

Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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Donegal crash is beyond comprehension

When I heard the news on Monday morning that eight people had been killed in one car accident in Donegal I thought that the newsreader had made a mistake, because she said it was a two-car collision. How could eight people die in a two-car crash?

We now know some of the details and it is beyond comprehension that so much destruction of life could happen in one incident.

It goes to prove just how dangerous our roads are, despite all the great work that has been done in the whole area of road safety in recent years.

I have read and listened to the usual people sounding off in the wake of this unprecedented tragedy but the facts are that there are always going to be tragedies like these, regardless of what efforts are made to improve road

safety.

I'm sure the full details of what happened in Donegal will come out in time, but it appears that there was no alcohol involved and that those who died were being left home after coming out of the pub having watched the World Cup Final. There was the poor woman whose car was hit – she had a narrow escape – but the poor man coming home from

bingo, minding his own business after winning €65, was not so lucky.

Young people will always take chances and it is easy to look back now and say that there should not have been eight people in that car. It's simply down to inexperience and it will happen again. It may not be on the same scale but it will happen again.

One can hardly imagine the

scale of what happened last Sunday night. The families will never get over it. It is the worst tragedy on the roads in the history of the state. My heart also goes out to the driver of the car who survived. What he and his family will have to live with for the rest of their lives does not bear thinking about. It was a shocking week and all we can do is keep those affected in our thoughts and prayers.



Angela Purcell, Teresa Durkin and Miriam McGovern at the opening of an art exhibition, part of the 15th Dr. Douglas Hyde Summer School of Traditional Irish Music in Ballaghaderreen recently. Pic: Mick McCormack.

Dáil on holidays but economic woes continue

So the Dáil is on holidays for the next 12 weeks, which means that Brian Cowen's Government will certainly survive until at least October, which is a great feat, given all that has gone on over the past twelve months or so.

It is interesting to hear the experts and economists who say that the economy is turning the corner. These are the same people who told us that everything in the economy was fine before it fell off a cliff! In fact there was a headline last week that announced that the recession in Ireland is over. However, since that statement was made we have heard the following: That 455,000 people are now out of work; 197 people a day have lost their jobs since the start of the year; a total of four companies a day have closed down this year; on Wednesday's Irish Independent

we were told that 5,000 people a month are emigrating to escape the unemployment crisis and that by the end of 2011, over 120,000 people will have left the country. These are mainly young people. We are also told today that we have the biggest government deficit in the whole of the developed world.

Brian Lenihan said last week that there was the prospect that there might be another four billion euro to pay back on top of what we owe. NAMA say now that only 25 percent of the loans it has are performing instead of the predicted 40 percent. Then we had a big announcement that the banks are being ordered to lend to 12 billion euro to Irish companies who are exporting. What about the Irish companies that are not exporting but who are struggling and need credit? Are they being left

to fend for themselves? People do not realise that the government now have to find at least three and a half billion euro in extra taxes and savings this year and the same figure next year too in the budget. Things like increased income taxes, property taxes, and water charges are almost certain now.

The bill for bailing out Anglo seems to be growing every week. If anyone thinks that we are even close to being out of recession then they are sadly mistaken. Small business people, publicans and shop keepers will all tell you that business this year has been much worse than last year. The recession might be over for the stockbrokers and the financial whiz kids that operate the hedge funds and the government bonds, but the people on the ground do not believe it for one minute.

A real hero

Coming home late last weekend I listened to a repeat recording of an interview that was live earlier in the day on RTÉ between Rachel English and former Dublin football star, and a man who is now the top kidney transplant surgeon in the country, Dr David Hickey.

It was one of the best interviews that I have heard in a long time as Hickey spoke about his time with the Dubs, his own cancer and treatment for same, his involvement in many charities here, in Cuba and Uganda, the health service here and what needs to be done, and life in general.

He spoke the most sense of anyone I have heard on the national airwaves or any other airwaves for that matter in many years. The work that this man has done and the number of lives that he and his team have saved over the years is phenomenal. He told several great stories but one in particular about a six-year-old girl whom he operated on 17 years ago. A few weeks ago he attended that girl's wedding and while he was at the wedding, he got a call to get back to the hospital where there was a kidney available for transplant for a six-year-old girl! There are some real heroes in this country and David Hickey is one of those. He came across as humble and sincere. I was very impressed.

Sky care – about your money



Is the ad for Sky TV featuring George Hook (left) the most annoying ad seen here for many years?

He starts by saying "Once upon a time in this country we were all millionaires." Really George? He should get out more. Then later he says, "Sky care". It is nauseating stuff. I am a Sky TV customer myself but take it

from me, Sky only care if you have the €60 a month to give them for their package. Thankfully the Après Match crowd gave Hook plenty of stick with a few really funny sketches where he does the ad holding several €50 notes! That's what it's all about George!

Callely remains brazen

It was infuriating to watch Ivor Callely on TV on Tuesday trying to defend the indefensible with regard to his expenses. The brazen way that he challenged almost every question he was asked is an indication that this guy is living in a different world to the rest of us. I said it here before and I say it again this week, Brian Cowen should have called in Mr Callely and told him to clear out his desk.



Northern violence is last thing we need

It was a pity to see the scenes of violence in the North of Ireland earlier in the week as the parades for the 12th July took place. There has been so much progress made over the past few years that the violence – even on the 12th – was a thing of the past.

However it is now clear that the so-called republican dissidents are gaining support in nationalist areas. That support may not be huge, but it was enough to create a flashpoint last Monday night in Belfast. To hear that 85 police officers were injured indicated the scale of what happened. I sincerely hope that we are not going back to the bad old days. It's the last thing we need in this country right now.



Mary Gallagher officially opens an art exhibition, part of the 15th Dr. Douglas Hyde Summer School recently. Pic: Mick McCormack.