

Leo: I thought 'typical Indian' jibe was parody

LEO Varadkar has shrugged off an apparent racial slur on Twitter by a veteran unionist politician, with the Taoiseach saying: 'I thought it was a parody account.'

Former Ulster Unionist Party deputy leader John Taylor this week lashed out at Mr Varadkar over his visit to the North, calling him a 'typical Indian'.

Mr Taylor, known as Lord Kilclooney, tweeted the comment under a BBC news story, and accused Mr Varadkar of 'bad manners' for not alerting unionist politicians to his trip across the border on Monday.

Yesterday, Opposition leaders in the Dáil condemned Mr Taylor's remarks. Mr Varadkar

By **James Ward**
Political Correspondent

replied: 'Concerning Lord Kilclooney's tweet, I did see it. I actually had thought that was a parody account, but seemingly it's not. Seemingly it's for real. That's all I'll say about that.'

He said his trip to the North, accompanying EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, was intended to be 'low-key'.

Mr Taylor, who has caused trouble in the past by referring to Mr Varadkar as 'the Indian', has defended his comments, saying he rejects 'false accusations of racism' and does not intend to withdraw the tweet.

In fact, the former Stormont

cabinet minister doubled down on his statement yesterday.

Asked by a Twitter user to explain what he meant by the comment, he responded: 'Typical of this particular half Indian - no Irish PM has previously ignored the normal courtesies of visiting the UK. He fails to understand that he constantly antagonises Unionist feelings and is damaging the improved North/South relations which resulted from the B. agreement [Good Friday].'

He further tweeted: 'It is not racially abusive as he himself has confirmed he is half Indian. That is great and not to be dismissed as the Indians are a great race.'

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

If we look hard enough, there is always light in the darkness...

MAY: a month of miracles. Not quite spring, not quite summer. A month when nature exhibits its finery and we respond with a smile.

The days are long and the nights have fallen away. It seems like only yesterday when it was dark shortly after dawn. Not now: the sun peeps above the horizon well before the world awakes.

It is still cold, but the nip is steadily losing strength. On the tree beyond my window, a pair of wood pigeons perch and coo. They sit and stare at the kaleidoscope of colour, at the cherry blossoms and the emerald vista.

Like an old married couple, they peck at each other's feathers. I like to think this is some class of cleaning ritual, or perhaps a little sign of romantic affection. After all, what is a kiss but a peck full of love?

They peck and they coo, and it is this lazy sound which heralds the new dawn. Finches and blue tits come and go with lightning speed. They jump, hop, skip and fly away before you can fully savour their glorious plumage.

But the wood pigeons, too old to care, remain impervious to it all. They fly in with the light and will depart only when we turn again towards the dark. They are mother and father of the trees, heavenly messengers of glad tidings.

Spiders and ants, weeds and bees are all on the move in May. In the crisp, cool morning, the cobwebs shimmer and shine like natural art. The spider creates not for pleasure but to prey. But we, the beneficiaries of their workmanship, have every reason to give praise.

The ants labour all day and all night. A community of service, each member having a particular function. If May is known as the month of the workers, surely this should include those industrious creatures who do a year's labour in May, before resuming their rest in June.

They say our bees are endangered and are heading for extinction. The result will be ecological carnage on an untold scale. So, let us cherish that familiar buzz as it joins the summer symphony.

And yes, May also brings the daisies and dandelions, the ragwort and wild flower. No surprise that the official name for ragwort is *Jacobaea vulgaris*. Like an

unwanted intruder with a vulgar countenance, it insinuates itself where it is least wanted.

Nothing is safe from the common weed as it sneaks up from the soil and creeps insidiously around the garden. New shoots are particularly prone to its sinister temptations. And, once it gains a foothold, it seeks only to suffocate and strangle those tender shoots.

May beckons us to the garden, calls us to save the shoots from such savagery. No mercy for the vulgar weed, no sanctuary for uninvited intruders. It's a taxing job but one that pays high dividends.

Rescued from peril, the new roses begin their summer work. In May, the little buds hesitate for fear of greenfly and the lingering frost. But when they finally let go and open to the world, they reveal why nature is best understood as a gallery.

For the bee, they offer the prospect of life and hydration. For us, the rose is a gift of creation - a symbol of love and an example of pure beauty. Neither painting nor poetry can perfect the reality of a pink rose in full bloom.

The background hum of lawnmowers, of children shrieking and dogs barking, reminds us that we are in the magnificent month of May. But never forget that, elsewhere in the world, May is an autumnal month. For those on the other side, it is equivalent to our November.

THIS means that, for all its beauty and majesty, May has a dark side. Then again, for those Down Under, November has a bright side. For them, November is not a month of gloom, but of sun, young blooms, spiders, ants and *Jacobaea vulgaris*.

You see, when looked at from a different perspective, the miracles of May are also the miracles of November.

And isn't this the real miracle of life that, if we look hard enough, there is always light in the midst of darkness?

Somewhere, in our beautiful world, there are always some tender shoots reaching with both arms to the sun.

Somewhere, either here or there, people awake to a comforting coo. On a branch outside, two old friends share a peck or two, as if to say: 'I love you.'

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