



SCROOGE IS ALIVE AND WELL



CHRISTMAS, the Season of Goodwill and Charity, is also the season of Exploitation and Grasping Opportunism.

Low income households, desperate for the money to get through the winter, see family members being taken on by employers who pay miserly wages.

Employers who expect people to work for £1 an hour have been condemned by Michael Condon, President of Limerick Trades Council.

"Anyone who pays such miserable wages is nothing more than a money grubbing Scrooge," Michael told Hatch 33.

The worst offenders are the fast food chains, some hotels and people involved in the catering and cleaning services.

These are areas in which, traditionally, women have been badly paid and exploited.

Many women whose husbands are unemployed get work in these jobs to bring extra money into the house.

However, they are reluctant to seek higher wages because if they earn over £50 a week their husbands' dole is cut by the Department of Social Welfare.

Michael told Hatch 33 that this policy gives employers the green light to pay women a pittance.

"The government must take some responsibility for the situation which has been allowed to develop", he said.

"It's a terribly unjust society where a spouse whose partner is receiving benefits of some kind can only go out and accept less than £50 a week."

Because of this it's impossible to break out of the poverty that many families suffer as a result of unemployment.

Life Beyond The Long Mile Road

- A Review of Limerick Music in 1990 -

Looking back, 1990 was an important year for music in Limerick.

Two new venues, The Savoy and Arthur's Warehouse, opened their doors for live music. The bad news filtered through of TUESDAY BLUE being dropped from EMI America on the eve of their second album.

Their break up was a sad affair but the outcome was positive with Ray Fean going on to NO SWEAT, Mike Ryan pursuing solo work and Dave Keary turning to session playing.

There was still a lot happening down by the Shannon and it's safe to say Limerick is far from dead where music is concerned. The thriving local scene puts paid to the adage that life ends on the Long Mile Road.

The continuing growth of the Xeric label is a case in point. Operating out of Xeric studios in the Shannon foundry, the label put out its debut single from PRIVATE WORLD, "THE BLUE GEM SEA", in September '89. 1990 saw the release of Limerick's first ever compilation album "THE REINDEER AGE".

Since then the label has flourished with releases of THE HITCHERS (winners of the 1990 S'kool bands competition), TOO MUCH FOR THE WHITE MAN, and, at last, local heroes TOUCANDANCE.



The TOUCANS single "GREEN EYES" sees them getting their live sound down on vinyl for the first time. Cassette releases are forthcoming from THE CRANBERRY SAW US and JOE BROWNE and the DIRTY DOG REVIEW.

They also put out a full cassette album of the legendary MICKO RUSSEL thus showing the boundaries they wish to explore and make available.

The 24 track Xeric Studios has had a busy year with PHILIP DONNELLY cutting an album and

all the Xeric Label acts recording there. Run by Pierce Gilmore and James Hanly, it has answered a vital need for young bands and established artists. Recording facilities of its type are now not just the property of Dublin alone.

The demo tape scene is getting some serious attention from Limerick Muses. A TOUCH OF OLIVER have put out four tapes so far, each one of seeing them broaden their experience. They are also gaining their own sound.

THE COUP, a fine piece whose influences border 70's punk and late 60's psychedelia, have produced a fine collection of original songs on their present 4 track demo. The same can be said for THE CRANBERRY SAW US who have an excellent female singer in their ranks.



What about the bands that have not yet recorded, not yet put their own plans for World domination in action. This year some new names have come my way including metallers DRIVESHAFT and the Cult-influenced BLUE FLAMES. Add to those solo act PATRICK DOODY and the Bauhausean STEMPLE SCHNEIDER BLACK.

All of these show the determination of people to create music and use it for their own individual statements. Plainly, the scene is alive and very much kicking.

THEY DO IT WITH MIRRORS spent much of the year in Dublin with college commitments. However the gigs they did play and their 2nd demo tape show them coming on to a more mature and confident phase.

For a long time it looked as if TOUCANDANCE would never get anything released. Losing one of their original members, they plugged on to eventually get Tony Brennan into the lineup. Just one month ago they finally got "GREEN EYES", their debut single, into the shops.

Eamon Hehir qualifies for being the most articulate songwriter I've laid ears on and it's great that at last the Toucans have a product to show the general market. Quality in their work was never in doubt. This year has been a revitalisation period for them.

John O'Regan



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UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMIGRATION:

Still our biggest home Wreckers

THE ELECTION of Mary Robinson has opened up a new era in Irish politics and change is in the air.

Within weeks of the Robinson victory all the political parties are talking about the necessity of dealing with the issue of divorce.

It's a remarkable turnout, given that only four years have elapsed since the 1986 Divorce Referendum.

Everybody thought that the pro-divorce lobby had been so heavily defeated that the possibility of having another referendum wouldn't be raised for many a long day.

But all that has changed since Mary Robinson, who symbolises modern progressive politics in Ireland, took over Aras an Uachtarain.

First John Bruton, the new leader of Fine Gael, started talking about divorce and now the younger members of Fianna Fail want Haughey to do something about it.

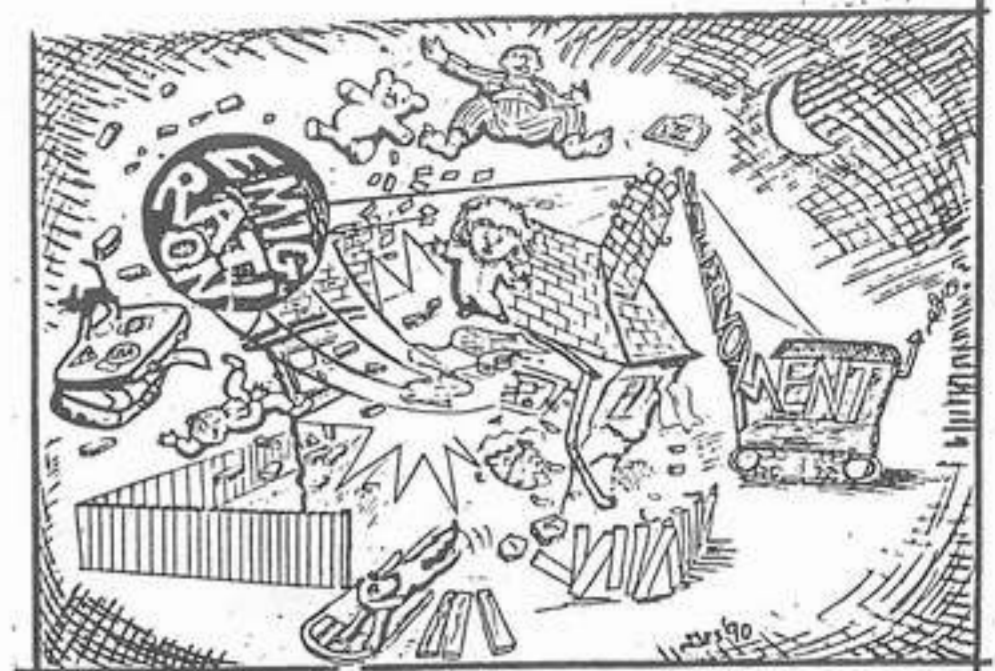
Which is all very fine and dandy.

It is true there is an obvious need for legislation to allow people to escape from the misery of broken marriages.

However when it comes to unemployment there is a deafening silence from the 'New Liberals'.

None of them are putting forward positive proposals on how to provide jobs for Irish people.

All we get is platitudes about creating the right conditions for private enterprise to make profits and hopefully (only hopefully mind you) everyone will benefit.



Granted, social welfare payments are keeping people alive but Man doesn't live by bread alone; dignity and self respect are every bit as necessary.

These 'new liberals' who claim that they are ever so trendy and progressive when they talk about divorce are pulling the wool over our eyes.

They only want to tinker about with the system and change a few laws here and there.

But that is not going to improve the lives of those of us who will still have to queue, week in, week out for social welfare handouts.

We are now in a situation where we have second-generation unemployment; as children of unemployed parents leave school they face the bleak prospect of never having a job in Ireland.

The Mary Robinson victory has led to rising expectations of change for the better in this country.

It is time to see some results from all this for the unemployed.

Urgent action by the government is required now to end the curse of unemployment.

Unemployment, not divorce, is the biggest social problem facing this country.

David Lee

PEACE ON EARTH DEATH TO IRAQ

In the background this Christmas looms the prospect of war in the Middle East.

Although war is not inevitable the signs are not looking hopeful for a peaceful settlement.

President Bush has initiated talks with Baghdad but only time will tell whether or not they are just a publicity stunt to cover American's preparations for war.

The militarists in Washington and London are predicting a short sharp conflict in which the Iraq army and

airforce will be crushed in Kuwait.

More than likely America and her allies will give Iraq a bloody nose but there is no guarantee that Saddam Hussein will immediately sue for peace.

Once started, war feeds on itself and develops a momentum of its own.

Unforeseen events throw into confusion the best laid plans of generals and the conflict escalates out of control.

Given the political instability in the Middle East an American attack

on Kuwait could plunge the region into chaos. Tens of thousands of civilians and servicemen would be killed.

Surely the best way to deal with the crisis is to allow the harsh economic sanctions imposed on Iraq to do their work and force Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait.

It may take 18 months for the sanctions to achieve this objective but that's far more preferable than a bloodbath in the Middle East.

David Lee