



FANTASTIC PLASTIC? We are rapidly moving towards a cashless society with increasing use of contactless payments

Forget cashless society – I'm sticking to real money

VIEW with alarm our incontinent rush towards a cashless society.

The reckless young gad about insouciantly with only a plastic card in their jeans pocket, while we, their parents, cling grimly to wallets and purses stuffed with notes and heavy with coins.

Without least a tenner, a fiver and five pound coins about my person, I suffer financial paralysis.

How else does one manage parking fees, taxi-fares, flag-sellers, tips for hairdressers and waiters (if only to make sure the staff get it)?

Tradesmen too, prefer to see the colour of your money, rather than paid by cheque. Daughter Dear mocks me for still using cheques, though, funnily enough, doesn't object to receiving one.

At least with real money, you can see where it's going and when you're liable to run out. For me, it's psychologically dangerous not to carry cash.

Apropos of nothing, don't you just hate the slimy feel of the new banknotes that stick clammily together, yet slither slyly out of pockets and purses?

It is a truth universally acknowledged that possession of a debit and/or credit card is a recipe for recklessness and remorse – head-staggers when the bank statement rolls in and a blue fit when the credit card arrives on its heels.

There's usually too much month at the end of one's money.

Pin numbers are lodged immovably in my forgettery.

My mind goes blank when facing a cash dispensing machine, the sun shining obliquely across its grimy perspex screen.

One unfortunate jab of a careless finger on the keypad; two abortive

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attempts and the third eats your card and you're pauperised for days.

Thence, hotfoot to the bank to sort it out. What a siege that turns out to be – and the bona fides they require practically include your shoe size and bust measurements.

I remember a discussion with Daughter Dear, then aged five and born with the acquisitive gene.

"Climb upon my knee child of mine" I said, "and let me give you a crash course in economics. You know the story of the magic porridge pot that never empties?"

She nodded sagely. "Well, it's not like that. Money is a finite resource. You can't take out more than you put in, otherwise the bank people get very cross and write to Daddy. And if your father discovers how much we spend on silly things, he'll run away and never come back."

She pondered this for a moment, then said, "But Mumma, we can always get more out of

the hole in the wall."

She's considerably older now, but pretty much of the same mindset.

We baby boomers, born into a climate of growing prosperity, reared our own children with great expectations, no notion of economy and unable to distinguish 'want' from 'need'.

Consumerism, once considered an ill, is now the norm. We've all been inoculated with the acquisitive gene. In the current climate we're bombarded daily by frenetically vivid and noisy advertising of the newest, most up-to-date 'must-haves' that persuade us to discard perfectly serviceable goods in favour of the latest model. It's not called 'the retail imperative' for nothing.

My dears, the concept of anything 'lasting' is so old hat.

Meanwhile, the gap between the well-to-do and the barely-getting-by becomes a yawning chasm and the number of people in chronic and permanent debt grows apace. The word 'afford' has fallen out of our vocabulary, to be replaced by 'must have this'. It's there for us immediately, often on temptingly easy terms. Instant gratification. Why wait?

Yet how quickly the thrill of the new evaporates. Ease of acquisition devalues everything.

As I stir a spoonful of instant coffee into a mug, I think guiltily of the three percolators gathering dust in the garage, each of them a brief enthusiasm.

Perusing a pretty selection of duvet covers in a magazine (though I have four for that bed already) this set would be perfect.

Of course I'd need to replace the curtains and probably re-paint the walls. Hmm....

Change for change's sake, powered by the retail imperative.

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ON THIS DAY

OCTOBER 26 1971

Troops Shoot Falls Sisters

A MAN was shot dead and a woman wounded by plain clothes policemen and another detained after a bomb had been placed inside the Celebrity Club in Belfast.

Meanwhile the Falls Road seethed over the weekend following the killing by soldiers of two sisters on vigilante patrol in the area. Pictures taken after they were shot showed that, contrary to an Army claim, they were not 'dressed as men' and a tape recording made in Raglan Street as soldiers raided a house recorded only the burst of gunfire followed by two other shots discharged by troops after the car in which the women died.

Mr Jim O'Hara, who was taken away by the Army during the search of Cape Street, was released soon afterwards but he had been badly beaten.

It was when the floorboards of his home were being ripped up and the house searched – nothing was found – that the car in which the two women died with a warning claxton horn blaring, went down Raglan Street and turned up Cape Street to alert people in the district that the Army were raiding and the order was shouted to 'Stop that car.'

Three Men Shot in Newry

SILHOUETTED against thirty-foot flames from a fiercely burning timber yard, thousands of mourners marched through Newry last night behind the coffins of the three men shot dead on Saturday night by troops. Women and children lined the debris-strewn streets as mourners, in military formation, marched behind the coffins.

The three men who were killed were James McLaughlin (27), married with two children of Barcroft Park; Robert Anderson (25) of Mourneview Park and Sean Ruddy (19) of St Clare's Avenue, all of Newry. Troops who shot the men were last night described as 'murderers' by Miss Bernadette Devlin, MP.

IRA 'on Offensive' – IRA Chief

THE North's struggle is now entering 'the vital phase', Mr Sean MacStiofain, Chief of Staff of the militant Provisional IRA, told Sinn Féin in Dublin.

"Our fight has changed from a defensive to an offensive campaign in all parts of the occupied area," he told 600 cheering delegates in Liberty Hall. In the front row was Mr Joe Cahill from Belfast and behind him was Mr Joe Clarke, a veteran of the 1916 Rising.

THE controversial shooting by British troops of two sisters in a car on the Falls Road and three men outside a Newry bank added to the sense that the North was rapidly descending into chaos and civil war.

At this point the IRA announced that it was engaged in an all-out offensive to force a British withdrawal from Ireland.

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