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The Decline and Fall of the Empire

The conflict in Ukraine is the latest step in America's downward spiral. Perhaps if Trump had remained as President the empire might have retrenched. An alliance with Russia in order to counter the economic power of China might have enabled the United States to retain her pre-eminent position, but now we are witnessing "pride before the fall".

Since at least the 1960s the empire has over-extended itself. The 1975 defeat in Vietnam not only exposed the limits of her military power, but also her financial power. In 1971 the US broke the dollar's link to gold and started printing money in order to finance the war. The consequent devaluation reduced the value of her dollar denominated debt much to the chagrin of her creditors and political allies.

Nixon's Treasury Secretary John Connally famously told a group of European finance ministers worried about the export of American inflation that the dollar "*is our currency, but your problem*".

The political hegemony of the US enabled her to avoid the normal economic consequences. The dollar remained as the world's reserve currency. The inflationary consequence of decoupling the dollar from gold was exacerbated by the oil 'crisis' of the early seventies. This 'crisis' was only a crisis for the West. By means of the OPEC cartel, which ensured that the real value of oil was maintained, there was a massive transfer of wealth from the West to the oil producing countries. The massive surplus in funds arriving in the Middle East was returned to the Western Banking system. But, unlike in former times, these funds were in the form of credit. The west owed rather than owned this money.

During the 1970s it was very noticeable that the Western banking system found it difficult to make an economic return on the credit extended from the Middle East. In many countries in the West the working class had achieved a level of power which prevented capital from obtaining an adequate rate of return, but had not

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No leak from Wuhan Institute of Virology, says BBC

On 1st March 2023, the BBC reported [1] that the head of FBI, Christopher Wray, had said in a Fox News interview:

"The FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the coronavirus pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident".

The lab in question is the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a Chinese state institution, where research into coronaviruses had been going on for many years.

The BBC website contains solid evidence [2] that undermines the theory that the Sars-CoV-2 virus leaked from this Institute. However, the BBC made no reference whatsoever to this evidence in its reporting of the FBI assessment that such a leak is the "*most likely*" origin of the virus. Instead, the BBC presented it as one of two equally probable options, the other being a so-called zoonotic spillover event when the virus was transmitted from animals to humans.

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Of War And Peace

The Irish Government has undertaken to arrest President Putin and transfer him to the headquarters of the International Criminal Court to be tried for an alleged war-crime. It has engaged in this undertaking in the knowledge that the ICC is not international in the sense that it covers the world. The body is a private association of a select number of states whose jurisdiction has been rejected by the major states of the

world: the USA, China, Russia, Pakistan and India. The Government also knows that the conviction of Putin for War-crimes requires the destruction of the Russian State, which would probably require a third World War in which the Chinese State too would be destroyed.

The threat to arrest Putin if he comes within reach hardly deserves to be called

a futile gesture. If Putin, in a fit of absent-mindedness, put himself within reach of the Gardai, and was recognised, the Taoiseach would go into a panic and consult Washington. The states that count in the world are war-fighting states. Right is determined by Might. Right and Wrong have never been disentangled in practice from Winning and Losing.

It might be added that the war crime in question was to take Russian-speaking Ukrainian children to safety over the

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

The 'REAL' Taoiseach

Bloody Sunday (back page)

Organised Labour:

State Benefits; Retail Workers; The Banks; Michael McGrath
(page 29)

achieved enough power to organise the economy on different lines. Walter Wriston, the Chairman of Citicorp, thought he had arrived at a solution. He reasoned that individuals and companies can go bankrupt but countries can't. But the extending of credit to various Latin American countries didn't end well. So the contradictions between capital and labour remained unresolved.

In the 1980s the rise of political forces represented by Reagan and Thatcher reflected an attempt to tilt the balance of power in favour of capital. Finance capitalists, such as James Goldsmith, felt that corporations were run for the benefit of managers and workers and it was time for shareholders to assert their rights.

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened up new markets as well as providing new sources of cheap labour to exploit in the 1990s. Similarly the opening up of China gave new opportunities for western capital.

Expansionary monetary policies in recent years have preserved living standards in the West. The import of cheap commodities from China have (until recently) mitigated inflationary pressures (unlike in the 1970s). But is this sustainable? The rise of Putin diminished the opportunities for extracting massive profits from Russia (which is why he is hated by the West), and the export of capital to China has proved to be a double-edged sword. Western companies have outsourced manufacturing to China and have extracted massive profits because of the cheap labour, but they have paid a price. The presence of such Western companies has given China access to western technological know-how, which has enabled her companies to compete with Western companies. Also, the policies have undermined the West's manufacturing base.

Donald Trump was aware of the problem and proposed that American-owned production be repatriated to the United States (or at least to other countries in

the American continent). A second strand to his political platform was that the US should cease to fight costly foreign wars with unlimited objectives.

There is now a consensus in the US concerning his economic policies, but the political Establishment (or as Eisenhower called it: *the military industrial complex*) eschewed his foreign policy and indeed undermined his attempts to implement it when he was President.

We are now seeing the consequences of American *hubris*. The United States has already lost the war in Ukraine. At the outset, the Americans thought that the pressure of war, plus the economic sanctions, would destabilise the Russian Government. It was an arguable proposition. Putin could not be sure that it was wrong. He hoped that his initial intervention would result in some kind of peaceful compromise.

By about August of last year it became clear that: America was not interested in compromise; the economic sanctions had not undermined the Russian economy; and internal political support for the Russian Government remained strong. Accordingly, Putin felt able to mobilise more than 300,000 soldiers in response to the escalation of the war by NATO.

Far from undermining the Russian economy, the sanctions have weakened the Western economies. The dollar's role as the International Reserve Currency has been challenged. Nixon's policy of driving a wedge between Russia and China is in tatters. Russia, with its rich resources and military strength, has now combined with the industrial might of China.

The War in Ukraine has exposed the consequences of decades of out-sourcing of production. The West is incapable of manufacturing the required level of weapons to counteract the overwhelming advantage that Russia has in artillery. "*The old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.*" Or so said Antonio Gramsci, the Italian communist, during an earlier crisis. Western economists can observe the symptoms but they cannot grasp their significance.

Interest rates in Russia are running at about 7% and inflation is about 4%. It could be said that both inflation and interest rates are too high, but at least it can be said that it is a functional system. Savers have an incentive to place their money in the bank, which is a condition of investment. And borrowers have access to funds from the bank.

But in Western economies it is almost the opposite (i.e. inflation at 7% and interest rates at 4%). For many years now, there have been negative real interest rates in the Western economies. There is no incentive to place funds on deposit. Instead, Central Banks have been pumping money into the system in order to inflate assets with dubious underlying value. There are at least 600 billion dollars of unrealised losses in the American banking system, which is enormous given the total capital is 2 trillion.

Nouriel Roubini, the economist who predicted the last economic crisis, is anticipating another “*hard landing*”. He says the sum of the world’s private and public debt was 100% of GDP in 1970. It is now about 350%; and in advanced capitalist countries over 400%. But he doesn’t attempt to understand the underlying causes. Debt, no more than credit, is not created out of thin air. For every dollar or euro of credit, there must be a corresponding amount in debt.

China has been extending credit to the US for decades in order to sustain a standard of living in that country which is not warranted by her level of production. But all of that is coming to an end.

By expropriating Russian assets following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, the US has announced to the world that she reserves the right to renege on debts to countries with which she is in conflict. The creditor countries have taken note.

The alliance between China and Russia has been followed by a *rapprochement*—brokered by China—between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

But the Europeans seem to be oblivious to the new geopolitical dispensation! Germany is not perturbed by the Americans destroying the Nordstream Pipelines. It seems quite happy to buy American Liquid Natural Gas at four times the price of the Russian equivalent and, more recently, Biden has been talking about transferring Germany manufacturing to the US.

It is scarcely believable that Europe is prepared to sacrifice its economic well-being on the altar of a moribund political and economic configuration. When will the Europeans dis-engage from the ideological fog that has saturated the Western media and recognise where their true interests lie? Perhaps, only a decisive Russian victory in Ukraine will bring them to their senses. ■

Potato Famine?

Dear Drs. Gaia Narciso and Battista Severgnini:

An article in today's (2.3.2023) *Irish Times* newspaper reports your tentative correlation of the degree of potato blight damage to the later intensity of rebellion. See my below letter to its editor.

Blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) is a natural event. I lost part of my crops of Aran Banners and Kerr's Pinks for a few summers by being a day late each year in spraying the stalks. The entire crop is lost within 7-10 days if untended, and the Bordeaux Mixture was not invented until decades after the 1845-1850 Holocaust. To my knowledge, potato crop losses from blight will be total unless promptly sprayed.

But far more important; wasn't genocide by imposed starvation, the at-gunpoint removal of Ireland's abundant foods, a more likely correlation with later rebellion?

...My book, *Ireland 1845-1850: the Perfect Holocaust, and Who Kept it "Perfect"* has, so far, had four printings in Ireland, one in Australia, and four in the States. It is available *gratis*, as an **eBook at irishholocaust.org**

From it you will learn, regarding "Holocaust", that it was reported as Holocaust starting on March 4, 1846 and continuing until November 19, 1855 in the pages of the *Cork* (now Irish) *Examiner* newspaper; also by Michael Davitt and others.

Are you connected to Ruth Dudley-Edwards or her "*potato famine*" promoters? Your replies would be appreciated. Academic integrity is involved.

Christopher Fogarty

Ukrainians Escaping?

It's interesting to compare coverage of the US invasion of either Iraq or Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The US invasion was against vastly inferior forces, but hailed as a success, despite the fact that the US was bogged down there for 10 years and exited without having won any clear victory, and without ever really taking full control of either country. But Russia is attacking a very different proposition—a well-armed country, both in terms of what it already had and what is being pumped into it by Western countries. The same Western countries seem to find it a useful dumping ground for their more obsolete (yet still effective) technology, and the aim seems to be to wear down Russian military and economic capability without actually attacking Russia itself.

According to the Western media, Ukraine is hands down winning this war, so my question is, if that's so, why is there still a flood of Ukrainian refugees western nations are expected to accommodate within their own borders?

Nick Folley

Khrushchev

A small detail in the March Editorial, America's War In Ukraine, is not correct. Khrushchev wasn't actually born in Ukraine though he wasn't far off it. Here's what Wikipedia has to say on the matter:

“Khrushchev was born on 15 April 1894,[b][2] in Kalinovka,[3] a village in what is now Russia's Kursk Oblast, near the present Ukrainian border.[4] His parents, Sergei Khrushchev and Kseniya Khrushcheva, were poor peasants, and had a daughter two years Nikita's junior, Irina.[2] His ethnicity is disputed, with some sources claiming that he was Russian[5] whilst others say that he was Ukrainian.[6] Sergei Khrushchev was employed in a number of positions in the Donbas area of far eastern Ukraine, working as a railwayman, as a miner, and laboring in a brick factory. Wages were much higher in the Donbas than in the Kursk region, and Sergei Khrushchev generally left his family in Kalinovka, returning there when he had enough money.[7] ... n 1908, Sergei Khrushchev moved to the Donbas city of Yuzovka (now Donetsk, Ukraine); fourteen-year-old Nikita followed later that year, while Kseniya Khrushcheva and her daughter came after.”

Readers may know this but 'Yuzovka' was named for the Welshman, John Hughes, who founded the coal and steel industry there in the late nineteenth century.

Peter Brooke

The O'Connor Column

Feargus O Rahallaigh – a tribute

Extended version of an appreciation delivered at the Memorial Service for Feargus in the Unitarian Church, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, on 12th March 2023

It is impossible to sum up in any brief way as complex and productive a man as Feargus.

He was born in 1948, the oldest of eight siblings. A fluent Irish speaker, he grew up in Dunfanahy, Co. Donegal. His father, from Belfast, was a customs officer and his mother, a teacher, was one of the *Ní Dhomhnalls*, a well-known cultured and traditional musical family from nearby Rann na feirste. She had been able to continue teaching despite the marriage bar as she was approached by the local Church of Ireland community to take up a vacancy in their school.

Feargus was a voracious reader, intensely curious and knowledgeable about all things: literature, history, economics, film, politics and music, of all cultures, leaving a library of thousands of volumes. Beneath what could seem a world-weary cynicism was a heart of true idealism.

Humanist, socialist and labour man, he never deviated from these, his core values. These aspects of his character were highlighted by many of his former colleagues in their messages of condolences: Patrick Kinsella of RTE recalled "*his sharp, logical mind, his courage to challenge consensus, and his strong sense of justice*"; Paddy O'Gorman how he was always "*good-humoured, and brave and unorthodox in his approach to the big questions of the day*". Former Trade Union leader Noel Ward, Pat Rabbitte's Ministerial Programme Manager in the 1990s, recalled "*Feargus's great intellect, his insightful iconoclasm and thirst for a better world which I experienced when working with him.*"

After graduating from Magee College, Derry, in 1969, Feargus started work as a draughtsman in Dublin. He also studied Economics at UCD, completing an MA under Prof. Patrick Lynch, the doyen of Irish economic planning, passionate in

his advocacy of a planning system along French *dirigiste* lines. Feargus retained an abiding respect for him. Feargus's MA thesis was an analysis of the low-technology aspect of the then Irish industrialisation model, warning of its inherent dangers and proposing how a planned approach could overcome these (as indeed it subsequently did).

The present writer first met Feargus in 1978 when we were both members of Dublin Branch of the B&ICO, the British and Irish Communist Organisation, its very name at the time a provocation! Contrary to what one might expect, it was a very free-wheeling group, morphing and changing over the years, and where anything and everything could, and was, said and fiercely debated. Wits, one sharper than the next, clashed with and confounded each other.

The B&ICO was a serious group, seeking in the 1970s to develop a realistic strategy to advance the labour interest, in both Ireland and Britain. It was an exciting time as Trade Unions—and what to do about them—had become the major political factor, against a background of armed conflict in the North. It was on the latter that the B&ICO developed its signature scandalous position, that there were in fact Two Nations in Ireland, and only if national and labour politics came to terms with that reality would they be able to progress. Few would bat an eyelid at such an idea today, but that was far from the case back then.

The ITGWU, Ireland's premier Trade Union, was struggling for a new bargaining strategy to advance workers' interests in the absence of a credible Labour Party. Feargus joined the Union as an economist in 1975, working alongside Manus O'Riordan, also of the B&ICO, in the Union's "*Development Services Division*", or "*brain box*" as it was called. He

was soon embroiled in the battle of ideas, providing much economic expertise for the Union's national bargaining strategy.

Between economic analysis and research to support officials involved in industrial disputes, he and Manus, along with, among others, Des Geraghty and Rosheen Callender, refined ideas such as those of Nina Fishman for a broad national Trade Union strategy that would combine wages and social policy improvements with an expansive high-productivity industrial policy.

As Peter Cassells of the ICTU said when Manus died some 18 months ago, it was this that laid the "*whole intellectual basis*" for the unique *Social Partnership* system which would be established in Ireland a decade later. Feargus's role in this in the 1970s was just one of his many contributions to national development.

Feargus moved from the ITGWU to RTÉ in 1979, where his natural calling as a journalist truly emerged, with notebook and pencil ever in his jacket pocket, eager for "*the story*" and to tell you of his insights into the latest intrigues. He helped move RTÉ's Economics coverage from its fixation on the tribulations of farmers to those of the new, ever more urban, working Ireland, presenting programmes covering industrial problems from the workers' point of view, and making the case for moving to a co-managed, technology-based industrial economy along Danish or German lines. He was greatly liked and admired at "the station", as Cathal Goan testified in a deeply moving tribute.

Feargus moved on to work in other areas, including, as a lifelong film buff, in independent film production and also at the Irish Film Institute. Alicia McGovern of the IFI described to the Dublin Memorial the sometimes chaotic but always passionately intense contribution he made

there, notably in helping to set up the now invaluable Irish Film Archive.

Feargus worked for two-and-a-half years as “*Special Advisor*” to Pat Rabbitte when he the Junior Minister for Enterprise in the “Rainbow Coalition” of 1995-97. Pat knew Feargus well from his own days as an official with the ITGWU. As “*Special Advisor*”, Feargus again deployed his passion for an innovation and technology-based Irish industry. Events also thrust him into a central role in another area, that of financial policy and the attempt, as he put it, to finally “sort out the Irish banks”.

Pat Rabbitte recalled at the Dublin memorial how his civil service staff held Feargus in awe, though senior civil servants remember him more with trepidation! He stressed Feargus’s genius and “*contrariness*”, as well as his fierce dedication to his work, and how colleagues viewed with amusement the irregular, erratic but long hours he worked, ever surrounded in his “*cubbyhole of an office*” by high mounds of books and papers, and working often late at night or over weekends to do whatever it took. And his debating with peers in Dublin hostels during his daily “*tincture at teatime, downtown*” which had, unfortunately, become something of a necessity.

Economist Jim O’Leary recalled those same debates, and his—

“fond memories of the numerous earnest discussions we had about politics and economic policy back in the '80s and '90s. He was a regular attender at the Doheny and Nesbitt School of Economics although it's probably fair to say he was not a staunch adherent of all elements of the School's [then ascendant neoliberal – ed.] credo!”

Of Pat Rabbitte’s legislative legacy, one of which he is particularly proud is the 1996 *Credit Union Bill*, which still defines the sector and which Pat readily concedes was almost entirely Feargus’s work. Feargus went on to play a central role in the DIRT Inquiry of 1996-98, established to investigate the extraordinary extent of tax evasion through bogus non-resident bank accounts. This brought out the best in him as he became a national authority on the subject and commanded the debate at the inquiry. Mark Kennedy of Mazars Consultants, later a very close friend, recalled:

“I first got to know Feargus in the course of the DIRT Inquiry, when he was officially acting as Pat Rabbitte’s advisor but, in reality, playing a much broader role in shaping the ultimate report of the inquiry committee ...”

Eugene McMahon, who worked with Feargus on several Oireachtas Inquiries, recalled in a message to the Memorial for Feargus held in Waikanae, New Zealand, on 6th March:

“There were many long and heated debates in committee rooms, which often ended indecisively with a nod to Feargus to ‘go sort it out’. He was comfortable across all disciplines, legal, political, financial: it mattered not a jot. He was the fulcrum around which all others made their contribution. He went away, did the research, and came back with a written synopsis, either debunking or proving the previously elaborated theories. And it was through his writing that he held the centre and controlled the dialogue. Sharp and concise, never a word wasted, his written analysis rarely brooked any argument.”

Feargus had not much time for the factionalist politics of the Left and, while attending Conferences of the Democratic Left, did not engage in its political debates apart from in his advisory government role. After DL and Labour merged in 1998, and Pat Rabbitte became its leader in 2002, Feargus was employed on the party staff as a Special Social Policy Advisor.

But Feargus always engaged with great intensity in the core ideological disputes in world economics, at a level, as many attest, which few others could match. Of his later work for several years on a part-time basis with Mazars, Mark Kennedy recalled:

“What started out as an occasional research and blog-writing role, turned into bigger projects—including a 90-page analysis on ‘Resilience in Banking’, which he discovered—to his delight—was later cited in a number of PhD’s as an authoritative source, and in 2009/2010 the great NAMA book project. Like a lot of what Feargus worked on, that started as a casual conversation over a pint and gradually gathered momentum. He signed me on as the accounting and finance contributor (over time becoming the unfortunate project manager of the book—organisation not being Feargus’ strongest suit) and Maire Whelan as the legal expert. It’s a big book, but the best of it is all Feargus, driven by his rigorous intelligence and sure eye for the heart of the matter.”

This was indeed Feargus’s passion and Mark, in summing up what he felt drove him in his work, picked two words, “*Public Service*”, as defining Feargus’s working life. The massive, 1,175-page, definitive guide to the NAMA legislation is—as Mark said, “*a big book, but the best of it is all Feargus*”, his great *oeuvre*. It was published by Gill & MacMillan in

2011 as *The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) Act 2009: A Reference Guide* by Maire R. Whelan, Mark Kennedy and Feargus Ó Raghallaigh (ISBN: 9780717148400). NAMA itself would play an absolutely critical role in restoring Ireland’s economic well-being following the global financial crash.

During the period of the global financial crisis Feargus was impressed by new ideas emerging and circulated them widely, notably on the potential of *fiat* currencies and “*functional finance*” to counter the relentless tendency of Finance Capital towards catastrophic crisis. Among other issues, he turned to examine was what he saw as a disastrous neo-liberal turn by the EU under the Barroso Commission, and the role being played by the European Court of Justice in enforcing the new creed.

Feargus observed this with much foreboding, writing on it as antithetical to the very basis of the “Social Europe” on which Unions and others had based their adherence to the EU. It was at this time that Feargus became increasingly disillusioned with the EU and with what he saw as Ireland’s turn to a smug self-enriching globalism, de-historicising itself in the process. The new self-congratulatory “Global Ireland” left him cold, making his move to New Zealand in 2014 something of a liberation.

Throughout his varied career, Feargus remained in touch with old friends and comrades from B&ICO days, taking part in meetings to discuss the affairs of the world and writing in the *Irish Political Review* and London-based *Labour Affairs*, latterly also on the politics, culture and history of New Zealand. He was a regular contributor to debates on the Aubane List, often posting his views on developments or sending links to articles he had found on varied subjects, often with the simple comment, “*Might be of interest to some*”. He also forwarded Aubane posts he found interesting to friends of his. His last post on the List—just twelve days before he died—was on the ruinous Ukraine War and what he saw as the misguided direction President Zelensky was leading his nation.

Feargus’s writing was always vivacious and profound. One regular *Irish Political Review* contributor, himself in his late 80s, who knew Feargus only from his writings and email posts, was surprised when he heard he had died:

“Feargus always came across as so lively, I was surprised to hear he was in

his 70s, having assumed he was a much younger man". Now, as Feargus might say, "that's a hoot!"

Feargus was reserved about his private life, but always ready to reminisce about his parents or update everyone on his children's—Kate and Holly's—educational and professional progress, ever a source of unconcealed pride and joy to him. It was a bond that was reciprocated, as was evidenced in their moving and thoughtful tributes to their father at the Waikanae Memorial Service.

Feargus's relishing of the new life he built with his partner Trish in New Zealand, and of the new friendships he formed there,

Fergus's Last Letter In *Irish Times*

**RTÉ's sale of Irish artworks
Tue Oct 8 2019**

Sir, – I note that "RTÉ to sell five piece of artworks at public auctions next month" (News, October 5th). Two of the artworks are by Louis le Brocquy and are RTÉ-commissioned canvases (1966 and 2000, the significance of the dates needs no elaboration). The other works are by the Ulster-Scot artist William Scott; the north-south artist George Campbell; and Tony O'Malley. The selection is to be flogged at Sotheby's sales-rooms, presumably in London. Post-imperial

was palpable. This was testified to in the moving tributes at the Waikanae service from many local friends, including fellow economist, Bill Rosenberg—until his recent retirement chief economist with the NZ Congress of Trade Unions. Despite his idyllic new rural home, social evenings, bowling, gardening and other pursuits he enjoyed, he immersed himself in New Zealand affairs, regularly attending meetings, concerts and other events in Wellington and engaging in heated discussion with the circles of economists he connected with. Typical Feargus!

His acerbic wit, and his seeming cynicism about the foibles of the mortals he had to deal with—which not infrequently

cultural cringe survives apparently in, of all places, Montrose.

Who in RTÉ made this decision? Someone or some body of a presumably executive type and title did so. On what authority and by what writ, including the statutory footing? It wouldn't have happened 50 or indeed 20 years ago. The very works to be flogged are evidence of that.

This to me is heritage, heritage sent to market, reduced in a way to bloodlines in a stallion sales ring.

RTÉ is a statutory national institution. Its management makes much of this in external publicity and the internal corporate culture it propagates among staff.

Taking this position seriously – as was the case for decades – the organisation is a cultural repository acting in trust on behalf of all Ireland.

drove him to real despair—masked, as said earlier, an abiding idealism. In many ways, in this world of ours he was just too intelligent for his own good. His thousands of books, and the infinite wisdom, humour and musings he imparted, remain a great legacy.

Feargus died on 14th February, suddenly, in his home in Waikanae, in his jacket pocket still that eternal notebook and pencil!

Fergus was an interesting man, a difficult man, a lovely man. May he rest in peace. As he himself might say, "Tootle-Pip!"

Suaimhneas síoraí dá anam agus comhbhrón ó chroí lena mhuintir

Key aspects of this pursuit have been there for decades: the home it has provided for classical, serious music in Ireland (the orchestras); the stage it has been for radio drama; the repository it has been for traditional music and culture and national lore (the music collectors and the sound archive); the role it has played in language policy; and the forum it has provided for national debate and its record in news and current affairs coverage and its archives.

It has also been a sponsor of the visual arts.

Its very headquarters is a hymn to modernism in architecture, originating in Michael Scott's designs.

RTÉ supporting the arts?

This sale, a raid on the national collection, should be stopped. – Yours, etc,

FEARGUS Ó RAGHALLAIGH



Some Members Of Fergus's Family

Sean O’Faolain and Canon Formation.

The Final Instalment.

As with all endeavours when one is powering towards the end — there is a surprise that one never expected. A book catalogue appears and within the pages there is one book that I never even heard of (and neither did any of my friends especially those with an ear towards Cork itself). It came out in 2016 and apparently sank without trace. I say this because no-one adverted to its publication, but maybe in some places in academia there fell its faint trace: but then why the silence?

The book is ‘Rebel by vocation: Sean O’Faolain and the generation of *The Bell*’. It is by a Niall Carson and was published by Manchester University Press. The book has a bright red cover and an etching by Mathew Staunton of O’Faolain with his trademark pipe, glasses and jaunty hat. In former articles, I have thought that someone would come along and like the Bloomsbury set, would make a stab at the creation of a set around ‘The Bell’, and all along someone had done so but it was an Englishman and *of course* it would have to be some one of an English *bent* because the Irish don’t think in such terms unless of course they are habituated in English universities.

But who is Niall Carson? He is an academic – Dr Niall Carson and is the “Joint Patronage Lecturer in Modern Irish Literature at the Institute of Irish Studies, in the University of Liverpool. He has published on topics such as Irish print cultures, working class poetry, and transnational Irish literature and has written a monograph on Sean O’Faolain the above mentioned one. He holds a PhD from the University of Liverpool and in addition to this; he holds degrees from the University of Hertfordshire, the National University of Ireland: Cork, and the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has worked at Liverpool Hope University teaching English Literature and Education and as a lecturer at the University of Manchester before returning to the University of Liverpool to take up his current post. He is Departmental Lead for Post-Graduate Research.” He has issued an appeal for proposals for PhDs in any aspect of modern Irish Literature and is himself working on a project about ‘The Irish Academy of Letters.’

In this Liverpool ‘Institute of Irish Studies’, there is the John McGahern Annual Book Prize of £5,000 for the best debut work of fiction — either novel or collection of short stories — by an Irish writer resident in Ireland for more than 5 years, published in a given year.

From 2019 to 2021 the recipients were Adrian Duncan, Hillary Fannin and Louise Kennedy. I have to confess that the first two are unknown to me and maybe the last is the one who got her maudlin book (having never read it nor seen it on TV only for some young friends telling me about it) televised into an even more maudlin TV series widely praised in England and winner of not a few prizes. A bit like ‘*The Banshees of Inis*’ ... yeah I get it — no one is talking about that great success until the Oscars mortified the smart crowd by ignoring it entirely! That’s the Irish Americans for you — always waiting for their well-directed kick *a lá* Beckett and his ‘*More Pricks than Kicks*’, Richard Murphy’s ‘*Kick*’ and didn’t Aidan Higgins write something also with ‘*Kick*’ in the title?

But while McGahern is now forever frozen as a canonised writer who took on the might of the Catholic Church and in doing so lost his teaching job. This gained for him a hero status amongst the *literati* and so, when serious claims of his abuse came out — by boys who gave their true identity, they were completely silenced. They noted that his temper exploded and, once that happened, he lashed pupils with his hands, fist or even a leather strap. But Ireland in 2011 was not for turning on the “gentle” McGahern and stars like the author Joseph O’Connor praised his friend, saying:

“I remember his gentle, curious face, his fascination with the world, his Irish country person’s courtesy in company.”

Well he was hardly likely to raise his hand to a fellow fated Dublin writer now

— was he? And his biographer Dr. Eamon Maher, author of ‘*John McGahern And the Catholic Question*’, stated portentously:

“It is at variance with my own experience of John McGahern on the *three or four occasions* that I interviewed him and whom I found to be affable and gentle.....” (Italics-JH)

That this more or less corroborated with the account of the lads that McGahern was fine until he was not — seems to have passed everybody by. And I think that this is *intentional* because we see today from Dr. Niall Meehan’s persistent attempts to get the State to help men who were abused by a Protestant man working in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, and being just shushed up because only victims of the Catholic Church are eligible to be recognised as “victims”.

And McGahern was starred as a writer, being the recipient of numerous awards and honours

“including a Society of Authors Travelling Scholarship, the American-Irish Award, the Prix Étagère Ecureuil and the Chevalier de l’Ordre des ARTS et des Lettres. ‘Amongst Women’ (1990) which won both the GPA and The Irish Times Award was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and made into a four-part BBC Television series. His work has appeared in anthologies and has been translated into many languages. He died in 2006.”

But, back to Liverpool University and the John McGahern prize, and I was wondering who was on the prize-giving panel. Did I get a shock when I saw who was top dog — well no, not really because this writer is everywhere these days a bit like the writer who thought he was a “*man of letters*” many decades ago — step forward Sean O’Faolain — now it is Colm Tóibín.

And, not only is he determining who will win this substantial prize (with three other academics who are pretty much unknown to us here in writing/reviewing circles), but Tóibín is Chancellor of the University of Liverpool!

And, if all that is not enough, Tóibín is the new *Laureate for Irish Fiction 2022-2024*. He was granted the award by the Arts Council of Ireland and it is a three year term. Before that it was held by Sebastian Barry 2018-2021, and the first Laureate was the multi-awarded writer Ann Enright. Each of them earns 50,000 Euros a year and have certain things expected of them in making sure “to promote Irish — Literature nationally and internationally and to encourage the public to engage with high quality Irish fiction”. Also:

“Over the three-year term, the Laureate will teach creative writing to students of University College Dublin and New York University, will spend time developing their own work, and will participate in a number of major public events and promotions.”

But by far the biggest shock I received while researching this topic was that in 2007, the Irish Government under Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, TD, Fine Fáil, created in Liverpool University a £5 million Chair in honour of Tony Blair whom Ahern credited with creating the framework for the Peace Process in the North of Ireland and thus was the ‘Blair Chair’ initiated!

I had to go back and make sure that this was not a ruse by someone and, after many hours of work, finally concluded that there really was such a Chair created with the money of a—surely unknowing—Irish public. We now know that Tony Blair is a liar, a war criminal and has made the best of post-Prime Ministerial life by ending up worth an estimated—at the last reckoning—£100, 000,000. And that tally is rising all the time—but has he used his vast wealth similarly to create an Irish Chair for Peace in one of the UK’s universities or even that of Ireland? Has he what?

But back to Dr. Niall Carson and his next project: which is on the ‘*Irish Academy of Letters*’ (with the time lapse that I am working on) probably he has already published this book. I surprised myself in noting that setting up the Academy was a good idea and should have continued, but English and American influences and particularly money decided otherwise. The idea for the Academy came from W.B. Yeats and George B. Shaw and they both came up with the idea of a prize for best literary work and this was called ‘*The Gregory Medal*’. So, from 1932 to 1970, the Academy presented this prize (obviously in honour of Lady Gregory), and those who were awarded it were as diverse as W.B. Yeats, AE (George W. Russell), Somerville and Ross (1 medal), Eoin MacNeill, Stephan Gwynn, Padraig Colum, Séamus O’Sullivan, Micheál MacLiamóir and Austin Clarke. James Joyce refused to join, but Elizabeth Bowen couldn’t wait to be on board in 1937 after she was proposed as a member by Sean O’Faolain. It reinforced her ‘*Irish*’ credentials just as she needed these most when she was coming up to the War and her espionage activities for the British Crown.

It is striking that these were the writers that were around Sean O’Faolain, and so came to be defined as “*the generation of ‘The Bell’*” by Dr. Niall Carson. The latter was right when acknowledging that in

the issue of ‘*The Bell*’ in April 1941, it had the full Editorial Board published. Sean O’Faolain who intriguingly got the stimulus from none other than John Betjeman in 1940 to pony up and get involved in this new enterprise—in the same way that Cyril Connolly had started ‘*Horizon*’ also in 1940. With O’Faolain there was Peadar O’Donnell—in my opinion the unsung hero of this enterprise—Maurice Walsh, Roisín Walsh, Eamon Martin, and from the start, a mutinous Frank O’Connor as the Poetry Editor.

There is an extraordinary assertion by Niall Carson that all of these were “*active in the IRA or within republican politics, with the exception of Maurice Walsh.*” The two Cork men O’Connor and O’Faolain may have been blow-ins in Dublin, as O’Faolain saw it, but they definitely were not in the IRA: as shown by me in February edition of the *Irish Political Review* (IPR) as regards the latter. Frank O’Connor never claimed to be an IRA man, maybe a young errand boy but the evidence is not there for a larger involvement. I laughed at one stage where they were both discussing going back to Cork and decided that they might well be beaten up or worse still get shot. This had nothing to do with politics, but rather their unorthodox life style, in betraying their wives and children—though no writer likes to mention this in today’s *liberal* Ireland. In the end both lads bottled it and didn’t return to Cork while the heat was on.

But back to Sean O’Faolain and his canon of writers. I was reading ‘*Canon Sheehan: A Turbulent Priest*’ by Brendan Clifford. (Irish Heritage Society in conjunction with Aubane Historical Society, Cork. June 1990) recently, and in it Clifford reminisced about seeing on British TV an interview with Sean O’Faolain some years back.

“He [O’Faolain] was understandably irritated at being listed along with Joyce as an Irish novelist, and explained that he and Joyce belonged to different worlds. This is, of course, manifestly true—the latter is the greatest modernist writer of our times. He has two novels that rank 1st and 3rd on the Modern Library 100 Best Novels – ‘*Ulysses*’ and ‘*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*’.”

Many people wonder why Joyce didn’t win the Nobel Prize for Literature but by the time ‘*Finnegan’s Wake*’ appeared, the awarding of the Prize was suspended i.e. during the years of the Second World War 1939-1945, and of course James Joyce died on the 13th January 1941.

But back to O’Faolain’s reaction to the interviewer’s claim that he and Joyce were on the same terms as Irish writers: there was also a personal *animus* that O’Faolain nursed against Joyce. When O’Faolain was struggling with writing his novels, and was indeed censored by the Irish State, he wrote to Joyce in Paris and sent on one of his novels, hoping that the great writer would offer him help. The novel was returned and Joyce sharply refused the Cork writer any help. But news had been getting to Joyce of O’Faolain’s cavalier treatment of his wife Eileen with his infidelities and if there was one thing that infuriated James Joyce was this type of behaviour.

As Padraig Colum, who knew the Joyces very well along with his wife Mary, was able to verify:

“Joyce had fixed ideas of faithfulness in marriage, and nothing shocked him more than to hear that somebody he knew was committing adultery.”

As Mary Colum astutely noted that Joyce may have broken from the Catholic faith but:

“I have never known a mind so fundamentally Catholic in structure as Joyce’s own, or one on which the Church’s ceremonies, symbols, and theological declarations had made such an impression. After he left Dublin I do not think he ever entered a church except for the music or some great traditional ceremony. And yet the structure was there: his whole mind showed the mental and moral training of the Church, and his esteem for many of its doctors and philosophers was greater than he expressed for other outstanding mentalities”.

As James Joyce himself put it:

“Those souls have not the strength that mine has
Steeled in the school of old Aquinas.”

Had Joyce lived, there is no question but that he would have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. As Aaron Jaffe revealed:

“James Joyce didn’t win the Nobel Prize, because he was dead when it was most likely to be awarded to him”.

The four Irishmen who won it were W.B. Yeats (1923), George Bernard Shaw (1925), Samuel Beckett (1969), and Séamus Heaney (1995). All of them, except Heaney, are Protestant. And, as for Sean O’Faolain and his canon formation, time and events surpassed him and left him an embittered old man. But there is still stuff to be mined from Carson’s book, as I only got a glimpse of it before writing this article. So there are waters yet to be tested and books to be reviewed and what a revitalising task that is!

Julianne Herlihy (c)0

Number 3, Part 3

The Brian Murphy osb Archive

Poisoning the well or Publishing the truth

(Part Two: Continued from *March Irish Political Review*)

From Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies* to RTE's Hidden History film on *Coolacree*

The issue of forgery and Peter Hart's 'honest mistakes'.

It was against this background that the question of forgery seemed secondary to the principal fact that the document, itself, could not be attributed to Tom Barry. Leeson, however, in his contribution to Indymedia, paid little attention to the considerations presented above, and repeated Hart's questions verbatim. He concluded that "*neither Murphy nor Ryan gave a satisfactory answer to that question*". One cannot claim to have a definitive answer to this question, which, at this stage in the debate, would appear to be of only a speculative interest, but a possible response is to be found in the pages of the two British source documents. Ironically Hart, himself, in the very posing of the question, has indicated an answer to it by remarking that "the pamphlet's British author even comments that the Kilmichael report does not support the official version of the ambush, which claimed that the IRA mutilated the Auxiliaries bodies".

The pamphlet that Hart refers to here is *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*. In other words, if I understand Peter Hart correctly, he is claiming that, if a forger was at work, he would have added the mutilation of the Auxiliaries to the forged report in order to blacken the reputation of the IRA. This argument might have some merit if both of the source documents that contain the Kilmichael 'captured report', *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)* and *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area*, had printed it without making any additional comments. However, both documents printed the 'captured report' with comments that were taken, in large part, from the 'official version' of the Kilmichael ambush. In other words the 'captured report' was used as a peg on which to hang the 'official' verdict on the ambush; and, with the word 'official', we are back in the world of Basil Clarke, 'verisimilitude', and distortion.

The effect is most clearly seen in the way in which the 'captured report' is presented in *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area*, the document that Peter Hart cited originally. In that source, immediately following the 'captured report', it is stated that "*the true facts are as follows*". The 'true facts' recorded that the Auxiliaries were "*confronted by a man in British soldier's uniform, and wearing a steel helmet*"; that many of the IRA ambush party "*were dressed as British soldiers and wore steel helmets*"; that the dead and wounded Auxiliaries "*were indiscriminately hacked with axes and bayonets; shotguns were fired into their bodies, and many were mutilated after death*". Similar 'true facts', although the list is not so comprehensive, were used to preface the 'captured report' in *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*.

The 'true facts' were, in fact, composed by Basil Clarke, Head of Publicity, and his colleagues, Captain H.B.C. Pollard of the Police Authority and Major Cecil Street of the Irish Office. Following the findings of the Military Court of Inquiry, held at Macroom on 30th November 1920, 'official' press releases were made available, in early December, with such headlines as '*Mutilated Bodies*' and '*Mutilation with Axes*' (Murphy, *Propaganda*, pp 65-67). Although one Auxiliary, who had visited the ambush site, did inform the Court of Inquiry that "*all bodies were badly mutilated*", the findings of Dr. Jeremiah Kelleher, while gruesome, did not endorse that finding. The only slight connection between the doctor's report and the 'official' story was his evidence that a wound on one Auxiliary had been "*inflicted after death by an axe or some similar weapon*".

In reality there were no IRAsmen in British uniforms and wearing steel helmets; there were no axes used in the ambush; and no bodies were mutilated.

At the time the *Irish Bulletin*, the or-

gan of the Publicity Department of Dail Eireann, attempted to correct the British version of the ambush. On 23rd December 1920, under the heading, *Converting Acts of Warfare into Atrocities*, it stated that "the English authorities prevented the examination of the bodies by any independent witnesses and spread broadcast the reports that hatchets had been used to mutilate them". The *Irish Bulletin* then explained, with remarkable accuracy, the propaganda methods of Basil Clarke, even using the word 'verisimilitude'. It stated that

"these false reports are given a certain verisimilitude by the suppression of essential facts: by the gross misstatements of certain details and by the deliberate addition of falsehoods known to be falsehoods by those who issue the reports".

In this context, the juxtaposition of the 'captured report' with the so-called 'true facts' of the ambush, we have, I would suggest, a reasonable answer to Peter Hart's question regarding forgery: a 'captured report' accompanied by the 'true facts' would not only damn the IRA but also convey a positive image of the British Crown Forces in their struggle against superior numbers.

Moreover, British officials, both civil and military, and those sympathetic to the British war aims, began, almost immediately, to record an account of the Kilmichael Ambush that was based on the [alleged] true facts of the 'official' report. In February 1921 Major Street's *The Administration of Ireland 1920* was published in which the Flying Column at Kilmichael was described as wearing "*khaki trench-coats and steel helmets*" and the bodies of the Auxiliaries were said to be "*hacked with axes and bayoneted*". In 1923 W. Alison Phillips, Lecky Professor of History at Trinity College, Dublin, writing as he claimed with access to secret British documents, recounted how "*a hundred Sinn Feiners disguised as British soldiers attacked the Auxiliaries, leaving the dead 'savagely mutilated with axes*" (Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1906-1923*, London, 1923). In 1924 General Macreedy, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Ireland in 1920, wrote in the second volume of his *Annals of an Active Life* (London, 1924) that the wounded at Kilmichael "*were deliberately murdered on the road, being mutilated with axes*".

It is significant, and relevant to Peter Hart's question about a forgery, that none of these accounts make reference to a surrender of any sort. If they had done so, it would have reflected badly on the integrity

and bravery of the British Crown Forces. For the same reason, it would be expected that any forgery of a 'captured document' relevant to the Kilmichael Ambush would also remain silent about a 'false surrender' and that is what we find. Indeed, on a purely speculative level, the argument of Peter Hart may, quite logically, be turned on its head: the silence about a 'false surrender' in the 'captured report', far from indicating that Tom Barry was its author, suggests that sources, other than Barry, were responsible for the document. To state the matter quite simply: Barry would have wanted the 'false surrender' version in any report of his; British sources would not.

One of the first accounts, British or Irish, to mention a 'false surrender' at Kilmichael was that of Lionel Curtis, a prominent adviser to the British Government, who visited Ireland secretly in early 1921. His version of events is of great interest because it was made after he had met Erskine Childers, then acting head of Publicity for Dail Eireann, and was influenced by Irish source material. They met in March 1921 and Curtis published his article on Ireland in the Round Table in the following June. Curtis reported that—

"an account of one notorious episode, which was obtained from a trustworthy source in the district, may enable the reader to see the truth in relation to some of the stories to which it gives rise. Last autumn a party of police was ambushed at Kilmichael, near Cork. Every member of the party but one was killed, and the bodies were shamefully mutilated. It is alleged by Sinn Fein that a white flag was put up by the police, and that when the attacking party approached to accept the surrender fire was opened upon them."

While the account by Curtis does perpetuate the British story of mutilation, it also provides an early mention of Tom Barry's 'false surrender' version of events. In this regard it should be noted that Peter Hart's claim that General Crozier, writing in Ireland for Ever (1932), was "the first writer" to recount the false surrender is, therefore, not correct.

Some ten years ago, in a review article in *The Month* (September/October, 1998), I had pointed out that the 'false surrender' account is also to be found in the life of *Michael Collins* (1926) by Piaras Beaslai: but this account by Curtis is far more significant. Coming from a British source and coming within months of the Kilmichael Ambush, it undermines Hart's claim to place "the first writer" of the 'false surrender' story at some considerable distance from the actual event.

One final point needs to be made in relation to Leeson's contribution to the debate. He stated in his Indymedia article that, if Peter Hart has "*made mistakes, they were honest mistakes*", and concluded that some of his critics "*should be a little more circumspect in what they say about Peter Hart and his work*". As Meda Ryan and myself were identified as critics in the preceding sentence, I presume that the remark about circumspection refers to myself. Faced by such comments, I can only respond by citing the opening sentence of my review of Peter Hart's book, as it appeared in *The Month*: "*this is a well researched book, an important book, a controversial book*". This sentence was considered so 'circumspect' that it was selected to appear on the back cover of subsequent editions of Peter Hart's book as a form of recommendation. The last sentence of my review, although raising some doubts, was, I would suggest, equally fair. "*Hart's findings on this important issue of sectarianism*", I wrote, "*are open to question, but his book is to be welcomed as providing much new and indispensable information on the IRA*".

The issue of Peter Hart's 'honest mistakes' and the manner in which he has responded to the critiques of his book will now be addressed. Interviewed by Brian Hanley in *History Ireland* (March/April 2005), it was put to Peter Hart that "*Meda Ryan and Brian Murphy have raised quite specific criticisms. How do you respond to these?*" In regard to Meda Ryan, Hart replied that her work was marked by "*ignorance and prejudice*", a remark that reflects more upon himself than upon Ryan—who answered his particular charges comprehensively in *History Ireland* (September/October 2005).

In regard to myself, Hart replied that "*Brian Murphy has recently done some research on British propaganda but it isn't published yet so I can't really comment*". This reply, with particular reference to propaganda, was correct. My book, already referred to, was not published until February 2006, although an appendix in that book on '*Peter Hart and the Issue of Sources*' had been published earlier in the *Irish Political Review* of July 2005. However, in my review article in *The Month* (1998), and in my letters to the *Irish Times*, I had raised several questions that might have been addressed by Hart in 2005.

There is no need to rehearse here the arguments about the 'captured report' of the Kilmichael Ambush, except to stress again two of the fundamental questions

that remain to be answered by Peter Hart: firstly, why persist in calling it the '*original*' report '*written*' for his superiors?; and, secondly, why omit from his published version of the 'captured report' the sentences regarding the dead and the wounded that prove that Tom Barry could not have been the author? These unanswered questions are important. Equally important are the questions that I raised about sectarianism in my review article. In many ways these questions relating to religious issues and the IRA have become increasingly significant, especially after the showing last year by RTE of the film on the shooting of two young Protestants at Coolacree on 30th June 1921. This film was part of their Hidden History series.

(To be continued)

Of War And Peace

continued from page 1

Border. And it might be asked: what did Ireland have to say about the illegal invasion of Iraq by the American and British Government and their destruction of a State system which had kept the peace between incompatible factions for a generation? The fine words about Ukraine can be seen for what they are: tail-ending the Imperial West!

WAR AND NATIONALITY

The Irish State, though founded through war, is not a war-fighting state. Two wars have been fought in it, and a third was fought in its neighbourhood, but it has no military tradition. It has no military history.

Ireland's military history ended in 1691.

A War went into its making as a modern state—the war it had to fight against the British Empire in order to preserve the system of government it had established peacefully, on the foundation of an electoral mandate, in 1919. The State has recently decided that it was not founded in 1919 at all, and that it was not founded in defensive war against an aggressively imperialist British democracy. It pretends that it was founded by Britain in 1922. The first of its three Wars is that blotted out. The happenings between 1919 and 1921 are transmuted into a misunderstanding.

The second War, fought in 1922-3, destroyed the system of government established in 1919-21. The purpose of the 1922 War was to secure the new

governing system established in January 1922, on British authority, by a dissident group of conspiratorial Republicans and Monarchist Sinn Feiners who had struck a deal with Whitehall. It was conducted by the organiser of assassinations of British Agents in the War of 1919-21, who was supplied by Britain with an Army for the purpose of making war on the territorial IRA which remained loyal to the 1919 Republic, which it had made a real presence in the life of the country.

That War, called the *Civil War*, becomes difficult to explain if the story is that the State was founded by a British Act of Parliament (the ‘Treaty’) in 1922. The best way of dealing with it is to treat it as another misunderstanding.

The two spectacular events of that War are the murder, in December 1922, of a group of Republican leaders from the War of Independence, who were taken prisoner in the first encounter of the ‘Civil War’, held in prison for six months, and then taken from their cells at midnight, without warning, on the instructions of the Treatyite Cabinet, and killed as an act of terror, without any pretence of trial, or even of accusation, and the tying of a group of Republican prisoners to a mine, which was then exploded.

If the catch-cry of “*war crimes*” has any realistic meaning, then those two events in the making of the Treaty State were war crimes—as the present Taoiseach seemed to admit when he organised his takeover of the Treaty Party.

The blowing up of prisoners by the mine happened at Ballyseedy in Kerry. On this awkward centenary an attempt has been made to establish a counterpart of it on the anti-Treaty side: *Remember Knocknagoshel!*

At Knocknagoshel, also in Kerry, retreating Republicans left some booby traps behind them and there were some Treatyite casualties.

“*All’s fair in love and war!*” The only thing that counts is winning. But, if it is insisted that certain things must be judged to be unfair in war, then tying prisoners to a mine and blowing them up is one of them. Leaving booby traps to obstruct the enemy is not one of them.

On this awkward centenary occasion a well-known Republican leader paid homage at both Knocknagoshel and Ballyseedy. So, in that quarter too, history is junk.

The third War, by far the greatest of the three, was fought on Irish/British

territory—Irish *de jure*, British *de facto*. The Six Counties are an integral part of the British state in everything except the most important thing: political life. They were allowed to remain within the British state at the insistence of the majority, but only on the condition that—while being provided with British services by the State—the majority would conduct a little government of its own, outside the sphere of British party politics.

This meant that the large Nationalist minority was placed under the immediate government of its local enemy and was cut off from the mediating influence of the party-political life of the state. Northern Ireland, not being a state—and being provided with all the major services of State, except politics, by Whitehall—had not the substance to generate democratic party politics of its own. Northern Ireland government was well summed up by one historian [Patrick Buckland, ed.] as a “*factory of grievances*”. It had nothing positive to do. Everything positive came from abroad—from “*the mainland*!”. The only business of the majority was to keep down the minority.

The British statesmen, who imposed that system on the Six Counties against the wishes of the Unionist Party, knew very well that they were imposing a system that could only preserve and aggravate the existing antagonisms.

Dublin politicians supported that Northern system in that they opposed every attempt to bring the Six Counties within the normal political arrangements of the British state. The “*factory of grievances*” held the large, and growing, Nationalist minority together as a cohesive community, detached from British political life, and provided a foundation in the North for the Dublin *de jure* claim of sovereignty.

But the Dublin Establishment was schizophrenic on the subject. When War broke out in the North between the Nationalist minority and the British State, the Dublin Establishment denounced it as an outbreak of criminality, while maintaining its claim of *de jure* sovereignty, which de-legitimised the presence of the British State in the North.

A quarter of a century after the War was brought to a positive conclusion by means of a drastic alteration of the governing system in the North, none of the Southern Parties can bring itself to describe it as a *War*. And the Party which established itself in the North as a war party has difficulty, in its Southern extension, in saying exactly what happened in the North.

The War was declared by the Republican leader Rory O’Brady in 1970 as a War to end Partition. We said at the time that that aim was unachievable.

Mid-way through the 28 years we noticed that the purpose of the War was being modified to accord with Northern Ireland circumstances. That modification made possible the Sinn Fein/IRA success of 1998. Sinn Fein/IRA then established itself very quickly as the dominant nationalist party in the Two-Nations 1998 settlement. It is now the major party over all, set to hold the First Ministry if the DUP agrees to restore the devolved system.

It was nonsensically branded a Fascist party half a century ago by Professor Dermot Keogh of Cork University, and Professor John A. Murphy of Cork University, who were both propagandists rather than academics. The branding stuck. It became the major Party in the South at the last election and there was talk of Ireland’s 1933 being at hand—this was the year when Britain did not veto Hitler’s appointment as German Chancellor.

Sinn Fein in the South is not Fascist. It never was. But it is no longer what it was. It could not have remained in its extension to the South what it was in the North. It might have set itself to take over what had been Fianna Fail ground when Fianna Fail denied its origins—but it went in the other direction of discarding all points of historical reference and living off the fashionable issues of the moment.

It has a policy on the housing problem, but it has also helped to create the problem by contributing to a campaign to drive private landlords out of the market in a society which has opted decisively for the market. And it must remain silent on a factor that has certainly aggravated the crisis: the opening of the country, as a war measure to Ukrainians who chose to leave the Ukraine as their contribution to the War. [The official figure at present is that there are 75,000 Ukrainians in Ireland. [As of August 2022, Russia appears to have taken the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees: 2,197,679 (see <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/qa-the-uk-and-the-ukraine-refugee-situation/>). Britain has 167,600 (How many Ukraine refugees in UK 2023: Google Search). Ed.]

Sinn Fein is beholden to Washington in many ways. (At a critical moment Present Clinton wrong-footed Britain by issuing a Visa to Gerry Adams.) It cannot now step out of line with the Government in

giving uncritical support to Washington in its determination to work up the Donbas/ Crimea dispute into a War to undermine the Russian state.

Ireland is a country without a military tradition. Wars have been fought in it, but these wars have not entered its experience. It has made itself, by an existential leap into a present without a past, an unconditionally peace-loving country. It therefore offers itself to the greatest Military Power the world has ever seen for its attempt to establish Perpetual and Universal Peace by establishing itself in universal dominion.

The particulars of the national conflict within the Ukraine are beneath Ireland's notice.

*

The International Criminal Court consists of a great many states, including Cabo Verde, Comoras, Cook Islands, Kirbati, Lichtenstein, Nauru, South Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and Venuata. Chief amongst its members capable of waging war are Britain, Poland and France.

Tony Blair's retirement message to his Party was that it must never forget that Britain was "a war-fighting state".

The world consists of war-fighting states. There were many such states in the world before Britain launched its catastrophic World Wars in 1914. There are now only a few of them. But the wars have grown progressively more destructive and more ideological.

When there were many states capable of fighting wars there were many fought over conflicts of interests between the states. Those wars ended in adjustments in relations between the states in the light of the conflict.

The Red Cross was founded by a Swiss citizen who was traumatised by the appalling casualties he observed on the battlefield of Solferino in the Second Italian War in 1859.

The total killed, counting both sides, in that War was under 5,000. The Italian cause was advanced at the expense of Austria. No State was destroyed. It was a dynastic war, a war without transcendental moral meaning, a Reactionary War.

Good Wars, Progressive Wars, did not begin until half a century later. These were wars that were not fought for sordid material gain, or indeed for anything tangible at all. The first major battle fought in Progressive War can be taken to be the Battle of the Somme. And the last major act of Progressive War was probably Hiroshima.

There were three armies at Solferino, all dynastic, and all commanded by the Monarch: the Pietmontese by Victor Emmanuel II, the French by Napoleon III, and the Austrian by Francis Joseph II.

The classic, pre-1914, edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes it thus:

"The French army, proud of its reputation as the premier army in the world, and composed, three-quarters of it, of professional soldiers whose gospel was the "Legend" [presumably of the first Napoleon's Imperial Guard] welcomed a return to Napoleon's battlegrounds, while the emperor's ambitions coincided with his sentiments. Austria, on the other hand, did not desire war. Her only motive of resistance was that it was impossible to cede her Italian possessions in face of a mere threat. To her, even more than to France, and infinitely more than to Italy, the war was a political war, a "war with a limited aim" or "stronger form of diplomatic note"; it entirely lacked the national and personal spirit of resistance which makes even a passive defence so powerful..."

It was a civilised war, fought within European civilisation—a thing which was broken up by the Versailles Conference in 1919 as a result of the way that Britain had fought its Great War.

Fanatical War, fought for no earthly purpose, was inaugurated by Britain, with active Irish Home Rule assistance, in August 1914. The hysterical note was present in it from the first hour. Tom Kettle was its St. Paul. And the "fighting Irish" were given their moment of glory (within moderation) in English life.

England scraped home to victory, thanks to the United States—which was a creation of essential England, Puritan England. The US was not yet ready to take over from the homeland. It left Europe to Britain to deal with. Britain made a mess of it, and then launched a second World War in search of a remedy, and messed that up too. The Second World War ended with a division of the world between Russia (which beat back the attack on it by most of the countries of Fascist Middle Europe) and the United States, which pressured England to allow it to place an Army in Europe which met the Russian Army at Berlin.

The division of the world was formalised by the establishment of the United Nations, which recognised Moscow and Washington as being supreme, each in its own sphere. The critical element in it was the Veto held by the founders on the Supreme Council. The Veto was also awarded to Britain, in honour of its part in launching that catastrophic War. And,

for decency's sake, it was also awarded to France, and to China—which was then a state of little consequence under American hegemony, and a site of Irish missionary activity.

That division of the world under two hegemonic Powers worked well enough as a World Order until the Russian system broke down, leaving the USA dominant—and giving it a taste for totalitarian hegemony.

The USA did not know how to conduct itself as the sole Super-Power in the world. It had been driven since the 1840s by the blind vision of "*Manifest Destiny*", articulated by that great Irishman John L. Sullivan (of whom Ireland knows nothing) during the Mexican War.

But the *Destiny* told it that it must keep on going West, which, of course, as the world is round, led to it going East. It sent warships to Japan to tell it that it must open itself to the world and become active in it, or else — . And Japan, seeing what Britain was doing to China after opening it with the Opium War, decided, in a remarkable development, to become a capitalist Imperial Power—thus making it necessary for the United States to confront it as an enemy.

America has no idea what its *Manifest Destiny* would look like when completed. Pompeo, or one of his colleagues, thought it would look like a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in every major street in every city in the world.

Ever since it found itself alone in control of the world in 1990, America has been acting destructively to no apparent purpose. It began with two Wars against Iraq, which had no wish to be its enemy. It gave Iraq the green light to deal with Kuwait which, it alleged, had been stealing its oil while Iraq had been engaged in stopping the Islamic Revolution in Iran from over-running the Middle East.

The first President Bush was content to do a lot of killing of Iraqis. He did not destroy the State. The Clinton regime which followed maintained close supervision over Iraq, grounded its air force, and continuously bombed its public utilities as the Iraqi State repaired them. The second Bush came along, said he believed that Iraq—under close supervision and continuous bombing—had built weapons of mass destruction, and, in alliance with Britain, he destroyed it.

The destruction of the State unleashed, in energised form, the forces of religious conflict which the secular socialist regime had subordinated.

Islamic State became a political force in the resulting anarchy. It was declared to be a Terrorist force, and so there was the *War On Terror*.

The comparatively stable State of Libya was destroyed during this period. And the Syrian regime, under attack from Islamic Fundamentalists was declared a *rogue state*, and would certainly have been destroyed, if the Russian State had not pulled itself together out of the condition of British and American-inspired anarchy, and came to its aid—marking it too as down for destruction.

While all this was going on, the Ukraine had become an independent state without any conflict with Russia, and without Russia taking any measures against the possibility of Ukraine becoming a hostile state.

In 2013 the elected Ukrainian Government negotiated trade deals with both the European Union and with Russia. The European Union insisted that the Ukraine should have an exclusive trade deal with itself. It fostered an uprising against the elected Ukrainian Government. A Ukrainian nationalist movement, which had acted with the Nazis against the Jews and the Russians during WW2, and which was assumed to have been snuffed out, appeared in Kiev's Maidan Square. The EU tried to calm down the situation. Washington said *Fuck the EU!*, and urged on the *coup d'etat* of 2014. There was an immediate assault by Kiev on the Russian minorities in the Donbas, the Crimea and Odessa. In Odessa a Trade Union building with Trade Unionists in it was set on fire—and those inside not permitted to flee.

The Russian Government acted in the Crimea, where its fleet was based. It conducted a Referendum there on the issue of returning to the Russian state. There is no doubt that this referendum was illegal under Ukrainian law. There is also no doubt that the population voted for annexation to Russia.

The Russian region of the Donbas organised resistance to Ukrainian Nationalist assault in 2014. The Russian Government negotiated the *Minsk Agreement* with Kiev: organised a kind of Home Rule arrangement with the Donbas, under Ukrainian sovereignty. The Ukrainian Government has since explained that it signed the Minsk Agreement only as part of a NATO plan to train its forces with a view of ending devolution in the South and East of the country, and completing the de-Russification of the Russian minority in the state.

Message from the White House to the World:

"We believe in investigating war crimes — but not ours or Israel's"

The US State Department website says the following about the International Criminal Court (ICC):

"We maintain our longstanding objection to the Court's efforts to assert jurisdiction over personnel of non-States Parties such as the United States and Israel."

In other words, it is US policy that the ICC should not investigate and seek to prosecute American or Israeli citizens, or the citizens of any other state that is not a State Party to the ICC, for example, citizens of the Russian Federation.

In 2020, the ICC prosecutor opened an investigation into activities by the US military and CIA personnel in Afghanistan. As we will see, the US applied fierce pressure on the ICC to have this investigation aborted, including by sanctioning the ICC Prosecutor. By contrast, the US has actively assisted the ICC investigation into activities by Russian personnel in Ukraine and President Biden welcomed the subsequent indictment of Vladimir Putin for war crimes.

When asked for his reaction to the ICC decision, Biden said: *"I think it's justified"*. He did not say: "We have a longstanding objection to the ICC indicting personnel of non-State Parties such as Russia".

What he should have said was: *"We believe in investigating war crimes - but not ours or Israel's."*

(*)

In November 2017, Fatou Bensouda, the ICC Prosecutor at that time, sought permission from the Pre-Trial Chamber of the Court to open an investigation into activity by members of the US military and the CIA in Afghanistan and in the secret CIA "black sites" in Poland, Romania and Lithuania.

In the 181-page document justifying her request, she wrote:

"... the information available provides a reasonable basis to believe that members of United States of America ("US") armed forces and members of the Central Intelligence Agency ("CIA") committed acts of torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, rape and sexual

violence against conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan and other locations, principally in the 2003-2004 period."

The US is not a State Party to the ICC and therefore the ICC cannot prosecute individuals for crimes committed within the US. But Afghanistan is a State Party and therefore the ICC can prosecute any individual, including Americans, on its territory. And the same is true for Poland, Romania and Lithuania, which are also State Parties.

The US objected strenuously to the investigation opened by Bensouda. In April 2019, the Trump administration revoked her US visa. In June 2020, President Trump issued an Executive Order, which determined that—

"any attempt by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute any United States personnel without the consent of the United States ... constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" and "declared a national emergency to deal with that threat".

Under this Order, Bensouda and another court official active in the investigation had their US assets frozen.

This extraordinary pressure on court officials lasted until April 2021, when President Biden revoked the Executive Order. Announcing the decision, Secretary of State Antony Blinken was at pains to emphasise that the US continued to "disagree strongly with the ICC's actions" in relation to Afghanistan. It continued to be US policy that the ICC should not investigate and seek to prosecute American or Israeli citizens, or the citizens of any other state that is not a State Party to the ICC.

(*)

These US efforts to abort the ICC investigation of American activities in Afghanistan are in marked contrast with extensive assistance being given by the US to the ICC in its investigation of the activities of Russians in Ukraine.

The US Attorney General Merrick Garland visited Ukraine on 22 June 2022 and declared *"there is no hiding place for war criminals"*. "Except in the US military and the CIA", he might have added. He announced various additional US actions *"to help Ukraine identify, apprehend, and prosecute those individuals involved in war crimes and other atrocities"*

in Ukraine", including the launch of a War Crimes Accountability Team and the appointment of Counsellor for War Crimes Accountability in the Department of Justice.

No stone is to be left unturned to assist

the ICC in the investigation of Russians, while every effort is made to obstruct the ICC in the investigation of Americans and Israelis.

David Morrison

22 March 2023

Policing The Pronoun

The case of Enoch Burke seems to defy credibility. Ostensibly the teacher has been jailed, dismissed and now heavily fined on a matter of personal conscience. Simply put, he declines to comply with a male child's demand that Burke calls him by a female name or feminine pronoun. Burke declines because he claims that his religion does not sanction compliance with such a demand. Burke is a devout Christian, formerly employed in a Christian school located in what was until recently a predominantly Christian country.

The child's demand is sustained by school policy and by the state law. Burke refuses to bend to either.

Twenty years ago the child's demand would have been gently ignored at first and only later if repeated, the child would have been offered some kind of counseling or guidance. Today, the child's demand is enforced by the state. Something has changed radically. It is Irish attitudes to sexuality which have dramatically changed. The digital generation is now fully aligned with their peers in the UK and the EU.

The name and age of the child is unknown and the views of the parents are unknown but are thought to coincide with the demands of the child. Therefore it is not known what the child wishes to achieve by the demand or if the child fully comprehends its significance. Indeed, many adults might not fully understand either.

It is not clear why the State has allowed itself to get involved in this matter or what the State wants to achieve. It is much clearer what Burke wishes to achieve – the right to be guided by his conscience which ought to be guaranteed by the Constitution. That his conscience is informed by his religion is of no consequence. Burke is then a conscientious objector and ought to be protected by law. If his conscience is not protected, then he is not living in a free country. He does not enjoy the freedom of conscience which the child seems to enjoy. It is not clear why a child should enjoy

this privilege when a professional teacher cannot also enjoy that privilege.

Burke has little support in Ireland and his large family is portrayed in the media as bordering on the fanatical because they are guided by their religious beliefs. Burke has not handled his position with the subtlety it requires and has probably been too confrontational. Equally the school and the State have reacted in an authoritarian manner. The result is what appears to be an absurd battle over pronouns. But in fact it is a battle about something much more significant – identity. More precisely, it is a battle about the right to identify oneself according to personal conscience. But what is personal conscience?

While it can be accepted that Burke is acting according to his conscience, we cannot know if the child is acting from conscience since we know nothing about the child. Crucially, we do not know what has influenced the male child to seek re-identification as a female. Therefore we cannot determine if the child has the right in law to re-identify. Adults may enjoy this right but it does not follow that children also have the right.

Other adult rights are denied to children with a view to protecting them. In Ireland it is illegal for children under 17 to engage in consensual sexual relations. This may be considered wise or unrealistic according to personal opinion. The law at present regards those under 17 as legally incompetent to consent to sex, yet it appears to sanction gender re-identification by underage children. This seems paradoxical.

It can be argued that, if a child is not competent to understand the full implications of sexual activity, then the same child cannot understand the range of implications of gender re-identification. While sexual activity in adolescence results from physical desires, the same cannot be said for re-identification which would be the result of a decisional process requiring cognitive reflection, judgment and guid-

ance. It would be more prudent if children were not allowed to re-identify until they reached the age of consent. This would also resolve the state's predicament, although it would not resolve Burke's position.

His position can only be solved by the law allowing him to identify the re-identified adult, either by biological identity as recorded on the birth certificate or by the name on the gender certificate. The second gender identity does not eliminate biological identity. A male is not a female because of a certificate. This freedom to choose would remove the pronoun police from the equation.

An alternative solution is simply to lower the Irish age of consent to that of other EU states such as Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Portugal where it is set at 14 years. This would allow adolescents of 14 and over to seek gender re-identification which would probably facilitate a great many cases and maybe this one as well.

Jack Lane

See also page 20:
The Strange Case Of Enoch Burke

2023 Roger Casement Summer School

Friday 5 May
and
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For video click this link:
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Full details at:
Web: <http://rogercasementsummerschool.ie/>

Email: casementschool@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DLRCasement>

Remembering The Shipyards!

I was born in Belfast and lived in Northern Ireland until the age of 22 but I never heard the description, 'Rotten Prod', used when I worked in the Harland & Wolff Shipyard, from 1946 to 1954. The shipyard pogroms of early 1920s were discussed by those with a moral conscience, or revelled in by a few, who warned it could happen again.

My father, a Protestant, and life-long communist, born in February, 1900, never spoke of 'Rotten Prods'. He spent his youth in what was called the wee yard of Workman, Clark, as an apprentice joiner and journeyman, before moving to New York in 1923. He spoke of them as *bigots*. Bigot was strong word then. Everyone knew that word bigot described some dangerous Protestants. He didn't like the word *Prod*, in common with other Protestants.

To be called a traitor was a big insult for those not following the rules and regulations of their national grouping. To be called a traitor, by family members, for marrying a Catholic, was something very harsh—which my father suffered continually. It's only in the past few years that I read of the 'Rotten Prods'.

I never heard my father talk of Ulster. That term was used by the loyalists, with whom he never identified. This didn't mean, unlike James Baird, the *Rotten Prod* of this book—written and very well researched by Emmet O'Connor—that he was for a unified Ireland. He in fact was a supporter of a Six-County Ulster, but a reformed one without sectarianism.

My father was very much a man of the Bible, despite his ideas on Communism. Studying it for most his life, his explanation to his Catholic family was that he studied it for its contradictions. In his eighties he asked me to send him a large print Bible from London. Protestants against the shipyard pogroms were to him good Protestants. The Long War he came to see as inevitable. He had a bird's eye view of sectarianism as it affected his Catholic family, and himself as a traitor.

*

Emmet O'Connor, being born south of Border, has a remarkable grasp of what constituted the heavy industry of the

North. It is not something recognised by many in the South. It was something of a myth among the Southern members of the London-based Connolly Association, of which I have been a member. To bring up that subject, a little too much, at a meeting made you seem like an Orangeman in their eyes. The General Secretary, and Editor of the *Irish Democrat*, discouraged any discussion of it.

An Englishman, he preferred the mainly rural Republic of Ireland, as it was in the 1950s and the 60s. The Irish Tricolour, with its orange panel, said that the North was Orange. You were forced to go Southern rural, because, as a Northern Catholic, you could also have a streak of orange in you. A favourite picture in the *Irish Democrat*, edited by Desmond Greaves, was of a donkey looking over a stone wall in Connemara.

Emmet O'Connor also deals very well with the various categories of workers in the two shipyards. There were the *black squads*—like caulkers, riveters, welders, platers, riggers and their helpers, the heater boys. They were called *boys*, though some might be going on for sixty. They could be called semi-skilled, as they heated rivets on a portable coke fire, kept hot by an air hose. The rivets, when white hot, would be thrown, with tongs, with accuracy to either the hand riveters or the machine riveters. A misguided rivet could mean being burnt to the bone.

The black squads, as the book notes, were the big earners. They worked by a method of piece-work, that was measured work. An uncle of mine was able to live in a nice area of Belfast and to buy a seaside cottage in Millisle in County Down. Though there were the finishing trades like joiners, electricians, painters, french polishers, and the imported Italian terrazzo floor layers (for the ship's bathrooms), the fitters—who put together the ship's engines—thought themselves the elite trades.

As the author says, there was plenty of cheap rented houses available for the working class. The unskilled lived in the kitchen houses that were two-up-and-two-down, in which the front door opened directly into the kitchen, which was used as a sitting room, with a smaller room, the true kitchen, called a pantry.

The parlour house of the skilled usually had three bedrooms, a parlour, as the best room, which was used for visitors, or for parents trying to get away from their children for a while. The parlour was forbidden to children except when visitors arrived, like relatives. It was usually furnished with carpets, a Chesterfield Suite of a sofa with two armchairs, some pictures on the wall, special wallpaper, silk-covered cushions, and a piano if a lot of overtime was available in the shipyards.

The parlour house's street door opened on to a passageway, off which was the parlour, and what we would call a sitting room today.

High earners worked with two of the biggest employers, after the shipyards: engineering complexes like Mackie Engineering, and the Sirocco Works. These sometimes exchanged workers with the 1930s Nazi Germany's industrial complex, in order to learn new skills. There was nothing political about it, it was mere business. Generally this was all Protestant industrial territory.

The Catholic working class streets had less salubrious homes because income came mainly from the building industry; the hotel trade as kitchen hands and porters, and chambermaids; warehouses employing rag pickers; cart and horse delivery men; and the poorly paid unskilled.

Sometimes Catholic workers might get the chance of a shipyard job as red-leaders who applied the heavily poisonous red lead to the raw steel of a ship, outside and inside in places like the airless holds of ships and the engine room. Outside the ship they stood on a couple of narrow planks held up by steel cables. Occasionally, these would break and the men would fall into the water, wearing their canvas protective suits. Rescued, and sitting in the back of the shipyard ambulance, they'd be given a tot of whiskey and a cigarette, before being brought to either a First Aid Station, or to hospital if severely injured.

The Yard had these first aid stations dotted around the whole of Queens Island. They were quite often full by the late morning. There were no helmets then nor protection clothing or industrial boots. This thoroughly researched book points all this out. There were Catholic skilled workers in the shipyard, not a lot, not as many as before the pogroms of 1920—when up to 7,000 were expelled either through threats or violence.

The few joiners that existed post-WW2 were there because of Billy Sinclair,

General Secretary of the *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers*.

He was a Protestant and an Executive Committee member of the Communist Party of Northern Ireland. He handed out the jobs. He daringly sent Joe Cahill, a convicted member of the IRA, and later a PIRA leader, to H&W to work as a joiner. If he had been refused a job by the management, Billy Sinclair would have called the mainly Protestant joiner workforce out on strike.

Cahill said he got on well with his fellow joiners. He would have known to keep quiet about his political views and to accept the teasing about being a *taig*. It was sort of joking with jags in it.

Catholic joiners were also employed when there were a lot of ship orders on the H&W books. Orders fulfilled, and they were gone, maybe for years. A way around speaking out for a Catholic was to be a communist. You could run them all down, like Churchill and Brookborough, the Unionist PM, at the time; But don't mention a united Ireland. That could be fatal.

Socially, as a shipyard worker, you were a pariah in polite society, thought of as a cursing, drinking, non-stop smoker with calloused hands, full of crude sexual jokes, a part of the great unwashed, probably wearing no underwear. You wore your dungarees unwashed for years, they said, as if your wife or mother would allow this to happen!

It is true you wore your working clothes to work and came back home in them. There were no lockers to put a change of clothes in. Joiners, painters and electricians had tool boxes where they could lock up their dungarees or joiner's aprons. Those living near H&W just walked home or got the tram in their working clothes.

A niece of mine, as a young girl, used to climb on to her father's lap when he came home. If she smelt cork she knew he was working on a refrigerated ship, on a whaler if there were the smell of rancid whale fat, a cargo ship in for repairs told her it was transporting bananas. But going out that evening it was in a suit and tie.

In the Orpheus ballroom in the four and five storied co-op store in York street, you danced with the shorthand typists who had to know where you worked. If it was rumoured you were a shipyard worker you might say you were an apprentice draughtsman. The style of close dancing together then meant you were holding hands with your hardened palms betraying you, though you were dressed in a suit and tie with polished shoes, a short back and

sides haircut and smelling of Brylcreem hair dressing, or you might wear Murray's Superior Pomade.

Attending the dance would mostly be a Protestant affair, so there was no probing about your religion. If you were part of a mixed Catholic/Protestant family living in a loyalist area where else could you go? You were not part of the Catholic community. You might slip into a Catholic Past Pupils dance in the centre of the city but they knew each other and you stood out as a possible Protestant intruder.

Admission prices to dancehall and ballrooms were cheap enough, so that you could explore maybe three on a Saturday night with your friends. The Plaza Ballroom in Chichester Street was said to be the biggest in Ireland, North and South. It was there where young Catholics and Protestants mixed, but not particularly amiably. You tried to pick someone of your religion to dance with, guessing by looks and gestures.

Catholic girls could think you were Protestant, and living in Protestant areas you wondered if some of it had rubbed off on you. Protestant girls could be unsure of you and begin conversations by saying they were bitter against Catholics, in order to test your reaction. This pretty girl was putting love second on her agenda. That did away with the love-at-first-sight syndrome!

Catholic girls belonging to Republican families could put you through a tough test. Being a Catholic in the Diaspora you may not want to meet her unnamed IRA uncle. They had some protection being part of that community while you were living out in the Styx.

The massive co-op building, controlled by Unionist women members, met its end when PIRA placed a bomb on the third floor on the 10th of May, 1972. I was in Belfast at the time and went to inspect the results. It looked as if there had been an earthquake with steel girders sticking through a mountain of rubble.

People were on top of the rubble digging, not for bodies, but for what they could find. A number of people were injured when a warning wasn't heeded. The RUC and British Army arrived to drive off the looters. The magnificent Orpheus ballroom was gone, and the shipyard was also beginning to go, the shorthand typists you danced with were probably long married with teenage children.

Monopoly Unionist rule was coming to an end. The Labour Movement had no part in this, and they had no part in trying to resolve the sectarian problems back in in

1919 -1923. The Labour Movement had been in the hands of the then Protestant majority back in the 1920s, and again, in their hands, in post-WW2 Northern Ireland through the CPNI. It seemed nothing was going to change until the Catholic community decided they had had enough of being oppressed.

There was no constitutional way of changing things. The problem was there was not enough of a defence force to stop the many pogroms against Catholics workers during 1920s. The RIC/RUC/British Army were not protective of the Catholic community. The Catholic community had no one, except what they could rustle up themselves.

The few young women in the Young Workers' League of the CPNI, all Protestants, and anti-Catholic, seemingly for political reasons. The Catholic Church was part of the Cold War against Communism, and that was confusing. You were a Catholic, and you did dislike the Church for this, but being a Catholic was more than just religion when being Catholic was your national identity, and would always be, despite your possible atheism.

If you were to convert, that would mean joining a different national grouping. Communism and the labour movement was not solving the national question in Northern Ireland. You had this instinct, long before the Two Nations Theory came into being.

It was obvious that the YWL [Young Workers' League] and the CPNI were Protestant organisations that held Sean Murray, a former IRA commander from the Glens of Antrim, as a hostage, for his good behaviour. He had meaningless titles like *General Secretary* and Education Officer for the recreating of young cadres. He would lecture on Marxism and Lenin and Stalin but he could never touch on the subject of Ireland.

Once, in the 1930s, he had been the centre of things when the CPNI had been the CPI, and followed a nationalist road. But WW2 had changed that to the Protestant position. In the 1930s a few Protestants had stuck it out with a nationalist viewpoint, and suffered for it, but with the *coup d'état* that changed the CPI into the CPNI, it was now a strange mix of Unionist-Communist led by powerful Trade Union chiefs, members of the CPNI, keeping things so as it didn't alienate the Protestant industrial working class, resulting in the loss of their jobs.

The Catholic community had no rights. They were to continue suffering, and

added to that, blamed for the Hungarian Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty's opposition to Communism, starting in 1948. Much like the Catholic population being punished with pogroms and death in the 1920s, when the IRA, in their protection of the Catholic community, went after certain of the most vicious killers in the Protestant community.

The book itself is 98 pages long and is packed with so much quotable information that you might find yourself quoting the entire book in an article. In addition to the 98 pages, there is a section of Notes running to 12 pages, a full page of Acknowledgements giving dozens of names, a Bibliography of almost eight pages, and seven pages of references, and like the main body of the book, it is all in small print, so, there is plenty to read and digest.

You can gather that the research for his book has been thorough and lengthy. On reading it, I feel that everything that had to be said about the remarkable work of James Baird in the labour movement has been said, including his sympathy for the expelled Catholic shipyard workers, and those in the heavy engineering works in the rest of the city, and citing the expulsion of over 1000 Catholic women workers in various ancillary jobs in the city. The author, in his research says:

"James Baird, the Rotten Prod, the main subject of this book, was born in the townland of Kilklay, near the village of Auger, south Tyrone, on the 6th of July, 1871.

His parents were George Baird and his wife, Margaret (nee Wright). George was born in 1841, and Margaret in 1850. They married on the 18th of August, 1870. George farmed in Kilklay, with a holding of 10 acres, about 5 kilometres from the boundary with Monaghan. He registered James's birth in Clogher on 14th of July and signed the certificate with an X.

James had just one full brother, John, born in 1873. Their father died that year and Margaret remarried in 1874. Her second husband was also a farmer, of 24 acres, and she bore eight more children.

Protestants formed a large minority in Clogher. It was likely that George was Presbyterian, with James being raised in that faith. We can only speculate on James's education from his extant letters, which were composed in a simple, direct style, with legible handwriting, in a careful upright construction, usually immaculate spelling, and a more causal attitude to punctuation. The author continues:

"James said little on his early life other than his father was a tenant farmer, and that he himself was 'a pronounced Home Ruler and socialist since 1893... in the Queen's Island, Belfast'..."

Queen's Island was the site of the Harland and Wolff shipyard. If James was a country boy moving to Belfast for work, he was not alone. Over the nineteenth century Belfast was transformed from a town of some 20,000 people into a major centre of manufacture with, in 1911, a population of almost 387,000.

This was all the more remarkable given the steady decline of the 'south and west'—as the southern provinces were called.

While both Belfast and Dublin enjoyed a sizable trade in food, drink, and tobacco, Belfast nearly monopolised other sectors of manufacture in Ireland. In 1907, the Belfast region accounted for £19.1 million of Ireland's £20.9 million worth of manufactured exports, excluding food and drink. Economic development entailed a high degree of specialisation in the British market, chiefly in textiles and clothing and shipbuilding and engineering and the locomotive of growth was the phenomenal expansion of iron and steel shipbuilding from the 1860s in Belfast's two yards—Harland and Wolff, "*the big yard*", and Workman, Clark the "*wee yard*". For their bounty, and the irony, they were also known to Belfast workers as "*the vineyards*". The yards were employing 12,000 by 1890, and 20,000 by 1914.

Harland and Wolff recorded 10,504 workers in 1915 and was estimated to have a peak of 26,000 employees in 1919.

"Shipbuilding in turn relied heavily on Britain's status as a maritime Superpower with a Global Empire, flagging 40% of the world's ships and carrying half its oceanic cargo. The ties binding Belfast with Imperial welfare, found their most potent symbolism in building Britannia's mighty merchantmen, ocean liners, and warships."

The author goes on to give comprehensive details of the H&W workforce which consisted of 90 different skilled trades in H&W. The shipyard was now making their own marine engines. I remember the Engine Works as a secretive place. It ran the length of a typical street with only one entrance, closed off with locked 20 foot high gates guarded by gatemen. (The term security guard is a relatively new description)

When walking down Queens Road you could feel the ground under your feet vibrating as if an earthquake was

about to happen, as they tested the massive engine.

Trundling it, over a storey high, to the ship, on a low loader with dozens of wheels, to the giant floating crane was indeed an amazing sight.

On the question of demarcation, where skilled trades stuck to their own trade, the management, of course, didn't like it. Your skill was very important to you, it can be your life. It was a very intensive training: for every skill was backed up with three evenings at a Technical College, each week for five years, to study for the *City and Guilds*.

For example, to name one of the 90 shipyard trades, woodworking. In my father's time when he started as a 14 year old in Workman, Clark, in 1914, it was a seven-year apprenticeship.

This was a time before the introduction of sophisticated woodworking machinery that did a lot of the moulding work, the dovetails, the tenon and mortise joints, and the planning machines.

A joiner's toolbox, back then at the beginning of the century, up until the 1920s, was full of hard-wood moulding planes, triplanes, smoothing planes, innumerable chisels, brace and bits (woodworking drills), various saws, big and small, the granny's tooth for making keyholes, rasps, and so on.

One man couldn't lift this box of tools, and it was usually delivered to the workplace by horse and cart, or an early motorised vehicle. Joiners wore uniforms, as did some other trades, as a mark of importance.

My father noted that aspects of joinery were being lost like the ability to name timber by taste by licking it. Some craftsmen of that standard were still around in 1946 when I entered the shipyard. My father was one them, who had to downgrade his toolbox to one he was able to carry, due to the introduction of steel tools. But, though replacing the wooden ones, it was still heavy.

Demarcation would have meant the jack-of-all-trades being introduced, the loss of many jobs, and the less efficient building of ships. And the working class had nothing but their weekly waged job.

Many skilled trades today only have a two-year apprenticeship, because of the introduction of portable machine tools. In engineering this is beginning to show, with the British Navy having problems with two of its aircraft carriers that have continuous engine failure, due to their construction in

the UK, mainly for patriotic purposes.

When most shipyards closed down in the UK, with H&W in Belfast, the retired section of the highly skilled were mostly to die off. And now there are no apprenticeships for the ninety shipyard trades.

Chinese shipyards have now overtaken the Japanese and South Korean yards.

The Philippines has an astonishing 118 shipyards. It is a country of over 7,000 islands, ideal for shipbuilding, making it the four largest ship producer in the world.

When I worked in H&W it was still the biggest shipyard in the world with its own internal bus service, to cover the huge territory of Queen's Island. Now it is the Chinese shipyard skills that is influencing the world, and they have a massive intake of apprentices from many countries in Asia, including the Philippines.

When James Baird left his south Tyrone home in the 19th Century to find work in the expanding industrial city of Belfast, I wondered, first of all, how he wrangled an apprenticeship as a country boy without connections. And: when he did get that apprenticeship?

I wondered how he survived on an apprentice's wage. I couldn't have left home as an apprentice for financial reasons. I had to stay with my parents until I was 21 years old.

I was an indentured apprentice and couldn't leave without my father's signature. He wasn't going to give it. The only way out, if given that rare permission, and your need to be independent financially, was to join the British armed forces, or the merchant marine by being a saloon boy on a passenger liner, or a cabin boy on a freighter.

Wages for first year apprentices was £1.14 shillings, rising by increments of 15 shillings each for each year, until the end of the 5th year, when a full journeyman's wage was £6.14 shillings and six pence a week. On this wage, my father was subsidising me. He paid for my food and my clothes.

Staying at home after the age of 21 meant handing in half your wages to the household, a tradition in Belfast that was going for almost a century. Shipbuilding had its working class dynasties. My father family's dynasty went back to before the Titanic was built. Before that they were well-known in the flax mills, where my father started work at the age of 12 years old as a half-timer. That was half the week at school and half the week in the linen mill. My grandfather was a Winding Master, supervising a section of

the personnel. He had come from the rural Strabane in County Tyrone to Belfast in the 19th Century. His wife, my grandmother, came from Sion Mill, also in County Tyrone. Their three sons and two daughters worked in the Belfast linen mills. The sons graduated to be apprenticeships in Workman, Clark and Harland and Wolff in the 19th Century.

How did James Baird fare in getting his apprenticeship and how did he survive on a very small wage, that wouldn't have covered the rent of a room? I expect that is the unknown aspects of Baird's early life in Belfast that author mentions.

To sum up. The book shows, to me at least, that the labour movement couldn't solve the national question. The inevitable Long War from 1971 to 1989 was to prove that. James Baird, as a Protestant Home Ruler, was eventually to be against the Partition of Ireland, because as he thought it divided the working class. What he wanted was one large unified Trade Union for the whole of Ireland. He felt, as it says in this book by Emmet O'Connor, that the bosses were dividing the working class by putting Protestant against Catholic.

The reality was they were already divided by history and nationality. James Baird, in his life-long struggle in the labour movement, was to be on the wrong side of things, in his changing to another's nationality interests to what he thought would be the unifying of the working class.

I couldn't quote too much of Emmet Blair's book, as I would only be repeating his very well-researched book, at the loss of my own originality. This book is worth reading about James Blair's life-long struggle in the labour movement, in which he loses everything and escapes to isolation to Queensland in Australia, in 1927, with his family. He was not to join the very lively labour movement in Queensland, where he might have made more progress, without the nationality question, which existed in the North of Ireland, getting in the way.

A slump was to hit Australia, soon after Baird's arrival. One Belfast man I knew in the CPNI, in the early 1950s, had been there during that time and managed to get back to Belfast by a combination of stowaway and working as a volunteer stoker a very hot engine room, unpaid, after being discovered by the crew.

He quoted a cynical Australian solution about what to do when food became scarce through lack of money:

"Take one cockatoo, boil in it water along with a horseshoe. When the horseshoe has melted the cockatoo is ready to eat."

Could be a metaphor for James Baird in his struggle in Ireland as he tries to solve the national question through the labour movement: The horseshoe is the national question and the cockatoo is the labour movement!

Wilson John Haire, 19.3.2023.

No leak from Wuhan Institute of Virology

continued from page 1

The BBC describes the Wuhan Institute in the following terms:

"The institute is the world's leading authority in the collection, storage and study of bat coronaviruses. Its researchers are led by star scientist Professor Shi Zhengli – known as "Bat Woman" to her colleagues because of her expertise. They have spent years collecting samples from live bats in remote Chinese caves."

Here's the evidence from the BBC website which undermines the lab leak theory:

"While the lab leak theory has smouldered away both online and in Washington political circles, it has largely been dismissed by scientists. It is a scientific consensus that has, in turn, fed into mainstream media coverage, with now wide acceptance that a natural, spillover event is the most probable cause of Sars-CoV-2.

"The dismissal is based not just on the fact that such spillovers have happened before, but on a key piece of evidence that has come from Prof Shi Zhengli herself.

"Concerned to rule out her lab's involvement in the outbreak, according to the Scientific American interview, she began "frantically" searching the experimental records and samples already stored in her lab.

"Her February paper [3] reported what she said was the closest match she was able to find. A virus, which she named RaTG13, collected from a bat in 2013, showed a 96.2% similarity to Sars-CoV-2. Although that sounds close, the 3.8% genetic difference between the two would, estimates suggest, take decades of evolutionary change to occur in nature."

"If Sars-CoV-2 had leaked from her collection of coronaviruses, the lab would

have contained either Sars-CoV-2 itself, or something much, much closer related [my emphasis].

"That really took a load off my mind,' Prof Shi told Scientific American. 'I had not slept a wink for days.'"

The *Scientific American* article referred to above is *How China's 'Bat Woman' Hunted Down Viruses from SARS to the New Coronavirus* by Jane Qiu published on 1 June 2020 [4].

(*)

Another article by Jane Qiu entitled *Meet the scientist at the center of the covid lab leak controversy* was published by *Technology Review* in February 2022 [5]. In it, Qiu asked Shi to comment on the abuse she has suffered as a result of the false accusations that a leak from her lab had killed millions of people. Here's her response:

Not surprisingly, the allegations have taken a personal toll. "I'm a human being as well, you know," Shi told me. "Have they considered what it feels like to be wrongly accused of unleashing a pandemic that has killed millions?"

Since the outbreaks, Shi has received numerous abusive emails and phone calls, even death threats. She has been called a liar, a mass murderer, and an accomplice of the Chinese Communist Party (even though she's not a member). In May 2020, it was falsely rumored that she had defected to France with nearly 1,000 classified documents.

At Shi's bat-themed office, I asked her how the past two years have marked her. Her girlish face suddenly dimmed. "I can't bear looking back," she said, and turned her head away. A long silence ensued.

"I used to admire the West. I used to think it was a just and meritocratic society. I used to think it must be wonderful to live in a country where anybody could criticize the government."

"What do you think now?" I pressed.

"Now I think if you are Chinese then it doesn't matter how good you are at your job—because you are tried by nationality," she said. "I've now realized that the Western democracy is hypocritical, and that much of its media is driven by lies, prejudices, and politics."

Shi paused and drew a sharp breath. Her body tensed, blood flushing her cheeks. The air swelled and seemed to grow hotter.

"They've lost the moral high ground as far as I'm concerned," she said. And if politics overpowers science, "then there will be no basis for any cooperation."

David Morrison

11 March 2023

POSTSCRIPT

On 8 March 2023, the *Daily Telegraph* published an article by its science editor, Sarah Knapton, entitled *No one believed the Covid Wuhan lab leak theory—then the world changed its tune*. She wrote:

"Even Wuhan scientists themselves were concerned. Dr Shi Zhengli, WIV virologist, told Scientific American that she remembered thinking if coronaviruses were behind the outbreak 'could they have come from our lab?'"

The protests in Israel ignore the Palestinian democratic deficit

Extraordinarily large demonstrations continue in Israel against Government's plans for extensive judicial reform.

If implemented, the planned reform will shift the balance of power away from the Supreme Court and towards the Knesset and the elected government of the day. For example, it will—

- give politicians more say in the appointment of Supreme Court judges
- limit the circumstances in which the Court will be able to strike down legislation passed by the Knesset
- allow the Knesset to re-enact legislation struck down by the Court
- bar the Court from declaring an individual to be unfit to be Prime Minister

The present government, led once more by Benjamin Netanyahu, is a multi-party coalition formed as a result of a general election on 1 November 2022. Nominally, at least, it has the support of 64 of the 120 members of the Knesset and therefore should be able to pass the legislation necessary to implement the planned judicial changes. However, there is some doubt as to whether this support will hold together in the face of the opposition from the streets - and at the time of writing Netanyahu has paused the implementation process.

A "JUDICIAL COUP"?

Those opposed to these changes in the Knesset and on the streets have characterised their implementation as a "judicial coup" and a serious threat to democracy in Israel. And the reporting of these events abroad has followed suit.

This was accurately taken from the *Scientific American* article referred to above. However, the same article went on to report that Dr Zhengli satisfied herself that the coronaviruses behind the outbreak did not come from her lab, as has been shown above.

Understandably, the *Telegraph* article didn't mention that!

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- {5} www.technologyreview.com/2022/02/09/1044985/shi-zhengli-covid-lab-leak-wuhan/

These changes are being put into effect by a recently-elected Government passing legislation in the Knesset through the normal procedure. And there is nothing whatsoever to stop the Opposition reversing them if it wins a majority in the Knesset at the next election. Furthermore, the changes enhance the power of the elected Knesset at the expense of appointed judges.

So, it is absurd to regard their implementation as a "judicial coup" and a serious threat to democracy.

THE PALESTINIAN DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

Characterising these changes as a threat to democracy in Israel is absurd for another reason, namely, Israel is not a democracy.

The most basic principle of a democracy is that everybody subject to the rule of the government emerging from the electoral process should have a vote. But millions of Palestinians in the occupied territories haven't got a vote and are excluded from the election of the Government which rules over them. If they were included, Benjamin Netanyahu wouldn't be Prime Minister.

The largely Jewish street demonstrations in Israel are not about this enormous democratic deficit affecting Palestinians (although a small anti-occupation bloc has been present carrying signs with messages such as: "There is no democracy with occupation" and "Democracy for all from the river to the sea").

The demonstrations are about rather minor Jewish concerns about how they choose the government of Israel, a process from which Palestinians are largely excluded.

David Morrison

28 March 2023

The Strange Case Of Enoch Burke

—How The State Ended Up With A Teacher Less!

There's a scene in Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* where Moore interviews two students of Columbine High School in Colorado, where the 1999 Columbine School Shootings happened. They are telling him they get class credits for taking a course in bowling. Moore lets that sink in as if to say, "*what are our children being taught these days? How have we let our educational standards fall so low that bowling ninepins is given the same value as math or geography?*"

The movie takes its name from this scene: *Bowling for Columbine*.

For years the standard of education in the United States has become something of a standing joke: anyone on social media will come across seemingly endless pop-vox and videos where young Americans are unable to find America on the world map; or name three countries in the entire world; or say which century—never-mind which decade—the Second World War was fought in or which major countries were involved!

There would be no point asking them how this War even came about, a whole level of complexity well above knowing the basic facts.

When one stops to realise that these are the voters who will elect the legislators of the future, the gravity of the situation begins to sink in. Any democracy is only as robust as the people that vote in it, and the effect is cumulative unless something drastic breaks the cycle.

The other consequence is the widening gap in American education: a very small elite with the resources, connections, money and family support to get a fine education at 'good' schools that feed Harvard, MIT, Ivy League. Then there's the rest of the country's public taxpayer-funded schools which have become a battleground in every sense of the word, and where no matter how bright and hard-working a student may be, they have to face the reality that the bar has been set so low, and the whole school philosophy so poor, that they may as well be graduating in tap-dancing, like Chaucer's Absolon in *'The Canterbury Tales'*, or bowling ninepins; effectively turning America's schools into a vast system of publicly-funded day-care until the age of 18, at which point the overgrown infants will be turned out into the nation's streets and polling stations.

This would be bad enough confined to the United States, but the trend has crossed the Atlantic, even though there is

a 10 or 20 year time lag, chances are that we will see similar results here before long and Ireland's once-vaunted educational system will be eventually reduced to the same level.

Therefore, if one good thing has emerged from The Strange Case of Enoch Burke, it is that it has brought all of this into sharp focus. It is evident that for some time now, Ireland has been going down the same road as the United States, where schools have become ideological battlegrounds (and in the States, eventually, literal battlegrounds) where the focus is increasingly on the not-so-Liberal Left agendas and social engineering instead of on getting a good solid education.

The Liberal Left have been trying to remove all trace of any form of religious element—especially Catholic—from the Irish School System for decades, elements that would be standing in the way of their dream of creating a Marxist dystopia with your children as the raw material. This appears to have developed two strands:

The first is to seek the 'divestment' of Catholic schools, where the Catholic Church would hand over the bricks and mortar buildings and equipment (some part-paid for by Church funds and Church Plate collections by generations of Catholic faithful to begin with) to secular/State schools.

If the Church is appropriately remunerated for whatever interest it has in these properties and is happy to divest them, this seems a reasonable proposition on the face of it. Firstly, it would allow the Church to concentrate its resources more effectively. Secondly, secular supporters of divestment argue this would give Ireland's parents greater choice and control over their children's education—but ironically, as we'll see, the same voices are also to be found calling for the scrapping of Article 42 which guarantees this right to parents in the Constitution in the first place!

The other strand seems to be taking provocative 'test cases' to enforce the Left's writ on the nation's individual educators. A similar logic could be seen when Asher's Bakery in Belfast was taken to court for refusing to make a cake celebrating gay marriage. It should be noted that the bakery—possibly picked because it was well known to be a 'Christian' business—had not refused to serve the customers on grounds of their sexual orientation, but that the product they were required to make was in conflict with their religious beliefs.

Instead of taking the order elsewhere, the customers took the bakery to court. Thankfully

the case was dismissed (and set a case law precedent for future cases) but no doubt left the Ashers stressed and financially hurt at the end of it, which the Left will see as a 'victory' of sorts anyway.

In the case of Enoch Burke, he was ultimately dismissed by the school for refusing to bend the knee to this Leftist agenda. Enough has been written already about how the Burkes (or the school, or the student in question for that matter) could have handled things differently or more productively, but no one seems to have noticed that the immediate practical effect is that the State is now one teacher less—and by all accounts, an excellent teacher, whatever one's views on Mr. Burke's personal beliefs—at a time when it is crying out for all the teachers it can get, class sizes are increasing, and teachers finding it more and more difficult to give time and attention to each student.

A further consequence will be the chilling effect on other teachers thinking of taking a conscientious stand against being forced to implement an unproven ideology they do not agree with. Does the Left care about any of this? Of course not, or it would have sought a reasonable middle ground, instead of being on Mr. Burke's case from Day 1.

Whenever a personal issue of national interest arises, one will usually find the media interviewing the principal characters at length, giving them airwaves and print columns to share their views and takes on the situation. By way of example, this was seen throughout the run-up to the 2018 referendum on the 8th Amendment where we were treated to an almost daily feed of people 'telling their stories'—of travel to England, of Ireland's '*restrictive abortion laws*', to the extent that the *Yes campaign* hardly even had to knock on doors as their views were being promoted and available on every newsstand and TV set in the country.

It will be interesting and instructive, now that (some of) the dust has settled on the Burke case, who and how much the media decide to interview on this story. Have any of our nation's 'doughty' journalists seen fit to interview Enoch Burke or his parents?

I suspect neither Enoch Burke nor his parents will get an opportunity to make their case in the pages of any of Ireland's main daily newspapers or the national broadcaster; the only time their words will appear in print is when they are carefully curated by journalists and editorial teams to frame the argument as the media wish it to be perceived. Right on cue, mainstream journalists—with what can only have been the sanction of their newspapers' editorial boards and management—began to

capitalise on Enoch Burke's stance and his dismissal as grounds for scrapping Article 42 of the Irish Constitution. Their argument appears to be that Article 42 gave Enoch Burke's parents the unacceptable choice and freedom to not fill their son's head with unfiltered Leftist ideology.

The Irish Constitution has been undergoing a thorough filleting of late: its enemies justifying this on the grounds that 'it is not fit for purpose'—though, of course, that depends on what you think its purpose is to begin with! If your aim is to ram through a Marxist dystopia on Irish society, then there are several Constitutional Articles that might conceivably get in the way of this 'dream'.

The Irish Government began the process by setting up an unelected Irish 'Citizens Assembly' (a name that would not sound out of place in Soviet-era Russia or Revolutionary France), and 'Constitutional Convention', the purpose of which seems to be to wash the Government's hands of the process while still producing the results required.

Most of the Articles presented to the electorate appear to relate to social issues (rather than say, Articles relating to foreign affairs, tax or the raising of revenue within the State), revealing the general purpose of these Constitutional reviews.

Keep in mind the duplicity here. The same types of voices calling for divestment of Catholic schools, on the grounds of giving parents 'greater freedom and control' over their children's education, are simultaneously calling for the scrapping of Article 42, the one Constitutional guarantee parents actually have to that very freedom and choice!

Either these Leftist ideologues, journalists and their editorial handlers do not know what they are saying out opposite sides of their mouths, or worse—they know exactly what they are saying—and you, the parents and electorate, are being played like a harp. In the meantime, the sum of their efforts in this case has been to reduce the number of badly-needed good teachers in this country by one—and possibly by many more if the trend continues.

Look forward to the next few generations of Irish youth struggling to find Ireland on the world map like their US counterparts, as the once-vaunted Irish educational system is dismantled from the inside out.

Nick Folley March 2023 ©

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Professor Kenny And The 'Treaty'

I commented on an *Irish Times* article on the 'Treaty' by Professor Colum Kenny (*Irish Political Review, February 2023*) not realising that he had just published two books on the subject. It is necessary, therefore, to return to the subject and comment on those books.

The first of them is *Midnight In London: The Anglo-Irish Treaty Crisis*. It says in its first paragraph that, on 6th December 1921, the Irish and British negotiators "signed an agreement for a treaty that would end the Irish War of Independence and create an independent Irish state".

This would be an unusually accurate statement of the contentious word "independent" was struck out, because it does not suggest that the agreement was between the existing Irish Government and the British Government.

In fact it was an agreement between the British Government and the five Irish delegates, under which the Irish delegates undertook to create a new Irish Government in place of the existing Irish Government (which had appointed them to negotiate on its behalf); and the British Government undertook to make a Treaty with that new Irish Government.

Professor Kenny says, a few paragraphs later, that the agreement—

"has frequently been described informally as "The Treaty", there was no treaty in law unless and until the agreement was ratified by Dail Eireann and by the parliament at Westminster".

But the Agreement makes no reference whatever to Dail Eireann. The British Government engaged in no dealings with the Dail or its Government. It never recognised the Irish delegates as representatives of the Dail Government. And, when the Dail voted by a small majority for a motion in support of the Agreement, it did not thereby ratify the Agreement and enter into Treaty relations with Britain. It simply was not recognised by Britain as being the other party to the Agreement.

Professor Kenny says that he "assumed that all parties to the dispute...were sincere and acted in good faith". There is certainly no case to be made against the British on these grounds. It never recognised the Dail. It never recognised the people it was negotiating with as Dail representatives. It never accepted credentials from them. Its

purpose was to break up the Dail system established in 1919. It achieved that purpose with the Articles of Agreement. In its casuistical way it was honest.

In later years there were Treatyite suggestions of British bad faith. But Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Fein, and Michael Collins, the Head Centre of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, should have been well able to read British casuistry, and to know what they had agreed to, and to understand how the Agreement would be policed.

THE IRISH THREATEN WAR!!

Professor Kenny acknowledges that "The British brought things to a head with their ultimatum on the night of 5-6 December", but applies the principle of "balance" in the continuation of that sentence: "but the Irish for their part had also held out the threat of a renewed War of Independence" (p12).

In what way did "the Irish" threaten Britain with war in early December 1921? The delegates certainly did not do so? For their Chairman, Griffith, the British threat of War was a conclusive reason for signing their document. And the Dail Government had carried on governing the country, outside the recently established "Northern Ireland" region, while its delegates attempted to negotiate a settlement in London. It made no attempt to overthrow the Northern Ireland arrangement—bad though it was. It governed all the institutions in the 26 Counties that were electorally-based, but did not threaten to break the Truce with a view to taking control of the rest, which were founded on the Army of Occupation. And the longer that condition of things continued, the better it was for it.

Of course, not everybody agreed with Griffith that the only thing to do in the face of the British threat of war was to give way to it. There were some who were willing to offer resistance to a resumed British military assault on Irish Government institutions. They threatened to resist an attack on them and, as Voltaire put it: "This animal is dangerous, if attacked it defends itself"!

If we do not take Voltaire's satirical definition as stating the case, then it must be taken that the threat of War on December 5th was a one-sided British threat, with no balance on the other side. Britain was not

responding to a threat when it made a threat.

TENSION

Confronting the Irish delegates on December 5th, the Prime Minister—

“reminded the latter that they were there specifically as ‘plenipotentiaries’. He said that ‘it was now a matter of peace or war and each of us must make up our minds’. So noted Robert Barton TD, who was acutely aware of the tension between the power inherent in the word ‘plenipotentiary’ and the demands of some of his Cabinet colleagues in Dublin...” (p39).

Was the tension between the meaning of the word and the view of some Cabinet colleagues in Dublin, or was it between the British Government ultimatum and the instructions of the Irish Government which had appointed the delegates?

The delegates, three of whom were members of the Irish Government, and all of whom were members of the Dail, had never challenged the authority of the Dail Government over them until the early morning of December, when they acted against the instructions of the Cabinet by signing the Articles of Agreement as Plenipotentiaries after the British had threatened *immediate war* if they insisted on taking the document back to their Government for approval.

NAMES & THINGS

The Prime Minister required them to sign the Agreement on their own authority and undertake to implement its terms. He may have reminded them that they were called Plenipotentiaries, but he had never accepted their credentials: “*Envoys Plenipotentiary from the Elected Government of the Republic of Ireland*”. His ultimatum that they must sign on the instant or else face war had nothing to do with their status as Plenipotentiaries given to them by the Dail.

Professor Kenny seems to acknowledge that the delegates were not in fact Plenipotentiaries. If they had been, they would have been empowered by the elected Irish Government to strike a deal with the British Government on its behalf, and the British Government would have recognised them as such. But the British Government did not recognise them as Plenipotentiaries acting for the Irish Government, and the Irish Government had not authorised them to act in its place in making a deal with Britain.

The delegates, in the credentials they were given by their Government, were described as—

“*Envoys Plenipotentiary from the Elected Government of the Republic of Ireland to negotiate and conclude on behalf of Ireland*

with the representatives of his Britannic Majesty... a Treaty or Treaties of Settlement, Association and Accommodation between Ireland and... the British Commonwealth”.

If the delegates had presented these credentials at the door of 10 Downing Street and had been admitted for a conference, the essential thing would have been achieved at the start. Britain would have recognised the Irish Government, and the conference would have been about arranging things between the two Governments.

But the delegates did not present their credentials at the door of No. 10. They would not have been admitted if they had presented them. They were admitted because they did not try to present them. Negotiations went on for about six weeks without either side raising the awkward question of what the Irish party actually was. It was tacitly understood on both sides that the discussions could not continue if that sleeping dog was not let lie.

And the Irish Plenipotentiaries gave no sign of thinking about themselves as Plenipotentiaries until the night of December 5/6, when the Prime Minister gave them an ultimatum to act as a collective Plenipotentiary body, representing themselves, before morning—or else he would start killing people.

They had acted under the direction of their Government, engaging in daily communication with it, until the morning of December 6th. That was not the kind of thing that Plenipotentiaries did. Plenipotentiaries usually had the power of government conferred on them for some particular purpose because they could not remain in continuous communication with their Government. The best-known Plenipotentiary was Benjamin Franklin, who acted for the American Congress in Paris during the American War of Independence.

The Irish delegates acted in breach of their Government’s instructions on December 6th. They later justified this by their title, which implied that they themselves acted with the power of government in the matter of making a deal. When this was queried in the Dail, they (Griffith/Collins) suggested that, if they had not actually presented their credentials from the Irish Government, the British knew they had them. But the British made sure that they had no official knowledge of the fact that the Irish with whom they were negotiating had Republican credentials in their pockets.

Professor Kenny gives the text of the credentials, and comments:

“Such credentials had a propaganda value but could never have been formally accepted by the British if presented to

them formally. Their acceptance would have meant implicit British recognition of the delegates as representatives of all of Ireland and of the notional Republic of Ireland itself. So the credentials were not formally presented... In an acrimonious exchange in the Dail on 14 December 1921, de Valera used this fact to diminish the status of the representatives who, from the outset, he himself had described as being ‘plenipotentiaries’—which is to say as being invested with full powers. Collins, responding defensively, told the Dail that the credentials were in fact presented (but he did not say to whom, or if they were accepted). Griffith added, ‘I believe Mr. Lloyd George saw the document’. These public statements perturbed the British prime minister, who according to his Cabinet secretary Thomas Jones, had not seen the credentials and thought ‘Had they been formally presented we should have had to reject them. They looked as if they had been drawn by de Valera to make difficulties’... Moreover, according to Barton’s notes of the final session, Lloyd George himself then referred to the Irish delegates as ‘plenipotentiaries’ when it suited him. Another example of ambiguity related to the words ‘negotiate and conclude... a Treaty. Deputies in the Dail argued as to whether or not this meant that delegates might have dispensed altogether with Dail approval”.

But—

“On the same day that de Valera issued their credentials, he also sent the five men separate instructions... ‘It is understood however that before decisions are finally reached on the main questions that a despatch notifying the intention of making these decisions will be sent to the Members of the Cabinet in Dublin and that a reply will be awaited by the Plenipotentiaries before the final decision is made’. He continued: ‘It is also understood that the complete text of the draft treaty about to be signed will be similarly submitted to Dublin and a reply awaited’... He concluded, ‘It is understood that the Cabinet in Dublin will be kept regularly informed of the progress of the negotiations’. This memorandum had political rather than legal implications, for the Dail had earlier ratified, without any qualifications, his nomination of the five men as plenipotentiaries. Indeed, de Valera did not now claim that the Cabinet had a power of veto, just that there was an ‘understanding’ that senior ministers in Dublin would be ‘kept regularly informed’...” (p42).

So, the delegates were given this strange, and inappropriate, title. If that title was taken in earnest, they would have had independent authority to settle matters between Britain and Ireland without the permission of the Dail Government—and that is what they did, with destructive effect on the Dail Government.

Brendan Clifford

Irish Times Unpublished letter 17 Nov 2022

The Church of Ireland and Abuse Cover-up

It is welcome news that Spiritan Provincial Fr Martin Kelly stated that confidentiality in settling claims of sexual and physical abuse against members of the Order no longer apply (Irish Times, November 17th).

On that basis the Church of Ireland should be pressed on whether gagging orders apply to taking action in relation to abuse by Patrick O'Brien during the 1980s. He worked in St Patrick's Cathedral at that time and abused children in the linked St Patrick's Grammar School. While parents of one victim had O'Brien prosecuted, so successful was the school and Cathedral cover-up, most parents never got to hear of it or of their own children's abuse. This was aided by non-reporting the subsequent court case. After his suspended sentence, O'Brien admitted to more child abuse, with an accomplice, to gardaí in the early 2000s. For a still unexplained reason he was not prosecuted again then.

O'Brien returned to St Patrick's Cathedral, where he continued to do voluntary work. Dean Robert MacCarthy later admitted to Patsy McGarry (November 11th, 2016) that on his watch a woman in the congregation, whose son O'Brien abused, "kept on agitating" about O'Brien. He later again admitted in the Church of Ireland Gazette that as Dean he had been notified officially some years earlier of O'Brien's abuse conviction.

Kerry Lawless, the victim whose evidence convicted O'Brien in 1989, contacted former classmates. They were unaware that O'Brien had been convicted of abuse. They then decided to report it officially. As a result O'Brien was convicted of the St Patrick's abuse in 2016.

As a result too of a garda tracking back, O'Brien was subsequently convicted as well for the early 2000s abuse. Unfortunately, instead of dwelling on this serious error, the trial judge pondered his difficulty in sending an elderly man to prison. Had CofI clergy, school authorities and gardaí done their job in the 1980s and 2000s O'Brien would have gone to jail for a long time as a younger man. Countless children would have received justice (and much needed support) earlier while others would not have been abused. The media did not, at the time, investigate O'Brien's seemingly charmed existence.

I am aware also that a former resident of a Smyly's Church Of Ireland Children's Home told the Church of Ireland, in writing,

about his abuse by a prominent clergyman. The response was to ignore the victim and to warn the abuser (who is now dead) of the allegation.

As reported in the Irish Times (January 23rd, 2012), Dean Robert MacCarthy stated that the CofI was 'lucky that there was no inquiry into sexual abuse within the Church of Ireland – if there had been, I doubt if we would have been found to be blameless' He was speaking about the Murphy report into abuse in the Roman Catholic Dublin Archdiocese.

It has taken a long time to expose what happened in Blackrock and similar schools. The harrowing RTÉ Doc on One programme on the Blackrock abuse means that journalists are all over the story like a rash. More victims have come forward as a result. For how much longer, I wonder, will the Church of Ireland stay 'lucky'. It too should be investigated.

Dr. Niall Meehan

Education abuse scoping inquiry - Church of Ireland letter, 13/3/2023

Dear Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop of Armagh,

I have written to the Minister for Education and to the Taoiseach and Tanaiste, about the sectarian basis on which the recently announced scoping inquiry into abuse in day and boarding schools has been set up (copy below).

In that context it would be helpful if you could write to the above and state publicly that you have no objection to the inquiry's terms of reference encompassing also schools under Church of Ireland auspices. I would be obliged if you could send me a copy and if

you could release your letter to the media.

It would be helpful if you could also state publicly whether Church of Ireland schools, associated institutions, or the Church itself, directly or through legal or other advisers, has imposed confidentiality agreements, otherwise known as 'gagging clauses', or similar provisions, on victims of abuse claimants in schools run by or associated with the Church of Ireland. You should also state publicly how many cases have been settled during the period covered by the current (albeit sectarian) scoping inquiry and the names of the institutions concerned. This should, of course, include cases arising from child abuse in St Patrick's Grammar School by Patrick O'Brien and the contemporary cover-up of that abuse by St Patrick's Cathedral and by the Grammar School. This exercise in information sharing should include also homes run by Smyly's Church of Ireland Children's Homes, that also operated as schools.

Please let me know as soon as is convenient (by email) your response to my request.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Niall Meehan

Copy letter to Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Education

Dear Taoiseach, Tanaiste, Minister for Education,

The shameful abuse suffered by children in, plus covered up by, Blackrock College and other schools should be investigated, publicly. But what other schools?

The government's 'scoping inquiry into historical sexual abuse' in 'day and boarding schools' is limited to 'schools run by religious orders'. I assume, as do most people, that the inquiry is therefore limited to investigating Roman Catholic schools, operating according to Irish state

**IRISH FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MARCH 2023,
SPECIAL ISSUE ON NEUTRALITY**

Editorial Comment: the *Non-Aligned Movement* debate

Interview with Clare Daly and Mick Wallace **Dave Alvey**

A Non-aligned Movement campaign proposal **Pat Walsh**

Opinion: Ireland & The Non-Alignment Movement: an Option

Roger Cole

Ireland, neutral, non-aligned, or NATO belligerent? **Ed Horgan**

Shannonwatch press release

Some facts on the Ukraine war you possibly do not know

Anthony Coughlan

The Non Aligned Movement **Wikipedia**

De Valera at the League of Nations

The High Cost of Blowing Up the World: Ukraine and the 2023

rules, procedures and funding.

As such, therefore, the proposed inquiry is sectarian. Perhaps you consider abuse a phenomenon endured and covered up only in Roman Catholic controlled educational environments. If so, demonstrably that is a mistaken view. In the 1980s Patrick O'Brien abused children attending St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School. As a result of determined parental action, O'Brien was convicted of abuse of one pupil in an unreported case in 1989. O'Brien received a suspended sentence.

Abuse of other children was not detected by gardaí mainly because the school plus Cathedral covered it up and failed abysmally in its duty of care to the children and their parents. The abuse was uncovered three decades later, after the 1989 victim discovered O'Brien back working in the Cathedral. He contacted classmates who were unaware of O'Brien's conviction and then decided to come forward. They also sued the school and Cathedral for failure in its duty of care. It is rumoured that 'gagging' clauses were imposed on complainants, so that the Church of Ireland could escape public opprobrium (and government plus media oversight).

Is the Irish state a Roman Catholic state that regulates only the behaviour of Roman Catholics it allows to run educational institutions? Are other religiously run institutions, in the above case by the Church of Ireland, expected to regulate their affairs in isolation? Are Church of Ireland children expected to suffer in silence?

As it stands a Church of Ireland school victim who wishes to contact the government's inquiry is outside its terms of reference and will be ignored. That also is shameful, as well as sectarian.

Please change the terms of reference so that they are pluralist and reflective of a non-sectarian republic.

From: Niall Meehan <niall.meehan@gmail.com> Date: Wed, 15 Mar 2023 at 14:50 Subject: Attn Dept Education officials: abuse inquiry Protestant institutions have escaped scrutiny - Robert MacCarthy (Formerly Dean St Patrick's Cathedral)

To: Correspondence Unit <eCorrCorrespondenceUnit@education.gov.ie>, <norma.foley@oireachtas.ie>

Cc: Department of Taoiseach <taoiseach@taoiseach.gov.ie>, Tánaiste <tanaiste@tanaiste.gov.ie>

Dear Derek Newcombe and Minister for Education Norma Foley TD,

I draw your attention to Dean Robert MacCarthy's letter in today's Irish Times (copy below), making the point I raised with you in my original letter on your proposed sectarian scoping inquiry.

Dean MacCarthy made a related pertinent point in 2012 on his retirement as Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, on the Church of Ireland being 'lucky' in escaping official scrutiny. The coverup of child sexual abuse in St Patrick's in the 1980s permitted Patrick O'Brien to continue to abuse for three more decades.

I cite this in my letter to the Irish times from last November (below). That letter makes other points also, concerning Patrick O'Brien continuing to work in St Patrick's Cathedral after his conviction and admitting to further paedophile abuse in the early 2000s to gardaí, for which he was not prosecuted. It mentions also Robert MacCarthy being remiss and admitting so in the Church of Ireland Gazette, concerning O'Brien's work in the Cathedral after his abuse conviction.

My letter below makes the point that institutional coverup of abuse is not confined to St Patrick's. When made aware by a victim of abuse in Smyly's Church of Ireland Children's Homes in 1994-95, the Church of Ireland contacted the alleged abuser, a clergyman, and ignored his victim. The alleged abuser made a statement to gardai in Dalkey, accompanied by his son, another Church of Ireland clergyman. Gardai then refused to speak to the victim, who wrote to them when he became aware of his alleged abuser's preemptive action.

Therefore, any official inquiry into abuse should be based on pluralism and equality. It should encourage submissions from all victims, irrespective of denomination or institutional ethos (if any). The Church of Ireland should be, as Dean MacCarthy suggests, subject to the same scrutiny as the Roman Catholic Church. On this issue, allegations of coverup of abuse, it should not be (to quote Dean MacCarthy) 'lucky' to evade official and media attention.

Have you any news with regard to the officials who are examining the sectarian nature of the proposed scoping inquiry into abuse in boarding and day schools? I asked in my last letter when a considered response might be sent to me. Any news on that also? Finally, I wrote a couple of days ago to the Church of Ireland, asking that they state publicly no objection to being investigated and to write to you on that basis. Have you heard from them?

Yours sincerely,
Dr Niall Meehan

Tel: 087

Why restrict the scoping inquiry to schools run by religious orders?
Irish Times Mon 13 March 2023

A chara, – The announcement by the Minister for Education to set up a “scoping inquiry” into allegations of historical sexual abuse at schools run by religious orders is a step in the right direction. Any abuse, even just one case, is abhorrent. The inquiry as announced is, however, a highly discriminatory step.

Religious orders are not the only organisations which provide such educational services. Is the Minister suggesting that those others are immune from such abuse, including schools run by the State itself? Studies of abuse in US public schools also indicate serious levels of abuse. Why restrict the scoping inquiry to schools run by religious orders, if we are serious about discovering the full facts?

It is of further concern in that religious orders are characteristic of the Catholic Church. To restrict the inquiry just to Catholic organisations would seem to suggest that the Catholic Church is inherently more to be mistrusted than other organisations. The Murphy report on the handling of allegations of abuse dealt overwhelmingly with how Dublin diocese handled allegations, while failing to scrutinise equally the handling of those cases by the State, which was also in the terms of reference. The result is a serious imbalance.

Article 44 of the Constitution of Ireland states: “The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status.” To inquire selectively into just one religious denomination, while there are many other institutions also involved in schools, hardly seems to respect that constitutional mandate.

If we're doing the job, let's do it right.
– Is mise,

PÁDRAIG MCCARTHY,
Sandyford, Dublin 16

Abuse inquiry Protestant institutions have escaped scrutiny
Irish Times Wed 15 Mar 2023

Sir, – How right Pádraig McCarthy (Letters, March 13th) is to draw attention to the fact that religious orders are not the only organisations open to abuse in schools.

To restrict inquiries just to Roman Catholic organisations would seem to suggest that that church is inherently more to be mistrusted than any other organisation.

What about the Protestant mother and baby homes which escaped inquiry because they were owned and managed by quite separate boards? – Yours, etc,

ROBERT MacCARTHY,
(Formerly Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral,
Dublin), Dublin 8.

Letter to Irish Times 15 March 2023

Sir, - Robert MacCarthy, former Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin, is right to draw attention to the sectarian nature of the proposed scoping inquiry into abuse in day and boarding schools (letters, 15th March). He was right also in 2012, commenting on the Murphy report into abuse in the Dublin Roman Catholic Archdiocese. Dean MacCarthy observed that his denomination was 'lucky that there was no inquiry into sexual abuse within the Church of Ireland – if there had been, I doubt if we would have been found to be blameless'. MacCarthy is not right about Protestant ethos mother and baby homes. They were investigated, however adequately, but only due to the unstinting work by the late Derek Linster and others I was proud to be associated with.

Dean MacCarthy's words are especially important, however, given that during the 1980s St Patrick's Cathedral and Grammar School covered up sexual abuse of pupils by Patrick O'Brien, a Cathedral worker who was treasurer of Friends of St Patrick's Cathedral, a fundraising body. In an unreported 1989 court case, O'Brien was convicted of one count of abuse and received a suspended sentence. That was because one pupil told his parents who informed the gardaí and also told St Patrick's.

The school and Cathedral authorities covered it up. Due to the success of the cover-up, other victims had no idea O'Brien was charged and convicted. Parents generally were not informed. As a result of failure to inform authorities of the serial nature of his offenses, O'Brien became free to continue paedophile activities for three decades. That is despite admitting to further abuse to gardaí in the early 2000s. He was even allowed back to the Cathedral to do voluntary work. When the 1989 victim and his mother became agitated at seeing O'Brien there, his services were only then dispensed with.

Due to the 1989 victim afterwards contacting classmates and telling them of O'Brien's conviction, they contacted the authorities and sued the Cathedral. O'Brien was convicted of the 1980s abuse in 2016. A garda tracking back made sure also that he was later convicted of the early 2000s abuse.

The Church Of Ireland has made no statement on civil actions by victims of sexual abuse, including O'Brien's victims, in institutions run by or associated with the Church of Ireland.

Institutional cover-ups cry out for inquiry. Why is the Church of Ireland, in Dan MacCarthy's words, 'lucky' in avoiding it? There is time surely, on this occasion, to ensure that pluralism prevails. The scoping inquiry should not be restricted to Roman Catholic religious orders.

Yours etc., Dr Niall Meehan,
Journalism & Media Faculty,
Griffith College

15 March 2023

Dear Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop of Armagh,

FYI (Irish Times letters attached) - also can you let me know when I might receive a response to my letter of 13 March?

All the best,
Niall Meehan

PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON
ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Our Ref: DES-CU-00816-2023

Dear Dr. Niall Meehan

I refer to your recent correspondence to the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley TD, in relation to issues raised.

On 7 March 2023 the Government approved the establishment of a scoping inquiry to inform the government response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders.

The scoping inquiry was established in response to recent revelations of historical sexual abuse in a number of day and boarding schools run by religious orders. While these revelations initially focused on the Spiritan Order, revelations and allegations in respect of schools run by other religious orders have since come to light. Having regard to this and the importance of meeting the challenging timeframe which the Minister has set the scoping inquiry, schools run by religious orders will be its priority focus.

It is not the role of the scoping inquiry to make findings of fact in respect of individual religious orders or schools. The scoping inquiry will also not be investigating individual allegations of abuse. Instead, the Lead of the scoping inquiry will, having regard to the outcomes sought by survivors, make recommendations to the Minister on the scope and breath of the Government response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. In this regard, it is envisaged that

the recommended response could also form a template for Government responses in respect of other settings.

Elements of the scoping inquiry will focus more broadly on the school sector as a whole, including an analysis of current child protection systems and frameworks within the primary and post-primary sector.

Yours sincerely, Cathal Gooslin
Private Secretary
23 March 2023

Dear Cathal Gooslin, Private Secretary to Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD,

I refer to your 23 March email response. I asked the Minister, the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste (8 March 2023) why the scoping inquiry into historic abuse in day and boarding schools the inquiry is limited only to Roman Catholic "religious orders". It therefore excludes victims of historical sexual abuse in otherwise equivalent school settings, where the same type of abuse was perpetrated.

The Minister's response is a non-reply reply.

This central issue of sectarian criteria is ignored, it appears deliberately. Specifically, Church of Ireland abuse victims and the educational institutions responsible are beyond the scope of the scoping inquiry. The Minister did not address this serious mistake.

The Minister wrote:

"The scoping inquiry was established in response to recent revelations of historical sexual abuse in a number of day and boarding schools run by religious orders. While these revelations initially focused on the Spiritan Order, revelations and allegations in respect of schools run by other religious orders have since come to light. Having regard to this and the importance of meeting the challenging timeframe which I have set the scoping inquiry, schools run by religious orders will be its priority focus."

I make two points on the above.

First: "recent revelations of historical sexual abuse" include the 2016 conviction of Patrick O'Brien for serial abuse in St Patrick's Grammar School in the 1980s. St Patrick's engaged in a cover up, engineered by the headmaster and by the then Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. That facilitated three decades of child sexual abuse by O'Brien. One distressed St Patrick's victim eventually told his parents of the abuse. They pursued O'Brien without any assistance from the school. In an unreported 1989 court case, O'Brien was given a suspended sentence of 6 months. The school failed in its duty of care by not informing parents of O'Brien's

activities. Parents therefore were not aware that their children were abused by O'Brien. The children plus parents had no idea that O'Brien was charged and convicted.

Had parents been made aware, so too would gardai and the courts. O'Brien would have been sent to jail then for a long time. Instead, O'Brien was free to continue to abuse children. Due to its inaction, St Patrick's is complicit in facilitating abuse of children by O'Brien over three decades. Scandalously, also, O'Brien returned to work voluntarily in St Patrick's Cathedral after his conviction, though Cathedral authorities knew he was a convicted child abuser. O'Brien was eventually investigated by gardai, only because his 1989 victim and the victim's mother saw O'Brien in the Cathedral. That victim, Kerry Lawless, tracked down his 1980s classmates and informed them that O'Brien was a convicted child abuser. Once they had that information, O'Brien's other victims gained confidence and complained to gardai. They also sued St Patrick's Cathedral and the Church of Ireland. As with victims of abuse by religious orders, the Church of Ireland has attempted to keep the details a secret, so as to avoid negative publicity and harm to its reputation. This is a repeat of the strategy pursued in the 1980s. A non-sectarian and pluralist scoping inquiry would investigate that. The current inquiry excludes such an investigation because it is sectarian.

Second: school's run by religious orders are not the scoping inquiry's "priority focus", they are its only focus. It is an inquiry whose basis is sectarian, excluding victims in non Roman Catholic school settings. As far as the state is concerned the excluded victims are non-persons. The institutions responsible for not vindicating their rights and/or for abandoning a duty of care are, as it stands, protected institutions.

In my letter of 8 March, I asked, "Is the Irish state a Roman Catholic state that regulates only the behaviour of Roman Catholics it allows to run educational institutions? Are other religiously run institutions, in the above case by the Church of Ireland, expected to regulate their affairs in isolation? Are Church of Ireland children expected to suffer in silence?"

Please respond with an answer to the question I asked and please stop acting in a sectarian manner, in my name and in the name of all Irish citizens, including victims of Patrick O'Brien.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Niall Meehan

West Cork History Festival

Simon Kingston of the West Cork History Festival has made a disturbing statement in a History Ireland debate on the TG4 documentary "Marú in Iarthar Chorcaí (Murder in West Cork)".

He says:

"At the History Festival which we've been running for six years we've encountered extraordinarily vitriolic behaviour from a very small minority, having our place where we hold the festival picketed, having all sorts of allegations made about us and who is supporting us, including a suggestion that the British government is funding the festival."

Does this chilling news signal a return of the bad old days of fear and prejudice and sectarian intimidation and worse? It is but a small step from picket, to rowdy thuggery, to fascist suppression of free speech. With added vitriol!

Together with an equally elderly colleague of the Aubane Historical Society, I attended the first meeting of the Festival in August 2017. We saw no picket or any other attempt to prevent people from attending. In fact we ourselves paid the entrance fee and participated. We distributed, free of charge, West Cork historical material such as "Embers of Revisionism" by Dr. Niall Meehan and Dr. Brian P. Murphy *osb*. Among those who read our contributions were Fianna Fáil leader Mícheál Martin and Bishop Paul Colton of Cork.

Eoghan Harris had a full session of his own in the festival. When asked to comment on our contribution, he said it was an exercise of free speech.

On the second day of the 2017 festival Mr. Kingston approached us personally a couple of times. The first time round he said he would prefer if we stopped handing out leaflets. We continued anyway. Free speech and all that. The second time he told us to leave. So we packed up and left.

The following year (2018) we decided not to go into the festival from which we had been ejected the previous year. Instead we remained on the public road outside the entrance and, as participants arrived, we handed them much the same material as before.

We certainly did not seek to prevent or dissuade anybody from attending. We were assisted at the entrance by a festival official who was guiding the participants as they entered. Whenever he was otherwise occupied we ourselves directed the arrivals.

People continued to arrive. But we ran out of leaflets and decided to depart, leaving the steward to manage on his own. Just as we were driving away, who else but Mr. Kingston himself came sprinting out onto the road, declaiming in very loud tones, and taking photographs.

We ignored this comedy and departed.

Readers can judge for themselves where the vitriol came from, and who was trying to suppress open discussion and free speech.

Pat Muldowney,
Aubane Historical Society
History Ireland, March-April 2023

Does
It
Up

Stack
?

Cheltenham

Well, the 2023 Cheltenham Gold Cup has been won, the exhausted punters have dispersed homewards and the Bookies are smiling contentedly after a good harvest—the betting was, it seems, the best in years.

Horse-racing is an amazing sport because it has something for everyone. The millionaires and the wannabe millionaires; and Kings, Queens and Sheiks own the horses; the Trainers, Jockeys, stable hands make their living from the horses; and the rest of the people can enjoy looking at the racing and stoking their adrenalin by placing bets. It is all very enjoyable and harmless as long as it is affordable. But too often it gets out of control—some individuals can't handle the excitement of it all and they lose their heads in the betting.

Like everything in life, betting in moderation is no harm, but not everyone can stop there. I had an uncle who bet £5 every day of his life. One bet every day. And he said he won more often than he lost. He had a drawer in his room specially dedicated to betting.

He would read the form of the horses in the newspapers and decide on which horse to place his bet and then he'd take a £5 note from the drawer and persuade someone to go to a Bookmaker shop to place the bet and, when he won, to collect his winnings. The winnings went into the special drawer and the drawer always seemed to be brimming with money.

His other hobby was the slow drinking of pints of Guinness at the local pub. Never at home. And never more than three pints a day. He combined the two hobbies by drinking in the afternoons, when the horse racing was on the TV in the pub.

He was married to a bossy Kenmare woman and had no children.

I had another uncle with the same two hobbies. This uncle was nearly always short of money and when he had it he spent it. He loved going to race meetings

and meeting the racing people. When he couldn't go to a race meeting he would put on his bets with a "runner" in a local hotel. This uncle also liked his drink – occasionally Guinness but more often a whiskey and sometimes to celebrate he'd drink a brandy. This uncle was more fun to be with. He enjoyed an evening in the hotel bar when there would be singing, and he'd sing himself as would his wife and I have seldom seen such a happy couple who had five children.

My father cautioned me against betting. He was a great greyhound supporter. I used to walk the dogs two or three miles a day and he'd bring me to the Greyhound Track when his dog would be running. Every time, before entering the track he would point out the bookies' motor cars – a Rolls Royce, a Mercedes Benz, a Ford V8 and so on—and he said, these are the bookies' cars and then pointing to all the other cars, usually non-descript cars, my father would say: "*these are belonging to people who do the betting. Don't ever bet on a dog or a horse for you will be buying a bigger car for the bookie.*"

It was shown to me by my father how bookmakers made up their book for a

given race in such a way that, whichever horse or dog won the race, the bookie never lost.

It was quite honest and straightforward – the bookie's clerk altered the odds on each horse, or dog, as the case may be, so that the number of bets multiplied by the odds always added up to more than could be lost if the favourite won.

Occasionally, it happens of course, that the favourite is heavily backed at the last minute after the "book" has been made up and balanced, and on these unbalanced books the bookies do lose.

And there is no one as sore as a losing bookie! He will look around for someone to blame. All connections to the winning horse will be minutely investigated at bookies' "autopsies". Heads may roll and even it has happened that declared winners were declared losers.

In the end, the system is fair to all but it ca

n be a rough ride. Nevertheless, a great day out at the races when you know some of the participants and you don't lose your head with the betting.

Michael Stack ©.

Sean Moylan: *the play!*

Michael Patric of the film *An Cáilín Ciúin*, in which he played the role of 'Da', has written and launched a one man play on Seán Moylan. It opened in the Cultúrlann, Newmarket, to full houses for two nights, 4-5 March.

The play's director was Geoff Gould, founder and Artistic Director of *Blood in the Alley Theatre Company*. Cormac O'Connor was the Designer and lighting was by Philip McIntyre.

Funding was provided by Cork County Council and the Arts Council. The play also ran in the Cat Club in the Cork Arts Theatre for five nights (March 28, 29, 30 and 31 April 1).

The play is based on Moylan's Memoir of the War of Independence, "*Seán Moylan in his own words*", published by the Aubane Historical Society and available from:

<https://www.atholbooks-sales.org>



Organised Labour!

continued

their income fall off a cliff. Jobseeker's Benefit (€220 a week) only replaces one quarter (25%) of the average wage and just half (49%) of an already low minimum wage.

"The same workers have 91% of their wages replaced by pay-related unemployment benefits in Belgium, 79% in Denmark and 69% in the Netherlands."

Owen Reidy added:

"If done right, this move will bring us in to line with the rest of the EU and allow workers continue to pay their mortgage and other bills while they look for a new job.

"However, I.C.T.U. is very concerned some proposals under consideration, if not amended, will disproportionately and significantly weaken the existing income protection of low-wage part-time workers and workers with caring responsibilities, the majority of whom are women.

"The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and our affiliated unions have published a policy paper setting out our position on pay-related benefits and our recommended changes to what is being proposed. We look forward to engaging with Government to get the design of this significant social policy reform right for workers and their families."

Retail Workers

"The Government will look to respond in a meaningful way to pay concerns of retail workers who are struggling to make ends meet, the Taoiseach has said" (*Irish Examiner*, 15.2.2023).

Leo Varadkar was commenting on the findings of a report from the *Mandate* Trade Union that indicated almost two thirds of people working in retail are earning less than €451 per week and only one

in five earn more than €502 a week.

The report, '*Smoke and Mirrors: the facts about Retail workers' incomes in Ireland*', lays bare the issues which persist for workers in the Irish Retail Sector—namely low pay and a lack of access to extra hours of employment.

Low pay is often caused by workers being unable to work more than their 'banded hours', as opposed to contracts where extra working hours are available.

This has created a situation where improving hourly rates have not been reflected in workers' weekly earnings, due to the low numbers of hours being worked by retail workers.

Mandate's research showed that a significant number of workers surveyed, 40%, would like to work more than their banded hours.

Unfortunately, some workers do not get the opportunity to work additional hours due to management opposition and extra hours being used as a tool for controlling, disciplining, and punishing workers.

The practice of deliberately withholding hours is always abhorrent but this is especially so in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

The Banks:

"Michael McGrath was also told that €1 in every €8 of all tax collected by the State came from just ten large corporate taxpayers" (*Irish Examiner*, 7.1.2023).

"It is now "increasingly unlikely" that the €29 billion of taxpayers' money used to rescue AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB will be recouped, top level government documents reveal.

"In a confidential briefing note presented to Finance Minister Michael McGrath on taking office on December 17, it is made clear that the department's earlier

belief that all of the money plunged into the bailed-out banks would have been recovered is no longer tenable"

(*Irish Examiner*, 7.1.2023)

No mention of the Anglo-Irish debacle when the state was taken for €37 billion Euros!

Pensions:

"Plans to have auto-enrolment pensions up and running by 2024 have been described as 'somewhat ambitious' by Department of Finance officials" (*Daily Mail*, 21.1.2023).

"Under the plans, announced last year by Social Protection Minister, Heather Humphreys, after ten years of employment, an employee will be putting aside 14% of their salary per annum, with no option to increase that figure or put in a top-up amount."

This will be made up of 6% of a person's salary, a 6% contribution from an employer and 2% from the Government.

There will not be a flexibility to continue at other percentages of salary rates. Employees will initially be putting 3.5% in year one of the scheme, with that figure gradually increasing to the maximum 14%.

The scheme was promised to be up and running by 2024, however, finance officials now claim this timeline was 'somewhat ambitious.' Michael Patric of the film *An Cailín Ciúin*, in which he played the role of 'Da' has written and launched a one man play on Seán Moylan. It opened in the Cultúrlann, Newmarket, to full houses for two nights, 4-5 March.

The play's director was Geoff Gould, founder and Artistic Director of Blood in the Alley Theatre Company. Cormac O'Connor was the Designer and lighting was by Philip McIntyre.

BLOODY SUNDAY continued

Mr. Heath: "Well you know it is very difficult to accept a condemnation of Stormont for doing something which you yourself have requested, you have constantly requested. You spoke to me last summer that marches should be banned."

Mr. Lynch: "Because I think these marches are provocative."

Mr. Heath: "Well then, this was a provocative march today."

Mr. Lynch: "But the fact is that—"

Mr. Heath: "—And against the law."

Mr. Lynch: "Well it was a peaceful march up to the point when—"

Mr. Heath: "It was against the law."

Mr. Lynch: "Yes."

Mr. Heath: "And it was provocative."

Mr. Lynch: "Yes. Well I admit but on the other hand—"

Mr. Heath: "Well I cannot therefore take this as a criticism of Stormont."

Mr. Lynch: "On the other hand, well the fact is that the whole thing arises as a result of the Stormont regime. It arises as a result of the—"

Mr. Heath: "It arises as a result of the IRA trying to take over the country."

Mr. Lynch: "Well, we have no intention of letting them do that".

(Abridged version, *Irish Times*, 2.1.2003)

Lynch contributes around 70 per cent of the conversation. Heath repeatedly ascribes culpability to nationalists and civil rights organisers. Heath, on five occasions, rejects Lynch's more tentative censures of the British Army as prejudicing the issue.

A year after the shootings, the Ministry of Defence was advised by the then Attorney-General, Sir Peter Rawlinson, that the Crown would have "*no prospect of a successful defence*", if actions for damages by the families of the victims went to court.

The *Bloody Sunday* killings occurred on the 30th January, 1972 when 13 unarmed civilians demonstrating against Internment in Derry were shot dead by members of the British Parachute Regiment and the Royal Anglican Regiment. A fourteenth person died later.

Edward Heath, the British Prime Minister, announced an Inquiry by Lord Widgery, the Lord Chief Justice, but by the time his *Widgery Report*—which many

regarded as a white-wash of Government and Army—was issued in April, 1972, the Stormont Parliament had been suspended.

Britain's Lord Chief Justice took the side of the soldiers. He put the main blame for the deaths on the March Organisers for creating a dangerous situation where a confrontation was inevitable.

During the succeeding years many attempts were made to have a new Inquiry and an Apology, but it was not until 30th January 1998, the 26th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, that Prime Minister Blair and Secretary of State for the Six-Counties, Mo Mowlam, announced the setting up of a Tribunal to be chaired by Lord Saville of Newdigate (1998-2010).

The *Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry*, (*Saville Report*), was released on 15th June 2010). The findings turned the discredited 1972 *Widgery Report* on its head. It exonerated the victims and delivered a damning account of the conduct of soldiers, concluding they had

fired more than 100 rifle rounds and were unjustified in killed 13 people on the day and injuring more.

On its release, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, said his apology for Bloody Sunday made it clear there was no doubt what happened was wrong, he apologised for the "*unjustified and unjustifiable*" deaths.

Ahead of the 50th anniversary, the ex-Prime Minister said that was a "*proper apology*" that left no room for doubt.

Ireland's *first Bloody Sunday* took place in Croke Park, in Dublin, on Sunday, 21st November 1920, when Black and Tans using machine-guns and rifles fired into the crowd and onto the playing-field where Dublin and Tipperary were playing a Gaelic football match; 8^o twelve spectators were killed and some sixty wounded, while many more were injured.

The casualties would have been higher had not officers of the Auxiliaries ordered the Black and Tans to cease fire.

[Readers are invited
to send in their Trade Union news]

ORGANISED LABOUR

MORE State Benefits Should be linked to Pay—Speaking ahead of the publication of an Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) policy position paper on pay-related welfare benefits for workers, Irish Congress of Trade Unions President, Kevin Callinan said:

"Income protection for workers is exceptionally weak in Ireland compared to the rest of the EU"

(ICTU Statement, 3.3.2023).

"Despite workers paying pay-related social insurance contributions when in employment, they only receive a flat weekly payment if they lose their job, fall sick or have a baby. In almost all other 27 Member States, workers receive a percentage of their previous pay to protect them against a fall in living standards during short gaps in employment."

Mr Callinan added

"Post-pandemic there is now a heightened public demand to strengthen our frayed social safety net. This cannot and should not be ignored."

Delivering on a *Programme for Government* commitment to consider a pay-related payment for recently unemployed workers, the Department of Social Protection has published a draft *Pay-Related Jobseeker's Benefit Scheme* for public feedback.

ICTU General Secretary, Owen Reidy said:

"I.C.T.U. strongly supports moving from flat-rate to pay-related benefit payments for workers.

"Full-time workers losing their job see
continued on page



LABOUR

Comment

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The 'REAL' Taoiseach?

“The transcript of the phone call between the then Taoiseach, Jack Lynch and British Prime Minister Edward Heath on the evening of Bloody Sunday [Derry, 30.1.1972] ... shows Mr. Lynch trying to restrain his emotions while Mr. Heath sounds cold, even disdainful.”

(Irish Times, 2.1.2003)

(New tape evidence acquired by the *Saville Inquiry* into Bloody Sunday (1998, 2010)

The telephone call was initiated by Taoiseach Jack Lynch who begins by saying: *"I am sorry to ring you at this hour but you will probably have heard the unfortunate news about Derry this afternoon."*

This sets the tone for the rest of the conversation, with Lynch adopting an apologetic tone, while Heath comes across as irritated at being questioned and attempts to attach the blame for the murders on the organisers of the march and the failure of the 26-County Government to act against republicans.

He says:

"If you had dealt with them (Republicans) this would have been over long ago". (An Phoblacht, 16 September 1999)

This is borne out by Lynch's further comments to Heath saying—

"and as I have said to you already, if this kind of thing is going to have its repercussions south of the border. . . I can assure you that my role is becoming more and more difficult and I am very, very fearful of what is likely to happen... I just want to tell you how gravely apprehensive I am..." (An Phoblacht, 16 September 1999)

Here is the conversation:

Mr. Lynch: "Lynch here. I am sorry to ring you at this hour but you will probably have heard the unfortunate news about Derry this afternoon."

Mr. Heath: "It is very bad news, yes."

Mr. Lynch: "Very bad news, yes. And from reactions received around the country at the moment it looks as if a very serious point has now been reached and the situation could escalate beyond what any of us would anticipate at this stage."

I am told that, according to reports I received and checked on the spot, the British troops reacted rather beyond what a disciplined force might be expected to, and, as you know, there were 13 killed and as many again injured"

Mr. Heath: "Well, now, as far as any accusations are concerned I obviously cannot accept that."

Mr. Lynch: "I assure you I can understand your point of view."

Mr. Heath: "I must also point out that this arose out of a march which was against the law, which was banned, you have always asked me to ban marches. Faulkner [Prime Minister of Northern Ireland] banned them last August [1971] and renewed the ban, as you know, for a year. Now this was done, and it is a policy which you have always urged, and we believe it was absolutely right for him to ban marches."

Now the people therefore who deliberately organised this march in circumstances which we all know in which the IRA were bound to intervene, carry a very heavy responsibility for any damage which ensued — a very heavy responsibility — and I hope that you would at least condemn the whole of that unequivocally and publicly."

Mr. Lynch: "Well I am waiting to get further clarification of the situation, but ..."

Mr. Heath: "So am I."

Mr. Lynch: "Well now, there is no indication at all that the IRA intervened before shots were fired from the British side. Now again you can disagree with that but this is the information I have got, and—"

Mr. Heath: "—I am not going to prejudice it."

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