


UNITY

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Politics on holiday?

WE all need a wee break now and again, even our erstwhile political class need to unwind for a period.

It's good to see the Taoiseach Leo Varadker taking some time away to himself, travelling all over the world at the tax payers' expense.

He seems to have had a wonderful time in Canada portraying himself as the young hip Irish version of Trudeau.

Socially Liberal, fiscally conservative, the media lap up this portrayal of a man who they promote as a moderniser and an advocate for a new politics in Ireland.

All this is taking place whilst the homeless crisis continues to sharpen in the 26 counties.

Just today it is reported that 2 twin brothers aged 15 have been sleeping rough on scaffolding surrounding the department of health's headquarters in Hawkins St in Dublin.

Apollo house provided a sanctuary for the homeless for a short period and ended when assurances were given by government to provide adequate services, assurances that have been cynically reneged on.

By Mel Corry

Varadker when he gets back from his holiyers may well be energised to work on some sort of strategy to deal with this national emergency, after all there will be a referendum on repealing the 8th amendment early next year, but somehow I doubt it.

In the North Sinn Fein northern leader, Michelle O'Neill has written to the British and Irish governments to request a formal resumption of talks in order to restore power sharing in the North.

The Dup branded the call a stunt and said they have been prepared for months to establish a working executive and that Sinn Fein is the cause of the impasse.

You and I may be forgiven for assuming that at a time when our economy is stagnating, our health service is in crisis, our public services are under an ideological attack from the Tories that the politicians, with our concerns at heart, would have continued to talk?

No, we all need a break during the silly season.

I remember being a hardworking textile worker when you looked forward to the 'July fortnight' complete shutdown but many firms now

have flexible holidays to ensure the wheels of commerce and trade continue to turn, everyone gets their holidays when they want and in line with the needs of the employer.

It's globalisation, it's the system!

In the political world surely there are enough of them to continue to work on our behalf whilst the global economy continues to be run against our interests and in favour of the interests of capital.

One example this week is the 5 health boards are to have simultaneous meetings on Thursday of this week to discuss the £70 million of funding cuts that have to be made before April 2018.

They want to consult with the public and trade unions on this issue although submissions have to be in before midday on Tuesday of this week.

Conveniently timed to ensure they control the response of the public and trade unions during a holiday period or that the public can't lobby their politicians because they're all on holidays.

I hate to sound cynical but long experience of how they work is the cause, maybe I need another couple of weeks off, just to recharge the batteries!!

Bodenstown 2017

DESCRIBED by seasoned observers as a significant development, John Douglas, general secretary of Irish retail trade union Mandate, delivered the keynote speech at a commemoration for Wolfe Tone on in Bodenstown, Co Kildare.

Widely regarded as the first theoretician of republicanism in Ireland, Wolfe Tone (1763–1798) is somewhat unique in that almost all republicans and socialists in Ireland honour him.

The event was organised by the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, under the slogan; unity of our people, unity of progressive forces, unity of our country.

Consequently and for the first time in many years, communists, republicans and trade unionists came together to celebrate the life of the Irish patriot and democrat.

Mandate general secretary Douglas began by saying that Tone and his comrades defined freedom in terms of citizenship.

This meant that the state had responsibilities to its citizens and where all citizens had responsibilities to each other.

He expanded on this saying that the unification of Ireland is not a geographical project.

Instead, it is the unification of the working class against the tyranny of colonialism, British imperialism and capitalism.



By Tommy McKearney

He continued by reminding those present that the vision of Wolfe Tone and the socialist revolutionary James Connolly has not been fulfilled.

Ireland he said is subjugated by neoliberalism and the country's domestic sovereignty has been sacrificed to the needs of global capitalism.

The recent experience in the Republic of Ireland of EU imposed austerity and the plunder of national wealth and the stripping bare of social provision should be a lesson to all and therefore a rallying cry to unite and mobilise.

Referring to the outworking of Brexit negotiations on Ireland, Douglas pointed out that argument about a hard or soft border is of little consequence to the oppressed and marginalised.



The debate, as currently constructed, will be decided within the capitalist and neoliberal framework and that in the absence of a socialist narrative, the void will be filled by rhetoric and division.

Warning against allowing the Brexit debate to become embroiled in sectarianism, he pointed to the dire situation in the United States.

By pandering to the far-right, the Trump administration has given oxygen and confidence to the forces of fascism.

Mandate's general secretary then emphasised that a new and better Ireland is possible.

An Ireland of equals, of opportunities for all, of fraternity, an Ireland in which is constructed a united socialist republic



compatible with the ideals of Wolfe Tone and James Connolly.

However, to do so, the Left and other progressive forces in Ireland need to unite around a clear socialist republican vision.

Highlighting the example of the recent successful Corbyn campaign in Britain, he said that the Left in Ireland should set out clearly what it is in favour of and not just what it is against.

With such clarity, a movement can be built from the ground up that will grow in strength and confidence because there is a real thirst for change as capitalism sinks again into crisis.

John Douglas concluded by quoting a line from Wolfe Tone, who once wrote; 'We will free ourselves by the aid of that large and respectable class of the community - the men of no property'

Just how important the Mandate general secretary's participation is viewed by those in attendance can be gauged through comments made by one of the event organisers.

'In the face of an ongoing assault on working class rights here in Ireland and elsewhere,' he said, 'it is encouraging to see a senior trade unionist address the vital work of building a broad progressive movement'

'For too long', he added, 'Ireland's trade union leadership had paid lip service to Connolly and Larkin but shied away from confronting the political establishment.

Thanks now to trade unionists such as John Douglas, this appears to be changing as over the last few years, radical sections of organised labour have played a prominent role in the struggle against austerity'.

MEDIA REVIEW

Couldn't agree more

In October 2005 the International Brigade Memorial Trust held its AGM in Dublin and a number of the veterans, Bob Doyle, Jack Jones Jack Edwards and Mick O'Riordan were welcomed by the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.

A few days later Kevin Myers, yes that same Kevin Myers, wrote a rather obnoxious article in the *Irish Times* on the International Brigades as part of his *An Irishman's Diary* piece.

He kicked off by accusing Frank Ryan of "eagerly clambering aboard a U-Boat with Sean Russell on a Nazi mission to Ireland."

These initial comments set the scene as it were for the rest of the article which was a total denigration of the Brigades.

He followed up with, "One could equally say that the Spanish Civil War was a fight against Stalinist Communism, a force which in its lifetime probably murdered about three times as many people as Adolf and his chums."

This is the standard argument of professional anti-communists who don't see fit to substantiate their claim because they can't.

He particularly singled out Mick O'Riordan who "remained an unapologetic defender of one of the worst and bloodiest tyrannies in world history, and on Saturday he was a special guest of the President."

Of course Myers was on safe ground by attacking O'Riordan the way he did.

Allison Morris, writing in the *Irish News*, August 3rd, made the point that he has been peddling his particular brand of offensiveness for several decades with a constant offending of Irish women with the kind of bar room misogyny that wouldn't be out of place in a 1970s end of the pier comedy act.

However, whilst this may have been acceptable she adds, his comments on Vanessa Feltz and Claudia Winkleman obviously forced his employers' hand.

Arrogance

It shows the arrogance of Myers that he obviously thought he was so untouchable he could get away with what he wrote.

As Morris states, his comments on single parents or MOB's (mothers of bastards) who became pregnant because it seemed "a good way of getting money and accommodation from the state," his statement that Africa was giving "almost nothing to anyone apart from Aids," and his claim that marriage equality with the "liberalisation of laws against homosexual acts," had caused four times as many deaths in the USA as the Vietnam War, all passed as acceptable comment.

Morris also made the point that in these cases he was punching down, picking on the little people, the poor, the voiceless and the marginalised, and that the offence of misogyny, saying men "usually work harder, get sick less frequently and seldom get pregnant," did not end his career.

However, when he tried to punch up, going after powerful influential

and well-paid BBC celebrities his career as a *Sunday Times* columnist was over in less than seven hours.

Of course Myers' latest piece with the accusations of anti-Semitism raises the question of freedom of speech.

Morris's take on this is that freedom of speech "doesn't mean that people who bring nothing to the table but offence should be paid, and in some cases overpaid, for that privilege."

Simon Kelner, writing in the *i* newspaper made the point that if a newspaper employs a recognised controversialist they can be hardly surprised when his column causes a controversy.

What he did question was how the piece got through a section editor, a sub-editor and a revise editor, unless of course the consensus was that Myers had a right to his opinion and that primacy of the columnist to say what he likes under his own name must hold sway.

He goes on to write that the piece wasn't a mistake or an inexplicable error of judgement on the writer's part and quotes an article from the *Belfast Telegraph* in 2009 in which Myers wrote:

"There was no holocaust (or Holocaust as my computer software insists) and six million Jews were not murdered by the Third Reich."

As far as Kelner is concerned these comments reveal Myers to be an Holocaust denier and that his comments on Feltz and Winkleman show he is an anti-Semite and for that "he should be run out of town." I couldn't agree more.

W. Ows