

Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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FF politicians see writing on the wall for hospital

I know that a lot of people are bored to tears about the Roscommon County Hospital story, which has ran on for 30 years now. But it is probably the biggest local issue here in Roscommon even still, and given the terrible economic times that we are in and all that has happened in the past two years in particular.

I listened to another long debate on the issue again at this week's meeting of Roscommon County Council and while many of the same things were said in that debate that we have heard many, many times before, I detected a very noticeable shift in emphasis especially in the contributions made by Fianna Fáil members during that debate.

For instance Cllr Eugene Murphy said that he was very worried about the future of 24 hour A&E following the recent

meeting held between the councillors and members of the HSE executive at Roscommon County Hospital.

He said that he was very worried that A&E and the Coronary Care units were under threat.

Other Fianna Fáil councillors told the meeting that the A&E consultant that was on call after 8 pm at night in Roscommon did not receive one call-out in a four-month period and that GPs were not sending people to Roscommon County Hospital.

Cllr Rachel Doherty made a very clever speech in which she (rightly) said that no politician in Roscommon wanted to see a downgrading of services at the hospital but that politicians and the people would have to face "a new reality" about the hospital, stating that if we had services there that were not

being used then we would have to look at the whole situation.

It sounded very much to me like the main government party within the county are resigned to major changes taking place at the hospital and those

changes are not for the better.

I know that Paddy Kilduff stoutly defended the role of Fianna Fáil as he usually does, but I detect a very subtle softening up process with regard to the services at

the hospital. Professor Brendan Drumm, in a farewell interview at the weekend, could not have been clearer. He stated that there were too many hospitals in the west and in Roscommon and Galway in particular.

I know that there has been a lot of scaremongering with regard to the future of the hospital over the years and there is no threat to the hospital ever closing down completely, but having listened very closely to the debate at the

council meeting this week I am now more convinced than ever that the services at the hospital are going to be run down over a period of time and that Fianna Fáil politicians know that the writing is on the wall.



We are all well used to reading and hearing about major music concerts in Dublin and other parts of the country but one of the most innovative music festivals in many years will take place this weekend at the splendid setting of Lisadell House in Sligo. There are three concerts over the weekend starring Westlife and Leonard Cohen and 10,000 people will attend each night. I'm sure Westlife will go down a treat in their own home county but Cohen is one of the great enduring music stars of this or any generation. He is over 70 years of age but he still performs for over three hours every night. It is a pity that the event clashes with the match in Dublin or there would be a lot more Roscommon people in attendance.

Pictured above is the construction of a huge sound stage for the 30,000 fans that will flock to Sligo for the forthcoming concerts in Lisadell House is underway at Lisadell House, Sligo. Photo: James Connolly / PicSell8.

Anglo and Arnott's

I know that Arnott's store in Dublin may not be of much relevance to anything here in Roscommon, yet there are very few people who have travelled to Dublin over the years and who have not visited the Arnott's shop on Henry Street at some stage.

Today I read where Anglo Irish Bank is now set to take over the ailing store. I don't know much about the financial details of what's going on but I liked the comment of one person on Morning Ireland this morning when he said, "This is a disaster, Anglo Irish Bank haven't a clue about retailing. Come to think of it they haven't a clue about banking either!" That about sums it up.

Need for a new political party?

Last week we asked the question was there a need for a new political party in Ireland. We got a number of responses. Here is one:

Seamus,

Yes there is a political vacuum but no there is not a need for a new political party. A new political party will fail like all other new parties and for the same reasons. Within a short period of time, it will forget why and what it set out to do and operate in crisis-reactive mode like the existing parties; it will succumb to the intoxicating influence of pandering to the demands of different, but nevertheless local vested interests; it will clap itself on the back for doing an ordinary good thing and then take an extraordinary, additional self-reward; it will quickly lose its concentration on reform issues and the job it was elected to do and replace it with the existing 'work at getting re-elected ethos'.

The real need is for the creation of a new breed of Irish people to go into and take over the existing political parties. This will require the reverse of Darwin's thesis and concentrate on the 'unnatural selection' of Irish people from the existing gene pool. A list of 'unnatural traits' to select for would evolve from the simple process of excluding the natural ones currently found in the existing parties and which are commonly sourced from the following: offspring reared by an 'Irish Mammy'; GAA umpires, referees and players from Co. Meath; cute hours; bankers who can't add even with calculators; fashion followers who can't tell mutton from lamb and have discarded 'backbone' as out of fashion; others.

Regards,
Peter Wrafter.

Arrogance of Ahern

I found the attitude of Minister Dermot Ahern, *right*, over the past week objectionable and arrogant at the very least. He told the Irish people to get out and start spending money. I have news for you Mr Ahern. It is very hard to go out and spend money you do not have.

Does this pampered and overpaid politician not realise what has been going on in this country over the past two years? He doesn't have to fill his car with petrol or diesel every week, he doesn't have to pay for his mobile phone, he doesn't have to pay car tax or insurance. Most of his meals and accommodation are paid for too. He gets paid outlandish expenses for almost everything he does. He may well have a heap of money saved over the years as a result, but for the majority of the rest of us who have to pay for everything, we have



no extra money to spend. Wait until he and his friends put property taxes and water charges on the bills of the ordinary people in December's budget. The arrogance of these people is simply breathtaking.

Priests to establish representative body

I was very interested in the story in today's papers that priests around the country are going to set up a new representative body because they feel increasingly frustrated at how they are being treated. I think that it is a very good idea. The church has been at the receiving end of some very bad publicity in recent years and some of it has been deserved too. However, it remains a fact that the vast majority of priests are hard working and totally dedicated to the communities in which they live. They feel that the bishops are not able to articulate their point of view so they are setting up their own body and I think that it should be welcomed.

Local heroes

Despite the recession there are great stories of local endeavour going on all the time without much publicity. This weekend the people in Castlerea will be in festival mode as they hold their annual festival and show. There is a very attractive music festival in Loughglynn, and in Ballygar the annual carnival will take place. It brings back memories of great days at the carnival years ago going to see acts like The Memories, The Plattermen the Swarbriggs etc. It was always mighty craic and many a great night was had attempting to secure lifts to and from the carnival. Despite hard times there is still great local community spirit and people are great to rally together to local causes and events. Long may it continue.