
Material

Democratic Left

1996

Democratic Left Annual Delegate Conference, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin 10th-11th. May, 1996: Guide and Timetable

Democratic Left

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Annual Delegate Conference

*Guide and
Timetable*

Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire
10th-11th May 1996



BREAKFAST: Eric catches up with all the news in *The Star*



OFF TO WORK: With a kiss for wife Ellen



PAPER CHASE: Eric ploughs through his paperwork



DUTIFUL: Returning to his office at the Dail

WISH YOU WERE HERE?

TD Eric Byrne's holiday is all work

ERIC Byrne TD was on a week's holidays, thanks to Halloween.

But not for him a whole week with his feet up, long lie-ins in the morning, a few late-night punts, maybe a couple of days in a posh hotel with his wife and kids.

"God, wouldn't that be great," the Democratic Left deputy for Dublin South Central sighed.

"But it's business as usual, I'm afraid."

The reality is that it's *him* on the third day of Eric Byrne's "Halloween holidays" and he's at his desk near the Dail as usual.

The phones are hopping, the files are piled high on his desk, he has three afternoon appointments, and a committee meeting in preparation for the following day.

His "holiday" bears a strange resemblance to his normal 12-hour working day — except the Dail is not sitting.

In front of him lie 50 files — the heart-breaking harvest from his constituency clinics — seven on Fridays, one on Saturdays.

They include the pleas of a woman at the end of her tether, teenage daughter pregnant, son a drug addict, husband unem-

By TERRY McGEENAH
Political Correspondent
Pic: GERRY MOONEY

ployed, her on valium. Another is about a woman whose husband has left her and taken up with another woman.

Wild

Her ex won't give her any money, her bills are hitting the roof and her kids are running wild.

They are just the cries for help that he encounters in his clinics — every one of them requiring at least one phone call but probably two or three as Mr Byrne tries his best to untangle the problem.

Besides the queries brought to him in his clinics, more come in all day long by telephone.

Clinics, calls and committees go on during Dail break



CALLS: Esther

Between 10.30am and 11.30am he deals with eight phone calls — and that's below average!

Most of the calls go first to his assistant Esther Blake — a one-woman welfare service in her own right.

As she juggles two phones, she tries to attract Mr Byrne's attention while he is in on another call — patiently explaining a desperate constituent's dilemma to someone in the Corps of Social Welfare or Finance or Health.

Problem

"Eric, it's that guy again about his car," she whispers across the room.

"That guy" turns out to be an Englishman who is not even one of Eric Byrne's 85,000 constituents.

"He overheard my name in a pub, and gave me a ring about estate duty on his car — so that's just something else I have to sort out," Mr Byrne said.

"There's just not enough hours in the day."

He is a member of six Dail committees, sub-committees or groupings.

He is a member of Dublin Corporation, Dublin Tourism, and Dublin Transportation Initiatives.

And he is a board member of the Eastern Health Board, St James Hospital, and Crumlin's Children Hospital.

That is on top of serving the needs of a constituency that stretches from



PARTING GLASS: But he's still working

the Liffey to the Dodder, the gritty inner city to holy Templespurg.

But Mr Byrne would not change it for the world.

That is why he gets tired when people slag off the ex-gravy-train muck-chance out for themselves.

"It's harmful that the popular, public image of a TD is one for people to deride and smirk at," the former sceptic said.

"The popular belief that we are all on to a good

thing is just not true. There literally aren't enough hours in the day."

"My assistant and I absorb very much the plight of so many people who are living lives of misery and look to us for some help."

"And I think it is the job of politicians to listen and listen carefully to their plight and attempt to provide some solutions to these problems, society is going to be all the worse for not trying."



WELCOME: Mr Byrne is greeted by Tony Mac Carthaigh at a community meeting



CONSTITUENT: Eric meets 90-year-old Martha Cann from Dublin's Rialto Cottages



TRIBUTE: Eric and Albert Reynolds talk to Terry McGeehan about Brian Lemihán's death

Off on holidays? "God, Wouldn't it be great" was Eric Byrne's response last Halloween, to media accusations of TDs being constantly 'on the doss'. This full page in *The Star* told the real story - for DL TDs, at least!

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WISE UP TO CREDIT

Minister of State Pat Rabbitte T.D. has steered the Consumer Credit Act 1995 onto the statute books in order to give consumers greater protection in their dealings with credit providers.

The Irish Banks' Information Service (IBIS), to complement the legislation, has produced a free guide to the wise use of credit from banks and other sources, in order that consumers can be better informed and can promote their own interests.

Shopping for Credit covers the following topics:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (a) types of credit | (b) advantages/disadvantages to credit |
| (c) selecting credit | (d) applying for credit |
| (e) credit rating and scoring | (f) protection for the borrower |
| (g) coping with credit problems | (h) how to budget |
| (i) forms and illustrations of a Personal Budget Planner, Collecting and Evaluating Information and an Application Form for a Bank Personal Loan. | |

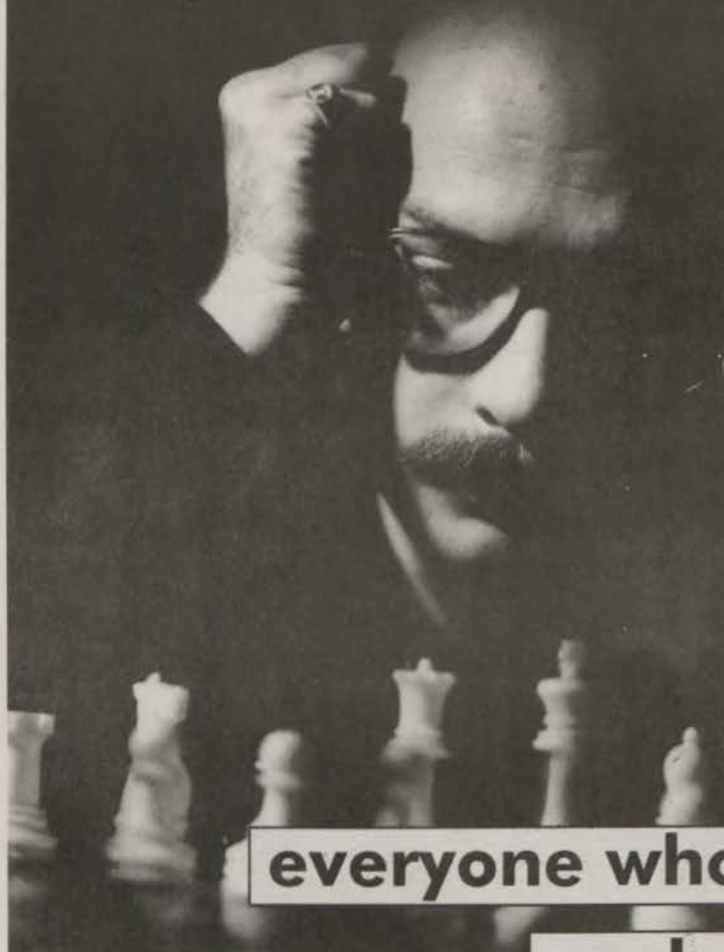
Compiled and produced on behalf of the five clearing banks [1], the *Shopping for Credit* booklet is available free of charge from IBIS or through clearing bank branches. It is one of a range of publications on banking freely available from IBIS, including the following: *Banking in Ireland* and the *Irish Banking Fact File*.

Further details from:

Irish Banks' Information Service (IBIS), Nassau House, Nassau Street, Dublin 2. Telephone: 01 6715299 Fax: 01 6796680.



brian



kevin



everyone who

works in TSB bank...

veronica

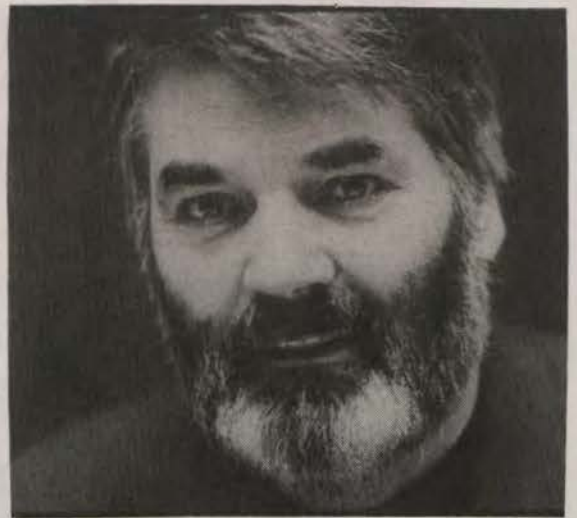


orla



...wants what's best for you.

Welcome to the 1996 ADC



Make no mistake about it these are exciting times for Democratic Left. We gather here for our Annual Delegate Conference

- ◇ *as a party which is making a real difference in Government*
- ◇ *defending the interests of those who are disadvantaged and marginalised*
- ◇ *committed to irreversibly shifting national policy towards a more inclusive free and equal society*
- ◇ *ever ready to challenge the status quo*

Our voice - your voice - is now heard at every level and Democratic Left is making that voice heard and making it count. Our politics is not about power for its own sake. Its about people, and in Government we address the real needs of people on jobs, on our children's future, on genuine support for families, on crime, peace. That work continues here.

At this conference we will chart the way ahead for Democratic Left and towards a society that more adequately reflects the real needs of all the people of this island. Play your part. Help make this conference echo beyond the walls of this building.

By your presence and participation here you will help make that difference and you will play your part in the work that we must do.

We meet here conscious that there is much work yet to be done, yet we also meet here in comradeship to celebrate what we have achieved and what is to come.

So celebrate what Democratic Left has achieved at the Cabinet table, in Dail and Seanad, in City and County and town Councils, in residents' associations and community groups all over the country. Celebrate our difference and enjoy the company of those who share what you believe in.

Let us celebrate what we are and what we have achieved and then turn again to the task of creating a new society that is at peace with itself, that respects difference, and includes all equally.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. De Rosca". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Bigger & Better

A number of DL branches have been established during the past year.
Below we profile the Phibsborough and New Ross branches

Phibsborough

"It aint what you do but the way that you do it - and that's what gets results"

For those of you lucky enough to have 'set up a branch' of your own, the following account may seem utterly unfamiliar:

I woke one afternoon to find that the Bermuda triangle was in reality the Phibsborough rectangle. Someone had re-drawn the boundary around my house (and a good deal many more besides).

Much as I mourned the loss of Bertie, I consoled myself with the fact that Proinsias was now to be my local TD: the Phibsborough / Botanic area was to be included in Dublin North West. But what of the influx of a new strain of electorate and residents? I didn't wait around to find out. A new broom and a new branch were in order.

Ironically, the Divorce referendum coincided with our arrival. We had a purpose, a 'few good men', a campaign, and what we lacked in finance, we made up for in shoe leather.

We hit the mean streets of Phibsborough, roved all along the banks of the Royal canal by the 'Joy', through the shrubbery of the

Botanical gardens (*I'm not sure which has the more exotic plants these days*) to deliver our message: 'Vote Yes' - and they did. The rest is history.

The campaigning and the organising continue. Letters need to be written, new members need to be recruited, and money needs to be raised....

With that in mind we're issuing, as a special offer, a 'Phibsborough passport', which will entitle the holder to membership of the Phibsborough / Botanic branch of the Democratic Left. The branch has eight members and is currently carrying out a review of local needs and priorities.

□ **Frank Bourke**

New Ross

The New Ross Branch of Democratic Left was formed at an open meeting in the town convened by Mick Enright on May 17th, 1995. Initially, the branch had six members including Ingrid O'Brien who was the sole party member in New Ross up to that time.

Less than a year after its formation the New Ross Branch of Democratic Left has increased its membership to thirteen members. Most of the

members - the majority of whom are women - had no previous political involvement although a few were formerly members of the Labour Party. The branch meets once a month and most of the discussion centres on local issues. Other activities include leafletting e.g. the Divorce campaign and the post-Budget leaflets. The branch's main priority is to increase further its membership.

The establishment of Democratic Left in New Ross was the result of a number of factors with individual members citing different reasons for joining. However, the catalyst was probably the visit to the town by Proinsias De Rossa in April 1995, during which he met a delegation of part time workers from the New Haughton hospital - workers who were victims of the 'dirty dozen' social welfare cuts. Several of these workers subsequently joined Democratic Left and are the nucleus around which the branch has continued to grow. The profile of the party in New Ross in April 1995 was also enhanced by the visit of Eamon Gilmore who announced a major allocation of resources for New Ross Port.

□ **Cllr. Micheal Enright**

FÁILTE GO DÚN LAOGHAIRE

Welcome to Dun Laoghaire

Look around and you will see a town which is preparing for the 21st Century. You will see our new Harbour Terminal and Stena's new HSS which can get you to Holyhead in 99 minutes. You can see the new Post Office, the new Garda Station and new Courthouse. You will see the cranes building the new County Hall, the new Theatre and the new Shopping Centre / Cinema Complex. Take a stroll off the main street and see the 19th Century dwellings now being refurbished by a Democratic Left Housing Minister.

Together with Councillors Denis O'Callaghan and Paddy Fitzgerald and with our committed Party members, I am proud of the leading role which Democratic Left is playing in the revival of Dun Laoghaire.



200 years ago, Dunleary was a small fishing village located around the present 'Purty Kitchen'. The building of the great harbour in the early 19th Century and the coming of the Railway created the port town of Dun Laoghaire.

It has witnessed every major chapter of Irish history. O'Connell, Parnell and Collins travelled through here on their missions to negotiate for Ireland. The soldiers sent to quell the 1916 Rising disembarked here. The biggest sea



tragedy in Irish history, the sinking of "The Leinster", in 1918 happened just 12 miles out from Dun Laoghaire. The Leinster's anchor now lies on the seafront as a monument to the 700 who lost their lives.

Many of our relatives sailed out of here on the 'Bád Ban' on their lonely journeys of emigration. Dun Laoghaire is however more than a port town. It is a community and a neighbourhood. This was never more obvious than last week when many hundreds mourned the tragic death of my good friend and Party member, "Tiddler" Meaghan, whom we should remember this weekend. Here in Dun Laoghaire, he was very much the life and soul of the Party.

Eamon Gilmore

SINCE THE LAST ADC...

Democratic Left members around the country campaigned on many important issues since the last conference. Canvassing has continued in many constituencies and the delivering of the party's budget leaflet was the party biggest distribution of leaflets outside of an election situation. The party's contribution to the Divorce Referendum campaign was impressive, a positive result being evident in areas where DL was most actively campaigning.

Cork members produced two campaigning documents highlighting problems facing the northside of the city, one focusing on education needs.

Limerick's DL branch hosted an education conference, open seminars on work and welfare were held in **Dublin South West** and **Dublin South Central**, a seminar on the family was held in **Kildare** and **Wexford** hosted a special seminar on environmental issues.

Eric Byrne's campaigning on drugs issues, **Kathleen Lynch's** opposition to links with NATO and the WEU, **Catherine Murphy** and **Helen Lahert's** stand on planning matters, **Joe Sherlock's** exposition of a corrupt local lottery, **Seamus Rodgers'** defence of the Gaeltacht grants, **John Ryan's** success on housing issues and **Mick Enright's** campaigning for Garda Juvenile Liaison Schemes typify DL representatives and members determination to get stuck in and make a difference in their communities. The party has also resolved to fight the forthcoming elections in Northern Ireland. Our northern organisation will be fielding candidates committed to non sectarian politics aimed at rebuilding the north and providing hope for the future.

Democratic Left was a short few months in Government when our ADC was held in

Liberty Hall at the beginning of April last year. Proinsias De Rossa in his party Leaders' address remarked that "never before in the history of Irish politics has a party of our size achieved so much in such a short period of time". Indeed that Monday's Irish Press reported that the party "*could boast of having made a major impact on the present administration*". Fianna Fail have gone on to claim that Democratic Left is running the Government.

During April Proinsias De Rossa took the opportunity to dismiss criticisms of socialists promising much and delivering nothing. As Minister for Social Welfare, he found himself in the happy position of being able to confirm that 75% of the millions owed to married women entitled to equality payments was to be paid before the end of the year. Additionally, he remarked "the fact is that we have delivered a £7 increase in child benefit to every child in the state, benefiting almost half a million families and more than one million children. This could hardly be described as delivering nothing". He took the opportunity then to announce that all government Departments and state agencies were to adopt Government driven anti-poverty policies.

Dept. of Marine Minister with responsibility for tackling sea pollution, Eamon Gilmore, also to hit the headlines at this time, when he barred a ship bound for Sellafield with radioactive material from docking in Dublin. This was further indication of the Government's "definitive and effective" action on opposition to the dangerous nuclear cargos across the Irish Sea.

Further illustration of DL's commitment to these policies was evident in the party's hosting of an alternative Bastille Day celebration in July, in protest at French nuclear testing in the south Pacific, was

- DL in Kildare has been active in highlighting rezoning and planning issues, spearheaded by Cllr Catherine Murphy.



attended by the Australian ambassador. The party has gone on to organise protests at the French and British embassies, a delegation of members went to the Wylfa plant in Wales to protest there and we recently staged a street demonstration on Dublin's Grafton Street upon the tenth anniversary of Chernobyl.

In the months following the conference, the Commerce and Technology Minister, Pat Rabbitte, helped start a major debate on Ireland's banking system. The party produced a document on competition in Irish banking, proposing such ideas as clearing houses and teller machines for credit unions. Having a Minister in the Department of Enterprise and Employment proved significant as Democratic Left put forward ideas on tackling the unemployment crisis.

DL pressure was influential in Community Employment and VTOS schemes being protected. DL's special conference on long term unemployment in November helped shape the Government's response to the crisis, resulting in such initiatives as the new £80 employers subsidy for taking on the long term unemployed, retention of Child Dependent Allowances for extended periods upon returning to work, retention of medical cards for three years in the same context and PRSI reductions for both workers and employers.

Minister for Housing, Liz McManus, organised a DL Social Housing seminar in

Bray last May. This seminar heard demands for provision of decent accommodation for everyone and helped to provide information on housing choices facing individuals and organisations. In July, in her accompanying brief as Minister for Urban Renewal, she announced the start of a £5.6 million package for renewal of cities and towns -including a regeneration of villages fund. Assisting projects such as landscaping, paving and provision of local enterprise centres, the Minister described it as "an injection of capital that people can see literally transforming their community". In housing starts terms, 10,000 households were provided for in 1995 - compared to only 6,100 in 1993 during the previous administration. Other crucial initiatives in housing terms included the launching of more housing management measures and new regulations for, and registration, of private rented dwellings.

Looking at this years' ADC, it could turn out that it may be our last one before the next General election. Some members will be aware that work is well under way in promoting those wishing to add to our current total of six TDs. Let's hope the ADC after the next election sees us with at least ten TDs and an organisation capable of further impacting our politics on the ground. Clearly, we're making a difference.

Democratic Left Annual Delegate Conference

Time Table

Friday

6pm

Registration

7pm

Standing Orders &
Opening Speech

7.15

Social Policy -

To include Social Welfare, Family Policy, Equality

8.30

Crime

9.15

Minimum Income / PCW &
Working conditions

10pm

End of session

Saturday

9.30am

Organisation

10 am

Environment ~

to include Housing/Planning & Nuclear Safety

11 am

Economy, ~

*to include Job Creation, Community Employment
& Food / Rural Policy*

12pm

Taxation Policy

12.30

Lunch

2pm

Northern Ireland

3pm

Marine

3.20 pm

Health & Drugs

3.45pm

International & Europe

4.15pm

Education, Arts & Culture

5pm

End of Session

7pm

Address by Proinsias De Rossa

*~ followed by Social / Bar Extension
& Live Music*

EQUITY IN WORK RIGHTS OUR NEXT TARGET...

◇ *Helen Lahert, DL Women's Officer on the past year*

There were some notable achievements for women in the last year, many as a direct result of DL's participation in Government. Without our persistence, who knows how long women would have had to wait for their social welfare equality payments. The concentration on increases in child benefit in the last two budgets has made a real difference to what is, in many cases, the only income to which women have direct access.

Victory in the tough Divorce Referendum campaign will enable divorce legislation to be introduced soon. This will allow the large number of women who initiate separation procedures to obtain a divorce and make a new start. This legislation will be for no fault divorce, which means nasty fights with insults and lies between ex partners can be avoided.

It is good to see progress being made in some areas and to know that DL has been fully or partly responsible for these changes. However much more needs to be done.

Most of the problem areas are in some way associated with work. Childcare facilities are still very costly and unorganised. Women's wages are still below the average men's wage and it

seems that the only long term way to tackle this problem will be through legislation for a minimum wage.

The discrepancies between the figures for the live register and for the Labour Force Survey recently show the limbo situation in which many women working in the home find themselves when they want to return to the workforce. They are considered neither employed nor unemployed and are barred from taking up back to work options like Community Employment. This issue will have to be a major future target for DL.

Although some attempt has been made to ensure representation by women on boards, and to encourage women into senior positions in the public service, the percentage of women in senior posts is still abysmally low. This will remain the case until the workplace is made more family friendly, to the benefit of both men and women. Although a start has been made by the provision of parental leave as opposed to maternity leave, as long as this remains unpaid it will be an option for the well off only.

Democratic Left women will be campaigning in the coming year for equity for women in work.

skin Deep

Saturday Night Social

Royal Marine Hotel

- Bar Extension -
No Cover Charge



The Port of Dun Laoghaire

▫ John De Courcy Ireland traces its unique history

One of several ways in which the port of Dun Laoghaire differs from the majority of our main ports is that from a number of vantage points, without having to go up into the air, the entire harbour can be taken in one swift glance. The whole 251 acres of water (somewhat less after recent developments) are embraced by the two encircling arms of the East Pier, 3,500 feet long, and the West Pier, 4,050 feet long, built of vast slabs of granite cut out of Dalkey Hill, southward of it.

Dun Laoghaire is also unlike any other important Irish port as a purely artificial creation pushed out into the sea from a barren, rocky and virtually deserted coast. It was the brainchild of a small group of engineers and two devoted master mariners, given solid life by a workforce of some 700 that were paid one shilling and eight pence to two shillings a day. It was hardly a fortune, but some 25% higher than workers were getting on port projects in other parts of Ireland.

What can be neither gauged nor guessed by looking at Dun Laoghaire harbour is the fact that the decision by the parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1816 to give permission for that port to be built was that it was one of the greatest examples of "people power" in Irish history. For decades Dublin had been gaining a reputation as one of the most perilous ports in the whole world to approach or leave in certain conditions. Shipwrecks were commonplace, almost all accompanied by the loss of all those on board. In November 1807 some 400 men, women and children perished on a single night between Seapoint and Blackrock.

Public opinion exploded and a great big meeting was called in Monkstown. It was organised by a popular Norwegian shipmaster long resident in the area. A huge

petition was sent to London, backed by others in West British ports. The "asylum harbour" of Kingstown, as it became known was completed pretty well by 1848. The Carlisle pier, also known as the "Mailboat pier" was the final addition before the super modern passenger terminal was completed in 1996. The arrival of steamships had transformed the new port's status from a refuge for sailing ships into being the busiest passenger port in Ireland. This was largely thanks to the vision of a Mr. Hutchinson,

the port's first harbourmaster and the acumen of the purely Irish "City of Dublin Steam Packet Co", the country's most successful ferry service anywhere.

Out of the harbour grew the town of Dun Laoghaire and the harbour became not only a great passenger port but the headquarters of the Irish lighthouse service. It has also been noted as the scene of the first ever broadcast of a sporting event, a famous yachting centre and was for a time a naval base.



Conferences.....

Bloody Conferences

□ *Two delegates offer a jaundiced view of our annual outing*

I suppose I have attended hundreds of conferences. I have even been to a conference on conferences! About the last thing you can, or are supposed to do at them is confer. If you're doing that, it's probably in the bar, the corridor or someplace else calculated to break the hearts of those trying to maintain serried ranks of interested and attentive faces for the expected hordes of media cameras, or keeping things running on schedule.



Someday soon, someone is going to invent (and patent) a new, exciting and even entertaining way to do what

conferences have been failing to do, at least since the arrival of television. We'll wonder then why we spent all that time, especially all those weekends, cooped up with a new found empathy for the battery hen!

The problem stems from the need to have "policies". It's not very reassuring for one of my political outlook to reflect that of the several million hours I have spent listening to, arguing for, ignoring, arguing against and finally voting on several hundred thousand policies I don't see much evidence of it ever having achieved very much until recently. Perhaps there really is no other way, but if other bits of my life registered the same type of productivity, I would be in fairly serious trouble.

This may stem from a traditional view on the left that our best hope lay in boring capitalism out of existence! Just at the point where this seemed to be working, capitalism trumped us by finding two of the most outstandingly determined bores since we emerged from the cave. In came Thatcher and Reagan and that was that for about fifteen years. No ma'am or siree, there was nothing funny about these two!

Which brings me back to conferring. Now that we are in a mood to shed the sackcloth and

the ashes approach to improving the lot of our fellow citizens, how are we to restore exuberance to the art of party conferences?

Some of the answers are obvious. Setting the proceedings to music, employing Clive Anderson to chair it, asking Ardal O' Hanlon to deliver the Presidential address (oops, wrong party, but at least he's not Twink!) and many other implausible possibilities.

But, and here is the serious bit, while the subject matter of politics is serious, does the process have to be quiet so leaden? Can it really be difficult to break out of pre-literacy, pre-television age model of how a gathering of people must be structured?

Or are annual conferences just a bad habit that is proving a bit hard to break? Do we have one just because all the others do it? Why don't we do a deal with them rather as we did on posters and see if anyone notices the difference?

And then spend at least some of the weekend actually communicating political ideas to each other in more intelligent and productive format than that determined by university debating societies.

Or, after all these years have I become an anarchist...or worse yet...a Green...aarrgh!

♦ **PAT BRADY.**

Have you heard the one about ?

The thing that always strikes me about Annual Conferences is the amount of rumours and speculations that fly around. I have sat, gob-smacked, listening to the most outrageous statements issuing from the mouths of people whom I considered, (until then) quite sane. Not that I am suggesting for one moment that anyone who willingly nails their colours to the mast of any political party in this country can be sane. We are all mad. We must be. I think politicians, nay, I know politicians are the most hated breed in Ireland, if not the world. And yet, there are thousands of us out there, all willing to give up our free time in order to help keep these monsters in power. I wonder why? Why doesn't someone write a thesis on it?

Anyway, I digress. Rumours. I have sat, as I have said, gob-smacked, and listened to the most outlandish statements ever to come from a comrade's mouth. And o.k. I admit it. I've spread more than my fair share myself. Where do these rumours come from? How come people who are by nature cynical, hard-bitten, thick skinned, dogmatic and arrogant fall for this rubbish everytime? Why, I have seen highly placed personages who shall remain nameless, rush ashen faced through a Conference Hall, hyper-ventilating, for all the world like they have received information that could "shake the State to its foundations", and all on account of a baseless rumour.

I remember at one Conference being in a black fury because I had just been told, (the gospel truth of course) that a T.D., standing

not 10 yards from me, had been recruited by the Labour Party and was seriously considering the offer. I spent an hour trying to manoeuvre myself into a position where I could glare, uninterrupted, at this miscreant, at the same time holding a tranny tightly to my ear, waiting for "The Announcement". (for those younger members a tranny was a device used before the advent of the Walkman) No announcement, no defection. Nothing. This T.D. however still remembers this mad woman sitting in front of him, mouthing silent obscenities at him and avoids me like the plague.



He thinks I'm mad. He's not wrong. I was determined to track this rumour down to its source. It would have been easier to trace the source of the Nile. Between half heard conversations, and repeated verbal versions of this half heard conversation, the rumour had taken on a life of its own and was "gospel" before the hour was out.

It reminded me of a story I heard from my grandfather. During the 1st World War, field telephones were a rarity hence messages were passed verbally down the trench lines to the nearest operator. Anyway, one day a message was passed down the

line. It said "Send up reinforcements, we're going to advance". By the time it got to the field telephone operator it had turned into "Lend us three and fourpence, we're going to a dance".

And what about the "who's sleeping with who" gossip. There is a certain person in our party who according to "gospel" has slept with half the female membership. If only I could tell you who I mean. You'd all die laughing. You wouldn't cross the road to spit on him were he on fire, as my mammy is fond of saying. I was horrified to learn that he had

yet another notch on his bed-post and I happened to be on very good terms with this notch. So I approached her and asked her gently if she was gone off her head entirely, and were her eyes, let alone her sense of smell defective. I'm nothing if not diplomatic. After I called the ambulance and she'd been sedated I of course found out that I had been had again.

So now anything I hear at Conference I will treat with the contempt it deserves. I am not of course referring to the words of wisdom coming from the platform! Am I?

□ Esther Steele

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Sunday will be a day of sober reflection for some.

It will be a day of excruciating pain for others.

The lucky ones will just have hangovers.

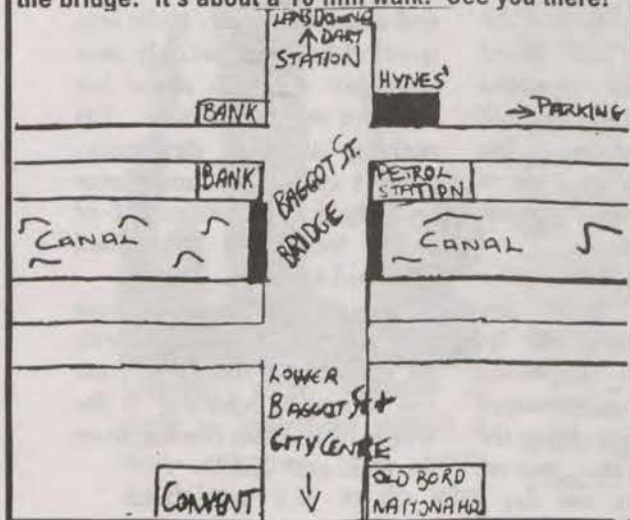
Whatever shape you're in, come to

Hynes's Pub (upstairs)
on Baggot St. Bridge,

between 12pm and 2pm

Free entry, full bar and a very good breakfast available for just £3.50.

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EDITORIAL

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... that Limerick is the
... rugby capital of Ireland?

Courageous

CONGRATULATIONS, Cllr John Ryan, on initiating a long-overdue debate on Limerick Civic Week. After a quarter of a century it is timely that the event should be re-assessed in city and county. Besides, there is always room for improvement in every festival.

Cllr Ryan's critical comments are particularly welcome because he attempts to see Civic Week from the point of view of the man in the street, rather than the dignitary on the platform.

His claim that the event needs to appeal more to the average citizen may or may not be valid. What cannot be denied is that his opinion is widely-shared.

Predictably, perhaps, his comments have been misconstrued as some sort of personal attack on Civic Week organisers—so much so, in fact, that Cllr Ryan himself has himself been the butt of criticism.



Unflinching: Cllr Ryan

That kind of response by the Establishment might deter some people from speaking out in future on matters of public interest, but clearly not Cllr Ryan. He might have stood alone but he has certainly stood his ground.

In so doing he has proved that not only can he take criticism as well as give it but that, he is a politician with the courage of his convictions.

Love link

• This Editorial from the *Limerick Leader* in April speaks for itself.



• Delegates at an earlier DL Conference

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Northern Ireland

"It's Time to Talk"

ON May 30th elections will be held in Northern Ireland leading up to talks planned to commence on June 10th. Democratic Left will be contesting with the aim of winning seats at the negotiating table.

In the party's political manifesto, which will be delivered to homes throughout Northern Ireland, the task of negotiators to produce acceptable arrangements within Northern Ireland based on the principle of shared power and responsibilities, is emphasised.

The consent of the people of Northern Ireland before there can be any change in the region's constitutional position is emphasised. Similarly there must be respect for everyone's

right to work for new institutional arrangements, without the threat of violence.

This must involve an acceptance of and respect for the separate traditions in Northern Ireland. One of the party's main demands at the negotiating table will be the enactment of a Bill of Rights

Central to development of normal politics in Northern Ireland is the guaranteeing of social, economic and cultural rights. This must be linked to strategies to tackle long-term unemployment, and equality of opportunity.

Any talks must involve moves towards decommissioning of weapons by the paramilitaries. This must be linked to an ending of 'punishment' beatings and information relating to the whereabouts of disappeared persons, the majority of whom must be presumed to have been killed after abduction.

"In the new Forum we have an unique opportunity through dialogue with our neighbours to arrive at an accommodation which will convert an uncertain peace process into political progress," Northern Ireland Chairperson, PJ McClean points out.

Northern Ireland Elections

May 30th

Support Democratic Left's Election campaign in Northern Ireland. Assistance is needed with leafletting during the remainder of May.

Financial support is needed to cover the cost of the campaign.

You may help by making a donation today, which may be given to the Administration desk.

Alternatively contact **Cllr Gerry Cullen**, Director of Elections, 45 Railway Road, Dungannon, Co Tyrone, Northern Ireland

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Tackling unemployment and boosting the rights of consumers have been among Pat Rabbitte's priorities. Here Pat is pictured at the opening of the Tallaght Money Advice and Budgeting Service in April.

Straight talking has always been one of Senator Joe Sherlock's trademarks, evident in this picture of a Munster delegates' meeting.



When the Northern Ireland peace process was threatened by renewed IRA bomb attacks earlier this year, Kathleen Lynch was among those who led a march for peace in Cork city.

Greater attention to Ireland's long-neglected coastal and marine resources and action against the nuclear risks from Sellafield have been among Eamon Gilmore's concerns in the Department of the Marine.

