

A POLITICAL UPDATE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

MAY 2009

At present we are in election mode for the European elections on June 4th. The European Elections are much different from local government elections. Each political party only has one candidate running in the six counties, our candidate is Bairbre De Brun and as we are the only party to have representatives in the 32 counties we also have a candidate in the 26 counties and that is Dublin woman Mary Lou Mc Donald. At the last European Elections 4 years ago both Bairbre and Mary Lou were our candidates and both were elected so we are hoping that they will be successful this time also. The European Parliament is based in Brussels so as you can imagine they spend a lot of time over there and it is a different set up compared to here due to the fact that all parts of Europe are represented and that means all different languages are spoken. Each representative wearing earphones that has an interpreter converting the proceedings to whatever language you speak addresses that problem. Bairbre De Brun is lucky as she is fluent in 5 languages. The downside of being a European representative is that you have to spend a lot of time away from your family and there is a lot of travelling backwards and forwards to Brussels. I will keep you informed of any developments.

The other thing that is at the front of everyone's mind is a court case that was to take place this week in Belfast. To give you the background to the case it involved a murder of a quiet inoffensive green grocer from Belfast that happened in September 2007. His name was Harry Holland who was 65 years of age, a long standing republican from a staunchly republican family. He was highly thought of by the community he served and had a friendly and positive attitude. He was a quiet unassuming character who loved to sing while working in his small shop. He was always cheerful and willing to have a chat with his customers about any topic they wished to speak about. He was a married man and the father of four daughters who loved their daddy enormously.

On the night of his murder he had been at a quiz in the local Irish Bar and was returning home when he spotted four youths, two girls and two boys who ages ranged from 15 years old to 17 years old trying to steal his delivery truck. As he approached them innocently he quickly realised that they were under the influence of drugs or drink or both as their behaviour and language was very aggressive. They were screaming abuse at him as he asked them to go away and leave him alone as he was a pensioner. Neighbours in the street heard the noise and one of them went to assist Harry and they were going to attack him to. An altercation took place and a 17-year-old stabbed Harry several times in the head with

an 8-inch screwdriver and they all ran off. An ambulance was called and Harry was taken to Hospital but sadly died shortly after. His wife and children and large extended family were devastated and were hoping that these youths were caught and imprisoned for their crime.

The four youths were caught quite quickly and while in custody gave information on each other. They were charged with murder and the trial was to start on Monday 4th May, the family were anxious and expecting justice to be done for Harry but behind the scenes lawyers were negotiating a deal and advised the 17year old to plead guilty to murder and the younger two a boy and a girl to plead guilty to an affray. The Judge accepted their plea and they will be sentenced in June. This decision angered the family as proper justice seemed to be averted and instead of all of them being charged with murder only one was and the lesser charge applied to the others. The people are horrified at this decision as the terms they will serve in prison will be short and as we still have not had the transfer of the Policing and Justice powers from the British Government we cannot change the legislation. I will keep you informed to the court's decision.

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