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Healy-Rae is Kerry upset with the FAI

AFTER lavishing praise on John Delaney down the years, Michael Healy-Rae now claims he is "very disappointed" at being fooled by "very incorrect" FAI financial statements. Surely this has to be a Kerry joke.

As recently as last April he told an Oireachtas sport committee hearing he was "quite confident" the disgraced former football boss could only be accused of being "passionately committed to his job".

Had the Kerry TD asked Delaney a question at the hearing, he might have got some answers but he didn't and instead kissed his butt by offering him "the mother of all welcomes" when he came to the Kingdom to open a new football pitch.

Delaney is not the only one who has taken the public for fools.

I just want to say a big thank you to everyone who reads the column and the Irish Mirror, especially those who take the trouble to send emails and letters into the office.

Without you none of us would be in a job.

So I wish you all a happy New Year and I mean everyone... even you Tory Boy.

Racists will follow where racists lead

FIFA has been trying for years to banish discrimination from the game with its show racism the red card campaign - but now it's worse than ever.

Former England international and Sky pundit Gary Neville hit the nail on the head when he pointed the finger at Boris Johnson who, by his own conduct, has given a licence to abuse.

When they see their Prime Minister making racist comments they believe they too can get away with it.

It was also strange that Sky Sports felt compelled to say Neville's views were his own, which begs the question as to where does Rupert Murdoch's station stand on racism?

Life is worth living, take it from someone who knows

DON'T know about you but I'm glad it's all over - and even happier it's not Christmas 1992. For some it can be "the most wonderful time of the year" but for others it can be a bit of an ordeal.

Most people are gladdened to see the Christmas lights but for many that glow in the winter darkness tells them they are approaching the gates of hell.

If not for work and family commitments I'd be on the beach and in the bars and restaurants in Corralejo, Fuerteventura, but hopefully I will be there in the New Year.

"Hope" is a tiny word, so small it's easy to lose and I certainly did when I spent Christmas alone in a dingy flat in East London in 1992.

It was a horrible year. My long-time partner running off with another bloke leaving me with a flat I couldn't afford on my own while I was in my final year at university trying to survive on a student grant was a bit of a downer, to say the least.

The only person I spoke to for an entire weekend was the checkout girl in the local Co-op store in Layton.

No mobile phones in those days that would allow you to keep in touch and while it's the done thing to criticise the overuse of social media, I reckon the likes of Skype, WhatsApp and Viber has saved the lives of many lonely people.

But it was the drowning death of my best friend in the River Boyne in February of that year which plunged me into the depths of depression. I met Paul

Heeney when we were both aged four and we'd been friends ever since, having gone through school together and in later life we remained close.

For 34 of his 38 years on this earth he was my best mate.

A talented musician, he played lead guitar while I strummed along wishing I could do that.

They say when a person dies a library burns down for all the knowledge and experience they have goes with them.

With Paul's death went a lifetime of memories and shared experiences.

I don't normally use my privileged position of having a column in a national newspaper to talk about my own life so I'm reluctant to do so.

But an acquaintance told me of a man who is very depressed at the moment and is finding it hard to get over Christmas and I'm sure there are thousands of other men and women like him.

I was that man in 1992 and hopefully my story will show there is light in all the darkness.

I haven't written about this before as I was embarrassed about admitting I considered taking my own life because I could see no other way out.

I now realise to take that course of action would have devastated many other lives and the consequences reverberate down the decades.

We should never say anyone took the

easy way out because there's nothing easy about taking your own life.

Trust me on that, because I was standing pretty close to the exit door at the time.

The reality is no one knows what's going on in another person's head, no matter how well you know them.

We know more about distant galaxies and the ocean depths than we do about what is taking place in the dark recesses of the human consciousness.

That old slogan "A dog is for life and not just for Christmas" has a special meaning because it was a couple of canine chums who probably saved my life.

My major concern back then was the welfare of my two dogs Saki and Scamper.

Whod look after them? I couldn't live with myself if I abandoned them, which is a contradiction in terms because I wouldn't have to.

It is hard to describe depression because once it lifts you see a different world.

It has no shape, even if Winston Churchill did describe it as a "black dog" which is somewhat ironic seeing that two white ones came to my rescue.

For me it was total numbness and detachment, not from reality, but from other people, combined with the feeling there is no way of escaping the utter pointlessness of everything. Except one.

The line from the WB Yeats poem,

There is no shame in being depressed and lonely

O'Leary is plane crazy to use doomed aircrafts

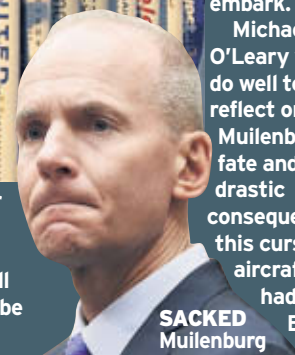
BOEING, Boeing, gone... the chief executive of the troubled aircraft maker that is and not the company itself... yet.

The firm fired Dennis Muilenburg on Monday as America's biggest manufacturing exporter struggles to recover from the fallout from 737 Max scandal which so far has killed 346 people. Boeing



last week shut down production of the plane, dubbed "sad Max", as it racks up massive debts amid allegations it put the pursuit of profit before

people's safety. Ryanair has ordered 210 of the killer planes but announced it will not tell passengers they are to be carried on what some



SACKED Muilenburg

airline industry insiders are calling the flying coffin and won't refund those who refuse to embark. Michael O'Leary would do well to reflect on Mr Muilenburg's fate and the drastic consequences this cursed aircraft has had on Boeing.

Ed break is Sheer bliss

MUSIC lovers got something of a Christmas present with the news Ed Sheeran is to take a break from recording new material and concerts in the coming year.

But it's not all good news, there are others who are only too willing to fill the gap in the mediocre market left by the Ginger Whinger.

Lewis Capaldi, who looks like he's just escaped from a Lord Of The Rings movie, is next in line to Ed's cheesy throne followed by Gerry Cinnamon.

Did I mention Paolo Nutini? Where is Scotland getting these geezers from?

Then again, isn't it the country that inflicted the bagpipes on the world.

The Samaritans are available 24 hours a day on 116 123, or if you're unable to talk go to jo@samaritans.org.



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Greens leader Eamon takes us for fuels..

GREEN Party leader Eamon Ryan drove out of Government Buildings yesterday in what appeared to be an old 2.5-litre VW minibus. So much for banning such vehicles from Dublin city centre, eh Eamo?

Could this be the same man who a few weeks ago suggested "village" folk should have a few shared cars between them.

His supporters claim he was using the vehicle to take down election posters. Then again he might have even been using the wagon to transport wolves.

Hopefully it will remind the Greens their pie-in-the-sky ideas won't work and people need our cars to get to work while we have the worst public transport system in the EU.

THE sacking of Julian Smith has caused shock on both sides of the border as he was considered one of the most competent Northern Ireland Secretaries ever to hold the post.

Why would you sack a man, who along with former Tanaiste Simon Coveney, restored the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Because he is an honest man who was not willing to trample on the Good Friday Agreement, which Johnson intends to do.

Now I spy hypocrisy at highest level

THE US doesn't want countries to use Huawei equipment because it might allow the Chinese to use communications networks for spying.

This is the same country whose intelligence agency, the CIA, was in secret control of the Swiss cryptography firm Crypto, which was selling its products to states around the world, including this one.

So the CIA had access to information which Irish officials thought was secret and this may have been passed on to Britain.

Not alone does this expose the hypocrisy of the Americans and their President, it shows they have no right to demand the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Failed politicians and the great gravy train robbery

THE disclosure that politicians who were sacked by the voters will share €2million between them is sure to make the public's blood boil.

Even when our TDs and Senators lose they win as 45 of them who stood for election and were rejected are likely to pocket an average of €45,283 across a range of payments.

They call them "parachute" payments but maybe the word parasite is more appropriate as some of the politicians involved voted to reduce ordinary workers

pensions and increase the eligibility age.

No statutory two weeks pay per year for these guys, no sir, a Dail deputy who loses their seat is eligible for a single payment of 75% of their salary... that's slightly over €72,000.

How did we arrive at a situation where politicians get these vast sums for what the public perceive as failure?

They themselves came up with this scandalous abuse of taxpayers' money so it's fair enough to call them parasites. It's the great gravy train robbery.

And it probably won't be long before a good few more of them are in for a big lob as it's now looking like there will be another election in the near future.

Neither of the other two big parties are willing to go into government with Sinn Fein with Fianna Fail refusing to even talk to them.

The Shinners' success has rocked the Establishment but the tremors from this earthquake were there for years although Fine Gael and Fianna Fail didn't feel the ground move.

As far back as 2017, leading academic Professor Aidan Regan warned the so-called economic boom was setting up a political time bomb that could lead to a Brexit-style backlash. Last Saturday that time bomb went off and blew away the old order.

Also, a recent UN report warns that "rising inequality is destabilising democracies around the world" adding "populism is being fuelled by resentment of untouchable elites". Even now both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael don't get it that the people have had enough and

are going to do something about it. Former Tanaiste Simon Coveney as good as accused an ungrateful public of being "impatient" over housing and health with his party after being nine years in office.

Best laugh of the week came from Fianna Fail's justice spokesman Jim O'Callaghan who warned Sinn Fein's election promises, if implemented, would "turn the country into Venezuela".

Does Jimbo forget that his party did turn Ireland into, not Venezuela but Angola, Colombia, Malawi, Morocco and Sierra Leone as they, like Ireland had to go begging to the International Monetary Fund to be bailed out. Fianna Fail left the country bankrupt after 13 years of disastrous misrule and the party's current leader was a minister in a government which guaranteed the banks costing the taxpayer €64billion.

The debt of €205billion – the biggest in the developed world – is largely down to the way Fianna Fail ran the country before and during the crash.

We won't mention dear old Charlie Haughey. I say dear because he was in the pocket of the rich and cost them in the region of €10million.

There was also the rampant corruption and shocking revelations which emerged at the tribunals. Did I mention the jailed Fianna Fail ministers?

So less of the Venezuela Jim, the Sicilian Mafia wouldn't get a look in

with your lot back in the day. As for RTE they too had their heads up their arse when it came to the public mood and got it totally wrong in their election predictions

The banks are also not happy at the prospect of the Shinners being in power as the party has promised to rescind the 20-year tax holiday gifted them by Fine Gael and Labour.

Mary Lou's outfit have also pledged to force the loan sharks to reduce their penal mortgage interest rates which are the highest in the EU. Apparently Bank of Ireland shares have lost around 65% of their value since the election and Sinn Fein are being blamed by market analysts. Bol shouldn't be so hard on the Shinners, didn't it wipe out all its share value through sheer recklessness and ineptitude a decade ago.

Business organisation, Ibec on the other hand is coming to terms with political reality.

The director general of the employers' lobby group said he will do business with the Shinners. He added: "The public sector is too small for the size of the private sector, and that is really something for Ibec to say.

"The lack of doctors, the lack of guards etc. You can feel it. We agree there needs to be an allocation of resources towards issues that affect people's everyday lives, like housing."

We're in some state when the bosses rep is calling for change and our public representatives are refusing to bring it about.



NEW ERA McDonald



Just who is Kourt kidding?

DON'T you just love Hollywood folk who want privacy and publicity at the same time?

Kourtney Kardashian apparently wants to limit the amount of exposure her kids are getting through her reality TV series Keeping Up With The Kardashians.

She claims it isn't "beneficial" for them and she's probably right but was it ever? It's hard to feel sympathy for the 40-year-old who has made a fortune from exposing her family to the world.

The moral is if you don't want your children on TV, get the cameras out of the kitchen.

TAKING STOCK OF SHINNERS' SUCCESS

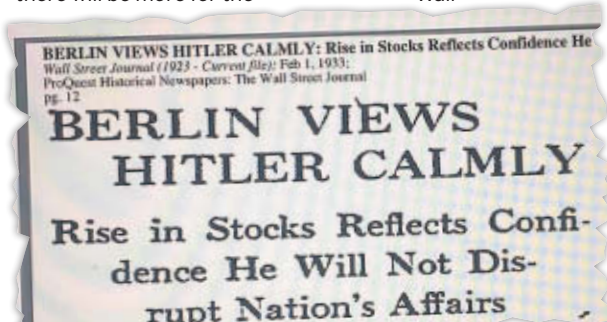
THE Shinners' stunning result in the General Election apparently resulted in big losses on the Irish stock exchange.

The obvious inference being if Sinn Fein follow through with their promises there will be more for the

citizens and less for the corporates.

Still, we shouldn't get hung up on stock market sentiment as when Hitler came to power in 1933, shares in German companies rocketed with the Wall Street Journal reporting: "Berlin Views Hitler Calmly.. rise in stocks reflects confidence he will not disrupt nation's affairs."

The old Journal was a little wide of the (Deutsche) mark on that one.



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Eam-less talk from w

KNOWLEDGE is a dangerous thing they say and it was proved so true this week on ITV's This Morning.

Eamonn Holmes, inset, became David Icke for a day, suggesting it was legitimate to debate that G5 phone masts might somehow be responsible for Covid-19.

Unfortunately there are people who will take Professor Holmes' nonsense as fact rather than believe experts who deem the technology safe. For the record, Covid-19 is a coronavirus, there are many others and they are biological entities. 5G is the fifth generation of wireless networking and follows on from 1, 2, 3 and 4G which no doubt Eamonn uses if he has a mobile phone.

If Eamonn can somehow marry them together he should be in a lab heading a team of scientists instead of talking b*****s on TV.

EVERY cloud... last month was the first March in almost two decades without a school shooting in the United States.

Unfortunately the only reason there has been no one killed or maimed by guns in educational institutions is because the schools were closed because of Covid-19.

But it's not all good news. In March, there were at least seven firearms incidents on school campuses that didn't fit the typical description of a school shooting as they involved adults and not students.

Only in America.

One Direction I'm not going

THE world is in the grip of a deadly pandemic and just when you think things can't get any worse we hear we could soon be exposed to One Direction.

Ladbroke's slashed the odds on a reunion following a flood of bets

after Niall Horan and his bandmates refollowed Zayn Malik, inset, on social media.

While some, mostly prepubescent girls, find their music infectious, a lot of us will be hoping they remain in isolation.

Needless to say I'll be practising extreme social distancing when it comes to the lads and their music.

Government to blame for nursing homes tragedy

AS the death toll mounts in our nursing homes we see once again that Ireland is no country for old men or women.

When the dust settles, when this pandemic subsides, there will be serious questions to be answered as to how and why up to half of all coronavirus victims were in nursing or residential homes.

The public should also ask why the State has farmed out care of our older citizens - who worked and paid taxes all their lives - to the private sector.

The same State which abdicated responsibility for old folk is now being forced to send doctors and nursing staff into the nursing homes because almost 300 people are dead and the body count keeps rising.

Yesterday a leading professor described what is happening in the country's nursing homes as a "national catastrophe". But it's been a long time coming.

When nearly a third of the residents of a care home in Co Laois died over the Easter weekend he is not wrong.

Professor Jack Lambert, who is

professor of infectious diseases at the Mater and Rotunda hospitals, hit the nail on the head when he described the spread of Covid-19 in nursing homes as "a catastrophe in the making".

He was also spot on when he told RTE's Today With Sean O'Rourke that the focus on acute hospitals meant the country "never put together a battle plan for community care facilities".

We are seeing the results of that on the daily bulletins as there are now believed to be clusters of coronavirus in up to 200 nursing homes and residential facilities.

As of yesterday afternoon around 290 of the 444 deaths from the virus were associated with residential settings, including 245 in nursing homes.

Nursing homes can be expensive places to live and die in as it typically costs between €850 and €1,250 per week to keep a resident there.

Indeed the profits to be made in the nursing home sector are so substantial it has attracted the cash of vulture funds which see Ireland's ageing population

as a lucrative investment. More to the point, they also recognise that Irish governments have as good as washed their hands of caring for older people in much the same way as they have championed private hospitals and healthcare to the detriment of the public health service.

While it is clear many of the nursing homes were understaffed - probably because of the poor pay - and totally unprepared for the unfolding catastrophe, most of the blame lies with the Government.

One of the main reasons hundreds of vulnerable people are dying in the nursing homes is because until this week the Government reckoned nursing homes and those in them were not its problem.

Wasn't that the whole idea of farming them off to the private sector in the first place?

Only when the death toll mounted, after the true figures were grudgingly

given, were the authorities forced to act and send in properly trained medical staff.

Dr Lambert said he is aware of a document that showed nursing homes were expected to make their own plans to deal with the pandemic.

Government forgot about the thousands in private nursing homes

He also said these facilities were expected to find their own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), to organise testing, training and isolate residents when even the State with all its resources could not do that.

It is not surprising that what is taking place in nursing homes is a national emergency with people dying in some of these facilities without ever being tested for the virus.

The Government forgot about the thousands of older people in private nursing homes because that's what they are there for... to take them off the State's hands.

In the Dail yesterday the Taoiseach that nursing homes would "not be the forgotten frontline" having apparently had a complete lapse of memory about them until the horrific death toll was revealed.

It is now clear the Government has been again resorting to its spin doctors rather than the likes of Dr Lambert who has been warning Ireland may end up like Italy and Spain for almost four weeks.

Fianna Fail and Fine Gael this week published a joint framework document in the hope of forming a government with some of the smaller parties.

One of their so-called "10 pillars" is a New Social Contract and a Universal Health Service.

While the wish could have been put forward by a Rose of Tralee contestant, who might throw in world peace as an optional extra, they are now an immediate necessity.

A decent health service is not an optional extra and the State must look after its young, sick and its old.

Unfortunately, it took a pandemic to prove that is the case.

A HEAVY CROSS FOR US TO BEAR

IT was the Easter that wasn't with even the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem - the location of Christ's tomb - closed.

This was the first time since the Black Death plague of 1349 that the sacred site was shuttered up on a Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

The Via Dolorosa - the route walked by Jesus carrying the cross to His crucifixion on the hill of Calvary - which is normally thronged with pilgrims was also deserted.

Funny that more than 2,000 years after Pontius Pilate washed his hands and sealed His fate, everyone else is doing the same these days to save their own skins.



Heading for a sandstorm

THE so-called "10 pillars" in the framework document published by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael - which include Universal Healthcare and A Better Quality Of Life For All - are not so much built on sand as on hot air.

Then again, when they are trying to

attract smaller parties to join a rainbow coalition, why not put forward pie in the sky proposals.

While a stable government is desperately needed, when both these parties could not deliver on housing and health while in virtual coalition for the

past five years, how are they going to manage it when the bill for the coronavirus shutdown comes in? Some say this marriage of inconvenience marks the end of Civil War politics, but it could well be the end of the Civil War parties if they press the austerity button.