

# 'Angry' firefighters vote in wake of hotel inferno

MEMBERS of the Dublin Fire Brigade have voted no confidence in the national director for Fire and Emergency Management and the Chief Fire Officer, as firefighters are 'disillusioned and angry' over safety concerns.

Siptu members of the force voted at an emergency meeting last Saturday, called in the wake of a fire in a high-rise hotel in Dublin last week.

'No confidence' motions were passed in both Seán Hogan, the national director for Fire And Emergency Management, and Pat Fleming, Chief Fire Officer.

Brenda O'Brien, Siptu sector organiser, said that policymakers and management have had

By Lisa O'Donnell

many opportunities to resolve the issues raised by members.

'We believe no satisfactory improvements have been made despite Siptu continually raising health and safety concerns,' she said.

'These votes of no confidence come from our members. They are front line firefighters working in fire stations and control rooms across Dublin city and county and they have had enough,' Shane McGill, Siptu DFB convenor said.

'These members are not only disillusioned and angry with the policies and the direction management has taken so far,

but how they have continually turned a blind eye to the concerns of operational staff and the representations made to them about training, safety, safe systems of work and exposure to risk.'

The votes follow a blaze which broke last Wednesday on the 13th floor of the Metro Hotel and apartments.

Everyone in the building at the time was evacuated and uninjured.

Unions issued warnings following the fire that it could take a disaster like last year's Grenfell Tower blaze in London to push the Government and councils to provide adequate resources.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# No alarm bells rang when our son left but it's a wake-up call

**T**HERE is a curious fact about me which most people simply cannot understand. 'Only one?', you say.

You guess right: I have my fair share of eccentricities which provide my children with no end of amusement.

But one that even they can't fathom is this: For more than 20 years, I have not used an alarm clock. And, what's more, I am always first up in the morning.

Say, for example, someone needs to rise at 5.20 in the morning. 'We will have to set a clock!', they frantically exclaim. 'Oh no we won't!', I reply with a self-satisfied grin.

And then, after much doubt and hesitation, they finally concede that I have earned my right to grin, laugh or cry out with boastful pride. No plane, boat or train has ever been missed on my account. 'Leave it to me,' I say, 'you'll be called at 5.20 on the dot!'

I can't fully explain how I manage it. I simply go to sleep and, without fail, wake ten minutes before the appointed time. It doesn't matter what hour of the night it is; if you want to be woken, I'm your man.

Mrs Dooley considers it an affliction. 'I don't know how you do that,' she says, 'and I don't care to know'. And yet, as I never cease to remind her: 'It has served you well every day for nearly two decades. Can you remember when you last had to endure the heart-stopping sound of an alarm?'

And yes, before you ask, I can even do it in different time zones. I can do it when we switch to Daylight Saving Time. It is as though I have a self-setting digital alarm encoded in my DNA.

'I'll need to be called no later than five in the morning,' said our eldest last Sunday. I did my best impression of the Cheshire Cat before boasting: 'You can leave that to me!'

The fact that we had just put the clocks forward by an hour was no impediment to my powers.

Why did he wish to rise so early? He was heading away to Stratford-upon-Avon with his drama group. The trip includes workshops at the Royal Shakespeare Company and a performance of Macbeth.

All wonderful, but my focus was on waking him on time - which, to

our confused body clocks, was not five, but four in the morning. But no confusion here! I would have him up and on the road by six.

As it happens, this was his first trip away by himself.

The excitement was tangible and the preparations extensive.

But, by Sunday night, he was all set for his first big adventure without his parents.

No time to think about that, said I to myself. Time-keeping is my priority! For if I fail, he will, quite literally, miss the boat.

I went to sleep - a deep sleep. No, don't fear, I didn't sleep it out.

At 4.45, my eyes opened to greet the new day and to get our boy on the road.

'Time to get up,' I whispered, 'you're off to Stratford.' He didn't know where he was or, indeed, who I was. However, within a few minutes, he was smiling sprightly and busily preparing for departure.

I had accomplished my task: our son was up on time and his brothers had not been disturbed by the screeching of an alarm.

But then, quite suddenly, I noticed that I wasn't myself. I am a morning person, someone who loves to greet the new dawn before the world awakes.

**I** THEN realised that, being so consumed with timekeeping, I was totally unprepared for what was happening. Our little boy was taking his first real step towards independence. He left on time, but his departure also left me in tears.

I was numb for the remainder of the day. In the twinkling of an eye, our little companion of 13 years had taken flight. The natural cycle had taken a turn for which I was not yet ready.

Don't misunderstand me: I am still proud to be known as 'the human alarm clock'. And I shall continue to provide this inimitable service to my slumbering household every morning.

But perhaps Mrs Dooley has a point. Perhaps, it is an affliction - especially when you are waking up someone simply to say 'goodbye'.

Perhaps there is no place for pride when the price you pay is a broken heart.

Maybe it's time I learned how to sleep it out.

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## SYRIAN CHILDREN'S APPEAL



Photo: Hamza Al-Ajweh, Syria, 2018.

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