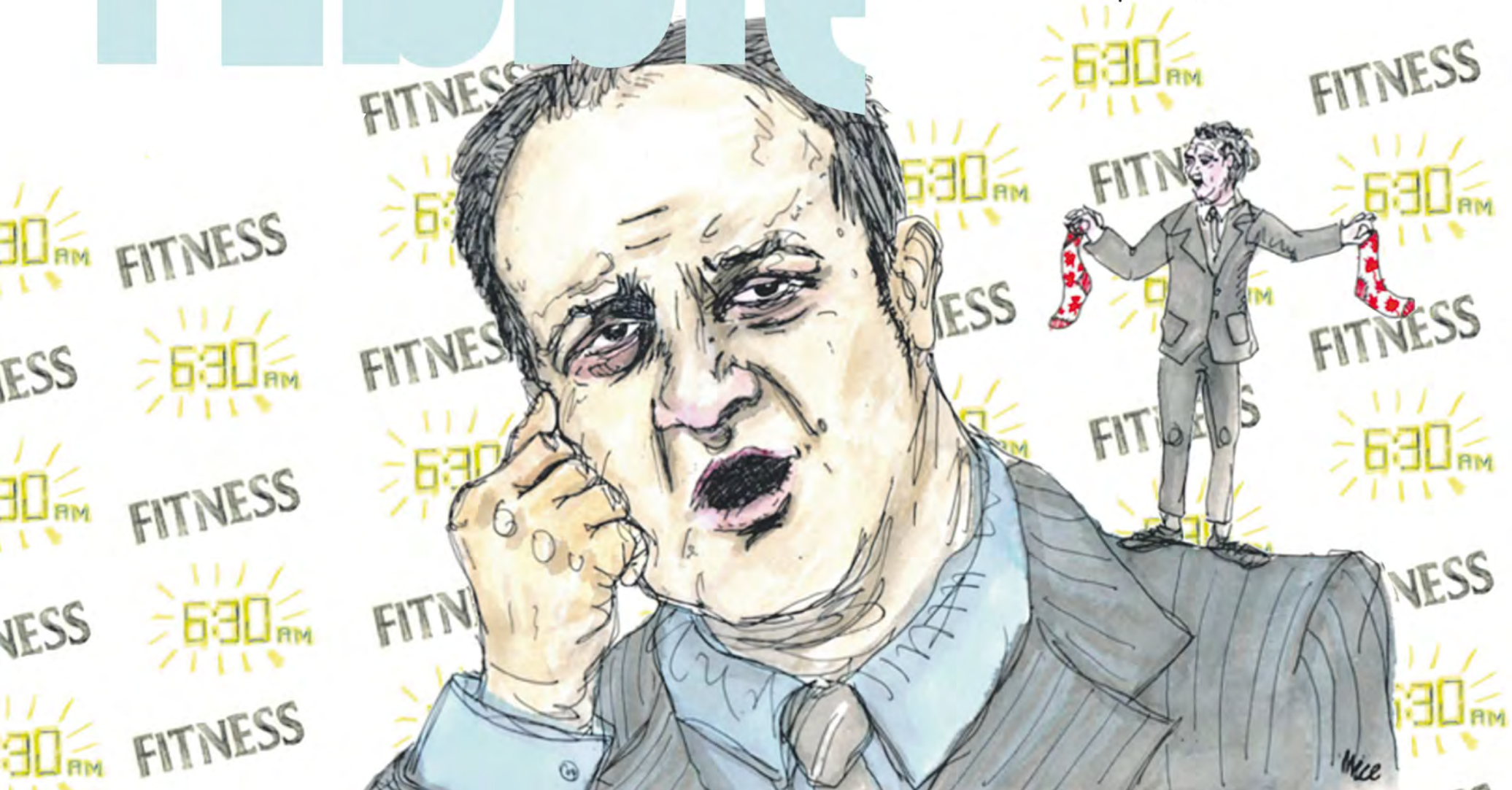


rabble

we are rabble
we sleep in



WHAT BATTLES
LIE ON THE
HORIZON FOR
CHOICE AFTER
REPEAL?

INSIDE

The Nardai

Turns out it's far more
than just a few bad
apples...

Dispossession

A new doc looks at how
the UK is ransacking its
social housing stock...

Dublin Bus

Find out how routes
are being pawned off to
mega-corps...

Interviews

More shite talk than your
average smoking area...



Orts

*Jesse Jones talks about hidden
histories of dissent...*

Comics

*Harry Hangover stumbles upon
the tech sector's darkest secret...*

HIV

*As a new crisis breaks, the state
fails to respond again...*

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A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE LAST BUMPER ISSUE. WE'VE A NEW TAOISEACH, WE LOST A GARDA COMMISSIONER AND OUR CITY IS BEING SAVAGED BY VULTURE FUNDS.

So, in true rabble fashion we've been sharpening our knives, even our pencils and honing missives about the state of the gombeen nation.

We honestly thought we'd have this issue out over a month ago. It just shows how overwhelming it can be to pull it all together. There's a whole team of cats that need herding into the bag. So, we get left sat here bleeding out of our eyeballs chasing content. At this stage, we've taken in enough blue light from our computer screens to send our cortisol levels to the moon for the rest of our lives. But when it all comes together, it's worth it. Isn't it? Please say yes!

Now a generation of us look on agas as insatiable landlords crack tenants open and suck the life out of their skulls. There's a real blood thirst out there. Property porn everywhere and cranes reaching for the moon. Yet the homeless are left to die on the streets while the chief housing advisor claims that our homeless rates are normal and that we shouldn't be overly concerned. We've reached the European standard. Is that a hint of pride in his voice?

Builds of new social housing have reached an all time low, while Eoghan Murphy and his Department of Housing predecessor Simon Coveney use wormy words. Describing the money being thrown at private landlords as a social housing "solution" and setting up storage units for homeless families. Jaysus, the shite they feed us.

Not surprising so, this issue is jammers with stuff on housing, that most basic

of needs. Patrick McCusker breaks down what the budget for next year has in store for housing and why it's going to be more of the same. While Sean Finnan looks at increased vulture fund activity in the realm of private mortgages where homeowners in arrears are coming face to face with the beast of private equity. He talks to those looking to help them in their struggle and what can be done to limit their activity.

Vulture funds may be sharpening their beaks and sucking the marrow out of our city with their ever increasing rents, but stuff keeps happening, folks keep kicking against the pricks. So, rabble goes underground and checks the pulse of the subterranean blues, looking at the recent increase in HIV diagnoses for instance.

After the recent Jobstown debacle, with one Superintendent after another reading the government's script before video evidence left them wiping egg off their face, we felt it was time to delve into scandals in the force. We wonder if anything can ever change in a culture of secrets and lies. Is it a few rotten apples or one festered orchard?

While Varadkar splashes out five million for his new communications department, to make sure all of his little thicks in office can keep their shit eating smiles stuck to their faces no matter what they spew, we keep battering down the hatches on whatever pennies our subscribers post us on Patreon.

Supporting us on Patreon keeps us with an office over our heads, and covers the costs of print and distribution. Without it, we'd be dead ducks. Who knows one day we may get our hands on some of that sweet €13 billion from Apple. Until then we are down with using our meagre resources to ring the bell loud and holler about the rotten and shady deals on our fair isle. There's enough crap here to make the Panama papers blush. #ParadisePapers? Just you wait for the Hiberno Dossier.

We're 14 issues deep into this now. It'd be a real shame to have to wrap things up because we ran over a fiscal cliff that was easily avoided through crowd-funding and your support. So, c'mon folks - make the leap. Support our Patreon.

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Army Council For this issue: Jim Gallagher, James Redmond, Martin Leen and Sean Finnan.

Words: Benny Profane, Caitriona Devery, Cathy Flynn, Dan Lambert, Darragh Lynch, Donal Fallon, Eileen Walsh, Gemma Hyland, Harry Sal Lacey, Jim Gallagher, Kev Squires, Kyle Mulholland, Martin Leen, Patrick McCusker, Paul Dillon, Paul Tarpey, Rashers Tierney, Sam Noonan, Sean Finnan, Shane Fitzgerald and Simone Hares.

Illustration: Brian Burke, Ciaran Kelly, Holly Pereira, Paddy Lynch, Sarah Devereux, Thomas McCarthy and Will St Leger.

Photography: Cathy Flynn, Denis Travers, Eoin Madsen, Off Beat Photography, Tom Beary, Tonie Walsh, Wally Cassidy and William Brawley.

Layout Lackies: It's grand, we use robots now. Forward to automated luxury communism.

Distro Fairies: Ye know who ye are. Cheers one and all.

Copuediting/Proofing: Patrick McCusker, Tomas Lynch, Jamie Goldrick, Paul Dillon and that Sham lad.



{EYE}

An Obsession With Borders

Kate Nolan's latest project LACUNA has just finished a month and a half run in the Gallery of Photography. She says of the project, "It was only 2 years ago when I was trying to formulate the concept for LACUNA that I realised my intrigue with borders and in-between spaces. This is why there needs to be space to reflect, so you open yourself up to understanding the key themes that connects your work and will support you for conceiving your next work." The photographer first became interested in documentary photography after coming across Jim Goldberg's Raised by Wolves. "It was my first realisation of the power of photography and the narratives you could create through combining images. Also the dedication of the photographer to work on the project over 10yrs." As well as practising the artform, Kate also teaches photography classes. So, any advice for budding photographers? "Think what you are trying to say with your photography. What is the question you're trying to answer. Photography can be aesthetically pleasing but it needs a purpose."

Check out katenolan.ie for more of her work

HIGHLIGHTS

p7. A few bad apples our hole! Here's a run down of some scandals that might have fallen into the pit of collective amnesia...

p8. Niall McCann is making a name for himself as a documentary maker on the orts under neo-liberalism...

p10. Naive Ted sat down for a chat about his outsider hip hop and the Limerick buzz...

p12. Ireland's sound system culture is keeping the dances pumping...

p18. Richard Barbrook shares some tips on how to hack an election...

p20. Our new supreme ruler Leo gets dragged over the coals...

p24. So what happens after Repeal? Campaigners talk about future obstacles to choice...

p40. Record numbers of people are being diagnosed with HIV. The government is doing SFA...



Gombeen #14

WHO IS THE REGIME'S REGINA? A BLUESHIRT POLITICIAN, A LANDLORD, AND A FAILED EN-TRA-PRA-NURE - SHE COULDN'T BE MORE THE ELITE'S OWN IF SHE TWEETED WHERE SHE WAS WHEN PRINCESS DIANA DIED IN A WEEK WHEN THREE HOMELESS PEOPLE DIED ON THE STREETS.

Her failed consultancy firm Enhance Solutions didn't keep its books in proper order - a criminal offence in itself. When it went into liquidation it owed over 100k to Revenue and state-owned AIB.

Doherty had also previously broken company rules by taking a disproportionate personal loan out from the company, though that has since been repaid.

Naturally, people questioned whether something untoward was going on. A year later, someone who publicly questioned Doherty about it on social media faced questioning by the Gardaí upon arriving back at Dublin Airport. That Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said the Gardaí do not intervene in personal or civil affairs didn't really inspire much confidence, because that appears to be exactly what happened.

During the summer she managed to let the cat out of the bag about the government's creep towards National ID cards. "Mandatory, not compulsory" were the regime-replicant's now-infamously chosen words - even though there is no legal basis that could make them mandatory. Rules, in Regina's book, are evidently just for the little people.



ABOUTUS.

rabble is a non-profit newspaper from the city's underground. It's collectively and independently run by volunteers. rabble aims to create a space for the passionate telling of truth, muck-raking journalism and well aimed pot-shots at illegitimate authority.

Ask us out at www.rabble.ie



Another Out Post Gone

THIS TINY HEXAGONAL KIOSK OUT IN BALLSBRIDGE JUST 37 SQUARE FEET, IS ABOUT THE SIZE OF A BATHROOM IN A SMALL GAFF. IT MAY BE ONE OF DUBLIN'S SMALLEST BUILDINGS, BUT AS DAN LAMBERT FINDS OUT IT TELLS A TERRIBLE TALE ABOUT WHERE OUR CITY IS GOING.

On the outside it's undeniably pretty. Sitting neatly on a grassy island surrounded by busy roads and towering brutalist 1970s tower blocks. The tiny hexagon of the kiosk is overlooked by another much larger structure, the grim 8 stories tall Carisbrook House office block, built in 1967.

The original Carisbrook House was an imposing Victorian terrace. The terrace was significant in the famed Battle of Mount Street Bridge in 1916, where almost half of the total British casualties in the rising took place. The British 5th and 6th battalions, as well as the Sherwood Foresters, met their first resistance here as four volunteers engaged them from positions in Carisbrook, although it was overrun quickly in the fight. Today the Israeli flag flies outside the building. Their embassy occupies the fifth floor of the tower.

The grassy island, upon which the kiosk sits, was used by the nearby Pembroke Fire Brigade Station on Merrion Road up until 1920. They stored an assortment of wheeled ladders there, which could be rolled out quickly in case of fire in the surrounding area. The kiosk itself was erected in 1920 and its designer and builders are unknown despite the efforts of local historical societies.

For much of its life it was a tiny newsagents, serving the local area and benefitting from the passengers of the number 8 tram, which ran from Nelsons Pillar to Castle Street in Dalkey, passing promptly every 8 minutes until the line's closure in July 1949. The kiosk became commonly known, as Moran's Kiosk, after one of the operators of the newsagents who we can assume was a memorable head.

Fast-forward exactly 40 years to the tram's final days, and in 1989, the teeny structure makes national headlines when developer Phil Monahan paid an obscene 132,000 pounds for it, making it the most expensive piece of property in Irish history by size. Its tale from this point onwards becomes one of capitalism and greed, based firmly in whatever financial value can be derived from it. So here goes.

In 1999 in the depths of the economic orgy that destroyed the nation, it was put up for sale once again, this time for

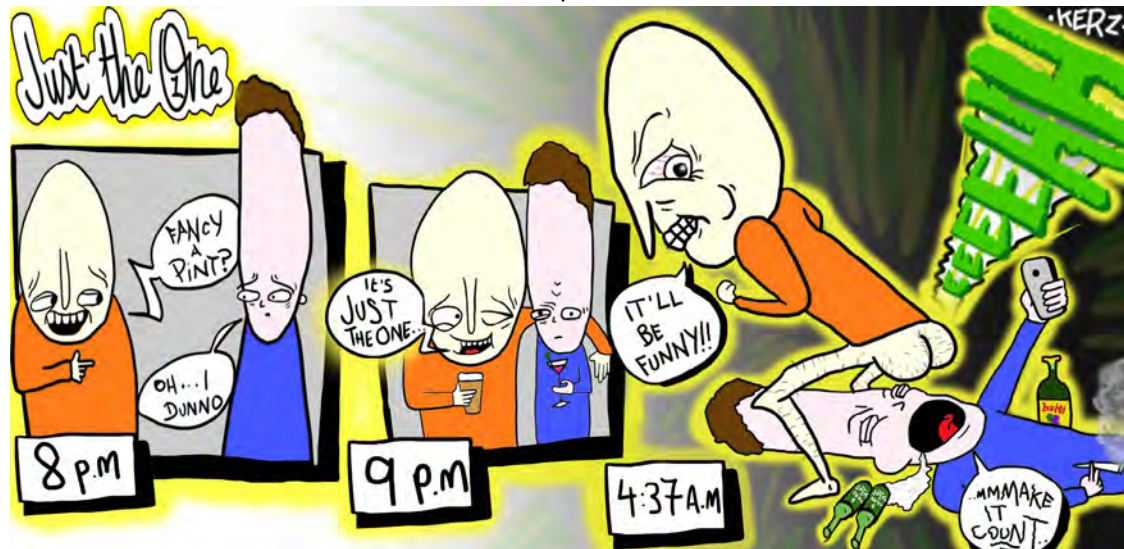
250,000 pounds although it failed to sell. At this time, and since 1996, it was operating as an O'Briens Sandwich Bar, a poster brand for the excess of these years. O'Briens, set up by former Fine Gael candidate Brody Sweeney, went into liquidation in 2009. The little kiosk then sat empty for some time until Brian Kenny, a native of Finglas and one-man coffee roaster began leasing it in 2012.

"To say it was in a state of disrepair would be a compliment," said Brian when we met up to chat. Brian roasted the coffee, manned the kiosk alone, and worked 6 days a week crossing the Liffey and back each morning slowly building something special and bringing a real sense of community back to the area. The kiosk, like in the days of Morans, all those years before was independent, community based, and became a hub of conversation and interaction on the grassy island. A sense of local had prevailed once more.

In 2015 however, a private investor once more swooped on the tiny building, it was sold for €235,000 and Brian had a new landlord. He sought to extend his lease to give himself some security but when this was refused he "had a bad feeling the game was up". This sadly proved to be true, the private investor sold the kiosk earlier this year for €330,000 to Colum and Ciaran Butler aka the Starbucks operation in Ireland. Brian's memory of it being swept from under him is not a positive one. A private investor told him before selling it to Starbucks that "negotiations have closed and you're not part of them".

There are now 52 Starbucks in Dublin City, they've often taken over a litany of other historic buildings; the old Bewley's building on Westmoreland St, Crown Alley in Temple Bar, and recently the Avalon House Hostel on Aungier St, formerly the independent Bald Barista.

They are repeating this across the country and often flout planning regulations, as seen in the Queen Anne Building in Cork, their store on Drury Street and out in Howth too. As for Brian, he got turfed out on March 31st, all his hard work swept aside for the mega-corp to claim this tiny building as its smallest outpost in its war against the city's independent coffee shops.



A QUICKIE WITH...

IF YOU THOUGHT IRELAND HAD POXY RESTRICTIONS WHEN IT CAME TO DANCING, WAIT TIL YOU HEAR ABOUT NEW YORK'S CABARET LAWS. MUCH LIKE OUR OWN 1935 DANCEHALL ACT THEY WERE FORGED AMIDST A RACIAL FEAR OF JAZZ. WHILE WE'RE STUCK WITH THAT PIECE OF SHIT LEGISLATION, NEW YORKERS HAVE REASON TO REJOICE. THEY JUST GOT RID OF THEIR ARCHAIC RESTRICTIONS. RASHERS TIERNEY CHATTED TO JOHN BARCLAY, AN ORGANIZER WITH THE DANCE LIBERATION NETWORK.



Can you give me a bit of background on the law itself, like what was happening in New York at the time it was brought in, who was behind it and how come it managed to linger on in the background until now?

It was enacted in 1926 during Prohibition amidst the Jazz Age and the Harlem Renaissance. White kids were getting into Black music for the first time and the old, mean white people in charge of the city were not feeling it. The city instituted the Cabaret Laws, take note of the "s", it was a number of regulations, as a way of controlling this phenomenon. The No Dancing Law was bundled with a Cabaret Card system and the Three Musician Rule, which almost entirely forbid jazz arrangements.

The law remains because NYC government has fought very hard, with all their resources for 91 years. A century's worth of evidence of blatant racism and homophobia has not yet been enough to embarrass them into letting go.

I read about the emergence of "lounges" – venues that would play dance music but restrict people to sitting around, chilling in the 1990s after the headiness of the 1980s and during Giuliani's crackdown – did people internalise the law, like take it on and self-police on nights out?

There has never been a moment when New Yorkers stopped dancing. The cops can start jailing us and staging public executions but we will never, ever stop dancing. What happened post-Giuliani is the dance scene split and gravitated towards two poles. On one hand you had bottle service clubs, catering to wealthy white people and tourists. They were generally left alone as they had political and financial insulation from the laws.

On the other hand you have queer communities, people of color, and just general NYC subculture: They went underground. Warehouse raves. Rogue DIY spaces. This dichotomy still exists: Rich people dance in the wide open, everyone else is treated like outlaws. Because of that NYC has, without a doubt, the most thriving warehouse rave scene in the world.

Did people organise to get around the Cabaret Laws? I'm thinking of private member clubs, underground venues and word of mouth culture. Did the laws have an adverse effect of encouraging these to develop?

There are a million tricks that New Yorkers use to try to skirt this stupid law but I cannot reveal any because we still use them and it's possible the cops are reading this. I can promise you they are absurd.

The campaign is pretty heavy in terms of labelling the law racist, can put this in context maybe. Like how is it used to target particular communities over others? Is this deliberate or is it just a function of structural racism?

While the city has admitted to the racist origins of the law, they have yet to apologize for its explicitly racist enforcement today. Between Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and The Bronx there has only been one Cabaret Conviction of a White establishment in over a year.

Almost all of the convictions go to non-white immigrant venues, mostly Afro-Caribbean and Latino. Non-white venue operators live in constant paranoia while white gentrified neighborhoods like Williamsburg host huge Dance Festivals in the wide open.

Seems deliberate to me but who knows.

Get inspired about how these backwards laws were defeated recently over at www.danceliberationnetwork.com. Time for our own Dancehall Act to go too!

Word on the boreens is that a lad called John Byrne is putting together a compilation of lost Irish groove classics. We heard about it on Colm K’s radio show. He’s a

soul, disco and house don dadda and selector most high on London’s NTS. Colm says to expect “genres we don’t really associate with music from 70s and 80s Ireland but

the records are out there.” You’ll hear about it via All City on the interwebz.



COMMEMORATION OF THE RISING
THE DIRT BIRD
instagram.com/thedirtbird

LYING SEAGULLS
CHEAT US ALL



LAST YEAR WE SAVED
GAZILLIONS THROUGH
CONTROL AND
ANTI-FRAUD ACTIVITY

IF YOU THINK A SEAGULL
IS CLAIMING THE DOLE
DISGUISED AS A PERSON
THEN REPORT IT.

DO NOT HESITATE!



An Roinn Spin agus Magairlí
Department of Spin and Distraction



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES HAVE BECOME SOMETHING OF A SPEAKERS’ CORNER FOR ALL SORTS OF JIBBERING ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT BOO HA. THIS IS OUR LITTLE ATTEMPT AT HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE GREAT AND GOOD, THE WHIMSICAL AND DOWNRIGHT HILARIOUS SHITE YOU LOT POST.

On Ireland’s housing shortage.

“First of all, stop assuming it’s a crisis. It’s not. It’s policy. Thinking it’s a crisis lets those responsible off the hook. Once you click to that mode of thinking then you know who is to blame.”

- Kevin Mahon

On that tipi out in in North Strand advertised on Airbnb...

“I really, really, REALLY, want this to be some kind of satire..”

- Peter Drennan

On Ireland’s biggest landlord and Vulture fund Ires Reit introducing a double deposit.

“Dublin is now like Sweden without the socialism and human rights.”

- Aindriu Purfieldon

On greyhounds getting doped up on gak.

“Dogs taking the devil’s dandruff? Another sign that the Celtic Tiger back in full flow”

- Philip Oh

On the Nardai’s breathalyser hoo-ha.

“It must have taken their breath(alyser) away.”

-Philip Oh

On Eoghan Murphy’s shoebox sized perma-hostels for young professionals nonsense.

“Because private space is soon to be classed as a luxury by our fascist leaders”

-Niamh O’Galvin

On the Irish Times recently discovering Cabra.

“Well when you don’t build social housing as a means of giving assets to the poor, then you make the existing housing stock of the poor an asset to be ripped away by gentrification and rent rises.”

-Hugo Fitzpatrick

On George Hook being told to go sling it

“Most normal employers would take a dim view of an employee who is repeatedly misogynistic, islamophobic, anti-migrant/refugee especially if other employees make a strong complaint against the person. They only put up with his garbage for so long because of the ad revenue he brought in. That was being threatened so they decided to act.”

- Simon O Rafferty

On the Secret RTE Producer shenanigans.

“Got me through the afternoon this work. The scandal.”

- Cathy Flynn

On the impeachment of former UCD SU President Katie Ascough.

“All this from woman who ran a campaign promising her personal beliefs wouldn’t interfere with her duties as an SU President, but who, within weeks and against the advice of her fellow officers and her students, sought unilateral legal advice to justify her own ideological driven censorship of information that has been disseminated without incidence many times, using a lot of money paid to the union from student fees to do so, in order to *protect* the union from a legal challenge of the sort only her own parents and their strange little group would have the funds and motivation to pursue... Uh huh.”

- James Doyle

On Bono’s distressing discovery to find his name in the Paradise Papers

“It will be all right, he’ll go into ‘therapy’ or ‘seek treatment’, disappear up his own hole for a few months and will be back pontificating.”

- Con Kennedy



Landlord Pricks



Six out of nineteen cabinet minister and another five government TDs are landlords. The biggest recorded landlord in the Dáil is Kerry Deputy Michael Healy Rae, who owns

two farmhouses rented out and a rental property in his home village of Kilgarvan.He also has a rental apartment at Killarney, houses rented out in Kenmare, Castleisland and Killarney, and

student accommodation in Limerick. And you wonder why regulation in this sector is so slow.



AN ARCHITECT TO REMEMBER

HERBERT SIMS

THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN IRELAND IS, IN MANY WAYS, A HISTORY OF FAILURE. DONAL FALLON TAKES US FOR A TRIP IN HIS DE LOREON AND INTRODUCES US TO CHAMPION OF SOCIAL HOUSING WHO DESIGNED BEAUTIFUL EUROPEAN ART DECO BUILDINGS FOR THE CITY THAT STILL STAND OUT AS VISIONARY MODELS TODAY.

While much has changed in recent decades, some things haven’t – there is nothing new about some of the discourse, depicting workers as overfed and underworked. If anything would surprise Dubliners of old about the current dispute, it is perhaps the fact there are tramlines at all.

Regarded as a legacy of British rule, slumdom still defined much of the heart of inner-city Dublin in the decades following independence. When the Fianna Fáil aligned Irish Press newspaper launched their important investigative series into the conditions of tenement Dublin in the 1930s, it was British imperialism and not local landlord greed which took the blame.

This over simplification of the past ignored figures like Alderman Joseph Meade, a Dublin Corporation councillor and Lord Mayor of the city, who played no small part in the subdivision of Henrietta Street homes into tenements in the late nineteenth century.

The failure of Dublin Corporation to tackle the tenement crisis was influenced at least in part by the fact many councillors were themselves slum landlords. Just as the Dáil today is home to a staggering number of landlords, the political class in the early twentieth century could also be found fumbling in the greasy till. A housing report in 1913 shocked Dubliners, by revealing how three councillors (all so-called nationalists) owned sixty-one tenements and second-class houses between them.

While the first Free State housing schemes in Dublin at Marino are deserving of study and represented progress, it was really the 1930’s which brought about the beginning of a real war on the slums. Cumann na nGaedheal’s Housing Act, introduced in 1924, had championed the middle classes who could afford affluent suburbia. Between 1923 and 1931, fewer than two thousand houses were built annually with State financial assistance, a contribution that was akin to pissing into Hell to lower the temperature with regards the housing crisis.

The Fianna Fáil party had made the slums an election issue in 1932, and rode into power on a wave of working class support. The idea of Fianna Fáil as something of a socially democratic party may surprise readers today, but this was a party with a leader (Dev none the less) who promised to make “the resources and wealth of Ireland ... subservient to the needs and welfare of the people.”

The tenements frightened the powers that be. In 1936, one Archbishop made the pages of the national press with his sensationalist claim that “slums could be called the breeding grounds of potential Communists. The fact that they are not producing

the natural destructive effects of typical Communism is to be attributed, in my mind, to the fundamental Christian virtues of faith, charity and humility.” Horace O’Neill, the City Architect, went as far as to tell a 1935 meeting of the Old Dublin Society that “slums are barbarous. If I born and lived in a slum and unemployed, I would be a revolutionist.”

No figure emerges from the tale of the 1930s as heroically as Herbert Simms, Dublin’s Housing Architect from 1932. Simms championed good quality public housing in the city, drawing his influences from the continent.

Today, beautiful art deco housing schemes dot the city on both sides of the Liffey, standing testament to the vision of a man who tragically took his own life eighty years ago next year. Overworked and under-appreciated, it is only in recent times that Simms has emerged once more, championed by housing campaigners and historians as an example to emulate.

Simms, a Londoner, entered the service of Dublin Corporation in 1925, a young veteran of the First World War. A scholarship

allowed him to study architecture at Liverpool University, and from the beginning his interests were focused on public housing. Achieving the rank of Housing Architect in 1932, he told one meeting that “they were now trying to do in one generation what should have been done by the last four or five generations.”

Architect Ciarán Cuffe has said of Simms that “his buildings were innovative, and well built. He had an eye for detail and a strong understanding of what was happening elsewhere in Europe.” In particular, Simms looked to the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, which were visited by Dublin Corporation employees eager to learn from public housing there.

What Simms gave us, best encapsulated by the Chancery Park housing scheme behind the Four Courts, was very much in the beautiful Art Deco style of those cities. He believed that “flats should last at least 200 years...providing they were properly maintained.” How much of Celtic Tiger era Dublin apartments will survive two centuries?

Of course, some argued this was not enough. Rather than building small housing schemes in the city, we needed to look more towards suburbanisation. While schemes like Cabra and Crumlin did alleviate some of the problems of the tenement city, they also alienated many, leading Brendan Behan to quip that there was no such thing as suburbia, only Siberia.

Poorly served suburbs lacking amenities were not the way forward. Speaking in 1935, Simms outlined his belief that “you cannot re-house a population of 15,000 people, as in the Crumlin scheme, without providing for the other necessities and amenities of life.’ Subsequent decades would prove this true.

In September 1948, Herbert Simms took his own life. He left behind him a suicide note claiming that exhaustion had pushed him past the brink of sanity. Ernest Taylor, the City Surveyor, paid tribute to Simms, by writing that “by sheer hard work and conscientious devotion to duty, he has made a personal contribution towards the solution of Dublin’s housing problem, probably unequalled by anyone in our time.”

On the same day they reported the death of Simms, the Irish Press carried news of a three year old boy who had died of scarlet fever in the tenement home of his family home, as “there was no room for him in a hospital.”



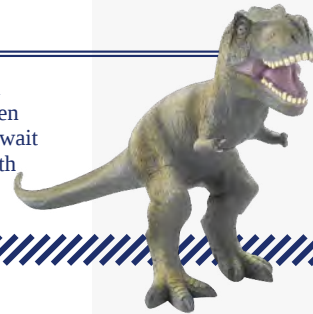


The dinosaurs are coming

Confirming their status as Ireland's most backward and anti-women party, Fianna Fail delegates doubled down and voted in their droves to oppose a mo-

tion in favour of supporting the repeal movement, and in favour a motion supporting the movement to maintain the eighth. They are pulling all sorts of delaying

tactics at the committee. Ruth Coppinger told it like it is when she said "why should society wait for Fianna Fail to catch up with the rest of us?"



Badly Bleached

Sometimes some tweets have to be immortalized in print and Rubberbandit's takedown of Ronan Mullen after his disgusting comments on Savita deserve that

accolade. "This Ronan Mullen lad seems like a bit of a badly bleached asshole." We agree.



7

A FEW BAD APPLES IS IT?

NÓIRÍN O'SULLIVAN FINALLY RESIGNED BACK IN SEPTEMBER BUT THE GARDA SCANDALS JUST KEEP ON COMING. RIGHT THE WAY BACK TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE STATE, THE GUARDS HAVE NEVER BEEN A FORCE FOR GOOD. THEIR COMMISSIONER IN THE GOOD OL' DAYS WAS EOIN O'DUFFY - A DECLARED FASCIST AND FANBOY OF MUSSOLINI'S WHO WENT OFF TO FIGHT FOR FRANCO IN SPAIN AND WHOSE NAME STILL GRACES THE TRAINING GROUND OF THE GARDA SCHOOL IN TEMPLEMORE. GEMMA HYLAND DUG THROUGH THE SHITE AND CAME UP WITH A TOP 10 LIST OF SOME OF THE WORST GARDA SCANDALS OF RECENT YEARS.

1. SITTING IN THE WAY OF CONTROL

The bungled attempt to frame peaceful protesters in the Jobstown show-trial brought the workings of the state into clear view, with a whole herd of Guards paraded up onto the witness stand to give evidence against Paul Murphy and the other defendants. Their testimony started to look decidedly dodgy when compared with video evidence of the scene. In the end the judge had to tell the jury that video evidence "must be regarded by you as the primary and most reliable source" in making their decision - implicitly telling them to disregard everything the Gardaí had said. Yet the Irish media have chosen to focus more on activists tweeting in the courtroom, than on the bare-faced, politically-motivated lies of Gardaí in the witness stand. You might think Gardaí who knowingly gave false evidence in court in order to get a conviction for political reasons would face perjury charges, but don't hold your breath for it here.

2. TAKING THE NATION'S PULSE

Back in 2014 we learnt that the Gardaí, like their brothers in blue over in the States or across the pond in the UK, were engaging in broad-ranging ethnic profiling of minorities - in this case the Travelling community, the most criminalized minority in the state. Traveller children and even infants as young as 16 days old were registered as criminals on the Garda PULSE database. Two children of one and two years old were registered as criminals when their parents went to a Garda station to get them passports.

3. SHELL HELL

Back when the people of Rosspoint Co. Mayo were protesting the clearance sale of our national resources, the government brought in the full force of state repression to protect Shell's interests. The images of snarling crowds of Guards blotting out the Mayo landscape were a stark illustration of where the state's loyalties lay. But things got worse when a recording emerged of two Guards joking about raping two women protesters they had just arrested if they didn't cooperate. But wouldn't ya know it, all five Gardaí involved in the "rape tape" scandal were cleared of all charges.

4. MAYBE SHE JUST FELL OVER?

Would you trust the Gardaí to take domestic violence and abuse seriously? Turns out their statistics for reported cases of domestic violence are way too low to make any sense. In 2016 they recorded about 5000 cases, while the Northern Irish police force, dealing with only half the population size, recorded 29,000, prompting women's rights groups to point out that there must be something going on here. Either the Guards are messing about with the numbers, or they just don't give a shit about domestic abuse.

5. A MILLION HOLES SCRATCHED

In a manipulation of statistics worthy of our Minister for Housing, it was discovered this year that our boys in blue had recorded almost a million more breath-tests for drink-driving than really happened. They had recorded nearly 2 million breath-tests, but had managed only to use just over a million breathalyzer kits. Ya get the feeling that after a long evening of sitting in the station drinking tae and scratching their holes they'd fill in a bit of paperwork just to make it look like they were doing something.

6. DON'T 'CHA KNOW A GUARD?

In 2012 whistleblowers within the Gardaí brought to light that there was widespread abuse of powers by senior officers going on in the penalty point system, with hundreds of people getting penalty points removed from their license, just because they 'knew a Guard.' Gemma O'Doherty the Indo journalist (the same journo who broke the story of ethnic profiling of Traveller children by the Guards) who was following up a story that Martin Callinan, the Garda Commissioner himself, might even have had points taken off his license, was promptly fired, seemingly for doing her job a bit too well in a newspaper owned by Denis O'Brien.

7. HOW DARE CLARE

In 2013, Clare Daly, the left-wing independent TD, who had been outspoken in her stance on Garda malpractice in the penalty point issue found herself pulled over, breathalyzed, arrested for drink-driving and handcuffed at the side of the road. Though she turned out to be under the legal limit, the details of her arrest were leaked by the Gardaí in an apparent attempt to discredit one of their fiercest critics. The Garda Ombudsman looking at the case decided that there was "insufficient evidence" to bother their arses investigating the Gardaí who had leaked her arrest to the press. No surprises there so.

8. WHISTLEBLOWER OR SNITCH

But the biggest scandal was yet to come. This year it came out that Maurice McCabe, the Garda whistleblower who brought the penalty points scandal up for air, had been the victim of a decade-long campaign to smear his reputation by associating him with allegations of child abuse that had already been found to be groundless. The attempt to destroy the life of a rare decent man in the force reached deep into the upper ranks of the Gardaí and the political establishment.

In the end, it was this scandal that finally put

the pressure on Enda Kenny to step down, when he gave what he called 'wrong information' about when he heard about the scandal - he said first he'd heard it on the news, but Katherine Zappone contradicted him, saying she'd told him the details of it earlier. But if this scandal eventually brought down the Taoiseach, he still managed to hang on for months afterwards. And one person who was able to cling on for months no matter what it turns out she presided over was Garda Commissioner Nóirín O'Sullivan - even as it emerged that the phone she had during the period when McCabe was being smeared has completely vanished, and with it all evidence of what Nóirín's role in it was.

9. GARDA FRAUDS CHEAT US ALL

Recently we also learnt that the staff of the Garda Training College in Templemore kept a neat little €125k of taxpayers money aside in 42 unauthorised bank accounts for senior officers to treat themselves to fancy dinners out, and for buying each other nice gifts when they retired, and even allegations of offshore bank accounts in the college's name. When the civilian head of HR at the college raised concerns, a senior Garda tried to claim that he was guilty of a crime just by asking questions that might damage the force. Niall Kelly, the civilian head of the group carrying out the audit of the College has also claimed that senior Gardaí tried to block his investigation and withheld information. As the investigation continues it's even emerged that the police force might not be paying their taxes.

But shur a little scandal like the misuse of hundreds of thousands of euro won't cause too much of a fuss, so what's the harm?

10. THAT NEVER GOES OUT

And finally and tragically there is the story of Dara Quigley. It's often been repeated that she was a shining light for activism and journalism in Dublin, but that's what she was. She was also a young woman with drug and mental health issues who was going through a very tough period in her life. She was arrested in April in a very vulnerable situation, and Garda CCTV footage of her arrest was shared on a Garda Whatsapp group, and eventually found its way to Facebook, where it was viewed upwards of 100,000 times. A few days later, this outspoken young woman had committed suicide. It blows the mind to think of what kind of culture has been fostered in the Guards where a bunch of men think it's alright to share a video like that of a vulnerable young woman with each other and on social media in order to publicly and callously shame her. A woman has lost her life and the Garda who shared the video was suspended - on full pay!

In all of this we can only salute the few brave Garda whistleblowers that have stepped out of the mafia culture of silence in the force, and challenged power with the truth.





The Chemikal Generation

There have been real socio-economic changes that have happened in the meantime, the world has shifted to the right. There is not the support there now particularly in working class communities for people to grow and develop into bands...

NIALL MCCANN IS MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF AS A DOCUMENTARY MAKER THAT LOOKS AT CREATIVITY UNDER NEO-LIBERALISM. HIS FEATURE ON LUKE HAINES GOT RAVE REVIEWS FROM THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO SEE IT AT FILM FESTIVALS. HIS RECENT LOST IN FRANCE IS ABOUT THE SEMINAL GLASGOW RECORD LABEL CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND. MARTIN LEEN SAT DOWN WITH HIM TO CHAT ABOUT MAKING ART IN THESE MARKET-DRIVEN TIMES.

Lost in France is a great documentary on many different levels. How did it come about?

My Luke Haines film (Art Will Save The World) didn't come out due to complex production company issues. I suppose the thing I didn't realise at the time but you learn as you get older, is that when you are a filmmaker even if you write and direct a film unless you own the production company you don't own the film. Young filmmakers should always find people to work with who they can trust.

So, I spent about two years trying to get it released while also trying to come up with another film, and I wasn't sure what to do. I didn't feel that I wanted to make a fiction film, because the budgets I deal with are tiny. It made sense to me after making a film about Luke Haines who was so important to me when I was growing up, to look back again.

The music that came out of Glasgow in the mid

90's was very important to me when I was growing up particularly Arab Strap and Mogwai. No one had made a documentary about that scene around it so I reached out to those guys.

I met Aidan Moffat from Arab Strap at a gig in the Grand Social in 2012 and I just went up to him and told him I had made a film about Luke which he had seen and liked, and told him I wanted to talk to him about making a film together. Aidan is a good guy he gave me his e-mail address and we stayed in touch. Over the next year or so we tried to figure out an approach to making a film.

I knew I wanted it to be a bit different to my first film which was about one person. I wanted it to be about a collective of people. I went over to Glasgow and met a lot of people who had been in that scene. I was amazed that these guys came from a place like Glasgow or Falkirk and had these really leftfield artistic approaches to indie music or whatever you want to call it, and that they didn't really give a fuck, which I thought was amazing

because I always gave too much of a fuck myself.

Using the trip to Mauron as a narrative hook was a great idea, and kind of made the film part documentary part road trip. How did you come up with this?

I asked Aidan about his big memories from that time and he told me about when Arab Strap, Mogwai and The Delgados started out and he told me about this trip they took to the French town of Mauron, where they played a festival in 1997. I came up with the idea of recreating this trip because I didn't want the film to be just all talking heads.

In many ways I think I kind of fucked myself because a lot of people think that the trip to France was very important. But it isn't, it's just an instrument to get people talking. There were many times over in Glasgow when I got the people involved in the scene in a room together but I couldn't really get them to talk about it. Scottish

people are like Irish people, we are not good at talking about ourselves. So the bit of distance allowed people to open up.

It's weird. There is a bit of a road trip element in all of my films. There is in the new one as well, maybe it's just me wanting to go travelling when I get a bit of money.

While on the surface it's a music documentary, it's about much more than that and is very reflective of the times we live in?

Well, I suppose it's a bit of a cliché but a good music film is not just about music, you do need good characters. I thought for a long time that Lost in France was a lament for stuff that is lost, that type of music industry or that type of world where you had to save up for an album before you went and bought it. These days everything is now so immediate if you want to hear something you have immediate access to it. I've loads of friends

who never buy music; they just illegally download everything because music means nothing to them.

I thought that it was quite telling that everyone I spoke to in Glasgow, everyone I spoke to in the music industry said that something like Chemical Underground could never happen now. It could happen in the way you guys do Rabble where you do it as something you are passionate about, but it's not something you take an income from anymore, where everyone involved can make a living. So the film is a lament for that world but it's also a celebration of what those guys did.

Another key point that comes across from the musicians/bands in Lost in France is that the welfare state supported them when they started out, that the dole gave them the space and time to make their art. The movie is also a kind of a lament for that kind of a welfare state.

Yes, the thing that interests me most is that I don't think that Chemical Underground could

happen now but not just for reasons to do with the internet. There have been real socio-economic changes that have happened in the meantime, the world has shifted to the right. There is not the support there now, particularly in working class communities for people to grow and develop into bands.

I'm not saying all the Chemical Underground crew were working class loads of them weren't. But at that time in Glasgow, Manchester and former industrial centres in Britain if you were from a council estate you could end up being in band and end up making it. It seems to me that working class communities seem intentionally more disenfranchised by governments now. It's not a coincidence that when the lads were starting in the 90's the welfare state was not a dirty word, it is now, particularly in Britain, it seems to be going that way here too.

I think that shift to a place where the arts become a hobby unless you are independently wealthy is quite worrying. What sort of art it will lead to in 10

years time. I can see in film those who can afford to indulge are the ones who are making films because with the time you need to spend it's impossible otherwise. Especially in places like Dublin. Look at rents in Dublin, how can someone who decides I can't have a 9 to 5 because I'm working on this script, you decide I'll stay on the dole, then the dole are at you the whole time. It's very difficult not to feel totally worthless when you are on social welfare because you notice all this shit that is written about people on social welfare in the press.

Could you tell us a little about the first film you made Art Will Save The World?

It was a look at Luke Haines life and work. But again it was using Luke's story to look at other things. What the Luke film is about in my mind is if you rely on the market to tell you what's good you're in very troubled waters. In the film every time Luke has an album released I list other stuff that was released and successful at the same time

like Kylie, The Spice Girls and all that sort of stuff.

We live in a world at the moment where lots of people think that if you are in the arts and you don't make a lot of money you mustn't be very good. This idea that if you are successful you are good. In my view a lot of the best and most interesting artists are the least successful. The movie is also asking the question can you sum up someone's life in a film which of course you can't. It's me taking the piss.

Your films are all about these kind of maverick stubborn bloody-minded people like Luke Haines, Stuart Henderson and Adrian Crowley.

That is something I admire. You need to be that way. It takes years to make a film.

Follow Lost In France on social meeja for upcoming screenings here and there!



Tupac and Bob Marley are the most popular humans in Limerick without a doubt. Every young person here seems to be able to freestyle writing rhymes not so much, but everyone seems to be able to bust some freestyle and talk some shit.

Red Vienna

Great article over on Jacobin about Red Vienna. When the council was ran by socialists, Vienna in that era became synonymous with progressive urban planning and

municipal administration. They faced many of the problems we face today in Dublin. The council however opposed real estate speculation and successively

bought more and more property, becoming the biggest landowner and building more than 60,000 apartments in 10 years. Check it out.



Scratch THAT

FROM CO-FOUNDING GALWAY’S COMMUNITY SKRATCH GAMES, BEING A MEMBER OF THE VINCE MCMAHON SCRATCH SUPER-GROUP TO MAKING SOME SERIOUSLY INNOVATIVE MUSIC AS ONE HALF OF ONE MAN DUO DEVIANT AND NAÏVE TED, ANDY CONNOLLY HAS BEEN A CORNERSTONE OF IRISH HIP-HOP AND ELECTRONICA FOR OVER A DECADE. MARTIN LEEN TOOK THE BRAVE STEP AND LEFT DUBLIN FOR THE WILDS OF LIMERICK TO GET THE LOW-DOWN ON SURREAL HIP-HOP AND THE UP AND COMING YOUNG GUNS .

How did you get into turn-tablism growing up down in Kerry?

Well I grew up down in Killarney and to be honest dance music was always kind of in the ether, there was always a kind of a hint of a ravey buzz in the air. You’d hear about these parties, Henry’s was just down the road, The Prodigy even played there before they dropped Charlie. Me and my mates all had a bit of cash because we could get part time jobs because of tourism. So we’d head down to Cork every weekend and blow all our cash on tunes.

When and how did you get into scratching?

Sort of straight away, if I didn’t have school I’d be doing it the whole time. I was quite serious about it quite quick. It was a kind of an affinity thing. It seemed like the only thing to be doing with yourself. Looking back I find quite a profound link between having a speech impediment and scratching because I guess at its core when you have a stammer you’re sort of a hyper-editor because you’re always moving your words about and always moving your sentences into places that you can navigate.

For me I couldn’t say my name in public. That was my big thing, most of the stammer stuff I could deal with, for instance if I had to read a passage I’d be nervous but once I got a start I’d be able to get the rhythm of it and start the breathing and get into it. I was probably never so embarrassed in those classrooms as those seconds when I couldn’t say my name. But of course some people would laugh because they couldn’t help it, because it’s fucking funny. You ask someone their name and they don’t know what it is, it’s absurd! It gives you a grasp of blackness and dark humour.

So I got really quiet, I was probably already quite quiet, so scratching just dominated. It was something I was cool and good at and a way into conversations. It was something I was good at that didn’t involve speaking. That was really liberating. I guess on some level all artists are trying to exert some kind of authority on a room and for me who was very afraid of crowds that was a liberating thing.

Also it was so unusual, no one was doing it. As I got better at scratching my stammer improved too, which was quite ironic, it helped because my confidence and my happiness were up.

When did you start producing?

The music in a way came from a kind of disillusionment with scratching and the scratch mentality of let’s just scratch real fast. At the time I was really into the idea of scratching as a musical instrument rather than this novelty thing that people were using it for. What I would call scratch music, no one really makes it, and there have probably been about 30 releases of music made entirely from scratching. There is very little of it. So I made it my mission to do it.

I made five records with no computers just turn-tables. The thing was though I just couldn’t perform it live so I was still stuck with normal djing as my outlet in the live setting. This is why we set up the Vince McMahon thing with Jimmy Penguin, Mikey Fingers, Danny Deepo and Rhombus Marylegs. It was supposed to be a one off but it was such good fun we just ran with it.

The thing about scratching though is where does the scratch DJ play? We’d always end doing ridiculous gigs with ridiculous people in ridiculous places; you’re kind of too weird for the hip-hop scene, too hip-hop for the other scenes.

You’ve moved away from purely scratching and use more electronics with the Ted stuff?

Well digital is great for scratching because it takes the needle slipping out of the equation which is great but what happens now when you see a DJ’s live performance it involves lots of pre-production and programming, and what has happened is everything is now so edited and so much effort is put into the production. It sounds amazing but it’s kind of against the point, you’re kind of like a unicyclist, it’s just a trick

With the new show the songs are standalone songs but they are made with the set in mind, they are made for manipulation. You can have one on each side and you can fuck shit up, that’s the spirit of it, it can’t be repeated, it’ll always be different, there is no way of doing the same thing twice. I might have a start and a finish I don’t have a middle bit and I’ll just feel it out.

I guess I’ve a big thing about transparency; I don’t want to hide shit from the audience as far as what’s happening. The more you are interacting with that computer the less they understand, and you’re losing a connection with the audience, it does something to the whole experience of the music.

Your live show is really theatrical at the moment what are the influences behind that?

Everything man, everything. I’m really feeding off that late 90’s techno thing at the moment. There was a feeling of that kind of techno; it made you want to dance. With the solo stuff I always loved to make people dance but it was with other people’s music as a DJ. So I’ve made a conscious effort with the new stuff to get people dancing. The show is made by someone who is sick of going to gigs where people stand around not really engaging unless they’ve had a few pints, artists not really giving it their all, people playing it safe. I like when the show goes wrong. I like the lack of a safety net where it can all fall apart, and people like that too. The tension is what brings people into your show.

Tell us about your work with the Music Generation project down in Limerick?

I have a day job because music doesn’t really pay the bills. I teach music to young people, well teach is probably too strong a word for it. We have drop in music sessions where it’s mentoring and you learn the skills by doing it rather than me teaching you how to do it necessarily.

So if you want to know how to make beats we’ll just make a song and you’ll go through the beat making process as part of it. It’s about unlocking creativity through music, and you get the skills as you go, which is quite close to my heart as someone who didn’t come in as a practitioner.

We specialise I guess in older teenagers and in particular rap and meeting. We go into schools, myself and God Knows and Steveamanakick as a kind of a trio, teach them song writing skills, and make demos. If they want to make reggae we’ll make reggae, if it’s hip –hop we’ll make that, whatever they are into.

Teenagers can be quite unforgiving which is nice because there is something quite humbling about a group of people that just do not give a fuck about what you are you doing, and I mean this in the nicest possible way- why would they give a fuck about this strange hairy man that’s trying to get them to do something. But what you find is because we do contemporary music even the hardest classes come round usually because we are interested in what they are interested in.

The Limerick project has been really successful, we do a lot of work, get good support. We got a building and we’re starting to see the first crop of bands coming out of it, on the rap side you’ve got Same Difference and Jonen Dekay, and on the band side you have Pow Pig, Eraser TV and A Weekend Away. This is great because these people are carrying on doing it. The Limerick rap scene is possibly the best in the country at the moment.

What is it with Limerick and rap in the last few years?

It should have been like that 20 years ago to be honest, it seems like it’s a rap town. I’ve been coming here since I was 19 or 20. It always felt like a rap town. It’s got all the demographics for it as a far as social deprivation, a city that’s been ravaged, a big young population and everyone fucking loves Tupac. Tupac and Bob Marley are the most popular humans in Limerick without a doubt. Every young person here seems to be able to freestyle, writing rhymes not so much, but everyone seems to be able to bust some freestyle and talk some shit.

How did you end up doing the theme tune for the Japanese wrestling, cause you’re a big wrestling fan aren’t you?

I am indeed. There have been times in my life when I’m more into contemporary wrestling than contemporary music to be honest. I did a record called The Flying Buttresses with Sebby C a few years ago. A friend of mine grew up with a guy who became a wrestler in Japan called Prince Devitt and he gave him the CD. This guy was seriously popular over there. A few months later Prince Devitt started following me on Facebook. Anyway in the wrestling he was a really good virtuous guy and the Japanese loved him but he was turning bad and needed a new tune and he wanted me to do it.

I was in the middle of my thesis and I immediately said yes. I made seven tunes for him in two days and they were all rejected. But what happened was he started his own faction called Bullet Club which is now absolutely huge, probably the biggest in the world and they used my tune as their theme. This is the thing I’ve done that small Andy would have been most proud of.

Head over to the unsценemusic.bandcamp.com to keep track of the lad’s movements and cop some new releases.



Most venues just don't suit. We always want to run a session that we would want to go to even if we weren't doing it ourselves and we want things to be set up in certain ways...

SEND INTO OUTER



RASHERS TIERNEY SURVEYS THE IRISH SOUND SYSTEM SCENE AFTER THIS YEAR'S MASSIVE SOUNDCLASH IN GALWAY. IT TAKES IN SIX DIFFERENT CREWS AND LEAVES THE TECHNICALLY BAFFLING CHAT OF HOGS, TOPS AND TWEETERS OUT OF THE LOOP. INSTEAD HE REWINDS THROUGH THEIR HISTORY AND HEARS WHAT DRIVES THEM TO BUILD THEIR OWN CUSTOM RIGS.

If you've ever been around anyone that gets their rocks off by piling friends into shitty little venues and serving up sonic treats of underground dancefloor nonsense to the public, there's a few given conversations.

For one there's a total dearth of even shitty little venues across the country to put stuff on in. If you're lucky enough to get a back room to set your decks up and bring people in for the night, 9 times out of 10 you are going to be confronted with an absolute pox of an in-house sound system or none at all.

Your options are simple. You either make do, or do something about it - that's what most of these folks did.

Revelation Sound System is ran by Benji and Jeremiah who hold down a yearly residency at Electric Picnic's Trenchtown area. Regular slots in local pirates and clubs around Cork City in the late 1990s led to weekly sessions in Sir Henry's.

The pair attended dances ran by Jah Shaka and

Abashanti in the UK. Leading them to only one conclusion: "We knew this was for us."

They play early roots classics to bang up-to-date weapons. Giants like Jah Shaka, Iration Steppas, Channel One, Mungos HiFi, Bush Chemists, Mr. Williamz and local lad done good, Cian Finn, have played their system. And they always have their own wax releases in the pipe.

"A sound system has much more emphasis on different frequencies and delivers music that can be felt as well as heard," they tell me. "Custom built sound systems all carry their own colour and unique tones, which makes attending these dances all the more exciting for the listener and dancer."

Sol Barnes from the Mindscape crew down in Scariff shares a similar experience. Representing the latest incarnation of a collective that has been on the go since the early 2000s, they play it all from hardtek to dub, bringing an attitude that insures local DJs don't take a back seat to big names.

Like many of the others Sol nerded it up on a website called speakerplans.com, an online beacon for this homebrewing audiophile scene. He eventually graduated from Music, Technology and Production at the Limerick Institute of Technology in 2011.

"I found it very hard, it is generally quite difficult to find venues where alternative non-commercialised music is accepted and the scene tends to be very small which makes organising events costly," he told me before going on to accredit the island's eco-system of smaller festivals with finally giving the sound systems a place to ply their wares.

Sol built his system with his wife and both are keen on integrating music and artistic decor. At their events this takes on a sci-fi menace.

Dublin's RubaDub HiFi are relatively fresh on the scene and have ran ran several dances in the Teachers Club and Wigwam. They say that being a sound system extends beyond just showing up with a stack of speakers and setting up in the corner of

the room.

"Sound systems have aims and ideas which go far beyond that. Whether they are political, musical or religious depends on the soundmen themselves and that's what makes each sound system so personal." Of the two lads, Iaral was inspired by stumbling upon a must see slice of UK cinema from 1980 called Babylon about sound system crews in London battling it out with each other (and the National Front) when he was 15. His compadre Charlie says it was hearing Revelation Sound at Electric Picnic that opened his ears. Like others, the poor quality of in house speakers and being forced to borrow gear off friends pushed them into the custom game.

"Reggae music has prominent bass and treble which we believe has to be heard on a proper sound designed for that purpose," he tells me. "Between ups and downs we've organised dozens of dances and enjoyed all of them. Since we've been running the sound we've been able to build up a lot more momentum and all in all to increase the quality of our gigs."

The pair again cite a culture of sharing designs online too and give props to some other known folk heroes of the scene.

"Steve Audio Terrorist and Ranking Rez from Worries Outernational have been really helpful as well along the way."

Asked to share a funny story they tell me how they brought the rig to a festival recently, and were given an unknown lineup to contend with. All was going well, until the end that is. "One of the lads though came up to play at midnight on the last night," they tell me. "First he asked us how to use the CDJs and then after a quick lesson started belting out Scatman! It wasn't quite what we had in mind when we built the Sound but we had a laugh!"

The Rootical Sound system out of Galway had its public outing back in 2001 and ratcheted up legendary appearances at the revered Mantua Festival. Chief operator Jason told me: "I was collecting and selecting Reggae music for a good

few years before I made the move to build my own system," chief operator Jason tells me. "When London based Channel One crew carried their Soundsystem out to Ireland to play sessions in both Dublin and Galway, the seed was sown then and I aspired to building my own sound system from that point."

Jason agrees that a standard PA just doesn't have the weight this music needs. "A properly tuned sound system can be heard and felt in a way that a standard PA cannot," he tells me. "Basically it comes down to pushing certain frequencies to allow the music to be felt throughout the body. Soundsystem becomes the all absorbing feature of the space rather than just a PA in the background."

World Bass Culture first landed on the scene in Waterford in 2007. Like others I spoke to, they share friends across the systems and an interest in the complexities of audio. They play a mixed bag and tell me about their first outing.

"We were worried at our sound system launch being held at the 'listed' beautiful Central Arts Hall in Waterford," they tell me.

Dust and bits of plaster started falling on the dance floor, leading to worries that they would be shut down and banished.

"Luckily though the directors at Central Arts were cool as cats and after the initial rafter blaster start the building soon settled."

RiseUp is based out of Cork city and was pulled together on the back of a club night of the same name. The likes of Objekt, Mala and Dbridge have played since 2010. Head honcho Jonezy has been into reggae since he was a kid but researching how to put a system together began in earnest in 2012. By 2014 he was cutting speaker boxes out of Scandinavian birch ply with the help of his chippy dad. It wasn't too long before it was shaking the old Kino cinema to its foundations.

"I wasn't impressed with the sound in most of the venues in Cork," Jonezy tells me. "I started bringing in sound systems like the Slowershop rig

Welcome Back Plugd

After closing its doors it the Triskel Arts Centre earlier this year, Cork's most renowned record store returns to business, this time upstairs in the Roundy. The beating heart

of Cork's music scene, and host to many wonderful nights, it's heartening to have them back.





when the venue’s wasn’t upto the task. This made me want to build my own speakers so I could customise it to sound exactly how I like it.”

The SubVersion SoundSystem in Galway all came together when Cormac Welfare figured it was time to up his game and get his own rig for the increasing spate of gigs he was organising. Crux and Will Junglist then joined in along the way.

“You need to be committed to carry a Sound to every gig or around the country,” Welfare tells me. “Its physical work which can be very tiring, especially after a long weekend of partying. You get to understand the equipment over time - how it works best for the music you play and the vibe you’re trying to create. You add bits and piece over the years, some work and some don’t!”

Financially it has its costs too.. “Most sounds I know of put on gigs, hope they’ll make a few quid and try build their sound that way,” Welfare tells me. “The equipment involved is invariably pretty pricey so it can take time and patience, but again if you believe in the music you’ll stick at it.”

Any downsides Welfare says are offset by hilarious trips in the van, with weird and wonderful interactions across the country. One that sticks in Cormac’s head is catching a few hours sleep on the floor of the old church the night before Sundown Gathering 2013.

“All rigs were set up and we had had a few beers at the end of the day,” he says. “I woke up freezing cold at about 6am and I looked up, half asleep, to see what seemed like some towering, black dalek looking down at me. It was in fact the Firehouse Skank soundsystem”

The Firehouse Skank Soundsystem from Dublin is considered the granddaddy of the scene and gets the credit for bringing sound system culture to Ireland in the early 1990s. Paul is its founder and started out DJing at parties in lost old haunts like the Anarchy Night Cafe.

“I loved loads of different kinds of music, still do!” Paul tells me. “I played across the board punk, dub, funk, hip hop, krautrock and

psychedelia but soon realised that reggae and dub was what I enjoyed playing in a club environment.”

He was so struck by a Jah Shaka dance in London right at the start of the 1990s, that regular trips back and forth to buy records and catch more followed.

“I found it strange that there was nothing even remotely like this going on in Dublin at the time. I used to go to a lot of punk gigs organised by the Hope collective and they really spread a message that anyone could organise gigs - there was no need to be at the mercy of the established venues and promoters,” he tells me.

Some friends he now credits with being “dons of the Irish animation boom” asked him to DJ at a fundraiser. It grew into a weekly thing and took years to build a crowd.

“While it sounded pretty good it wasn’t quite the full immersive experience,” Paul recalls as his quest began. “So there being no internet and nobody in Ireland with a sound system whose brains I could pick, I got talking to all the people I had met in London in the sound system world to try to get my head around the fundamentals.”

“It took a year or more of lots of talking, looking for non-standard speaker parts, persuading people of my bona fides so that they would help with building custom speakers and amps for an Irish sound system. This was before the proliferation of sound systems across Europe so it was unusual for someone outside England to be building a sound system.”

Names like Zion Train, Conscious Sounds and Roots Ting gave him a dig out and linked him up with specialists like Jah Tubby and Russ Disciples. The hard work eventually paid off and it put Firehouse on a whole other level. Maintenance and lugging might be the next tes but the real challenge then became finding somewhere to run the system

“Most venues just don’t suit,” says Paul. “We always want to run a session that we would want to go to even if we weren’t doing it ourselves and we want things to be set up in certain ways so the

options narrow down pretty quickly.”

Once he got involved, Enda Starr’s music engineering background took up the technical slack. “He was a great help,” says Paul. “Tuathal is our main man for maintaining the sound these days and he is always tweaking the kit and getting new ingredients to nice it all up. I don’t know where he got the knowledge really - maybe he was just born with it.”

Paul tells me about picking up the first Firehouse Skank boxes back in the day. It involved an odyssey across the motorways of England and Wales in an old VW Gold dragging a horse trailer behind to pick up speakers from a lad called Mr Dub. Then in 1994 he organised the first proper sound system session in Ireland with Channel One. “They came with a big crew and a big van loaded with enormous speakers and gigantic amps. We had an amazing turnout - a full house of about 750 people in a venue called the Furnace off Aston Quay and we had to turn hundreds more away!”

Then Paul’s best friend decides he needs to take a piss. “The hall was jammed,” he recounts. “So he figured he would try a door at the back of the hall and find his way to some secret toilet. He opened a door, hit some switches to get the light on and the full lights came on all over the hall.”

The crowd started shouting disapproval so Mikey Dread put a stall on the tunes to find out what’s going on. Paul’s mate scarpers. He recalls that “security were running about for what seemed like quite a while before someone found the open door to the control room and sorted it out.”

He talks about driving a cramped van of UK sound system heads around Ireland “There was much amusement at the lack of motorways back then,” he thinks back. “Every time we’d manage to pass a tractor there would be whoops of celebration and laughter.”

Photo from Tom Beary and Off Beat Photography.



movement of the people

EACH YEAR SINCE 2012, A GROUP OF LIMERICK VOLUNTEERS MOTIVATED BY HIP HOP BASED STREET CULTURE COME TOGETHER TO LINK PEOPLE AND PLACE FOR A FESTIVAL CALLED MAKE A MOVE. PAUL TARPEY FILED THIS FIELD REPORT ON WHAT WENT DOWN THIS YEAR.

This year’s event was the most ambitious since 2011. Back then the fallout from the Celtic Tiger encouraged a particular response from the workshops, street art and hip hop performances.

Now as the so-called economic upturn asserts itself on the city, it creates new situations to respond to. The festival showcased the links between the spirit and elements of hip hop, as well as Limerick’s space and history.

One constant between both “boom” periods has been an unwelcome fluid approach to the city’s history by developers.

Some sought to legitimize their planning proposals by grafting aspects of Limerick’s social history onto plans in a bullish attempt to merge and accelerate the past and present for commercial gain.

There was an emphasis too on how Limerick’s social history can be articulated using the urban language of the street.

On the Sunday of the festival Make a Move invited participants to a workshop in the Limerick Printmakers to create a set of 50 posters referencing the 1845 visit of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

The intention was twofold. First to continue a conversation set off by the visit when Douglass spoke in Bedford Row. And then to acknowledge its contemporary relevance on the streets of Limerick.

Groundbreaking research by local historian Liam Hogan, discovered that Douglass and two other African American abolitionists had spoken to a packed house on the same site on Bedford Row over a 15 year period in the nineteenth century.

Then a church, it is now a café. There was no marker of its historic past. With the support of Hogan and the café owners, Make a Move

invited artists for a performance to rectify this.

Clara Rose Thornton (InkBlot Complex) devised an event called Joined Hands in Freedom. It referenced the abolitionists but also looked at other connections in the struggles for the freedom of Irish and African Americans.

Thunderous spoken word, talks, and humorous socio-political theatre were presented in front of a packed café by Clara Rose Thornton and Sahar Ali.

Sahar presented extracts from her sell out Dublin Fringe show Saharcasm which examined Ireland through the lens of an Irish Muslim woman. A variety of speakers and performers drew links between black and Irish struggles.

On the Sunday the Walk Talk and Paste workshop led by 061 artist Eoin Barry acknowledged these links for the street.

This physical coda to Friday’s performance presented commemoration and re-activated history. It was a counterpoint to the usual commemorative tradition of bronze and stone.

After the workshop Eoin led a group of participants around Limerick’s city center pointing out various citizen based street art pieces. These included some that had featured in earlier Make a Move events but were now painted over. Gone but living online.

The walk highlighted a disconnect between the online representation of Limerick, where citizens engage with the city during the ‘downtime’, with a view that city space is often blocked in more prosperous times by advertising.

Eoin’s walk also served as an orientation in the practice of siting street art.

The destination for the commemoration using the posters created

earlier was significant. This NAMA-fied block of buildings remains one of Limerick’s sore points. Another example of historic content being erased by an over ambitious developer.

The plan was another shopping center, which he wanted to call the Opera center in a glib reference to it being the birthplace of the singer Catherine Hayes.

The site itself, with its chained gates and doors, has languished for a decade as both marker and monument to the excess of the Celtic Tiger.

Barry contemplated all of the above in the design process for a temporary monument to Douglass. The piece sees the words of Douglass address Limerick’s public from the platform of a toxic building.

The team pasted a set of 50 alternating wheat pasted posters. Filling the space in red and black anarchist colors surrounded with a motif of chains, the words of Frederick Douglass proclaimed “I would unite with anyone to do right and with nobody to do wrong” (red) and “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men” (black).

With these words the project also celebrated Make a Move’s ongoing commitment to a street based youth activity that is drawn from hip-hop culture.

This reactivation of a wounded space by the citizenry, underlined that plans should not just be opportunities for developers for commercial gain.

The installation of these posters is a reminder that Limerick has a rich and intertwined living history.

Keep them ears peeled for next years dates and head down ta feck!

Photos by Wally Cassidy



BACK IN LATE OCTOBER THE CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC HOUSING BURST ONTO THE SCENE PROMISING A WATER CHARGES STYLE AGITATION FOR THAT MOST BASIC OF HUMAN NEEDS. HARRY SAL LACEY CAUGHT UP WITH EUGENE MCARTAN TO SEE IF THEY TICK ANY DIFFERENTLY TO THE REST OF THE HOUSING MOVEMENT.

What do you mean by public housing? Is this social housing or affordable housing or both?

The difference between social or affordable housing and our demand for public housing is the following. We believe that everyone should be entitled to rent a home from the state, paying rent commensurate with their disposable income. The terms “social” and “affordable” to allow the “market”—that is, private developers, speculators, and landlords, both domestic and foreign (vulture funds)—to decide what is affordable and what is not. Affordable to whom? Speculators will not build houses unless they make a profit.

So we are allowing these small groups of companies and rich and powerful individuals, both national and foreign, to determine what is affordable or not. We do not accept that the “market” should determine the availability of shelter for our people—young or old, working or unemployed, married or single.

What groups are in the campaign and what are the main common objectives for the groups involved? Also, have we not reached “peak” housing groups?

A number of TDs have come on board to

sponsor the campaign, including Clare Daly, Catherine Connolly, and Mick Wallace. In addition, the following parties, groups and individuals are actively involved, with more coming on board: Communist Party of Ireland, Dundrum Housing Action, DBHAC Altogether, Éirigi, Cllr Cieran Perry, Fr Peter McVerry, Inner City Helping Homeless, The Workers’ Party, 1916 Societies and the North Dublin Bay Housing Crisis Community.

Do you see this government ever dealing with the crisis or is it just going to be all lip service?

It’s clear that the Government are ideologically incapable of dealing with this crisis. Given the experience of the last five decades of Governments made up of various shades of opinion, while outwardly appearing to be different they have shared a common approach to housing—and many economic and social questions—which is to leave the provision of a home (house or apartment) to the private market, dominated by property speculators, developers, and bankers, whose only concern is making the maximum profit. Experience has shown that the private market has never provided, and can never provide, for the basic human right to housing. It is not acceptable that the housing needs of our people should come

second to greed.

This Government, and any possible future combination of the big parties in the present Dáil, are incapable of solving this problem, because they have enacted and continue to enact policies that are aimed at protecting the “market,” and not the interests of the people. Also, it is a fact that six Government ministers are landlords, as are many TDs. The dominant ideology promoted by the state itself gives priority to what the media call the “market,” in all aspects of our lives.

There are many groups working on the ground with those directly affected by homelessness. Will the campaign be co-ordinating with them or will it be taking a different angle?

Some of the organisations involved in working with the homeless are involved also in the Campaign for Public Housing. Where we differ from some of the organisations is that we see the solution in the building of public housing. We will campaign vigorously to raise awareness among working people throughout the country to expose the duplicity of the present and past governments in this crisis. Their policies have contributed greatly to the crisis. We cannot continue to implement or impose the same policies and expect a different result, other than the one now unfolding before our eyes.

Brendan Kenny recently got a few headlines for himself in setting three options for dealing with some of the dilapidated council housing stock around the city. He’s arguing in favour of widespread demolition and then rebuilding with land swaps. What do you think of this approach? Are alarm bells going off in your head too?

We would profoundly disagree with this approach. Speculators and developers want their hands on prime city-centre sites that at present are owned by Dublin City Council (ie the people), while working people would be forced to the outskirts of the city, with few amenities, poor public transport, etc. The spiral of breaking up existing communities would continue, because of the drive for maximum profit by a small few.

Also, we have the experience of councils up and down the country that have already given away valuable public land to private speculators in exchange for getting a few public houses built, or the odd community centre. We need to address the serious question and maintain that the common good is superior to the right of private property.

When it comes to creative solutions to the housing problem, should there not be a focus on transport or other “outside the box” ideas, like there are smaller towns dotted all over the rail network that if we had an expanded service

could alleviate some of the burden in Dublin?

Certainly all ideas and suggestions are worth looking at. But once again experience would inform us that the state usually uses this as a means of dumping people into areas badly served in social and transport infrastructure, without proper consultation with the people, repeating the same old mistakes. So long as housing policy is determined by the profit, then people’s interests will come well down the list. We can see particularly in Dublin, in the inner city, new student accommodation springing up and charging extortionate rents from students. These were and are traditional working-class districts. It is far more profitable to build students’ apartments and rip students off than to build public housing.

Private renting is a cash cow for international and domestic speculators, slum landlords, and other parasites. NAMA has given away a vast number of properties at knock-down prices to domestic and international speculators. We as a people were forced by the EU to take responsibility for 42 per cent of all EU bank debt, and NAMA is part of the burden placed upon us. So we are being doubly ripped off.

There have been loads of housing campaigns. None of them have ever succeeded to organise mass numbers. It’s seems to be an issue which attracts left wing interest, but once a housing issue is solved for an individual, couple or family, people seem to move on. Does this not put a limit on the campaign?

That may or may not be the case. There are

tens of thousands of families and individuals on housing waiting lists across the country and more joining the queue every day. Part of our remit is to raise public awareness about the interconnectedness of the main problems facing our people. The state has restructured the economy, with precarious employment, zero-hour contracts, “internships” and minimum-wage jobs increasingly becoming the norm. This is now coupled with precarious shelter, causing huge social problems across the board and having a profound effect on the lives of working people.

One of the big problems in housing campaigns is that everyone seems to have the same point “build more housing” but then avoid the more difficult questions. For example, across the left parties and independents, there is support for the policy of selling off council housing. Will the campaign raise its voice against this?

Our campaign is opposed to the selling off of public housing to tenants, to ensure the continuous increase of public housing as a percentage of the total housing stock. We are also opposed to the selling off of all public lands to private developers. Public land for public housing. If we are to end the obscenity of spiralling rents and the spiralling cost of buying a place in which to live, we need to break the private-sector monopoly on housing. The Government has created a situation where young people and thousands of families are locked into slum landlordism. The alternative is public housing, available to those who require it or who simply would rather live in public housing than be up to their necks in debt to banks.

A ready and plentiful supply of public housing would end slum landlordism. If you could get affordable accommodation from the city council

or county council, why would you want to share a three-bedroom house with twenty other people and pay €400, €500 or €600 per month for the “privilege” of having somewhere to rest your head?

If you could get a publicly owned house, why would you want to borrow €400,000 to €600,000 for a house, put yourself and your family in debt servitude for forty years, afraid to get sick, or your children getting sick, doctors and hospital bills, pay school bills, provide your own health insurance, look after your own pension, exist on zero-hour contracts and precarious employment, coupled with precarious housing?

You’ll find the Campaign for Public Housing online. Keep an eye on them.

A ready and plentiful supply of public housing would end slum landlordism. If you could get affordable accommodation from the city council or county council, why would you want to share a three-bedroom house with twenty other people...

political hacks



Labour had their own social media department buying ads but the real thing that has impact is people creating stuff, liking and sharing it themselves from bottom up rather than top down...

RICHARD BARBROOK PLAYED A KEY ROLE DEVISING CORBYN’S RADICAL DIGITAL DEMOCRACY MANIFESTO. HE WAS IN TOWN GIVING A TALK AT THE RECENT CRITICAL MEDIA CONFERENCE. MARTIN LEEN BRAVED STORM BRIAN AND VENTURED OUT TO LEAFY BALLSBRIDGE FOR THE LOWDOWN ON HOW TO HACK A GENERAL ELECTION.

You were deeply in involved in Jeremy Corbyn’s recent election campaign. Could you tell us how you hacked the election with all the press against you?

People did blogs, Facebook posts. We made a game called Corbyn Run. It got 1.6 million impressions and hundreds of thousands of downloads. The game is basically Jeremy chasing

after Tories and bankers who avoid paying taxes shaking them down for money. As you accumulate more money you can release more manifesto pledges and more and more people join the great upsurge in the Labour Party. It’s a fun game to play but it’s got a message. Like how you could pay for the Labour Party manifesto, how we’ll shake down the Tories and bankers who avoid taxes. It became kind of a symbol of the campaign and showed that the Labour Party could politically engage with people in a different way.

We figured out how to hack Facebook by having loads of people liking and sharing the kind of posts that can overwhelm the algorithm. Lots of people were doing this spontaneously and this took off so much that I had an ex-student who is a card carrying Tory telling me that her Facebook feed got overwhelmed by Labour propaganda.

What was powerful about it was that it was being shared by people organically. Labour had their own social media department buying ads but the real thing that has impact is people creating stuff, liking and sharing it themselves from bottom up rather than top down.

Why were the so called left-wing media, especially papers like The Guardian and such a huge proportion of the politicians so against him?

Because he didn’t go to their dinner parties. He was seen as an eccentric. In the Blairite autobiographies people like Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonald were always described as a small group of left wing rebels, who they had in the Labour Party as a kind of decoration just to have a few lefties there. They never took them seriously. They all live in a bubble, all live in the same area of London, all went to Oxbridge, and their kids go to the same schools. Even though he’s a North London MP he’s outside of that circle. When they were glad-handling it with rich and powerful people and so on he was in dusty halls talking to fifty people about Palestine or Kurdistan or something. There was a concerted campaign against him. He was seen as a threat.

The right of the party is so much about the bubble of Westminster that it forgot where it came from, that it’s a labour movement. Labour is a labour movement as well as a Labour Party. It only works if it’s a movement. A lot of the Blairites were horrified with Jeremy because they see the Labour Party as a group of politicians who get into power and then just wheel and deal on behalf of the people, and then they wonder how they end up like Tories, because they have no links with the wider world.

And what about The Guardian?

They are in the same bubble. They hated him because he’s a socialist and they’re a liberal paper and because he’s gone beyond what’s permissible in their idea of what left is. They’re called The Guardian because they guard how far left you can go. The same with the BBC which is supposed to be a public service broadcaster and supposed to be balanced, but their idea of balance is to have three Tories, one right wing Labour Blairite and one of us. We had all the media against us and yet we managed to get within 2% of winning. Instead of the Tories having a landslide they now are a minority government, and within the next eighteen months Jeremy Corbyn will be the most popular politician and Labour will come into power on the most left wing program since 1945.

To what do you attribute the success of Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign? Why do you think he did so well against the odds?

Those of us in the left of the party realised that if we had proper left wing policies, we’d get lots of new people into the Labour Party, and if you give people a proper choice they will come out and vote.

When I was out canvassing for the 2010 election people were saying there is no difference between the political parties which was true. They were all neo-liberal economics and in favour of liberal intervention in some form, even the Lib-Dems by that point had given up on their pacifist thing. So in that election your choice were red neo-liberals, yellow neo-liberals and blue neo-liberals.

That kind of solved the Brexit thing too because a lot of the Labour voters who voted for Brexit did so as a kind of protest against neo-liberal economics. If you offer a proper anti-austerity reflationary policy, because austerity is a con, then people will support it.

How do you respond to the leftist critique that by using platforms like Facebook etc you are enabling monopoly capitalism?

Well monopoly capitalism is there and you just have to deal with it. It’s like any war game you have to fight with the tools you have and on the terrain you are on. Technology is just a tool. The corporations will try to make it into one thing; we will try to make it into another. It’s a site of conflict. Facebook is a huge monopoly corporation but it allowed us to take on the might of the Tory establishment and the right wing press by

subverting it and hacking it.

In the digital democracy manifesto you talk about platform cooperatives. What do you mean by this?

This was a phrase invented by our American comrades and it basically means replacing Uber and AIRBNB with co-operatives. It has now become Labour policy. The traditional left policy has always been to replace private ownership with state ownership, state capitalism they used to call it. This is a problem because its democratic only in a very vague sense, the management is usually very autocratic and because it’s separated from the workers then it’s easy to privatise. Co-operatives are a way to democratise this. So platform co-operatives is for example rather than having huge companies organising these apps drivers have their own co-operative, their own app, without having to give Uber 40% of the fee.

One of the key points in the digital manifesto is massive multi-person on line deliberation to make popular participation in the democratic process easy and inclusive. How does that work?

What we are talking about is using technologies

to build out from the centre. If you think about the Labour Party they have branch meetings, they have commissions and other things. But if you want to write the next manifesto, how do you get the members to write the next manifesto or at least input their ideas. One thing we learnt is that most of the expertise is out there, and if you give people permission to contribute their ideas and expertise they will.

But you have to do it so it’s scalable. A good example is if you are a doctor, have a busy job, have kids and a busy life and have knowledge that is very useful to contribute. You need to have a platform so that you can do it while you are on the bus. I mean voting is great, meetings are great, but what if you have disabilities, or kids or a busy life.

These are not practical. You need to find a way to include people these people they have a lot to offer. So it’s not just us sending messages downwards but people sending messages up, and people starting to run their own lives. The goal of any left political project should not be just to replace one bunch of bureaucrats with another, but to shift power and wealth from the few to the many. It’s not just a political slogan.

Can you tell us about cybernetic communism and the origins of the internet?

The myth of the internet is that it was founded by hippies as some kind of utopian information society ideal. It came out of cold war competition between America and Russia over who would own the future. The Russians sent the first man and woman into space and they were beating the Americans. So the Americans said what is the next thing is after the space race? The CIA had heard about the Russians building cybernetic communism, a computer network society. So the Americans identified this as the next point of humiliation.

So there was a race to develop it. The Soviet Union abandoned it because they were scared of what it was going to do, they saw that it was going to lead to post-industrialisation and the end of the party. But the Americans kept pouring money and research into it until eventually it escaped from the laboratory. The hippy myth bit is between it escaping from the military industrial complex and entering into the corporate world.

Richard Barbrook is the author of Imaginary Futures: From Thinking Machines To The Global Village. Put it on your Xmas reading list.



The Irish Times ran a piece back in July in which inner-city teenagers said they are constantly stopped and searched by gardaí, even when

wearing their school uniforms, and talked to by gardaí as though they are adult criminals. All the way back in rabble #2 Redmonk spoke to a group

of teenagers from Blanchardstown and found them to be struggling with the internalisation of their own demonisation. Dig it out for a read.

LEO. ACTUALLY

THE BLUESHIRTS ANNOINTED A NEW PARTY LEADER RECENTLY AND THAT MAN IS A MASTER OF THE SPIN GAME. SAM NOONAN SLIPS ON A PAIR OF WADERS AND TAKES A POKE AROUND THE SLURRY PIT OF OUR NEW TAOISEACH’S CAREER SO FAR.

You’ve heard about the government’s new Strategic Communications unit yeah? “The precise mandate and other arrangements for the operation of the new unit will be worked out over the coming weeks,” so Varadkar told the Dáil back in mid-July as he sprung the setting up of this new spin shop for the regime on us.

Amazing how a marketing department setting out to create Brand Varadkar can be rolled out in no time while public service improvements are kicked endlessly down the road.

This new Strategic Information Unit is brought together to “communicate to the public, taxpayers and citizens what the Government does on its behalf”. Cos fucked if anyone else knows. Marketing guru John Concannon is to head up this massive CSPE endeavour.

You’d already be familiar with him from clusterfucks like the state’s Easter Rising commemorations, where he had the grandiose title of Mr 1916. Before that he masterminded that begorrah horror show The Gathering. We’d forgotten about that dose of poor mouth paddywhackery too.

Concannon clearly knows what he’s at. His 80-second “mood-setting” promo vid for the 1916 commemoration led Diarmaid Ferriter of University College Dublin to comment it was “completely inappropriate” and “embarrassing, unhistorical shit”.

If Kenny could be criticised for being the master of meaningless gibberish that saw party handlers eventually keep him out of the light, then Leo is characterised by a bad habit of opening his mouth and saying what he actually thinks - something that has earned him the plaudit of “gob almighty”.

Touted as an ideologue and prone to right wing barstool utterances he’s going to need a lot of mollicoddling from this new unit to avoid tanking with the public.

Leo says he wants to represent “people who get up early in the morning” and moaned that “unfortunately there are a group of people, very often supporters of the far left, that believe they shouldn’t pay anything and that Apple, bondholders, or billionaires should pay...”

That’s the sound of determined dog whistles to corporate interests and sets the tone for a virulently anti-trade union and worker leadership. Varadkar’s campaign slogan “you don’t get anything for nothing” is a Thatcherism par excellence. It’s a mean-spirited and nasty approach to the vulnerable. If he took his own line seriously, there’d be a massive increase in inheritance tax to look forward too.

His sensationalist welfare fraud campaign in the lead up to the FG leadership vote was a disgraceful use of public money and

criminalised the poor.

He mislead the public on the extent of welfare fraud, pulling a figure of 500m out of his arse before it was eventually corrected by Department officials to 41m. The real cheater in all of this was Leo, who used €204,000 of our money to raise his profile before the FG leadership race.

There was no bus ad about bailed out bankers, crooked developers or tax avoiding corporations costing our country billions. He is a regime politician true and true. His whole life is dedicated to perpetuating an ideology which has made Ireland one of the most socially and economically unequal in the European Union according to the OECD.

In his time as Minister for Social Protection he kickstarted the JobPath labour activation scheme, clogged straight out of the Tory handbook on privatising the management of unemployment - it sees firms harassing and profiteering from the jobless and has earned comparisons to the movie I, Daniel Blake from opposition TDs. In September 2008, Varadkar happily fed myths about welfare scroungers and suggested that unemployed foreign nationals on the Live Register be offered six months of benefits to leave the country.

Varadkar is a medical doctor. Amazing then the record his years in health have left us. He took 12 million out of the 35 million budget increase which had been specifically allocated towards hiring new staff within mental health. At a time where Ireland has the fourth highest teen suicide rate in the European Union. One in three young Irish LGBTs have attempted suicide. Yes to equality indeed. Nearly 14,000 Nurses have fled “dejection” since 2014 to the temptations of the private sector and abroad due to public sector wage suppression and the misery of the wards.

When he had a chance to change it, he did nothing. Bad form for a lad who’d said he wanted the position since he was a seven year old wee nipper. He once told consultants desperate to secure 24/7 cardiac care for a hospital he was too busy to meet them. He constantly drops hints in favour of the cancerous ideology of privatization. As Minister for Health he lauded his own cunning in taking out private health insurance and avoiding an age related levy (something he should be challenging...) while calling for private managers to take over the running of poorly performing public hospitals.

Gob Almighty is also an insensitive, dangerous, harmful bigot. When speaking in a radio interview he said allowing rape victims to terminate their pregnancies could lead to “abortion on demand” and compared people travelling for access to gamblers holidaying in Las Vegas.

He might look every bit the modernizing man but ignores even objective judgements from the Human Rights Committee finding

the 8th Amendment “cruel, inhumane or degrading”. He was content to use the Citizen’s Assembly to stall reform, but now after its deliberations calling for radical liberalisation, he wants nothing to do with it.

Varadkar sees himself on the same wavelength as Trudeau and Macron. If his record is anything to go by so far the varnish will rub off soon. He promised he would ban public sector strikes in essential areas during his election. That sounds more like someone taking after traditional Blueshirt role models like Mussolini or Franco with a self righteous disdain for democratic rights.

Sure, there is plenty surprising about Varadkar’s rise to power and the international community can be forgiven in celebrating this unlikely rise of the gay son of an Indian immigrant in dreary, wet Catholic auld Ireland. Who could not but think that someone who might’ve experienced difference or prejudice could understand or practice empathy? You’d be wrong.

Within Fine Gael, Varadkar is seen as aloof from traditional party members. He didn’t carry the popular vote for leadership. Yet at one point the inner workings of the regime decided it needed a facelift. How could it maintain moral authority as it wrecked Irish society with a bumbling Enda at the helm? So it reached for a young blood.

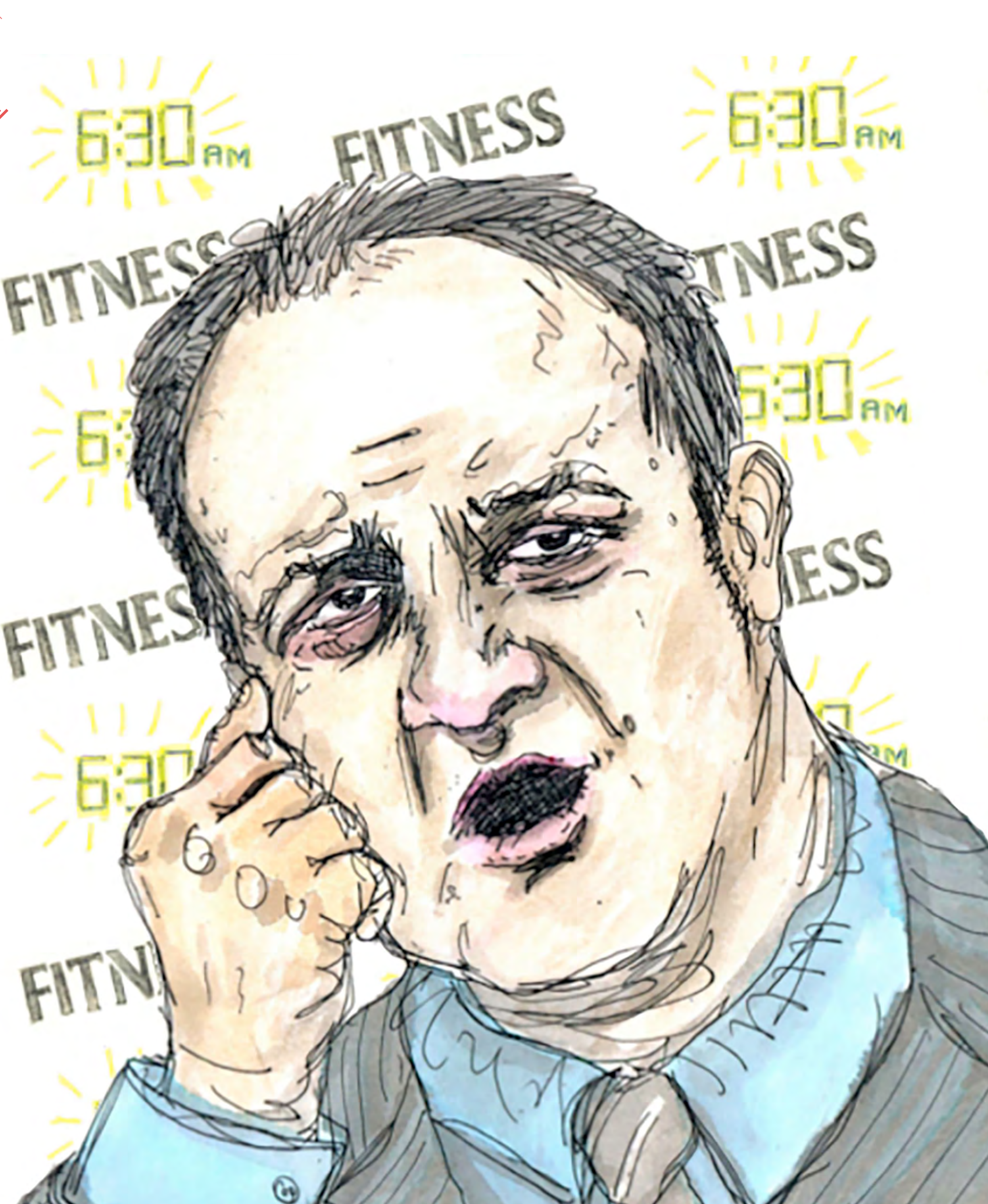
Priorities are majorly distorted in Leo-land and he is no stranger to playing the dark arts of spin. Happy to be painted in lycra and flute around the Phoenix park with Trudeau. Someone who could let on he was at the “rave in the woods” at Electric Picnic or go on the session in Copper Face Jacks. Ya know, one of us and not so bad?

Except Varadkar isn’t one of us. He hasn’t just assimilated into power and privilege. It’s his background. He joined the Blueshirts while attending a posho private school in Palmerstown that costs € 7 €7050 a year today. Does that sound like anyone you know?

On a day that two homeless people died due to an ever-deepening housing crisis, Varadkar took to Twitter to recount where he was the day Diana died. Meanwhile, the people that’ve been living in tents along the Royal Canal between Phibsboro and Drumcondra got served a notice to leave. Despite there being a dearth of safe and suitable accommodation in the city.

You already know what to expect from this new propaganda project. Affable affluence and talk of being different from the old crowd. As Leo’s record shows, he’s really not. Beware the empty gestures of the liberal bourgeoisie. It’s going to take some operation to sprinkle glitter on this shit show.

Illustration by Mice.



ESTATE OF THAT

AS IRELAND SCRAMBLES TO GET TO GRIPS WITH ITS HOUSING CRISIS, DIRECTOR PAUL SYNG TURNS IN A BLINDING EXPOSEE OF THE DELIBERATE DISMANTLING OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE UK. RASHERS TIERNEY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM TO HEAR HOW WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES ARE BEING TREATED LIKE SHIT AS DEVELOPERS AND LOCAL COUNCILS CONNIVE AFTER PROFIT.

You've got the last twenty or thirty years of stigmatization of people that live on council estates or live in council housing and that's in the arts and media every day in programs like Little Britain with that Vicky Pollard character...

Housing defines our times. Across the pond in Engerland, it's no different. Paul Syng says he was compelled to make this film by activist friends of his.

"It was a case of them introducing me to people that were on estates and fighting to save their homes. You know after that you get to know people a bit and then you hopefully earn their trust and then you can work with them."

The doc starts off tracking the mass social housing projects that took place in the wake of the Second World War when Labour were swept into power. Looking at the long game, all of this was turned topsy turvy by the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme by Thatcher's first government. Cut to grainy footage of The Iron Lady herself sandbagging her reign with new Tory voters. Handing over property deeds at insane knockdown prices to huddled families.

Consequential statistics from all this burn in via animations and infographics a go-go. At the beginning of the 1980s, 42% of the UK population lived in social housing. That's plummeted to less than 8% with over five million on the housing list. Now, 50,000 former council homes in the UK are let out by private landlords. Fifty fucking thousand. For Syng that's the nub right there. This bleeding dry of public assets for private gain and then the gut wrenching knock ons from this swindle.

"I don't necessarily think there's you know a group of shadowy figures in a darkened room making these plans," Syng tells me over the phone. "Effectively housing in particular is driven by the market and successive governments have put all of their faith in solving people's housing needs in the private rental market."

This fanatical belief in the market is compounded by cash strapped local councils on both sides of the political divide eager to fill their coffers. Making land deals with developers. Shallow promises of regeneration and rehousing fed to tenants.

Each estate brings its own tale. The doc taps into a string of these via housing activists, campaigners and academics. There's people like Beverly in Aylesbury. The only person left living on her estate after it was sold off to developers. Outside, irony laden hoardings declare "a fair future for all". Such tensions exist in cities across the UK but it's in the capital that things are most extreme.

"You know London is a very compact area," says Paul. "And land costs a hell of a lot

of money there and I think in some situations you know something has to give. Because you know it's very difficult to acquire land. Local authorities have had their budgets cut. And it's just the perfect storm where the people who are going to suffer are what would be referred to as indigenous working class communities."

There's the story of the Heygate estate in Elephant and Castle. Example par bloody excellence for a process that ultimately sees traditional working class communities pushed out or made alien in their own area.

"And I think that's all that matters when we see our local working class populations just diminish and areas become not gentrified because that's a nice word but actually socially cleansed," explains the director. "Where the Heygate stood is now called Elephant park. The council partnered with an Australian company called Lend Lease and the deal that they did, it doesn't make any financial sense. You can see the figures in the film. They demolished 1000 homes and scattered those 3000 people that were living there."

More often than not, the properties are swept up by foreign investors. Former residents (even those that availed of right to buy) are offered miserable buyouts that leave them unable to compete for new homes on the open market. The figures illustrate a mass displacement to the sticks.

Many of these estates are iconic. Heygate popped up in Attack The Block and Top Boy. Even a Madonna video. Balfron was designed by a key Brutalist Hungarian architect Erno Goldfinger and was once heralded for quality and experimentation in social housing. The fabric of pre-existing communities were held together and housed beside each other in the development.

Goldfinger even moved in for a period and threw champagne parties to elicit insights from the residents. Directly inspiring JG Ballard's High Rise. Balfron also appeared in an Oasis video. Paul Syng fills me in on what happened the residents of this fabled 26 storey structure.

"It went into a bit of what you know was, I suppose, called decline because not enough care or money was being spent on it by Tower Hamlets council and eventually there was a buy out. Residents decided for it to be stock transferred from our hampers to a housing association called Poplar HARCA."

Poplar HARCA decided they couldn't refurbish it. Heritage status made it too costly. So they "decanted" everyone to properly modernize it. "Unfortunately they then decided that they wouldn't actually move people back in," says Paul. "They'd moved them all out

and then they decided to turn it into a luxury apartment so what was originally designed to be housing for working class communities is now turned into a luxury apartment development."

Syng's earlier documentary Invisible Britain charted how the Sleaford Mods burst into popular consciousness articulating a raw rage that captured Britain breaking down along the very class lines New Labour had said no longer existed. Dispossession leaves you with a similar sense of a culture war being waged from above. A war waged through poverty porn and condescending comedy that stigmatizes those that live in social housing. This year's BAFTA award for comedy went to People Just Do Nothing. A show whose origins derive in taking the piss out of a documentary called Tower Block Dreams Ghetto On Sea.

"You only need to turn on the TV you know on any given day or night and if you flip channels you'll come across, you know, some of those property porn shows like A Place In The Sun. That sort of thing. Where it's all about owning your own home," says Paul. "And you know that's become something that not only everybody kind of wants but everybody is made to feel they should aspire to. And so you got that side of things. And on the other side you've got the last I don't know twenty or thirty years of stigmatization of people that live on council estates or live in council housing and that's in the arts and media every day in programs like Little Britain with that Vicky Pollard character. "

In some quarters, these grandiose structures that transformed skylines and lives are said to have failed to stand the test of time design-wise. Less machines for living in and more factories of alienation and anti-social behaviour. I ask Paul if this view is just another excuse to knock social housing. Not just metaphorically, but quite literally as we've seen even here in Ireland.

"In a lot of these cases it was problems with society. It was problems down to deep inequality whether that was through low wages, whether that was through not providing people with sufficient means of welfare that you then create problems. I mean things like crime come from people they don't come from a particular building and a lot of these buildings they're really well designed and architects know what they're doing in these things and I think to actually blame the buildings just becomes a convenient excuse to knock them down but you don't solve problems."

There's a tragic urgency to the flick. It premiered five days before the Grenfell Tower fire. How would this disaster have impacted the documentary had it coincided with filming? Paul's answer lends an insight to the basic solidarity that underpins his filmmaking.

"It would be difficult to make a film about council housing and not include Grenfell," he says. "Grenfell is the most significant thing that's happened, I would say perhaps in the history of council housing really. I think it shows the level of neglect and the lack of value that was placed on the people that lived there. How would we have included it? I can't really say. I mean I'm always very wary of things like this. You can be seen to exploit a situation. I'd never go down there and poke a camera in someone's face because it's not how I do things."

Sometimes our own national conversation on housing sounds like people discussing the weather. A phenomenon beyond our control. While stringing landlords and the government up for this mess of a market might be a comforting flight of fantasy, Paul Syng offers practical sketches to cog and ram down the throat of the next establishment politician that knocks on your door.

For a start he argues to suspend the right to buy in England. "It's happened in Scotland I think it's happening in Wales and you know until we can replace that housing stock that's being sold off, we need to suspend the policy."

There also needs to be a loosening up of the greenbelts. "There's lots of land in England but there's lots of rules about what you can build upon and what you can't like," he says.

He also calls for a five to ten percent levy on foreign investors buying buildings and penalties for those left unoccupied. "If we did that and then ring fenced the money to spend on not only social housing but also on homelessness. That would be great. It might stop so many foreign investors parking their money here and leaving the buildings empty."

How's that for a to-do-list?

Head over to www.dispossessionfilm.com for more. You'll find information about viewing the documentary there as well as a massive list of inspiring local campaigns fighting back in the UK.



AFTER REPEAL- WHAT?



Pairtrúin

One of our favourite labels to come out of Dublin this year, Pairtrúin's debut release is one for checking out. You can pick up PTN001 Oli/Fes from All City

and catch the lads on the second Wednesday of every month from 11pm on Dublin Digital Radio. Oh and they've a banging pay what you can compilation on

Bandcamp too that had the NTS chat room blowing up for IDs.

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{CHOICE}

IT'S BEEN THIRTY FOUR YEARS SINCE THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT WAS ADDED TO THE CONSTITUTION, AND IT LOOKS LIKE 2018 WILL BE THE YEAR WE MAY FINALLY GET RID OF IT. WHAT WE'LL ACTUALLY GET TO VOTE ON REMAINS TO BE SEEN. WITH THE REPEAL MOVEMENT SO GIDDILY HIGH, IT'S EASY TO FORGET THAT REMOVING THE AMENDMENT MIGHTN'T BE ENOUGH. CATHY FLYNN SURVEYED CAMPAIGNERS ACROSS THE ISLAND TO SUSS OUT WHAT BATTLES MIGHT BE ON THE HORIZON.

Word on the mean streets of Dail Eireann suggests the the real talk is happening outside of the Joint Oireachtas Committee which was set up to consider the findings of the Citizens' Assembly. Fine Gael, as the majority party, are conducting their own talks on the side, out of public view, aiming to water down the Citizen's Assembly recommendations, which were far more liberal than anyone anticipated.

Various politicians, both within and outside of Fine Gael have begun saying to the media that the Irish public will reject these liberal recommendations, as if to prepare us for a referendum where the only choice presented is to vote for super restrictive abortion access or keep the status quo.

"They don't know what they want!!!" is bandied about when anti-choicers discuss the Repeal movement, as if it's all one homogenous blob. Pro choice campaigns in Ireland range from NGOs to small radical action groups. But all pro choice campaigners in Ireland agree that the first step to any kind of abortion access in Ireland is to Repeal the 8th amendment.

Abortion access on request (demand if you prefer) up to twelve weeks of pregnancy is the norm across much of the EU. However, barriers still exist even in places with relatively liberal abortion laws. Costs can be prohibited, stigma exists and some areas may lack doctors who can or will perform abortions. In the UK, abortion is still technically a crime, despite it being easily accessible, and free from repercussions.

In Ireland, a penalty of 14 years exists for procuring or helping someone to procure an abortion, including via abortion pills, which are on the World Health Organisation list of essential medicines.

Geography is a factor in abortion access which is being considered by Irish abortion rights activists. Geography and stigma can come together to render abortion inaccessible even where it is technically legal. In rural areas of Canada, there is a lack of doctors who perform abortions, though the abortion pill is available.

Scarcity of doctors and clinics is an issue in the US and rural Australia also. In Sicily, 98% of doctors are conscientious objectors to abortion - which makes abortion basically impossible to access despite it being legal in Italy.

The Abortion Rights Campaign is the largest pro choice activist group in the country. They want free, safe and legal abortion, for anyone who needs or wants one. To achieve this, the 8th amendment needs to be removed from the constitution. ARC is a grassroots organisation, with over 20 regional groups around the country and solidarity groups around the world.

Though all Irish women have the right to travel to access abortion, the fact is that it is more difficult to travel from rural areas. Costs of travelling to an airport may push the travelling option out of reach for women in rural areas. Abortion stigma and fear of the neighbours might be more pronounced in small towns.

Denise O'Toole of Sligo Abortion Rights Campaign believes that conscientious objections could limit access to safe abortion providers and care. She pointed to European Court of Human Rights whose rulings make it clear the state needs to ensure access to legal services.

"The Irish Government will have to ensure any conscientious objection here is well defined, legislated for, well regulated in practice and complies with international and European law in order to avoid limiting women's access to reproductive healthcare,"

Denise tells me.

"Barriers which discourage women from having safe legal abortion potentially lead to women seeking unsafe and dangerous abortions. We have seen how the role of conscientious objection has led to a fatal outcome for women like Savita Hallapanavar and also other cases in Europe."

Denise points to the European Court Of Human Rights rulings in 2011 and 2012 saying "states are obliged to organise the health services system in such a way as to ensure that an effective exercise of the freedom of conscience of health professionals in the professional context does not prevent patients from obtaining access to services which they are entitled to under the applicable legislation".

"Women in rural areas already face greater barriers with travel, time and financial costs to access healthcare they need and certainly don't need any more," Denise concludes.

"Rural hospitals will need to provide abortions and comply with Irish and European legislation."

Inishowen is one of the most wild and rural areas of the country. In fact, the nearest hospital is across the border in Derry, and it it where most residents go when they need emergency care. I talked to Cathleen Shiels of Inishowen Abortion Rights Campaign about what might happen after the 8th Amendment is repealed.

"We need to make sure that abortion is accessible for women in Donegal by making sure we look practically at provision," she tells me. "The abortion pill could be prescribed by GPs. In those rare and often tragic circumstances when a late term abortion is required, families must be able to access compassionate care at home."

It's a numbers game. If the one available doctor in a rural area conscientiously objects, then women in that area have no access, and they still will have to travel. Which has a knock on effect, because lower income people can be prevented from travelling due to financial constraints. Our rural transport services are shit and expensive.

For some women, travelling all is not an option at all. For refugees, people in direct provision and undocumented migrant women, a trip on the plane or the sail and rail to the UK for an abortion is not possible. For non EU citizens, UK visas can be prohibitively expensive, or impossible to access.

You may recall the case of Ms Y, a migrant woman who arrived in Ireland pregnant after being raped in the country she was escaping from. The Irish state saw fit to deny her an abortion here, deny her the right to travel, and forced her to remain pregnant until her foetus could be brought to viability. She went on hunger strike, and eventually was forced to give birth via caesarean.

Migrants and Ethnic Minorities for Reproductive Justice (MERJ) is a new pro choice group. They represent people in Ireland who are affected by the 8th amendment more than most - those that cannot travel to access abortion.

According to Emily Waszak of MERJ, the narrative of this being only a problem for 'Irish women' needs to be challenged.

"The right to health care shouldn't be predicated on whether or not someone is a citizen or has money," she says. "It should be the right of all people who live here within the Irish context and more generally the right of everyone everywhere."

After the 8th is repealed, Emily says MERJ hope to see free, safe and legal abortion "with the understanding that it must also be

accessible to everyone regardless of where you live or your legal [citizenship] status."

There is a problem of institutional racism in Irish hospitals. 40% of maternal deaths recorded in Ireland are ethnic minority women. The 8th amendment affects all aspects of maternity care, not just abortion access. It can also affect consent in childbirth and pregnancy. The Association for Improvements in Maternity Services (AIMS) represents maternity services users in Ireland.

Krysia Lynch is the chairperson of AIMS. She said at a recent press conference that "the 8th amendment hangs like a spectre over the entire Irish Maternity services. It doesn't just influence women who chose not be pregnant...we already know that. It influences women who do decide to be pregnant who want to continue their pregnancy. It influences the care that they receive because it influences decisions that healthcare professionals take for them. It influences the way the pregnant people make decisions or can not make decisions for themselves."

AIMS wants the repeal of the 8th amendment and greater rights for users of maternity services and say women "should not be forced to travel to another country to receive basic health care. They should be entitled to it in their own country, freely safely and legally."

Parents are a group that have experienced the spectre of the 8th too. 54% of people who access abortion services are already parents. Parents4Choice are a group who represent the voice of pro choice parents in Ireland. I spoke to Linnea Dunne from the group to get more insight.

In a post-repeal Ireland, Parents4Choice hope that "abortion would be free, safe and legal, and available to anyone who needs it as part of our maternity services."

Like AIMS, Parents4Choice hope for an improvement in our maternity services.

"A repeal of the 8th amendment would not only enable new legislation for access to abortion in Ireland," Linnea explains. "But it would open the door to a reform of the HSE Consent Policy, improving care for everyone going through our maternity system, whether they want to continue their pregnancy or not."

For both AIMS & Parents4Choice all of this is an important juncture in a wider change of culture and modernising of our maternity services.

When it comes to the actual nitty gritty of legislating for abortion in a post-repeal scenario, Lawyers For Choice are on the case. "Free, safe, and legal is often mooted as the gold standard for abortion access," Sandra Duffy of Lawyers For Choice says. This echoes the concerns of the ARC regional groups and MERJ. "We also remind people that accessibility itself is an important factor" Sandra continued.

Sandra says the group is concerned that "the potential for conscientious objection to create lacunae [it means a gap, I had to google it!] in distribution of doctors who are willing to perform abortions, are all factors which will have to be dealt with in order to ensure accessibility."



Poverty of Ambition

THE GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON HOUSING IS TO CONSTANTLY REPEAT “SPENDING COMMITMENTS” AND ISSUE ESTIMATES FOR HOUSE BUILDING PROJECTS. PATRICK MCCUSKER DONS HIS NUMBER CRUNCHING GLASSES AND LOOKS BEHIND THE HEADLINES OF THE GOVERNMENT’S HOUSING STRATEGY IN BUDGET 2018.

Overall spending is up to 1.9 billion in housing, which is a startling 46% increase on the 2017 budget. This figure includes 500m to meet a new target of 50,000 homes for those trapped on housing lists. There’s also a target of 3,000 exits from homelessness in 2018, as well as an increase in the Vacant Site Levy and 75 million for new affordable housing initiatives. It certainly is a lot more generous than last year’s

budget or the near-total neglect of the issue before the time bomb erupted over the last few years.

This increase makes for great headlines and tweets. The same goes for the idea of a housing plan to build 50,000 homes and engineer 3,000 exits from homelessness (which is still less than the number of homeless children).

This budget is terribly forgiving to landlords, letting agencies and vulture funds. It’s as if the government wants to help those in dire straits

without taking any steps to actually address the causes of the housing crisis. In this spirit, lots of money is being counterproductively thrown at the problem.

For example, 301 million euro is going into Home Assistance Payments (HAP) to add 17,000 new tenancies to the 39,000 existing ones to create a total figure of 56,000 people in HAP. This figure is complemented by 134 million for 600 new Rental Accommodation Scheme tenancies. Whilst this

will undoubtedly be of huge help to those in need, it just enables the worst tendencies of the rental market in the absence of any strengthening of rent controls.

Even the 5 million increase in funding for the Residential Tenancies Board will merely lead to a stated goal of an inspection once every 4 years. And that’s in the best case scenario. Anyone who’s ever rented can testify as to how many combinations of tenants or even landlords can come and go in that time.

So if this budget does little to help private renters, does it at least alleviate the problem of supply by encouraging property owners great and small to bring vacant properties back into circulation? 9% of the housing stock in Ireland is currently unused, so it’s a good place to start. Unfortunately, the only answer is “not really”.

You could say that there was 32 million allocated to the Repair and Leasing Scheme, which aims to encourage landlords to renovate derelict properties so as to re-use them as social housing. It was introduced by Simon Coveney with the hope of creating 800 social houses by the end of 2017, and 3,500 by 2021.

However, this scheme is demonstrably a failure. Uptake has been a mere 15 of an expected 150 houses in Dublin city, 4 of 31 in Kildare, 1 of 25 in Dun Laoighre and, most damningly, 0 of 24 in Galway City and 0 of 41 in Fingal.

When the market for private developers is as good as it is now, it’s hard to believe anyone with property in a city is going to turn it over to the state at a massive loss to themselves. The increase in the Vacant Site Levy from 3% to 7% is doomed for the same reason. Doubling the Vacant Site Levy is unlikely to stir too many more owners of vacant properties into action when there’s a fortune to be made from bringing their own properties into the market.

There is some acknowledgement that the state has to get its own act together with regards to providing housing. Eoghan Murphy has set targets of 4,969 new social housing units to be built and another 900 to be acquired in 2018.

These claims don’t stand up to much scrutiny. If builds are to overtake acquisitions by a factor of 5 to 1 in 2018, it would involve a drastic turnaround in housing policy, particularly in Dublin. Acquisitions have consistently complemented or even overtaken builds over the last 20 years. As well as this, it pales in comparison to the 19,600 tenancies which a combination of long-term leasing, RAS and HAP are expected to create in 2018.

It also has to be asked just how the government expects the pace of construction of social housing to double in the course of a year. A recent study on The Journal.ie found that a mere 856 of the 2,500 builds announced for 2017 could be confirmed as being “practically completed” by the end of the first quarter of 2017. Whilst refurbishments also factor into these numbers, the uptake figures for the existing schemes don’t inspire confidence.

Although more and more people are being brought into the safety net, little is being done to stop them falling into it to begin with. Tenancies are being created through short term solutions such as HAP or RAS rather than anything more substantial for fear of interfering with the rental market.

It’s not hard to see a poverty of ambition when the increases and initiatives announced in the Housing Budget are set against the reality of the situation. There’s a willingness to spend money, but without drastic legislative measures to curb the worst excesses of the rental market and a demonstrably effective programme to build and acquire social housing.

It doesn’t have to be this way. There was a study by Dr. Mary Murphy and Dr. Rory Heame of NUI Maynooth which was recently published in Village magazine and showed the awe-inspiring folly of the government’s reluctance to build.

If the current government’s housing policy is followed to its conclusion, there will be 1 billion per year diverted into the private rental market

through schemes such as HAP by 2021. There will be 120,000 units provided by HAP by 2021, with no end in sight.

The study shows that it will be 32.9 billion more expensive to house these people via HAP over the course of 30 years than it would have been to construct local authority housing. As it stands, the government is pursuing a deeply counterproductive housing policy which unintentionally spends far more money in the long run.

The best Eoghan Murphy can hope to be remembered for in these circumstances are his efforts to manage the housing crisis. Without a change of tack, this government will have squandered the opportunity to do what they could have to solve it by pushing for bold legislative programmes and genuinely sustainable building plans.

Not only do we deserve better, it just makes more sense than the current mess that only suits landlords, letting agents and vulture funds.



HIV IS A POLITICAL CRISIS

ACT UP DUBLIN

www.actupdublin.com



We're not one for conspiracy theories but Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine fame recently raised the possibility of Britpop as

a government fuelled conspiracy, aimed at taking the wind out of the sails of the burgeoning rave scene. On that note Repeater books have

recently released a book on the subject entitled 1996 & the End of History. No need for tinfoil hats in this case.

BYE GEORGE!

GEORGE HOOK IS A LONG TIME BLUESHIRT SUPPORTER WHO MADE A GOOD LIVING FROM GREASING THE GEARS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE FINE CRAFT OF BEING A REACTIONARY WIND UP MERCHANT ON PRIME TIME RADIO. WE DRAFTED IN PAUL DILLON TO LOOK AT HOW THE HOOKIE MONSTER EVENTUALLY TEEL FROM GRACE AND TALK ABOUT THE FAR BIGGER PICTURE OF WHO RUNS THE MEEJA.

George Hook is as mainstream as it gets. No one said the favourite word of the middle classes "Rohnan O'Gar-rah" quite like him. He was the perfect media darling for a particular type of middle Ireland, pro-establishment listener or reader. He liked their favourite stuff (rugby) and he had the right politics.

It was great the way he would lean in close to the mic, and give out about about the trade unions, and then lightly say "okay, what sport do we have at the weekend?"

He loved business and the right type of business. The sort of private entrepreneur, like Denis O'Brien or Michael O'Leary, who could "run the public services better than (quick pause) "civil servants". Best of all, he did that in a populist, anti-establishment way. He made billionaires sound like heroic rebels, and reduced the people who actually do the jobs to part of the problem.

He's been there, insulted that and worn the blueshirt. He has a long term close association with Fine Gael. Indeed, so close he wanted to stand for them in a general election, but as a "Michael Collins Fine Gael candidate". He frequently describes himself as "an old blueshirt". He used to do a podcast with the two ultimate Fine Gael insiders: PR men Billy O'Herlihy and Frank Flannery. He even whooped up the FG troops with locker room blather about "winning a cup final" at the start of the 2011 election in the Aviva stadium.

Imagine a solid as a rock, right on, committed lefty who was close to or in a radical left party, enjoying hours of access to mainstream media, presented as a voice of common sense? No, I can't either.

His media career came late. He was 56 before he made a media breakthrough. Before that, he was a rugby trainer and he had a business which failed with spectacular debts.

He made his name first as a rugby commentator in RTE, making his debut as a guest in 1997. Later, he became a columnist with The Irish Independent. Who else! It wasn't long until Hook had extended his reach beyond RTE sport, and soon you felt a bit like Father Jack when he said "him again" and launched a missile at the TV.

But it was Newstalk (who else again) who gave him his best platform yet. Along with Ivan Yates, he became the station's biggest profile anchor. He hosted a drivetime show, The Right Hook which he "retired" from in 2016, before returning, phoenix like, with a new lunchtime show.

He has majored on being the whole political correctness gone mad theme. "Hasn't it awl-gonne-to farrr!" This opened up a firing range of options. He also championed the pro-free market ethos of a media group whose founder Denis O'Brien made 300 million in the late 90s from the sale of mobile giant Esat Digifone. Remember that?

That was the same licence which was the subject of the Moriarty tribunal. According to the tribunal's report "payments and other benefits... were furnished by and on behalf of Mr Denis O'Brien to Mr Michael Lowry, and that these were demonstrably referable to the acts and conduct of Mr Lowry in regard to the GSM process that inured to the benefit of Mr O'Brien's winning consortium, Esat Digifone."

It's great how that free market works, isn't it?

It was his lunchtime High Noon show that was to prove his undoing (for now, at least). During his opening monologue on Friday the 8th of September, shortly after he mused on staffing at RTE, Hook turned his attention to the case of Commonwealth game swimmer Otto Putland.

The story, which had just broken, was that a jury had cleared Putland of one count of rape, but failed to reach a verdict on the second count after more than four hours of deliberation. According to ITV news, there is the potential for a retrial.

According to the Journal, these were Hooks comments:

"She was passed around, went the story. And apparently she went to bed with one guy and he goes out and another guy comes in. She doesn't want to have relations with the second guy but he forced himself upon her. Awful.

"But when you then look deeper into the story you have to ask certain questions. Why does a girl who just meets a fella in a bar go back to a hotel room? She's only just barely met him. She has no idea of his health conditions, she has no idea who he is, she has no idea what dangers he might pose.

"But modern day social activity means that she goes back with him. Then is surprised when somebody else comes into the room and rapes her. Should she be raped? Course she shouldn't. Is she entitled to say no? Absolutely. Is the guy who came in a scumbag? Certainly. Should he go to jail? Of Course. All of those things."

He went on to ask: "But is there no blame now to the person who puts themselves in danger?"

The presenter continued:

"There is personal responsibility because it's your daughter and it's my daughter. And what determines the daughter who goes out, gets drunk, passes out and is with strangers in her room and the daughter that goes out, stays halfway sober and comes home, I don't

know. I wish I knew. I wish I knew what the secret of parenting is.

"But there is a point of responsibility. The real issues nowadays and increasingly is the question of the personal responsibility that young girls are taking for their own safety."

The backlash was immediate and massive. Thousands of tweets were sent calling for Hook to be taken off air. Crucially, news talk colleagues like Chris Donoghue called time. Newstalk held out for a week, before releasing a statement, saying that "George Hook has been suspended from his duties."

So what then does all this mean.

National Union of Journalists General Secretary Seamus Dooley is in a good position to know. He has spent decades in the industry, first as journo himself, but for two decades as a fighter for the rights of journalists and media workers.

"There are a number of worrying aspects about Communicorp's actions following George Hooke's unacceptable comments. His comments were crude, crass and indefensible. The decision to ban all Irish Times journalists from all Communicorp companies was by far the most worrying. It exploded the myth that the company's stations operate independently and exercise independent editorial judgement.

George Hook had no association with Today FM, for example yet the ban extends to both national commercial stations owned by Communicorp. The ban was announced by the Chief Executive and was clearly based on a company wide view of The Irish Times with no regard for editorial values."

For Dooley though, the fallout can not be understood without re-examining who owns and operates media in Ireland.

"The BAI needs to reexamine the decision to allow Communicorp own both Newstalk and Today FM and the company's approach should inform the decision on the renewal of both licences. The NUJ has been banging the drum about media ownership for many years. It is no coincidence that the Chairman of INM Lelsie Buckley has been the most outspoken critic of the current, inadequate restrictions on media mergers."

The public backlash against Hook is a signifier of the new landscape: the national conversation is no longer one way. All eyes will be on Hook when he returns to a new weekend slot in December, while Dr Ciara Kelly has gained a weekly residency at the station.

Hook is returning to a changed media landscape, where he is likely be challenged and held accountable.





Build Red Bases

Thought the radicalism of UCD SU was a thing of the past? Think again. The students decided to break away from their Centra chicken fillet rolls

and cans of Dutch to confront Kate Ascough's subversion of the unions mandate to campaign on repeal purposes. Let's just hope it wasn't

a flash in the pan. Make Belfield Red again! Forward to the student, peasant and workers soviets!

taking on the Vulture Club

LAST JANUARY, THE MASTER OF THE HIGH COURT EDMUND HANAHAN WARNED THAT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS HOME REPOSSESSIONS WERE TO INCREASE FIVE-FOLD. ALREADY THIS YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN 517 CASES LODGED BY COMPANIES AFFILIATED WITH VULTURE FUNDS AGAINST DEBTORS, THAT’S A TENFOLD INCREASE FROM THE 53 CASES RECORDED IN THE HIGH COURT LAST YEAR. SEAN FINNAN LOOKS AT THE SURGE IN THE FUND ACTIVITY THIS YEAR AND WHAT’S BEEN DONE TO FIGHT OFF THE BASTARDS.

Ireland currently has over 76,000 mortgages in arrears, an insidious hangover from the financial crisis. Up until this year, few suffered the fate of evictions and having their home repossessed. However, this year has seen a tenfold increase in the number of cases taken in the High Court against debtors. Why?

Since 2014, the European Central Bank has began turning up the heat on Irish financial institutions to address non-performing loans. This is an effort to give an impression that its affairs are squeaky clean, and to remove the last vestiges of a crisis that has continually threatened the very union that it governs. Fiscally at least. Financial institutions here have been scrambling to rid themselves of their non-performing loans, packaging them up and selling them off to private equity funds aka vulture funds in common parlance.

Private equity funds, or vulture funds as they're more commonly known as, specialise in purchasing 'toxic debt'. As Dr. Michael Byrne explains in the Debt and Development Report on Vulture Funds activity in Ireland:

"Vulture funds are a particular type of financial firm and financial investor. They usually take the form of private equity firms or hedge funds and their defining characteristic is that they specialise in investing in 'distressed

debt'. Debt can be understood as 'distressed', also referred to as 'non performing' or 'toxic', when the debtor is no longer making full loan repayments and is therefore in breach of their obligations under the loan contract, or when there is a high risk that this will happen. In other words, a debt which is in or close to default."

AIB is a state owned bank. Last April it sold €200 million of non-performing loans to the vulture fund Goldman Sachs. This transferred god knows how many distressed mortgages from an institution that governs under some (ahem) consumer regulations to a private equity fund answerable only to profit.

With property prices expected to match their boom time height by the end of the year, it's no surprise that the vultures are seeking a return now on their investment. By seeking repossessions on arrears, the private equity funds are using the state's judiciary system to evict homeowners in order to free up the property to sell for a lucrative profit.

"If someone can pay a restructuring amount then a bank might have a solution. But if the loan is sold to a vulture they don't do restructuring," states Hall. "So a family could pay €1500 of a €1900 mortgage but the vulture has no restructuring process to accept this and therefore requires full payment plus arrears. A bank might split the mortgage and accept the €1500. This means it's way more likely for a vulture fund to proceed with repossession

proceedings.

So, what's the difference between a bank owning your mortgage or a private equity fund. For one, vulture funds are not regulated by the central bank. They abide by their own rules. Like the rack renters seeped deep in the Irish psyche, vultures can and have behaved with impunity. They offer no opportunities to restructure and unlike banks, are not regulated under European Consumer Law.

Larry Broderick, of the Irish Financial Services Union spoke to rabble on the main differences between the two.

"At present the banks are putting in a significant effort to work out solutions with people in arrears on their mortgage. Off-loading non-performing home loans to a for-profit, so called 'vulture fund' could have serious implications for thousands of mortgage holders in financial distress. There is no guarantee that a 'vulture fund' would put the same effort into finding solutions for mortgage holders in distress and it could aggressively pursue court proceedings and try to secure repossessions."

"As of September 2016, 90,000 Irish loans are in the possession of vulture funds. The number of mortgages are unclear but there is anywhere between 10,000 Irish mortgages to 20,000. There has been a 40% increase in the number of repossessions of PDHs in arrears between 2016 and 2015. The Irish state is not galled by their presence nor the unprecedented power that they are

acquiring in Irish society."

Earlier this year Minister for Finance Michael Noonan stated of the funds:

"You criticise me for not intervening with vulture funds. Well, it was a compliment when they were so dubbed in America because vultures, you know, carry out a very good service in the ecology. They clean up dead animals that are littered across the landscape."

Such a good service it seems that, as the Sunday Business Post reported earlier this year, the government allowed them to pay just €8,000 in tax on assets of over €10 billion. I'll let you scoop your jaw up off the ground before reading that figure again.

It's not just in the absence of a tax rate that the Irish state is allowing private equity funds to set its agenda. Just look at the complete absence of regulation of the firm's dealing with their 'clients' and the use of state authorities, such as the Gardaí and the County Sheriff to carry out evictions.

What can be done to suppress the role of the vultures and offer banks an alternative to selling their non-performing loans on to the vultures?

Broderick states that it's up to the government to look at its own role, especially since it's the majority shareholder in AIB bank which has been selling off its bad loans to the vultures.

"The State needs to look at what is good for society as a whole and it should use its power, including its majority

shareholding in AIB, to achieve the best social outcomes. Keeping people in there is a positive social outcome and that needs to be reflected in AIB's approach to its non-performing loan book."

He continued, "The banks could offload their non-performing loans to a not-for-profit organisation which is focused on keeping families in their homes. There are proposals along these lines currently being developed, some at a very advanced stage."

Some of these proposals have since come to fruition. One of which has been the Mortgage To Rent scheme, launched in September by the Irish Mortgage Holders Association, AIB and iCare housing.

In this scheme, a mortgage owner in distress contacts one of the above, and if they qualify for the scheme, iCare buys the mortgage at a discount rate from the bank. Mortgage holders then rent their home from iCare but with the option at any time to re-buy their house at the discounted price which iCare bought it from.

iCare isn't the most desired solution. AIB's involvement raises a lot of eyebrows given the recent announcement that it's to pay no corporation tax for the next 20 years.

Yet in the short term at least, iCare does keep the wolves from the door and gets rid of the constant stress that comes with facing down the banks every day. It'll do for now.



it's total class exploitation

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE FASTEST-GROWING SECTORS OF THE IRISH ECONOMY. A QUICK GLANCE AT JOBS.IE LEAVES YOU IN NO DOUBT THAT THERE ARE PLENTY OF JOBS IN THE SECTOR. HORROR STORIES ABOUND OF MISTREATMENT OF STAFF BY UNSCRUPULOUS SCHOOLS. STUDENTS DON'T FAIR TOO WELL EITHER. GEMMA HYLAND CASTS HER EYE ON THIS BOOMING SECTOR.

As momentum grows around a UNITE union campaign on behalf of teachers looking for better working conditions and job security, it's worth remembering how this predatory sector also targets and exploits its students.

Many students from Brazil, Venezuela and other non-EU countries come to Ireland on a Stamp 2 student visa - which allows them to work for up to 20 hours a week while they are studying. Studying English is the most common way to get this visa. In order to get it, though, students have to have a minimum attendance record of 80% or their visa will be cancelled.

Back in 2014 some major media investigations found that schools were systematically playing around with attendance records - one investigation found, among other things, that out of a random selection of 21 students in one school, 12 had never even shown up for class. In one college 950 students were on the books in a building that only had capacity for 150.

Alice, a language teacher based in Dublin remembers the period, "a visa farm school was a school that enrolled as many students as possible, regardless of their facilities and with no care for the student actually turning up to class. They pay the teachers as low a wage as possible. I had ghost students on lists that I had never met. There was no academic direction, once you turned up and appeared to be teaching something that was enough. They were the cheapest courses students could buy to come to Ireland and originally once you paid your fee you could come to class or not at your leisure."

As the news broke and the government cracked down on dodgy schools, taking away the accreditation that allowed them to offer courses to students in exchange for visas, the sector was hit by a wave of school closures, with ten schools shutting their doors in the space of just over a year.

Often, students came to class in the morning to find the doors locked and a notice pinned to them saying that it had gone into liquidation. Students who had sometimes paid up to thousands of euros in down-payments for their courses were left in the lurch, and Ireland's reputation as a place for international students to study took a bad knock.

Since then the government body with responsibility for English-language education here - ACELS (Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services), recently absorbed into QQI - cracked down hard on schools, forcing an ever-tighter array of bureaucratic regulations on them. Teachers employed in the sector agree that regulations need to be tightened up to protect staff and customers.

Alice says that "stricter regulation means there aren't the cowboy schools being set up as visa farms with owners ready to run off with the cash at the first sign of trouble. We can never again allow a situation where business people see an opportunity to open a 'school' because groups of people want visas to work." However, there is less of an awareness of how this increased bureaucratization has affected students.

Students are carefully monitored and marked as 'not attending' if they are more than 15 minutes late. The role of teachers has become less about education and more about policing their students attendance, issuing cautions if it drops below acceptable levels.

Alice acknowledges that "at times you pretty much feel like an extension of the Garda National Immigration Bureau system and part of the immigration monitoring system."

As Jose, a Brazilian student based in Dublin puts it: "the regulations are much more restricted now for both schools and students, but I never seen an inspection to make sure things are going well academic-wise. The payment of the fees and attendance records seem to be the only concern."

Students now have to jump through hoops to be eligible to renew their visas - they have to show signs of progress in the language, and can only stay studying English for three years, before they have to progress to studying for a diploma or a degree at a higher level institute - further spawning a sector of 'cowboy' universities and colleges.

To get their visas students have to show evidence of their progress in the language, leading to an 'examinification' of the system in which most education becomes geared towards passing the Cambridge exams that ACELS deems a marker of competence in English. This 'qualification culture' has created a situation where having the exam skills and exam technique necessary to pass the exam and get your certificate is considered way more important than actually learning to speak.

Even to progress to a higher-level institute non-native English speakers have to do the IELTS exam to show that they have a sufficiently high level of English. All of this makes money for Cambridge, the company that makes most of these exams.

Most students - who can afford to fly to Ireland, support themselves here as they get started, pay expensive school fees, and show Irish immigration authorities that they have the three grand in their bank accounts needed to be eligible for a student visa - come from relatively middle-class backgrounds in their own countries. Nevertheless, here they are anything but - they work in low-paid service sector jobs, serving tables, delivering pizzas and cleaning office buildings. Given that they have to study a minimum of 15 hours a week, and that those hours have to be during normal 9-5 work hours, most students are by default ruled out of the professional environments in which they might have experience and qualifications. Instead they forced into low-paid part-time work.

It is also foreign students like these who are among the most exploited by slum landlords in the middle of a housing crisis - one Dublin landlord was found to have over 70 people crowded into one house in extremely hazardous conditions - most of them international students. Despite whatever romantic views the cosseted Left here might have, many Venezuelan genuinely fear to go home, and stay on here illegally working for poor pay in the black economy after their visas have expired.

In the context of exorbitant rents and high-costs of living, 20 hours a week in a low-wage job is impossible to live on, so many students work under the table. These students, on temporary visas, provide Irish businesses with cheap labour without any chance at getting permanent residency status.

In this context, language schools, several higher-level institutions, the Cambridge-exam-complex, and even English teachers, as well as a whole host of other institutions, are part of a sprawling "border-industrial complex." This tangled web of companies and institutions rake in the profits from deliberately-created and highly-bureaucratized and regulated loopholes in immigration law that provide for the legal migration of easily exploitable temporary workers.

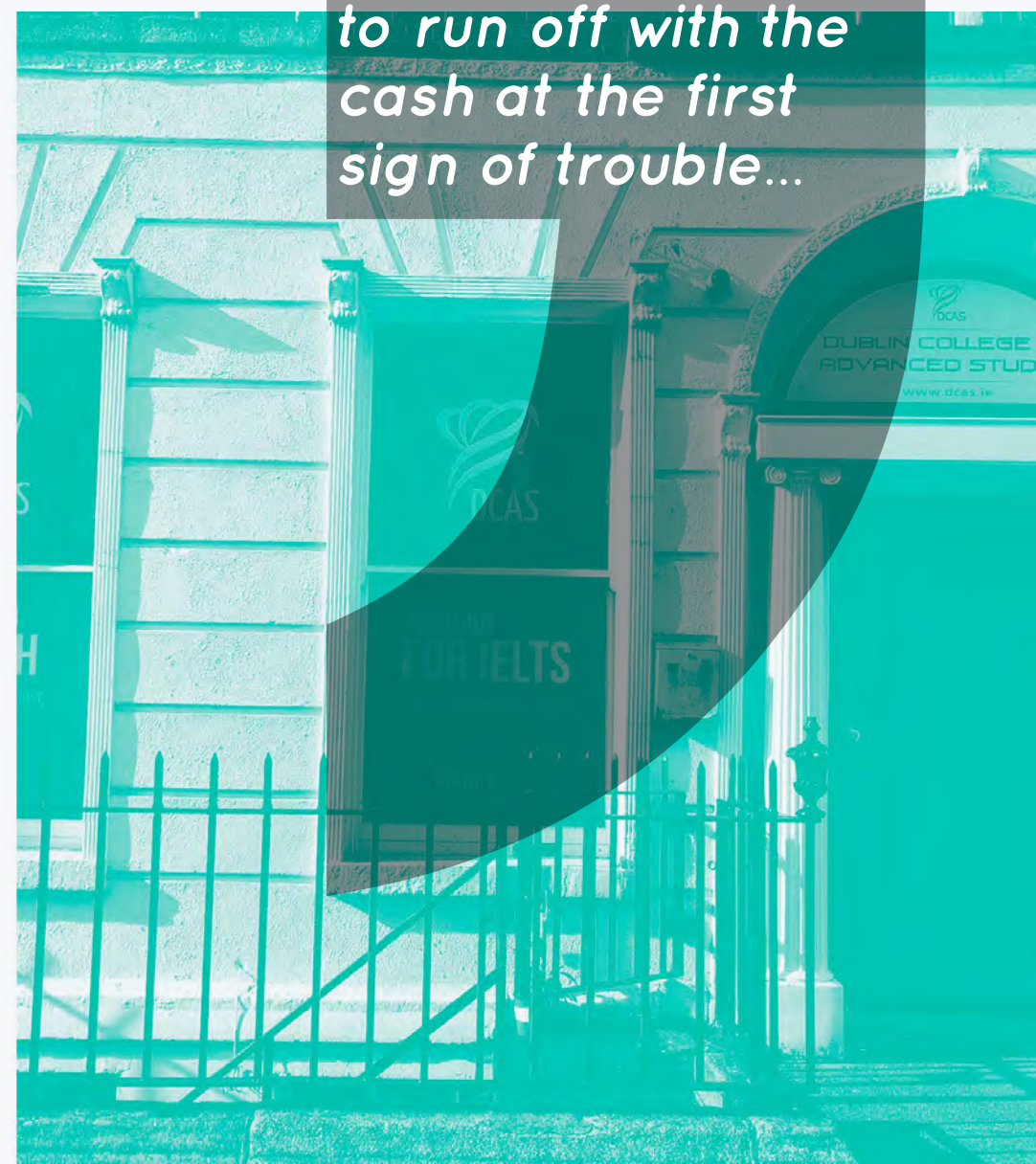
These workers do not have the same rights or access to social services and security as EU-citizens - e.g. they cannot access social housing services such as the HAP scheme - and their lives are regulated and monitored by forcing them into classroom three hours a day.

While there are a great many good schools run by dedicated staff that provide quality education to eager students, there are also many schools that exist only to profit from an artificial gap in the market created by borders, bureaucracy, and global systems of inequality.

All names have been changed. Photos by Beggars.



Stricter regulation means there aren't the cowboy schools being set up as visa farms with owners ready to run off with the cash at the first sign of trouble...





AUTHOR ENDA BROPHY HAS SPENT THE PAST DECADE RESEARCHING CALL CENTRES. HIS BOOK LANGUAGE PUT TO WORK CHRONICLES HOW THE INDUSTRY HAS TRANSFORMED THE WORLD OF COMMUNICATIONS AND LOOKS AT HOW WORKERS FIGHT BACK WITHIN IT. PAUL DILLON TOOK HIS CALL.

You write how, in the first decade of the 21st century one in every 3 jobs created in Ireland was a call centre job. And you define the call centre economy as part of the "Cyberteriat"? Can you tell readers who forms the Cyberteriat and what role they play in economic life today?

The cybertariat is a concept I borrow from the feminist labour

scholar Ursula Huws. The way I use the cybertariat in this book is to name a different set of working subjects and cultures. The case I make is that while it is strikingly diverse in its composition, the cybertariat’s labour processes tend to be mediated by information technology, highly routinized, disciplinary, and almost entirely lacking the passion and autonomy one hears so much about in descriptions of work in the creative industries. The cybertariat is not doing what it loves.

These are workforces assembled to carry out the miserable jobs that communicative capitalism depends on, workers who input the data, take care of the communication, deliver the products, maintain the consumer relationships, offer the support, and execute the sales. They are just as proletarianized as workforces have always been in capitalism in the sense that they have no other way to make money other than by selling their labour, but this relationship occurs in increasingly cybernetic environments.

One final point I would make is that I am not suggesting the

first group of “creative workers” are not proletarianized—they most certainly are, but their working cultures are often markedly different than those generated by the drab, workaday lives of the cybertariat.

What acts of resistance in call centres stand out for you as acts that might be copied by others who work in call centres, or taken up by those organising call centre workers?

The book focuses on three cases of collective organization by call centre workers culminating in outright conflict with employers: a strike in Atlantic Canada by call centre workers belonging to an established trade union, innovations in labour struggles developed at the margins of the labour movement by a rank and file union in New Zealand, and a form of self-organization forged by workers operating outside of the established trade union movement altogether in Italy.

In all of these cases, workers relied on some of the classic tools used by labour against employers: dis-identification with management’s goals, quitting, slacking, and refusing work, circulating counter-

Property Porn

-Less than two years after the Irish Times reported that Oireachtas banking enquiry was told that “a number of journalists simply acted

as cheerleaders for the property sector”, the crew over at the Irish Times are creaming themselves again with headlines such as

“Priced out of Stoneybatter, try Cabra instead” and “James’s Gate plan tees Liberties up as Dublin’s next hip district”.



While some of the scholarly literature writes off individualized and informal forms of resistance like slacking off or quitting your job as minor and ineffectual, they are actually very important in that they can support, or even become the foundation for, more threatening and collective forms of action...

perspectives on the work they were doing via electronic communication or alternative media, and sabotaging the labour process. One of the arguments I tried to make is that while some of the scholarly literature writes off individualized and informal forms of resistance like slacking off or quitting your job as minor and ineffectual, they are actually very important in that they can support, or even become the foundation for, more threatening and collective forms of action.

Other than this, I catalogue a great number of specific forms of resistance by call centre workers, from flexible strikes, to coordinated campaigns aiming to overload call centres with bogus calls during peak times, or workplace occupations. Those examples and many others will, I hope, be helpful to call centre workers depending on their specific situation.

There is no one size fits all approach—sabotage may advance workers’ positions in some cases, while collective organizing through a union may be the best solution in others. I certainly don’t advocate outright conflict unless the situation is favourable, since management has a formidable array of weapons trained at insubordinate call centre workers, including intense surveillance, temporary contracts so workers can be let go at will, and disciplinary enforcement of infractions.

You raise the question of "whether the established union movement in its present form is an adequate vehicle for collective organisation of the cyberteriat." What do you mean by that, and what conclusions are you willing to draw around that from your research?

Established unions do crucial work and in the majority of cases they remain the best solution possible for a workforce that is clearly on the back foot. I have organized through established unions in the past and have appreciated the resources they can provide to unorganized workers trying to improve their working conditions.

At the same time, I am sympathetic to critiques of the unions that were founded before the rise of neoliberalism, including that they can be too bound by legislation, by organizational culture, and by conservative hierarchies which are averse to conflictual action, organizing the unorganized, and addressing gendered and racialized injustices generated through labour markets. In my research I found that the boldest, most creative, and effective actions from workers came through organizations at the margins of the established labour movement, or operating beyond it altogether. This may be a coincidence and it could speak to my choice of case studies, but I don’t think so.

The Italian case of the workers at Atesia is particularly eye-opening: here a small group of workers, organizing against both the bosses and the established trade unions that were signing contracts

enshrining the workers’ precarious employment, forced a nationally-binding regularization of precarious call centre employment in the country, the broadest I’ve heard of in the sector.

Labour organizations should always keep creative and confrontational tactics in the toolkit, including brand-tarnishing, and direct actions like picketing call centre company customers or even occupying workplaces and taking them over if possible. All of these tactics have been used to great success in the examples explored in my research.

The figures on "churn" in call centres are startling. You quote a statistic saying that Ireland's call centres may have a churn of a third over a year. What does this high level of staff turnover mean for workers organising in call centres?

I’ve tried to challenge the predominant understanding of workplace churn as a sign of labour’s weakness in the workplace. Rather, I argue that workplace turnover is a manifestation of one of the most basic forms of labour resistance under capitalism: refusing a job that is unacceptable. When looked at from this perspective the massive ongoing exodus from the call centre is not a sign of labour’s subjection but rather of its resistance and autonomy. In fact, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that labour turnover is expensive and difficult to handle for call centre management.

One solution to the problem generated by workplace churn lies in recognizing that workers with experience in organizing a union could bring the seeds of unionization from one workplace to the next. In New Zealand, Maori and Pacific Islander workers organized in the fast food sector by the Unite Union in its Supersize My Pay campaign of 2005, popped up in call centres a couple of years later and hit the ground running in the Calling for Change campaign organizing outsourced call centres.

What will automation mean for the future of call centre work? Does automation threaten the future of call centre workers, in a very fundamental way, in that it may mean that huge numbers of call centre workers are replaced?

For call centre companies the automation of call centre work offers a tempting alternative to the cost and effort associated with shaping, disciplining, and supporting an often unpredictable labour force. In fact, this kind of labour is already partially automated and the work has been downloaded to the consumer, who is forced to press buttons as they navigate through automated menus to access the information, services, or people they need. And a cutting-edge industry is developing around the goal of expanding on this first, rudimentary stage of call centre automation, drawing on advances in AI, database mining, and computer-processing speed.

On the other hand, the more you know about call centre work the more you appreciate the degree of complex, culturally-sensitive,

and emotionally intelligent labour that often goes into it when it is performed well. Even training workers from the Indian subcontinent around the cultural nuances of the consumers they’ll be speaking to in the United States is immensely complicated.

But the prospect of automation should nonetheless be taken very seriously by workers and their organizations.

When describing the composition of the call centre labour you use the words "feminisation, precarity, mobility" and you note that women are overrepresented on the call centre floor, and underrepresented in management positions and in high tech sector. Can you elaborate on this?

I see call centre work as a clear example of a broader labour market transformation, what has been called the “feminization” of labour. This is a double process involving growing participation by women in the waged workforce and an expansion of the formal economy to include jobs that are female-associated (nursing, care-giving, child rearing, etc.).

Most estimates put the info-service workforce in call centres globally at somewhere around 70% female, and this statistic is surprisingly consistent globally. So the call centre is a feminized space, but this doesn’t mean that it is an egalitarian one by any means—these workspaces institute and consolidate new forms of patriarchal and class relationships.

You end the book on a hopeful note by arguing that "another call centre is possible". You note that discussion of how call centres could be transformed by and for the cybertarian workforce are few and far between. Why is this the case?

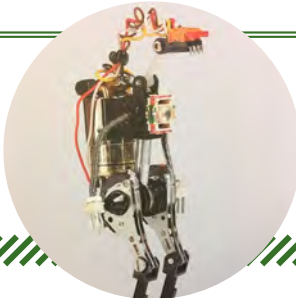
I’m genuinely stumped at the lack of research on examples of socially progressive applications of the call centre. Nor do scholars seem to be interested in examples of the call centre or similar workspaces being organized democratically in a genuinely democratic fashion. So there’s an immense amount of academic research on call centres, but virtually none of it has explored the relevant historical and contemporary examples of workers running the phone lines without bosses, whether through collectives, cooperatives, or during labour occupations.

To give just one example, the NGO Women on Waves runs, among other services, a safe abortion hotline for women in Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand, Poland, and Morocco. These examples are really important and we should be paying attention to them.

The buke is called Language Put to Work: The Making of the Global Call Centre Workforce. Out on Palgrave Macmillan.

One of our favourite Irish non fiction books of the year has to be Mark O’Connell’s To Be A Machine. With all this talk of Post-Humanism, O’Connell has one upped the lot

and meets those that are taking the journey into conjoining the human body with machine. What could be the worst that will happen?



{SOLIDARITY}

FOR WHOM THEY YELL THE TROLLS?

THE MINISTRY OF STRATEGIC AFFAIRS HAVE DENOUNCED THE GLOBAL BDS CAMPAIGN AS ANTI-SEMITIC AND HAVE FOUGHT IT TOOTH AND NAIL. NOW, THEY HAVE ADOPTED A NEW STRATEGY THAT COMBINES THE ADDICTIVE NATURE OF VIDEO GAMES WITH THE INSIDIOUS CACOPHONY OF INTERNET TROLLING. KYLE MULHOLLAND GETS DOWN IN THE MIRE AND TAKES A LOOK.

On June 7th a strange advert appeared on social media. It was an obvious piece of propaganda that framed all of the negative press Israel receives as lies and slander. The video shows a nerdy looking young man accosted by two women, ‘You’re smart’ they tell him, ‘You know the truth about Israel’. They lead him on an exodus to show the world the real Israel, embarking on humanitarian missions and other wholesome activities. It’s all to no avail, when he gets home all of his good deeds have been twisted by the media into yet more fake news. He’s dejected, but the buxom models return to tell him there’s an easier way, downloading the 4IL app on his phone and fighting the good fight for Israel online.

4IL is a smartphone app that rewards users achievements for interacting on social media with certain pre approved coverage of Israel. Users can earn badges for sharing positive coverage, and flagging negative press to get it taken down. The target media is designated as a ‘mission’ within the app. The more missions you complete the more you level up your account. There is a social aspect, users are encouraged to personalise their profiles, join groups, and compete with other users to get to the top of a leaderboard.

This kind of reward-based incentivisation is called gamification, the use of systems usually found in video game design to promote desired behaviours. Gamification is becoming increasingly common in app design, even if you haven’t realised it, you have probably fallen under its spell. Duolingo, a popular language learning app, uses

levelling up and daily login awards to keep its users coming back. The technique employed in 4IL is called a reward loop. Completing missions unlocks a badge, each subsequent badge will take a little more work to unlock. This is the same type of gameplay loop employed by games like World of Warcraft and Nintendo’s Pokemon, it’s inherently addictive with each achievement giving the user a little shot of dopamine. Eventually this starts to wear thin, this is where their second game system takes over; the leaderboard. As the number of actions between achievements grows, users can start to slowly drift away but the leaderboard helps draw them back. It’s similar to how Call of Duty became popular by constantly regenerating progression system that shows your skill level.

This type of gamification creates value and uses it to hook a user’s attention, pushing them into performing the tasks you want them to. It is for this reason that more and more companies are using gamification systems to motivate their employees and squeeze a little more productivity out of them, using the little dopamine boosts that videogames are so good at providing.

Russia has become notorious for maintaining one of the largest internet troll armies on Earth. These so called “web brigades” wage an information war across the internet. They use a legion of fake social media accounts, a host of blogs, and an avalanche of comments to flood the internet with pro-Kremlin propaganda. The comment sections under articles critical of Russia are often overwhelmed with the troops of web brigades, drowning out all opposition. The journalists who write these pieces can find themselves the targets of

massive harassment campaigns.

A piece published in The New York Times detailed one such campaign aimed at Finnish journalist, Jessica Aro. She had attempted to expose the influence of the web brigades and found herself their target. They harassed, doxxed, and spread lies about her; going so far as to dig up old police records and frame her as a drug dealer.

The digital age has changed the rules of engagement, and an army of internet trolls is a powerful propaganda machine. The web brigades are a branch of Russia’s intelligence agencies, carefully trained and controlled with strict guidelines. This is one way to compete in the online war. What Israel has done, is crowd source its own web brigade.

Fatin Al Tamimi, Chairperson of The Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, says that 4IL is merely the latest cog in Israel’s propaganda machine, ‘The Israeli state, like all states responsible for gross breaches of international law, war crimes and human rights violations, obviously wishes that the world would simply ignore its crimes against the Palestinian people, and would instead treat it just like any other normal state, and not the apartheid state that in reality it is. Israel and its appendages spend millions, if not billions, on propaganda - which it terms ‘hasbara’ (a Hebrew word meaning ‘explaining’) - every year, with one aim: to get people to ignore Israel’s crimes.’

Hasbara comes in many forms, from PR style promotion of Israeli exports and friendly relations with other countries, to legions of

pro-Israeli trolls who in many cases are students paid to comment on social media. A common target for hasbara is the Palestinian-led Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement - a group that works to assist the Palestinian people in their struggle against illegal Israeli settlers.

“4IL appears to be simply Hasbara 3.0, sponsored by the Israeli government and mogul Sheldon Adelson” says Fatin. Adelson is an American billionaire and outspoken Israeli activist. “The app is clearly targeted at young people with its unlocking of achievements and other such video game-related features” Fatin continues.

“Perhaps what is most interesting about it is the military-style language being used: ‘missions’, ‘cyber strikes’, ‘Iron Dome of truth’ and so on. It seems the Israeli state is clearly trying to export its military-orientated obsession and the language of occupation to online millennials.”

Ultimately Fatin feels that 4IL will make little difference, and ultimately no amount of trolling in Facebook comment sections will distract from the illegal occupation and human rights abuses the Israeli government inflicts on Palestine every day.

Fatin feels that this is why the app will fail. “Growing numbers of people all over the world are supporting them via the BDS movement. It is the very success of the BDS movement, which cuts across the failed ‘peace process’, that is the reason for the creation of 4IL in the first place. But 4IL will not stop Palestinians from achieving our freedom.”

Independent Irish publishers Tramp Press are trailblazers when it comes to top quality, experimental and award winning Irish fiction. But they’re also

setting the standard when it comes to challenging sexism in publishing. Earlier this Autumn, they launched new guidelines to draw awareness to the constant

sidelining of women in literature and publishing.



BOTH HOME AND ABROAD, COMPANIES ARE PROFITEERING LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE FROM THE ISRAEL APARTHEID STATE. KEV SQUIRES GIVE US THE LOWDOWN ON SIX COMPANIES THAT DIRECTLY BENEFIT FROM THE OCCUPATION AND PUT A CORPORATE SHEEN OVER ISREAL’S CONTINUED BARBARITY.

HEWLETT-PACKARD

HP is up to its eyes in profiteering from Israel’s occupation and human rights abuses. HP’s technology and equipment facilitate Israel’s brutal decades-long military occupation of Palestine and the associated apartheid regime, war crimes and ongoing colonisation. It does this in a variety of ways, especially through the development of Israel’s biometric system used for population and territorial control and surveillance of Palestinians both inside Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory. In addition, HP provides the IT infrastructure for the Israeli Navy, thereby helping to enforce the blockade of Gaza, and supplies the computer systems for the Ministry of Defense. HP employs illegal settlers in Beithar Illit and provides services and technologies to two of the largest settlements in the occupied West Bank. HP’s Basel system is installed at the Israeli military checkpoints in the occupied West Bank which deprive Palestinians of freedom of movement in violation of international law. There is a global campaign urging people to boycott HP until it ceases making money from the oppression of Palestinians.



01

BANK OF IRELAND

In 2016, the Bank of Ireland came under severe criticism when it unilaterally and without giving an actual reason closed the accounts of the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), who had banked with them for 15 years. The IPSC lobbied relentlessly for months seeking an explanation for the closures, but none were forthcoming. Meanwhile, Bank of Ireland officials were spotted in Israel on an IDA (ie, taxpayer funded) junket entertaining prospective clients with whiskey tasting sessions. The IPSC has asked people to consider whether they wish to continue banking with an organisation seemingly so hostile to Palestinian rights. As an aside, it has also been revealed that the BOI is training its staff in Krav Maga - the martial art developed on indigenous Palestinians by Israel’s colonial occupation forces.



02

PAYPAL

The financial transaction giant has come under harsh criticism from human rights activists for refusing its services to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, while allowing Israelis who live in illegal settlements on Palestinian land to use it unhindered. PayPal operates in 203 countries, but has never allowed Palestinians to avail of its near-monopoly services. This has badly impacted upon the Palestinian tech and artisanal export sectors in particular.



03

AIRBNB

It’s probably no surprise that the company that made a fortune from figuring out how to monetise couch-surfing – and drive up rents in the process - is happy to take its cut from the expulsion of Palestinians from their land. Airbnb is the subject of a global campaign calling upon it to refuse to allow rentals in Israel’s illegal settlements. Over 150,000 people around the world signed a petition demanding Airbnb immediately end this practice, and the petition was handed in to Airbnb’s headquarters in the tax avoidance heartlands of Dublin’s docks.



04

MEDIMEE

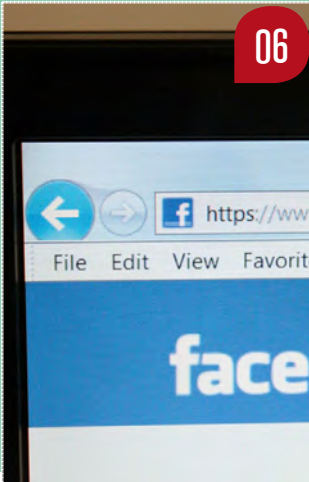
While not in the same league as the other four in this list, the small Irish health start up MediMee is the latest winner of Start TLV, the joint techwashing venture cooked up between the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the Ireland-Israel Business Network. Like GirlCrew, Bizimply, LogoGrab and Trustev before them, they happily accepted an award from the Israeli Ambassador after winning the competition in August, and will soon travel to Israel on an all-expenses paid trip that will help to continue the promotion of ‘Brand Israel’ amongst Irish start ups. In a supreme irony, this year’s Start TLV was billed as being all about “Health and wellbeing”, and took place at a time when the World Health Organisation reported that “Deep power cuts, the lack of fuel for generators for hospitals, and the shortage in medicines and supplies are placing more lives at risk every day and bringing Gaza’s health sector to its knees”.



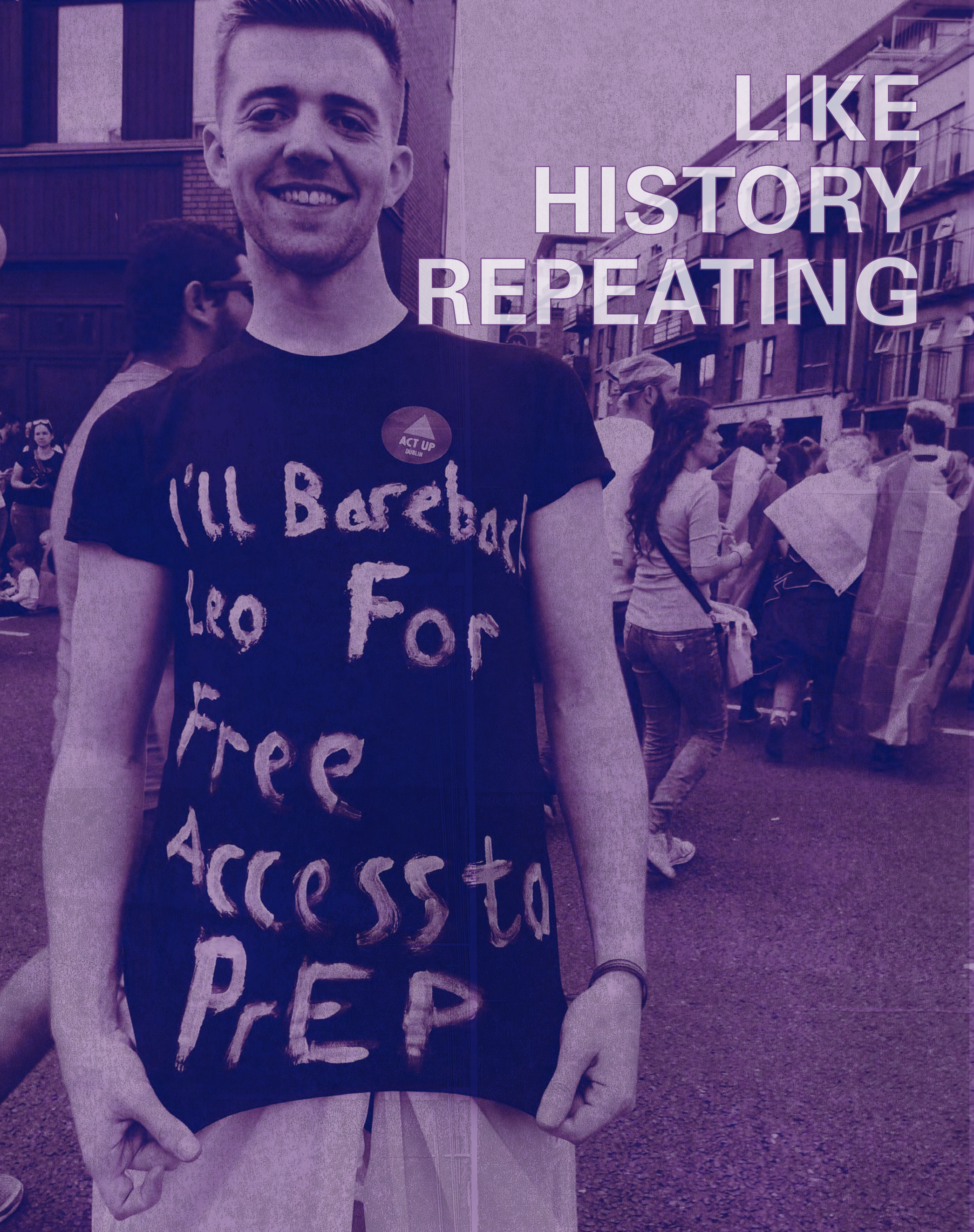
05

FACEBOOK

Not content with enforcing some of the most ridiculous censorship on the net (eg, banning supporters of the Kurdish YPG from posting, threatening antifascist pages with closure, etc), the Big Daddy of social media has been working behind the scenes with the Israeli government to clamp down on what it calls ‘Palestinian incitement’. The Israeli government is working hard to enforce legislation that will compel social media outlets to ban content that Israel claims “incites violence”. Basically it is trying to make Facebook censor any content deemed by Israeli officials to be improper. Sadly, Facebook it seems is more than happy to do its part by working hand in hand with the Israeli government; Ayelet Shaked, the Israeli Minister who posted (ironically, on Facebook) her genocidal desires to wipe out “the entire Palestinian people [because it] is the enemy” noted that between May and September 2016, she submitted almost 160 requests to Facebook to remove content, and in 95% of cases Facebook acted on her orders. Not long afterwards, Facebook began shutting down the accounts of Palestinian journalists - it seems that reporting the truth about Israel’s occupation is too ‘inciteful’ for Facebook and the Israeli government.



06



LIKE HISTORY REPEATING

Capitalism, Mate.

Deadly episode of the Team Human podcast series. It's a project by Douglass Rushkoff, you might recall his cyber culture shtick from the 1990s. Guest Richard Barbrook

uncovers the economic forces driving the evolution of technology while simultaneously acknowledging the utility of our tech tools as evidenced in the recent organizing around

Labour underdog, Jeremy Corbyn. He also finds sinister motives in Silicon Valley's new enthusiasm for Universal Basic Income. It's episode 47 at teamhuman.fm.



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NEW HIV DIAGNOSES ARE BEING RECORDED AT ONE EVERY 18 HOURS - A RECORD HIGH. THE LGBT COMMUNITY HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPACTED. JIM GALLAGHER FINDS THAT IRELAND'S RESPONSE TO THE UPSURGE IN NEW DIAGNOSES HAS BEEN PIECE MEAL, PATCHY AND ILL INFORMED.

There has been no coordinated national response to the surge in new HIV diagnoses until the National Sexual Health Strategy was launched recently. There is no comprehensive and accurate data on HIV in Ireland. Information on patterns, incidence and prevalence in different populations is standard elsewhere, and necessary for making informed policy decisions. Without the correct data, knowledge of the situation is impaired, and it is difficult for a more holistic approach to emerge: one which would include targeted preventative care and education, along with better testing.

All this concerns HIV Ireland, formerly the Dublin-based Alliance, who have worked to improve conditions for people living with HIV since 1987. Their Director, Niall Mulligan says “the ongoing upward trend in new diagnoses within the MSM (men who have sex with men) community is a crisis.” To address it, he wants “greater outreach with the community and increased access to free testing”. He says the lack of data on the crisis hinders an appropriate response, and “would help in arguments against regressive legislation (criminalising the purchase of sex being a case in point).”

The Dean Street clinic, an NHS Sexual health programme, have noted a 42% reduction in new infections at their large London based clinic since introducing PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis), a pill that keeps HIV negative people from becoming infected. The pill, supported by WHO (World Health Organization), provides an alternative method of protection for those who may not always use condoms.

In Ireland, however, there is no access to PrEP through the public health system. While some seek off-brand versions and PrEP is bought online, many have had medications seized by customs. The Irish Times reported in July that since January “eight shipments, totalling 630 tablets have been seized”.

Andrew and Elena, of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), connect the ongoing struggle right back to ACT UP's founding in New York in 1987. Central to their understanding of the situation is that “HIV is a political crisis” and that they must “make political demands on the state and government to do more.” Sexual health services for gay and bisexual men have seen their budgets cut in recent years. “This should outrage the LGBT community. We should be demanding accountability from politicians and public health officials, as well as the leaders in our community who failed to make this part of the community's political agenda.”

While there is new and effective treatment available, Andrew thinks the Irish state shows little commitment “to effective education and prevention, and almost no support services available for people living with HIV here.”

Furthermore, HIV remains a deeply stigmatised disease despite the dramatic improvement in our ability to deal with it.

Despite the dramatic increase in new HIV diagnoses among the LGBT community Andrew highlights budget cuts for services and a lack of interest or engagement in continuing with programmes which had proven to be a success.

Andrew doesn't solely find fault with the government however, for him this situation is “enabled by a community that never raises its voice to protest, never stands up to demand an effective and serious response to the HIV crisis”.

Elena says that “Ireland has one of the lowest rates of STI testing in Europe, with only 9.4% of men and 8.3% of women reporting ever having had an STI test, according to the 2006 Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships.”

In Dublin there are three locations offering free weekly walk-in STI clinics, GUIDE clinic, Beaumont Hospital and Gay Men's Health Service on Baggot Street. According to Elena, “People regularly report being turned away from clinics because there are too few spaces available. So you have inconvenient times and locations, general lack of rapid HIV testing, long waiting times, along with uncomfortable waiting room environments—these are all factors that have been shown to be barriers to testing, particularly for young people.”

“By comparison, Bristol—a city with roughly 100,000 fewer residents—has one dedicated sexual health centre which operates walk-in clinics from 9am to 4pm six days a week. Additional community clinics operate in 7 city wide locations and there are 9 other clinics specially dedicated to the provision of sexual health services to young people. Clinic opening times are varied with some operating until 8.30 at night.”

Elena draws attention to the 2010 Irish Contraception and Crisis Pregnancy Study which found that “although 60% of Irish adults had received sex education, this was focused mainly around the biological mechanics of heterosexual intercourse. Only about half of 26-35 year olds had received information on sexually transmitted infections and “safe sex” and less than a third had received information about homosexuality.”

She continues, “A text-book produced by people with links to pro-life group Youth Defence was being used in many of the country's top schools, including Dublin's prestigious Blackrock College. This book makes no mention of gay relationships, casts doubt on the effectiveness of condoms and advocates exclusively for an abstinence-based approach to avoiding HIV, STIs and unplanned pregnancy. When this is the standard of health education being provided to young people, it is little wonder people are ignorant, often confused and ill-informed.”

Elena emphasises the need to raise awareness of the reality of living with HIV today, the fact that “life expectancy for a person with HIV is now the same as any other adult. A person on antiretroviral medication is incapable of transmitting the virus to another person when they have reached the treatment goal of an

undetectable viral load. Women with HIV can and are having HIV negative children.” This is significant progress and can surely change how people living with HIV are perceived and treated by others in our society.

Elena is currently researching the impact of stigma on people living with HIV for her PhD and while noting that there is no silver bullet, draws attention to benefits of “contact with people living with HIV” as “one of the most powerful ways to challenge stigma in individuals.”

While the medical consequences of HIV/AIDS are totally different today than in the 80s, there still remain clouds of shame and fear overhead. Tonie Walsh, well known LGBT activist, has called for a memorial to those who have died from HIV/AIDS as a good way to combat stigma.

In his view, “we need to be more assertive in rolling out sexual health strategies.” We should see “the Department of Health proactively initiating an information campaign on PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis) and PrEP for GPs, we should have in every hospital around the country a clinic for testing and providing information.” Walsh knows all too well that some of the taboo with STI screening is caught up with religious morality and asserts that “we need to change, to tackle it in the school system and with an education strategy for GPs.” Something which can't be left to specialist groups but rather “needs to happen at the centre of Government.”

Tonie recalls how Gay Health Action (GHA) was the first group to take it upon themselves to address HIV in Ireland in the mid 80's.

“In 1985 were the first cases of people dying. It five years for the government to talk about it in the Dail. That is shocking, it totally illustrates the disconnect of the legislature.” Gay Health Action felt “obliged to roll out information on protecting yourself and what the disease was” to a “worried and bewildered population.”

Initially the Department of Health gave a small amount of money for the first information leaflet to be printed, which went very quickly. “When it was to be reprinted the Attorney General at the time advised the Department of Health it would be ‘inappropriate’ to fund a leaflet which was tantamount to encouraging criminal activity.” This excuse was to be used again and again by those in officialdom and civic society to justify their inaction.

“RTE used it in 1987 when they refused to broadcast an advertisement for Out magazine, they couldn't be seen to be encouraging criminal activity. George Birmingham (FG) the Minister for Youth used it in 1985. He was invited to the 2nd International Lesbian & Gay Youth Conference, (a precursor to International Gay & Lesbian Youth Organisation), but Birmingham wouldn't participate.”

Future funding was done by the gay community. “We used our own resources. There was the pitiful sight of us going around bars with buckets in 1985 to fund” the GHA leaflet. Indeed it was 1987 “before Ireland had a dedicated ward, it was in James' Hospital. It was also 1987 when Fiona Mulcahy set up the

GUIDE clinic for HIV and STIs.”

That year “we were so angry at the Church's attitude to condoms, we held a condom picket outside the Vatican embassy. We weren't selling them but we probably could've been arrested. We blew them up, put them on the gates. We had signs saying “Protect yourself from the Church - wear a rubber!”

Walsh sees “extraordinary parallels” between then and today. Looking at attitudes to rubbers then, “it's not too much of a stretch to compare it to the way we're stumbling around PrEP. We knew then they were the most effective way to protect against HIV. Now we have studies from the US showing PrEP being very effective in preventing infection.”

Though like Niall of HIV Ireland and Andrew and Elena of ACT UP, Walsh notes that “we can't just decide to make PrEP available for all, it has to be in the context of a better sexual health strategy.”

The history of HIV/AIDS is also a history of turning despondence into resistance. Alternative Miss Ireland was one such example. While it was originally a pisstake, “poking fun at beauty norms and fashion and po-faced events, there was great panache and extraordinary transgressiveness then, there was great art.” In the early days it was in the legendary club Sides and the funding went to the Rape Crisis Centre, although with “lots of emigration, deaths and so on” it didn't continue.

It returned in 1996 and launched itself into rabble rousing and fundraising for HIV/AIDS causes and charities. Walsh remembers “it was born out of us watch our friends get ill and die. The motto, which sums it all up, was “Glamour rooted in despair”. It was an attempt by those involved to “find a language to deal with AIDS”.

“You're in you mid-twenties, can you imagine, and you're visualising dancing towards the future with your friends only to find them die one after another, horrible and shabby deaths. The fear and bewilderment, who is going to be next, are you going to be next. It was a drip feed. I can only liken it to war, everything upended.”

However Walsh recalls “there was a dark and savage humour there.” One example was Panti's opening monologue which “would be sexing up STIs, she would go through an STI hierarchy and the types of people who would have each one.”

The success of the event meant they had “about thirty to forty thousand pound to work with a year.” All run on volunteer labour with people coming out of the woodwork to make it happen with money going to kids charities and gay men's charities and those like Cairde which was set up to help those with HIV.

“At it's heart it was conscious-raising, historicising horror. Implicit every year there was a group of people finding a way to wave goodbye to those who had died. It partly finished as we imagined we had grown up and the work was being done by the State and agencies that hadn't existed when we started. Time has shown that it is not necessarily the case.”

Head over to actupdublin.com or add them on Facebook to find out how to support them.

Basic
Shit

Dubliner Ed Murphy has been over in Berlin for the last couple of years working away on Basic Income for all. If you're over in Berlin call into

visit their Tinyhouse cryptocurrency cafe for basic-income advocacy - Cafe Grundeinkommen.

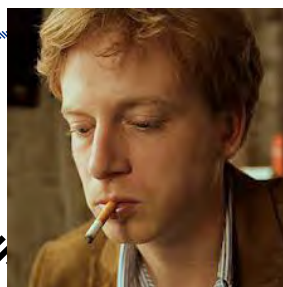


Jailhouse
Rock

Back in 2015 hacktivist and journalist Barrett Brown was locked up for his involvement in the exposure of state secrets over in the US. His regular column for The Intercept

from the inside had us in stitches with its portrayal of the characters he was locked up with and the byzantine bureaucracy of the US prison-industrial complex. Fresh out

of prison, his new column over on Motherboard looks like the sequel we were all waiting for.



It took 800 years to get most of Ireland back from the Brits, and then we just gave it all back to the Catholic Church...

SO THIS ONE NIGHT IN SKINTOWN



FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF HIS HIGHLY ACCLAIMED DEBUT NOVEL SKINTOWN ABOUT RAVE CULTURE IN 1990'S NORTHERN IRELAND, ENNISKILLEN ACTOR CIARAN MCMENAMIN TALKS TO EILEEN WALSH ABOUT DRUGS, PROTEIN SHAKES AND ORANGE MARCHES. AND WITH HIS BOOK BEING HAILED AS THE NEW TRAINSPOTTING, THE FILM RIGHTS TO SKINTOWN HAVE ALREADY BEEN SNAPPED UP. WATCH THIS SPACE.

People in Northern Ireland are tired of hearing stories about the Troubles, people in the South of Ireland are not remotely interested in the subject and people in the United Kingdom barely even know where the place is, so why do you think anyone would want to read your book?

If you're going to ask me why anyone would be interested in a story set in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, you might as well ask me why anyone would be interested in a story set in Charlottesville or why anyone would be interested in a story set in Palestine a few weeks ago. I think human beings are interested in stories about anything.

I set out to write a book about young people that was set in Northern Ireland that was based on fact rather than on lies. And the thing I'm most proud of about the book is the reaction it's got in England, where a lot of people said to me, "I never actually thought about Northern Ireland in that kind of context at all."

People are interested in stuff and people are certainly interested in stuff where life is kind of extreme and life is more difficult and life is more interesting.

Growing up in Northern Ireland in a lot of ways was fucking mental. But it was also one of the most interesting places to grow up and I wouldn't change it.

Skintown seems to be loosely autobiographical, with the main character Vinny being yourself basically. Apart from all the drink and drugs and wild partying depicted in the novel, there are some pretty bizarre sectarian scenarios as well as some scary and very hairy situations. What is the most surreal experience you had growing up in Northern Ireland?

The incident at the start of the novel, when Vinny finds himself in a car with two loyalist thugs because he has to pretend to be the girl's fella, is one of the few fully autobiographical sections in the book. A version of this happened to me when I was 18 and always stuck with me as a surreal microcosm of the whole place.

We dropped the girl home and they began to make it clear that my future was painful as they knew rightly I was a Catholic, despite my protestations to the contrary. When things looked really hopeless we crashed the car. Down fifteen feet into a field. The car was a total write off. The thugs were both drunk and we had a crisis on our hands and all of a sudden we were best friends in a shared new drama and all of the other sectarian shite literally went out the smashed front window.

Sounds like Brexit.

You're living now in Hastings in England with your wife, after having spent the guts of 20 years living in London. You left Northern Ireland a long time ago. Was there anything in particular that made you want to leave ?

I would be lying if I said the Troubles fuelled my burning desire to leave home. I left home to see a bigger world and to go to drama college. This would have been the case had I grown up in a small town anywhere. I would also gladly live in Fermanagh again. I love the place. My soul is definitely happier there. I just can't convince my English wife.

Vinny, the central character in Skintown seems to be totally uninterested in religion. What's your take on it? Are you a believer?

To be honest, I have absolutely no time for religion. When I am bringing up kids, at some point hopefully, I will not be putting them into a faith school, like I was. I think the Catholic Church has been one of the biggest scourges in Irish history. As the man said at the end of the book, it took 800 years to get most of Ireland back from the Brits, and then we just gave it all back to the Catholic Church. I've no time for religion and I think the sooner we become more and more secular, which we are doing, the better it'd be for everybody.

Much of the novel is pretty graphic with lots of drug-taking and sex. Were you worried about what your wife would think of it? And maybe that it promoted drugs and promiscuity?

The sole purpose of Skintown was to promote promiscuity. My wife has read the book but I wasn't nervous at all. I'd have been more curious as to what she thought about all the drink and drug-taking. We all know people who run around doing mad shit but they don't all take as much fucking drugs as I did. And quite clearly, you can't write about all that stuff in that nightclub on those drugs without having experienced it.

I used to go to the raves. I've been to about 60. In London and in fields in Somerset and in Belfast. I was in Kelly's in Portrush once. I've been up there a few times for the after parties. I knew that world.

Why did you base the book around Kelly's, given that you were only there once?

Kelly's was the driving force at the time for that world and that escape. It was an almost mythical concept that everyone was aware of. The Friday night exodus to Kelly's. The crazy druggie ravers and their little Kelly's secret club. I knew many friends who lived for it. I was always on the edge of it. I was more into the drugs than the early rave music which I hated but I loved the vibe and the concept, and in my experience it definitely broke down old barriers between people.

I liked the partying. I liked the drugs and I liked the scene, the fun and the girls. Music was and still is a big part of my life, but then it is for everybody. It's a connection. For everybody.

Tell us about the soundtrack that runs through the book. It seems pretty important to you. The different songs that appear have their own section and are listed at the end of the book as Vinny's Playlist and it's up as such on Spotify.

The music through the book is almost like another character in Skintown. Vinny has different musical tastes to a lot of his peers. And he tells a lot of the stories through the songs that are in his head. And all of us go through life with our own soundtrack, whether it's what we're listening to in the gym or the car.

It's different from everybody else's but it's our soundtrack. But as soon as you meet people who like the same music as you, you sort of instantly like them and find you have something in common with them, rather than stuff that's keeping you apart.

At the end of the day, two young Stone Roses fans, from East Belfast and West Belfast when they are 17, will end up sitting having a conversation obsessing about the Stone Roses. And that can be the thing that makes them realise that they're not as different from each other as they've been told since they were born. I think there's a really strong sense of that in the book.

One of the main themes in the book, because it happened to me, my sisters and everybody else, was this notion that the dance music scene and the drugs broke down the sectarian barriers in Northern Ireland.

Some of the writing in the book is absolutely stunning, poetic almost. One of the most vivid scenes is where some of the guys are coming down after a rave, scrambling down a hill at the beach, on their way to an after party.

The writing's always been there. There's writing in my family. There wasn't any drama but there certainly was writing. My Uncle John, JP McMenamin wrote all Gerry Anderson's comedy characters. All those great things we enjoyed. The woman with the cat. And Rosie Ryan. And all those letters Gerry read out every day on his show on BBC Ulster.

My uncle was posting those every morning. He sat all day on his own writing for Gerry. He had a very unique way of seeing the world and an amazing grasp of language for a man who never left Castledearg. It's quite a phenomenal thing. I was a bit wayward at school but the thing I was really good at was creative writing, particularly writing punishment essays. I used to take a lot of pleasure in them.

The main character in your seemingly autobiographical novel, Vinny, at some point falls deeply and madly and passionately in love. Hopelessly even. But next thing you know, he spots a different girl he likes and it's like the other girl never even existed. There is a later discussion about emotional unavailability. How would you define this?

It's about the male tendency to spend your life always thinking there's something better round the corner as opposed to realising that what you have in front of you is as good as it could and should ever get.

It's actually a concept that's probably more relevant now than to those kids in the mid 90's but it's something I'm really aware of at the minute with all this online dating on Tinder, which I did some of myself, I'm not ashamed to say.

But this concept of getting up every day to flick through the 15 new pictures of the girls you've been 'liked' by or paired with...there's a whole generation of young people out there that are flicking through pictures, making decisions about people before they've even cracked a joke, watching pornography every day and you can kinda see a world, for a lot of people, where the glass is always half full.

How did you deal with your emotional unavailability?

Mine was a natural progression from youth to age and then meeting someone at the right time as opposed to the wrong time. I think now things are completely different. Everything is so image driven. Young fellas drink protein shakes, not Guinness. The start of the end!

You talk a lot in Skintown about the tradition in Northern Ireland of Orange Marches. How would you describe them to readers in the South of Ireland?

They are the ultimate personification of outdated biblical anger and bile that's dressed up as culture. It's pathetic that they call it culture now and they call it the Orange Fest and all that. I think it's so nasty. The bottom line is, like in the Da's closing speech in the book, if we stop getting annoyed about it, it won't work.

Orange Marches only exist because they annoy the other side. I quite like the idea of a world where every Catholic in Northern Ireland puts on a wee red, white and blue onesie and goes out and joins in every year and makes them cups of tea. Then in a decade, they'd be gone.

Can you tell me about the best rave you were ever at?

The best rave I was ever at happened at the Caves in Ballintoy outside Portrush and the details are now available in all good book shops.

Like he says, it's out in the shops. Go and buy it!

Season of The Witch

There's an incredible generation of women that have taken up the placards again. But there was a generation before them, and before them again...

BRISTLING WITH POLITICAL RESONANCES, JESSE JONES PICKS APART HIDDEN HISTORIES OF DISSENT AND RESISTANCE. HER INSTALLATION TREMBLE TREMBLE, AT THIS YEAR'S ART OLYMPICS, THE VENICE BIENNALE IT FEATURES ICONIC THEATRE ARTIST OLWEN FOUÉRÉ AND WAS INSPIRED BY RESEARCH INTO WITCHES AND OTHER FEMINIST HISTORIES THAT ARE STILL RELEVANT TO CONTEMPORARY IRELAND CAITRIONA DEVERY CAUGHT UP WITH HER TO CHAT ABOUT ART AND POLITICS.

How do you think the witch has functioned as a cultural symbol and what brought you to it?

My interest in the witch came about over a long time, but specifically there was an exhibition in 2014 in the British Museum and it was called Wicked Bodies, a kind of thesis exhibition about the representation of witches since medieval times, including amazing works by Goya and incredible artwork. But I was very disappointed by the contextualisation of those images. At no point was it really contextualised that these images were a form of political propaganda and were often used to illustrate the demonic sensibility and otherness of women. In a lot of ways that othering of women justified their exploitation.

At that point I began to realise that there was something still relevant about that representation of female power, abjectness, horror and fear that could be in some way mobilised as a way of thinking about the role of women politically in the world today. It just became a kind of act of imagination, spurred on by a political position. For me as an artist it's really important to see those things going hand in hand. I never want to think about making an artwork as being super didactic about my political position.

The exhibition title comes from the chant by the 1970's Wages for Housework movement: 'Tremble, tremble, the witches have returned!'. Central to this movement was feminist academic and activist Silvia Federici, who wrote a foundational book linking the witch trials to capitalism. Can you tell us about your attraction to her ideas?

Marx's idea of primitive accumulation in terms of how capitalism developed as an economic system is really important. But I was really drawn to Federici's way of thinking about what happened during the witch trials, which set out the conditions for primitive accumulation. Almost like a kind of prehistory to that moment, and that prehistory was the division of people based on their gender, during the witch trials; the dispossession of 50% of the European population during that period of agency and power and property. What's really incredible about Federici's position is just how logical it is. You can see how the genealogies of misogyny that emerge with the instigation of private property.

It's not so much thinking about it from the position of Marxist primitive accumulation but thinking from the position of the enclosures and the invention of private property, and how that really sets out a gender based violence within capitalism. In terms of the possession of private property, the dissolution of the commons and then I guess the kind of dissolving of the deep connections between women and their relationships, autonomy, agency and role within a shared society. It really shifts that into something else, and I think the invention of private property is the thing that really instigates that.

I'm a working class woman from a working class neighbourhood in Dublin. I live in a working class neighbourhood in Dublin. I was aware of class politics before I was a feminist, but it was the explanation of class based Marxist feminism of Silvia Federici that made the most sense to me.

Ireland has a very particular history of colonialism, then post-independence a very powerful church, with huge control over women's lives. What effect do you think that's had?

Yes it has. But not just the Church. The State in the 1930's became a very counterrevolutionary, regressive force. Everybody on the left knows that. What it did to the relationship between women and the public sphere is shocking. I think everybody on the left should be acutely aware of how women have, in particular as political subjects, been incredibly dispossessed by that movement in the 1930's. And still are to this day.

What has the resistance to that been like?

There's a great feminist movement in Ireland today but I really am hoping that we can deepen that into a critique of capitalism. Feminist anti-capitalism is the way I see out of the other inequalities and injustices that we experience as women, in different variations, whether that be ethnicity or class background or economics. Our ability to access agency as women is also incredibly variegated based on these terms. A solidarity that is across class and gender divides is how I see this movement progressing.

Tremble Tremble is about the power of symbols, ideas, culture. Do you believe that trauma is transmitted through cultural memory?

Yes, even through ideas of the epigenetic, not to be so literal about it. We do have a shared consciousness that is somehow transmitted between us. One of the ideas that really helped capitalism establish itself is the idea of individuality and an individual self and an individual consciousness. And I think in a lot of ways, as people on the left, we need to think creatively to break down that assumption of capitalism and modernity, because all it serves to do is divide people into competitive consumers of things and services and reality. And actually to have a more shared understanding of the permeability of our shared consciousness. To think about that in a more expanded and artistic way is a really helpful political act for the left. Sometimes people think you're flaky on the left when you talk like that.

Do you think there's a resistance to certain kinds of thinking and creativity on the left?

If what we want to do as anti-capitalists is completely transform political and material reality of the world, we have to be experimental and expansive and imaginative in our thinking. We have to deconstruct the master's tools. One of the master's tools is rational scientific ways of analysing reality. They're totally approaching it with the same rationality that invented capitalism in the first place.

It's a counter rationality – Federici is counter rationality, she creates a different type of knowledge economy, that's based on solidarity and bodies and shared temporalities, and also shared unconscious. There's a kind of – there's a dark potential magic in that, that could be used by the left if they were not so square sometimes.

How do you negotiate that difficult relationship between art and politics?

Art is a very different type of communication than political discourse. It really tries to access us in a completely different way cognitively, than language or textual discourse. For me as an artist to communicate things that might be around our political unconscious is really important. For many years I've been very interested in the idea of the political unconscious and what might be holding political reality together for us in ways that we haven't articulated or understood yet. And that might be something that's connected to our shared unconscious in a kind of Jungian sense. So for me archetypes and images are always political acts of opening up that shared unconscious.

I suppose that's one of the things about my position on an artistic relationship to history, I argue that we need to have an artistic and a somatic relationship to history as well as a political and analytical one. To find the truths of history, rather than the factual, practical facts of history – what are the universal truths that history teaches us. So there's a kind of strand of poetics in how we might interpret history.

I feel like art might be the last place that we have as a refuge of really experimental and challenging political thought. When we think about how many other spaces within the public sphere have become incredibly generic and have become muted in their ability to express political thought. But I think there's something about the space of art that still allows us to challenge our own thinking and create doubt.

Are you hopeful about the possibility of change for women, in particularly around bodily autonomy, in Ireland?

I think that Repeal is definitely part of a really long fight that's been going on for a very long time. There's an incredible generation of women that have taken up the placards again. But there was a generation before them, and before them again. So I see it in a continuous genealogy, and I think it's an incredible moment and one that's part of a very long historical process. It took a lot for us to get this far.

I think that something has really changed in terms of the courage and imagination of Repeal movement. It was able to imagine a way of thinking about the legalisation of abortion in an entirely new way. And set that alight in consciousness, so you objectively see reality and say hang on a minute, you know, so there's a different cognition with the politics, because the Repeal movement has really shaped the argument and aestheticized it in a way, that can make links with people's imaginations. I think it's very powerful what's happening. It shows what can happen so quickly in a culture.

You can find out more about Tremble Tremble at the website www.irelandatvenice2017.ie. The exhibition will come to Ireland in 2018.



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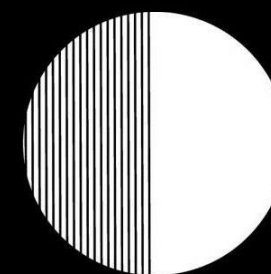
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He said what?

We wonder when Ireland will start treating climate change seriously before we all start living in a pineapple under the sea but it seems

it is easier to listen to the Healy Rae's and his argument that "Noah's Arc is proof that climate change" isn't a man made phenomena. Danny, we'd

love to share your stupidity. The simple life is the happy one after all.

COLOURS AND FACES SWIM PAST HIM AS HE READJUSTS TO THE LIGHT AND TIPS OUT HIS CIGARETTE WITH A HAIRLESS WHITE ARM. HE GLANCES AT HIS DESK, COMPLETELY CLEAN WITH A GILDED LEATHER FINISH REPLACED ONLY THIS WEEK REFLECTING THE CITY LIGHTS OUTSIDE. HE HAS RELINGUISHED ALL FORMS OF PAPER COMMUNICATION.

Here he reaches out to the ether, to the anti matter, to the still point of the spinning earth contained entirely in the sensory deprivation tank inherited after the fall of the old guard. He remembers the oath he swore around the deer heads and heroin frosted eyes of Varadkar's crypt. They'd take him with them if he wanted. Simon Harris, Chief Whip, how did that sound Baby H? He hadn't hated the old guard as much as the others. But by the end, the poor fuckers, they were too dicey with the swarkowski body scrubs and Garda inspectorate units.

Baby H plays his hand tighter. No Ardagh Chalice Cum Cams using your own IP, no reclaimed milkyway Labour assistants on the knee. Junior ministry, you got it sugartits. The ghostly Soc Dems mad and still trapped in the walls would beat chunks out of the walnut door for the noise until they were finally dragged off into the Seanad chambers and the key thrown away. The claw marks are still there he must get that door replaced he remembers. Rule the tank or be its victim.

Our hero shuts the lid and settles back into silent, grey waters. Tomorrow is the meeting with the media team and if he fucks this one it will be the pickled fingers of Sean Crowe pointing in his direction. One last chance, Varadkar said after those women died down in Ballyferriter. Maniacs choking on bath salts. Doctors said they'd presented a few weeks before giving their reason as risk of suicide but that was becoming the oldest trick in the book. It was always going to be risky, but Noirin assured him by the studio lines of Montrose that they had whole teams working day and night seizing packets and tea leaves. The heeled boots of every rhinestone cowboy backbencher were pressed against his temples since the Rotunda went public about the contradictory 7 month waiting lists in all public hospitals for the various hot tickets such as ectopic pregnancy etc. An abortion is not that hard he thought he'd fucking do them himself if he could but his hands are tied. They were ramming this same shit down his throat every second of every day until he landed his fists in an unintended splat against the leatherette of his bureau and told his secretary he would only be communicated with by eagle or through scheduled appointment at

the tank. If the Taoiseach wanted him he'd be here, working, really working with his glutes facing God.

Colours rushed before him. Pick a colour, Leo said. Pick a fucking colour and that's it. It was a beautiful idea, he had to admit. They'd found it on the whiteboard of Labour's old canteen back when the very notion of an extra hospital bed was enough to give even the lowliest troika pitbull the protein shakes. The Moon Tan- Protecting Mothers and Babies. When they eventually tracked Kelly down in a Tipperary marshland tearing the wings off a butterfly he said they would launch it as the Roisin Dubh, protecting the daughters of Ireland. It was amazing, not even fucking Putin could do this although the pumps would be bought in from Russia, recycled from an old machine that dispersed cloud separating crystals into the air and prevent rain only used once at Sting concert in Moscow. Another fucking genius.

"You see", Kelly had continued catching a fly on his tongue and swallowing quickly, "you pumped this chemical into the air and it reacted to heightened levels of progesterone in the body. Every pregnant person within a 50 mile radius would glow. You never looked so beautiful through the eyes of the state." But Roisin Dubh wouldn't fly, it was seen as the wrong colour, so to speak. Black face, coal face, good grief. So Moon Tan, wrenched up through the gullet of 10 hungry interns over 17 hours of a liquid only diet at last years' convention. Moon Tan, watching over you and yours.

Colours swelled before him as he wandered in the darkness. Never moving but travelling through light years of Harris family history from the first lobed tetrapods to leave the water and crawl along the rocky beaches of Greystones. Keep it in, let the breath flow.

Another three women dead. Every headline said it even the ones they'd got in the stocking from 10 christmas' ago. There's no keeping a leash on this, Leo said. I've given you everything, he screeched over the shoulder of a caramel two up two down parliamentary assistant rescued from the rubble of social democracy. Pick a fucking colour. Pass this through those Matt Talbot's in PR and clear us a deck.

The red of his eyelids rushed and bounded into eternity. He reached deeper into the chokehold of his mortal coil beyond the reaches of this dimensional prison and braced himself against the gushing tides of human, animal, mineral, chemical the incredible whiteness of his being and behold. Blue. Blue like the veins of his pulsing temple. Blue like the lips of his forefathers shattering their guns against the heads of co-op farmers. Blue like the morning sky. Blue like the new garda recruits flushing down their 25th baby guinness and reaching for his hand under the bar. Blue, like the moon that shines on him and blue like the light that shines from the pearly arses of Dublin Bay South.

He was saved, he was made. Protecting mother and babies, there wouldn't be a woman in this country they couldn't find before the journos got there first. He would be no English on a motorway telling abandoned mothers they could sleep here for the night, he would be no deer in the headlights. He opened his eyes and breathed in deeply. He had a facial in the Dail bar in 20 minutes. He climbed out of the tank and into the night, slapped a towel over his shoulder and knocked off the lights on his way out. He remembered his manifesto. Baby H always finds his way to the spray booth.

Words by Simone Harres. Illustration by Mice.



Maniacs choking on bath salts. Doctors said they'd presented a few weeks before giving their reason as risk of suicide but that was becoming the oldest trick in the book....



Living the Regime!

SOME RECENT MASTER STROKES & GAFFES BY OUR BETTERS & RULERS



01

1 LEO AND THE LATTES

There was a time in Ireland where coffee was for the middle classes, and tea for the workers and small farmers. Things have changed since, meaning that John and Josephine Normal can now access the full range of caffeine treats with ease. Alan "AK47" Kelly, the former Labour minister (remember him?) who tried to force through water charges, and stood over policies leading to the worst housing crisis in the history of the state) nicknamed the last budget "a cup of coffee budget.". Varadkar later responded with "Latte Socialists", a catch all term for lefties criticising the budget. Given Alan Kelly is on the verge of losing his seat to the Blueshirts in Tip, he might end up having a lot more time for lattes. He also may at the time of his losing be leader of the Labour Party, as he ferments rebellion against a hapless Brendan Howlin. Oh the chortles.



02

2. SCREWING WOMEN PENSIONERS

Do you remember the time when your Uncle Padraig took the early retirement at 55? Cousin Frank, if he retires after 2028 won't get a cent from the state til hes 68. And by then, the universality of the state pension will be torn to shreds so he'd better hope there no gaps in the PRSI payments. Direct benefit pension schemes (the one where you are guaranteed a certain income after your retirement) are closing one by one, and about half of the schemes left are underfunded. Tuned out yet? You probably haven't read far enough down to answer that question. The news is so bad on the pension front that most people turn off, and hope to fuck that the single Auntie or Uncle signs the lot over, as a way of making good the time the Mother and Father got shafted in that will. But just in case there was any shred of doubt about how bleak the picture is, there is worse news on women's pensions. In 2012, Joan Burton (remember how Labour protected people from the cuts? No, us neither) introduced more changes to how people qualified for the pension, meaning a loss of 1,500 euro a year for up to 22,000 women, with many more affected. The changes further punished women for being out of the workforce for periods of time, particularly those who fell victim to the marriage bar.



03

3 THE TRACKER MORTGAGE SCANDAL

There was a time when the Irish banks throw up a major controversy a generation, but now they throw one up every few months, at such a pace that people can barely keep track. Geddit? See what we did there? The tracker mortgage scandal (a crisis for those who have lost their gaffs, a boom for the banks who have profited yet again) are the latest in a long line of recent outrages. Delivered to us toned down and manicured by a media that's heavily reliant on cash from the banks. Pathetically, staged managed apologies and excuses from Bank Directors to a Government who largely controls the banking sector, and therefore could do something about it, were enough to move the media cycle on. Trackers are mortgages where the interest rate is the European Central Bank main borrowing rate plus around 1%.Thousands of people, who in many cases were encouraged off trackers onto fixed rate options, on the understanding they could go back to the tracker after a period, discovered that the option was gone when they tried. So they were lied to, at the cost of tens of thousands, by banks which are now the most profitable in Europe. The victims are the same people who have paid back 42% of the total cost of the European banking crisis, at a cost of close to €9,000 per person, according to Eurostat.



04

4 SPONSORING THE CRISIS.

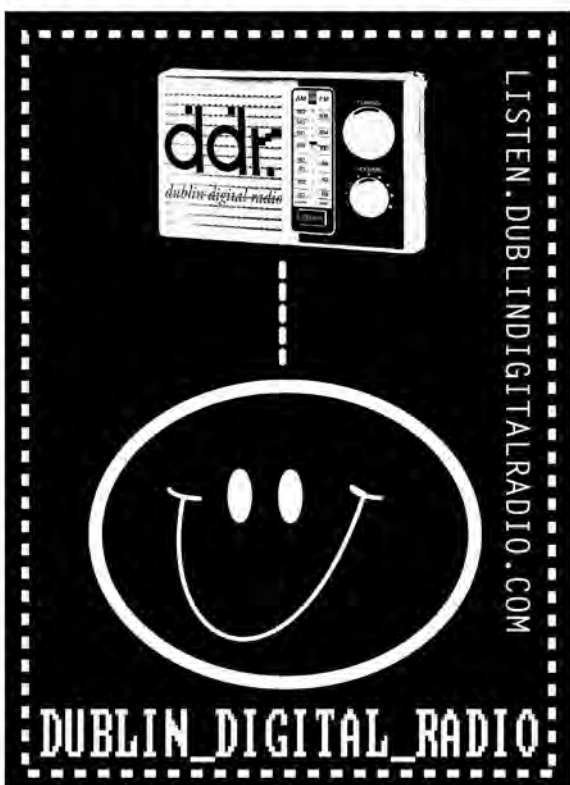
Do you like your property news served with a good dollop of self interest? It goes without saying that a big plank of Irish property policy is to rev mortgages up ta fuck, to get the banks as profitable as possible. The more you pay pack, the more the banks gain. Check out houses on the Journal. ie, where Ireland's lowest paid journalists feed the media hungry masses with the latest "news", as well as maintain Ireland's worst comment section. Some feat, when you consider the shite that's out there. The Journal property magazine is "supported" by KBC, while Bank of Ireland are also in on the act, with sponsoring articles like "How I survived the house-hunting process, according to a first-time buyer" AIB, and Permanent TSB also sponsor similar Journal content. And of course the entire bloody Journal is owned by Distilled media the crowd behind Daft.ie. Oh and each of these banks, btw, have scourged thousands of customers in the tracker mortgage scandal. Oh how the little piggies swirl.



05

5. BUDGET 2018.

The budget coverage in RTE and the papers amounted to more waffle than you'll pick up in the freezer section of all your local Spars combined. rabble tuned out even earlier than usual, our ears. The budget did what the Blueshirts do best of all, serve up a fat reward for the class who need it least. A single person on 75,000 grand a year benefited from the tax changes to the tune of €328.48 per annum, 5 times more than poor saps on 25 grand who just got an extra €65.87 per year. Meanwhile, the age differentials in how much dole you get have become as entrenched as being stoney broke. 24% of us are categorised as being on low pay. That puts Ireland in a top three of a leader board no rational worker wants to be part of. That is, countries with the highest rates of shit pay. Columbia tops the list, with the US coming in second. Fine company indeed.



HARRY HANGOVER

& The Rite of Blood

AFTER HAVING HIS MORNING TRIP TO THE DOLE OFFICE COMMANDEERED BY A NOTORIOUSLY SCABBY BUDGET AIRLINE OWNER, OUR HERO FINDS HIMSELF IN THE SECRET CHAMBER OF THE MASONIC LODGE...

BY THE HAND OF THE GREAT ONE WE WELCOME YOU. ENTER!

NOW, IF YOU'LL JUST FOLLOW ME...

OUR GUEST HAS ARRIVED!

LET THE CEREMONY COMMENCE!

IS... IS THAT... IS THAT MARK ZUCKERBERG???

IT CERTAINLY FUCKING IS. NOW S'CUSE ME, I'VE TO GO GET SOMETHING OUT OF THE BOOT...

3 MINUTES LATER...

WE HAVE THE GIFT OF LIFE TO GIVE...

TO BE CONTINUED...

WE SPEAK IN CODE

PADDY LYNCH .COM

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST DAY?

WHEN THEY TOOK YOUR PHOTO

FOR THE I.D. CARD.

"THIS IS IT," YOU THOUGHT "ME FROM NOW ON."

ON THIS UNREAL PLACE.

WHERE THE STONED BUILDERS MILL ABOUT WITH TECH BOOMERS,

PERCHED ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY

READY TO JUMP SHIP OR BE SWALLOWED BY THE RISING SEA LEVELS.

WHICHEVER COMES FIRST.

WE'RE OKAY, WE'RE OKAY. IT'S ALL GOOD. BUT YOU KNOW DEEP DOWN THAT NO-ONE PLANS IT LIKE THIS.

delivered

YOU JUST MUDDLE THROUGH

REMEMBER WHEN YOUR ID CARD CAME BACK? YOUR PHOTO STRETCHED AND DISTORTED TO FIT THE SPACE

STILL YOU, JUST A MODIFIED VERSION

Paddy Lynch 2017

The Session Pixies



TAKING A BREAK FROM THE POST TOBACCO CONTROL LAW LIFESTYLE OF SCOURING CIGARETTE MACHINES IN SUBURBAN BOOZERS FOR THE LAST OF THE FABLED 12.5 BOXES OF AMBER LEAF, THE SESSION PIXIES RETURN TO RABBLE HQ TO ANSWER YOUR WHINES AND MOANS.

C'mer t'me

So I was there skullin cans on the Canal the other day with the Missus and the wayen. Sun was out, people were laughin, everyone was havin' a good time, ya know. But sure then didn't I get pure locked and (sniffles with hands up to his eyes), and now I can't even find me wife and kid! They're lost! Have ya seen 'em? Have ya? Nah? Can ya spare us a fag and some cans instead then?

Beseechingly yours,
Some Greetin' Cunt

Here I know you! You're the prick that told me the exact same sob-story that one nice weekend back in June. You owe me 2 cans of Grolsch ya wee bollocks!

Dear Session Pixies,
From whence you came?
Yours,
Curious Orange

Well Mr. Money Cat we can only sympathise with your current situation. Those few moments of dread as you approach the ATM machine to check the now much depleted balance is something we've all experienced. Any responsible confidant would tell you to quit your philandering ways, buck up, and fly straight for fuck sakes. But that's not us. We advise that you fish around your apartment for all those old, empty and now discontinued 12.5g bags of Amber Leaf.

Invest in a few kilos of some cheap Aldi tobacco and proceed to pack and reseal said tobacco in the Amber Leaf pouches. These can then be pedalled for an extortionate price to your fellow sesh heads who will be only too happy to pay-up - just for nostalgia's sake. Jordan Belfort aint got shit on us, son.

Oh so ya want the Session Pixie origin story is it? Well to be perfectly honest with ya the accounts vary. Some say we magically manifested from a puddle of Christy Moore's sweat that accumulated on the floor during a session in Lisdoonvarna in 1982.

Other sources suggest that we are what happened when Lindsey Lohan accidentally sat on a cum stain left behind by Charlie Sheen at a particularly debauched L.A loft party.

Incidentally, the marketing departments of various tobacco and beer companies have tried to claim us as their own invention in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience.

We are currently pursuing these companies for image-rights violations (court proceeding prevent us for commenting further on this matter). The true answer remains a mystery even to us, but we have ordered one of those home genealogical kits ya see advertised on the telly and we'll make sure to inform you of the results.

HORRORSCOPES

TRAGIC TERRY AND THE MAGIC COWBOY HAVE TAKEN A SABBATICAL TO RESPECTIVELY: TAKE A CHEAP HOLIDAY IN OTHER PEOPLE'S MISERY AND ALSO GO ON A PERUVIAN AYAHUASCA RETREAT EXCEPT IT'S IN MEATH. LEAVING BENNY PROFANE AND HIS TRUSTY SIDEWICK WHO'THEFUCKAREYOU BOY TO TAKE LIBERTIES WITH THEIR COSMIC DIVINATION DUTIES BUT ULTIMATELY SAVE THE DAY.



SCORPIO OCT 23-NOV 21

That eejit you met when you were backpacking in Guatemala has somehow found you on Facebook and is insisting that he should come visit. You curse yourself for having humoured him. Now you have to make up elaborate lies about family deaths and infectious diseases in order to avoid this insufferable wind-bag. For next year's holiday you decide to go to Mosney.



TAURUS APR 20-MAY 20

You are not what emojis you use. You are not the pages you like. You are not your Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn profile. You are not your classically-finished, two-bedroom terraced flat in the south side. You are the all-singing, all-dancing shit of the world.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUN 20

The fake news that your star sign has been co-opted as the name of a Management Consultancy firm begins to drive you to distraction. You decide to raid the company's offices in the dead of night, Smearing shite on the walls and leaving a wall of rotten wrong post-it notes on every computer screen.



CHANCER JUN 21-JUL 22

You have yourself convinced that you're a sub par specimen. You're not a rabid dog, so stop putting yourself down. Others will do that for you, rest assured. . So as Cancer swoops low and tip toes for fear of discovery past touchy Saturn this winter, take off the kid gloves and give your nose a good pick. No one's watching.. And if they are.. Fuck em!



LEO JUL 23-AUG 22

What about that solar eclipse there, eh? No one ever catches these things do they? SO what a fuckin' bout it. Sterlings weak so get busy buying dodgy vinyl on the internet. There's never been a better time to splurge that hard earned money on crazily overpriced vinyl re-issues.



VIRGO AUG 23-SEP 22

This is it, man. This is the one. This is your moon cycle I can feel it. All those other moon cycles were just practice-runs. They were taking the pistachio. This time will be different. This time it's all about you. The new you!

The better you!



LIBRA SEP 23-OCT 22

Frustration in love compels you to make a bigger effort to meet like-minded people. Amazingly, you find a public institution that caters specifically for Libras. But when you arrive at this place you find only eccentric pensioners and neglected toddlers.



ARIES Mar 21-Apr 19

The prospect of an imminent world war awakens your dormant warrior. You take to wearing camouflage and pick fights with low level officials, bouncers and anyone fool enough to make eye contact. Your pride takes a battering, but it's nothing compared to the bruising your once charming face receives.



SAGITTARIUS DEC 22-JAN 19

You will spend the majority of the next month fantasising about the numerous elaborate and obscure ways that you could kill your line manager. Each individual piece of office stationery is carefully considered for the potential bodily harm that it could possibly inflict. You decide that scissors are too easy, not to say obvious. Death by stapler on the other hand...



CAPRICORN DEC 22-JAN 19

An unexpected bowel movement will leave you red-faced on public transport. Some quick-thinking sees you shift the blame to a nearby child. You get away with it but you spend the rest of your life living with a deep and burning shame. Eventually the regret becomes too much. To atone for your sins you spend the remainder of your days riding the 16 bus, forlornly admitting to other people's unclaimed farts.



AQUARIUS JAN 20-FEB 18

Aquarius you classy bastard, how the hell do you do it? Your first born (also an Aquarius) will beawarded the Nobel Prize for Cow Tipping. At the ceremony in Stockholm various world leaders and scientific boffins will compliment you on your new haircut and immaculately defined cheekbones. The Doors are reanimated and play an impromptu gig. In addition, have you lost weight?



PISCES FEB 19-MAR 20

Your continual attempt to evoke an air of nostalgic whimsy eventually reaches breaking point. Stop nonchalantly walking around with that Sony Walkman clipped into the waistband of your Nike tracksuit bottoms. Repeatedly quoting the catchphrases of long forgotten confectionery ads is no longer charming. No, no one wants your last Rolo! And for fuck sakes give up on trying to solve that Rubix cube! It's been 23 years and you've only got one side done!

On The Buses

IT MIGHT HAVE PASSED YOU BY BUT 24 DUBLIN BUS ROUTES HAVE BEEN TENDERED OUT BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY (NTA) TO BRITISH TRANSPORT GIANT GO-AHEAD. THE PRIVATE OPERATOR IS TAKING ON ROUTES THAT SERVE THE OUTER SUBURBS. PATRICK MCCUSKER HAS THE LOWDOWN ON WHAT THIS SIGNALS.

Go-Ahead are a multinational operating services in Britain, mainland Europe and Asia. They are one of the largest operators of bus services in the UK, running around a quarter of London's buses, British train services such as the Southern rail service, and bus services in Singapore, with an estimated annual revenue of £3.4 billion for the fiscal year ending in June 2017.

They also recently made the papers in the UK for their employment practices. They provoked a strike on the Southern rail service by trying to introduce driver-only trains. The acquisition of the Dublin Bus tenders marks their first foray into the Irish market.

There is far more to this than simply a change of management on a handful of suburban bus routes. Here's the real game. It's the continuation of the longstanding national policy of dipping into the public purse to subsidise private operators, but with a new frontier; the opening up of our main suburban bus service, which up until now, was fully public.

Private sector bus transport in Ireland is hardly new. Anyone who's gotten the likes of John McGinley Buses, Feda O'Donnell or the imaginatively named Wexford Bus amongst numerous others can attest to this.

Overlooked is the promotion of these operators over Bus Eireann. Wouldn't it make more sense to allow Bus Eireann to run these potentially profitable routes, and use the dosh to cross subsidise, with a particular nod to rural and hard-to-reach areas?

Unfortunately this isn't the case. Either as a result of deliberate Government or Bus Eireann policy, Bus Eireann seems to have avoided the tendering process for the high speed, high volume "motorway" routes which would help sustain bus services where they are most needed.

In reality, we have a barely existing rural bus service, as attested to by the current debacle in school bus transport. Bus Eireann currently compensate for their near-invisibility in many rural areas by subcontracting 89% of school

bus contracts to locally based private operators. Anyone who grew up in rural Ireland and experienced overcrowded, freezing buses clearly on their last legs can attest to how flawed the tendering process for this can be.

Bus Eireann has been so badly managed, and so poorly invested in, that it expects to lose €12 million this year, and any news coverage has largely focused on how industrial relations have inevitably descended into chaos as a result of management's efforts to bring this under control. It's hard to expect this situation to change as Bus Eireann's much-publicised financial and industrial relations problems continue, and the private operators continue to be favoured by public policy.

What we have instead are a litany of small companies, some of whom have been accused of appalling labour standards, running a big chunk of the services. Bus Eireann handles the rest, and huge areas of the country are left unconnected in the meantime.

Successive governments have addressed the deeper problems of public transport by continuing to encourage the development of private bus companies to fill the void left by their absence from the market.

However, this tender could be the beginning of the end for the smaller operators in many respects. The Go-Ahead contract is a first of its kind, a bus contract awarded to a multinational, rather than a local operator or national carrier. Dublin Bus did tender for the services awarded to Go-Ahead. So take note Bus Eireann.

The criteria for making a tender for the "Dublin 10 per cent" were well beyond even a thriving local bus provider. Private companies seeking to compete on Dublin metropolitan routes would have to have a turnover of €30m and at least nine million passenger journeys per year. Only companies like Go-Ahead or semi-state companies like Dublin Bus or Bus Eireann meet these criteria, which is a lot easier when your services involve several different routes in big cities.

The obvious result into the future will be that the likes of Go-Ahead are essentially being subsidised by the state. This marks a new shift

in public bus policy, away from the semi states and local operators. It won't be long before the Go-Aheads take out the chequebook and buy the services from local operators, which the public bus company did not tender for in the first place. This is privatisation Irish style. The fact that there isn't a public company to hand over to multinationals smoothes the way.

The current government is open about their public policy preferences. Minister for Transport Shane Ross went so far to claim he didn't view it as his duty to intervene in public transport disputes. A cursory Google search of the news stories about the bus strike will reveal dozens of Fine Gael councilors based in the rural hinterland of Rathmines boasting as to how this hasn't been an issue in the private sector. Typically, their idea of addressing a problem is to deny their own power to solve it.

With both the EU and the Irish Government favouring liberalisation, the entry of Go-Ahead points to a grim scenario of for profit services which will disadvantage those who live on the less profitable routes.

The smaller operator for more isolated communities could well be forced out of the market by deregulation which grants multinationals such as Go-Ahead an inbuilt advantage over them.

It follows inevitably that a privatized bus service will mean no bus service at all for many, and that our commuters and students will simply be fodder for a large corporation that cares little for their community, unless there is proper opposition to bus tendering and people demand a proper bus service that actually caters for the needs of people rather than businesses.

The alternative is that many people will have to get up very, very early in the morning to deal with the long drives and massive traffic jams that will punish them for having a job or children, or needing to travel for access to public services or recreation.

Is this grim fate what Leo Varadkar meant when he said he wanted a government for early risers?



Poster

Will St Leger serves up a slice of pull out agit-prop around the HIV crisis and PREP...