

## the IRISH NEWS

Pro fide et patria

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## SF can build confidence

AS pressure continues to be exerted on the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process, some welcome respite was provided by the launch of a Fianna Fail policy document yesterday.

The Republic's minister for foreign affairs, Brian Cowen, was speaking at a press briefing on Fianna Fail's policy on Northern Ireland when he said "the single most important challenge for the next Dublin government" would be consolidation of the agreement.

The minister was of course speaking in anticipation of still being in power. But there is no reason to suspect that a different electoral result will mean a substantially different policy towards the Good Friday Agreement.

While Mr Cowen was making his very welcome comments, negative noises were coming from predictable quarters. South Antrim MP David Burnside was calling on his Ulster Unionist Party colleagues to make this week the beginning of the process of removing Sinn Fein from government in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr Burnside quoted, among other things, the Colombian debacle which has placed the republican movement in a very uncomfortable position since the arrest of three men there.

That unease reached extraordinary heights last week with the senate hearing in Washington which dealt with the arrest of the three and allegations of IRA involvement with 'a worldwide terror network'.

The republican movement, long credited with having an extraordinarily efficient PR machine, has suddenly found itself on the end of some very pointed and serious accusations.

Some of those accusations have carried more weight than others. Accusations that the IRA was behind the Castlereagh break-in have so far failed to produce any definite evidence that that was the case. The same is the case concerning the murder in Tyrone of Barney McDonald. The same cannot be said of the Colombia affair.

Sinn Fein has talked about concerted attempts to blacken the republican movement. That does not explain the presence of three self-confessed republicans in Colombia, allegedly on false passports.

Mr Cowen in his speech yesterday spoke of "confidence building" helping to bolster the Good Friday Agreement over the next five years. Sinn Fein and the IRA can help in that confidence building by ensuring that no such excursions reoccur.

They must realise that such events are manna from heaven for opponents of the Good Friday Agreement and they place partners in that agreement in unnecessarily difficult positions.

## Use of pellet guns worrying

A MAN was seriously injured in a shooting incident at the weekend. The fact that the injury was caused by a pellet gun should be a cause for concern.

Pellet guns can be bought at markets throughout the country. Many are virtually impossible to tell apart from those with a bullet-firing capacity.

Without doubt these weapons have been used in serious crime and they have also been the cause of personal injury, some - like Saturday's - serious.

Surely it is time these weapons were brought under more severe legislative control.

Given that they can be used for the commission of crime and are the cause of injury, should they not be treated in much the same way as bullet-firing weapons?

## Quotes of the day

There are paramilitaries on both sides who have moved on and now see a bigger picture of a nice future

The new chief superintendent for north Belfast, Julie Lindsay, discussing the security situation in the area

I can confirm that the orders given on the days leading up to Bloody Sunday and confirmed on the morning of Bloody Sunday were that there should be a defensive mode only

The commanding officer of the Official IRA during Bloody Sunday who is due to give evidence to the Saville inquiry

I did not tell the health board about the situation because I did not want Anthony taken away from me Francis Cahill, whose schizophrenic son Anthony was locked away in the family home in Co Cavan for 14 years

## Now a land of saints, scholars and singers

As Irish musicians celebrate and commiserate their successes and failures at last week's Hot Press Irish Music Awards

Todd R Nicholls looks at the country's burgeoning pop and rock music industry

BEFORE Bono, Louie Walsh, Clannad and Thin Lizzy, Irish music was, for the most part traditional, wholesome and folksy. But in the 30-odd years since Ireland found rock and pop, we have become one of the world's most successful musical nations.

It is difficult to prove it through record sales, yet the feeling remains: Ireland rocks the world like no other nation.

Last weekend Belfast hosted the Irish Music Awards and a celebration of the commercial success of home-grown music from U2 to Ash and Westlife.

The question remains, therefore, why Ireland with its small population - and, by definition, its limited resources - has become so successful in the world of music?

The experts suggest looking for answers is a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack. Yet some theorists point to both internal and external factors to explain Ireland's success.

The Irish are a musical nation, although it does not disguise the fact that up until the last 30 years Irish musicians have struggled to make their mark on the world stage.

There was, however, never a shortage of people willing to try.

The Corrs, for example, partly learnt their trade in their aunt's bar in Dundalk, while the members of Clannad were also brought up learning their instruments in a pub in Co Donegal.

Andrew Lynch, feature editor with *In Dublin* magazine, says: "I read somewhere that there were more bands in Dublin than in any other capital of the world in the early 1980s. I could believe that."

The experts also suggest that although the population of the island of Ireland is just over five million, the Irish population and market as a whole is a good deal larger around the world. "Although there are a small number of people on the island of Ireland, the number of people with Irish connections around the world is huge," Mr Lynch suggests.

"It means there is plenty of interest in contemporary Irish music. Although it may not necessarily matter where Irish groups come from, some people overseas will take an interest because of it."

Dr Noel McLaughlin, born and raised in Ireland and now a senior lecturer at the school of art at the University of Northumbria, also agrees with this theory.

"They say the total number of people around the world with some Irish connection is between 50 and 120 million and so there is a huge amount of people who have some identity with the Irish."

"What this means is that there is a ready market for Irish musicians, especially now in an age where the question of identity is a lot less obvious than what it used to be. People are hanging on to their national identity more."

The second major internal reason why the Irish have been so successful musically is that it is now possible for local bands to sell millions of albums worldwide without having to leave Ireland.

There were numerous Irish acts, especially in the field of traditional Irish music, who in days past left Ireland for the greener pastures of overseas in the hope of making a living from their talents. Apart from inspiring a whole generation, what U2 did was demonstrate that it was possible to make huge-selling albums without leaving Ireland to do it.

U2 also proved to the next generation that being Irish was no predicament to achieving success.



■ MODERN IRELAND: The Corrs honed their skills playing in a pub in their home town of Dundalk, Co Louth

Numerous stories are told of U2 being put down by their so-called mates when they were starting. "You'll never make it," they were told. This begrudery was reflective of Ireland at the time: An Ireland that failed to appreciate the numerous opportunities on offer for talented musicians. Perhaps the most important internal reason why Irish musicians have become so successful worldwide is that our outlook has changed in the last 50 years.

Irish writer John Waters has talked about the concept of modern Ireland: a nation more separated from the church and certainly more outward looking in its approach to the world. The impact of this change is that creative talents in Ireland have started to look internationally for not only their inspirations, but also their markets. Ireland, Waters has suggested, has grown up.

"Those in the Irish music scene have become very good at marketing themselves worldwide," Andrew Lynch adds.

"Bands realise that the market they should be directing their music at is international. You see bands like Ash and The Corrs proudly say what their aims are and how they hope to sell plenty of records."

"There is a brash confidence about these bands, an arrogance even. These bands want to be successful and they will do what it takes to get there. It has become very cut-throat."

Dr McLaughlin points to U2 as being amongst the

first of the Irish bands who proved that the key for Irish musical talent was to look outside Ireland.

"There is no doubt that U2 not only were the benchmark for this new approach in Irish music, but they were one of the key factors behind this concept of modern Ireland at work," he adds. Connected with this, the primary external reason why Irish music has become so popular is that technological advances have made an act's home country in some respects almost irrelevant in marketing.

As long as an act speaks English, what appears as important is their image, their sound and, most importantly, the marketing they undertake to promote their single/album.

Irish acts will always be popular among those with Irish connections around the world but they will not be limited in other markets where the Irish influence isn't as strong.

The boy band phenomena, characterised by Boyzone and Westlife, is the best example of the modern musical scene in action, with the emphasis on immediacy and not on development.

Andrew Lynch says: "They key is for them to be already developed before they enter the industry."

"They need to have the right look, the right image, and, as long as they have some talent, they will normally sell records by the bucketload."

On This Day/April 29 1932

By Eamon Phoenix

## Oath of Allegiance debated in Dail

AN amazing scene took place in Dail Eireann on Thursday during the debate on the second reading of the bill to abolish the Oath of Allegiance from the constitution following reference by deputies to incidents in Ireland during the 'troubled' period. Mr Batt O'Connor (Fianna Fail), criticising a statement by Mr Dillon, said: "In 1916 members of the Irish Party in the British House of Commons cheered the announcement of the execution of Irishmen", and Mr Dillon (a son of the former Home Rule leader, John Dillon) retorted: "It's a damned lie."

The speaker, intervening, asked Mr Dillon to withdraw and Mr Dillon replied that if he suspended 40 times he would contradict Mr O'Connor's statement about the Irish Party. Uproar followed and Mr James Coburn (Independent, Louth) rushed from his seat and, holding Mr O'Connor by the lapels of his coat, shouted: "If you were a younger man I would kill you where you stand."

In the midst of the hubbub Mr William T Cosgrave (the former prime minister) intervened and in his quiet voice appealed to Mr O'Connor to take back his statement, and peace was instantly restored. Both Mr O'Connor and Mr Dillon withdrew their remarks.

Speaking in the debate, Mr J F O'Hanlon (farmer) told the Dail: "With this bill, we will clash and lock the door on the emancipation of the nationalist of the north and throw away the key. We are stereotyping the border for all time, and our brother-nationalists in the north can't get out, and we cannot get in to succour them."

In 1923, he said, they had sacrificed 400,000 nationalists in the six counties - nationalists whose ancestors had written their name large in the history of this country and of other countries for more than 800 years. The bill (abolishing the oath) was a barrier to the future unity of Ireland. Deputy Frank Carney (Fianna Fail, Donegal) said the nationalists of the north had been abandoned by the abandonment of Article 12 of the treaty,

an article which Cosgrave and company had adopted as one of the main planks in their platform when they advocated adoption of the treaty in 1921.

It was the abandonment of the nationalists when Mr Earnest Blythe declared that they had made a "damned good bargain".

Professor JM O'Duilliva (ex-minister for education) asked what would have been the attitude of every party in the Free State if England had attempted to violate the treaty. He warned the government they were playing with fire at home and abroad.

Was the president (Mr de Valera) going to declare a Republic for 26 counties or 32 counties?

Was he going to annex the six counties spiritually, economically and politically? This country had nothing to gain by the obliteration of the oath.

Sentimental objections to it did exist, but he maintained that it was the loosest and vaguest bond that could exist.