



Bernadette McAliskey: upset to have her voice replaced by subtitles on a BBC programme.

Do not adjust your sets

Bernadette McAliskey was not the only person misled by Trevor Phillips and the producers of BBC2's Nation programme shown on September 1.

Misled also were members of ethnic minorities and other nations in this supposedly "united kingdom" who were told they would be getting a serious and committed "multi-cultural programme", an all too rare opportunity for their voices to be heard. Instead what they got was tokenism in which an audience was used as a cheap programme "fill-in" for the best part of an hour by the BBC.

Michael Grade was even more accurate than he knew. It appears that nation shall not speak unto nation, but rather be sub-titled.

JOE MURPHY

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A 'shameful attack'

One can only guess at the reasons behind the divisive letter of Eoin O'Connor (The Irish Post, August 29) attacking Irish trade unionists seeking equal rights within NALGO, while at the same time trying to smear the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG).

In whose interests was his letter? NALGO are big enough to speak for themselves without the need for surrogate letters whose main function seems to be distortion and cheap smears. He even fails to mention that the picket was organised by the NALGO Workers' group.

He proceeds to distort the main reason for the picket, which was stated in The Irish Post report, and that it was about equal rights and representation as a self-organised group within NALGO.

To attack, under the guise of supposed concern for Irish solidarity, Irish workers within NALGO seeking self-organisation is wrong. Irish self-organisation is not compatible with showing solidarity with the Irish people or showing support for other Irish trade union issues and it is clearly wrong to set them against each other.

Irish workers have the right to take action within their own union on issues which affect them — that is democracy at work. Irish workers have a good record of cross-union solidarity and at supporting Irish unity. Why ridicule Irish workers in Britain with the idea that "social security payments to West Belfast should be cut off while we all learn Irish"?

He later proceeds to attack and try to throw cheap smears at the IBRG. Long may the size representation and influence of the IBRG continue to worry him. His attack on the Irish voluntary sector is shameful.

The IBRG and other Irish projects of the 1980s, their workers and volunteers, pioneered many new community developments within the Irish community, luncheon clubs for Irish elderly, new Irish centres, including an Irish women's centre, new welfare and advice projects, the first national conference on mental health, conferences on education, welfare and women's conferences, a bookshop, campaigns for justice and equal rights, against racism in the media etc.

Cheap slurs cannot take away the achievements of these projects and their dedicated staff teams of workers and volunteers.

The IBRG fully supports the demand of Irish workers in Britain for self-organisation and representation within their trade unions. As new groups of Irish workers begin to organise in Birmingham and in Southwark, we should welcome such developments as giving strength to our community and to Irish people in struggle everywhere.

Respond to these needs

Congratulations to the DION sub-committee for bringing to the attention of the Republic's Minister for Labour the plight of the elderly Irish community in Britain needing welfare support (The Irish Post, September 5).

These members of our community fully deserve any help that should now be forthcoming from their home country because of the part they played in supporting the economy of their country during their "temporary" stay in Britain.

It is now imperative for the Minister to respond both positively and financially to this timely report from DION.

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Please help

I am a final year student at Trinity College, Dublin. My dissertation title is "The importance of visiting 'home' to the Irish in London and to the Irish economy".

I have compiled a straight-forward questionnaire and I need people who are Irish-born, living in London, to fill them out. These are all done on a no-name basis.

I really would appreciate replies to this letter, to the address below.

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The rapid fire Irish, that has as much to do with buntús cainte as Serbo-Croat, lights up eyes, turns heads and provides endless amusement as the Dub behind the bar strains ears to comprehend. Due credit to the man who must feel at times that he's surrounded by Donegal, John Lee has taken it in his stride, and last year he joined an Irish class in the city. Donegal won't find a firmer opponent on the turf at Croke Park. There was always going to be some Dub/Donagel banter given the circumstances, but this weekend's Sam Maguire final has seen the whole pub go football crazy!

The Squirrel's owners already have an honourable record in their association with the GAA, for they are the sponsors of Pearse Harps and barman John Salmon recently ran in the Great Scottish Run, a half marathon, for the club, raising £117 and earning himself an honorary membership of the Harps — not an easy thing to come by in these parts.

John himself, whose grandparents are from Dublin, has not been slow in giving the Donegalmen advice in where the best hiding places are if they want to avoid him and The Squirrel's other Dub, landlord John Lee, after Hill 16 celebrates another victory for the Liffeymen.

The view from the business side of the bar must have seemed like Davy Crockett's eye-view of the Alamo over recent weeks. Never has Hill 16 been so surrounded, but the Dubs, though few in number, have not been backward in coming forward.

John Lee's "Dublin for the Sam Maguire, Donegal for the holidays!" quip, plus offers to draw a map for the men from the north-

west to find Croke Park, shows that being an endangered species isn't the depressing lot you might think it is. There's a friendly offer from the Donegalmen to get him a grant from Greenpeace, because the likes of him are almost extinct in the city. John reckons, however, that there'll be plenty of Dubs in their natural habitat come Sunday.

Partner John McQuillan commits treachery and opts for Donegal. These are desperate times...

Neutrals, and they are scarce, felt that, on balance, a victory for Donegal would be of great benefit to the community in general and the GAA scene in particular. Strangely enough, one of Glasgow's more community-minded landlords didn't agree — funny, that!

To those without any direct Donegal or Dublin connection, it seems like inter-county alliances and understandings have been formed and broken with a speed and an absence of explanation that would make the Balkans row seem simple.

Some allegiances are easier to understand, though. John Salmon's mate is a Derryman who can't forgive Donegal for what they did to his team. Northern kinship counts for nothing — he's rooting for the Dubs.

Points not pints over the bar

THE Squirrel Bar in Glasgow's East End will this weekend see the climax of some of the liveliest craic any Irish pub has seen for as far back as anyone can remember.

The pub's two landlords, Glaswegian John McQuillan and Dubliner John Lee, have been making strenuous efforts to keep Irish music alive and kicking in the city's East End. Every Wednesday

This weekend, The Squirrel Bar in Glasgow will be transformed into a mini-Croke Park as GAA aficionados from both sides root for their teams in the all-Ireland football final. PHIL MAC GIOLLABHAIN sets the scene.

night sees traditional musicians playing a set and they're always ready to help any beginner who wants to try their hand or find out more, but there was more than bothrans on the agenda this week. In a soccer-daft city the "garrison game" was gently nudged aside as the topic of conversation.

Donegal is in the all-Ireland final and nothing else matters. If a family tree was something that you purchased like a suit of clothes, then most of The Squirrel's patrons obviously went to Henry Ford: "You can come from anywhere in Ireland — as long as it's Donegal". At times, usually near closing time, it's easy to forget that you aren't in Falcarragh or Gweedore.

When the regular Tuesday night game of "twenty-five" is in full flight, people are offered unfavourable psychological profiles and unflattering family histories as Gaeilge!

Surrounded

The rapid fire Irish, that has as much to do with buntús cainte as Serbo-Croat, lights up eyes, turns heads and provides endless amusement as the Dub behind the bar strains ears to comprehend. Due credit to the man who must feel at times that he's surrounded by Donegal, John Lee has taken it in his stride, and last year he joined an Irish class in the city. Donegal won't find a firmer opponent on the turf at Croke Park. There was always going to be some Dub/Donagel banter given the circumstances, but this weekend's Sam Maguire final has seen the whole pub go football crazy!

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Solidarity

Young Roisin Campbell, whose father is from Tyrone, opted for Ulster solidarity, so the men in green and yellow get her shout. If there was any real scope for an anti-Donagel alliance, The Squirrel would probably be the place to find it, but all said and done the world must look like it's coloured green and yellow to John Lee at the moment.

If victory is Dublin's, he'll be a hard man to avoid. Defeat isn't even considered.

In equally resolute mood is Hughie Boyle of traditional band Tírconnail. No prizes for guessing where this fellow hails from. It was 1961 when Hughie first set out from Dungloe with his family, finishing his schooling in Glasgow. He confidently predicts that the men from Dun na nGall will lift the Sam Maguire. He also sees the prospect in an interestingly Glasgow Irish way. "Donegal winning would be on a par with Celtic winning the European Cup".

That famous victory, which did the ceiling tendency no harm in Letter K and all points west 25 years ago, is being remembered with great fondness this year. Anniversaries are like that. No one was enough of a GAA historian to tell me when was the last time that Tír Conaill, as they say in these parts, "did the business". [They've never won it, that's why! Ed.]

Everyone from the north-west was agreed that this was a one-off for Brian McEniff's team of heroes that travel south this weekend. They're all peaking at the right



GLORY DAYS: Down captain Paddy O'Rourke wore the crown last year when his side beat Meath in the all-Ireland football final but who will be taking the Sam Maguire Cup home this Sunday?

time, I was told. It's now or never, in the fairy tale way so beloved of British soccer finals. It's when a sporting one-off like Donegal happens that you see the difference in the supporter of the underdog. Not for them the easy confidence of supporters whose team regularly grace their particular hallowed turf. There is a sense of history in many of these born-again fans who didn't know that their lads could live in such company. The Dubs, of course, will have none of it — Sam Maguire is theirs. Bloody Meath.

Refreshing

What was refreshing about stirring it up in The Squirrel was to remind yourself that in a few short weeks Glasgow will get again experience the grimness of an Old Firm Skol Cup final. In that atmosphere, football colours and pub territory can show a decidedly uglier side to this city. It's nice to see how things could be done.

No, in fairness there hasn't been controversy, except perhaps in the scramble for tickets. Even The Irish Post has not been immune from the conflict, for its photographer in Scotland, Tommy Main, was at the centre of a ticket furore over a 'fair and open ballot' held by the Pearse Harps, a club close to Tommy's heart. Guess who won a ticket? "I totally deny it was an unfair ballot. That's slander!", joked the Post's cameraman.

Tommy will find himself sitting next to fellow Dub, John Salmon, who is party to an enterprise that will outrage the faithful patrons of The Squirrel. I can exclusively reveal that the banner of The Squirrel Bar Dublin Supporters Association will proudly fly from the Hogan Stand for all Donegal to see. When you learn that Tommy is travelling to the game from Donegal in a Tír Conaill supporters' bus resplendent in a Dublin top... well, that's the sort of bravery that wins cups.

Tommy reckons that the final is unfortunately timed for the community in Glasgow, coming as it does the week before the traditional Glasgow September weekend. He reckons only 30 to 40 die-hards with tickets will make

the trip. Had it been a week later, he reckons it could have been hundreds.

However many eventually make it to Dublin — and to the match! — they'll be watching a rare breed in any event — no Diego Primadonnas, no squabbling over personal terms and agent's fees. These guys are for real, what you see is what you get.

The Donegal supporters should be rightly proud whatever the result, but the pub pundits tell me they've a mountain to climb. For although they're a force to be reckoned with in their own Ulster backyard, the atmosphere of an all-Ireland final on Dublin's home turf is another ball game.

But, if there's any happy endings going begging, I'd love to see it fielded towards Errigal.

As someone who has watched tiny heroes from Termon to Teelin fight it out like subbuteo-sized John Waynes, I know that the northern county's big lads won't be lacking guts or heart for the jersey. Tommy Main's own sawn-off little battlers, the Pearse Harps under-12s, demonstrate that this man could show C.J. a thing or two about manoeuvring.

The team's strip is, by popular demand of the wee men, the green and yellow of Donegal, as is their tracksuit. The second strip, well, it's a kind of blue colour...

No real hostility

Seriously though, in a city of sometimes ugly sporting rivalry, even the most malicious commentator could find no real hostility of which this game could be a metaphor. This isn't Gael versus Pale, jackeen versus gombeen, or culehich against gurrier.

The visionary patriarchs of the GAA wanted to create a pride in being Irish through the playing of Irish games, to re-create a national culture that would lead to a cultural nationalism. Constructed by minds that only knew Victorian west Britain and remembered The Famine, this was thinking big.

By the time that thousands of men, carrying hurling sticks at the slope, accompanied Parnell's coffin, the foundations of a meaningful national rebirth had already been achieved. It was only time before this nation on the sportsfield would make its presence felt as a nation in the arena of kings and states.

The 32 counties of banter and refereed battle is proof that we are a nation, not a notion, and that our territoriality takes in Falcarragh, Finaghy and Finglas. Now that is worth cheering about.



TRUE BLUE: John Lee, landlord of The Squirrel Bar and an ardent Dublin supporter.