financial Regulator allow this? Ignorance? Not likely. Complicity? Probably. Credit Default Swaps (CDS) are all very well until unscrupulous and criminally dishonest bankers and para-bankers started swapping Credit Default Guarantees

which were fictitious i.e. 'naked' as the lingo goes.

Colin Peterson, the Chairman of the US House of Representatives has introduced a Bill which provides that all "*naked*" CDS contracts—"naked" is where the participants do not actually own the underlying loan or bond—be banned by law. A process which the *Financial Times* protests will wipe out "perhaps 80% of the market". The FT calls the proposal absurd and ridiculous with Colin Peterson as a politician looking for populism and says that "*consenting adults should be left get on with it*" (*Financial Times*, 2nd February 2009).

The problem is the "*consenting adults*" so beloved of the FT were not doing something in private on their own—they were committing fraudulent acts in public with our money and our pension funds.

Will the Irish Minister for Finance or the Minister for Justice (we are dealing with crime here) have the courage to legislate effectively against short-sellers, "naked" CDS traders and Derivative traders? To tolerate further these criminal acts does not stack up.

WHERE ARE THE AUDITORS?

The Enron affair in the USA triggered a lawsuit which eliminated the auditing company Arthur Anderson which sank under the weight of damages for malpractice.

Auditors and Chartered Accountants signed off on the Balance Sheets of companies such as Bank of Ireland, AIB, Northern Rock and ABS etc etc. It has now been conclusively shown by events that these Balance Sheets were false. The Debtors were hugely bad; the assets such as Credit Default Swaps were largely non-existent, Contracts for Difference were pure gambling and certainly not assets. To cap it all, there were truly massive loans given to directors, director's associates and politicians which even the most cursory audit must have revealed, and the evidence is that this conduct was going on for many years.

The millions of Euros paid in bonuses were calculated on the basis of false audited accounts. So why is there a deafening silence about the auditors? And why did Price Waterhouse Coopers get paid €12,500,000 for their work of auditing the Bank of Ireland while KMPG got €8,500,000 for presumably similar work in AIB? Why the extra €4 million for PWC? Both Banks are about the same size? It doesn't stack up!

Michael Stack

Historians

History Ireland on Coolcrease

Joost Augusteijn reviewed the *Coolcrease* book for *History Ireland*. He did what he could for RTE and the academic Establishment, but it appears that he found the main things indefensible—RTE's slant on the Coolcrease killings and Peter Hart's handling of the Kilmichael Ambush. His critical review therefore has the character of apologetics in the bad sense—not in the sense of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, but in the sense of defensive dialectics on the margin of the issue, which have the object of distracting attention from the issue proper.

Much of Augusteijn's criticism of the book is the kind that in English aesthetic circles used to be called "*precious*". Let's call it finicky. Like this:

"The successful refutation of the central tenet of the RTE documentary does not, however, make it a good book."

I would have thought that a book produced for the purpose of refuting a position asserted by the state broadcaster, in a programme put out to the millions, which actually did refute it, would be judged a good book according to the critical standard applicable to such a publication. But no, it is not a good book, because: "*the various contributions are quite uneven, there is repetitive information, the referencing is sometimes inadequate*" etc. And yet it hit the nail on the head, which was its object.

If it is a bad book in so many ways, if it offends painfully against academic standards, why is it noticed at all by a revisionist academic in an academic publication whose bias has been revisionist—necessarily so in a magazine which depends largely on academic patronage. (I do not know if it is also voluntarily so in accordance with the will of the Editor, who was once a fierce revolutionary, but it is not unknown for fierce revolutionaries to tame themselves.)

The book was not a contribution to academic discussion—by an act of faith I will suppose that there is such a thing. It could not be because most of the contributors are not academics—they are not paid by academic authority in the history, politics or sociology departments of institutional academic life. Academia is in this respect a closed shop of the kind that the working class used to have but now only the middle classes have. The academic closed shop discourages blacklegging. It conducts its affairs autonomously as if real life did not exist. But now, having over-reached itself with

continued

the encouragement of RTE, it finds real life reacting against it with a force that it would be imprudent to ignore, and it takes notice of blackleg material.

Augusteijn is dismissive of the notion of institutional revisionism, but suddenly in the last paragraph admits its existence: "*There certainly is an institutional resistance to a strong nationalist line of interpretation in academia*". He does not reflect on how strange it is that there should be institutional resistance to national interpretation in the academic bodies of a state which owes its existence to strong nationalism.

But the institutional resistance of academia is not only to nationalist interpretation. Consider the following:

"The book... can be seen as an expression of an upsurge in the conflict between two interpretations of the national past. In academic writing the so-called revisionist approach has indeed long been dominant but is now widely challenged by a nationalist interpretation which always remained alive but had become submerged in public, largely owing to its association with Provisional IRA activity.

"What all of this does show is the depth of feeling among republicans over the fact that their views are under-represented in the public arena. For that to be remedied, however, they will have to accept that there are people with a different political frame of reference who interpret the past through their own blinkers."

This is mere garbage.

The *Coolcrease* book includes contributions from Republicans and from people who notoriously are not Republicans, or nationalists of any kind, and who were denounced because of that back in 1969 when the whole Northern business started up in earnest. I was not denounced by the Provos, with whom I had a reasonably based disagreement in Belfast as they were coming into being in the Winter of 1969-70. The irrational denunciations that I recall came from members of Fine Gael, the Labour Party, the SDLP as it was coming into being, and the Official Republicans, particularly Eoghan Harris. And the Lynchites in Fianna Fail, who had to be very careful always to present their nationalist credentials. And of course by Professor the Lord Bew as he became a Stickie, who told me I was licking Unionist arses.

If what calls itself revisionism had to

do with factual or conceptual adjustment of the prevailing nationalist view of things to practical realities in the years around 1970, I would be a revisionist. But that is not what it is at all. And, if its great concern was to figure out why things turned out as they did in the North, taking account of the salient political facts, with a view to establishing a political position which might reasonably be expected to alleviate the conflict of communities there, I would be a revisionist. But it wasn't.

I have heard it said that academic activity proper has nothing to do with what goes on 'out there', in the vulgar world of political activity. But that cannot be Augusteijn's view because he says that the "*revisionist writing*" submerged nationalism in academia because of its "*association with Provisional IRA activity*". I cannot see how that can be made to mean anything but that academia responded to the Provo campaign by going anti-nationalist. Revisionism therefore is political, and so is academia.

But what effect of any kind did the anti-nationalist politics of revisionist academia have on the actual conflict in the North? None that I saw. And I was a very close observer of it all, within the battlefield in West Belfast, from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. Revisionism simply did not address the actual experience of life in the Catholic community under the 'Northern Ireland state', and it had nothing to say that made anybody sit up and listen outside its own funded conclaves up at Queen's, and Balmoral, or away on retreat at Corrymeela on Fair Head.

It being conceded that academic activity is not sealed off from politics, it seems to me that revisionism in Universities was not to any degree an objective analytical response to the Northern war conducted by the Universities out of a concern to understand how it came about and to remedy the situation, but was a response cultivated in the Irish Universities by the academic dimension of the British state which used the Northern war as a device for breaking up the historical understanding of the South.

Provisional Republicanism arose very suddenly in 1969-70. It arose out of the extraordinary—the unique—conditions of life of the Northern Catholic community in the British state. The Catholic community was subjected to routine harassment by a Protestant devolved Government, under the sovereignty of Westminster, and was deprived of the possibility of democratic response in the politics of the state. That routine of undemocratic government broke down under the Protestant pogrom of August 1969. Jack Lynch's inflammatory speech of mid-August and Cathal Goulding's press release that he was deploying his non-

existent Belfast Brigade were marginal influences precipitating the event, but the essence of it lay in the way the North was governed within the British state.

I know this because I was there, and because I was trying to head events in a different direction. I succeeded with relation to a number of individuals, but obviously I failed with relation to the vast majority. The point here is that, in the actual situation from which it all began, I and those with whom I was associated had a very different view of things even then from the view attributed collectively by Augusteijn to the producers of the *Coolcrease* book.

In 1972 we organised a demonstration at the Foreign Affairs building in Dublin, demanding the repeal of Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution which asserted sovereignty over the North. David Morrison, Eamon O'Kane and some others spent some time in Mountjoy because of it. There was little or no academic or popular support. Articles 2 & 3 remained in place for a further quarter of a century before being amended by the spurious 'all-Ireland' vote of 1998. If they had been repealed in 1972 for the purpose of putting relations with the Unionists on new ground something might have followed from it. That was our case. Their eventual repeal passed almost unnoticed. It did nothing to alleviate the intensification of communal antagonism precipitated by the Good Friday Agreement.

The Northern war arose out of Northern conditions and was sustained by them from 1970 to the mid 1990s. A basic change of attitude on the part of the Southern regime, signified by a repeal of the sovereignty claim, was a necessary precondition of Dublin getting a hearing amongst Ulster Unionists. No more than that. But Lynch, C.C. O'Brien *et al* refused to contemplate a repeal of Articles 2 & 3. And they they were somehow persuaded that the responsibility for the mayhem in the North lay with Articles 2 & 3, or with the way history was taught in the South, rather than with the way the British state chose to govern the Six Counties.

FitzGerald and O'Brien refused to budge on Articles 2 & 3 in the Spring of 1974 and the Sunningdale arrangement fell before the Unionist General Strike in May. (And yet again we put ourselves out of court with nationalist Ireland by going along to a Labour History Society Conference being held at Queen's University and pointing out that, while they mulled over Sinn Fein strikes of 1920, there was an actual General Strike going on all around which they didn't seem to notice.) I think that was the last time that Articles 2 & 3 were of any practical significance to Northern politics.

I do not pretend to understand the

intellectual process—or the emotive psychology—through which nationalist Ireland in its non-Provo dimension was made to accept responsibility for the Northern mayhem, and exonerate Britain, even while keeping up the traditional indictment of Britain. (That was Jack Lynch.)

In order to sustain the position I took up in 1969 against all the fervour of the 1970s, I had to take democracy in earnest as a historical category and have done with populist sloganising. I concluded that the North was an undemocratically governed part of the British state and that the war came about because of that fact. My remedy was to try to make it a democratically governed part of the state. Consideration of this feature of the situation is taboo for revisionists.

The policy I proposed for dealing with this state of affairs was that the North should be brought within the democratic political system of the state, so that it might become possible for people from both communities to act together in parties based on social issues relative to the governing of the state, instead of grinding against each other in communal blocs outside the politics of the state.

The fact that the electors in the Six Counties are excluded from the democratic political system by which the state that holds them is governed is indisputable. At least I have never seen it disputed. But it is a fact which cannot be stated in revisionist literature. At least it is a fact which I have never seen mentioned by a revisionist writer—and it is such an obvious fact that the reason it is not mentioned cannot be that it is not seen. It is as if the revisionist Politburo had issued a decree on the matter and enforced it through the patronage system it controls.

It is a fact which has unacceptable implications for right-thinking people. It implies that ever since Partition the Six Counties have been an undemocratically governed region of the British state. And, if that is allowed to be said, the thought will not be far behind that it has something to do with the persistence of the IRA.

But, although the fact cannot be mentioned, it seems to me that it has been considered by the Politburo, because Augusteijn's Trinity mentor, Professor Fitzpatrick (from Australia) came up with a kind of counter to it: that Northern Ireland is not an undemocratic enclave in the British state, but is itself a state. (See the Preface to *The Two Irelands*, Oxford 1998.) And of course, if it is itself a state, it is meaningless to describe it as being excluded from the democracy of another state.

Northern Ireland is not and never has been a state. The apparatus of the British state (usually referred to as Imperial) never

ceased to operate in the 6 Counties. The major institutions have always been British, administered by the Imperial Civil Service. There was also a devolved civil service. And Catholics were well aware of the difference between the two.

There was in the mid-1960s, in the time of the egregious Capt. O'Neill, a movement within Ulster Unionism to assert Dominion status—or an opinion that the status of Northern Ireland was that of a Dominion, rather than an integral part of Britain with a devolved Government subject to Westminster. It was a fantasy trip. In 1972 the Stormont system was abolished by a stroke of a pen in Whitehall. William Craig said that that stroke of a pen was unconstitutional. But there is actually no British Constitution under which he might prosecute the Government. The only actual British Constitution is the will of the majority in Parliament at any particular moment. The rest is window dressing.

Craig, finding that his doctrinaire legal quibbling was a waste of breath under the sovereignty of Parliament, went on the streets and launched a kind of Fascist movement, Vanguard, in an effort to constitute Northern Ireland into something resembling a state. Under the immediate impact of the abolition of Stormont there was enough disgruntlement in the Unionist community to enable Craig to put on a bit of a showing. For a couple of months in central Belfast one felt, this must be what it was like in Berlin in the early 1930s. The affair culminated in a mass rally at Ormeau Park at which ambitious threats were made, and David Trimble came into prominence for the first time. But Jim Molyneux and the Rev. Martin Smyth held the bulk of the Unionist Party and the Orange Order to the old line. Craig's movement petered out. And that was the rise and fall of the Northern Ireland State.

A quarter of a century later all that was forgotten, and budding intellectuals in Southern Universities began to be indoctrinated with the pre-emptive notion that Northern Ireland is a state—an Irish state—lest it should occur to them that Britain must bear the main responsibility for the mess that was made of this region of its state.

It is now said that the revisionists were inspired to write as they did by the Provo War in the North. But what did they do to deter people from supporting the Provos? Nothing. They supplied no alternative account of things, relative to actual Catholic experience in the North, which might have encouraged some different course. They simply did not address the particularity of the North. And the few things I noticed them saying were so bereft of sense that I could imagine people being driven towards the Provos by them.

Their object was obviously to erode all coherent understanding of the historical

development though which an independent state came into being in the South.

Augusteijn published a big book on that period in 1994, *From Public Defiance To Guerrilla War*. The 1918 Election does not appear in it as a definite event with consequences. It is only mentioned in passing, as if it was self-evidently of no particular significance. But it seems it is no longer possible to slide around it like that. Here is what he says in the *Coolacrease* article, continuing from the quotation given above:

"...they will have to accept that there are people with a different frame of reference who interpret the past through their own blinkers as we all do. Insisting on the debatable interpretation of the War of Independence as a struggle between a democratically elected government and imperialist power as a basis of addressing the rights and wrongs of actions in the past does not work. The 1918 election victory of Sinn Fein does not necessarily constitute a legal basis for such a view. Despite the landslide victory, less than 48% of those voting supported Sinn Fein. The victory was not a mandate for the use of force, nor can it retrospectively justify the 1916 Rising. It is certainly possible to assume that a majority of the people voted for Sinn Fein, but not by arguing that uncontested seats were a normal feature of Irish electoral history [?!].

"The essence of whether the Dail government established in 1919 could be seen as legitimate hinges on one's definition of the people. The writers here assume that there was always a separate Irish nation encompassing the island of Ireland. Therefore even elections held in the context of the UK can be seen as Irish elections. A legitimate government, however, is not just made up of a majority of people in some self-defined area wanting to be independent. If so, there would be a lot more states on this globe. Republicans never accepted a separate Ulster despite the fact that a majority of the electorate there voted for it. The recent declaration of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia shows that recognition by the international community is a central element in the debate on legitimacy, and in international law the Irish state was created by the 1921 Treaty and not through the vote in 1918..."

As for the conduct of the Pearsons:

"They did not see the situation as a war but as a rebellion against the legitimate government, and actions against the IRA... were therefore fully justified in their eyes..."

Did the *Coolacrease* book really deny that the Pearsons saw themselves as acting in support of the legitimate Government, whose legitimacy was Imperial, against a rebellious democracy? Did Augusteijn

not bother to read it before reviewing it?

Augusteijn seems to agree that the source of legitimate government in Ireland in 1919-21 was Imperial, not democratic, and that legitimacy came to nationalist Ireland only on 6th December 1921 when the Treaty delegates complied with the British ultimatum under threat of immediate and terrible war. His use of language in his major book certainly carries that message.

The *Coolacrease* book certainly does not say what Augusteijn implies. In fact, it dwells on the issue of the source of legitimacy—Imperial or democratic.

I do not recall that in a section on Legitimacy in his major book he listed international recognition as the crucial thing. Perhaps he was then more aware of what the international situation was in January 1919, and has now forgotten it. The victorious Entente Powers were forming the League of Nations at Versailles. The defeated states were excluded. Greece, invaded and conquered by the Entente in 1916 was present in the form of a puppet Government. India was sort of present in the form of the British Government. A whole raft of states in South America had been intimidated into declaring war on Germany so that they would be morally implicated in the outcome. The world was in principle constituted into an integral whole, but a hierarchical one in which Britain had a *de facto* power of veto. Before the War the world consisted of a large variety of states, each with its own foreign policy. Each of them might take the decision to recognise a declaration of independence by a particular people as legitimate. But, when the elected Dail declared Irish independence, the world, gathered at Versailles, was living through a delusion of unity manipulated by Britain and under a British veto. International recognition meant admission to Versailles, and Britain denied all of its possessions the right of appeal to Versailles. Some unelected coteries were admitted and were given 'nation states' that were unviable (eg, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia). The Government elected by the Irish was excluded.

At the end of the Great War for Democracy and the Rights of Nations, a world body subject to Imperial authority was established and it conferred or withheld legitimacy according to Imperial expediency. *Coolacrease* posed the question, Either/Or. Augusteijn made the *de facto* choice of Empire as against Democracy as the source of legitimacy. As an operative in revisionist academia in Ireland with a career to make, he could do nothing else. He has now made that choice explicit—even though it seems that he has now left Irish academia and is employed by the University of Leiden.

Coolacrease was produced in refutation of history fabricated in the service of policy because the fabrication was false. People holding very different positions collaborated in proving that it was false. Augusteijn cannot defend it as being true. But neither can he acknowledge that the publisher is the notoriously 'two-nationist' etc. Aubane Historical Society. In order to be able to say anything about it, he must pretend it is what it is not. Minds shaped by the Revisionist Politburo cannot cope with much reality.

Brendan Clifford

PS

I assume the reader is familiar with the red-herring about Sinn Fein only getting 48% of the vote in 1918. This happened because there was no vote in a quarter of the seats because the Home Rule Party refused to contest them, knowing that its support had collapsed in them. In a number of those seats the collapse of the Redmond vote was not a sudden consequence of the Conscription crisis, Redmond already having lost the Cork city and county seats in 1910 to a movement of protest against the Catholic sectarian element he had introduced into Home Rule politics. That is another thing that the Revisionist Politburo does not allow to be mentioned.

Rejoining The Commonwealth?

Letter Submitted to Irish Times on 26th March which failed to find publication

I wonder if the signatories of the recent letter calling on Ireland to rejoin the Commonwealth (Irish Times 23-3-09) can find any place for the Irish Republic in their pluralist vision for Ireland. It has proven to be one of the most robust democracies of modern times and a model example of what a UN-member country can achieve in terms of moral leadership. We have a long proud tradition of UN-peacekeeping that makes our soldiers welcome as saviours rather than invaders around the world. That we currently suffer from a leadership keen to squander that moral lead in its failure to object to the Shannon overflights and Iraq War does not yet seriously detract from that carefully nurtured legacy.

In comparison the Commonwealth can make no such boast. Where were the protests over the war in Iraq or Israel's attack on Gaza from its members? Would Commonwealth membership really give us such a strong voice in world affairs? Even when we were part of the UK body politic we found our vote was simply ignored when it didn't suit Westminster, as in 1918.

In fact the organisations which Britain

has established since the decline of its Empire have had but one purpose—to maintain British primacy in the absence of Imperial power. That is the principal purpose of the Commonwealth, and was the motive for establishing the failed EFTA [European Free Trade Association], as a bulwark to maintain Britain's prime position in a Europe that was moving on without it.

It is a waste of time for Ireland to join such an anachronistic association as the Commonwealth. We might as well resurrect and join the Hanseatic League. There is already an organisation which was founded to promote peace and democracy, called the United Nations, if it could just be made to work properly. Our energies would be better invested to this end. Nor will Commonwealth membership go far enough to achieve reconciliation with unionists, who won't be satisfied with less

than a return of the United Kingdom. They could just as easily become members of the Irish Republic if reconciliation was their main concern.

Nick Folley

Note:

The letter referred to was signed in their personal capacity by: Roy Garland, Prof. Geoffrey Roberts, Bruce Arnold, Ian Beamish, David Burnside MLA, Robin Bury, Ann Carr, David Christopher, Liam Clarke, Dr. Brian Crowe, Prof. Brice Dickson, R. E. Edwards, Gerald Fitzgerald, George Fleming, David Ford MLA, Sen. Eoghan Harris, Prof. Liam Kennedy, Steven McColl, R. B. McDowell, Pamela McMillen, Pierce Martin, Aidan O'Hara, Roderick W. Oliver, Simon Partridge, Dawn Purvis MLA, Lord Rana, Wm. J. Sibbett, Derek Simpson, Dr. Bill Smith, James Smyth, Tony Stanney, Jack Storey, Billy Tate MBE, David S.C. Thompson, Jerry Walsh. C/o Dept. of History UCC. www.Ireland and the commonwealth.com

or thereabouts. QED.

To give an idea of the absurdity of the official 1841 figure let's look at some background and earlier attempts at counting the population.

Thomas Reid visited Ireland in 1822. He was a most serious and competent individual, a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and much travelled. He was perplexed as to why Ireland was not benefiting from the virtues of the Union and not becoming more like the rest of the UK. It was self-evident to him that this should be happening. He was a most inquisitive individual. He would go into cabins and hovels to find out what was going on. Often at some risk to himself.

One of the first things that struck him was how difficult it was to establish how many people actually lived in these places.

"It would scarcely be imagined by any one who has not tried the experiment, how difficult it is to ascertain the population of Ireland. There exists among the peasantry an unconquerable aversion to tell the exact number of which their families consist, and in nine cases out of ten they represent it under the truth. On what grounds this prejudice exists I am not able to explain; but I had ample experience of the fact."

We will ignore his naivety for the moment and respect his honest efforts.

So being the type of man not to be defeated by such a task he embarked on a project to count the population in 1822. He set up an extensive project with relations and friends to do it and published it with a breakdown by County, number of houses and number of Catholics and Protestants. It came to 7, 855,606.

Mr. Reid published this but he did not believe it. Being a gentleman, he would not contradict his friends and be seen to rubbish their hard work. But he was quite certain they were wrong. He said:

"...it is feared the statement is far from correct. Had I trusted entirely to my own observations, the result would have been considerably greater.. I am quite certain that the view here given is much below what it should be; indeed I had many opportunities of proving it; but deference for those who kindly interested themselves in the inquiry... has induced me to adopt their calculation."

He went on to give a concrete example of the levels of underestimation that could exist and the efficiency of the census enumerators in those days. He quotes from a: "A Mr Hardiman in his History of Galway" (at page 192), who says,

"The return of the inhabitants of the town and liberties, after the census act of 1812 amounted to 24,284; but those to whom the enumeration was entrusted were, according to their own subsequent

Figuring Out The Famine

We will have the first annual Famine Memorial day this year on 17th May. A very good idea. Let's hope it achieves something useful. Let's hope it achieves more than last year:

"The National Famine Commemoration Day was held on May 25th last year when an official reception was hosted at the Custom House in Dublin by Minister of State at the Department of Community Affairs John Curran, who also spoke at yesterday's press conference. The failure of the potato crop during the 1840s was a transforming event in Ireland and no other event in our history can be likened to it for either its immediate impact or its legacy of emigration, cultural loss and decline of the Irish language," he said. "That legacy includes a strong appreciation today among Irish people of issues such as food security and a strong commitment to humanitarian aid and relief. The spread of Irish people around the globe during that fateful period in our history is without parallel. The Great Famine resulted in the formation of many diaspora communities, who helped to ensure the prosperous development of the countries to which they travelled," Mr Curran said. (Irish Times, 9/1/2009)

So the Famine was just a potato failure and had a positive outcome—elsewhere. What a perverted way to commemorate an event like the Famine. But, sure, we must see everything in a global context now in this globalist world, must we not? It makes one feel so much better even if its starvation with a global face. And those who were starved into being the flotsam and jetsam of life in the late 1840s must be consoled

in their unmarked graves that they did great things where "*they travelled*". Soon they might well be described as having been tourists to distant climes or our first globalisers by Government Ministers.

Could I suggest one simple task to Mr. Curran to justify a commemoration this year—find out how many actually died? That would make it a unique commemoration. It would also be a historic achievement. Despite all the brouhaha about the event that simple fact is not yet established with clarity and certainty and surely it is an insult to the memory of the dead if we do not even take the trouble to count them properly—even to the nearest million.

This issue has bugged me since the official entertainment jamboree that commemorated the 150th anniversary near Drishane Castle in Millstreet, which was opened and presided over by President Mary Robinson. A sick event. Drishane and its inhabitants, the Wallis family, like many other such families did very well out of the Famine. They survived, naturally, and as a result of the Famine had plenty cheap land and labour to live off for another couple of generations until they went bankrupt when the locals got off their knees and a bit of elementary competition appeared for land and labour.

I have poked around to get some basic facts about what the population was before the Famine. This would seem easy but it is not and this is the crucial factor. Every schoolboy thinks of the 1841 census, 8.2m, subtracts the figure from that of 1851, 6.5m, deducts a figure for those that emigrated (sorry, "*travelled*") and there you are. You are left with a million or two

accusations of each other, guilty of gross neglect and omission in the execution of that duty. The general and most probable opinion is, that the population amounts at, present (1820) to 40,000, which comprehends a vast number of daily increasing poor, without trade, manufacture, or adequate employment."

Mr. Reid comments:

"In 1814 before a Committee of the House of Commons, the population of Galway was stated to be 50,000. I regret to say that the charge of 'gross neglect and commission' set forth in the preceding note, is fully borne out by my own observations in a great many parts of the country. Desirous of having some conversation with the 'enumerators' I made my inquiries about them, but did not happen to pass through any district where any one appeared to know or even to have heard any thing at all of such a person" (Travels in Ireland, 1823).

What possible credence could be given to census figures from such a background? It is a great pity Mr. Reid did not give us his own estimate but we can easily add a million at least to the figure quoted.

A few years later another attempt was made by a rather amazing statistician, César Moreau, a Frenchman resident in London, who produced *"The Past and Present Statistical State of Ireland established in a series of tables constructed on a New Plan and principally derived from official documents and the best sources"*. It provided thousands of statistics on every conceivable subject relating to Ireland including its history, geography, industries, trade, products, politics, administration and of course population and sold for 30/- . It was a stunning piece of work and all done in the neatest of handwriting.

He calculated the population in 1827 and also provided detailed breakdowns of the main towns by sex, occupations and houses, inhabited and uninhabited. My sample test for his figures was the town of Millstreet and they ring true and accurate. He came to a figure for Ireland of 9,050,000. This figure would confirm the reservations that Smith had about the figure of almost 8m five years earlier. There is no evidence that these two ever knew of each other's existence and they would have arrived at their estimates independent of each other and this adds to the credibility of their figures.

Everyone agrees that the population was growing at a very rapid rate during the early decades of the 19th century. 1.6% per year is generally accepted. This would put the population in 1847 at over 12m according to Moreau's figures. While that is still only an estimate it does show that a figure 8.2m for 1841 is just not credible.

The incredible fact is that there is likely to be about 4 million people missing from the Famine figures universally quoted!!!

It is also truly amazing to read how conveniently it is ignored that any 1841 figure could not possibly be the same as the 1847 figure but

they are accepted as such. One would have to accept an outbreak of mass celibacy or mass infanticide, or both, from 1840 onwards if they were to remain the same.

It should be the first task of any self-respecting Irish Government that commemorates the Famine to have the most essential fact of all clearly established. It has never been done. Is it too much to expect? If it is, it might be better to scrap the whole Memorial Day thing and avoid the likelihood of adding more insult to injury.

Jack Lane

The Labour Party And Northern Ireland

[The Labour Party held a special conference at Mullingar, 28 March, to debate the 21st Century Commission report, a constitutional scheme to centralise power in the hands of the Labour leader. The report recommended far-reaching changes in Labour Party governance, as well as endorsing the SDLP as the partner for Labour in the North.

The leaflet below was distributed in connection with a motion proposed by the N. Ireland Constituency Council, proposing that the Party would contest the 2011 Local Government elections. Standing Orders Committee ruled that, in the event that the Twenty First Century Committee was passed by conference, the NICC motion would fall. (This was because the 21C Report, while not ruling out various developments in the future, ruled out any contest against SDLP i.e. no change in status quo.)

There were about 30 speakers for and against 21C. Criticisms were on grounds of over-centralising power, and quite a few criticised its N. Ireland position. However, the 21C Report was approved by a large majority, despite the contributions of two N. Ireland speakers. It was made an issue of confidence in Gilmore; the Unions had already secured significant amendments to Gilmore's 21C line.

It is hoped to carry further material on contributions made by delegates in the next issue of *Irish Political Review*.]

THE 21ST CENTURY COMMISSION AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Labour Party members in Northern Ireland are unanimously opposed to the 21st Century Commission's recommendations on the future role of the Northern Ireland Constituency Council.

We are a determined group, that grew out of a nucleus of cross-community activists, who in line with Dick Spring's statement that Labour formed part of the Third Strand of politics in the Island, proudly asserted themselves to be "neither Unionist, nor Nationalist, but Labour." From this group of individuals, holding Party membership through the HQ branch, we evolved into the NI Labour Forum and then on 1st March 2007, the NEC endorsed our status as a Constituency Council.

We are proud of our unique non-sectarian stance and cross-community reach. We have in our ranks, people of great credibility in the movement, including, former Independent Labour councillors, academics, trade union

UP THE POLE

They fly Israeli flags in Loyal Ulster

Catholics, the Palestinian flag.

Why do they support those who lie and brag.

What is it Israel can bolster.

Can it be they see themselves as settlers, the Catholics as Native Irish.

Do they hope and plan to see them perish.

Some Loyalists are still led by hustlers, wishing that on the Palestinian.

The deep fear of ethnic cleansing remains that Catholics will lose their hard-won gains.

Out of the woods but still so simian, England's piece of Ireland keeps its divide.

It apes democracy so death provides.

Wilson John Haire (26.1. 2009)

and community activists.

It is therefore frustrating for us to note that the 21st Century Commission is ignorant of our status in the Party and actually poses the question—*"should the Labour Party follow Fianna Fail and consider organising in the North?"* (sic).

It is frustrating too, that they clearly do not understand the system for the "designation" of political parties for the NI Assembly, outlined in Clause 6 of Strand 1 to the Belfast Agreement, which states as follows—

"At their first meeting, members of the Assembly will register a designation of identity—nationalist, unionist or other—for the purposes of measuring cross-community support in Assembly votes under the relevant provisions above."

We pointed out the school boy errors in the first draft of the Commission's report, in a leaflet at the conference in Kilkenny and in the cringe-worthy Q&A session at the end. Despite our efforts, the assertion is still made that if we were to contest elections in the North (the logical path for us to follow), then this *"would require Labour to opt for adherence to—and seek votes exclusively from—just one of the two traditions."*

We shouldn't need to spell it out—but here it is. If we decide we are in a position to contest elections for the Assembly, we will designate as **OTHER**. We do not need to designate for local council elections.

Rather than value the existence of a self-consciously cross-community group in the North, the Commission has recommended *"the strengthening of links"* with the SDLP—a party which has self-consciously designated itself as Nationalist. This can only have the unfortunate effect of making our party appear to be a cold house for the Protestant community. This would be a betrayal of the principles on which our party was founded. And it is completely unnecessary. A message needs to be sent to the Commission and to the wider party that the only just and reasonable course for the North, lies in supporting our right to contest elections, proudly, under the Labour standard. You can do this by supporting **MOTION NO 54** in the name of the NI Constituency Council.

SOCIETY continued

When the A.L.P. split in 1954, their leader, Dr. Herbert Evatt described 'The Movement' as "a disloyal and subversive group", those ejected from the party formed the Democratic Labor Party (D.L.P.), which itself won only a handful of seats, but whose presence caused the A.L.P. to lose six Federal elections. The National Civic Council had considerable influence on the thinking and policies of the D.L.P.

Santamaria was an outstanding thinker and organiser, he was also mentor to Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne. Having been employed on Santamaria's paper, *AD2000*, the present writer finds it extraordinary that David Quinn seldom refers to his Australian Catholic experience and never mentions the prolific writings of B. A. Santamaria.

The following extracts may explain why:

"The last big crisis campaign of his life [Santamaria] was on economics. Now that he had little political power, he returned to economics, his original interest from the Depression days of the 1930s. Then he had followed the Papal Encyclical line against both capitalism and communism. He believed capitalism was rearing its ugly head again in the 1980s, and would impoverish ordinary people and destabilise society. A combination of globalisation, rampant international money markets and Australia's growing national debt meant the nation had lost control of its economic destiny. Men traded in paper to make money rather than producing things to make money. He remained wary of business practices, wanting profits shared rather than productivity increased. He believed in government intervention in the economy. (p.398).

"Santamaria saw in the 1987 stock market crash a potential return to another great depression:

"The years 1989 and 1990 will wit-

ness the beginning of a period of great financial disorder, which will affect the whole of the Western world, but which, granted the size and continual increase of Australia's foreign debt, will affect Australia with particular virulence. In this period of burgeoning turmoil, which will exceed in severity the recessions of 1971, 1981 and 1987 and which will bear a much closer resemblance to the collapses of the 1890s and the 1930s, it is critically important to reject the proposition that so long as Communism is defeated, finance capitalism is a worthwhile substitute."

"He opposed the prevailing free trade, anti-protectionist, non-Keynesian small government policies associated with Hayek, Friedman and other, and promoted by Reagan and Thatcher. His argument was that he was consistently anti-liberal—against liberal permissive social views, and against liberal 'laissez faire' economic views. His economic views put him offside with many traditionalists, who came to support the new deregulationist views." (B. A. Santamaria-*Running the Show*-Selected Documents 1939-1996-p.399-Edited by Patrick Morgan-The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne-2008).

"It has become normal to blame the 'greed' of the Bonds [Alan], the banks, the lawyers, the accountants for the present situation, which, in my view at least, will soon equal the Depression in its gravity.

"I believe that the problem lies with 'the system' itself. It is true that individuals are greedy. But if Governments accord tax deductibility for interest payments on business borrowings, if banks are given control of credit policy; if deregulation permits any body who can raise 'hot' money abroad to bring it into Australia; if the principle of incorporation allowed clever individuals assisted by cleverer lawyers to control literally hundreds of shelf companies to mystify and defraud—what do you expect? (p.482).

"I have always believed that the present system of monopoly capitalism would lead us to this point, unless deterred by strong legal controls. It is merely ironic that it should have happened under a 'Labor' Government. The Liberals would not have been sufficiently game to try! (p.483). (B. A. Santamaria-*Your Most Obedient Servant*-Selected Letters 1938-1996-p.483-Edited by Patrick Morgan-The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne-2007).

"No, I'm not becoming 'more radical' with the passing years, although a new-found friend in Clyde Cameron insists on psycho-analysing me thus. It isn't so. In 1936, I started a small paper called the *Catholic Worker*, which ultimately reached a monthly circulation of over 60,000. I won't send you a copy of the first editorial I wrote, since the style is so amateurish. But in it, I did write that Communism was not the problem for us in Australia. Capitalism was." (B. A. Santamaria).

INTERNATIONAL TU CONFEDERATION
The International Trade Union Confederation (I.T.U.C.) announced a 5-point plan to combat the global economic crisis. The announcement came on the eve of the G20 meeting in London. Unions called for the following measures to be adopted:

- * a coordinated international recovery and sustainable growth plan to create jobs and ensure public investment;
- * nationalisation of insolvent banks and new financial regulations action to combat the risk of wage deflation and reverse decades of increasing inequality;
- * far-reaching action on climate change;
- * a new international legal framework to regulate the global economy along with reform of the global financial and economic institutions

The 21st Century Commission and democratic accountability?

We share the concerns of many in the party at the method chosen to make policy in a variety of areas, simultaneously, through the creation of an appointed Commission, and such flawed use of consultants and confidential processes.

The Commission is clearly ignorant of Northern Ireland, but is also wilful in the amount of evidence it ignored to reach its conclusions.

For the record

* The Labour Party is already organised in Northern Ireland, and has been since 2004, when Pat Rabbitte launched the Northern Ireland Labour Forum (NILF) in the historic Linenhall Library, Belfast.

* Our evolution into the Northern Ireland Constituency Council, was agreed by the Party's Organisation Committee and NEC on

1st March 2007.

* We proposed to the Labour Party conference in Wexford in November 2007, that the Party contest Local Government elections in Northern Ireland. In response, the NEC set up "a special commission, representative of the NILF, the PLP and the NEC" to explore that issue, amongst others. Two Party members from Northern Ireland sit on the special commission, which has yet to report.

* The two Northern members, Mark Langhammer and Mary McMahan, presented detailed background/research papers—"Space for the Left in Northern Ireland: Evidence from the Life & Times Survey", Dr Jenny Muir, Belfast 2008 and—"Trade Union attitudes to Labour Party organisation in Northern Ireland", Mary McMahan & Mark Langhammer, Belfast 2008. In addition, Mark Langhammer's speech to the Tom Johnston Summer School, Galway, 14th July 2007 (*the Future of the Left*

in Northern Ireland—see www.labour.ie/northernireland/speeches)

* Two out of three respondents (66%) to the Commission's Members survey "felt it was **very important**' or **important**' for the Party to develop an all-Ireland structure" (Commission report, p 89)

* The Party Commission on Northern Ireland, set up by the Wexford Conference of 2007, was not consulted by the 21st Century Commission.

* No account was taken of the extensive submissions to the 21st Century Commission by Northern Ireland members, through the N.I. Constituency Council.

This manner of policy making in secret, by cabal, by a party that seeks the trust of the electorate, has been discredited in Britain, where the New Labour project has run its course. It has no place in our politics on this island. And we should not be afraid to say so.

SOCIETY continued

several options for resolving issues in a short time frame, but not otherwise worthy of the rather elevated philosophical commitment that seemed to be at the core of Ahern's political credo.

"If the reconvened talks succeed in reaching an agreement, any new accord seems likely to bring about a fundamental alteration to the social partnership model.

"Until the current crisis, the social partnership model was based, above all, on unions' willingness to trade moderate pay rises for income tax reductions, and for commitments in the areas of public and social spending.

"Any new deal would be quite different in combining pay concessions of one form or another, with increases in income tax, and reductions in public and social expenditure.

"In this way, the basis of the social partnership will shift towards the kind of 'concession bargaining' commonly at the core of social pacts in European countries, but up to now largely unknown to Ireland's social partners." (*Irish Independent*-26.3.2009).

Labour Party conference: Mullingar, March 28, 2009

Delivering the most amusing speech of the conference, Jim O'Brien, a local election candidate in Portlaoise, said the concept of what is needed to live a normal life was one of the first Celtic Tiger casualties.

"Next week it looks like we are in for another interminable round of partnership talks where a bunch of extremely well paid individuals will attempt to decide what "enough" should mean for the rest of us. That's like asking a bunch of rabbits to decide our family planning policy," he said. (*Irish Independent*-30.3.2009).

Jim didn't mention which 'rabbits'! Nor can one discover a single positive contribution from political Labour towards progressing Social Partnership. No bloody wonder they have to advertise in the media seeking candidates for the local elections. How bloody pathetic!

PUBLIC SERVICE STAFF CUTS
Finance Minister, Brian Lenihan has signalled the imposition of an across-the-board public service recruitment embargo.

The move to impose an embargo — agreed by Ministers in pre-Budget talks behind closed doors — was mentioned by the Minister at the end of a Dail contribution on March 26, to the surprise of his civil servants and members of the

opposition.

The disclosure will mean the loss of up to 3,000 jobs a year across the entire public service through natural wastage — meaning the non-replacement of those who retire or leave.

Such an embargo was last seen in the worst days of the 1980s recession, and was widely criticised. Its inflexibility was seen at the time as affecting the delivery of public services.

There are 330,000 people on the public purse in both the civil service and wider public service, i.e. nurses, gardai, firemen, teachers.

The estimates are that such an embargo could save €120-€150 million in pay each year. Four years of non-recruitment would raise at least half a billion Euro for the state coffers.

"The fact is the bingeing was tolerated and stimulated by politicians of all sides. The persistence of their "what we have we hold" greediness is unforgivable. The political scapegoating of bankers is a red herring . . . our politicians . . . were given a grand little economy. They have messed it up. Worse still, they persist in denial and in their refusal to share the pain. They have lost our respect utterly.

JOSEPH F. FOYLE.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS; NEW LABOUR AND PHONEY SOCIAL DEMOCRATS!

The political parties would like to portray the financial crisis as a result of bankers' greed and economic problems brewed up overseas; but even a blind man would have to acknowledge that it stemmed just as much from mistakes made by regulators and politicians. And foremost in the front ranks were the new-age Labour leaders.

Everything has been thrown into the market. There is no longer a great hinterland of private life outside of the market. We are all speculators now, and if democracy is to be taken in earnest it must be said that we have all chosen to be speculators in which we risk our money every time we 'save' (i.e. invest) it in a bank.

So cut out the 'cod' about 'irresponsible' speculators as being responsible for the crisis. They are only the speculators who happened to be at the cutting edge of the system when it went into crisis. They were engaged in the business of expanding the market, which was a necessary business in the open capitalism chosen by the democracy. And they delivered the goods for a surprisingly long time.

"We are now suffering from what may be a terminal case of political paralysis which I define as a situation in which you can change the leadership of a party, or the government itself—but it has no effect on the basic condition of the nation." (*B.A. Santamaria*)

DAVID QUINN—A 'CHILD' OF THATCHER!

David Quinn is the former editor of "*The Irish Catholic*" and now a prominent commentator on religious and social affairs. He recently had a 'go' at Paul Sweeney, who is Economic Adviser to the I.C.T.U.—"On 'Questions and Answers' ICTU's Paul Sweeney was practically salivating at the prospect of a bigger State." (*Irish Independent*-13.3.2009).

The thrust of David Quinn's argument was: "The future the Left wants is a much bigger State paid for by much higher tax." In the same paper on March 27, he was concerned about the fate of Sir Fred Goodwin of the Royal Bank of Scotland and 'our' own Sean Fitzpatrick of Anglo-Irish Bank: "Tax the rich too much and you take away their incentive to make money. If the rich, or those with the potential and drive to become rich, effectively go on strike, then the whole of society ends up poor."

He appears to be absolutely opposed to liberal permissive social views, but is absolutely in favour of liberal 'laissez faire' economic views.

So far as the present writer is aware, David Quinn did part of his journalistic apprenticeship in Australia, where he worked on a magazine called *AD2000*, established by the National Civic Council leader, the late Bob Santamaria, the aim of which was to support traditional Catholic teaching.

B. A. Santamaria was one of the most controversial Australians of his time. His sphere of influence ranged across the nation's political and social landscape. Santamaria, an ardent anti-Communist and devout Catholic, was fiercely intelligent and a natural leader, polarising the community into loyal followers and committed opponents. He died in Melbourne in 1998.

'The Movement' began in 1941 by Santamaria and Bert Creman was designed to combat Communist influence in the trade unions. Formally set up as the Catholic Social Studies Movement, it was under the auspices of the Catholic bishops in 1945, but its existence was never announced.

At the same time, Industrial Groups were set up by the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) and successfully opposed Communist influence in union affairs. Santamaria's 'Movement' though not formally linked to these groups, provided a considerable part of their muscle.

SOCIETY continued

aircraft, investment in plant and machinery dropped 26%.

"The only good news is that the quarterly declines in investment may not be quite so aggressive from here. If they improve, our latest forecast of a 7% contraction in 2009 will prove right," said Rossa White, an economist at Davy Stockbrokers.

THE ONE-DAY NATIONAL STRIKE

"The new talks come at a time when the general perception appears to be that the unions' hand has been weakened following the patchy response of workers to the day of strike action planned for Monday – in particular the failure of Impact, the largest public sector union, to generate sufficient membership support to take part. A month ago the unions organised 120,000 people to march on the streets of Dublin, and it appeared that the wind was behind them in dealing with the Government.

"However, it can be argued that they did not sufficiently capitalise on the momentum of the march and that the strategic decision to go for the day of strikes highlighted the lukewarm attitude of many members towards industrial action in the current climate.

"On the other hand, the unions will point out that the campaign on the day of strikes did lead to many private sector employers engaging with them on the national pay deal, and that the campaign succeeded in persuading the Government to go back into social partnership talks." (*Irish Times*-26.3.2009).

IMPACT, the largest public sector union, whose General Secretary is Peter McLoone, the former President of the I.C.T.U. said it had no basis to sanction industrial action after a ballot result fell marginally short of the level of support required under its rules.

The Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants, also voted decisively not to take part in the planned action.

It is understood that S.I.P.T.U. staff in the Higher Education Authority also voted against participating in the strike.

"We are interested in entering into negotiations," said a Government spokesman, who refused to respond to questions suggesting that the unions had lost some negotiating power by the lack of enthusiasm among some workers for the National strike.

However, former Teachers Union of Ireland (T.U.I.) President Paddy Healy said "outrage" had been caused by the I.C.T.U. leadership's basic acceptance of the public sector pension levy by re-entering talks.

Dublin's post-primary branch of the T.U.I. passed a vote of no confidence calling for the resignation of Mr Begg. The Tralee IT branch of the T.U.I. has proposed a motion for the TUI congress to join with other trade unions to take strike action.

THE IMPACT DECISION

"The surprise decision of IMPACT members not to ratify the Congress campaign had threatened to dilute the effects of working stoppages in the public sector.

"With over 55,000 members, IMPACT makes up a significant proportion of the roughly 300,000 union members in the public sector. Given that other public service unions are represented in most of the workplaces where IMPACT members are employed, the union's decision not to participate would not have fatally compromised the planned work stoppages, as many IMPACT members were likely to have refused to cross the picket lines.

"Why IMPACT members' support for the day of action fell just short of the required 66% margin will be a major concern for the union's leaders.

"IMPACT is a well organised, well led and professionally run trade union.

"In contrast with some other public service unions, such as the C.P.S.U., it has little tradition of either union members or elected representatives overturning the advice of senior officials. IMPACT has also long been a stalwart of both I.C.T.U. and of social partnership. There is little reason to believe that the members were unsupportive of the I.C.T.U. 10-point plan for economic recovery and its core concept of a 'social solidarity pact'. IMPACT members were to the forefront of a recent campaign to lobby public representatives in support of Congress's proposals and in opposition to the public service pensions levy.

"The most significant factor in the union's vote is likely to have been the leadership's inability to convince a significant minority of members that a national strike would be an effective industrial relations weapon in the current environment.

"Ironically, the union's own record of moderation under social partnership could have predisposed large numbers of its members against adopting a more militant posture this time around.

"The most significant effect of IMPACT's decision was to weaken the moral authority of I.C.T.U.'s campaign, not least given the uneven support that the day of action was likely to have attracted across the private sector.

"With an overall rate of private sector unionisation of about 28%, the campaign would likely have had an uneven or patchy effect across that sector, and major areas like public utilities, banks and retailers were likely to have been

largely unaffected.

"Against such a background, I.C.T.U. will have been relieved that its main objective in calling for the day of action, to persuade Government and the employers to re-engage in talks, has met with a positive response." (*Irish Independent*-26.3.2009).

COWEN AND SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

"Speaking after the weekend Fianna Fáil Ardfeis, on March 1, 2009, Mr Cowen said social partnership negotiations – which collapsed over the Government's decision to impose a pension levy on State employees – will continue to be important.

"Social partnership continues to have a role to play in this country because I am making it clear that quite apart from having to deal with the question of having to deal with unemployment, providing enterprise supports and looking after the public finances and do something with the banks, we also need the agility and co-operation of everyone on the ground," he said.

"However, Mr Cowen has already expressed caution about the prospects of the Government getting back into round-table talks with the social partners, saying in the Dáil last week that he agreed with Irish Congress of Trade Unions general secretary David Begg's assessment that it would be "unwise" to resume formal negotiations "unless there is a reasonable degree of confidence that agreement on all the central elements can be found".

"Responding then to questions from Labour leader Eamon Gilmore, he said then: "While I remain available for dialogue with the social partners, the basis for a resumption of formal negotiations has not been established at this time."

"Nevertheless, some contacts have continued to exist between the State's top civil servant, Secretary to the Government Dermot McCarthy and union leaders, notably Mr Begg, since the sides divided on the levy." (*Irish Times*-2.3.2009)

COWEN AND AHERN

Bill Roche is Professor of Industrial Relations and Human Resources at the School of Business, University College Dublin, he has published a substantial body of scholarship on Social Partnership, Partnership in the Workplace and the issue of declining trade union organisation.

"An intriguing aspect of the crisis of social partnership has been the posture of Brian Cowen. Social partnership is less central to Cowen's political identity and track record than to that of his predecessor, Bertie Ahern.

"He seems to have adopted a more hard-headed and contingent posture toward the process -- viewing it as one of

SOCIETY continued

Government to raise borrowing this year to 11% of GDP from 9.5% so as not to "crash" the economy. They are also looking for greater protection for those on low incomes.

I.B.E.C.'s concerns are expected to focus on a wage freeze, employer PRSI reform and enterprise investment.

I.C.T.U. General Secretary, David Begg said he believed the Taoiseach was sincere in stating in his letter that outstanding difficulties could be resolved on the basis of the I.C.T.U. 10-point plan for national recovery: the Social Solidarity Pact.

The talks are likely to focus again around this framework. Scope seems to exist for some restructuring of the pension levy, with a view to reducing the burden on low paid public servants, as well as for closing off tax shelters and introducing a property tax -- all measures favoured by I.C.T.U.

Given the worsening fiscal situation, the unions will want to ensure that changes to income tax are structured in a strongly progressive manner.

WHAT I.C.T.U. WANTS?

Mr. Begg "has said the Government's indication that it is prepared to relax its previous stance on limiting borrowing to 9.5% of GDP this year could be the "key to the solution" of achieving a new social partnership deal.

"Mr Begg said last night the trade union movement had been concerned that by sticking to the 9.5% borrowing limit the Government ran the risk of "crashing the economy".

He said the signal given by the Taoiseach that the Government may borrow more than originally planned this year potentially represented significant movement and the unions may "be able to get something more liveable with". (*Irish Times*-26.3.2009).

He warned the Government against cutting "too deeply and quickly" in the mini-Budget and pointed out that the threat of industrial action was only lifted until the budgetary measures were unveiled.

But he said the "sincere" tone of the Taoiseach's letter and informal contacts with senior government officials gave him the belief unions could "achieve something".

He stressed that their chief purpose was to ensure the "economic adjustment" was fair and transparent.

"One has to be conscious that this is a very difficult situation and it's hard to envisage any final outcome which is going to be received with delight by anybody in the country," Mr Begg said.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

One of the biggest objectors to the September pay deal (6% over 21 months) was the Construction Industry Federation (C.I.F.) led by former Farmers, and Progressive Democrats leader, Tom Parlon. Its confirmation that it was recommending its members refuse to pay the increases saw it excluded from the next round of talks. Indeed, the C.I.F. recommended a 10% cut in construction workers wages. However, the builders were invited back into the pay talks.

The C.I.F. had been looking to get "back around the table" having failed to receive an invite from the Taoiseach. Taoiseach Cowen and Parlon shares the same constituency Laois/Offaly.

Parlon said he had been calling and texting the Taoiseach to tell him the Federation must be represented at the talks.

"I have been trying to get in touch with the Taoiseach to ask him why we are not there, but I have heard nothing back, but I'll keep trying," he said on March 26, 2009.

Figures released last month showed the construction industry suffered a 24% fall in output in the last three months of 2008, the biggest fall on record.

THE ECONOMY—A 26 YEAR LOW!

In the Dail on March 26, Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan disclosed that projected tax revenues dropped by another €3 billion since January highlighting the scale of the challenge facing the Government in devising its emergency Budget for April 7th.

The figures showed the first annual fall in the country's national income since 1983. Income (GNP) fell by 3.1% over 2007, and output (GDP) was down 2.3%.

Mr Lenihan told the Dáil the projected tax take for 2009 will be €34 billion as against the €37 billion estimate in January. Last year tax revenue was €41 billion and in 2007 it was €47.8 billion.

With Government spending for 2009 estimated at close to €58 billion, a gap of €24 billion now has to be bridged. The bulk of that will be made up of borrowing, but savings and tax increases of the order of €6 billion will also be required.

Welfare payments are the biggest item of Government expenditure at about €21 billion and Ministers are searching for ways to control the bill, which is rising as a result of the rapid growth in unemployment.

Official figures published on March 26, show the economy shrank dramatically in the closing months of last year, resulting in the steepest decline in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 in a quarter of a century. GDP fell 7.5% in real terms in the fourth quarter of last year compared with the fourth quarter of 2007, while gross

national product (GNP) fell by 6.7% over the same period, according to new figures from the Central Statistics Office (C.S.O).

The declines in GNP over three consecutive quarters have taken the economy back to the same size it was three years ago.

The C.S.O.'s quarterly national accounts suggest that the economy was weaker in the final three months of the year than had been previously thought. Since the beginning of the year the economy has deteriorated at an even faster pace.

Tax revenues are down 24% on last year, while retail sales are down by 20%.

STRUCTURAL DEFICIT

"The Government will shift its budgetary strategy to avoid having to pile on even more tax rises and spending cuts, Taoiseach Brian Cowen indicated yesterday." (*Irish Independent*-27.3.2009).

Speaking as new figures revealed that the economy had hit a 26-year low, Mr Cowen said the Government had to be conscious of what the economy could bear in terms of higher taxes and less spending.

"There is a balance to be struck between taking money out and maintaining jobs," Mr Cowen said.

The emphasis in next month's Budget would be on the underlying "structural" deficit, rather than the actual deficit.

There is no precise figure for the structural deficit. The targets agreed with the EU Commission put it at 8% of output (GDP) this year, or €4 billion. Mr Cowen's comments may indicate that the Government will stick quite closely to finding the €3 billion a year needed to eliminate the structural deficit by 2013, and borrow whatever else is required on a year-to-year basis.

With the economy performing so badly, economists say there is something to be said for such an approach.

BORROWING

"You would need €8 billion to keep to the original borrowing figure for this year, and you just can't do it," said Pat McArdle, chief economist at Ulster Bank.

"The economy may shrink by more than 8% this year. The structural deficit is the right thing to target, but it is difficult to calculate."

The declines accelerated in the last quarter of the year as multi-national companies cut back production for the first time.

House-building fell by a half compared with the previous three months, and personal spending was down 4%. Even excluding the expensive purchase of



Societalism not Socialism?

Representatives of the social partners met on March 26, 2009, for preliminary talks on a new national agreement on economic recovery.

The agreement to meet came after a decision by the national executive of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (I.C.T.U.) to "defer" a nationwide strike planned for Monday, March 30. It followed trade union leaders' acceptance of an offer from Taoiseach Brian Cowen to enter talks on an "integrated national response" to the economic crisis.

Did the I.C.T.U. have a choice? No, not if their participation in the social partnership had any sense or meaning over the last 22 years. The coming weeks will determine whether the concept will survive or not and that is not going to be easy.

"The decision whether to conclude such a deal will be central to the trade union movement's future, as it attempts to find a new relevance and halt a decline from a membership spread over 60% of the workforce 40 years ago, to approximately 30% at present." (*Irish Examiner*-25.3.2009).

A major anomaly appears to be a growing weakness and inactivity at local level with the apparent gain of strength and influence nationally through involvement in the partnership process.

The Taoiseach told the unions in his letter that there was an overwhelming case for "the development of an integrated national response to the complex interplay of domestic and global forces which must be confronted, and for this response to be effective by commanding widespread societal ownership".

The Government believed that "a lot of this work" necessary to reach an agreement on a new social partnership had "been done anyway".

He said he saw "considerable merits" in the many aspects of the 10-point plan for economic recovery drawn up by I.C.T.U.

"However, the signal by the Taoiseach yesterday that it [Government] may have

to borrow more than the 9.5% of GDP which it had originally said could ease the progress of the talks. The unions had argued that such a target could force the economy into a deflationary shock and it proposed that the Government's borrowing requirement should be relaxed to 11% this year.

"It is unclear yet whether Brian Cowen's signal about higher levels of borrowing represents some form of choreography with the unions in advance of the new talks, whether the spending cuts in the offing may not be as severe as had been forecast, or whether the Government's revenue figures for March are even worse than had been feared.

"In his letter to the I.C.T.U. inviting it to take part in talks, Cowen said that the core elements of a new integrated national response to the economic and other related crises had been outlined in the framework document agreed between the social partners in January. However, in that document, the trade unions signed up to cuts of € billion. The target for reduction in spending in next month's budget could now be up to € billion.

"Separately, a shift in the position of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (I.B.E.C.) last weekend could

also improve the prospects of a new deal. In its letter to unions at the weekend, I.B.E.C. effectively said that while any new agreement would have to involve a lengthy pay freeze, it would not stand in the way of any employer who was in a position to pay the wage increases on a voluntary basis." (*Irish Times*-26.3.2009).

"The unions have indicated they are willing to consider a rethink of the transitional wage deal agreed last September which called for 6% pay increases across the private and public sectors." (*Irish Examiner*-27.3.2009).

Unions, employers and Government have not formally met at Government Buildings since the start of February when talks on a new economic recovery pact collapsed.

Union leaders stated their priorities for the talks, which are expected to conclude after the budget on April 7, 2009.

Unions may find it difficult to justify their decision to re-engage in talks if the Budget is draconian, with tax hikes and reductions in social welfare.

Among the unions' chief aims for the talks are:

- * To ensure the Budget is fair and protect social welfare payments.
- * To extend government borrowing over a longer time frame.
- * To ensure compliance with the national wage agreement.
- * 'Amelioration' of the public sector pension levy.
- * €1bn for unemployment initiatives and establishment of a pension protection fund.
- * Three to four-year stay before homes can be repossessed.

In a circular sent to members, S.I.P.T.U., the largest union, said its priorities in talks would be job protection and a fairer tax system.

The I.C.T.U. also called on the

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