



**UPLIFTING MOMENT:** Labour's Sean Sherlock being lifted into the sky at the Cork East count in Mallow.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# A salute to the unsung heroes

**I**T WAS only while watching Paul Newman announcing his retirement at the age of 82 last night on the news that I realised I'd better start this week's column with an apology.

Last week, I suggested that if I ever wrested power away from the democratically elected people of this country, I would favour killing old people at the age of 80.

What with seeing the sprightly Newman and being accosted in the street by numerous people who still carry umbrellas on warm days, I believe it right and fair to point out now that I was joking. I am no ageist; some of my favourite grandparents are old people.

Nearly 300 years ago, Jonathan Swift wrote a pamphlet called *A Modest Proposal*, in which he wrote that the starving people in Ireland should eat their own children as a solution to their hunger. There was an outcry, because the ordinary man in the road back then did not realise Swift was being satirical.

While I was not attempting to be satirical, I was — let's not mince words — encouraging murder, and I'd like to make a correction to last week's article.

Apparently, 49% of the people who voted for Fianna Fáil last Thursday were over 65, so perhaps we should consider lowering that knocking-off age to 75. Before any irate elderly



**ROBERT O'SHEA**

Fianna Fáil supporters decide to ring me this week, let me just say I am as happy as the next naive fool that we will have another five years of life under a socialist leader.

There is also something comforting in the surge of Fine Gael. Not only have we managed to keep the status quo, we have also returned Irish politics to its traditional two heavyweight parties, who are divided, not ideologically, but by a war that most of our grandparents or great-grandparents didn't even fight in.

Something all politicians who fought an election campaign up until last Thursday did afterwards was thank their back-room staff, the invisible people who did the hard work behind the scenes.

There were also thousands of unaligned, unmentioned people who helped everything run smoothly last week. The rest of the article is dedicated to them. All names below

## The Lifter

A lot of people think that when a politician is hoisted up after his/her election that it is their supporters doing the

lifting. Not so. "We'd do the lifting in 33 of the constituencies," says one Galway 'lifter'.

"There are freelance lifters in the others. They outlawed lifting by supporters in 1982. You can't just leave anybody pick up a public representative willy-nilly. That's where we come in.

"It's not rocket science, but there is a fair few bob in it on the day. Myself and the four brothers do it, dividing up the constituencies. We have 30 on the payroll. I lifted 24 fellas in eight constituencies last Thursday, finishing up at 1.30am.

"The main thing is to keep on top of the counts and be in the right place at the right time. After that, it's just, up and shake them about a bit," he added.

He says they are also available for county finals.

## E-voting machine security man

It was a poignant night for this employee.

"I sat in there with them the whole night, listening to the counts on the radio," he said.

Around midnight, he says he plugged them in.

"I felt they deserved that at least. Hearing them hum away in there, it was like a hymn to democracy, and I won't lie, it brought a tear to my eye," he added.

## Cliché man

During the election pro-

gramme special, there was a constant flow of people emerging from the studio shadows and landing pieces of paper in front of the analysts and politicians. "Yeah a lot of viewers seem to think we are handing out the latest polls and tallies," says one Cliché man.

"In fact, on the sheet of paper I hand to, say Richard Bruton, it will say: 'You haven't mentioned the national interest in 23 minutes.' Or I'll give one to PJ Mara: 'Say "going forward" again.'

Without these clichés, viewers probably wouldn't get annoyed and switch over, thus spending their whole time watching the election coverage, overdosing on politics, and eventually going mad.

## Some unsung heroes we didn't manage to talk to:

- Anybody, anywhere who found themselves trying and failing to explain the PR system to a foreigner and who refrained from saying: "It's the fairest way really."

- The phone receptionist in RTÉ who took the call from an irate viewer yelling down the phone last Thursday: "Where the f\*\*\* is Shortland Street?"

- The Dominos pizza delivery people who kept the hard-working journalists who were slushed up to their eyelids in coffee from going dizzy with hunger.

## Health Update

From [irishhealth.com](http://irishhealth.com)

### Unseasonal sunshine brings skin cancer warning

You don't have to be a sun worshipper to be at risk from its damaging effects. Around nine in 10 of all skin cancers are caused by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays and can be prevented by taking proper precautions against sun damage.



The incidence of skin cancer is rising, with around 8,000 cases of non-melanoma skin cancers diagnosed in Ireland every year, according to the National Cancer Registry. As we have seen in recent weeks, climate change is leading to hotter weather earlier in the year, so the risk of sun damage is no longer confined just to high summer.

One of the most common skin conditions that result from excessive sun exposure is solar keratosis or actinic keratosis.

Solar keratosis appears on the face, lips, ears, scalp, neck, backs of the hands and forearms, shoulders and back — the parts of the body most often exposed to sunshine. If untreated, there is a possibility that the area affected by solar keratosis can develop into skin cancer called squamous cell carcinoma (SCC).

This is not usually a life-threatening cancer, provided it is detected and treated in the early stages, but if left untreated it can spread into surrounding tissue and start to cause more serious problems.

Solar keratosis lesions can vary in colour; the texture is dry and rough, so often it is more recognised by touch than sight. The area may itch or feel prickly or tender, especially after being in the sun.

As solar keratosis lesions are the result of long-term damage due to over-exposure to the sun's rays, it is unlikely that the area of the skin with sun damage will only experience one single lesion or episode.

Therefore once you have been successfully treated, regular examinations and check-ups are required to keep the condition under control.

Ultraviolet rays are at their strongest under a clear sky, even if the temperature is low or the wind makes you feel cold. So always use sunscreen, paying particular attention to the neck, ears, nose and lips.

And if you suspect you may have any of the above symptoms you should visit your GP for advice.

### New advice on tonsil trouble

Adults who frequently get sore throats may benefit from having a tonsillectomy in the short-term, according to a new report.



A recent study from Finland showed that having your tonsils out significantly reduces the likelihood of further infection after 90 days, compared with 'watchful waiting', where the condition is closely monitored.

However, an editorial in the *British Medical Journal* states that until there is more evidence available about the longer-term benefits of the surgery, it is difficult for doctors to give firm advice to patients.

Any benefits of the operation in adults must be balanced against potential disadvantages such as earache, dehydration, dental injuries and a small risk of life-threatening complications.

### Warning on OTC painkillers

Over-the counter (OTC) drugs can be highly addictive, according to a new UK study.

Doctors Chris Ford and Beth Good report that in the past three months they have seen three patients with addictions to the pain medicine Nurofen Plus, which contains ibuprofen and codeine phosphate.

They say all three patients had started using the product for approved indications, but their use had escalated as they became tolerant to the codeine element of the medicine, and each reported side effects.

Codeine phosphate is available over the counter in the UK and Ireland in combination with other ingredients such as paracetamol and aspirin.

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