

WOMEN FACE 'UNFAIR PRESSURE'

COMMENT
BY LARISSA NOLAN



"ARE you a married woman? Do you have children? How old are they? You must be very busy..."

It was this loaded line of interview questioning that led to Minister John Halligan becoming – unfairly – the new villain in the latest pantomime “sexist” storm.

It's understandable how such queries could make a mother of two feel she'd been passed over for the job and the Workplace Relations Commission agreed.

But the subsequent media-fuelled hysterical reaction missed the bigger picture – if you think job interviews are discriminatory against women who want a career and children, wait until you're in the job itself.

Any working mother will tell you that discrimination in the workplace is rife against those trying to balance the day job with raising kids.

A UK survey last year showed that the majority of working mothers have experienced

“Any working mother will tell you that discrimination is rife in the workplace

LARISSA NOLAN ON THE FUROR AROUND THE MINISTER

inequality due to their status – with reports of being sidelined, losing out on promotions and even being threatened with dismissal.

A recent ESRI survey in Ireland found women are twice as likely to face prejudice in work – and never-married lone parents (84% of which are women) are most at risk of being discriminated against in the public and private services.

It's a sharp reality check for new mothers, who naively expect to continue on in careers post-baby, just as we did before, when we were free at all hours, not hampered by family commitments.

When I became pregnant with my son in 2009, I remember being fiercely indignant that the response to my news in work was less about congratulations and more about concern. How

Don't be angry at Halligan... save it for workplace culture punishing mothers

would I cope? Did I think I could do my job anymore? How offensive! I remember thinking. How outdated!

But I ended up leaving office jobs and working for myself when I realised there is no leeway given to those who are raising the next generation.

Generally, there is no accommodation made for anyone who has to go to a sick child, or attend a parent-teacher meeting, or who could do with flexi-time to suit childcare

arrangements. You're stressed, you're oppressed, you suffer burnout.

It's no wonder a recent study found that two out of three Irish mothers would choose to stay at home with their children, given the choice.

The workplace is a hostile environment for mothers, who are often made to feel useless, uncooperative and workshy, when in fact they are highly capable, organised women who never take a day off.

The Minister of State explained he only asked the question to reassure the interviewee.

He said: “I wanted her to know I would be flexible in terms of any family business she may have to attend to.

“Too many workplaces have less than family friendly arrangements and I always

ensure my workplace is as family friendly as possible.”

That is a stance that is to be commended, not condemned.

Don't be angry at John Halligan – be angry at the inherent workplace culture that punishes those who prioritise family instead of rewarding them.



Minister's gaffe not 'hanging offence', says Taoiseach

BY FERGHAL BLANEY

MINISTER Halligan appears to be in the clear following his embarrassing sexist remarks gaffe after receiving backing from the Taoiseach.

Speaking at the Fine Gael national conference in Cavan,

Leo Varadkar said Mr Halligan's wrongs were not “hanging” offences.

Junior Minister John Halligan has apologised for asking a job candidate whether she was married and had children and has promised to pay the €7,500 his Government

department was forced to pay for the offence by the Workplace Relations Commission.

Mr Varadkar seems willing to draw a line under it.

He said: “First of all I think what he did was absolutely wrong, absolutely inappropriate to ask

anybody in an interview about their family status, or their marital status for that matter.

“I don't think it was a hanging offence. I don't think it would merit ending Mr Halligan's political career, but I don't think what he did was acceptable, it was wrong.”



'SEXIST' GAFFE
Minister Halligan has apologised



BUNGLING The Irish Mirror story on interview scandal

Hitler model is withdrawn after outrage

A LIFE-SIZE Hitler model used for selfies by visitors to an Indonesian museum has been removed.

Pictures shared on social media of people grinning as they pose with the Nazi leader caused outrage.

The model at the De ARCA Statue Art Museum shows the dictator in front of an image of Auschwitz.

Museum operations manager Jamie Misbah said: “We don't want to attract outrage.”

Jewish human rights activist Rabbi Abraham Cooper said: “Everything about it is wrong. It's hard to find words for how contemptible it is.

“The background is disgusting.”

Large planet could be 'the end of Earth'

THE discovery of a giant planet has fuelled speculation that a world predicted to unleash an apocalypse on Earth exists.

Researchers this week announced the discovery of the new planet so large they're not sure if it even qualifies as one.

The OGLE-2016-BLG-1190Lb was seen using NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope and is estimated to be more than 13 times the mass of Jupiter.

Doomsayers have speculated it could be Nibiru, or Planet X, the world that will allegedly cause the end of Earth.

Researchers have speculated it might not be a planet.

Anger after council kills young lynx

AN animal park has expressed outrage after a young Eurasian lynx which escaped last month was shot dead on the orders of the local council.

Lillith, who was 18 months old and twice the size of a domestic cat, had been missing from Borth Wild Animal Kingdom near Aberystwyth, in Wales, since October 29.

Ceredigion County Council said she had been killed after she “strayed over to a populated area of the community”.

The animal park said she did not pose a threat to humans and are “outraged”.

A spokesman said: “We are truly devastated.”

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Brave work by gardai in feud war

THE Garda have taken a battering of late for various scandals - but we should salute the brave officers who prevented another potential feud murder yesterday.

Shortly before 8am a suspected three-man kill squad from the Kinahan cartel were ready to shoot dead Patsy Hutch in Dublin's north inner-city.

They were heavily armed with a sub-machine gun, a semi-automatic pistol and revolver and were reportedly due to collect €200,000 for the hit.

If it wasn't for excellent police work, Patsy Hutch, brother of Gerry "The Monk" Hutch, would most likely be the 15th fatal victim of the bloody feud.

Officers from the Garda's drugs and organised crime bureau were waiting and swooped before the gang could strike.

The intelligence-led operation was a huge success for gardai. A suspected deadly hit squad has been taken out of the equation and an innocent man is still alive.

It was the 45th life saved in the bloody feud as the Kinahans try to wipe out the entire Hutch extended family.

Assistant commissioner John O'Driscoll, responsible for the Garda's special crime operations, and his brave officers deserve great praise.

Too often lately gardai have taken a kicking. Today we say well done to the men and women of An Garda Siochana.

Homeless need more support

IT'S frightening to think homelessness and hypothermia accounted for nearly 3,000 hospital stays in the last decade.

HSE figures show almost every day at least one person is discharged with no fixed abode.

Dr Chris Luke painted the stark reality of the dangers people living on the streets face, many being violently attacked.

If it wasn't for agencies like the Simon Community the statistics would no doubt be higher.

The Government needs to make more facilities available so more people don't end up having to rely on the hospital A&E for warmth and care.

It's scrum win

IRELAND are on course for Grand Slam glory after winning the Six Nations by stunning the Scots in Dublin.

A win over England next week would cap off a tremendous tournament for Joe Schmidt's team.

We're hoping they'll make it a famous five from five.

WOMEN'S DAY NEEDS TO SHOW FEMALES AS VICTORS.. NOT VICTIMS

COMMENT

BY LARISSA NOLAN

It was meant to be the day to celebrate women's progress - an emboldening rallying cry to the sisterhood.

Yet there was remarkably little positivity on International Women's Day, suddenly everyone's new favourite calendar date, despite having never heard of it before this year.

Buoyed by the #metoo and #timesup bandwagons, social media was flooded with gushing tributes to the female half of the world's population and our supposed battle against a constant male backlash.

The disingenuous narrative peddled by the identity politics brigade was all about gender pay gaps, sexual harassment, discrimination. This is an illusion of truth.

To witness the mass hysteria, you would swear we were living in Saudi Arabia, where women are yet to be emancipated, or perhaps back in the Ireland of the early 1970s when the marriage bar was still in existence.

It is disrespectful and dismissive of all the hard work done by our foremothers, who have already fought - and won - all the major battles.

Because in general, in the Western world women are equal - it's only modern feminism that is telling us we're not.

It means all the good news is drowned out in a chorus of nagging and whining from a gender seemingly insistent on showing itself as alarmist and vindictive - taking us right back to ancient stereotypes.

Worse - it brainwashes the next generation of young women into a negative, damaging perception of themselves as disadvantaged.

It's disempowering and arrests progress.

Rather than telling girls they are doing better than ever before, the message is defeatist, nothing has changed.

You could be forgiven for thinking being a woman was a disability. Why not hail the good news of our successes?

Take the gender pay gap, an obsession with campaigners who don't want to acknowledge its demise.

But as feminist academic and author Joanna Williams - who has broken it down - says: "The frequent repetition of a claim does not make it true."

It's not widely known how the bandied-about gender pay gap figure of 24% is arrived at, so here's how. It's calculated by comparing the total annual pay of all men and all women, irrespective of key details such as the amount of hours worked, the job type, experience or qualifications.

Women often take

LEADER Countess Constance Georgine Markiewicz



FEMALE POWER
Ex-president Mary McAleese is proof women can make it



INSPIRATIONAL
Dolores O'Riordan

'It should be a celebration of everything we have achieved...we ARE equal'

months out of work, or years in some cases, to do that most important job in the world - raising the next generation.

But when the wages of men and women working in the same job, for the same amount of hours, at the same level for the same years are compared, there is no pay gap at all.

Our female neighbours in the UK are

outstripping men - there are more women than men working as veterinary surgeons, doctors and lawyers, and more women in accountancy and academia.

Here in Ireland, 52% of solicitors are female and almost 90% of teachers are female, with the role of principal split 50/50.

Even more good news for feminists - young women are earning more than their male colleagues.

"We need to make the office a much more inclusive place for those women trying to balance a career with children"

When the pay of people in their 20s is compared, no matter how it is measured, women are the higher earners.

An increase in the number of female CEOs is just around the corner, another positive fact ignored.

It wasn't until the mid-1990s that the number of girls going to university really took off, and with the job of a CEO requiring decades of experience, we will very soon see those women becoming the highest-ranking in their company.

At least they can be, if they want to - but they may wisely choose a happier work-life balance. Prioritising family often means we women shun jobs that take over our lives and that's our choice.

There are gender quotas in everything from politics to the arts, positive discrimination, equality legislation to ensure rights are observed and even scholarships awarded on the basis of biology.

In today's society, women do have choice. You can be

the stay-at-home mum or the CEO or you could be Kim Kardashian, on the front cover of a magazine with an exploding bottle of champagne balanced on your naked derriere, if that's what you wanted.

We still have a long way to go around issues of childcare. We need to make the office a more inclusive place for those trying to balance a career with children - it is often such a stress and mothers are so exhausted and wracked with guilt that a recent Irish survey showed 63% of us would choose to stay at home, if finances permitted.

Another helpful change would be to lift the societal expectation to be the "perfect mother" that is pushed so heavily in the media.

Maternal instinct plays a big role in this but less healthy is the fact 85% of Ireland's 90,000 single parents are women, who have literally been left holding the baby, shouldering enormous financial and emotional responsibility.

It's time to accentuate the positive and cancel out the negative. Let's start telling women: you can have it all.

Let's stop the scaremonger myth of the male predator and instead encourage women to own their sexual power, while ensuring fear or pressure is never elevated above dignity and self-worth.

We have a proud history of incredible, fierce, impressive women in Ireland, from suffragette and revolutionary Countess Constance Georgine Markiewicz to the recently departed Dolores O'Riordan to Mary McAleese.

The former president used International Women's Day to rightly lambast the Catholic Church as a "bastion of misogyny" for its perverse insistence on refusing to ordain women.

Let's follow these trailblazers - and be victors, not victims.

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RUGBY PALS CLEARED: RESULT IS

COMMENT

BY LARISSA NOLAN



AS the jury went out in the Belfast rape trial on Wednesday morning, a close friend sent me a message saying: "It looks like those guys are going to get off."

Perhaps the most controversial case of its kind ever seen in a court on this island, we were following it, discussing it as intently as everyone else in the country, distressing as it was.

As a supporter of the justice system and the right to a fair trial, I made the point that I didn't see them as "getting off" as, like anyone else in a civil society, they stood before the courts as innocent citizens.

Should they be found guilty, obviously then, I would fully condemn their actions. I ended the respectful debate with my friend saying: "The trouble is, whatever the verdict, there will be those on either side of this case who will not accept the democratic verdict of a jury."

What an understatement that turned out to be.

Social media – the home of mass hysteria – erupted in ostensible rage, bile and vile commentary against the four men who had just been acquitted in a court of law.

The pitchfork mobs have moved on from the rejection of presumption of innocence to outright rejection of the criminal justice system. Only their view of what the right verdict should have been is tolerated, as if they are our elected moral guardians, or God himself.

This skewed ideology is more fascistic than it is just, and it is of no help to the unfortunate girl who has gone through this most ugly of cases.

There is no context or perspective, no understanding that a not guilty result is not a failure of the courts system: it's a verdict.

For liberals purporting to stand for victims' rights, the most militant were quick to demonise anyone who didn't agree with their view that the court's decision was wrong.

Would we prefer a conviction rate of 99% like in China – where those on trial are automatically guilty?

The narrative goes like this: if you aren't furious at the decision of the jury – who sat for eight weeks considering every detail of the complex case – you're as bad as a rapist yourself.

You're a woman-hater, a victim-blamer, a rape-apologist.

There was a guilty verdict the day before, in the Central Criminal Court, where two brothers were jailed for raping their teen sister throughout the 1980s. But there wasn't so much attention for that crime, no such support for that young woman whose life was destroyed.

People gathered at the Spire in Dublin yesterday, with some TDs even joining in, protesting at the court's treatment of women in such trials – even though our justice system is entirely different.

Those accused of rape are named in the UK – unlike here where they are never named unless convicted – and

Docs: Booze impact tests are needed

BY NIALL O'CONNOR

MORE research is needed into the impact of alcohol on the memory of rape victims, top psychologists said yesterday.

University of Birmingham's Dr Heather Flowe, pictured below, and Dr Melissa Colloff of Loughborough University are working to help cops.

Writing in the Garda Review, they said the vast majority of rape victims – up to 80% – are drunk when they are attacked.

And they said investigators are often unsure how to proceed. They added:

"Testimonial concerns are acute in rape. Firstly, there is considerable evidence from surveys and mock jury studies indicating that victims of rape are judged harshly and blamed for the incident if they were alcohol intoxicated –

regardless of whether their intoxication was voluntary or involuntary.

"Secondly, rape cases often present with very little physical evidence, and therefore, may have to be adjudicated based largely on testimony."

Tests were carried out on sober and intoxicated subjects to determine the effect of evidence gathering and recall of events. The experts said police should use "cognitive interviews" to help people "systematically remember an event".

The doctors continued: "We found in our work that women who had consumed alcohol remembered the hypothetical rape as accurately as women who were sober. It should not be assumed that testimony given by a rape complainant who was alcohol-intoxicated is inaccurate. But more research is needed."

the public would not have been allowed in the hearing.

Those differences are what made it so distressing for the young woman at the centre of it, as it turned into a cheap drama, a circus – and pointless foot-stamping over an irreversible decision only adds to that sensationalism.

Organisers said they were angry and upset at the treatment of the complainant, which they described as "harrowing and re-traumatising" but these are disempowering words that



AMBITION
Olding wants to get career back on track



FREE MAN
Paddy Jackson after he was cleared



STORY Irish Mirror yesterday

only serve to further diminish her, after she showed such courage and strength in the witness box.

Better the tribute from the Detective Chief Superintendent in the case, Paula Hilman, who described her as a young woman of great "resolve and confidence".

Fittingly, it was Judge Patricia Smyth who pinpointed the essence of the Belfast rape trial when she directed the jury with the simple words: "It is for you to decide where the truth lies."

For anyone who had followed the details of this case for the previous two months, it was unequivocal that this brave young woman believed she

was telling the truth. She believed she had been raped by Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding at a house party two years ago, when she was 19.

Their friends were also charged with lesser offences. Blane McIlroy denied exposure and Rory Harrison denied perverting the course of justice and withholding evidence.

But the fact the jury returned a verdict of not guilty for all four defendants highlighted how there can be a dangerous discrepancy in what a court decides is rape and what a woman may view as rape.

And while it may not have been the case in this particular trial, it threw up

the issue of how the ever-expanding definition can be damaging to all involved – and most importantly – to women themselves.

This is something we need to address to save women from going through the ordeal of a court case, when a court may not be the right place for their complaint

Or to help them deal with and process harmful experiences in a suitable manner.

And to avoid identifying as a "rape victim" when they may not be at all.

Some of the world's most senior classical feminists – from Australia's Germaine Greer to America's Katie

'NOT A FAILURE OF THE COURTS'

Whatever the verdict, there will be those on either side who won't accept it..what an understatement that turned out to be



INTERVIEW Solicitor Paul Dougan

Olding 'hopes he'll play for Ireland and Ulster again'

BY EMMA McMENAMY

A SOLICITOR for rugby star Stuart Olding said yesterday the player "absolutely" hopes to play for Ulster and Ireland again after he was acquitted of rape.

Paul Dougan said: "Inevitably [the IRFU] will want to examine the events of the last nine weeks.

"Stuart recognises that there are questions that will have to be asked but equally the morality of what has gone on, the indulgences, the excesses, it happened when he was on holiday, when he wasn't working.

"Ulster Rugby and the IRFU have been monitoring the case throughout. Hopefully they will recognise how Stuart represented himself [on Wednesday].

"Obviously his desire is to return to the sport that he loves.

"Stuart is a very dedicated sports person, he's a very committed, well focused individual in his particular sporting achievements.

"He is somebody who had great promise and will still have great promise. He is a sportsperson and everything that goes along with that

in terms of how he looks after himself and his health and lifestyle."

Mr Dougan also told Sean O'Rourke on RTE Radio 1 how Olding was "a different person" to the one described during the trial.

He added: "The details of the trial haven't been pleasant reading, pleasant listening, and as a consequence of that I think Stuart wanted to recognise that and that he is a different person in 2018 than perhaps the individual who was portrayed through the course of the evidence in the case."

A spokesman for the IRFU said: "We are unable to comment on any matter pertaining to the review process."



SCRUM Aftermath of court case in Belfast

“ We need to disentangle what rape is and stand by those who have been raped ”

Roiophe – have raised concerns about a tendency to encourage women to “re-define” bad experiences as rape – broadening the definition to include all unpleasant or regretted after-the-event sex. As Roiophe states: “It expands to include any kind of sex a woman experiences as negative. Regret can signify rape.”

The feminist academic Joanna Williams explains why this is so problematic, stating: “As a result of this linguistic over-reach, sex has become

so problematised that some women genuinely do not know if they have been raped.”

We need to disentangle what is rape and what is not – and stand by those who have been raped to go through the courts, hard, though necessary as it is.

We can show our support on placards but the legal system cannot.

And regrettably it has to upturn private aspects of lives in order to establish the facts, in what the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre aptly described

this week as a “cruel and inefficient” process. No one doubts the trial trauma of the woman at the centre of this case was cruel.

But to allow our empathy to turn into rage, to lose our minds and hark back to medieval justice is harmful to everyone.

She is to be commended as an inspiration for her resilience and having the courage of her convictions – despite the harsh reality that we have no control over what the courts ultimately decide.

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LESSER CHARGES McIlroy, left, and Harrison were both cleared