



STEPHEN ROCHE
ON WINNING, LOSING AND REGRET
IAN O'RIORDAN SPORT



MARY LOU'S OMNICRISIS
PAT LEAHY WEEKEND

THE IRISH TIMES

WEEKEND EDITION

€4.00 (€3.00 Northern Ireland)

irishtimes.com

Saturday/Sunday, October 19/20, 2024

Seasonal shift Calm before the storm

Barges tied up along the Grand Canal in Dublin yesterday. Met Éireann has issued weather warnings as Storm Ashley approaches. There is a possibility of coastal flooding. Report: page 3



Photograph: Tom Honan



Midlife career moves

The chef, the teacher, the writer

MAGAZINE

At 25, I'm recovering alcoholic
Mary Kate Harrington

AUTUMN GIVEAWAY
WIN
€1,000
HOTEL VOUCHER
SEE MAGAZINE



OPINION

Pressure grows over timing of election

Green Party leader rebuked for suggesting November 29th as possible polling day

Tánaiste calls for clarity on election date but 'this is something' for talks next week

PAT LEAHY and JACK HORGAN-JONES

The leaders of the Coalition parties will discuss the timing of the general election on Monday evening with expectations growing that a date at the end of November – or possibly early December – will be chosen as polling day.

November 29th was suggested yesterday by the Green Party leader, Roderic O'Gorman, much to the annoyance of Fine Gael, who pointed out it was the Taoiseach's constitutional prerogative to call the election.

A spokesman said the Taoiseach would engage with Coalition leaders before seeking a dissolution of the Dáil and triggering an election, adding that the Taoiseach "has consistently stated he will not do that through the media" – widely seen as a rebuke to his Government colleague.

While the calling of an election is the Taoiseach's responsibility, it is the Minister for Housing, Fianna Fáil's Darragh O'Brien, who will have responsibility for setting the date and deciding on either a three- or four-week campaign.

The Coalition leaders will discuss arrangements for rushing through necessary legislation in the remaining weeks of the Dáil. The Finance Bill – which gives effect to many budget measures – will need to be pushed through while other essential legislation includes the Appropriations Bill and legislation providing a three-year budget for the Houses of the Oireachtas, which also must be passed by year end.

That Bill was approved by the Government earlier this month. It includes provision for €565 million for the operation of the Oireachtas from 2025 to 2027, an increase of more than 20 per cent over the three years 2022-2024.

A series of supplementary estimates – essentially top-ups to the budgets of several Government departments – must also be passed in Dáil votes.

There is also a technical Bill necessary to underpin the

State's private health insurance market which must be passed before the end of the year.

The Dáil sits next week and then rises for a week for the midterm break, returning on Tuesday, November 5th.

Senior political sources ruled out cancelling the midterm break, meaning that all remaining Bills that are essential will have to be passed in the days after November 5th if there is to be a November 29th election. Sources say this is possible with extensive use of the guillotine – a parliamentary motion that ends the debate and requires an immediate vote.

Slip

The last possible date for the dissolution of the Dáil to allow for a November 29th election is Friday, November 8th. With so much legislation to pass through the Oireachtas in such a short time, some sources

think that the election date could slip into December.

A senior Fianna Fáil figure suggested December 6th as a potential date, noting it was the anniversary of the signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Meanwhile, a senior Fine Gael figure said it was now "almost guaranteed" that the election would not be held on the 29th, due to Mr O'Gorman's suggestion, and would not be announced next week.

Other sources said that they did not expect any announcement on Monday, but that the leaders would look at the practicalities of clearing the decks for an election.

Speaking in Cork yesterday afternoon, Tánaiste Micheál Martin agreed there was a need for clarity, adding: "This is something we can deal with next week." However, he was "not going to get into specific dates". "The bottom line is you either have it at the end of No-

vember or the beginning of December," he said, adding that February was the other option.

Asked if Mr O'Gorman had overstepped the mark by going ahead of him and Mr Harris, he said "politics is politics. I'm not too excited about it."

→ Miriam Lord's Week: page 5. Features: page 6. Mary Lou should have a word with Bertie: page 16. Editorial comment: page 17



The battle for black America

KEITH DUGGAN WEEKEND

State may sign up to 'Iron Dome' defence system

CONOR GALLAGHER

Ireland may join a planned international missile defence system, which has been dubbed "a European Iron Dome", under plans being considered by officials.

The European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) is aimed at significantly upgrading the air and missile defences of European countries. Polish prime minister Donald Tusk recently likened it to Iron Dome, Israel's anti-missile system.

Germany established the ESSI in 2022 in response to Russia's devastating long-range missile attacks on Ukraine. It will allow countries to jointly procure advanced air defence systems and co-ordinate their use.

The possibility of Ireland joining the ESSI is one option being considered by a civil and military team of Irish defence planners. It is one of several proposals aimed at dramatically improving Ireland's negligible air defences.

The Defence Forces operate out-of-date ground-to-air missile units and anti-aircraft guns which are of limited use against modern threats.

Crucially, Ireland also lacks a primary radar system capable of detecting airborne threats.

Sources said the work of the civil-military group is at a very early stage and that its focus is on procuring a military radar system, rather than joining an international air defence system.

However, membership of

the ESSI is one option being considered as part of long-term planning, sources said.

"Department officials are considering a range of European developments regarding air and missile defence while focusing on developing Ireland's own capabilities in this area," a Department of Defence spokesperson said.

Ireland has not yet been invited to participate in the initiative. Any invitation "will be examined in full cognisance of

Ireland's national policy in this area", the Department said.

Any decision to join the ESSI would likely be highly controversial, given the State's position of "military neutrality", which is based on non-membership of common defence organisations such as Nato.

Sources point out that Switzerland and Malta, both neutral countries, have recently signed up to the ESSI and that the system is intended to be defensive in nature.

Weather

Dry and sunny with the odd shower but rain will develop in the southwest after nightfall. Highs of 12-15 degrees.

THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2.
D02CX89
Telephone: (01) 9203900
Online: irishtimes.com
The recommended retail price of THE IRISH TIMES in the Republic of Ireland is €4.00
Subscriptions: Tel: (01) 9203901
Email: subscribe@irishtimes.com



Home News

High Court: the family of Aoife Johnston has settled an action against the HSE over her death at UHL two years ago: page 2

Courts: A woman spoke of the 'terror' she felt when she saw a man fall to the ground after being shot on a farm in Co Dublin: page 4

World News



Middle East: Israel has sent more troops into Gaza, dashing hopes of a quick end to the conflict after Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was killed this week: page 11

Business Today

Energy: Coolglass Wind Farm Ltd has asked the courts to declare that An Bord Pleanála has failed to approve enough green energy projects to meet 2030 targets: page 18

Tech: Donald Trump claims he got a call from Apple CEO Tim Cook about EU financial penalties: page 18

Sports Weekend

Rugby: Leinster have made seven changes for their clash against Connacht this evening in Galway with Rabah Slimani making his first start for the province

Soccer: former Ireland player Ronnie Gibbons has alleged she was sexually assaulted by Mohamed AlFayed

AN EVENING WITH
RICHARD DAWKINS
UK / EU · 2024
THE FINAL BOW:
HIS LAST TOUR ON THE ROAD
HOSTED BY ANDREW GOLD | HOSTED BY JOHN MCWHORTER
ULSTER HALL BELFAST | THE HELIX, DUBLIN
THU 14 NOV 2024 | FRI 15 NOV 2024
SOLD OUT
EXTRA DATE ADDED DUE TO DEMAND
SAT 16 NOV 2024
SINGULARARTISTS.IE | IDEATE | The Poetry of Reality