

1995

The DIT Examiner: the Newspaper of the Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union Special Edition, April 1995

DIT Students' Union

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The DIT Examiner

The Newspaper of the Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

April '95



DIT Mountjoy Held its annual fashion show recently in Jury's Hotel. As usual, it was a high class affair and not without its bizarre moments. Page 6



DIT's second institute wide sports day took place at the ALSAA sports complex. Last year's event was always going to be a hard act to follow. Page 7



The rise and rise of John Travolta continues with his latest film, the action fest Broken Arrow. We check it out. Page 9



USI's annual congress was held in the Ardilaun Hotel, Galway. It was a most interesting and revealing weekend. Page 12

DITSU triumphs in USI Elections

The new President of USI will be Colman Byrne, currently Overall President of DITSU. He will be joined on the incoming executive of USI by another DITSU officer, Helen Ryan, who was elected Welfare Officer. Helen is presently the Site President of DIT Kevin Street's Students' Union.

In the end, after a vigorous campaign by both candidates, Mr Byrne won the election quite handsomely, by 100 votes to Bob Jordan's 55. Mr Jordan is the Deputy President of USI. This is the first time in five years that the mantle of President has not been passed from one USI candidate to another and will be seen by many as a vote for change. Mr Byrne believes that this was crucial to his victory.

"I ran my campaign on that. It needs change, needs energy, new blood, but I wasn't asking people to vote against someone else, I was asking them to vote for me." He said that that he did not think he would win by such a margin but professed himself 'delighted' with such a result. Mr Jordan, of whom outgoing President Colm Keaveny spoke very fondly in his speech on the final day on Congress, said that he will now be bowing out of Students' Unions politics, as he had promised himself if he failed in his attempt to become president.

"I'm going to get a job," he told the delegates at the Ardilaun Hotel in Galway where Annual Congress was held this year.

This election had been a tough one to call and few were prepared to pin their colours to a particular mast, at least not publicly. Bob Jordan had tradition going for him; he is well liked and a fine, witty speaker but going against him was a certain sense of dissatisfaction with USI, made abundantly clear when this year's officer board report was voted against. His opponent, Colman Byrne, is an ambitious young man who enjoys a good dog fight. He ran a strong, highly

efficient campaign, playing the need for change card heavily. No mean speaker himself, he delivered a well received speech on Thursday evening, the first of Congress. The reception was an indication that the election had swung his way. Nevertheless, when Frank Crumney entered to announce the outcome of the elections, the tension in Congress hall

was remarkable, palpable. The winner in the Presidential election was the last to be announced and when it was announced that Byrne had received 100 votes (the quota was 78), his supporters had heard all they needed. They cheered, champagne was uncorked and Byrne was held aloft.

Mr Jordan accepted defeat graciously, offering a handshake to a tearful My Byrne. Most of the DITSU delegation and various others who had supported the Byrne campaign, then repaired to the hotel bar to continue the celebrations, which went on long into the night.

Minutes earlier, Helen Ryan, who is presently Site President in DIT Kevin Street's Students' Union was elected USI Welfare Officer. She ran uncontested and so was virtually assured of election



but still the moment her election was officially announced, and the massive cheer that went up, proved too much and she too wept. The pressure was off and she could relax for the weekend.

She said she was delighted with the overwhelming 'yes' vote. Her priorities for the year will include tackling the housing difficulties which face students each year. "The introduction of taxes for landlords means that they are going to reflect that in their rent increases so their may be a housing crisis. We'll be for some sort of relief for people who rent to students."

She says that USI will also be closely monitoring the operation of the students summer jobs scheme and will fight for the retention of the £200 extra available to students on the scheme whose parents are unemployed.

In the other contests, Ms Noeleen Hartigan, presently USI's Welfare Officer, was elected Deputy President; Malcolm Byrne, UCD, was elected Education Officer and Dermot Quaine, Limerick RTC, was elected Union Development Officer. Kelly O'Dowd was elected Women's Rights Officer at Women's Congress.

Mr Byrne's priorities for the coming year will be consolidation of current membership of USI - there were plenty of warnings at this year's Congress that some people are unhappy - improvements to the grants system and the student summer jobs scheme, the legitimacy and effectiveness of which most students now seem to accept.

"We have to adopt what the students have said. Now we have to make it better, to improve it."

The DIT Examiner

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Here You Go Again

It is hard to believe that some students in the DIT are beginning their exams this week. Scary, isn't it? Only yesterday it was September and the year stretched ahead with exams nowhere in sight for many of you. Suddenly, there they are, looming as only exams do. The next month will be rough, it's as simple and brutal as that. The pressure will be considerable, whether you are a first year or a final year student. and, naturally, the exams are very important; you have worked hard to get to this point and it is understandable that you may think that everything hinges on how you perform over the next few weeks

But, do not let them take over your life. Certainly, give it your best and commit yourself to them but do not forget to take time out to relax for a moment: go for a walk, go for a drink, go to the cinema, do something. The exams will offer more than enough pressure without you fretting and worrying when you're not actually sitting one or studying for the next one.

The students' union is still around; the year isn't over yet. If there is anything bothering you and you don't know quite where to turn, drop in and simply ask; that's what they're there for. There is little point in bottling things up, especially at this time of year. The solution may be simpler than you think.

The executive of DITSU and the DIT Examiner wish all of you the very best of luck in the coming weeks.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I found your recent front page articles concerning DIT Rag Week more related to a propaganda machine rather than the newspaper of the 25,000 student of the DIT.

As a sabbatical officer and President of a site college and one who was not in favour of a DIT Rag Week, I found that the views of students of DIT Aungier Street as indicated a recent class representative meeting were not being catered for - not to mention the views of other officers in other colleges. For example, what did the local Entertainments Officers think of it all? Our local magazine, Link, had the opposite effect of the recent editions of "the Examiner", however 'Link' is written primarily by the Student Union and the students of DIT Aungier St and its readership is the students of Aungier St and no one else as expressed in our recent Editorial.

What annoys me the most however is having had the foresight to see that the views expressed in the "Examiner" would be all one sided, I actually requested an interview and/or comment on the issue of the DIT rag week. A request which although agreed, was not adhered to. Some colleges do not have local magazines and therefore what is read in the DIT Examiner is often seen as gospel. Is it any wonder therefore that large amounts of editions are left unread in various colleges? Students are intelligent people, it's about time their representatives and employees treated them as such.

Yours Sincerely,

Dan Wade
Site President,
DIT Aungier St

The Editor Replies

I do not accept that the front page articles referred to were propagandist, and I am not too sure what is meant by 'propaganda machine'. The DIT Examiner is designed as the newspaper of the DIT Students' Union and therefore, naturally, part of its brief is to promote and advertise DITSU events, be they the DIT Sports Days, individual fashion shows or DIT Rag week.

The front page article in the January/February edition was largely concerned with the various events that were lined up for the impending rag week. Mr Wade's reservations about rag week were not included in direct quote, but reference was made in the article to such concerns. Furthermore, such concerns were also referred to in the editorial of that issue. No entertainments officer contacted the paper in relation to rag week.

The front page article in the post rag week issue was concerned simply with the events that occurred on the night of rag ball. I am at a loss to discover anything of a propagandist nature in the piece.

Once again, reference was made in the editorial to the reticence of the part of some people to the idea of a DIT wide rag week. It also expressed the view that the rag week was an overall success and that the idea was a sound one. The DIT Examiner believes that this is the case, nothing more. Mr Wade is of course entitled to disagree with this opinion; that is what opinions are for.

Sincerely,
The Editor

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**RUN BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS
SO GET INVOLVED!
IT'S YOUR STUDENTS' UNION.**

Clarifications

Should you encounter anything you feel is in need of clarification in this, or any other issue of the DIT Examiner, please contact the editor and any such matters shall then be clarified in the subsequent edition

Editor John Carroll
Contributors Siobhán Weekes
Associate Editor Colman Byrne
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The Summer Job Scheme '96

The Students Summer Jobs Scheme allows third level students (Not Final Year Students) to take up part-time work useful to their community during their Summer Holidays and to receive payment for this work.

The scheme operates from 1st June to 30th September 1996. The maximum number of hours a student is allowed work is 200 over a 6-17 week period. The maximum hours worked per week cannot exceed 35. The rate of pay for students is £3 per hour up to a maximum of £600. This payment is not subject to income tax or PRSI. Students may also get another job to supplement their income for the Summer months.

To qualify for work under the scheme you must be currently in full-time third level education, be aged 18 or over on 1st June 1996 and satisfy a means test. It is important that all students apply

because there is no specific cut-off threshold for family income, so even if you don't qualify for a maintenance grant, you can still qualify for the Jobs Scheme.

Eligible students must get written approval from the Department of Social Welfare before the work/project commences. A student will be given a Job Certificate. Working arrangements are a matter to be agreed between the student and the sponsor. Before starting work the student must give his/her job certificate to the sponsor.

Application forms are available from Student Union Offices or from the Department. Under no circumstances will applications be accepted after the closing date on 31st May 1996. Allow for 21 days for processing of your application.

The Completed Application Form should be sent to :

Department of Social Welfare, P.O. Box 3988, Dublin 1.

Final Year students can sign on the day after their last exam. They should do this because you will only get back-dated payment from the day you sign on. You need some form of ID, a birth certificate or a passport and a letter from the college to say you have finished your final year exams. You get this letter from the Administrations Office. You must continue to sign on each week.

If you have signed on before, your payment will come through quickly. If this is your first time signing on, a Welfare Officer will come out to visit your house or flat. If you live at home, you will be means tested on your parents' income and you will need your parents' P60 and possibly other proof of

income and expenditure. You can expect to receive payment 6 weeks from the day you sign on. Again you may be lucky and be paid quicker.

If you want to claim Rent Allowance you must get in contact with your Local Community Welfare Officer in Local Health Centre.

Information on working abroad is available from USIT in Aston Quay. Always research the country you are travelling to - it is wise to know how to work legally and the do's and don'ts.

REMEMBER to take out insurance over the Summer months, in case of loss or theft of your belongings.

If you have any queries or problems on any of the above issues - drop into the Students' Union for more information.

Mountjoy Square Goes Medieval

Grog, wenches, lascivious, immoral clergymen, several drunken knights, fair maidens, vast amounts of food and more grog. Chaucer would have loved it.

Such was the scene in the canteen in DIT Mountjoy Square for the highlight of their art and design week. The place had been cleverly and diligently decorated in a medieval manner, as had anyone who wished to attend the dinner to mark the end of the week's activities.

The DIT Examiner (modern garb plus infernal soul stealing image creating machine) dropped in to record the moment.



If you want your soul back, contact the paper



Martin Malone was the winner of the Bus Eireann Travel Vouchers Competition. He won £350 worth of USIT Travel Vouchers. Pictured (l to r) are: Karen O'Leary, (Bus Eireann), Victor Fyfe (Bus Eireann) Martin Malone and Jimmy Kane.

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INFORMATION - DUBLIN, 8366111.

The Exam Appeals Procedure

Each year, the DIT's Exam Appeals Board received on average, 10 appeals from students regarding exams results. They are usually concerned with an upgrading of a result but not always. Occasionally, there is a request to sit a supplemental exam if the usual supplemental options have been exhausted.

There is an appeal procedure that should be followed and it should be available from both the library and the exams office in each DIT site. This is not always the case and so we will here outline the procedure as clearly as is possible. This procedure is there to be used if you feel you have a genuine case.

Tom Duff, the DIT's Academic Registrar, has pointed out that the exam appeals board, which is independent of individual colleges, cannot change results but can pass onto the exams board information that may not have been available at the time of the exam. This may then result in the exam board reconvening to consider the student's case.

1. First step is to get an Examination Appeals Form (Form A1). This should be available from the Administrative Section of the relevant college.

2. This form must be completed in block letters or typescript and lodged with the relevant director within two weeks of the publication of the Provisional Examination Results and accompanied by the appropriate fee (£37). The relevant director must then sign and date the appeal and he will then forward it to the Academic Registrar (Tom Duff). It must be accompanied by:

A. Information as to whether

(i) the appellant [student making the appeal] has made efforts to resolve, through the relevant Head of School/Department the difficulty which has given rise to the appeal

(ii) a recheck has been requested and, if so, state the outcome if processed

(iii) the Examination Board has been made aware of any special circumstances, including medical, affecting the appellant's case prior to determination of results

(iv) the students in general and the prospective appellant in particular, have been informed of the appropriate course regulations

Other information which must accompany the appeal is

B. A written evaluation of the case from the relevant director, including comment on the allegations, if any, contained therein

C. Medical certificates relevant to the case

D. The appellant's academic record in previous years and a transcript of his/her current class group's examination results in respect of which the appeal is being sought

E. The process by which the appellant may continue his/her studies if the appeal is unsuccessful

F. Any other relevant information on the case.

Be sure to include any information that may be relevant, and if including any medical certificates, ensure that

you list their inclusion on the appeals form in the appropriate section of the form.

Section 10 of the form asks the appellant to 'please specify the change you seek in your result as a consequence of this appeal'. This section, according to Tom Duff, was introduced because there have been students who were requesting a further supplemental exam rather than an upgrading of a result. Don't be worried by the request. State honestly your feeling on the matter and why.

There is space provided on the appeals form (section 8) in which you may present your case in your own words. If you feel there is insufficient space provided on the form, you can continue on separate sheets of paper but make sure you include them with your appeal and indicate clearly their inclusion.

There is a facility for presenting your case to the board, either by yourself or with a willing lecturer/representative of the students' union. One of these could present the case for you or you can forego this option entirely. It will not prejudice your case.

Hopefully, you will not need recourse to this facility, but if you do, don't be afraid to make your case.

3, South Anne St,
Dublin 2.
Ph: 6774339



3, Nassau St,
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Killing for Convenience

Dead Man Walking takes on a great deal and unfortunately the weight of trying to cover every conceivable moral angle in the ongoing debate on the death penalty finally renders it less effective as a criticism of that policy than it could have been.

By remaining as detached as he can be writer/director Tim Robbins has endeavoured to prove in a measured, driving argument that the death penalty is wrong, that it solves nothing, is the preserve of cynical vote hunting politicians, and is finally, utterly inhuman. It's as if he sat down and decided that if he left anything out, those in favour of the death penalty would point an accusing finger and shout "ah ha, but you didn't show this, what about that?" And so Robbins packs in as much as possible but in doing so he robs the film of

comes to terms with the enormity of not so much what he has done as what the end result will be for him. We are also shown the families of the victims grieving six years on, telling their story to Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon), who has befriended Poncelet in his last weeks, and wondering angrily how she can sit with them and then return to the prison to talk to the killer of their children. Prejean is more a symbol of liberalism than a character; she is asked all the questions and has to contend with all the apparent contradictions which trouble those who oppose the death penalty. It doesn't quite come off. Sarandon, who won an Oscar for her performance, is admirably restrained, and, in a film that relies heavily on close up scenes between Prejean and Poncelet, almost always separated by a screen or wire, we can see

relevant but it makes the film seem like a lesson. In fact, it often feels like a documentary. Scenes with Prejean and the families of the victims, shot in their silent homes, are most reminiscent of this style. In some other scenes, particularly those featuring Poncelet's lawyer (Robert Prosky), the dialogue sounds like narration. Only in the final scenes are we given any visceral, cinematic depiction of what it means to sanction the taking of a life.

The emotional response of the audience at this point is testament to the restraint of Robbins and a sensational performance by Sean Penn. Sarandon's work here pales next to his, in what is admittedly the more showy role. He is given the best lines and biggest scenes in the film and makes the most of the opportunities afforded him. His character is a preening, petulant and, now, impotently angry murderer, faintly silly looking with a high pompadour hairstyle and half assed goatee. Penn sets his face, eyes flat and unblinking, small mouth in a nasty sneer, and gets to it. His guilt is never in doubt and he remains an unpleasant individual throughout, though Robbins allows him occasional flashes of humanity to underline the fact that the State is about to take the life of a person. We are shown his family also (the director takes great pains to cover all bases) to emphasise the human dimension but the scenes are superfluous and are among the weakest in the film. The mother's wailing is overdone and may even cause titters in the audience. Not, I imagine, the desired effect.

The film's climax is inevitable and is handled in the simple, matter of a fact style of the movie as a whole. It is here that its effectiveness stands out; there was a palpable, audible emotional reaction in the darkness even though the final scenes are intercut with the horrible murders in the terrifying loneliness of a Louisiana forest. This is Robbins only real cinematic trick, and a pretty standard one it is. For the rest of the film, he employs an unfussy and direct style, wisely letting the actors do the work and not distracting with clever angles or swooping camerawork (the recent *Murder in the First* was a terrible offender in this regard).

Dead Man Walking is a heartfelt film, well acted and occasionally very moving but because it attempts to make the definitive argument against the death penalty, albeit it in a reasoned fashion, its sense of drama and power as a cinematic work is dissipated.

Also Showing Get Shorty

The seemingly inexorable rise and rise (again) of John Travolta continues with this smart, engaging, if rather lightweight crime caper set in the pre-tentious, backstabbing world of movie land.

In the best adaptation so far of an Elmore Leonard novel, Travolta plays Chili Palmer, a very cool strong arm man who tracks a life insurance scam artist to Hollywood. A movie maniac, he is utterly besotted with the place and when he meets up with Z movie producer Harry Zimm (gleefully OTT Gene Hackman), he cannot resist pitching his idea for a film. Meanwhile, Zimm is so impressed with his new underworld contact that he cannot resist talking tough to Chili's ostensible boss in Miami (Dennis Farina), thus getting himself into a whole heap of trouble.

The top notch cast that includes a tough talking Rene Russo as actress Karen Flores and Danny Devito taking the complete piss as a preening method actor and al makes the most of the snappy dialogue and sly digs at Hollywood and the whole movie making thing. *Get Shorty* is fast, glossy and very entertaining but as a satire on Hollywood it lacks the rapier sharpness of *The Player* or *Sunset Boulevard*.

Nixon

Oliver Stone continues his trawl through America's recent history in this vigorous telling of the rise and fall, rise and fall of Richard Nixon, played by Anthony Hopkins who looks little like the disgraced President but captures the mannerisms perfectly and ends up doing more than prosthetics ever could.

Employing an array of visual styles, as he did to irritating, jarring effect in natural *Born Killers*, Stone takes us through the life of a man he sees as filled with self loathing. We are taken through the highs and lows, shown the duplicity of the man and his cohorts (played by a great supporting cast - Ed Harris, James Woods, Powers Booth, Paul Sorvino) but for all the effort put into the film and its extreme length - three hours - there is no explanation for his more nefarious activities and why he thought he could get away with them.

Visually arresting, terrifically acted but its psychology is a little too pat and doesn't satisfactorily explain the man.



Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn in *Dead Man Walking*

intensity and anger. We are shown, for example, the brutal rape and murder of two teenagers by Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn) the crimes for which he is on death row. This is suggested at throughout the film and only finally shown in detail towards the end, a la *The Accused*, as Poncelet

through reference to the unfairness of the death penalty. We are thrown facts about the lack of rich people on death row, the numbers of blacks on death row, the politics behind many of the decisions (Bill Clinton, who played the death penalty card when running for President, take a bow). All very true and

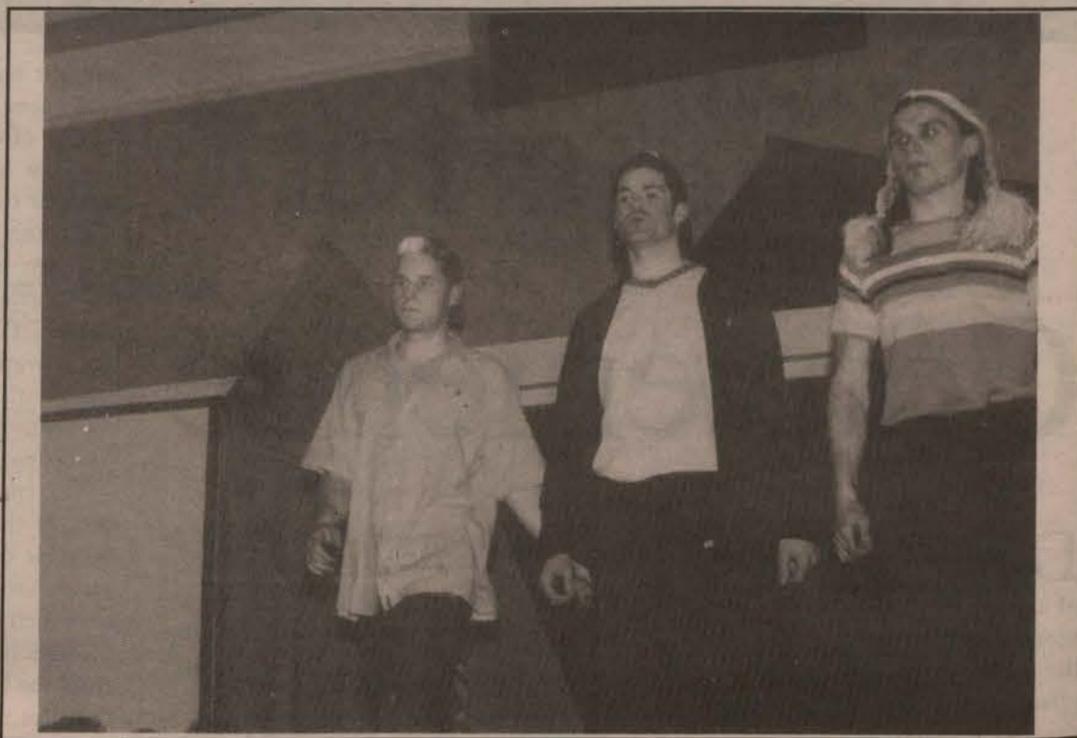
Mountjoy Square Close the Clothes Shows

DIT Mountjoy Square brought this year's series of DIT fashion shows to a sparkling, shimmering end with their very own high tech, high style event recently in Jury's Hotel. The models, by time slinky, silly and downright outrageous in dress and manner, did their thing with consummate

ease and professionalism while Tara (herself not to be outdone in the high fashion and higher hair department) emceed with confidence. The audience lapped it up but one question remains unanswered: What in Heaven's name did Mark Lee do to this hair? Beg pardon, two questions. Why?



Explain yourself, young man



One of these men is not like the others, one of these men is not the same



Don't even try to explain yourself

Selected scenes (some a little scary) from DIT Mountjoy Square's Fashion Show, Jury's Hotel, March 25th, 1996



*"What do you think?"
"Dunno, they all look a bit crap to me."*

Sports Day Disappoints in Dreary Weather

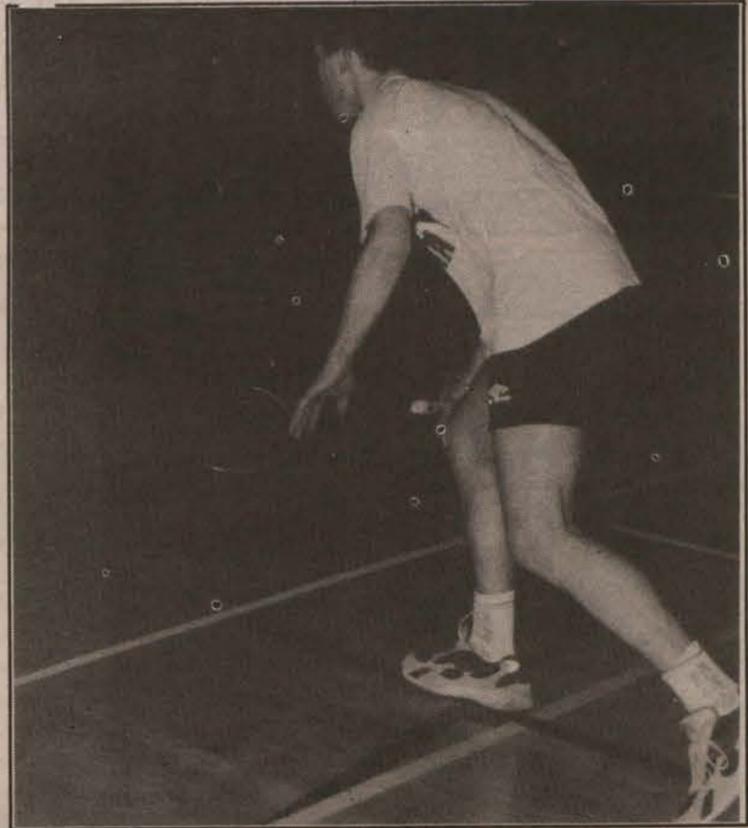
Was it the weather - grey, drizzly, relentlessly cold and unwelcoming? Perhaps it was the furious pace of the surrounding weeks with rag week, elections and preparations for annual congress. Maybe it had something to do with the somewhat rushed nature of the plans. It was probably all three but no matter how you look at it, this year's DIT Sports Day was a grave disappointment compared with the glowing success of its predecessor.

Swinging into the ALSAA grounds by the airport, it was immediately apparent that the numbers attending, whether taking part or simply observing, were significantly lower than last year's. The outdoor sports field were deserted save for one seven-a-side rugby match. On the all surface soccer and hockey pitches, blue legged and red eared sports men and women fought on bravely while their supporters kept moving to keep warm. The wind was

merciless.

In the welcome warmth of the sports hall, basketball took centre stage - there always seemed to be a match taking place - while others played volleyball, badminton or took part in an aerobics. Upstairs, in the viewing area, those who had finished their games or who had simply had enough, supped on pints and looked down. Most who were there this year were participants and the whole event lacked the sense of fun that prevailed last year. It was all over by 3.30pm and everyone simply slipped away, though the hardier element head for a pre-organised event in McGraths later on.

Kudos are due to all those who took part in unpleasant conditions but a long look will be needed at this year's event. DIT sports day should be a priority from the beginning of the year and not a mad dash in the weeks leading up to it.



Letting in Some Light

Eithne Fitzgerald, Minister for State at the Office of the Tánaiste, talks exclusively to the DIT Examiner about the intricacies of the proposed Freedom of Information Bill, due for publication next month, and what it will mean for Irish society.

Getting information from official sources in Ireland can be a nightmarish and protracted process and a source of screaming frustration. For a long long time, an ethos of downright unhelpfulness and secrecy has prevailed and the systems available have hardly offered easy access to personal information that citizens in many other countries take for granted. In a late 20th century democratic state, it is a risible situation.

In recent years, however, successive governments have been making noises about freedom of information as basic right, not privilege, of great changes that will be wrought upon society fairly soon, making Ireland a more fair and open country. The ball is now currently with Eithne Fitzgerald, Minister of State at the Office of the Tánaiste. It is she who has been steering a Freedom of Information bill through our legislative loops and chicanes and the bill is due to be published in May. It will doubtless be heralded by the current Government as yet another shiningly proud example of the open and transparent manner in which the country is now being run while in the other corner, it will be derided as a toothless piece of fluff that doesn't go nearly far enough.

The Minister puts the government positions succinctly, if predictably: "It's about openness and transparency and accountability in government." At least she has the good humour to smile when she says this as it has become a cliché to rank up there with mature recollections.

"At present, the bizarrely anachronistic Irish system, based closely on the Westminster model, affords only minimum access to official information, and then almost grudgingly, even when that information is non-controversial material relating to the enquirer. As regards information pertaining to the operations of public bodies that the Government would rather not talk about, this is usually imparted through the use of parliamentary questions. The answers to these are often obfuscatory, wishy washy affairs. What this sort of set up has led to is the embarrassing and revealing likes of the Beef tribunal, which then in turn provided further proof, as if it were required, that the system needs to be changed, nay, overhauled. The Supreme Court decided that a Cabinet Minister could not be questioned on cabinet matters, collective responsibility necessitating "the non-disclosure of dissenting voices". Had such matters been open to scrutiny in the Dáil, the Irish taxpayer could have been saved vast amounts of money. That's the way things are at present.

Ms Fitzgerald describes the current situation thus:

"The air people breath now is secrecy and then after a while [when the bill

becomes law] people realise that this is just part of the furniture. This is way it happens. It can take a long time" And with such a deeply entrenched culture of secrecy, which suits perfectly those with access to the information, there will be and has been resistance.

"Those of us in the know who have done our homework are very conscious of what is going on but there are those in the public service who haven't actually realised that this is coming. A consultation period has gone on but there are still parts of departments saying 'we won't publish this'. Freedom of information is going to be on the statute books by the end of the year so why not publish now?"

Official Ireland has been lagging far behind most other western democracies in its attitude to freedom of information. Its policy of non-disclosure is frustrating, emasculating and patently undemocratic. Other countries whose legislature stems from the Westminster model have had freedom of information legislation for many years, Australia, New Zealand and Canada since 1982. All have been successful and do not seem to have heralded the death knell of effective operation of good government, threatened by the pesky intrusions of a nosy public.

In Sweden, which is not modelled on Westminster, there has been a freedom of the press act in place since 1766 and any citizen can demand to see the letters received by the Prime Minister on any given day. There are few exemptions to this rule. Not surprisingly, the proposed bill for Ireland does not go this far, or anything like it but even so its provisions are going to be very hard for some to swallow. It is based more closely on the legislation of other Westminster type systems.

"We've looked at freedom of information in other jurisdictions around the world and we looked at the standard model, particularly honed in on the Westminster model. It's very similar to our own and a lot of lessons can be learned there. We looked closely at New Zealand, Canada and Australia. Both Canada and New Zealand not only have Federal but also State legislation, we looked at a lot of models and variations on a theme. We also looked at the American and Scandinavian models.

"Most freedom of information legislation has the same kind of basic structure: there is a right to information with exclusions, and these are fairly identical across the board - security, defence, international relations which could be jeopardised. Generally speaking, if something is in the course of being decided, most jurisdictions have rules governing that. Cabinet matters before government would be a subset of that. Information given in confidence, commercial secrets, a miscellaneous rag bag, research, habitats. These



Minister of State, Eithne Fitzgerald

are the main standard exclusions. The appeals system is where it differs. It's a key."

As in other countries with a similar system, if a request for information is refused, there will be an appeals procedure. An information commissioner will be appointed, the Ombudsman, who will have the power to call witnesses and papers. The ruling of the information commissioner will be binding on public bodies. The Commissioner will be appointed by the House of the Oireachtas.

The bill will pertain to public bodies and will apply immediately to the mainstream civil service and Government departments. It is envisaged that its remit will be extended when the process is operational and after any wrinkles, and there will be many, have been ironed out. When it is extended, it could prove very interesting for third level institutions which are notoriously, pathologically protective of students' records.

"It will apply to public bodies and they will be fairly widely defined. We're going to start with the mainstream civil service and the our plan is that there will be a kind of rolling application to the wider public service and our next targets are health boards and local authorities, people dealing with the public. Most countries, 90% of requests are from people wishing to see their own files and then you have public interest groups, environmental groups, journalists, opposition politicians.

"We have a wide definition of public bodies; basically, when someone benefits from public funds, they can be deemed public bodies. Voluntary hospitals will come in, secondary schools which are privately owned but publicly funded will come in. Potentially the net can be cast very widely. " Third level

institutions should come in, she says, being in receipt of public funds.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Freedom of Information Bill relates to a provision for public servants who suspect wrongdoing. It also protects these public servants from disciplinary action when such disclosures are made. Disclosures may be made to the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Data Protection Commissioner, the Information Commissioner or the Garda Commissioner. The media are conspicuous by their absence from this selective list.

It should be borne in mind at this point that under Article 19 of the International Declaration on Human Rights (1948), to which Ireland is party: "Everyone as the right to freedom of opinion and expression: this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of information."

We are moving then, but the pace will be slow, particularly in this Whistle Blowers section.

"This is a section that I would be the first to say isn't terribly well developed. We wanted to run with something on this and we were getting mixed signals on whether it would be developed or not and the Taoiseach himself felt maybe it didn't sit very well. We slipped it in and we didn't do an enormous amount of homework on it.

"What we did have was the model of the Civil Service reform act of '76 in the States but we didn't do a huge amount of work because we weren't sure we were going to get it in. We spent our time dealing negotiating with government departments and the government itself, dealing with justice and other tricky issues, and as I say we were getting mixed signals about whether

this would be in or out of the final bill or whether we would be asked to do a separate piece of legislation but we got it in and were pleasantly surprised and we thought 'we'll do a bit more work on it before we go back to government on it'. But the basic principle is that if someone has suspected something there are three possibilities - they're right, wrong in genuine error or maliciously wrong. We have to allow for situations when you are dealing with that. There's no point if someone has a complaint and you give it to someone who can do nothing about it, so the list of people we have there are people who can actually do something about it. We may take out the Data Protection Commissioner."

Ms Fitzgerald is anxious to point out that there have to be protections against allegations that are incorrect or deliberately malicious.

"So within those parameters we are going to develop this, again there are other countries that have done a lot more work."

She admits that there are cases where a vigilant press and "genuinely independent media may actually be the best way of uncovering" but that they may also do damage to innocent people and so more work needs to be done in this area.

The new bill encroaches on territory currently guarded with rabid jealousy by the Official Secrets Act, introduced by Charles Haughey as Minister for Defence, in 1962. Note the following in relation to the passing on of information:

"A person shall not communicate any official information to any other person unless he is duly authorised to do so or does so in the course of and in accordance with his duties as the holder of a public office or when it is in the interests of the State to communicate it"

Given the great changes being proposed by the new bill, there is surely a very strong argument for abolition of this massively restrictive piece of legislation.

"I would personally repeal it in the morning if it was my job to do so but the programme for Government gave the job to the legislation and security committee of drawing up of recommendations for the Department of Justice, whose thing it is. What we have done basically gives a framework for the repeal of the Official Secrets Act. So our bill doesn't contain punitive sanctions for people who give unauthorised information. That is not in the public interest because basically the Official Secrets Act covers that but if you were simply to repeal the Official Secrets Act you would need some sanction for people who, say, leak exam papers, hack into security files or whatever.

"You do need some protection because there are some few matters when the public interest in secrecy outweighs the public interest in disclosure, but our philosophical view is that public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in secrecy and we are trying to do at some length in our bill is to spell out and so limit those areas."

Top of the Class



Orla O'Connor has been nominated by the DIT Kevin Street and the University of Dublin, Trinity College, in Association with the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Association as the most outstanding final year student in the B.Sc. (Human Nutrition and Dietetics) for 1996 in Ireland.

As such she is this year's winner of the Flora Nutrition Award and will receive £6,000 for post-graduate studies.

Pictured (L to R) is Mary Maloney, lecturer in Dietetics, DIT Kevin Street and Flora Award winner, Orla O'Connor

John Wooos with Broken Arrow

John Travolta, Christian Slater, bomber planes, missing nuclear warheads..... what more could you possibly ask for? Directed by John Woo and written by Graham Yost ("Speed"), "Broken Arrow" is packed with more action and square jaws, nay testosterone, than any big-budget thriller of this year so far!! The title refers to the code-name given by the US Government when a nuclear weapon goes missing, which is obviously what the plot is centred around.

Major Vic Deakins (Travolta) and Capt. Riley Hale (Slater) are top US Navy pilots and best friends. They fly Stealth bombers, which, to those not raised on Tom Clancy novels, are planes which look like they have escaped from the set of a Batman movie; jet black, shaped like Darth Vader's helmet and radar-resistant. On a test flight over Utah, the Stealth is loaded with two live nuclear warheads, in order to find out whether or not they can be traced by radar. While on this flight, we discover that Deakins is not the nice guy we thought he was. He wants to commandeer the plane and use the warheads to hold a major US city to ransom. Hale is ejected from the bomber and is left for dead in the desert, while Deakins also ejects, crashes \$2 billion worth of military hardware, and meets up with his fellow criminals. Needless to say, Hale is far from dead, and Deakins is not exactly home and dry. From here on in, the two friends are pitted against each other in a battle for the two missing warheads.

Deakins wants them in order to make a wad of cash and Hale wants them back with the Government (out of harm's way?).

Okay, so "Broken Arrow" sounds like the archetypal, no holds barred/no expense spared action thriller, but there's much more to it than this. Directed by Hong Kong turned Hollywood film-maker, John Woo, this

script-writer as "Speed"; a young, heroic man, good at his job who is up against one of his own in order to save lives. Essentially, the villains in both "Speed" and "Broken Arrow" both use their knowledge of explosives to get their own back on the system which has mistreated them. Then again, considering that "Speed" was one of the biggest box-office draws of last year, Graham Yost

also gets some of the best lines. Example:- one of Deakins' baddies is shooting at Hale who is hiding behind one of the warheads. Deakins, using the same tone of voice as a put-upon headmaster says "Could I ask you not to shoot at the thermo-nuclear weapons, please?" Surprisingly, there is no obvious love interest. There is only one female part in "Broken Arrow"; Samantha Mathis is the Park Ranger who finds Hale when he is ejected from his plane and who helps him against Deakins. Not once do they snog. What they do after the credits roll is left to the imagination, but this is essentially a Boys With Toys movie. Woo cleverly avoids any unnecessary love scenes, even when we really are expecting Hale and Terry to get it together on screen.

I must admit that I wasn't expecting much from "Broken Arrow", but I was pleasantly surprised. If it's depth, meaning and ground-breaking performances you're after, go to the latest Ken Loach offering. However, if it's Friday night and you can't face Gay Byrne or the Girly Show, then get the largest tub of popcorn, a couple of mates and head off to see "Broken Arrow". It is far from the best movie I've seen this year, but it is a pleasant change from the action movies-by-numbers approach that usually takes over anything that involves the US Navy, big guns and even bigger budgets.

By Siobhán Weekes



John Travolta tries to impress Christian Slater in Broken Arrow

film has realised its potential. By using slow-motion to emphasise reactions and set-pieces, and clever use of locations, Woo manages to make more of the script than merely "Top Gun" with bad guys. It is however, at a glance, very evident that it was written by the sam-

obviously stuck with the if-it-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it philosophy.

That is also where the comparison with "Speed" ends. Christian Slater can actually act, and plays the sympathetic hero well, while Travolta is brilliant as the money-mad would-be terrorist. He

DITSU Elections '96 - The Results

Position: Overall President

Joyce, Colin
yes: 2939
no: 831
Spoilt: 147

Joyce, Colin elected

DIT Aungier St

Position: Site President

Total Poll: 558
Spoilt Votes: 26
Total Valid Poll: 532
Quota: 267

Grogan, Des 207
Kavanagh, Susan 49
Pidgeon, Sinéad 276

Sinéad Pidgeon elected

Position: Deputy Site President

Total Poll: 562
Spoilt Votes: 17
Total Valid Poll: 545
Quota: 273

Colman, Maebh 278
Weekes, Siobhán 267

Colman, Maebh elected

Position: Public Relations Officer

Total Poll: 558
Spoilt Votes: 14
Total Valid Poll: 544

Ní Láoghóg, Sorcha

Yes: 397
No: 147

Ní Láoghóg, Sorcha elected

Position: Irish Language Officer

Total Poll: 560
Spoilt Votes: 12
Total Valid Poll: 548

De Barra, Maureen
Yes: 449
No: 99

De Barra, Maureen elected

Position: Equality Officer

Total Poll: 553
Spoilt Votes: 16
Total Valid Poll: 537

Nevin, Gráinne
Yes: 398
No: 139

Nevin, Gráinne elected

Position: Clubs and Socs Officer

Total Poll: 557
Spoilt Votes: 13
Total Valid Poll: 544

Grogan, Rachel
Yes: 445
No: 99

Grogan, Rachel elected

Position: Entertainments Officer

Total Poll: 563
Spoilt Votes: 25
Total Valid Poll: 538
Quota: 270

Farrelly, Leigh 271
Manning, Paul 267

Farrelly, Leigh elected

Position: Part time Students' Officer

Total Poll: 562
Spoilt Votes: 18
Total Valid Poll: 544

Purtill, Gavin
Yes: 421
No: 123

Purtill, Gavin elected

DIT Cathal Brugha Street

Position: Site President

Total Poll: 846
Spoilt Votes: 20
Total Valid Poll: 826
Quota: 414

McCartan, Shane 314
McCarthy, Tom 78
Moran, Patricia 328
Smith, Conor 106

McCarthy, Tom eliminated

Second Count:

McCartan, Shane 314 + 23 = 337
Moran, Patricia 328 + 28 = 356
Smith, Conor 106 + 17 = 123
10 votes non-transferable

Smith, Conor eliminated

Third Count

McCartan, Shane 337 + 44 = 381
Moran, Patricia 356 + 60 = 416
19 non-transferable votes

Moran, Patricia elected after recounts

Position: Site Deputy President

Total Poll: 845
Spoilt Votes: 17
Total Valid Poll: 828
Quota: 415

Condon, Adrienne 57
Coughlan, Bob 202
McCarthy, Damian 147
Molloy, Mairead 79
O'Sullivan, Paula 198
Stapleton, Linda 145

Condon, Adrienne eliminated

Second Count

Coughlan, Bob 202 + 26 = 228
McCarthy, Damian 147 + 9 = 156
Molloy, Mairead 79 + 5 = 84
O'Sullivan, Paula 198 + 5 = 203
Stapleton, Linda 145 + 4 = 149

eight non-transferable votes

Molloy, Mairead eliminated

Third Count

Coughlan, Bob 228 + 24 = 252
McCarthy, Damian 156 + 18 = 174
O'Sullivan, Paula 203 + 22 = 225
Stapleton, Linda 149 + 14 = 163

six non-transferable votes

Stapleton, Linda eliminated

Fourth Count

Coughlan, Bob 252 + 41 = 293
McCarthy, Damian 174 + 26 = 200
O'Sullivan, Paula 225 + 74 = 299

22 non-transferable votes

McCarthy, Damian eliminated

Fifth Count

Coughlan, Bob 293 + 95 = 388
O'Sullivan, Paula 299 + 76 = 375

29 non-transferable votes

Coughlan, Bob elected without reaching the quota, after recounts

Position: Public Relations Officer

Total Poll: 844
Spoilt Votes: 37
Total Valid Poll: 807
Quota: 404

Carolan, Michelle 229
Lenehan, Andreas 442
Meehan, Rachel 136

Lenehan, Andreas elected

Position: Employments Officer

Total Poll: 846
Spoilt Votes: 27
Total Valid Poll: 819

Tighe, Caroline
Yes: 709
No: 110

Caroline, Tighe elected

Position: Clubs and Societies Officer

Total Poll: 832
Spoilt Votes: 23
Total Valid Poll: 809

Hook, George
Yes: 721
No: 88

Hook, George elected

Position: Equality Officer

Total Poll: 839
Spoilt Votes: 28
Total Valid Poll: 811
Quota: 406

Byrne, Conor 383
Jennequin, Niamh 252
McGrath, Niamh 176

McGrath, Niamh eliminated

Second Count

Byrne, Conor 383 + 49 = 432
Jennequin, Niamh 252 + 88 = 340
39 non-transferable votes

Byrne, Conor elected

DIT Bolton Street

Position: Site President

Total Poll: 1006
Spoilt Votes: 34
Total Valid Poll: 972
Quota: 487

Costello, Colin 610
Mythen, Ethel 362

Costello, Colin elected

Position: Site Deputy President

Total Poll: 1003
Spoilt Votes: 17
Total Valid Poll: 986
Quota: 494

Colgan, Eamonn 245
Liddy, Michael 293
McGuire, Deirdre 448

Colgan, Michael eliminated

Second Count

Liddy, Michael 293 + 38 = 331
McGuire, Deirdre 448 + 68 = 516

139 non-transferable votes

McGuire, Deirdre elected

Position: Irish Language Officer

Total Poll: 1005
Spoilt Votes: 28
Total Valid Poll: 977

O'Briain, Michael
Yes: 846
No: 131

O'Briain, Michael elected

Position: Public Relations Officer

Total Poll: 1002
Spoilt Votes: 40
Total Valid Poll: 962

McInerney, Mark
Yes: 809
No: 153

McInerney, Mark elected

Position: Entertainments Officer

Total Poll: 994
Spoilt Votes: 56
Total Valid Poll: 938
Quota: 470

Mitchell, Charles 513
Blair, Ruairi 425

Mitchell, Charles elected

DITSU Elections '96 - The Results

Position: Clubs and Societies Officer

Total Poll: 993
Spoilt Votes: 59
Total Valid Poll: 934
Quota: 468

Kenny, Jason 403
O'Daly, Ross 531

O'Daly, Ross elected

DIT Kevin Street

Position: Site President

Total Poll: 605
Spoilt Votes: 5
Total Valid Poll: 600

Blake, Dermot
Yes: 544
No: 56

Blake, Dermot elected

Position: Clubs and Societies Officer

Total Poll: 600
Spoilt Votes: 28
Total Valid Poll: 572
Quota: 287

Killilea, James 267
O'Conchubhair, Andoni 305

O'Conchubhair, Andoni elected

Position: Irish Language Officer

Total Poll: 601
Spoilt Votes: 12
Total Valid Poll: 589

MacDonnacha, Pdraig
Yes: 501
No: 88

MacDonnacha, Pdraig elected

DIT Mountjoy Square

Position: Site President

Total Poll: 942
Spoilt Votes: 16
Total Valid Poll: 926

MacDonnacha, Pdraig elected

Quota: 464

Byrne, George 280
Keane, Tom 317
Whelan, Robbie 329

Byrne George eliminated

Second Count

Keane, Tom 317 + 52 = 369
Whelan, Robbie 329 + 63 = 392
165 non-transferable votes

Whelan, Robbie elected without reaching quota after recounts

Position: Site Deputy President

Total Poll: 927
Spoilt Votes: 130
Total Valid Poll: 797
Quota: 399

Emmett, Ronan 399
Kinsella, Raymond 398

Emmett, Ronan elected after recounts

Position: Part-time Students Officer

Total Poll: 922
Spoilt Votes: 47
Total Valid Poll: 875
Quota: 438

Buckley, Trevor 270
Burke, Channelle 605

Burke, Channelle elected

Position: Clubs and Societies Officer

Total Poll: 885
Spoilt Votes: 22
Total Valid Poll: 863

Spence, Richard
Yes: 734
No: 129

Spence, Richard elected

Position: Public Relations Officer

Total Poll: 917
Spoilt Votes: 41
Total Valid Poll: 876

Shannon, Michael
Yes: 759
No: 117

Shannon, Michael elected

Position: Irish Language Officer

Total Poll: 912
Spoilt Votes: 58
Total Valid Poll: 854
Quota: 428

Fox, Diarmuid 390
Maher, John 464

Maher, John elected

Position: Equality Officer

Total Poll: 912
Spoilt Votes: 51
Total Valid Poll: 861
Quota: 431

Daly, Rosemary 396
Smyth, Raymond 153
Townsend, Audrey 312

Smyth, Raymond eliminated

Second Count

Daly, Rosemary 396 + 34 = 430
Townsend, Audrey 312 + 20 = 332
99 non-transferable votes

Daly, Rosemary elected without reaching quota

Position: Entertainments Officer

Total Poll: 926
Spoilt Votes: 63
Total Valid Poll: 863
Quota: 432

Crowe, Andrew 428
Timmons, Ciaran 435

Timmons, Ciaran elected

However, the Chief Returning Officer was notified that Ciaran Timmons did not attend and speak at the hustings and is therefore disqualified. Thus, the vote for this position is rendered null and void and it will be necessary to re-open nominations for this position and hold a

by-election - date to be fixed

By-election Results: DIT Kevin St

Position: Public Relations Officer

Total Poll: 400
Spoilt Votes: 5
Total Valid Poll: 395
Quota: 198

1st Count
Mark Flavin: 153
Justin Lawrence: 30
Ger McEvoy: 84
Sinead Redmond 128

Justin Lawrence eliminated

2nd Count
Mark Flavin: 153 + 4 = 157
Ger McEvoy: 84 + 3 = 87
Sinead Redmond: 128 + 1 = 12
Non transferable: 22

Ger McEvoy eliminated

3rd Count
Mark Flavin: 157 + 15 = 172*
Sinead Redmond: 129 + 11 = 140
Non transferable: 61

Flavin, Mark elected without reaching the

Position: Entertainments Officer

Total Poll: 401 votes
Spoilt Votes: 03
Total Valid Poll: 398

Eimear Cummins
Yes 317
No 81

Cummins, Eimear elected

Position: Deputy President/Welfare Officer

Total Poll: 402
Spoilt Votes: 08
Total Valid Poll: 394

Lloyd, Roisin Shaun 164
Maye, Deridre 230
Maye, Deirdre elected

Position: President

Total Poll: 157
Spoilt Votes: 2
Total Valid Poll: 155
Quota: 78

Byrne, Colman 100
Jordan, Bob: 55
R.O.N: 0

Byrne, Colman elected

Position: Deputy President

Total Poll: 157

Spoilt Votes: 2
Total Valid Poll: 155
Quota: 78

Hartigan, Noeleen 101
Lyons, Eugene 4
R.O.N: 50

Hartigan, Noeleen elected

Position: Welfare Officer

Total Poll: 157
Spoilt Votes: 1
Total Valid Poll: 156
Quota: 79

Ryan, Helen
Yes: 152
No: 3
R.O.N: 1

Ryan, Helen elected

Position: Education Officer

Total Poll: 157
Spoilt Votes: 1
Total Valid Poll: 156
Quota: 79

Byrne, Malcolm: 114
Moody, Ollie: 40

O'Callaghan, Matthew: 0
R.O.N: 2

Byrne, Malcolm elected

Position: UDO

Total Poll: 156
Spoilt Votes: 1
Total Valid Poll: 155
Quota: 78
O'Cathain, Eoin: 50
Quain, Dermot: 105
R.O.N: 0

Quain, Dermot elected

Rancour Rules the Roost at Congress '96

USI Congress 1996 will be remembered as the most bitter, rancorous and revealing weekend in the national union's recent history. The level of bad feeling was deeper than could have been imagined, the

Mark Garrett, UDO, accepted that this was an oversight. It was already very clear that the USI exec. was in for a rough time. As usual, lengthy debate and no small amount of shouting ensured that many motions were not

motion calling for such policy was defeated at last year's Congress. These were uneventful and the next issues that rose hackles were Constitutional Amendments one and two relating to a sexual harassment disputes committee. There were objections from DITSU and UCD on the grounds that named external organisations who would be members of the committee were not relevant to USI and that such issues were internal matters in the first place. After a series of recounts, a challenge to the ruling of steering committee (defeated) and with bad feeling running at a new high, CA 1 was finally passed. CA 2 was not put.

Later in the evening, the position of Environmental Awareness Officer was created after a recount. Recounts were to be a recurring feature of the weekend.

For most of the DITSU delegation, the rest of the night and a fair proportion of the early morning were to be spent in wild celebration, with one or two people revelling in the victory just a tad too much. Interestingly, both Malcolm Byrne and Garrett Tubridy from UCD were sported DITSU polo shirts for the evening. And there was a conga through the hotel. This must never happen again. The conga is Satan's dance.

Saturday's first session was tabled

another talking about knitting. Before anyone could bay for his blood he pointed out that he was "taking the piss. Just trying to see if yis are awake." They were awake alright. In the end the motion was heavily defeated.

After lunch women's congress loomed. In previous years the motions in this section of annual congress have proved fertile grounds for lively, sometimes bitter debate. This year, for whatever reason, it went relatively smoothly; once a motion of no confidence in steering committee chairperson Damian O'Broin had been passed, that is. Notably, a number of the smaller delegations walked out in protest at this development and what they perceived to be the overall vitriolic tone of Congress 96.

The annual congress dinner was a fairly speedy affair, with the staff of the Ardilaun, overall wonderful, whipping away certain diners' soup (mine, OK, mine) with unseemly haste and then being too close for comfort when, on return of said soup, the plaintive cry went up: "my spoon, they took my feckin' spoon".

"Here you are sir."

"Oh. Thanks."

The food safely out of the way, the DITSU and UCD delegations then tried to outdo each other with loud



Malcolm Byrne, incoming education officer, is congratulated. This man owes me a fiver

unhappiness with USI in certain quarters was made manifestly clear at every available opportunity and the overall tone would be best described as nasty. Incoming USI president Colman Byrne will have to walk a particularly thin tightrope during his term in office because there are a lot of dissatisfied and angry people out there.

It didn't start out like that - Thursday's hustings was a largely uneventful affair, with only a particularly effective speech by Colman Byrne generating any heat - and so USI's executive was taken very much by surprise during officer board report on Friday morning. A question and answer format had been decided upon and this was, in retrospect, most unwise because standing orders were lifted so that delegates could grill the various officers. In the end, they voted heavily against officer board report, an amazing development and a sure indication that all is not well within USI. The mood had turned unpleasant and we hadn't even reached page one of the clár, which, incidentally, had an image of Trinity College on its cover (Trinity is not a member of USI).

Education motions were first on the agenda and it wasn't long before officer board were again in trouble with ED 2, relating to capital investment, being disputed on the grounds that it did not make reference to DIT. Adopting a conciliatory approach,

discussed and the post-lunch session was further shortened by the announcement of the election results. Opinions had been sharply divided in the weeks leading to this moment; for a long time no-one was really sure which way the election would go, which made the margin of victory for Mr Byrne all the more surprising. He received 100 votes to Bob Jordan's 55 and the DIT delegation went wild. They then retired to the bar and remained wild for much of the weekend. Mr Byrne, a canny operator, had conducted a vigorous campaign and he seemed to simply want the position more than Mr Jordan. There seems also to have been an element of protest voting, that someone from outside the USI exec. should be elected.

The heady tension broken, a break was needed. A quiet pint in Salthill was called for and so off I went, unwisely opting for the darkest bar in the world, the kind of place outside whose open door small children's three wheeled bicycles lie on their side, one wheel turning gently. Inside, a man who looked and moved too much like Begbie from *Trainspotting* played pool. "Game over," he spat as he sank the first ball. It was time to slither away.

Sessions on National and International Affairs followed and it was noticeable this year that there were far fewer motions in each section than in recent years - ironically, a DITSU



Congress 96 in session

for 9.30am and so naturally began a little before 11. The welfare motions were moving along nicely until the brick wall of W3 came into view. Proposed by welfare officer, it was deemed patronising by some male delegates. In highly mischievous mode, Cathal O'Driscoll sauntered up to the podium to speak about the ludicrousness of men in one room talking about football and beer and women in

singing. It was good natured enough but, as with the rest of the weekend, there was a darker undercurrent. Points were being made and muscles were being flexed.

Drinking commenced. And it continued for a long, long time. The bar did finally close around 4.30 and your correspondent naturally decided that there was nothing else for it but bed. I later learned that a most accommodat-

ing night porter made several excursions to a secret place and returned with further beverages for the hardiest of the hard. And no-one contacted me! This will not be forgotten.

Sunday, be virtue of being a hang-over heavy zone and the last day of Congress should have been a relatively tame affair. Instead, to the surprise and disgust of many, it was a morning of the walkout, the insult and the palpable sense of "what the hell happened?"

It began for this now weary hack, amusingly enough. Whilst havgin the skin flayed from my back by the shower, a member of the hotel's cleaning staff opened the door, and, realising the a scene from a bedroom farce was developing, emitted a small shriek, an apology and ran out again. I think I heard her laughing as she ran down the corridor, why I do not know. My dignity sufficiently restored (some time later) I made for the grand room where the debate was about to begin.

Before the session started, Steering Committee, made a statement outlining their reasons for not including certain motions in this year's clár. They also flatly rejected accusations of bias.

Minutes later, a delegate from St Mary's teacher training college called for standing orders to be raised so that "the individuality of delegates could be discussed" He was, he said, concerned about "intimidatory tactics". His speech was emotional and heartfelt, if a little incoherent, but the motion was defeated. As a result, in a move that was clearly planned, several

of the smaller delegations walked out of the room in protest. The session was finally declared inquorate and no-one quite knew what to do. A flurry of meetings followed and after lunch Congress resumed, the tension high, the sense of expectation almost tangible: at this point anything could have happened.

What did happen was amazing. An emergency motion on the failed peace process provided more speakers than any other of the weekend, people lined up for minutes at a time to offer their opinion and when steering committee, pointedly chaired by Damian O'Broin, attempted to close congress, the place erupted, some delegates rising and calling for a motion of no confidence in the chair. This was defeated but after some thought, it was decided "because of the extraordinary circumstances" to extend congress. Delegates had their say and returned to their seats.

Closing speeches followed, this session chaired by the incoming President. Of the outgoing USI executive, only Bob Jordan chose to broach the extremely thorny subject of the weekend's events: "this really hasn't been the best of Congresses". Colman Byrne then promised, in the final speech of Congress, to work to bring the various unions together. Some damage has been done, and the bad feeling will remain.

The incoming president of USI has his work cut out because there is a lot of work to be done within before attention can be effectively focuses on the issues facing studenin this country.

Each year, USI annual congress throws up a number of misquotes, gaffs and other unfortunate verbal accidents that provide much needed light relief from the seriousness of many debates. We gellfully collect them, and reproduce them, not in order to humiliate anyone who spoke but to highlight the fact that congress isn't all about crow thumping, heartfelt speech making, point scoring and policy making, that it has an element of enjoyment which it would be a shame to neglect.

Friday:

"Will delegate leaders please get their delegates into the hall...will I sing a song?" Frank 'Steering Committee' Crummy all but guarenteeing that the hall will remain empty.

"There's now a 10% cunt in the awards - Yes, I know, it's called nerves" - Un-named delegate amazingly managing to utter the dreaded 'c' word without outraging anyone.

"Your free fees will become anachronistic ... they will become a shibboleth" - Collie McGivern who later walked off with the award for 'intoxication with the exuberance of one's own verbosity'.

Saturday

"I'm going to sit ddown now because I've forgotten what I got up to say" - Incoming WRO Kelly who had just spoken for five minutes.

"No thank you Ms Hartigan, before you even open your mouth" - UCC delegate saving Noelcen a journey to the microphone for a point of information.

"I'll talk to them as equals" - Male UCC delegate, referring to women, and setting himself up for a five minute exercise in digging deeper.

"Just to finish on one small point ... well, maybe not" - Ciara Fitzpatrick, DCU, remembers something else.

"Speaker, what exactly are you doing now?" Steering Committee's Gráinne Murphy adopts the primary school teacher style with UCD's Garrett Tubridy.

Sunday

"I don't propose to talk for very long 'cause I think I'm about to pass out." - Queen's delegate speaking for many.

THE IRISH TIMES

DITSU Simplex

CROSSWORD

Competition

PRIZE: First 3 correct entries drawn will each receive a £20 gift voucher for DITSU Students Union Shop.

RULES: Only open to members of the DIT colleges. Employees of DITSU and THE IRISH TIMES are not eligible to enter. No Photocopies - Entries close: Mon. 29th April.

SEND TO: THE IRISH TIMES / DITSU, Crossword Competition, The DIT Examiner. (to be dropped into local Union office)

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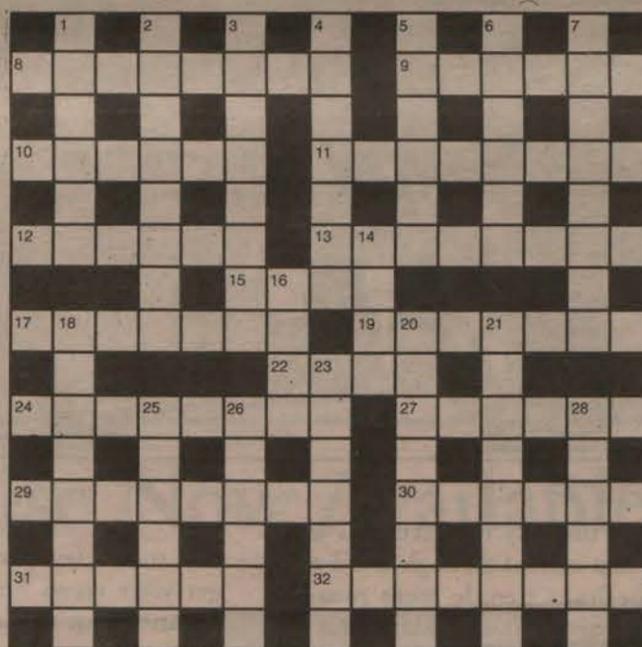
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Last Issue's winners were:
 Donal Commene (DIT Bolton St.)
 Brian Hyland (DIT Mountjoy Sq.)
 Rory Rudden (DIT Bolton St.)



ACROSS

- 8 Floor or overwhelm if I tune Dan out? (8)
- 9 Plant disease, especially of potatoes (6)
- 10 Grasping claw of a prince (6)
11. Preparing for performance by exercise, etc (8)
12. Could Ann get a bird? (6)
13. Laugh at, deride (8)
15. Look after or incline in some direction (4)
17. Type of armoured car named after opponents of the Crusaders (7)
19. Lower tidal part of a river (7)
22. Tall ornamental container (4)
24. Yet rolls around the American tram-cars (8)
27. Hindu elephant river (6)
29. Originator, one who designs something for the first time (8)
30. Ten are overturned but are tidier (6)
31. Regard with high respect (6)
- 32.. Continuous showers of gunfire (8)

DOWN

1. Disease of the heart marked by bouts of intense pain (6)
2. Gigantic South American snake (8)
3. Strangle by tightening a strong around the throat (8)
4. Stand from which a book is read (7)
5. On a ship, train, etc (6)
6. Meal eaten out of doors (6)
7. Dealer in candles, oil, soap etc. (8)
14. 'Beware the ... of March' (Shakespeare) (4)
16. Grudge feeling at the good fortune of others (4)
18. Planned or put in good order (8)
20. College for future priests (8)
21. Violent shaking, great disturbance or change (8)
23. Impute (7)
25. Looked lustfully (6)
26. Course served at dinner or freedom of access (6)
- 28 Not flat, level or smooth (6)

COMPETITION NO. 7

All's Changed, Changed Utterly

Colman Byrne, incoming President of USI, talks about his plans for the coming year and reflects on Congress '96, which will not go down in history as the happiest, unless of course, you were elected as President

Colman Byrne is a political animal. He will tell you this himself and indeed has gone on record as saying that he would one day like to represent his constituency (he is from Roscommon) at a national level. When he learned that he was to be the new President of USI, comfortably beating Bob Jordan, he burst into tears and went on a hugathon. He looked like a man who had been afraid to breath for hours. The election means a great deal to him for it is an auspicious addition to his CV and he will doubtless go to great lengths to publicise USI in the coming year.

But before all that, the current president of DITSU will have to deal with the fallout from this year's Congress, an occasionally nasty affair where feelings ran high and too often bubbled over. There is talk of disaffiliation and many delegates were clearly unhappy with the tone of the weekend.

"I don't think it was the most rancorous or bad tempered. I think we've seen worse. I think some people were

upset at the way the elections and I think that carried through and I think that perhaps people were more set behind particular candidates this year than has happened in previous years."

Notwithstanding, Byrne's optimistic interpretation of the weekend's events, he will still have to contend with and appease those who felt intimidated and with at least one disaffiliation campaign. A veritable baptism of fire could well be in the offing.

"They feel intimidated by large delegations, perhaps with the DIT delegation wearing the t-shirts and being a group that were together. There was a certain amount of triumphalism but that's only right in that they canvassed for me and they worked for me and when I got elected they wanted to celebrate. They sang their song and they wore their t-shirts."

In fact some of them did more than that, allowing the moment and no doubt that extra glass of beer to go their heads. Mr Byrne agrees that man-

ners were forgotten at certain points over the weekend.

"Some people had not [manners] at a particular stage when they had a certain amount of drink on them; that has to be forgiven as well. They were told that and they know that, a certain amount of delegates actually apologised for their behaviour because they realised themselves that they were wrong, but that's a once off."

If that was diffused, the threat of disaffiliation has not yet been so dealt with. Naturally, it is not a situation with which he is at all happy.

"The threat of disaffiliation when things aren't going your way is always, as far as I'm concerned, a very dangerous and perhaps ridiculous thing to do in that, 'things aren't going my way so I'm getting out' goes against everything we're talking about when we're inside. What we're trying to do is have an organisation that suits everyone. If it turns into an organisation that only suits a few people and people pull out then it will always be an organisation

done if they say this when that's not true at all. Most people would find it distasteful."

"If you can't argue with someone in case they disaffiliate then you're never going to get anywhere because you'll never be able to argue the points out. You have to be able to tough with each other. to argue with each other, disagree with each other totally and then at the end of the day say 'OK lets move onto the next point'."

All of this aside, he does expect one serious disaffiliation campaign in the near future.

At this year's Congress, when officer board's report on the year's activities was put to a vote, it was defeated heavily. This was seen by many as an expression of dissatisfaction with USI, which makes one wonder about the extent of the protest vote in this year's elections, about specifically in the Presidential election the 'anyone but a USI officer' vote.

"Well I suppose that if I said it was very important I'd be taking away from myself. I suppose to a certain extent it was important but I don't think it should be overrated either. I don't think that anyone who got in would say they got in because they were the best candidate and did the best job trying to get elected."

He did run his campaign promising change, a new direction and new ideas but he insists, "I wasn't asking people to vote for someone else, I was asking them to vote for me and I said that when I was talking to people. Of the people who did finally vote for him he says that "if you told them that they were voting against a different candidate rather than for me, I don't think they'd be too pleased."

Mr Byrne believes that his top priority this year is improving communication; that itself covers a lot of ground but he refers specifically to the membership of USI.

"We have to consolidate what we already have, which is our membership, to get the members happy and that this organisation is worthwhile. It is not use chasing affiliations when some of your biggest members are talking about disaffiliation. There are potentially a lot of hard times coming up."

For him, the perception of USI as a Dublin-centred organisation has to change, and that will be down largely to improved communication, "by making them see that they are more a part of the organisation than they felt that have been before, by making them see that what they spend on affiliation fees they are actually getting something back, by making them see that USI is an organisation which represents them

so that when they hear USI and see USI they'll say, 'we're part of that'."

This will of course be a mammoth task, as individual unions, contented or not with the current state of USI, are much more concerned with their own day to day problems, the umbrella organisation only really taking a place somewhere near the centre of the stage during (dis)affiliation campaigns and national days of action. It is not as if former executives have not known about the perception problems for USI.

"Communication is a big thing, I've always been very big on communication, hands on leadership, not only into talking to people once every three months. I intend to visit every college at least once this year and I will be making sure that the officers are also visiting the colleges, they don't have to spend days in them, they could visit three or four in one day. All they have to do is sit down with the SU president or whatever for an hour. It doesn't have to be a massive process."

Other issues at the top of USI's agenda for the coming year will be the ongoing problems with the grants system, the funding of Students' Unions and the summer jobs scheme.

This last is problematic because in spite of vociferous opposition to the scheme from USI and students' unions around the country, a survey carried out by USI showed that the students participating were quite happy with it. It is interesting to note that over a year and a half ago Colman Byrne, then running for the position of Overall President of DITSU for the first time expressed the unpopular opinion that perhaps the scheme was not such a bad idea.

"We have to adopt what the students have said. Now we have to make it better, to improve it."

USI will also be seeking an improvement on the numbers of student representatives on the HEA's sub-committee dealing with the distribution of the capitation fee of £150. At Congress, an emergency motion was passed which mandated officer board to accept the three seats offered. Those opposing the motion wanted to hold out for the fourth seat, thus giving them more muscle. Colman Byrne spoke neither for nor against and this surprised many, given the importance of the committee.

"At the time I was unsure, whether to go for the three or the four. The way the debate was going I wanted to listen rather than get involved in it, so I decided not to speak myself."

But surely, it was important that the delegates hear what the incoming president had to say about such an important and pressing issue?

"Yeah but I mean that's imposing your thoughts on other people, there are people there who have been involved in the process up to this. I could have spoken on this and said 'I am the incoming president' and said this is the way. I don't think that was



Colman, Byrne

the right thing to do. I don't believe in speaking on something unless I am informed on it." In the end, he voted to accept the three seats but says USI will fight for a fourth.

At the beginning of the interview, Mr Byrne made mention of the unhappiness some people felt with the way the election had gone. Personal enmity aside, it's quite likely that his well publicised affiliations to Fianna Fáil will be a cause of some suspicion. Incoming Education Officer Malcolm Byrne (no relation) also has close FF connections. The incoming president denies flatly that USI is about to become the student wing of Fianna Fáil.

"It won't become party political despite the gossip columnists of the Phoenix and Education and Living [The Irish Times' weekly educational supplement]. I am far less of a Fianna Fáiler than everyone makes me out to be. At the start it was flattering, that I was made out to be this big person. In the end it was annoying because it was used against me wherever I went.

"I hold not proper position in Fianna Fáil. I was secretary of a youth branch back home but because I am so busy with the students' union I don't have time to do anything with it. It's dysfunctional, it meets maybe once a year. My priorities are with the students' union, I have shown that because when the big FF events were on I was at the SU events, which were just run of the mill ordinary ones. Other members in Fianna Fáil feel the same way. They want to do a job.

"I am not afraid of disagreeing with Fianna Fáil or anyone else for that matter. I don't think it's going to make any difference, I think that the way the Government is at the moment that it could perhaps be used to your advantage. USI should always use the opposition as part of the way of getting the point across in the Dáil and then into the public domain and if you know people within the party, the even better, use them to do your job."

But the organisation has a history of having left wing connections so some may fear a shift to the centre, or the right.

"No. It's the organisation for students, not for party politics. Left, right, centre, loony, as long as they do their job as professionally as they can and represent their students, their personal politics don't matter.

"I would supposedly be Fianna Fáil, supposedly right of centre. I have no problems doing occupations, marches, campaigns, lobbying. You don't have to be left wing to represent someone's rights. I look at my job as a job I have been entrusted with, to represent students' rights. I am professional in my outlook and I will continue to do that."

He talks about this professional approach, about which he is clearly proud, when asked about the somewhat adversarial relationship he has had with his incoming deputy president, Noeleen Hartigan. He expresses the hope that what's in the past remains there.

"I hope that people will forget things. I want to have a clean sweep, a new beginning and many other clichés if you like. I want to go in, sit down and say 'right, new team, no-one will be treated any different, better or worse, from anyone else. I would hope that we start to get on personally. If we don't it won't make any difference. I am professional in the way I follow my work and the way I do my job. I don't think my personal feelings have any role in a job I have been entrusted with, to be representative of 150,000 students. My personal feelings and others sort of pale into insignificance when you think about the job you have been entrusted with."

Colman Byrne is a mass of contradictions. He is canny and ambitious but along with the drive and aggression that go with this, and which will doubtless be frowned upon in some quarters, he likes to be liked. Sometimes he cannot understand why his style antagonises some people. His is not the style of recent students unions presidents and it will be very interesting to see how he handles the reins of a national organisation. There is no doubt that he will make the most of the opportunity afforded him this year.

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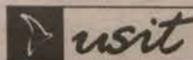
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Fire Drill a Flaming Disaster

The fire alarm went off at the agreed time of 10.50am; this was to be a punctual little blaze. From labs and lecture rooms sleepy students emerged and sauntered in the orderly fashion so typical of people escaping an inferno outside to the assembly point of their choice. We opted for point B as that was where people seemed to be having the most fun.

Assembly point B is located toward the back entrance to DIT Kevin Street and we were ushered to these gates which had been thrown open especially for the fire; usually they are in a fixed position which allows only single file passage. Presumably these same gates will be equally accommodating on the case of future, actual fires. And so we ambled along, passing by the swimming pool, in which several happy people continued to paddle and frolic, safe in

the knowledge that as they were in water, and wearing rubber hats, they were exempt from the evacuation. Incidentally, also exempt was everyone in the old building, possibly on the very valid grounds that a full scale fire drill would be a logistical nightmare.

Meanwhile, Dermot Blake, incoming Site President of the students' union, led a band of evacuees to the emergency exit to Church Lane (until recently chained shut). Tragically, the gates beyond the door refused to open and so the students remained, bemused though happily not burned, until the gates were eventually unlocked from the outside by a helpful man.

Back at assembly point B, the evacuation was progressing smoothly, thanks largely to the conspicuous absence of the many cars usually parked on double yellow lines and other prohibited areas.

The whole affair was watched from third floor windows by a number of fireproof people who had presumably decided that evacuation was not for them. Once safely outside the grounds of Kevin Street we hung around in the light drizzle, disrupting traffic and bothering passers by trying to make their way home.

After some very disorganised standing about, we were allowed back into the grounds of the now secure, safe and completely fire free building. The swimmers, protected by their pool, were unscathed and waving at us from the third floor were the fireproof students.

Within minutes the gates had been returned to their former position and the following morning, the cars were once again parked in all the wrong places. A roaring success then, and a valuable learning experience.



National Students Centre

"The basic principle of the Union of Students in Ireland is the defence and promotion of the fundamental educational, political, social, cultural and welfare interests of Irish students.

The National Students Centre was established in 1993 with that in mind, so as to provide you with good quality, low cost entertainment facilities."

We read over our founding principle again recently and figured we needed to change some things. So from Thursday the 16th of November our new price list will be:-

Draught Pints	£1.70
Bottled Beer	£1.50
Spirits	£1.65
Liqueurs	£1.80
Soft Drinks	75p



It's your Club, use it !

**Remember every Thursday, Friday & Saturday
Music & Munchies till 1 • Beer till 12.30
MEMBERS FREE • GUESTS £2 AFTER 10.30**

A New HORIZON For DIT

The DIT has been selected to participate in the AHEAD Horizon project which is designed to address the needs of students with disabilities within the institution.

The European funded project, which is already up and running, consists of seminars and tutorials dealing with such issues as study skills, learning skills, reading techniques, essay writing, exam preparation and workshops. They also offer an opportunity for students with varying disabilities to come together to discuss their needs and to provide support if needed. A referral service is also available.

"It's for every student really, open to anyone who wants to come along," says Susan Lindsay, DIT's Senior Counsellor.

"I've been on to Patricia Callaghan [director of AHEAD] that the DIT needed to do something. We're under-resourced in that area. This has arisen because there hasn't been any structure available and she felt the timing was right to introduce the programme. This is just paving the way because we're hoping the DIT will take it up because the funding is only going to be for a short time."

The cost of setting up the project and running it for the year is about £90,000, with 90% of this coming from Horizon and the rest from the DIT itself.

If the project is a success, and finance permitting, the plan is to expand the service to include a career guidance element and possibly a disability officer.

"It's a pilot programme and we may have to go back to the drawing board, but it seems to be working well," says Ms Lindsay.

The seminars are currently being held in DIT Aungier Street (Mondays, 6pm) and DIT Mountjoy Square (Wednesdays, noon)

For further information contact Susan Lindsay in DIT Head Office.