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UNHAPPY... McKeown

CATHOLIC CHURCH STUCK IN THE PAST

AS you know, I'm taking little interest in our election, which could be called the five-year cull of local idiots.

Many were surprised when the SDLP announced in its manifesto that it was now in favour of integrated education — and none more so than leading Catholic clerics.

Donal McKeown, the Bishop of Derry and Chair of the NI Commission for Catholic Education, said the new SDLP leader Colum Eastwood hadn't mentioned the policy shift during an earlier meeting.

Imagine that — the leader of a major nationalist party having the temerity to change policy without first informing the bishops! I mean, what are politicians at?

The answer is that the days when Catholic politicians had to go cap-in-hand to have all social policy decisions rubber-stamped by bishops are now long gone.

An example of how the Catholic church is trapped in a deluded bubble came with a pastoral letter they sent out to the faithful ahead of this election.

One topic raised was equal marriage rights, which, the laity were quickly reminded, had recently been rejected by Pope Francis.

Such rights have been passed in the South — and have only been blocked by repeated Petitions of Concern to the Stormont Assembly.

Putting his foot, Sinn and rest of leg in his mouth

I CALL Gerry Adams the Great Leader as the North Koreans have already copyrighted the title Glorious Leader.

And thank God our Great Leader said what he said. It's about time somebody spoke out on the secret we all know but never mention — yes, nationalists are officially the most oppressed people ever.

Sure I remember well as a boy of ten when my Protestant master came and took me away.

He changed my name from O'Cathain to O'Kane and branded me with a national insurance number before setting me picking cotton in Bog Meadows in West Belfast.

Alright, I know half of you are laughing and the other half scratching your heads thinking, 'He's got a point — no, really, he's got a point.'

On first hearing of the Great Leader's latest weird tweet on Sunday night, where he used the 'N-word', I immediately thought to myself he's either been hacked or has suffered a mild stroke.

But no, Adams had been relaxing at home watching the Quentin Tarantino film Django Unchained, when he'd suddenly become so swept up identifying with the black hero that he decided he could use the same language as him.

And there was his mistake — you see, the 'N-word' is out of limits for pasty-faced white boys such as the Great Leader. For let's be honest, Adams looks much more like a

slave owner than a slave. Monday morning saw the internet ablaze with criticism of the tweet, and it was clear the Great Leader was in trouble.

A Sinn Fein press conference was hurriedly called and while Adams apologised for his use of the 'N-word', he went on to try and put that mistake into a geopolitical-historical context.

But in so doing, he made an even bigger arse of himself.

According to the Great Leader, nationalists have suffered more than US blacks, been more discriminated against than Indian untouchables and robbed of more land than Australian aborigines.

In short, the Great Leader sees himself as the spiritual embodiment of Martin Luther King and Gandhi. All this in the very teeth of an election — somewhere, even Basil McCrea was cringing.

I'm refusing to jump on to the bandwagon and accuse the

Great Leader of racism — what I am saying is that he needs constant supervision when around social media.

And I'd guess this latest wacky tweet won't turn up in the next edition of the Great Leader's little book of tweets.

If Adams was left feeling a bit silly after trying to draw parallels between nationalists and black people in the US, he can take comfort from the fact that his good friend Ken Livingstone made an even worse comparison.

Livingstone attempted to defend the indefensible comments of Labour MP Naz Shah by arguing that Hitler had in fact been a Zionist, as he'd once agreed European Jews should be transported to Israel.

I'm not going to give you a history lesson on just how wrong that argument is — I'll merely remind you that six million Jews were slaughtered by Hitler and leave

you to look up the skewed historical rationale of Livingstone's scurrilous argument yourself.

And I do recognise that much of the accusations of anti-Semitism within Labour have more to do with internal party politics than actual anti-Semitism.

That the Tories are taking the moral high ground on the issue is nothing short of obscene when one looks back to how that party has historically viewed Jews.

I hope that the crass comments of a few individuals will not be used to stymie criticism of the Israeli state.

There is no connection between criticising the policies of the Israeli government and being anti-Jewish.

It should be remembered that much of the most vociferous criticism of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu comes from Jews within Israel. As someone who has followed the sad history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I was struck when Israel's new ambassador to the UK, Mark Regev, appeared on TV commenting about Livingstone.

Regev's previous position had him in charge of damage control when things with the Israeli military went badly wrong.

He once commented during one of his frequent international media appearances: "Usually, when you see me, it's bad news."

One can but wonder why Israel has decided to send him as ambassador to London at this time.

Is exceptionally bad news about to break and could that news involve Iran in some way?



MUSICIAN... Donohue

SHOWING REST OF US HOW IT'S DONE

THAT'S the 1916 commemorations over for another 100 years and thankfully everything passed off peacefully.

Sadly, there was little evidence of reconciliation or rapprochement north of the border. But in Cavan, two men showed how adults deal with such events.

Jim Mills, the secretary of an Orange Lodge band, held out an olive branch by joining local traditional musician Martin Donohue in an event marking the Easter Rising. Jim and Martin have been collaborating musically since 2010.

Now let's export this common sense here.



EXCELLENT... Nesbitt

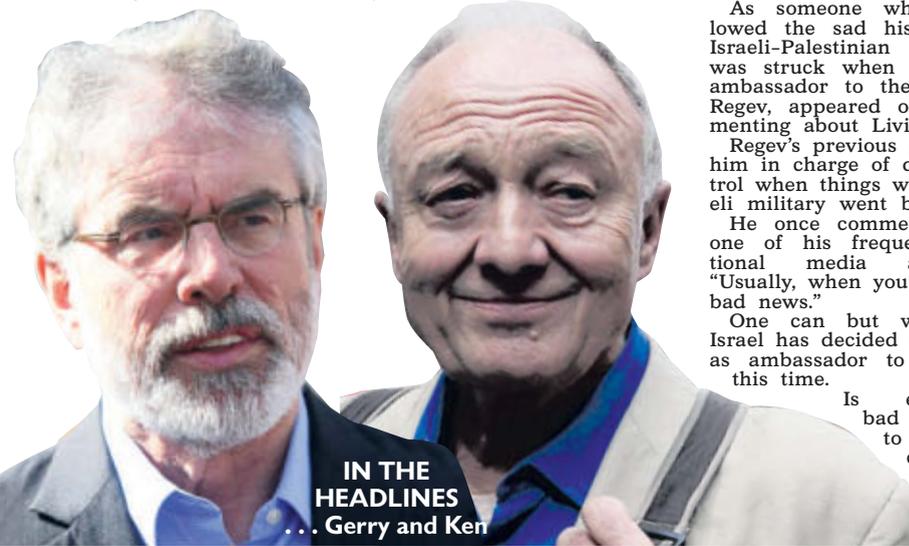
A KILLER ROLE FOR FANS OF NESBITT

THE Secret, the TV drama on the murders of Trevor Buchanan and Lesley Howell, has been met with both acclaim and ridicule.

Family members of the deceased argue the show is distasteful, coming so soon after the actual events.

I can see their point, but the fact the case involved illicit sex, religion and a murderer who was only caught because he confessed made it inevitable it would be dramatised.

I've only managed to watch a little of the first episode. But I have to say Jimmy Nesbitt's portrayal of murderer Colin Howell is probably the best performance he's given.



IN THE HEADLINES... Gerry and Ken



NOT FOR EVERYONE... opera leaves Jake bored

OPERA CAN SING FOR SUPPER

LOCAL playwright Rosemary Jenkinson's play Here Comes the Night had a swipe at Sinn Fein Culture Minister Caral Ni Chuilin.

Ms Jenkinson isn't the first to accuse the minister of being ill-equipped for her office, due to the fact that she seldom attends the theatre.

I wonder if Ms Jenkinson has even considered the possibility that the minister doesn't attend the the-

atre — not because she doesn't like drama, but because the standard of plays on offer are s***e?

Not that I'm basing this on Ms Jenkinson's present offering. I haven't been to see it, but think it sounds similar to material the Hole in the Wall have been doing brilliantly for years.

What I am saying is there is a definite middle class bias against anyone who doesn't just love Ibsen

or opera. I once did a segment for BBC NI where they had me sit through a performance of The Marriage of Figaro at the Grand Opera House.

To say I hated it doesn't do hatred justice.

Only I was being paid to stay, I'd have been out within minutes of the start. You see, I don't like opera, or ballet, for that matter.

Does that make me stupid or uncultured? I don't

think so. It simply comes down to everyone's personal taste.

While I'll always argue for funding of the arts, I do sometimes wonder just how much high art would survive if us oinks decided we were going to base funding on popularity.

I'm in the Culture Minister's corner — I don't see why she should be forced to attend the theatre if she doesn't want to.