



United We Stand



Many said it would never happen, some indeed said it shouldn't, but on the 24th of January 1999 the Rotunda Hospital saw the delivery of a new political force.

The union of Democratic Left and the Labour Party has entwined radical Republicanism and the Labour movement into an entity which embodies the best opportunity for Irish progressive politics since the foundation of the State. We, at this first combined conference, must establish a firm resolve and strategic direction in order to provide the Irish people with a government of the Left sooner rather than later.

The old Irish political order is slowly withering under the impact of economic development, inspired by the social democratic actions of the European Union and the educational

achievements of our youth. The Irish public now demands an institutional and governmental realignment built upon a pluralist, equitable society rather than traditional clientism, a state in which opportunity and social justice can be delivered at home as well as abroad.

It is this changing political environment we must set our sights on the bigger picture rather than merely parliamentary or sectional interests.

The Irish Labour Tribune, with its new editorial team, will continue to provide a blend of party news, opinion pieces, reviews, the odd humorous piece and a number of new features. TILT will be independent, innovative but most importantly of all interesting. We cannot promise that everyone will like everything in TILT, but there should be something for everyone in TILT. We hope that TILT will aid in the building and promotion of Labour's political platform.

We are pleased that this issue includes articles by both leaders of the new formation's previous incarnations. TILT will not only disseminate views and policy initiatives to party members but also interest the wider Left and Trade Union movement, for the lifeblood of the Left is ideas and these must be communicated and encouraged.

If you have any comments, questions or indeed contributions, please contact us at the following address: TILT, 17 Ely Place, Dublin 2 or phone 01 - 872 8728 (Peter) or 01 - 830 6706 (Scott).

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CONFERENCE
ISSUE

TILT

TILT is intended to provide a forum for debate and a source of information for members and supporters of the Labour Party.

The views and opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the editors, publishers nor of the Labour Party.

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Emmet Stagg T.D.
Des Whelan

Editors: Peter Fitzgerald & Scott Millar

Layout: Tony Collins Design

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Droopier - the ins

CAP REFORM FF STYLE



Sen. Pat Gallagher

Labour's Seanad team of Joe Costello, Kathleen O'Meara, Pat Gallagher and Brendan Ryan are renowned for their tenacious pursuit of Ministers in the usually sedate Upper House.

Pat Gallagher, recently managed to expose the real intentions of Environment Minister Noel Dempsey, with regard to election expenditure legislation. During a debate on the new Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Bill in the Seanad Senator Gallagher challenged the Minister over his refusal to apply any limits to expenditure by candidates in the forthcoming local elections.

During the debate Pat Gallagher stated that "the Minister's reasoning in his speech this morning, that such a limit would make the scheme very bureaucratic for candidates and political parties and would add to its cost, is extremely weak. If that is the case for local elections, the principle also applies to Oireachtas and European elections." Why does the Minister not get rid of it altogether then? Pat ask rhetorically.

Minister Dempsey replied, "I will in the next electoral Bill."

Just try it Noel!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON LADS?

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern often seems to be at a loss in understanding what his Government is actually doing.

This was made abundantly clear in a recent heated Dail exchange when Labour's Spokesperson on Children, Roisin Shortall, TD, was suspended from the Dail after sustained question of the Taoiseach over the Government's proposed children's legislation.

The Children (Juvenile Justice) Bill has languished at Committee Stage in Dail Eireann since the Government came into Office. Roisin has raised this matter persistently with the Taoiseach during the Order of Business in the Dail. However, during the most recent exchange our embattled Taoiseach seemed to become confused about the issue in question and gave the impression that there were two Bills before the House. One a Children's Bill and the other a Juvenile Justice Bill.

Despite his own confusion, the Taoiseach announced that the Bill at Committee Stage, which the Government has ignored for nearly two years, will in all likelihood be scrapped and new legislation will begin again from scratch. Perhaps Seamus Brennan's Millennium Committee should take over at this Stage?

Deputy Shortall quite rightly demanded a straight answer to her question. Her persistence to get the truth led to her dismissal from the chamber. Somehow, TILT, doesn't think this will stop Labour's Dublin North-West Deputy.

GREENS FAIL TO SURPRISE

Mr. Nutty will be standing for the Greens in the forthcoming Euro elections. No surprises there then.

e inside track on politics

GCHQ FF STYLE

"Taoiseach, our old friends in the News of the World like you, I think! I would suggest that you might drop them a note and thank them for their support"



Pat Rabbitte T.D.

The Government's media monitoring unit, or as Labour's Pat Rabbitte calls it "FF's very own little GCHQ", recently attracted the attention of the *The Sunday Times*. This august publication made an application, under the Freedom of Information Act, requesting details of correspondence between Mr. Marty Whelan, manager of the monitoring unit, and the Taoiseach. Some records were withheld on the grounds that these related to party political activity and were thereby exempt from release under Section 2 of the Act.

This revelation, that Irish taxpayers were funding FF intelligence gathering operations led Comrade Rabbitte to make the following remarks in an ensuing Dail debate on the matter:

"This case, however, demonstrates the extent to which, under this Government, the distinction between official and party political activity has been blurred, if not entirely erased.....The reality is that the media monitoring unit is a Fianna Fáil espionage unit funded by the taxpayer to monitor what its political opponents are saying about Fianna Fáil. It is Fianna Fáil's very own little GCHQ eavesdropping for political purposes on political opponents."

"The unit is staffed by six full-time civil servants and headed by a former party press aide. The full year cost of the unit is £70,000, according to the Taoiseach, excluding the salaries of the six civil servants who are being used for party political purposes. While the unit masquerades as an integral part of the Government Information Service, supplying a service to members of the Government, its purpose, as revealed by the information commissioner, is transparently party political. The State pays for this as if it was a public service, such as the building of roads or the healing of the sick, yet according to the information commissioner, this is not a public service, it relates to the functions and activities of Ministers, not as Ministers but as members of a political party."

"Depending on your sense of insecurity you could regard this eavesdropping as either sinister or entirely pointless. That the taxpayer should subvent this exercise, however, when we have been authoritatively told that it is carried out entirely for party political purposes, raises serious questions about the legitimacy of this as an item of public expenditure."

"To give an example of the kind of thing revealed in the appeal to the information commissioner, the director of this press unit sent the Taoiseach a note with a clipping from the *News of the World* which says: "Taoiseach, our old friends in the *News of the World* like you, I think! I would suggest that you might drop them a note and thank them for their support.". The *News of the World* is approving of a Fianna Fáil Taoiseach; Mr. de Valera would turn in his grave."

"The next note concerns a report that the Minister, Deputy O'Rourke, spoke for five minutes and 30 seconds on "Morning Ireland" and was interrupted nine times by the interviewer, Aine Lawlor. Anyone who interrupts the Minister, Deputy O'Rourke, nine times in the course of five and a half minutes is a brave person. It seems we are getting to the stage that if David Hanley laughs during an interview, which he may do given the bags which was made of the Luas system by the Minister, it will be in a note from Mr. Marty Whelan to the Taoiseach. The report also stated that Deputy Emmet Stagg got five minutes and 45 seconds, largely uninterrupted.

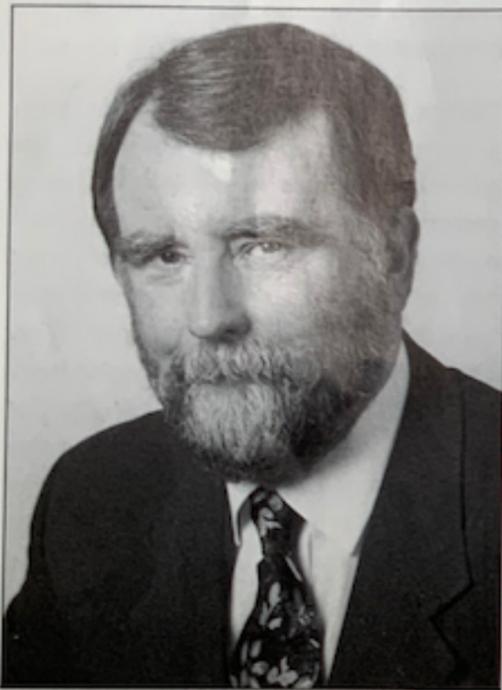
"The notion that the taxpayer should have to pay for this party political unit is ridiculous. The rainbow coalition employed people for the express reason that our party political ethos and approach to policy questions were different. This is not about policy, it is about eavesdropping on what the media and telecommunications have to say about any given Minister. The notion that Marty Whelan is sitting in some secluded part of Government Buildings with a slide rule measuring the number of column inches the fashion correspondent in the *Sunday World* writes about the Taoiseach. I ask the Minister to indicate that if this unit is to be kept in place it will not be funded by the State. I make no imputation against the very amiable person who heads the unit. It is an irony that he has ended up spying on the rest of us for Fianna Fáil but such are the ironies of progress in political life."

In reply to Deputy Rabbitte's reasoned argument Minister of State Frank Fahey assured the public that "The unit provides a comprehensive information service to Government Ministers and their Departments on Government policy initiatives and developments and alerts them to any problems which may arise in relation to their implementation. In this way Departments will be able to provide a better service to the public."

Surprisingly, neither the Taoiseach nor the Minister of State in his Department, Seamus Brennan, saw fit to defend the operations of Marty's listening post, even though it is directly responsible to the Taoiseach's Department. Is this a case of once listened twice shy?

Pat Upton - Memories & Political Legacy

BY TOMMY BROUGHAN T.D.



Pat Upton T.D.

"Well what are you hearing Tom?"

This greeting, in his inimitable Clare accent, was the usual opening of countless phone conversations between Pat and myself, often late on Sunday evening, as we wrestled with the latest political developments in the 27th and 28th Dail. It characterised Pat's whole approach to politics. He listened constantly to the people. Perhaps more than any other current political representative he sought continual feedback. Feedback on his own performance, feedback on the standing of the party, feedback on how the punters were thinking.

He was our best psephologist, and the tutor for a whole generation of Labour politicians and activists in polling and appraisal techniques. When we embarked on a few starry eyed campaigns (either on issues or in elections) Pat quickly brought us down to earth with his inevitable polling returns and his equally inevitable conclusion, "It is all there folks, look at the data!" With every poll that has appeared since Feb 22nd last, I always think of Pat, our great teacher and dear friend.

Through-out the 27th Dail when our Party Leader Dick Spring T.D. wrapped up lengthy PLP discussions, he often referred to his own father Dan and the colossal struggles of the Kerry North Labour Party to retain our seat there. Dick would spur us on and challenge us to demonstrate that we were serious about politics, like the generations of activists in Kerry North.

Dr. Pat Upton of course was ferociously serious about politics and the advancement of the Labour Party and the people we represent. One of my

earliest long conversations with him was just after Paddy Murray, Pat and I handed in our nominations together for the 1989 General Election. In that and ever subsequent election Pat fought blistering campaigns. No stone was left unturned in leafleting, canvassing or posterling to put the Labour message forward. As a public representative Pat leafleted constantly and his famous large A3 leaflet was the blueprint borrowed by many other colleagues. Indeed these leaflets were often the main source of information, especially on local developments, for the people of Dublin South Central.

Pat was a street politician par excellence. He never missed a public meeting and never shirked from taking an unpopular, courageous stand in front of a massive crowd. When the drugs and crime crisis was at its zenith in the mid 90's Pat strongly led and supported efforts by communities to eliminate this scourge from the South Inner City through treatment centres and community policing initiatives. More recently Pat's courage in standing up boldly for the rights of refugees was rightly highlighted at his funeral.

Despite his innate shyness, Pat loved walkabouts, and his breakfast meetings and canvasses with Cllr. Joe Connolly, Paddy O'Reilly, Paddy Morton and other "minders" and friends around Crumlin, Walkinstown and Drimnagh (and more recently Ballyfermot) were rightly cherished by the people of these areas. One of my strong memories of Pat is of meeting him a few years ago attending the funeral of one of my cousins in Bluebell. As he stood at a distance outside the Church, Pat was engulfed by constituents running forward to greet him and engage in banter. So one consolation I had from that sad occasion was that



Pat Upton T.D.

I knew that general election

Pat's Constituency was Paddy Murray, to canvassing friends or supporters double the amount and so on.

Pat Upton in the Dail and Seán Lemmon media through and the success

During his time and Joe Connolly Upper House bills and Paddy Harte and

role in our constituency a honorary

Six" with Joe Connolly Derek Mc

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Without a Deputy

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Pat was especially

opportunities



Pat Upton T.D.

I knew that Pat would regain his seat in the general election and of course he duly did.

Pat's Constituency Chairperson and friend, Paddy Murray, told me that Pat's philosophy in canvassing was simple. When he had 2 or 3 friends or supporters on a street, his aim was to double that to 4 or 5 and to double that again and so on.

Pat Upton was a total professional in both the Dail and Seanad. He enjoyed a high profile in the media through incredible untiring personal efforts and the support of our Labour H.Q. and Dail staff. During his time as a Senator from 1989-92 Pat and Joe Cosello led the Labour charge in the Upper House, turning out a myriad of motions, bills and policy documents. With Senator Jack Harte and John Ryan, they played a significant role in our 1992 success. In the 27th Dail Pat was a honorary "ex-officio" member of the "Northside Six" with Joe Costello, Roisin Shortall, Sean Ryan, Derek McDowell, Sean Kenny and myself. He courageously made no secret of his distaste for the 1993/94 liaison with Fianna Fail which he likened to the Labour Party "drinking a cup of poison". In truth, he was little happier with the 1994/97 alliance with Fine Gael. He simply wanted an independent Labour Party with the largest possible numbers of Councillors, T.Ds & MEPs. Without a Labour Taoiseach and a large contingent of Deputies, he saw a continual difficulty in implementing our policies and suffering from the usual yo-yo General Election results as Labour took the flak for the 2 conservative parties.

Pat was coming into his own in the present Dail, especially as Justice spokesperson, his first opportunity as a frontbencher. He had deeply

held views on crime and especially on the damage it did to deprived working class districts. Long before the Blairites, Pat and Dublin colleagues like Cllr Michael Conaghan had worked out a "tough on crime - tough on the causes of crime" approach. Pat believed strongly in social and economic action, taken in consultation with local communities, to tackle the real causes of criminal behaviour. Characteristically Pat was framing a comprehensive Labour Prevention of Crime Bill when he tragically died. He believed passionately that, as with most key services, the administration of security and justice should be organised and democratically controlled on a local and regional basis.

Throughout his parliamentary career, Pat communicated his views on Labour policies relentlessly in press statements, articles and radio /TV interviews. His Sunday morning statement was a staple feature of Dublin local radio and he almost always "made the tabloids" on the Monday morning. Many members and constituents will have to get to know Pat's wealth of interests from his regular column "Pat Upton's Perch" in "Faces" magazine.

Pat could easily have held the Agriculture and Food, Enterprise and Employment, Environment and Local Government or Social Community and Family Affairs portfolios and achieved his particular ambition to be Spokesperson for Education or Health. He was also a regular columnist for the News of the World and wrote articles for the Irish Times, Irish Independent, Sunday World and the Irish Mirror. Indeed, he used every available forum to defend the Labour

message and encouraged his parliamentary colleagues do the same.

He was one of the brightest and sharpest minds in the Oireachtas and wore his distinguished academic honours very lightly. Inevitably it was to Pat we turned to when the Genetically Modified foods issue moved to the top of the political agenda and characteristically he had radical and sensible views.

Pat Upton's death left a huge void in our Parliamentary Labour Party, just as we were returning to centre stage with our by-election victories and the union with D.L. Everybody remembers that Pat was deeply unhappy with the merger (especially with its timing) but he admired the professionalism of our new colleagues and wished for us to emulate them. Ironically had he lived, it was very possible that many of these new colleagues and Pat would have become strong allies on key issues of policy and electoral strategy.

Pat's death also left a huge void in Dublin South Central and the communities he served so selflessly and spoke out for so fiercely. Comrades and close associates such as Niall Connolly, John McAlinden, Shay Conway, Tommy Murtagh, Christy Curtin and Martin Lafferty will especially miss Pat's brilliant company and inspiring leadership. They now have the onerous task of rebuilding and retaking the Dail seat Pat had carved out house by house in street after street.

Most of all Pat is missed by his beloved and devoted family, his wife Anne, sisters Mary & Anne and his children, Henry, Patrick, Lizzie and Bob. Pat's family was his haven from a turbulent world and his chief support in political and academic life. As with the families of many Labour politicians, the Upton family stood shoulder to shoulder in the major tests of Pat's public career. They provided Pat with that key warmth and stability which he needed and which enabled him to represent our Party so vigorously and successfully. Of course it's likely that the Upton name will again figure prominently in the future politics of Dublin South Central.

Pat Upton's wit, energy and passion are impossible to replace. There was so much about Pat, his accent, his laugh, his kindness, that made him a unique person. At his funeral, Eugene McCague, a long-time friend of Pat's summed up his commitment to politics. Pat didn't have much time for complicated worldviews, he thought endless debates about ideology to be 'auld guff'. As a socialist, Pat had a simple political motivation. He thought too many people in society were getting a raw deal and he wanted to change that. It's a principle that many of us would do well to remember as we gather for Conference.

Half Empty, Half Full

RUAIRI QUINN T.D.

TILT reprints the full response of Party Leader Ruairi Quinn T.D. to a recent article in the Irish Times by Fintan O'Toole on the state of social democracy.



Ruairi Quinn T.D.

Fintan O'Toole's piece on the last gasp of social democracy is perhaps a typical piece of self criticism from an undoubted member of the family of the left.

The tendency to judge oneself harshly, more harshly than we judge others, has often been part and parcel of political discourse on the left. For example, and Fintan will know this well, the extreme left in this country have always reserved the greatest part of their ire for the Labour Party, and its leadership, than it ever did for Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael.

Fintan's assertion that 'the great paradox of European politics at the moment is that socialists can have power so long as they give up what used to be called socialism' is in my view an unfair judgement on the state of European social democracy. Surprisingly, it is also quite ahistorical. What counts is what is socialism today, not what used to be called socialism, as Fintan puts it. Socialism and social democracy like all other political families is entitled to remould itself to face old problems in new and changing circumstances.

Fintan's perception of our movement at this stage is one of the bottle being half empty rather than half full. It is a view not shared by everybody,

least of all me. Assessing the state of social democracy in the Irish Times early in the new year, Patrick Smyth quoted an American Journalist, William Pfaff, as saying 'the left has conquered the right. For all practical purposes the liberal or social democratic left has won the intellectual and political battles of the last two centuries, making the modern world what it is.'

Pfaff in my view is correct. The problem is that many of the achievements of mid-century socialism like the welfare state we take for granted. Others, for instance, health treatment based on need not ability to pay, are yet to be won. We underestimate too the extent to which the electoral success of the Labour Party in particular dragged the Irish politics from the centre right to the centre left. The Progressive Democrats for instance established in a blaze of glory to take all things public out of politics now find themselves supporting the implementation of a minimum wage!

That is where I depart from Pfaff who goes on to say all the battles are over and that only the issue of managing the system remains (incidentally he also believes that the left are better technocrats than the right and obviously I would agree with him on that too!).

Yet some of O'Toole's criticism of the Left does ring true. The arrogance of Cresson and the paternalism of the old left are traits I recognise and reject. Socialists often in their haste to provide some services to people forgot one crucial part of that process - people themselves. Accordingly, we have moved from a position of rejecting markets that perform that task well to a position of regulating against their worst excesses. In other areas though, modern thinking far from deserting the Left is returning to some of its key values. Spending by the state for instance, so long an anathema to many in this country that has seen state spending as a percentage of national product fall to the lowest in the European Union, is making an intellectual comeback.

And if Fintan wishes to see a clear left right divide on this issue he need only look at the Government's stability programme published last December that shows spending as a percentage of national product continue to decline despite the £50bn price tag put on our infra-structural deficit by the ESRI last week.

Fintan is right also in saying that the battle

between ideals and pragmatism is more pronounced on the Left than any other political movement. And he is probably right to suggest that Lafontaine's total abandonment of one for the other led to his own downfall. But, the public is as entitled to expect competence as well as principles from their politicians. In Oskar's case, many of his ideas were not as radical as his confrontational manner in presenting them but he ultimately paid the price for flouting the nature of the mandate given to his party at the election.

I reject Fintan's assertion that the Left has spent so much time trimming its sails to the prevailing winds that it no longer knows what voyage it's on. Rather, the assertion by Patrick Smith that the phenomenon of globalisation has yet to find an adequate response from the left is closer to the truth. Put simply, socialism in one country clearly failed and in the modern world there is no future for social democracy in one country either.

I do not take the view that globalisation per se is a bad thing. Yet, it's clearly the new battle ground between right and left and one in which the Left has ceded too much ground. For example, while the right talks about the importance of free trade, often regardless of the democratic conditions in which it operates, to argue for the freedom of workers to trade their labour as they saw fit in a functioning democracy was presented as a gross interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. If the Right wants to argue for global economic rights let them, but the left's job will be to argue for a framework for human rights and democratic accountability as rights and not as an optional extra.

These are issues that the parties of the Party of European Socialists are already grappling with. It is no accident that an international debate on debt relief for the developing world should coincide with the ascendancy of the Left in Europe. No accident either that it was the Left which led the demand for the inclusion of chapters in the Amsterdam Treaty on employment and social exclusion. The Labour Party recently led opposition in the Dáil to the Bretton Woods Bill and the ESAF fund. We have sponsored a Bill on Trade Union Recognition, with an approach which has been effectively endorsed by the high level working group. The challenge of securing further democratisation of the European Union's institutions lies ahead.

Blairheart - The Scottish Elections

BY SCOTT MILLAR

Tony Blair faces the biggest test of his New Labour/New Britain project when the Scottish people elect their first devolved parliament on May 6th. In an election campaign characterised by the parties, who could possibly yield power i.e. not including the Scottish Conservative Party, all attempting to position themselves clearly to the left of centre, the Scottish Labour Party (S.L.P.) (on the strength of present opinion polls) would seem to have come out on top; not due to any public enthusiasm for their policies but rather the voting habit of generations showing its strength.

This election not only carries high stakes for Blair but also his Scottish lieutenants. It looked, up until late last year, that the Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar might preside over the loss of Labour's electoral supremacy in Scotland for the first time since 1956. The polls have since turned around and the credit for this change of fortune may be claimed in part, by the Chancellor (and if the British press is to be believed 'arch-rival of Blair') Gordon Brown who has heavily involved himself in the campaign since Christmas. Brown embodies the demure side of the Scottish Labour Party; - economically focussed and not totally enamoured with the entirety of the New Labour Project.

The Culture Clash over the true position of the S.L.P. is encapsulated in the fate of James Canavan, the now independent front-runner for the Falkirk West seat. Due to his uncompromising and popular, left-wing stance on such issues as privately financing hospital building and Labour's stated aim of not raising taxes in Scotland above the U.K. standard, he was removed as the official



"Scottish Politics making the step from Protest to Power."

candidate and then expelled from the Party. It would be wrong to conclude from this that the S.L.P. is firmly under the control of Blairites, rather such defiance has a resonance throughout the Scottish Party from ordinary members to Scottish Parliament candidates.

Any real threat to Labour victory comes from the Left, with even the Liberal Democrats manifesto having more redistributory aspirations. The Scottish National Party (S.N.P.) has practically sidelined the cherished goal of independence (now only a commitment to a referendum during the government term) and is emphasising a wide ranging social programme (under the slogan "enterprise, compassion and democracy") in order to regain the advantage they held last year. Under the leadership of Alex Salmond the party has clearly defined its social-democratic position, indeed it seemed that Alex could do no wrong in his political appeal to the traditional Left consensus of central Scotland (even appearing, green and white scarf firmly in place, when Celtic won their first league victory in 10 years; such gestures have aided the party in totally losing its Protestant image which hindered the party's electoral performance in Labour's Strathclyde strongholds). It seemed the S.N.P. was the party to lead Scotland into a new political era, clear of the pall of corruption which has dogged the Labour movement in the West of Scotland.

However the move from the 'abstracts of the constitution' to the detailed economic realities of policy, only weeks from implementation has proved hazardous; - Blair, himself, placing much emphasis on exact costings of the nationalists ambitious plans for welfare improvements and policies such as the abolition of college tuition fees for Scottish students.

The fall in S.N.P. support has not only been beneficial to New Labour. With the disenfranchised of Scotland's sprawling housing schemes being drawn to the Scottish Socialist Party and its charismatic leader Tommy Sheridan, recent polls give this united party of ultra-left protest anything up to 8 seats in the proportionally elected parliament.

Blair has not staked his political credibility on



"Alex Salmond - caused controversy when he came out against NATO Bombing."

the return of a Labour administration to govern Scotland's domestic affairs, such a sharp political operator would never risk that on the vote of a people who share so little of his home counties sensibilities. But whatever the result it will have implications on the larger constitutional configuration of the U.K.

As it presently looks, Labour are heading towards a number of seats which will ensure them coalition with the Liberal Democrats, if not an outright majority (Labour also has the declared support of the Scottish Tories on any issue which could possibly effect the constitutional position, a poison chalice which will ensure slightly less votes). Whatever the final outcome, however there will be no strengthening of Blair's policy vision within a Scottish context. An impressive Labour showing at the polls could encourage left-wingers within the party to stray from the dogmatic line without directly endangering the elected hegemony. This result would also be seen as a strong endorsement for Gordon Brown strengthening his position within intra-party politics.

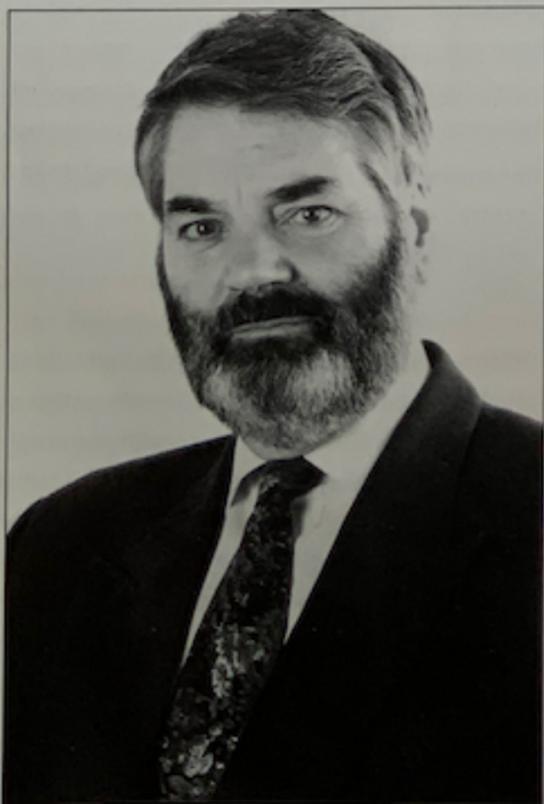
With a venture filled with political pitfalls as steering a devolved Scottish domestic policy as well as attempting to keep line with the larger British organisation, Dewar may find his stated life ambition of being Scotland's First Minister quiet untenable. A term in opposition may well focus S.N.P. economic policy formation to a degree that when Scotland next goes to the polls they may well be in a very favourable position.

Labour victory on May 6th may well be very hollow for Blair as the dynamics of Scottish devolution emerge.

Partnership for Peace

PROINSIAS DE ROSSA T.D. MAKES THE CASE AGAINST PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

In the first of what we hope will become a regular debate feature in TILT, Michael McLoughlin and Proinsias De Rossa make the cases for and against Irish membership of Partnership for Peace.



Proinsias De Rossa T.D.

In an extract from a speech by Proinsias De Rossa (Labour Party Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs) on the Private Members Debate on Partnership for Peace, the case against Partnership for Peace is made.

We live in a period of rapid political change. Within the past ten years we have seen the collapse of the Berlin wall and the map of Eastern Europe change beyond recognition. New alliances are emerging. The Thatcherite tide that threatened to swamp Europe during the 1980s has now been reversed, with 13 of the member states of the EU now having Left or Centre-Left governments. We have seen the European Union develop at a rapid rate, moving closer to political and economic union, with the enactment of the Maastricht Treaty, agreement on the Amsterdam Treaty and the coming into effect from January 1st of this year of the single currency.

Attitudes are changing. Positions are being re-examined. Views are evolving. For instance we now have a Green Minister for Foreign Affairs in Germany who attends and participates at meetings of NATO Foreign Ministers. In this rapidly changing world it is simply not sustainable to repeat a meaningless mantra about the 'sacredness of Irish neutrality', as if we were still in the midst of the Second World War or still trapped deep in the dark days of the Cold War. In any event, as papers released as recently as this week indicate, our neutrality during the Second World War was not, in fact, as 'neutral' as many people believed. In addition I think that any objective study of Ireland's role during the cold war will show that it was a similarly lop-sided neutrality.

That is not in any way to devalue our record of neutrality or particularly the record of successive governments in keeping this country out of military alliances. Despite our neutrality Ireland has never

been an isolationist country. As far back as the 1930s Ireland was an active member of the League of Nations. We have been a member of the United Nations for 40 years. Ireland has served on the Security Council of the United Nations and on one occasion provided the President of the General Assembly. Irish troops have served with distinction in virtually every continent on the globe.

Irish Foreign Ministers, such as Dick Spring, have served with distinction as President of the EU Council of Foreign Ministers and in that role have helped to broker solutions to many international disputes.

In the context of the Irish peoples long standing commitment to neutrality and non-participation in military alliances, any Dail proposal that Ireland should join PFP, an organisation that is effectively a NATO sub-group, was always going to be controversial. There are different views on this issue in the Labour Party and we are engaged in a serious and wide-ranging debate, not only on PFP, but on the whole issue of how peace can be guaranteed in our world. There are a range of views on the proposal within Fianna Fail and I suspect that one would not have to dig too deeply within Fine Gael to find divergent views on it.

Whatever decision is finally taken about membership of PFP - and again it is no secret that my view is that we should not join - I am absolutely satisfied that any decision at this stage would be totally pre-emptive. There is a need for a full and informed debate on all of the implications of all of the security needs of the European Union, and it is in that context the question of whether or not to join the PFP needs to be addressed.

When that debate has run its course the decision is then appropriately one, initially, for the democratically elected membership of the Oireachtas and I believe, ultimately, it should be

"As a firm supporter of deeper European integration, I accept that this process will lead to a common defence and security architecture for the EU."

put to the people in a referendum. It is a political issue, and I feel some degree of concern that senior members of the Defence Forces and indeed the representative bodies for the Defence Forces have come dangerously close to straying into the political arena in some of the comments they have made on this matter in recent months. However, I welcome the clear statement from PDFORRA today that this issue is a matter for the government and for the Irish people

And everyone should be clear about this. PfP and the security needs of the European Union are separate and distinct issues. The PfP has nothing to do with the European Union. The PfP was an initiative of the US and is effectively a sub-group of NATO. PfP treaties are negotiated directly with the NATO High Command. There are many member states of the PfP but only 14 are members of the European Union. The PfP includes many countries which were formally members of the Warsaw Pact, and a number who were members of no bloc.

As a firm supporter of deeper European integration, I accept that this process will lead to a common defence and security architecture for the EU. As a member state of the EU, where support for each of the developments in the Union has been approved by substantial majorities at successive referenda, we must be willing to play our part in this process.

The PfP is now being described by its promoters as a 'European Defence system', with the insinuation that it is a logical extension of EU integration. This could not be further from the truth. NATO-PfP includes many states which because of their human rights records are explicitly prevented from joining the EU (e.g. Turkey). The PfP was designed as a vehicle to allow partial NATO membership to East European states which Russia would simply not tolerate as full members of a hostile military alliance. In addition NATO-PfP strategy is designed not to assist the democratic integration of the EU, but to pre-empt the emergence of a European security system (CFSP) and to integrate Europe through NATO rather than through the EU.

I believe that it would be far preferable to have a European security structure ultimately subject to the EU than to the domination of European security affairs by the militarist transatlantic alliance that is NATO. The major advantage of such a structure is that it would ultimately be subject to the democratic checks and balances of the EU Council (the member states) and the European Parliament.

There are also a number of other myths around about the implications of staying out of PfP. Staying out of PfP does not in any way hinder Irish participation in peace keeping or peace enforcement operations throughout the world. Most of the operations in which Irish personnel are involved have been mandated directly by the United Nations. Even where peace-keeping operations have been 'sub-contracted out' as in Bosnia, our Defence Forces are participating with personnel from 39 other participating countries, only 20 of whom are members of NATO or the PfP.

Neither would staying out of PfP - contrary to the frequently repeated line - rule out joint exercises between the Irish Defence Forces and those of other European Countries. These are already taking place and can continue as long as the government considers them to be appropriate.

Ireland already has observer status at the WEU - a decision taken by a Fianna Fail led government. Again going in or staying out of PfP would have no impact on this observer status at all.

Neither would staying out of PfP in any way restrict or inhibit our involvement on the international stage.

One of the particular concerns I would have about the PfP is the emphasis that its sponsor, NATO, places on the possession and potential use of nuclear weapons. Ireland has a long and proud record of opposition to the possession of nuclear weapons. As recently as last June the government took a very welcome initiative with a number of other countries seeking to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and to limit those already in existence.

I said at the time that it was a particularly positive development to see Ireland joining with other countries, both inside and outside the EU, who shared our concern about the continuing threat posed to the world by the existence of nuclear weapons. This initiative showed that notwithstanding the development of a common foreign policy in the EU, it is still possible for an Irish government to take initiatives in regard to foreign policy issues at UN level, provided there is the political will to do so.

The June initiative was particularly welcome as it was directed at existing nuclear weapons as well as those being developed by 'new' countries. While the recent nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan have focused attention on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the biggest threat to global safety by far remains the huge arsenal of nuclear weapons held by the big powers. With the cold war now very much in the past, the case for disposing of these lethal weapons is more compelling than ever.

It was an Irish initiative that was largely responsible for the conclusion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty almost 40 years ago. That treaty had some success in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons, but it has not stopped those countries which are determined to secure these weapons. As we approach the millennium it is now an appropriate time to launch another initiative aimed at freeing the world from the awful threat posed by these weapons of mass destruction.

These are my views of the matter, views which I believe are shared by people in all parties. I respect the views of those within the Labour Party and the other parties who hold contrary views. I look forward to a rational and informed debate on the matter in the Labour Party, in the Dail and in the country generally.

A balanced course must be mapped out between those who, on the one hand, would rush this country into NATO at the earliest possible opportunity, and those on the other hand who make outlandish claims that every development in the EU will lead to NATO troops on the streets of Irish towns and villages.

Partnership for Peace

SOLIDARITY OVER RHETORIC

MICHAEL MCLOUGHLIN MAKES THE CASE FOR IRISH MEMBERSHIP OF PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE.

Questions of international relations have always been at the heart of left wing politics. People of my age and generation were partly propelled into politics by events in South Africa, Palestine and Nicaragua. The international role of the social democratic left, a family with an affiliate in practically every country (often underground), is still one of its enduring features. There was an obvious and meaningful "left" policy on the major international issues of the day governed by an overarching set of values based on solidarity, human rights and the rejection of cold war politics domination of the developing world.

However as in all aspects of politics and public life things have changed immensely in the last 10 years and we must be able to shape and meet these changes. The left promoted and campaigned on Irish neutrality in the past and rightly so. The cold war least we forget offered little to either set of combatants and despite much revisionism cost millions of lives in S.E. Asia, Afghanistan, Central America and elsewhere. How, or indeed why, should any progressive and independent nation have allied itself permanently to the promoters of such conflicts? The left pushed forcefully however for an active foreign policy on issues where Ireland, while not been aligned to either side, would take the side of justice and human rights. Successive Irish governments were spectacular in their fence sitting abilities usually in a pro-west fashion. One of the worst examples of this was the failure to recognise the Vietnamese backed Cambodian government, which drove Pol Pot from power, at the UN.

Conflict today however is of starkly different nature since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. No longer are there two super powers facing each other in a global stand-off and skirmishing in third countries with disastrous effects on local peoples. However conflict remains and indeed has increased in many areas. The fall of Communism has led to some of Europe's greatest security concerns in post communist societies like the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Caucuses. Nobody needs to be told about the modern face of conflict, we see it all the time on our screens. Security and humanitarian instability arise in the same way from internal ethnic conflict as they do from "traditional war". However it is ethnic and civil strife which now faces us as the major challenge of modern international affairs.

Heightened awareness of conflict through the media leads modern democratic peoples to seek solutions from the international community to problems which are far from simple.

The values of solidarity, human rights and democracy still hold in these modern conflicts and it is usually obvious who is the aggressor. Nobody could be neutral in terms of what is going on in Burma or East Timor. The dismemberment of Bosnia while the West looked on was I hope a watershed in our attitude towards international conflict. The ability to do something concrete in modern crisis situations is now the key measurement of solidarity. Words are not enough. Furthermore the left must welcome the development of international law that brings dictators and war criminals like Pinochet to some type of justice.

However our thinking on the structures and organisations which deal with conflict remains outdated and inadequate. Cold war situations and traditional UN peace-keeping seem to be the limit of our knowledge and interest in responding to crisis situations. Irish forces serve with great distinction under the UN flag and this role and the UN's part in it will continue to be central to modern crisis management but merely sitting between hostile parties and observing will not be sufficient in many emerging situations. Indeed our experience of UN forces watching helplessly the ethnic cleansing of Srebrenica, Gorazde and other "safe havens" must have thought us this lesson beyond a doubt. Total dependence on a UN Security Council designed in the 1940's peace settlement will lead us to repeat the same mistakes to the amazement of our citizens veto by veto, troika by troika.

Even in technical terms the previous dispensation on armed forces and ordnance no longer fits modern theatres. Troop transporters and tanks serve little functions in establishing humanitarian zones, accompanying aid and policing mixed cities. The civic role of international forces is of growing importance as can be witnessed in the SFOR mission. Yet with all this change and with all these developments we are to believe that Ireland can remain unchanged. It is truly ironic that all our rhetoric on peace-keeping and our role in it is completely devoid of any discussion of the changing face of modern conflicts. How

can one of our greatest foreign policy commitments be to solving problems that no longer exist and refusing to acknowledge that our help, solidarity and most of all experience may now be needed in a new way.

The debate on PFP has exposed some of the laziest thought processes not just on security matters but on modern statehood and democracy itself. The complete absence of any self confidence in many commentators that sovereign nations can shape events is more sad than annoying. The perception that neutrality is some high and mighty sanctimonious calling only visited upon the most noteworthy states is pretty lame especially for those who talk so much of international law (read the Hague convention to find out what neutrality really means in international law)

The left must ensure it does not repeat the mistakes of history where European integration was viewed as a free market big business club. Capital and business were quick to spot the need for supranational structures to deal with new economic situations. The left lost crucial ground and allowed the agenda to be shaped by others. It could be argued we are still paying the price. In the same way as many want to build a different economic and political vision of Europe so too do many want it's security priorities to be different.

In many ways talking about membership of Partnership for Peace is a bit of a misnomer. The vast majority of opponents of PFP oppose it in the same way as they oppose EU integration and the single currency (and by and large they are the same people). PFP is portrayed as some form of uniform definable organisation with set goals and rules of membership. Nothing could be further from the truth, the PFP must be one of the few organisations which allows the members to set their own rules

However it is ourselves who must decide what our priorities are in foreign and security policy. In many respects the Partnership for Peace debate merely exposes the fact that we cannot answer what these priorities are or more importantly how they can be achieved in reality. This may be quite understandable for a country with Ireland's history but it is less so for a party with such rich international links as Labour and with such a supposed commitment to solidarity in foreign policy.

What are Irish principles in foreign policy? Presumably the best statement is the White Paper on Foreign Policy which a previous party leader drafted after one of the broadest and most democratic consultation processes ever seen. It starts from the principles of Article 29 of the Constitution which emphasises the peaceful settlement of disputes and the role of international law. Peacekeeping, disarmament

and the role of the UN have all emerged as traditional priority areas later. Nothing in PFP contradicts any of this. Indeed the PFP framework document emphasises all of these in detail (see White Paper P 128-32).

Labour and the international socialist movement is supposed to stand for solidarity a concept which emphasises not a charitable approach but one which respects the wishes of those who are oppressed or seeking assistance. We cannot simply receive both financial and political solidarity from the international community for ourselves and Northern Ireland and then turn our back on the wishes of others less fortunate.

What does our solidarity look like in practice? Particularly how does it work for the newly independent democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Declarations in various international fora and series of ineffectual troikas are scarcely sufficient. The Amsterdam Treaty marked the triumph of failure once again for the proponents of a Europe which might be grown up enough to deal with problems on its own doorsteps, problems which impinge on us all in terms of refugees and other spill-over effects. If there are three reasons for Labour to support Ireland's involvement in the Partnership for Peace they are Bosnia, Bosnia and Bosnia. The generation who said never again would slaughter and genocide be permitted in Europe were the first to look away. The dearth of solidarity among Europe's decision-makers was astounding.

The IFOR and SFOR operations were and are the practical examples of a real solidarity towards the multi-ethnic state of Bosnia. The opponents of PFP have openly admitted that Ireland's role in these matters is completely powerless. Effectively we are to be a nation of onlookers in genocide and slaughter. What if the left lead governments of Sweden, Finland and Austria took the same approach. All three nations have admitted that Partnership for Peace was a key component of their preparation for these operations. If we want to assist in peace-keeping, crisis management and other vital aspects of modern security solidarity in eastern and central Europe and the NIS we must be in Partnership for Peace to protect our own forces when serving in these missions. If we do not join Partnership for Peace we must declare publicly and honestly that we are not interested in future peace-keeping and our traditional areas of foreign policy. This is an important responsibility as it is unfortunately far from certain that major ethnic conflict is a thing of the past in Europe and its near abroad.

One of PFP's central objectives is promoting the civilian control of the military. The real needs of crisis management and peace-keeping are military ones hence the need for a military organisation

to co-ordinate its activities. The EU, UN and OSCE are the respective political organisations (all of which we of course partake in). It was the UN which gave IFOR its mandate in Bosnia specifically recognising its own and the Europeans shortcomings.

Arguments about nuclear weapons and Iraq etc. are spurious. Many of our EU partners are nuclear states. The US and the UK have proven their ability and willingness to act independently of the international community. One of the few Western European countries not to condemn the Iraqi bombings was Ireland, hardly an argument that it is PFP which restricts our foreign policy!! The crisis in Kosovo reveals how there is no binding policy linkage to NATO with Austria banning NATO planes from its airspace and Russia allying itself with a NATO opponent.

The defence forces themselves recognise the training needs they have in the international field most importantly of all the nuts and bolts of working with multi-national forces and the key questions of interoperability.

The rooting of Russia in a co-operative European security structure is perhaps one of the greatest post cold war achievements. Take a country like Estonia for example, which has been accepted for the first wave of accession to the EU. Not so long ago they witnessed Russian troops preventing independence in the Baltics. The same forces, even if in a demobilised form, are still on their territory today. Yet now they can participate in confidence building measures together including early warning systems for potential conflict. Yet Ireland is to tell them we are above all of this and will not train with them to serve in a Bosnia type conflict in the future?

All PFP participants decide on what their areas of co-operation will be. Is it the case that there are no areas we can identify for improved co-operation? How will such an agreement breach neutrality if we are the ones laying down the areas of co-operation and the end product is to enhance our capability in peace-keeping etc.

The real question is do we want Ireland to play a role in humanitarian crisis, search and rescue and crisis management. If we do, then not to prepare for these tasks via the Partnership for Peace is nothing short of irresponsible.

The Internet Election

PETER FITZGERALD LOOKS AT THE INTERNET SITES OF THE US PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS.

The war in Kosovo has been described as the first "internet war". It looks like the 2000 US Presidential Elections could be the first internet election. The elections may be over a year away, yet all the contenders have their internet sites up and running. While it has become something of a standard campaign requirement to have an internet site, the web seems to be taken more seriously by the contenders to be the next US President. Steve Forbes announced his candidature on the web. Elizabeth Dole launched her campaign simultaneously on the web and TV. Al Gore states in his site that he plans "to make Internet communication the most important part of my Campaign for President". Jesse Jackson announced to the world that he wouldn't be running on his son's web site. As Al Gore is the only Democrat in the field, most of the sites up and running are for Republican Party candidates. So what are the individual candidates sites like? Well, read on.

www.algore2000.com

Al Gore first sought the Democratic nomination in 1988. So it should come as no surprise that his web site is the most comprehensive of the candidates in the field. His speeches page contains 30 speeches grouped according to topic!

The one irritating aspect of his site (and indeed many of the other major contenders) is the sweet as apple pie nature of a lot of the content. There are pages on "My Family", there is quite a substantive page on "Tipper" (his wife) and there is a "Just for Kids" section. A site with something for all the family! However in his defence there is none of the wrap me in the American Flag graphics that seems to be standard fare for the Republican candidates.

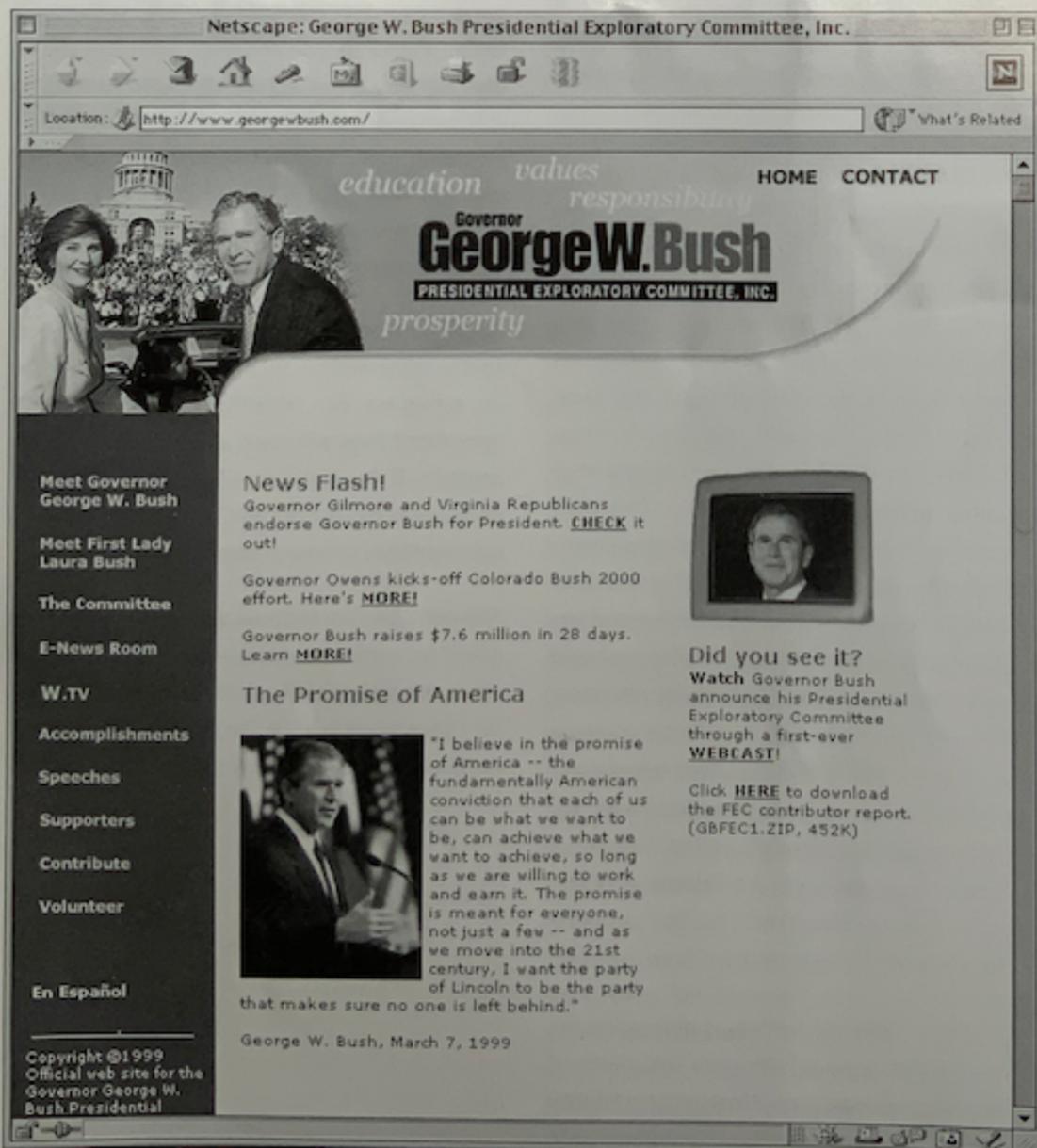
Surprisingly, he makes no use in his site of the fact that he is Vice-President. Unsurprisingly there are no obvious references to President Clinton on the site.

The site is full of photos and is the most interactive of all the candidates. It's also very user friendly in terms of layout.

www.georgewbush.com

George Bush Junior has not declared his candidature yet but he has set up a Presidential Exploratory Committee which have set up a web site. The most striking thing about the site is the picture of Governor George Bush's draped in the American flag at the top of his page.

He outlines his vision based on "The promise of America". This "compassionate conservative"



refers to every-one's favourite Republican- Abraham Lincoln "I want the party of Lincoln to be the party that makes sure no-one is left behind".

There seems to be a bragging match going on among the Republican candidates regarding how much funds they have raised with Bush giving prominence on his site to the announcement that his Exploratory Committee have raised over \$6m.

Along with Al Gore his site has a Spanish language option (Spanish speakers making up an important constituency in the key states of Florida and California). There is also a page where you can "Meet First Lady Laura Bush" who talks of her interest in literacy.

You do come away from the site with a better knowledge of who George Bush is, however there are very little policy specifics. No doubt as the campaign develops, so will his web-site.

www.edole2000.org

Elizabeth Dole's site departs from the standard format in that when you enter it you are confronted with a smiling Elizabeth Dole and a quote from the good lady "The United States of America deserves a government worthy of its people" (a sideswipe at the antics of Bill Clinton presumably). This all takes about fifteen seconds to unfold. You then have to click on this to get to the main page of the site. While this may strike you as novel on the first visit to the site, it does get irritating when you have to go through this brief and rather useless page every time you want to enter the site proper.

The site is divided into the regular sections Issues/Press Office/About Elizabeth/Get our Newsletter/E-Dole Interactive/Get Involved. Again fundraising gets a prominent mention on the site. You can view her making her announcement speech as well as read the speech.

Currently the site is limited in terms of content, despite having served in two cabinets as Secretary of Labour and Secretary of Transportation. At the time of this review there were only three press-releases and one speech on the site!

www.gopatgo2000.org

Pat Buchanan's site has the obligatory US flag imagery however it lacks the gloss of many of the other sites. This is in line with his anti-establishment campaigns for President.

What he misses out on style, he makes up for in content. His site is the most detailed of the

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window displaying the Gore 2000 website. The browser title is "Netscape: Welcome to the Gore 2000 web site -- and to our crusade for America's future". The address bar shows "http://al Gore2000.com/welcome.html". The website has a navigation menu with "Get Involved", "My Family", "Tipper", "Issues & News", "Speeches", and "Town Hall". The main content area features a "Gore 2000" logo, a photo of Al Gore, and a "My Vision For the 21st Century" section. On the right, there are links for "En Español", "Volunteer!", "Issues", and a "What matters to our young people?" poll.

republican candidates in terms of policy proposals, speeches and press releases. You are left in no doubt where Pat Buchanan stands on the major issues. This is partly due to the fact that he has run for President before, but also due to the fact that he is not aiming for the catch-all vote of Bush or Dole, he is very firmly placed on the right of the Republican Party. However, the poor lay-out does detract from the site.

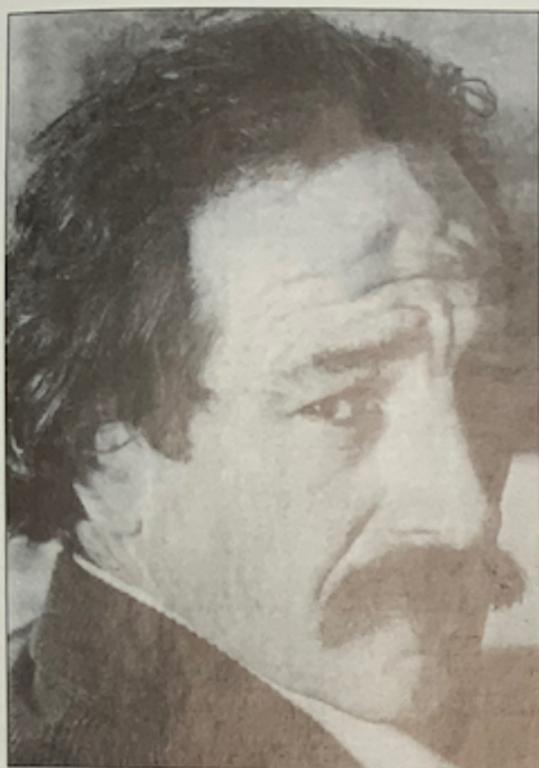
www.quayle.org

Before you ask, the spelling is ok. Danforth Quayle's site is actually very good. It is very user friendly, lots of content (although some of it is dated some speeches go back to 1990). His site also contains a comprehensive series of links to

Republican related sites and to US newspapers (the only site reviewed that has links!)

You can also read reviews of his books (He has written two seemingly). There is also the obligatory profile of his wife and the "Look at how much money I've raised!" section. If you are really bored you can also "get photos of Dan Quayle in action" in his multimedia section.

His issues section (stronger families, less government, lower taxes) is a little on the short side and his approach is not very innovative. Nonetheless this is a better site than you would expect but then again we probably don't expect a lot from Mr. Quayle.



Playing a man whom his contemporary comrade Countess Markevitz once described as having "the heart of a lion, a voice like rolling thunder and the vision of a god", was never going to be easy. The voice alone belonged to one of the most renowned orators the world has ever known and accepted so by friend and foe alike. No matter how experienced an actor one was (and I wasn't when I first played him), one was always going to feel inadequate in the shadow of such a "primeval force". Even though I was lucky enough to have been born with a voice that could adequately project to the back of a theatre and was similar enough in features to him when young i.e. had a moustache. One however knew that ones clarion call would pale into insignificance compared to the powerful big Jim Larkin. So, the job had to be done, with a humility that few historical characters can make you feel and only a fool would not be humble and honoured to have been cast to play such a noble figure. Eventually I played him in dozens of productions of "the non-stop Connolly show", "A Revolutionary Recalls" and "the Risen People" on the Dublin, Belfast and London stage. I am no mystic, but there were quiet moments sometimes in different dressing rooms, just before going on the boards, that one felt his almighty, but benign presence and the pungent odour of his pipe tobacco close by.

I was lucky enough over the years to have received many kind and praising reviews for the portrayal, but when I received the fulsome gratitude of his son Denis, his grandson Jim IV and his great granddaughter Miriam, my fretting heart was settled and secured.

Of course, it has to be said that having writers of the Calibre of Jim Plunkett, John Arden and "himself" to work from, the direction of that other Dublin genius, Jim Sheridan, one would have to be poor indeed, not to have performed fairly with

Larkin About

JER O'LEARY TELLS TILT WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO PLAY JIM LARKIN

the solidarity of such greatness. The mount-optimum moment of all came when I was invited to portray his famous Lock-Out speech on the balcony of Cleary's of O'Connell Street (formerly William Martin Murphy's Imperial Hotel - right under the flag pole where James Connolly directed the Plough and the Stars to be flown in Easter week 1916) right in the actual footsteps of the man himself, where he rallied the people of Dublin on Bloody Sunday 1913 for the inner city 1993 commemoration of the Dublin workers glorious struggle. One is sure that one does not have to relate the eerie profundity of such a moment.

Big Jim it should be recalled, with the enthusiastic support of Connolly and Markevitz and Partridge and all the members of the Red Hand Union were putting on plays in Liberty Hall as early as 1911. After 1916 it took over 50 years before anything similar occurred, to the eternal credit of the late Senator Michael Mullen of Cabra.

It is a "good thing" for the actors of Dublin that bould Big Jim only ever performed once on the boards himself. The auspicious occasion was at the Owens Theatre in Pearse St. when the Abbey was in exile there and he had "requested" from Lady Gregory the right to put on her play "The Rising of the Moon". Larkin's idea was that he being such an innovating ad libber and natural dramatist himself he did not need to learn the script and would "do the natural thing on the

night". One does not have to be a regular theatre goer to image the consternation of the other players on the stage, awaiting their cues, complete and entire anarchy and chaos ensued.

Big Jim of course was great, the rest were decimated. A quite emotional sigh of relief could be heard in actors country when the Big man allowed that once was enough for him on the Dublin stage. They didn't call him Big Jim .. for Nuthin'. Jim was well known at public meetings for slipping out his false teeth in order to perfect an uplifting "almighty roar" to rise us off our knees, but in the heat of the moment of similar during the said play he forgot where he put them and was without them for the rest of the evening, that may have been the moment of his decision not to 'tread the boards again'.

There have been many moments over the years in playing such a magnificent man, but on the first night of the first Jim Sheridan renewal and direction of James Plunkett's "The Risen People, an electrifying night at the Project Arts Centre in 1976, for Big Jim's Centenary Birthday the author and theatre critic, Rosita Sweetman noted: - "just as "Big Jim" finished his Lockout speech and excited stage left (where else would he go), and aged member of the audience (and a veteran of 1913) grabbed me by the arm and said softly - "good on yeh Jem". In that moment tears flowed between us.

For all this Big Jim, many thanks.



Jer O'Leary as Big Jim Larkin in *The Risen People*

Terrible Beauty

BY FRANCIS DEVINE
MAY DAY 1999

They were beating him,
the black man,
on a side street in Dolphin's Barn,
Tuesday afternoon about half three,
they were beating him.

Four young men were kicking him,
not knowing when to stop,
jackals at some other beast's kill,
they were beating him,
a passive, stuffing-less rag doll,
slouches against a grey wall,
offering no resistance,
they were beating him.

As I slowed the car
they stopped, swore at me,
threw things then ran off
shouting back racist abuse,
'Effing nigger lover,
we'll burst yous,
you effing banana man'.

As I helped him stand
I saw he was West African,
Nigerian maybe, a broad face,
two tribal nicks at his temples,
his teeth trembling, oozing blood
as if he had been guzzling cherries.

He clutches his stomach,
stumbled but shook off my hand,
his eyebrows slit like Dick Tiger
somewhere in the fourteenth round.
He said nothing as I suggested assistance,
that I would bring him to James's
that I would bring him home.

They had beaten him
the black man, cold and curious
in Dublin 8, flotsam or jetsam,
in need of a welcome, a smiling face,
in need of the sun, the smell of red earth.

'This a terrible country' he said
and I thought of the 1960s
looking for digs in Brixton
with their printed signs
'No Wogs, No Dogs, No Irish'
I wondered would Nelson
give back his Freedom to a city
that could savagely beat
a man on the street
because he was black,
a vulnerable, wondering stranger,
an easy target.

Is this the terrible beauty
we have reared?

Begrudgers Guide to Conference 1999

**FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO
HAVEN'T ATTENDED A
CONFERENCE BEFORE, OR
FOR THOSE WHO
PARTICIPATED SO
ENTHUSIASTICALLY IN
PREVIOUS ONES THAT
THEY ARE ONLY A BLUR,
TILT HAS PUT TOGETHER
THE FOLLOWING HELPFUL
GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND.**

Conference 1999

Gathering of some of the more interested (and interesting) members of the Labour Party who will spend the weekend talking, drinking and ... well ... talking and drinking.

The PLP

A rarer species than at last conference. Can be a sensitive lot, especially when treated like ordinary mortals by the Chairperson. Doesn't he know how important these people are? You wouldn't get lip like that in Dublin I'll tell you!

General Secretary

Sits beside the Chair and decides who gets to talk, ahem, sorry ... I mean ... ensures the smooth running of conference.

Debate

Unending periods of time that go on all day, in which delegates who wrote motions take their turn to speak about a subject totally unrelated to what the last person said without any risk that someone who disagrees with them will get within an asses roar of a microphone. Debates are also useful for disappearing into when its your round, or to watch the Chair exert his authority over people who ought to know better.

Journalists

Easy to spot at conference weekends, strolling around the place in complete bliss having just had their ass well licked by people who really ought to know better.

Registration

Where you will be glad to hear that your branch hasn't paid a penny to the party since Ruairi Quinn had a comb and that your involvement in the conference will now be confined to reciting poetry in bad Irish in the hotel bar until you cough up (The missing cash). Under no circumstances argue the toss with the people on registration, or you will end up (as they say in the better parts of Finglas) with "your head in a sling."

Candidates

Candidates can make or break a conference, depending on how close votes are getting, or how many people they are up against. As a simple rule of thumb, never agree to vote for anyone after just one pint, and never try to wheedle number shix, hic, out of them (this might arouse the suspicion that your pledge of fealty might be less than truly heartfelt). Any candidate worth their salt will lash drink around them like snuff at a wake so follow the noise and enjoy the democratic process while it lasts (till lunchtime on Saturday only) Thereafter, avoid meeting any more than one of your erstwhile soulmates at the same time, lest one might tell the other what a good and loyal supporter you are.



Elections

Used to be a lot of these, rarer these days than before, for a number of reasons (Don't mention the war) In fact, there hasn't been a keenly fought election since the last Tralee conference (Shhss! Shutupwilya!) Ah yes, what a row that was, who is it was involved in that one oh yes it was (You're fired - Ed.)

Vox-Pops

A process whereby RTE round up all the weirdoes at conference and present their opinions as those of the Labour grassroots. If stopped and asked to do a vox-pop for television please check your fly and turn your glass eye the right way around.

Bedrooms

Place your bags here on Friday night, they will be safe till you come to collect them on Sunday morning.

Leader's Speech

For one hour on Saturday night delegates are asked to be on their best behaviour as the party leader speaks live to the nation. Delegates are asked to restrain their enthusiasm to polite hand clapping and giggly titters where appropriate, none of that "Gwan ya boy ya" guff thank you very much, and no braying like donkeys during Michael D's contribution either, just because it doesn't rhyme doesn't mean its not poetry. And finally, no waving at the folks at home when the cameras look at the audience, if the TV viewers

think we've displaced the Late Late its curtains for all of us.

The Function

The functions at party conference have a chequered history. Some are left to the local organisation to run while others have been nationally choreographed disasters. As a rule, if it sounds dreadful outside, it is dreadful inside. Stay in the bar, eventually someone will start a row and the entertainment value can, on occasion, be of the highest order.

Socialist Party

As you first approach the conference venue what looks like the welcoming committee might well turn out to be a picket, or as the millies (sorry, the Socialist Party) would have it A Mass Picket. This sort of thing should be encouraged as it adds to the excitement of the weekend as the jovial banter flies too and frow: Sell Out Bastards! Capitalist Fellow Travellers! No Water Charges! versus Howaya Joe! Howis it going Kevin! Donit worry lads it'll piss rain any minute!

Union Delegations

Gangs of middle-aged, large-girthed men who hang around conference centre corners sucking on butts, spitting, swearing, and scaring young middle-class types who joined the party to support the liberal agenda. These comrades are to be admired, after all, they've managed to get paid to be here!

Key Figures at Conference

Party Leader

Baldy chap with a beard. By all accounts a great man to buy pints!

Deputy Leader

Looks a lot bigger on telly. Will definitely not be outdone by yer man from Sandymount on the pints front.

Billy Attlee

Looks like the guy on the telly with the cigar, but a bit shiftier. Buy you a pint? He will in his b****x! He knows he'll never be Party Leader.

Conference Wildlife

DROOPIER'S CONFERENCE PROFILES

Conference time again! For Droopier, conference is all about rediscovering what the Labour Party is all about and as the old Party election slogan went: **People Matter Most**. Here is Droopier's guide to the people you'll meet in Tralee.

The PLP Member

How to recognise it: Definitely wearing a suit. Aloof demeanour. Megalomania. Paranoia. Delusional.

Where it's found: TDs and senators are usually found asleep ... sorry, listening intently ... on the platform or frantically trying to remember the name of the delegate they're talking to while looking around for someone more important.

Distinguishing characteristics: An ability to reduce subtle and complex debate to mindless 'let me be quite clear about this' drivel and anecdotes about constituents.

The Rural Delegate

How to recognise it: Ill-fitting shiny, navy suit and hundred-year-old brown shoes.

Where it's found: Standing in groups outside the conference hall talking in unusual gutteral dialect of pidgin.

Distinguishing characteristics: Complete disinterest in national politics.

The Dublin Delegate

How to recognise it: 'Cosmopolitan' slacks, and shirt with animal insignia on breast pocket. Irish Times. Attitude of unbearable superiority.

Where it's found: Walking around like it owned the place.

Distinguishing characteristics: Committed belief that rural Ireland should be privatised

The Conference Virgin

How to recognise it: Easily recognised by jumper,

earnest expression and a vast folder.

Where it's found: Can be difficult to spot. Conference first-timers spend most of their time at the debates so you can only spot them in the crowd at the end of each session.

Distinguishing characteristics: Sincere belief that motions passed at conference have an impact on party policy.

The Labour Youth

How to recognise it: About 20 years younger than anyone else: wearing some piece of imitation military apparel. Formerly this was PLO scarves and combat jackets now replaced by combat trousers.

Where it's found: Behind a stand it has been asked to mind 'for a few minutes' or giving a passionate oration from the platform on the plight of indigenous people on the Kamchatka peninsula to a quarter-full conference hall.

Distinguishing characteristics: Vast capacity for alcohol bought by someone else.

The Labour Lady

How to recognise it: Handbag and new outfit bought especially for the weekend.

Where it's found: Enjoying a daredevil gin and tonic before the leader's speech.

Distinguishing characteristics: 'Isn't it great to see all the young people.' 'Dick Spring looks very smart.' Groupie-like desire to meet TDs.

The Labour Lad

How to recognise it: Carrying four pints of Guinness across a crowded bar. Cigarette in mouth. Thick wad of delegate cards in back pocket.

Where it's found: Arguing that the large, bearded Australian is in fact Nuala Ni Lunasa of the Ballyfay

branch. The Bar. Shepherding herds of wide-eyed delegates and drunks down for the elections

Distinguishing characteristics: Knows everyone at conference. Stunning powers of mental arithmetic when it comes to elections, delegate/national collection/registration fees and the price of a round.

The Labour Bore

How to recognise it: V-neck jumper or tweed sports jacket and tie.

Where it's found: Gathered in groups regaling anyone who'll listen with tales of derring-do at conferences past and telling embarrassing stories about people who are now respectable in the party.

Distinguishing characteristics: Sad sense of resignation that the old days were so much better.

The Spin Doctor

How to recognise it: Looks like a secret service agent.

Where it's found: Walking at high speed through the hotel, mobile phone clamped tightly to ear. Desperately trying to stop journalists talking to delegates.

Distinguishing characteristics: Withering contempt for party members.

The Journalist

How to recognise it: Virtually any pompous git you meet at conference could be a journalist.

Where it's found: Holed up in the lair provided for it by the party (press room). Walking around, slyly trying to see how many people recognise it.

Distinguishing characteristics: Sure and certain knowledge that if it talks to all the other journalists there, they'll definitely know what's going on in the Labour Party.

Tom Johnson Summer School

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Book Review

THE IRISH AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936-1939
BY ROBERT STRADLING, MANCHESTER, 1999

The Irish dimension of the Spanish Civil War is the subject of Robert Stradling's new book. It is often forgotten how deep an impact the war in Spain made on Irish political life, if only for a short period.

Public opinion in the Free State was overwhelmingly Pro-Franco, and thousands attended rallies organised by groups such as the Irish Christian Front. Both the Catholic Church and the Irish Independent newspaper played a major role in mobilising a frenzied atmosphere, in which discussion of the rights and wrongs of the conflict in Spain was drowned out in hysteria over alleged atrocities committed by the 'Reds' against Spanish nuns and priests. However, despite strong rank and file pressure to support Franco, the Fianna Fail government adopted the Non-Intervention of France and Britain.

The emotions aroused over Spain caused major problems for the Labour Party and the Trade Union

Movement. Michael Keyes, the Party's Vice-Chairman, spoke at Irish Christian Front rallies. An attempt to raise an anti-Fascist Motion at the 1938 Labour Party Conference was heavily defeated, with several Labour T.D.'s declaring themselves Catholics first, and politicians second.

A forthcoming book, 'The Spanish Civil War and Ireland' will look closely at the Impact of the Conflict on Irish politics. Robert Stradling's book, however, deals mainly with the story of the Irishmen whose beliefs took them to fight on opposite sides in Spain. Many on the Left will be familiar with the Socialists and Republicans who joined the International Brigades, under Frank Ryan. But Stradling is keen to tell the story of their opponents, believing they have been neglected by historians until now. He points out that many of Eoin O'Duffy's Brigade were not Blueshirts, and that defence of religion, rather than support of Fascism was their major motivating factor. This is a valid point, and

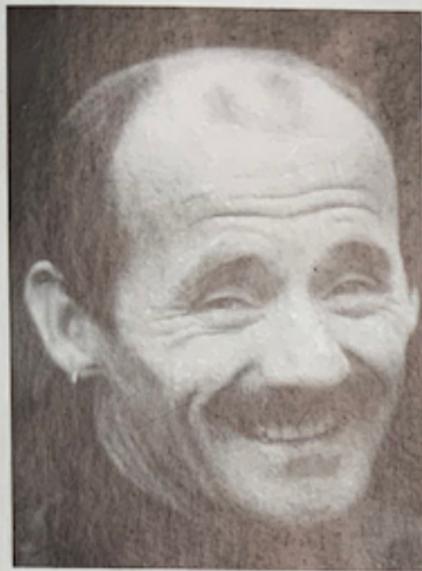
certainly many of these young men could not be described as Fascists. However, it must be remembered that they were aiding Fascism, however unwittingly.

In his quest for balance, Stradling goes as far as to claim that both O'Duffy and Frank Ryan supported Nazi Germany during the Second world War. In Ryan's case this is simply untrue, and the complicated path that led him to war time Dresden is not explained by Stradling. It is also important to remember that while O'Duffy's Volunteers landed as heroes, the Irish International Brigaders were subject to vilification and harassment.

Nevertheless this book contains much of value for anyone interested in both Ireland and Spain in the 1930's and will help enlighten a new generation about the radical strands in Irish political life in this decade.

Brain Hanley

IF I RULED THE WORLD...



BRENDAN O'CARROLL, IRELAND'S LEADING COMEDIAN AND COMIC PLAYWRIGHT, GIVES HIS VIEWS ON HOW HE'D SORT OUT THE COUNTRY.

1. What would your campaign slogan be?

It is my belief that those living in disadvantaged areas believe that the supposed "Celtic Tiger" is a positive thing, however I am also of the opinion that these same people perceive socialists representatives of these areas to be in a time warp, and not connected to the wealth that seems to be flooding the country. As someone from a similar background as these people that has battled hard for my share. I would like to portray my campaign as that of someone who will go to battle with the "Fat Cats" for their share of the pie, with confidence and a smile on my face. So my slogan would probably be something like, "Fighting for YOUR share".

2. How would you fund your campaign?

It is most likely that I'd be running as an independent, so it would come from my personal coffers. I have a good team around me and through my work have already established a name and personal recognition, so I expect to keep the budget low.

3. Who would be your role model?

My mother Maureen O'Carroll. Labour TD in the 50's.

4. Who would you be willing to go into coalition with?

Unless the balance of power were dependant on it I would not go into coalition. However, if it were, then I would deal with whoever wanted the power the most. For in the lust for power they will give anything, even the very power that they seek.

5. Who would be in your cabinet?

Impossible to speculate as an independent, however if I had the pick of talent across the board I think any cabinet would be blessed with the inclusion of those with the talents of: Prionsias De Rossa, Liz Mcmanus, Bertie Aherne, Liz O'Donnell, Brendan Howlin, Jan O'Sullivan, Alan Dukes, Dick Spring and David Norris.

6. Who'd be your spin doctor?

Rory Cowan. He has been with me since I began and before me was with Tina Turner, Shirley Bassey, Cliff Richard. He is the best of the best and knows nothing about politics, a distinct advantage.

7. What issues would concern you most and what would you do about them?

This article would not be the place for specific issues, however the overall retaking of power for the electorate, the removal of the control of their lives by unelected bodies such as banks, judiciary, supposedly independent boards set up by government etc. "wherever there is injustice..." and all that.

8. Is there anything currently illegal that you would legalise?

No.

9. What would you outlaw?

I would remove the licence to sell tobacco from any place that will not allow you to smoke i.e. Airports, Airlines (on board) etc...

10. Where would you bring a visiting head of state if you went out on the town?

It would depend on the person, i.e. Bill Clinton, Leeson St. or Yelstin a tour of Irish Distillers (and pick him up later).

11. What Would You Dislike Most About Being A Politician?

Nothing I can think of, probably having to wear a suit in the House.

12. "Hello" magazine offer you £20,000 for a photo-shoot at home with your family, would you accept?

No. Too late.

13. How would you handle the army deafness claims?

Exactly as they are being handled right now.

14. A very high paying job becomes available in Europe, would you jump ship and take it?

No. I have no interest in doing a job which I know other people can do ten times better.

15. What would you call your political memoirs?

"Who threw that?"

16. Who'd play you in the film?

Charlie Chaplin.

17. Finally, would you enter politics if the opportunity arose?

Without any doubt.

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