

Gardaí 'almost on a war footing' in pay demand

RANK-AND-FILE gardaí are on an 'almost war footing' with the Government over pay.

Speaking at a Garda Representative Association demonstration outside Government Buildings yesterday, they voiced anger and frustration at what they see as Public Expenditure Minister Paschal Donohoe's lack of dialogue over pay.

They believe he is pushing them into escalating their ongoing action against the Government.

They have not agreed to the Lansdowne Road Agreement and are particularly upset at the July 1 implementation of Fempi (Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest) legislation. This means new gardaí on salaries of just over €23,000 will not receive the one-year increment

By **Neil Michael**
Chief Reporter

of €2,301 due this year until 2018.

They will also be denied the €4,000 rent allowance that colleagues previously got, meaning they are at least €6,000 a year worse off, said the protesters.

Demonstrations will continue and the members said they were prepared to escalate matters.

John Joe O'Connell, GRA Central Executive Committee member for Co. Kildare, said: 'We are not going away. They are trying to bully us and back us into a situation that we will accept the Lansdowne Road Agreement... If terms are not met - all we are looking for is a fair day's pay and restoration - we are almost on a war footing now.' The GRA is

looking for pay to be restored to 2008 levels, a lift on the pay freeze and an end to the two-tier pay system for new recruits. Mr O'Neill said: 'We haven't made any decisions in respect of (striking) but we are ruling nothing out.'

A Garda spokesman said: 'An Garda Síochána appreciate there are recognised mechanisms for dealing with issues that arise.'

Minister Donohoe was asked about GRA members' views that he is pushing them into industrial action by not having met them to discuss their demands. He said: 'My officials will be meeting the GRA. I believe it is important we have contact. I will be happy to meet the GRA once we have agreement reached in relation to their status under the Lansdowne Road Agreement.'

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Being human is the greatest miracle of all

BEFORE breaking for the summer holidays, my eldest son was scolded by a teacher for saying something which seems to me quite obvious. 'Human beings are a higher species,' he said in the course of a class debate. David is a deeply sensitive child who loves all creation, especially animals.

Like his brothers, he has profound moral concerns about the killing of animals for human consumption. He cannot comprehend any form of cruelty to either human or animal. Yet, he is reflective enough to know that, as a species, we are indeed set apart.

In a world where the divine spark has been extinguished, it is easy to think of humans as simply 'clever animals'. Deep down, however, we all know that this description of our condition is incorrect. It does not take away from our love for animals to say that we are not the same.

Like St Francis, we can love all creatures, caring for them with tenderness and compassion. However, beautiful as they are, which of them can gaze in awe at the starry heavens above and imagine what lies on the other side? Which of them can stand back from their impulses for the sake of lifelong love?

To love as a human loves, is to see into the heart of someone who will journey with you until the end. It is to look into her eyes and see fidelity, commitment and sacrifice. It is to take those often tragic twists and turns with a friend who will not depart when the going gets tough.

Love is sacrifice. You give up everything for the sake of someone who owns your soul. You temper your desires in the name of a person whose happiness counts more than your own. That person is the source of your dreams, your redemption from a life of solitude.

Each human being is a unique perspective on our world. Each is a centre of memory, of mourning, of imagination and beauty. We look at things, but we do not merely see things as they are. We see them as they might otherwise be, as they can be for the poet, the philosopher and the painter.

We build as though standing in the light of Creation. Our churches and cathedrals, our sacred sculptures and monuments, cry out to paradise with an eternal yearning. Our prayers, rites and rituals rise like incense towards our heavenly home.

We sing like angels and compose with sounds that transfigure the earth, the body and our perception of each other. To us, this is not a string of unconnected beats. The music we make is a blessed harmony that graces all the great occasions of our lives. We look at death not with confusion, but with tender eyes that mourn for what was and what might have been. We have the power to

retain something of the lost loved one. We weep because we can still see him or her before the mind's eye. We construct memorials to their memory, commemorate their passing with gentle acts of love.

We give our lives for causes more noble than our own. We defend values and principles to the point of persecution. We walk the way of the Cross, not out of instinct, but because it is the right thing to do.

We know right from wrong because the sweet voice of conscience cries out from the depths. It urges us to treat others as we would like to be treated. It commands us not to kill, harm or deceive our neighbours.

And who is our neighbour? He is the one who cries out for mercy, the one who lies dying on the other side of the street. A true neighbour is the one who never ignores a cry of distress.

We are beings without whom this world would never have come to consciousness. We have unlocked the deepest puzzles of life and we have reshaped the face of the earth.

We have moved well beyond our own frontiers into celestial realms without end.

We are capable of great cruelty, and yet our capacity for courage, care and compassion far exceeds the sufferings we cause. We make room for those who previously had no voice, no stake in our common future. And in looking towards that future we are guided by our past - one filled with love, sorrow, suffering and salvation.

And when the darkness is so great that the last light flickers and dies, we can still hope for a brighter day. We can still have faith that a new dawn will appear on the horizon. We have hope because we can rise above the tragic moment and imagine a better world.

WE are human beings and we have made a world of miracles. Sometimes, we betray our own values and the cost is often profound. Then, from the ashes of our errors, we rise up and bring a new hope.

The weeping mother embracing her newborn, the grieving widow kissing her beloved for the final time, the dying Mozart composing his own requiem - all such moments shine with sublime beauty when perceived by us. In everything we do and say, in everything we make and create, we infuse creation with a spirit of love, joy, sorrow and sacredness.

That this includes all our fellow creatures - whom we idealise in word, painting and song - shows that our ingenuity and love knows no limits.

We are set apart because, without us, the world has no memory, no scope for improvement, no tenderness or hope.

We are set apart because we can love and mourn for all people, creatures and things. And then, in the heart of each one of us, they can live on as though they had never died.

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