

# We need €3bn more in taxes, campaigners say

IRELAND needs to raise up to €3billion in additional tax revenue per year to fund a 'fair, equal and progressive' future for the country, a social justice campaign group has argued.

Social Justice Ireland published its annual socio-economic review yesterday.

The organisation argues that Ireland needs to increase and broaden its tax base by the massive sum to keep Exchequer funds safe through uncertain economic times.

It says the €3billion is also necessary to help fund decent public services as well as to upgrade ageing national infrastructure.

'We want to chart a course to

By Mollie Cahillane

a better Ireland, that is what this review is about,' said Seán Healy, chief executive of Social Justice Ireland.

'At the foundation of that is how we raise taxes and how much tax we raise. We are a low-revenue economy, yet we are one of the richest countries in the world. It should be a priority to find those additional resources, not to squander the resources we have.'

The organisation claims that the review, titled Social Justice Matters: 2018 Guide To A Fairer Society, aims to persuade policymakers to adopt a different approach.

Eamon Murphy, an economic and social analyst with the organisation, said: 'We need to collect sufficient tax to ensure full participation in society for all, through a fair tax system in which those who have more pay more, while those who have less pay less.'

'With this book, policymakers have a guide for how that can be done.'

Social Justice Ireland argues that the money can be raised from measures such as a minimum effective corporate tax rate of 10%, a financial transactions tax, eco-taxes, and increasing the minimum effective tax rates on high earners.

## Dr Mark Dooley



### MORAL MATTERS

## Consent? Try respect and decency too

ONE evening the Dooleys were eating dinner. Our eldest was telling us about a person whose story I found rather interesting. Naively, I said: 'I should very much like to meet her.'

'You can't say that, Dad!' exclaimed my embarrassed son. 'What?' I said. He replied: 'You can't say you'd like to "meet" someone!'

It transpired that, for those of my son's generation, to meet a person is – how to put it? – well, to have an amorous encounter with them.

To my shock and horror, he explained that young people no longer 'go out' with each other. They meet, which means bypassing all customary norms surrounding sexuality.

It is no longer necessary to know someone's name, and you can forget about a romantic prelude over dinner. Gone for good are the days when you might court a person. Today, as in every sphere of life, delayed gratification has given way to immediate satisfaction.

Wasn't it WB Yeats who poignantly asked: 'How but in custom and in ceremony are innocence and beauty born?' Without custom and ceremony, we reduce life to a coarse husk that is lived for pleasure but rarely for love. We live our days as though the radiance of civilisation had never dawned.

If any area of human life should be surrounded by custom and ceremony, it is that of romantic attachment. For people are not commodities but those from whom the light of life shines most powerfully. We are not dealing with another object, but with another will, spirit or soul.

When I was growing up, there was still something of the Jane Austen approach to love. Even the young approached each other cautiously and modestly, seeking the other's consent with customary respect. They dressed up, dined out and danced in ways that, by today's standards, seem singularly quaint.

I do not say that I grew up in some sort of romantic utopia. What I do say is that there was still something beautiful in the way couples got together. And that was simply because we still attached importance to custom and ceremony.

But now, all of a sudden, we are being told that our children require lessons in 'consent'. Yesterday, we learned that Education Minister Richard Bruton has ordered a review of the Relationships and

Sexuality Education programme, because, as he says, we need to take into account 'the needs of young people today, who face a range of different issues to those faced by young people in the late 1990s'.

If my son's generation face 'a range of different issues', it is because we, as a society, have casually abandoned the old norms and customs that put beauty and respect at the core.

If we must teach them consent, it is surely because the very idea has been undermined by our 'progressive' social attitudes.

But what is progressive in thinking that we can simply dispense with customs which demanded that we earn, and not grab, another's attention?

In the late 1990s, we didn't have to teach people consent because it was still a pervasive moral principle. Yes, there were violations and transgressions, but we viewed them with revulsion and dismay. That, however, was before the young took online pornography as their standard for how sexual relations should be conducted.

We abandoned custom and ceremony and we lost innocence and beauty. And now, when the damage of this, our dark age, has been laid bare, we rush to restore what we so casually discarded. Now we see the value in things that we once dismissed as 'prudish', 'repressive' and 'outdated'.

HERE is nothing prudish or repressive in seeking to win another's affection. To do so is the foundation of respect and, ultimately, of love. It is the only way to ensure that human dignity is not plundered and polluted.

As I see it, the argument that we now must teach consent is not a laudable innovation. If anything, it is a tragic indictment of a society that is fighting a rearguard action against its own moral failings in respect of the young. It is a belated attempt to restore those time-honoured safeguards against abuse and exploitation.

And who, having witnessed the carnage caused by this loss of custom and ceremony, would not wish for some beauty and innocence?

Who, as this tormented age reveals its terrible secrets, does not long for a time when people instinctively knew what it meant to win another's heart?

Who wants a world where no-one is prepared to pay the true price of love?

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