

Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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Losing a generation

There is no doubt that Brian Lenihan is an impressive performer. I listened to him on the radio on Tuesday with Sean O'Rourke as he gave an assessment of where the economy stands now. His cancer treatment is certainly not impairing his ability to do his job.

There was a glimmer of hope this week from the ESRI who say that the

decline in the economy will stop at the end of this year. However, there were some other very significant stories in that report that did not receive nearly as much publicity. The biggest story as far as I'm concerned is that between 2009 and 2010 a total of 100,000 people will have emigrated. That figure is quite shocking. It means that 100,000 people have decided that their future

is not in this country, which is very sad.

Most of those people are highly educated and capable young people. Those are the very people that we need to get is out of the hole we are in. The generation that are in power at the moment have shown that they are not capable of running the country properly. We have got to start creating

employment. It has to be the number one priority.

Senior politicians are still living in a bubble. Last week when Mary Coughlan got the silent treatment at the teachers' conference in Ennis I was sure that maybe the penny might have dropped for her. Alas no. Out she came immediately afterwards and told us again that the recession

was caused internationally (Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns...yawn). I am convinced that if Brian Cowen and his ministers came into the Dáil, put their hands up and admitted to the terrible mistakes that they made as a Government that there would be far more respect for them. Either way we are a long, long way from any kind of a return to normality.

McClaren shook the establishment

One of the great characters of the music business, Malcom McClaren passed away last week and it brought back memories of a period of huge upheaval in the music industry when he came along.

I remember when McClaren unveiled his band the Sex Pistols in the late 70's. There was uproar as Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious went on the rampage. Much

of the punk movement was a front and meant little, but McClaren was instrumental in changing the rock and pop music business forever. Suddenly these brash bad mannered and odd looking kids with orange hair and safety pins holding their clothing together were making hit records. It shook the establishment and made for great craic at the time.

Brusna thanks



Organisers of the recent 6 km walk in Brusna this week thanked everyone who took sponsorship cards, who sponsored participants and who walked on the day and to all who supported us throughout. Proceeds totalling 5,325 were presented to the Irish Heart Foundation on Tuesday, 6th April. Ready for the off! A group of walkers pictured outside Brusna Church before a 6 km walk in aid of The Irish Heart Foundation recently. Pic: Mick McCormack.

Bail out for Greece

I read this week that as part of the bail out of the Greek economy, Ireland lent them €450 million. That couldn't be true. Could it?

Testing times for owners of small businesses

The owner of a small business in the Roscommon town area rang me last night and told me that if it wasn't for the help of his family that he would have gone out of business six months ago. He employs five people and is struggling badly. The Government has to secure the jobs that are there and have to try to create some new jobs. Unless they do that, we are going nowhere fast.

There are calls today (Wednesday) for the establishment of a special body to assist small businesses to stay operating and to maintain employment. That could not come fast enough for most people.

Pressure takes its toll on Cardinal Brady

I hope that Cardinal Sean Brady is ok. He was taken ill on Tuesday night but he appears to be fine since. With all that had gone on in recent weeks and months with regard to the church, the man has to be under pressure. All these things take their toll and regardless of the rights or wrongs of what

happened, I think that we all would wish Cardinal Brady well. I met him a few times and he is a very nice man.

Lib Dems will hold the balance

Those of us who take an interest in elections and politics will have been watching and listening to the carry on in the general election campaign in the UK. As far as I can make out the Tories are expected to get a small majority when the results are announced, but it may not be even enough to form a government and they may need the Lib-Dems to form an alliance for that government.

Of course if that happens it would mean that the parties in Northern Ireland would have a huge say in the formation of the next UK government too. Apparently the TV cameras like the look of David Cameron, while they are not so excited by Gordon Brown. There will be three leaders debates on TV and that will have a big bearing on the result.



Rising cost of fuel

There hasn't been a lot in the news about the rising cost of petrol and diesel in recent weeks. There has been a rise of at least ten percent, which is putting a lot of pressure on people in several walks of life. The price of a litre of petrol is now about €1.30 in most places and that will surely have implications with regard to inflation. Not alone are people on fixed incomes now, but a lot of people have had their pay cut, so this big rise in petrol prices is having another detrimental effect on families and businesses.

On a brighter note it is good to see that car sales are beginning to improve. It would appear that the

scrapage deal announced by the Government is working and the more realistic prices being charged by the manufacturers is working too.

However, I had to laugh when I read the big hullabaloo about the electric cars on Monday last. The Greens announced that there would be a grant of €5,000 to buy an electric car. Wow, that's looks good, I thought. That was until I read further down the article and realised that the electric cars available cost between €32,000 and €38,000. Most ordinary families would not be able to afford half that figure. It is typical pie in the sky from the Greens. We would all love to have

an electric car. But if you can't afford it then it's a waste of time even talking about it.

Turner for Tralee

The 2010 Roscommon Rose of Tralee competition is set to be another great night and this year it's in Kiltonan Castle on Friday week, April 23rd. I have been involved in the past couple of events and it is a great night's entertainment. MC again this year will be Ollie Turner who is a master at this kind of thing. I read that Ray D'arcy does not want to continue as the compere of the Rose final and the organisers could do far worse that appoint Ollie Turner as his replacement. He is brilliant at that job and would be a breath of fresh air.

Last year's Roscommon Rose, Maria Hoey, spoke so very well at last weekend's launch and how she didn't make it to Tralee to the final I will never understand. The way she put this year's contestants at ease last week was very impressive and speaking to her, she had a great year as the Roscommon representative. Best of luck to all concerned this year.