

- [Declare Drug-War on Users and Kids](#)
- [Should the State Sanction Gay Marriage?](#)
- [Tribunal Bertiisms](#)
- [Blue Tomato - A Restaurant Review](#)
- [Strictly for Cat-Lovers](#)
- [Issue 168's Letters to the Press](#)
- [Quotes for Issue 168](#)

Declare Drug-War on Users and Kids

Last week, following some exemplary police work involving intelligence, informers and surveillance, the Irish Gardai seized a massive 32-kg haul of heroin worth €6½ million on the street, and in the process captured, virtually red-handed, one of Dublin's most notorious drug traffickers, believed to be a 35-year-old called Michael Byrne.



Congratulations all round are therefore in order. That is 32 kg that will not be injected into anyone's veins, and a drug dealer taken off the streets who will therefore not be pushing deadly chemicals for the next several years.

Surely, a major fillip for society.

Except it's not. Not by any measure whatsoever.

The whole drug-busting success is a total waste of taxpayers' money.

- Not a single heroin user will go without his/her fix.
- And for as long as that scummy individual is locked up, others will immediately step forward to take his place and keep the criminal drug supply chain humming as smoothly as it always does.

This is the utter fallacy of the much-touted war on drugs, vigorously pursued by well-meaning jurisdictions and police forces all over the world, and with equal lack of beneficial impact whatsoever. The only spin-off might be a slight rise in the price of drugs to compensate for the inconvenience of being harassed by the boys in blue, which might marginally deter a few marginal users. Surely some of the more sophisticated and richer states are having some success? Nope. Not one. Not even the much-vaunted United States.

The reason is a simple one: they are aiming at the wrong target, all of them.

It is drug-peddlers who are the common object of attack, and they have been duly - and rightly - vilified and placed beneath contempt in societies everywhere, from Capitalist America to Authoritarian Russia to

Socialist Venezuela to Communist Cuba to Islamist Iran. Thoroughly antipathetic to each other, such countries make strange bedfellows when it comes to drugs, and do little to co-operate with each other in their fights against the common enemy, the drug dealing industry.

The secondary mis-targeted target, not pursued so eagerly as the pushers, are the drug growers, those wondrously industrious and inventive developing-world farmers of such places as Afghanistan, Columbia, Laos. In the quest of feeding their families, these hardy men find ever better ways of growing poppies, coca, cannabis and other nefarious plants. This is despite the attentions of international drug-busters who want to ruin their harvests while vainly tempting them to take up less lucrative crops.

You have to marvel at how stone-age Afghan tillers of the soil, in a desperately poor, war-torn, gun-happy, terrorist-ridden country, are nevertheless by far the world's foremost producers of heroin-grade opium-poppies.

Indeed, according to the UN and the CIA, those rugged Afghans currently meet over 90% of the world's demand for heroin and other opiates.



I can think of no other single country that produces - and, don't forget, also exports - 90% of the world's anything, let alone a land-locked nation almost devoid of infrastructure and beset with every kind of problem known to mankind, whose people sport an average annual GDP of barely \$2 a day.

The growers and the the pushers are the wrong targets for enforcement because they are not the source of the world's drug problem.

That dubious honour belongs of course to the customers. For it is they, and they alone, who create the demand and provide the money, without which there would be no drugs industry, criminal or otherwise.

There is only one way to stop or suppress the drugs industry, and that is to mount relentless,

merciless pressure on drug users themselves. So long as they are prepared to continue buying, no amount of napalming of crops or putting traffickers under lock and key is going to halt the production and trade. New farmers and new traffickers will spring up to meet the demand while welcoming the (temporary) reduction in competition.

If drugs are to remain illegal, any drive against users needs to make two distinctly different attacks.

- Firstly, users themselves need to be ***hunted down*** in their thousands and punished. With the right will, this would be relatively easy on a one-by-one basis, although the vast numbers involved would put huge strain on judicial systems everywhere.

Moreover, it would soon become supremely unpopular, because vast numbers of users are not so easily vilified as handfuls of dealers. Drug-takers are regularly portrayed as “*victims*”, “*addicts*”, “*prostitutes*”. Or else they are pillars of society, or celebrities (of movies, TV, music, modelling, even sport), or just ordinary, regular, tax-paying, law-abiding guys and gals - not to say, voters - enjoying a night out or a private dinner party.

A concerted crackdown will quickly look like bullying and overkill and will particularly upset influential people who are caught or whose offspring are. And without robust leadership from politicians

who don't mind losing their seats as a result, it could quickly become as desultory as random breath-testing often is, where ambushes of pubs, clubs and restaurants at closing time are assiduously side-stepped, as are blackspots where the drink-drive accidents actually happen.

Nevertheless, such a crackdown would at once start cutting demand and thus, in turn, production and trafficking, a feat which no other “*war on drugs*” has come close to achieving. It would immediately criminalise thousands and cause uproar among the people (ie voters), as they see their friends and relations carted off by the law.

- The second approach should aim to cut people's *desire* for drugs in the first place. Certainly, widespread TV advertising about the dangers would help, just as ads about the horrific effects of alcohol-fuelled car-accidents help to reduce drink-driving.

But a wholesale change in the drug-taking culture will not happen unless it targets people when they are so young they are only beginning to form their own views of the world. Just as is beginning to happen over things such as global warming, nature conservation and bad driving, that means starting anti-drugs education at primary school, if not kindergarten level. And keeping it going, relentlessly, throughout children's educational process, so that when they hit the adult road, drug-taking seems as

ridiculous to them as driving without a seat-belt or leaving all the lights on.

Such social brainwashing of the very young and upwards has over millennia proven to yield huge dividends throughout a person's life, whether for good or ill.

- Indoctrinating generations of Ireland's kids in the Catholic Catechism is a case in point, leading to the ludicrous situation that Éamon de Valera, the then leader, felt obliged to let the Vatican view the already heavily Catholicised Irish Constitution before promulgating it in 1937. It is only in the past couple of decades that the Catholic stranglehold on perceived morality in Ireland has been eased.

Other examples include

- instilling a huge sense of personal knowledge and pride in one's own nation, history and - dare I say it - race, a concept that helped create and fuel countless empires over the centuries, for better or for worse. “Rule Britannia” and all that.
- Or, witness the tribal loyalties and hatreds, systematically inculcated from the cradle, that lead to conflicts such as
 - the 1994 Rwandan genocide of Tutsis by Hutu, or
 - Northern Ireland's 30-year war between Unionists and Nationalists, or
 - the current violence pitting Kikuyu against Luo in Kenya.
- To this day, innumerable madrassas across the world (heavily funded by

Saudi Arabia) teach Muslim children the wickedness of Jew-pigs and the virtues of suicide-homicide. So whole generations are now growing up with such notions hard-wired into their brains, and hot for jihad.

So it's a long-proven formula. Get 'em young. Or, as the Jesuits used to say “*Give me a child of seven, and I will show you the man*” (meaning “*I will turn him into the man I think he should be, whether you like it or not*”).

Brainwashing kids with anti-drug ideas will thus certainly succeed in reducing the number of adults with a yen to snort or inject. But though not especially expensive, it is unglamorous, difficult to implement in a widespread manner, pretty boring and will take twenty years to yield results. Compared to the fun of routing out dealers and poisoning poppy fields, it provides few kudos for politicians and law-enforcers charged with tackling society's drug problems.

Yet no battle against drugs can ever be ultimately successful until it confronts the true culprits, ie those who imbue the stuff, both

- today in fact (ie the adults) and
- tomorrow in all likelihood (children).

For both groups of citizens, the solution is the same: to conquer and bend that most powerful of mankind's attributes - the attitude of the human mind.

This means declaring drug-war on both users and kids.

- But will any politician ever dare court the unpopularity that will inevitably follow when current users start getting seriously harassed?

Nevertheless, society everywhere should recognize that efforts over the past several decades have been no more than a money-wasting sham, and should simply refuse to countenance their continuance.

There is of course another alternative, even more radical yet by comparison cheap and easy. Drugs could simply be legalised, decriminalised, regulated and taxed. They could be treated no differently than those two other dangerous drugs tobacco and alcohol.

But that's an argument for another day.

Should the State Sanction Gay Marriage?

Every Monday, the (subscription-only) Irish Times hosts what it calls a Head2Head debate, where two antagonists set out their respective cases over a selected, topical question. Readers are then invited to go online to add comments and vote. Recent subjects have included:

- Is aid channelled through African governments a waste of money?
- Are the tribunals good value for money? (see also Tribunal Bertiisms below)
- Will 2008 be a bad year for the Irish economy?
- Should Christmas be abolished?
- Are men victims of domestic violence to the same extent as women?
- Should we be concerned about online gambling?

A couple of weeks ago, I was contacted out of the blue by the newspaper asking whether I would like to contribute to the **NO** side of the question, "Should the State sanction gay marriage?". This was prompted by my post last November, "Recognizing Non-Marital Unions", which an Irish Times editor had spotted. So I trimmed it down by half, and sent it in.

The **YES** part was written by Eloise McInerney of LGBT Noise, which is a recently formed pro-gay-marriage group, and in my view she argued her case rather well.

I have transcribed the debate here, along with the (furious) letters and some 300 comments it provoked and my responses to some of them. I also took part in a 24-minute radio debate that you can listen to or download as an MP3.

The final poll gave 73% to Ms McInerney and 27% to me. A resounding, well-earned defeat for my own non-PC side of the argument. But you have to think about the kind of people who would be motivated to vote online on such a subject. I suspect that many of my supporters couldn't be bothered. That's my story anyway.

Tribunal Bertiisms

Non-Irish readers may not be aware of the many ways in which Ireland's current Taoiseach (prime minister), Bertie Ahern, brings joy and hilarity to the nation. The acolyte of an illustrious predecessor, Charlie Haughey, renowned for systematically plundering the state coffers over many decades, he has spent the past few years dodging and weaving to avoid the ministrations of a Tribunal he himself set up

to investigate corruption in the building planning process. Haughey, the master, famously described Bertie as "*the most skilful, the most devious, the most cunning of them all*". He is having to use all of these talents, and a few more, to explain how he mysteriously obtained large sums of money when - according to himself - he was a penniless, separated, homeless, senior minister in the 1990s, without even a bank account.

A master of the turn of phrase, relish these recent contributions in relation to the Tribunal.

Quote: "*There's nothing in the law or the constitution that says I have to have a bank account. Some people dye their hair yellow or put rings in their noses, I decided I wasn't going to open an account. Put it the other way round - there was no reason that I should.*"

It was, apparently, perfectly "*normal*" that, whilst "*friends*" were giving him large sums of money when he was Minister of Labour in the late 1980s and later Minister of Finance, he had no bank account for six years and dealt solely in (untraceable) cash.

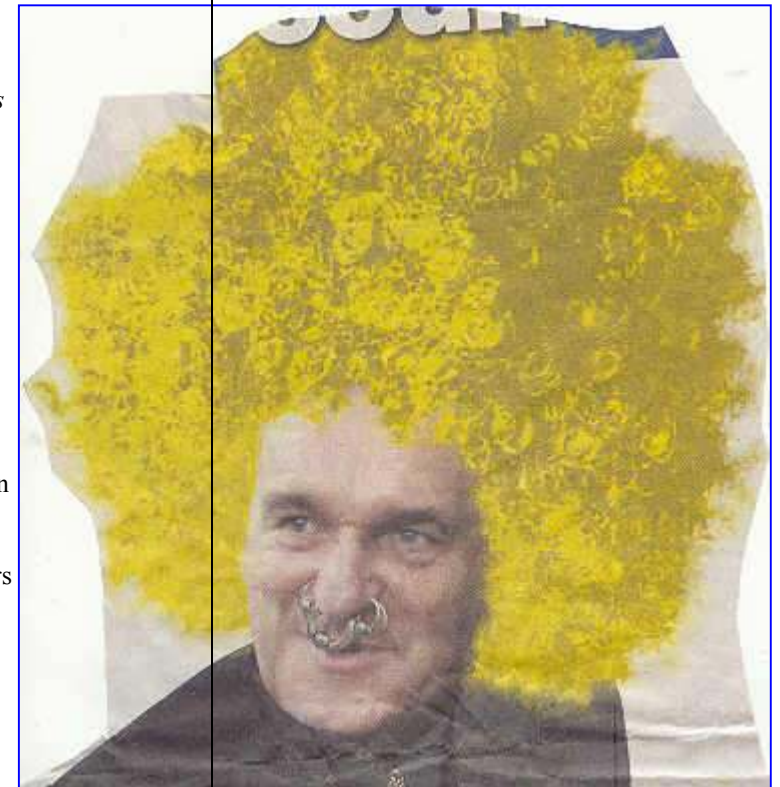
Back in those halcyon days, being a bankaccountless Finance Minister was, it would seem, no different from sporting yellow hair and a few nose rings.

Quote: "*Be Jesus, I'm some fella.*"

Bertie responds to a suggestion that the origin of a particular bank lodgement was other than pure.

Quote: "*The sun could crash into the moon but, I mean, it didn't happen.*"

What "*didn't happen*" was that he had received a gift of IR£22,500 on a particular date, which was earlier than the date he had previously testified he had received it.



Quote: "*Now, if years later Mr O'Connor wants to disown me and he doesn't know me well that's his bloody business.*"

Bertie, on being told that the - by his account - "close, personal friend" Padraic O'Connor who had given him a personal gift of IR£5,000, had in fact testified that he was not a friend of Bertie's at all and the money was for the party not the Minister.

Quote: "But that is really only playing smoke and daggers with it."

This is, apparently, a killer argument in favour of awarding himself a €38,000 (15.6%) pay rise, which makes him the highest paid government chief in the OECD - ahead of George Bush, Gordon Brown, Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy, Stephen Harper.

Typically, nobody knows what "smoke and daggers" is supposed to mean; not even Bertie.

Here are a few more classics, but I can't figure out or remember what they refer to

Quotes:

"Throwing white elephants and red herrings at each other."

"I never condemn wrongdoing in any area."

"I'm not answering what I got for my Holy Communion money, my Confirmation money, what I got for my birthday, what I got for anything else. I'm not into that."

I will add to these gems as more Bertisms get uttered. I'm looking forward to a fresh crop when he is to be hauled back to testify before the Tribunal in February.

Blue Tomato - A Restaurant Review

From time, I will write a brief review of a restaurant I've visited.

In the Pest part of Budapest, Hungary, close to the eastern bank of the Danube you can find the Blue Tomato, about a hundred metres behind the magnificent Vigzin haz, or Comedy Theatre. It has a menu pages long, in English as well as Hungarian, but is outstanding for just a few items. Having



been there several times over the last couple of years and sampled much of the fare, I can attest that you should just stick to these three dishes - preferably on a bitter winter's day.

- Bean soup (€3½), a to-die-for broth, thick with smoked knuckle of pork and luscious beans.
- Their goulash (also €3½), a Hungarian soup/casserole specialty of beef, tomatoes and paprika, is seldom bettered

in any other restaurant, and then there's their

- spicy chicken wings (€6), of extraordinary succulence in a batter you'd sell your grandmother for, and a huge platter of them.

Wash this down with plenty of cold beer (€3.75 per pint) and/or Hungarian wines (€10-15 a bottle).

The Blue Tomato is on Pannónia utca 3-7, District 13, phone +3-6-2-339.8099. If you have a GPS, go to Latitude 47°30'49.22"N by Longitude 19° 3'7.18"E.

The staff are cheerful and all speak reasonable English, but though there's a website, it's largely in Hungarian. But you'll find much of the menu contents there.

My overall score as a percentage? - 80%

Strictly for Cat-Lovers

The Columbian lady, Anna Julia Torres in this video-clip, had found a lion cub in a forest, who was on his last legs. She took the little fellow home, named him Jupiter and nursed him back to good health. Later when Jupiter grew too big, she found a good home for him at a zoo. Then after a while she went to visit him. Watch the reaction of the king of the jungle when he sees his favourite lady....

VIDEO OF LION HUGGING THE LADY

Issue 168's Letters to the Press

Here are my Letters statistics for the past two years.

	2004	2007	2008 (so far)
Letters Submitted	75	66	3
Letters Published	24	17	2
Success Rate	32%	26%	67%

So no trends there, then.

In the seven long weeks since the last issue of this blog, I've submitted a further half-dozen letters, but only two of them made it into print, which is roughly in line with the past couple of years.

- Pay Increase for State CEOs **P!**
- to the Irish Times
Madam, - So, chief executives of commercial State bodies are to get "significant increases" because a consultant says their pay is 14 to 20 per cent behind the average in the private sector (Salary rises approved for heads of commercial State firms, January 9th).

But this observation is valueless unless accompanied by statistics showing that CEOs are fleeing state enterprises to join private sector. They are not, and I would suspect that is simply because in their present jobs they are cosily protected from the rigours of shareholder ruthlessness. Fourteen to 20 per cent sounds like a reasonable trade-off to me.
- Yours etc,

- Courage Misplaced **P!**
- to the Sunday Times
Sir, - It is not the Labour party that requires the "courage" to table a private members' bill

in favour of abortions, so much as the unborn children who need the courage to face the resultant abortions. (Courage on abortion, Comment, January 6th, p1.16 - *not available online*). - Yours etc,

- Fluoridation and Water Pollution
- to the Irish Times
Madam, - My elderly dentist father, now retired but an international pioneer of fluoridation in his time, remarked when he read Mary Hilary's letter moaning about fluoridation, "bloody dentists blamed for ruining the environment; bloody fluoromans trying to ruin kids' teeth" (Letters, January 3rd). That about sums it up. - Yours etc,
 - Why Cuba Beats Caredoc
- to the Irish Times
Madam, - Dervla Murphy describes how the efficient Cuban medical system thankfully saved her from dying of hyperexia (heat stroke), but concludes with the appalling cry "Viva Fidel!" (Letters, December 20th).
- If she is so fond of the Communist prison-state and a dictator whose regime has killed over 73,000 of his countrymen, perhaps she should take up residence in Cuba. - Yours etc,
- Aid and Corruption in Africa
- to the Irish Times
Madam, - It is understandable that Joe Manning, as Sierra Leone's Honorary Consul to Ireland, should want the

flow of Irish taxpayers' aid-money to continue to flow into the coffers of the governments of Sierra Leone and elsewhere (Letters, December 18th).

However, he speaks in contradiction.

"The main cause of poverty in Africa is bad government and we cannot cure this by ignoring it or working around it," he writes. Setting aside for the moment the massive role of Western trade protectionism in perpetuating developing-world poverty, his answer that bad governments will somehow improve if you give them (Irish aid) money makes no sense whatsoever.

Aid should be directed at those who need it, and that does not include "bad governments". That was the point of David Adams' article, as well as earlier letters by GOAL's John O'Shea.

As for bad governance, this is best addressed by removing the bad governors and fostering democracy. But, of course, very few care sufficiently about bad governance and the misery it causes to encourage such a solution. - Yours etc,

- That Missing Canoeist
- to the Irish Times
Madam, - Everyone has been wondering where John Darwin, the canoeist missing from Hartlepool, has been hiding out for the past five years (World and Breaking News, December 6th).

The authorities needed look no farther than westward across the water. As

photographs makes abundantly clear, he merely changed his name to Dermot Ahern and masqueraded as Ireland's foreign minister. That probably also explains the Panama connection. - Yours etc,



John Darwin
Canoeist

Dermot Ahern
Foreign Minister

Quotes for Issue 168

----- HOLY LAND -----

Quote: "I was shocked and saddened at the sight of the wall. It is with bridges, not walls, that you build peace."

Cardinal Seán Brady after a visit to the Holy Land.

In this instance he is wrong: that infamous wall has reduced suicide bomb attacks on Israelis by 95%, which is a significant advance in peace for those non-dead Jews.

----- PAKISTAN -----

Quote: "My mother always said: 'Democracy is the best revenge'."

Bilawal Zardari, 19-year-old bereaved son and political heir of assassinated Benazir Bhutto

Quote: "Benazir Bhutto was also my sister, and I will be with you to take the revenge for her death. Don't feel alone. I am with you. We will take the revenge on the rulers."

Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, long term opponent and bitter enemy of Ms Bhutto, his eyes at times welling up with (crocodile?) tears.

They were both Prime Minister twice, both dismissed, both times for corruption.

----- I R A N -----

Quote: "It was in fact a declaration of surrender ... It was a positive action by the U.S. administration to change their attitude and it was a correct move."

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on America's latest intelligence report which says Iran ceased developing a nuclear weapon in 2003 (presumably in fright at what happened to Saddam)

----- S W E D E N -----

Quote: "To welcome changes and to let the mix of cultures and experiences enrich our lives and our society is the only road ahead."

The king of Sweden, Carl Gustaf, in his Christmas address to his subjects.

But lives can only be enriched by a mix of cultures if the cultures being added to the mixture are richer than what's already there, and that is by no means a given

----- K E N Y A -----

Quote: "While freedom of worship will be upheld ... the Council of Islamic leaders shall be permitted to have an oversight role to monitor the activities of ALL other religions and any applications for religious activities and institutions will require their approval. They shall have the right to deny approval to cults and other evil practices."

Article (v) a) of a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in Kenya on 29th August 2007,

between Raila Odinga and the National Muslim Leaders Forum.

In exchange for the NMLF's support for his presidential campaign, Mr Odinga undertook if elected to introduce Sharia law and other Islamic restrictions to Muslim-majority areas of Kenya (Muslims form 10% of Kenya's total population).

It turns out that Barak Hussein Obama, son of a Luo Muslim, a one time Madrassa student, yet a Christian, albeit of the nutcase neo-racist "Trinity United Church of Christ", and currently a leading contender for the US Democrats' presidential nomination, is a "close friend" of fellow-Luo Mr Odinga.

Curiouser and curiouser.

Is his eagerness to pull American troops out of the Middle East related? Or just standard Democrat boilerplate surrender-monkeying?

----- I R E L A N D -----

Quote: "We need to be as comfortable with words like 'prosperity' and 'economic opportunity' as we are with 'equality' and 'independence'."

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams acknowledges reality following his party's disastrous performance in Ireland's May 2007 general election.

----- R U G B Y -----

Quote: "Happy New Year everyone and congratulations to the Kiwis, who by my calculations celebrated the start of 2008 a

full twelve hours before we South Africans did. It must be a nice feeling for New Zealanders to be first at something for a change."

South African rugby pundit Gavin Rich is catty about having won the 2007 World Cup, whereas favourites New Zealand were ejected at the quarter-finals

Of course, now that in the interests of promoting racism in South Africa, a new coach has been appointed not because he is the best candidate



but because he is black, it is unlikely South Africa will win the next World Cup in 2011.

When it comes to colour-blindness in rugby, New Zealand leads the field

Hattip: Graham in Perth

----- D E V I L -----

Quote: "It's been a black eye for our town, a stigma ... We're good Christian people."

Scott Walker, the mayor of Reeves, Louisiana, announcing that the town will be allowed to change its telephone prefix from 666.

Residents say that the 666, associated in Christianity with the Devil, because of the Bible's Book of Revelation 13:18 where it is referred to as the "number of the beast", has harmed Reeves' reputation.

You should know that fear of the number 666 is, of course, known as hexakosioihexekontahehexaphobia.

----- S E X E S -----

Quote: "Would I go topless like Vladimir Putin? Why not? Touch my muscle(s)."

Venezuela's madcap president Hugo Chavez, flirts with supermodel Naomi Campbell

Quote: "Ladies, the odds are good, but the goods are odd."

A tour guide, commenting on the high male-to-female ratio in Alaska