



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ireland's former EU trade commissioner Phil Hogan, left, and Supreme Court judge Justice Seamus Woulfe

Par-fect illustration of Ireland stuck in a patriarchal past

I'D ALMOST forgotten about Brexit. Easily done, in the middle of a global pandemic. There are more important things such as masks to argue about and trivialities such as future trade agreements can get lost amidst the furore over sanitiser.

The days were long but the weeks short in lockdown and so, in a blink of an eye, we find ourselves in the month of September with the January deadline looming ever closer.

I was reminded this week that Brexit was still an unresolved issue for a very unexpected reason. It was not because of a rousing Rule Britannia speech promising to take back control of the borders by Boris Johnson. The prime minister has barely mentioned the B word lately and anyway, he was on holiday in Scotland. No, I was reminded of this massive, life-changing and potentially economically disastrous deadline because of a jolly boys' golf dinner.

A nod to the *Irish Examiner* who broke 'golgate' – a story that immediately started claiming political scalps, a great piece of journalism. The paper reported that more than 80 people had attended an Oireachtas golf society event in Clifden, Co Galway. Included on the guest list were a host of high-profile figures from Irish political life. The dinner took place the day after the government changed its guidelines in the face of an increasing number of Covid-19 cases.

The first head to roll was Dara Calleary, who resigned as agriculture minister and deputy leader of Fianna Fáil. The Supreme Court has ordered an investigation into the attendance of Justice Seamus Woulfe, a former attorney general. Jerry Buttimer, the

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deputy chairman of the Irish senate, has also resigned, saying his attendance was a "serious lapse of judgment".

And so back to Brexit as another person who faced calls to quit was EU trade commissioner Phil Hogan. As European commissioner, Hogan – who won a George Foreman grill at the dinner – seemed intent on riding out the scandal. Member state governments cannot force a commissioner to resign. If a newly formed government could remove a commissioner part-way through the EU institution's five-year term, then, given the electoral cycle of 27 states, the College of Commissioners would be in a state of

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constant upheaval.

Among other revelations it later emerged that the commissioner was stopped by gardai for using his mobile phone while driving in Co Kildare, on the day of the dinner.

Last night after days of pressure Hogan stepped aside and will not now be heading back to Brussels with his lean green grilling machine.

Take aside the back-slapping and booing that went on while businesses are crumbling under the pressure of lockdown and the invitation list was interesting for another reason.

That all these men of high office felt happy to party while the rest of the country remains in partial lockdown and with the economy fast tanking, is an example of entitlement in a still patriarchal society.

Ireland may have experienced rapid social change in recent years but the hierarchical structure of high office has changed little.

Men outnumbered women two to one at the dinner. Former Kildare junior minister and ex-Fianna Fáil TD Áine Brady did attend the dinner and has also apologised. A woman, you cry – this debunks the jolly boys theory.

Well, no. Mrs Brady was at the dinner on the arm of her husband Gerry, who was invited as he had played in the tournament. She was his plus-one.

At such dinners, deals are made, alliances formed, promotions secured and women are more often than not excluded. While such a culture exists there will always be men occupying jobs and positions at the expense of more qualified women.

Is it any wonder the suffragettes dug up the golf courses?

ON THIS DAY

AUGUST 27 1970

'Liberal' Minister Quits

THE appointment of Mr John Taylor to Minister of State has caused undisguised alarm in Opposition circles. The derivation from Parliamentary Secretary was announced yesterday simultaneously with the resignation of the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Robert Porter, QC. Mr Gerry Fitt, MP, leader of the new SDLP, immediately called for a recall of the Stormont Parliament to discuss the 'dangerous situation' that had now arisen.

The Alliance Party saw Mr Taylor's appointment as a 'coming home present' for Mr Paisley [soon to be released from jail]. Mr Austin Currie, MP said: 'Taylor's appointment is unquestionably a move to the right, made worse by the fact that Home Affairs is a key ministry in relation to the whole Civil Rights programme. Porter was the only liberal in the Cabinet.'

Craig in Guns Promise

MR William Craig [former Home Affairs Minister sacked by O'Neill] told a Young Unionist rally in Derry last night that when the next Stormont Government came in there would be an armed police force and a police reserve force with 10,000 men. He said the police would not necessarily carry arms, but these would be available at each police station if they were needed.

In an hour-long speech, Mr Craig castigated the present government for what he said was their inept handling of the North's problems. At the present time there is the greatest effort ever made to destroy Ulster. Mr Harry West said the government must go and be replaced by a government of traditional Unionists.

RUC Arms Issue

A PERMANENT special committee is being set up to advise Sir Arthur Young, RUC Chief Constable, about the supply, use and availability of arms. The move follows a decision by the Police Representative Body to discover how many of the 3,500 men want guns back.

Houses and Jobs for Derry

MORE than half of the nearly 2,000 families now on the waiting list for homes in the Derry area may be housed by the end of the year. And there are already enough houses planned or under construction to house them all, according to yesterday's Derry Development Commission report.

A major concern of the Commission is the attraction of new industry to Derry. The report shows that since mid-1967 ten new firms have been established.

As the civil rights reforms began to take effect, the SDLP voiced concern at the departure of the moderate Minister, Porter at Home Affairs. The promotion of the anti-reform Taylor was seen as evidence of a lurch to the right by the embattled Chichester-Clark government as IRA bombings and verbal attacks from Craig and Paisley intensified.

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