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EGO... TUV's Allister

SICK OF ELECTION POSTERS ALREADY

YOU know it's election time again as politicians' pictures haunt us along every roadside.

Have you noticed that, even though politicians on all sides continually argue they've no power over the flying of flags, not one flag seems to appear on a lamp post during election time?

The battle between the parties is between who can get highest up the lamp post — and from the height of their posters in north Belfast, Sinn Féin must have liberated a troop of Republican chimps from the zoo.

Someone once said politics is showbusiness for ugly people, and the hack of some of the politicians on display bears this out.

Not that I'm an oil painting myself, but sweet Jaysus, I wish they didn't try and smile. There's something wrong when they try to look happy.

It doesn't matter if it's Caral Ni Chuilin's coquettish smirk or champagne socialist Mairtin O Muilleoir showing off his private dental work, it just doesn't look right.

Irrespective of the rictus smiles, the prize for weirdest election posters this time round definitely goes to the TUV and its esteemed leader.

Every TUV candidate has Jim Allister lurking in the background of their picture like some malevolent spirit staring over their shoulder.

Jim has obviously decided that they only stand a chance in the election if the great man himself makes an appearance.

Defeat rodents with courage and Aero bars

I WAS out for a walk with the family along the Lagan Tow Path last Sunday when my six-year-old daughter pointed at what she said was a mouse on the riverbank.

We all went over to have a closer look at the 'mouse' only to discover it was a rat the size of a small cat.

I jumped when someone screamed — and was mortified to discover the scream had come from me.

My eight-year-old son tried to comfort me, saying it was only Roland Rat.

I could tell from his eyes that he would never view me in the same way again.

Gone was the fearless Dad he'd come to rely upon, replaced by a quivering wreck.

You see, I don't like rats, or mice — in fact, I hate the bastards.

It's not the teeth or tails, it's their unsanitary ways.

If you've read this column for a while you'll know I've always been, let's say, fastidious about cleanliness.

I'm not OCD, I just like things clean, and the idea of dirty rodents fills me with absolute horror.

A few years back, I came close to leaving home when two mice took up residence in our attic.

Every night I lay awake, hearing their little feet scurrying around above my bedroom.

I blame my nature-loving wife for their arrival, who had taken to feeding every bird in north Belfast from a bird table right beside the back door.

Bird feed close to a house is like a flashing fluorescent

vacancy sign to any passing members of the rodent community.

I immediately employed the services of a top-notch pest expert — who looked like a cross between Bear Grylls and Crocodile Dundee.

After a Sherlock Holmes inspection of my property, he solemnly informed me that my unwelcome guests were probably third or fourth generation residents.

He explained that the first generation would have been very timid and quiet, the second generation

had become habituated to living in my home — and the third viewed me as living in their home!

How true this became when eating breakfast one morning, a mouse casually

walked through the door, looked up at me nonchalantly and very slowly walked out of sight behind the fridge.

'Mice were mocking me'

It was obvious they were mocking me and this was now a battle to the end.

Stupidly, I had made the mistake of doing some research online — and learnt to my horror of their prodigious breeding abilities.

I knew if I didn't eliminate them soon, an infestation of biblical proportions was sure to follow.

However, all efforts to kill them failed. They seemed to

positively thrive on poison. I tried traps with cheese, which didn't work.

I tried ham, only to find my mice were vegetarians.

I wasn't sleeping and had taken to walking around the house with a hammer in my pocket in case one of them made another appearance.

Every night I would listen to their antics in the attic — it began to sound as if they were wearing tap shoes, having seen Riverdance.

The wife was beginning to worry I would need some form of psychological intervention when a friend told me mice loved chocolate.

The fact this information came from a good 'friend' who knew how badly I was taking the situa-

tion meant, in typical Belfast fashion, that there was the possibility he was in fact seizing the opportunity to add to my misery.

Still, I was out of ideas and in despair and embarrassment, I laced two traps with the best Mr Cadbury had to offer, promising myself I'd deny to the point of death ever having done so.

And can you believe it? Within a week, my unwelcome guests had been despatched to mouse heaven.

Their downfall had indeed been a sweet tooth — in that, at least, I shared something with them.

Since then I've filled every hole in every wall, I've bought a device online which supposedly repels rodents by sending an electric pulse through the wiring of the house and I've forced Bill Oddie (aka the wife) to move her bird table up the garden.

In short, apart from digging a moat, I've done all any human can to keep the furry ones out.

So I have genuine sympathy for the KFC outlet on Belfast's

Shaftsbury Square which was emptied of customers at the weekend, when what looked like the rat from the Tow Path appeared looking for some of Colonel Sanders' famous finger-licking chicken.

My advice to the management is traps loaded with crumbly Aero — that and arm every member of staff with a hammer for their pockets.



1916 PARTY... centenary

A MISSED CHANCE TO RISING & SHINE

ANNIVERSARIES don't get much bigger than a centenary, so it wasn't surprising the Republic's government went all out to celebrate 1916.

From the scale of the parade in Dublin, it looked like pretty much every armed member of their armed forces was there.

Even the Irish Air Force made an appearance, all six of them.

The parade offered Loyalists a one-off opportunity to invade the Republic and take back the 26 counties, but they were much too busy huffing.

The decision of Arlene Foster to refuse an invitation looked all the more churlish when you consider the British Government had no difficulty in accepting theirs.

Worse was to come when bumbling Alliance leader David Ford said he wouldn't attend, linking the commemoration to present-day dissidents.

In doing so, he gave credence to a link that both the Irish Republic and Sinn Féin have long refuted, and no doubt pleased dissident ranks.

To round off the infantile histrionics, the DUP contingent in Belfast City Council reneged on a cross-party decision to invite the Irish President to a dinner by refusing to attend.

Compare this behaviour with that of the Queen who laid a wreath in Dublin's Garden of Remembrance in 2011 for all who died during the rebellion and you can see the difference between real reconciliation and what passes for it in Northern Ireland.

No sympathy for 'player' McCollum

WHEN news broke that coke courier Michaela McCollum was to be released from jail in Peru, I presumed she was ailing, would be whisked to a local hospital, with photographs showing an emaciated waif on life support.

How wrong was I? A mere 72 hours after release, an effervescent Michaela, resplendent with newly-dyed blonde hair, appeared before RTE cameras to be interviewed for a docu-

mentary. When McCollum and her pal Melissa Reid were caught attempting to smuggle cocaine worth £1.5million, I never believed for a moment her claim she was a simple lass coerced into crime.

She both looked and acted like a good-time girl who had taken a chance on some easy money — when arrested, it was Reid who looked the more distressed of the two.

Her hair in a tight bun and sporting a fashionable black jacket, McCollum displayed lit-

tle emotion when paraded before the world's media by the Peruvian police.

She even laughed during questioning — she may have been only 20 years old but she was clearly hardened beyond her years.

Now we're asked to believe she has turned over a new leaf and wants nothing more than to be an ambassador against drugs.

She tells us she's "not a bad person" and was punished for what she described

as a "moment of madness". I wonder which moment she's talking about. The moment she was approached by the drug traffickers? The moment she collected her tickets for Peru? Or the moment she stuffed £1.5million worth of cocaine into her luggage?

The truth is that McCollum is a 'player' — she knew exactly what she was doing when she committed the crime and has coldly calculated her escape from the moment of her capture.

