

Artists have a role in banishing ticket touts

OVER the past year, we have seen how tickets for in-demand gigs such as those by Adele and U2 have, just minutes after becoming unavailable through Ticketmaster, popped up on reseller sites such as Seatwave for massively inflated prices.

As the law stands, there is nothing that can be done about price gouging. So Fine Gael TD Noel Rock wants to introduce new legislation to ban touting, as has already been done in countries such as Brazil. He commissioned a survey to gauge public support, and found that a massive 86% agree that reselling above face value should be banned, even if that means job losses on reseller sites.

In the face of fan outrage, Mr Rock is right to pursue his cause, but there are questions as to just how workable any such legislation would be. After all, the internet knows no international boundaries, and what is illegal here would not necessarily be illegal elsewhere. Even if tickets had to be collected in person, a short drive to a separate jurisdiction on this island would solve that problem. There is a danger of the law of the unintended consequences coming into play, so a little more imagination is needed.

If this does indeed prove impossible to police, then we must also ask why, if they love their fans so much, the artists themselves have not done more to stamp out malpractice. After all, the GAA has successfully limited touting by selling tickets for the main events through the club network, noting the numbers so that when anyone is caught trying to sell a ticket above face value, it is easy to trace where the ticket came from.

Artists too could insist that tickets be sold only to those who have registered with their fan clubs; nothing is more traceable than when it is linked to an IP address on the internet.

Mr Rock's initiative is a good one, but it is just one weapon in what needs to be a much bigger arsenal. There needs to be an alliance of artist, promoter and seller (though in many cases, Live Nation, which owns Ticketmaster and Seatwave, controls the entire process) to ensure this rip-off is stamped out for good.

Coveney misfired

TODAY marks the deadline laid down by the former housing minister for ensuring no family still would have to live in temporary accommodation while waiting for a new home. The deadline was not met, and it no doubt comes as some relief to Simon Coveney that he is now in Foreign Affairs, and no longer accountable for his failure to keep his promise.

Yes, many families have been moved out of hotels, but only to halfway-house hubs which often are actually in converted hotels anyway. This is not good enough. His successor Eoghan Murphy must be more proactive in putting an end to temporary shelter, but he has limited powers and a limited budget.

We have been saying it for three years now – but there is only one solution to the housing and homelessness crisis and it can be summed up in one word: build. We need thousands of new homes, and we need them now.

Tunnel vision

A VAN driver managed to accrue nine penalty points, one offence short of losing his licence, in just 90 minutes – thanks to new speed detection methods in the Dublin Port Tunnel. He might feel a little persecuted and hard done by, but that is tough. Penalty points are a nuisance, as are the fines of €240 he faces, but nothing compared to killing someone recklessly, or maybe even killing yourself. There is an easy way to avoid points: slow down.

IN a democracy, trial by jury is an essential guarantor of true freedom. It is a right not enjoyed around the world; it is a right for which, over the years, many have fought – and some have even died. It is a cornerstone both of our judicial process and of our deeper belief that, ultimately, it is the people of this country who are the pillars on which the State was built.

And therefore, when a jury of 11 men and women handed down not guilty verdicts on Thursday to six men accused of falsely imprisoning the former tánaiste and her assistant in 2014, I saluted them. They had done their job: they had weighed the evidence presented to them, they had considered the arguments put before them, and they had arrived – unanimously – at an emphatic verdict.

The Jobstown Six, as they have styled themselves (doubtless trying to suggest themselves, laughable as it is, as a latter-day Birmingham Six), were found not guilty of the charges they had faced. The system had done precisely what our forebears had intended it to do.

Paul Murphy and his acolytes were free to go, without a stain on their characters. But being innocent of this particular crime does not, however, mean they had done nothing wrong.

For it remains the case that the then-tánaiste Joan Burton was left terrified in her car for some hours. It remains the case that her adviser Karen O'Connell was subjected to the same abhorrent treatment. It also remains the case that the guards themselves felt it imperative to call into play the Public Order Unit – plus a helicopter. And it remains the case that members of An Garda Síochána, those who uphold the law and defend the peace, were reduced to bargaining with the Jobstown mob in relation to how and when the two trapped women would be released.

Indeed, a quick viewing on YouTube will also illustrate that, despite this week's not guilty verdict, the menace exhibited that November day in Jobstown also remains for all to see. The loud banging on the roof of Burton's car, the angry voices of a baying mob (including one voice shouting that, when it comes to sanctuary, the nearby church is 'the only place she will be safe').

All of this remains the case and so, whether or not you accept that all of this arose, as Murphy contends, because unsavoury and incendiary elements infiltrated the protest, these are still the facts. A mob was whipped up into action that day and Burton and her companion were subjected to abuse and vilification and trapped in their car while the protesters – the mob – ranted and railed.

In the minds of such people, the very idea of 'peaceful protest' does not exist.

For them, a protest is not some public expression of discontent regarding a particular issue, but a way of undermining the very foundations of our political and legal order. As Murphy declared in an online rant earlier this year: 'Defending the Jobstown protesters... offers socialists an unprecedented opportunity to push an increasingly open door of

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ESSAY



by Dr Mark
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awareness about the role and operations of the capitalist state. Its repression can be counter-posed to an alternative vision of a truly democratic and socialist society, run in the interests of the majority where its police force is controlled by and accountable to working-class communities.'

Just study the startling menace in that last line.

In the socialist utopia dreamed of by these people, the Gardaí would be accountable to, and controlled by, a particular 'class'. It would not serve the interests of all Irish citizens, but only those from a single community. In other words, if the likes of Mr Murphy had their way, the Gardaí

would be reduced to a private militia in the service of those whose eventual aim is to subvert our parliamentary democracy.

Now, you might argue that because the Solidarity party commands such a tiny share of the national vote, its menacing declarations are best ignored. If so, you are mistaken, and that is because those who led the Jobstown 'protest' are not ultimately interested in their vote share or in the niceties of parliamentary procedures. Their method of choice is not the ballot box but the power of the mob.

Look at how they manipulated a legitimate grievance over water charges and turned

The more they struggle to win votes, and the more they realise they don't speak for the Irish people, the more the hard left will resort to vile, venomous protests aimed at elected politicians. That's why last week's verdict was...

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it into something much more threatening. Look at how the Jobstown incident has given them national prominence, endless airtime and, in some deluded quarters, hero status. Look at that and you will see that such people, however few, are far from benign.

WE saw the same phenomenon following the recent British general election, when radical supporters of Jeremy Corbyn refused to accept that he had lost the vote. As they merged on Downing Street, screaming their obscenities, they were rightly denounced as 'deniers of democracy'. Then, within days, they sought to hijack the Grenfell Tower tragedy, again for their own pernicious purposes.

Pseudo-revolutionaries who wish to surmount the nuisance

Mob rule:
Protesters
surround
Joan
Burton's
car in
Jobstown

Friday

OCRACY

of democracy always have recourse to the mob. We saw it unleashed with terrifying effect in the French Revolution, and then copied by the Russian communists in 1917. In the face of the mob, even an army can be rendered impotent.

A legitimate protest is one that is both peaceful and law-abiding. But when a protest is hijacked by those with a mob mentality, when it is manipulated by those who would seek to whip up a violent frenzy, 'protest' becomes a euphemism for lawlessness and anarchy. The objective is to smash all symbols of authority which they consider 'repressive'.

Behind the mob mentality is a chilling psychology wrought from the cauldron of violence and inspired by a longing for total revolution. What ostensibly starts as a protest can very soon descend into chaos and disorder. The catalyst is usually one or two individuals who whip up the crowd against an imagined scapegoat.

We saw it in Germany and Italy with the rise of fascism, when, in the early days, the rent-a-mob

mentality was the order of the day. In every such case, the method is the same: choose a scapegoat and unleash the power of the mob against it.

In short, the mob acquires oxygen in paranoid opposition to those it perceives as a threat, to those who control the system to the disadvantage of 'the people'.

And how easy it is to be consumed by the power of a paranoid lynch mob.

The wicked phenomenon of online bullying, where gangs of 'netizens' find common cause against the innocent, shows the true horror of this mob mentality. What starts as a veiled threat very often descends into a wild clamour, one that can easily drive a person to their death.

We have enough examples of mob rule from history to know why it can never be tolerated by any decent democracy. Murphy and his associates sneer at the rule of law because, as he says, it is 'decided by parliamentary majority'. In their distorted vision, our laws are illegitimate because

they are decided upon by the democratically elected representatives of the Irish people.

In the end, the rule of law is the only thing that stands between us and mob rule. Our laws, however flawed and frail, testify to our willingness to negotiate our differences and compromise when our rights conflict with those of others.

FOR the most part, we accept that those we elect to high office will pass laws that are in the best interests of the vast majority of Irish citizens. When, however, we feel that the Government has not fairly executed that duty, we have every right to take to the streets.

That is so because protesting is a time-honoured way of demonstrating our disapproval. But no grievance is too great to resort to violence or to take the law into one's own hands. For that, indeed, is a denial of democracy – a denial

of the genuine will of the people as expressed at the ballot box. If the Irish people really desired Solidarity's 'alternative vision', they would endorse their policies in an election.

The fact that Solidarity and People Before Profit have no great electoral mandate proves that the majority of citizens don't share their miserable vision for this country.

They don't want to be governed by people who think it perfectly legitimate to hold an elected representative against her will, and who blame their subsequent arrest on a conspiracy by the 'ruling class'.

They don't want to be governed by those who decry the rule of law as 'naked repression'.

The mob is used by the sinister fringe as a means of bypassing the law through fear. And yet, it doesn't take much for that mentality to spread like a virus. It begins with a protest and, before long, you have a riot.

Elements on the sinister fringe understand this, which is why they

generally become professional agitators. Murphy has, for example, taken a leading role in protests in Italy, Istanbul and Israel. For his troubles, he was deported from Israel in 2011.

Knowing that they shall never achieve real power through normal democratic channels, they turn every grievance into an excuse for a protest.

In so doing, they make it seem as though they speak on behalf of 'the people'.

We saw this in the way they insinuated themselves into the anti-water charges movement, turning what was a genuine demonstration of discontent into the monster they let loose in Tallaght.

We saw it in the way they falsely claimed credit for a great expression of people power to which they contributed nothing except fear and aggression.

The truth is that the 'Jobstown Six' do not speak for the vast majority of people in this country. Those who genuinely took issue with water charges did so not by aligning themselves with Solidarity or People Before Profit, but by registering their anger at the last election. In refusing to return the Fine Gael-Labour coalition to power, the people had their say.

AND that is the way it must be in any democracy worth its name. As democrats, we do not answer to the mob, to professional bullies who seek to overturn our system of government through violence and intimidation. We answer to the law, which is neither 'repressive' nor threatening, but which safeguards us from the Lord Of The Flies nightmare we glimpsed in Jobstown on November 15, 2014.

After all, who wants to be part of a state where mob rule eclipses the rule of law? Who wants to be governed by people who think our police force should be controlled by a single section of society?

But that is what motivates those who are now posing as victims of a 'police state'. It is what drives those who think that democracy is a sham which can only be crushed by violent dissent.

In 2009, Murphy was registered as a PhD student in law at University College Dublin. His thesis was entitled: 'Does Socialist Law Exist?'

If the Jobstown 'protest' was anything to judge by, 'socialist law' certainly does not exist.

That Murphy and his friends got a free and fair trial which ended in their acquittal proves, however, that the democratic rule of law not only exists, but even defends the rights of those who would deny it.

The very justice system they scorn is that which protects them from the mob justice they would inflict on others.

They may be free and, yes, we must live with it.

But freedom comes with the responsibility to uphold the law and to respect the rights of others. It will only be a matter of time before we know if they are prepared to pay that price.

If not, a much greater price will be ours to pay.