

MARY ROBINSON

When *Circle of Friends*, Maeve Binchy's novel about coming of age in fifties Ireland, was being adapted for the cinema, Binchy, who lives just south of Dublin, was often present at the filming. One afternoon, an actress took the author aside and told her how much she loved to do these old costume dramas. "Oh, this isn't costume drama," Binchy remembers telling her. "Costume drama is the French Revolution, it's...it's Regency England. Costume drama is about ancient history. This is just about growing up. It's about my youth." To which the actress replied, "Your youth is ancient history. There are no lines on the roads in this movie. People ride horses and buggies. They're scared of priests. This is costume drama."

She wouldn't have been right in, say, 1980, but she is now. The Republic of Ireland that still existed in pockets even twenty years ago—the Ireland of saints and scholars, the "priest-ridden" Ireland, the Ireland that missed the Industrial Revolution and the Second World War, the Old Sod, Romantic Ireland—is dead and gone. The most stunning evidence is the wealth of the place. Across the country, housing prices have doubled in the past decade, and in Dublin they've tripled, to an average cost of close to \$150,000. Ireland now looks and feels like America or Europe: Dublin's Grafton Street, even in the 1980's a hodgepodge of fancy department stores and seedy knick-knack shops and fish-n-chippers, has been bricked over for pedestrians, much like the main drag in an American "latte town." Its landscape—Burger King, the Body Shop, Patagonia—is one that any Valley Girl would recognize. In the rinky-dink market town of Mallow in County Cork, there's something on the main drag that looks very much like a strip joint. Even in rural County Kerry, pubs where you can drink espresso, eat *insalata caprese*, and watch "Seinfeld" on an 84-inch TV screen are not a rarity.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL is senior writer at the Weekly Standard.



♣ BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Prosperity, sex, and feminism are turning Ireland into a place like anywhere else. Under the wildly popular New Age president Mary Robinson, a procession of reforms

S NEW IRELAND



The country, as many of its natives say, is having its sixties, seventies, and eighties at the same time. Everyone talks about the New Ireland, as if they've just come through a revolution, and those who defend the "Old Ireland" are considered beyond-the-fringe troglodytes. When they talk in this vein, the Irish are not alluding to Intel's assembly plant outside of Dublin or Apple's in Cork. For the economic revolution going on pales next to the moral one—a source of exhilaration, optimism, and excitement, as well as instability, uncertainty, and occasional muttered warnings from the Old Irish of spiritual peril.

Defrocked Priests

For the biggest change in mores is the declining influence of the Catholic Church. Ireland is still the most religious European country; the preamble to its constitution still invokes the Holy Trinity. But polls show Mass attendance has fallen by a quarter since the early 1980's, and in European Union "values surveys," Irish scores are plummeting on such indices as belief in the afterlife and belief in the soul. As gauged by such soundings, the Republic of Ireland has dropped behind the Protestant north in many measures of piety. This year's entering class at the national seminary in Maynooth will produce only an estimated eighteen ordained priests—roughly a tenth of the level of thirty years ago. Irish religiosity has not been gradually on the wane: It receded by tiny degrees between Vatican II and the late 1980's, but since then the bottom has fallen out of it.

It has thus been tempting to chalk it up to a backlash against a few spectacular priestly scandals in the last few years. In 1992, Eamonn Casey, Bishop of Galway, was revealed to have had a long-standing affair with an American woman, to have fathered a child by her in 1974, and to have paid her tens of thousands of dollars in hush money out of diocesan funds. What was curious was the way rank-and-file Irish Catholics reacted. Casey had been the most prominent post-Vatican II leftist in the Irish church, one who repudiated the fire-and-brimstone of his predecessors in order to "modernize" the institution. He focused on animal

RAFAŁ OLBINSKI

R CALDWELL ♣

made the country seem at times like a Bacchanalian revel, at others like a Jacobin purge. Giddiness may have replaced traditional gloom, but there'll be a price to pay.

rights and “economic justice,” and took the side of “liberation” movements in the Cold War. What’s more, he did all of this on television, where he became something of a Phil Donahue figure. It was he who led the discomfitingly large protests against “U.S. imperialism” in El Salvador when Ronald Reagan visited Ireland in 1984.

Thus, in the wake of the Casey scandal, the church was inclined to attribute its problems not to any institutional stasis but, on the contrary, to a rogue figure from its touchy-feely fringe. It’s a defensible argument, but the public would have none of it, particularly when the problems kept mounting. When a priest dropped dead in a gay bathhouse in Dublin in 1994, the two fellow-patrons who tried to resuscitate him were also priests. Just as alarming as the incident itself was the insistence by several newspaper columnists and television personalities that the priest would have been far better off if he had “come to terms with his sexuality.” There have been a dozen more gay priest stories, and a couple more involving priests with offspring.

But all of them have paled next to the case of Brendan Smyth, which obsessed the country for years, an obsession that ended only with Smyth’s death late last summer. Smyth was arrested in Northern Ireland and indicted for several incidents of “buggery” (still the legal term here, as well as the tabloid one) involving dozens of young children in his charge. What frosted parishioners was the picture that emerged of church indifference and preoccupation with damage control: After every incident, it was revealed after the arrest, Smyth’s Norbertine superiors had simply moved him to a different diocese. In the event, the government did little better: In 1993, when Smyth fled an extradition order from the North, prime minister Albert Reynolds—a self-made discothèque-and-dogfood magnate who comes out of the pious traditions of Ireland’s largest party, Fianna Fail—failed to act promptly. His coalition partners bailed out on him, and his government fell.

Again, the reaction has been as telling as the incident, with Irish people overwhelmingly calling on the church to revise its teachings on sexuality, rather than condemning the individual offenders for deviating from them. In conversations with young Irish people, one hears rabid anti-clericalism, full of invective and loathing. In 1995, when Cahal Cardinal Daly, Ireland’s primate, went on a popular television show to present a conservative defense of the church’s disciplinary steps in the sex scandals, he was booed off the stage.

In August, Smyth died of a heart attack. For fear of riots, he was buried secretly by a handful of other priests in the middle of the night, by the light of a hearse’s headlights.

Enter Mrs. Robinson

In the absence of the church, Irish people have turned to the state for moral guidance. Given the Tammany-esque patronage traditions of Irish politics in which the party that paints the most

♣

This year’s entering class at the national seminary in Maynooth will produce only an estimated eighteen ordained priests—roughly a tenth of the level of thirty years ago.

houses and repairs the most windows wins, moral guidance is about the *only* thing the Irish haven’t sought from the state. But since her election in 1990, President Mary Robinson—who stepped down in September, two months before the scheduled

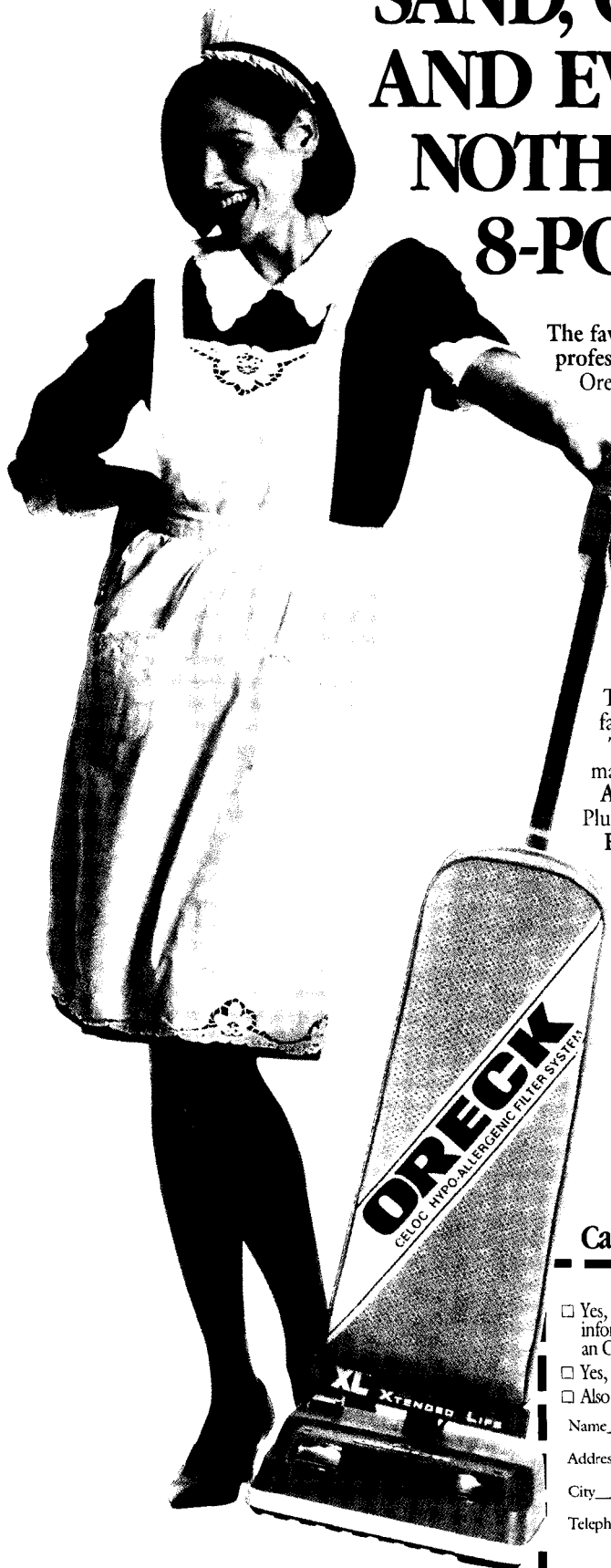
end of her seven-year term, to become the U.N. high commissioner for human rights in Geneva—has become the moral symbol of the New Ireland. Robinson’s election was a fluke: One of the other two major candidates was a Dole-like placeholder; the other was found days before the election to have sought in the previous administration to suborn the very office he was running for. Robinson, who made her career as a member of Ireland’s Labour party (a largely academic tendency that has virtually no laborers in it), won by a narrow plurality. But however accidental the vote, Robinson has become a towering presence in the country, often compared—in her influence, if not in her politics—to Eamonn de Valera, the Irish Republic’s Founding Father.

Constitutionally, the president is not permitted to speak on policy issues. But Robinson proved masterful at the combination of television stunts and therapeutic policies that mark the Clinton/Blair age—and exerted a powerful liberalizing force through a number of disingenuous appeals that infuriated more traditional parliamentarians. Throughout her term, she kept a low-watt electric candle burning in a window of the president’s official residence as a sign of welcome for members of the “Irish Diaspora.” She collected dozens of honorary degrees and had a thriving line in African misery. She broke into tears after a visit to a Somali aid camp, and actually published her diaries from the trip, which amount largely to an analysis of her emotions:

I had called for lateral thinking, for a new vision towards the peoples of Africa. The problem was how to energise commitment in a way that altered the whole equation....Analysing my sense of shame and outrage, I knew it arose from an inner sense of justice and equality....When we left Nairobi and took the long flight to Paris, I lay back in the plane, closed my eyes and wept quietly for a long time. I felt it was right to weep because I was grieving for the pain of a whole people....And then it was time to prepare for the visit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Robinson has a pitch-perfect understanding of the television-age politics that was exposed by the heartfelt grieving over Princess Diana. People see and hear so much of their leaders that they begin to mistake them for close friends, judging them on the basis of assumptions about their charm, or glamour, or niceness, rather than any beliefs they might hold or policies they might follow. But if Robinson has something of Princess Di’s power-politics-through-style about her, she also belongs to a type recognizable in the United States: the “rights agitator.” Descended from both the Catholic and Protestant Irish upper classes, graduate of a Paris finishing school, she studied law at

SAND, CAT HAIRS, DUST, AND EVEN DUST MITES, NOTHING GETS BY MY 8-POUND ORECK XL.



The favorite vacuum of thousands of hotels and more than 1 million professional and private users. Now you can use the incredibly powerful Oreck XL vacuum, with its special top-fill design, to clean your own home better than ever before.

Take the Oreck Challenge. We'll let you try the Oreck XL risk free for 15 days. There's no obligation.

The Oreck exclusive Filter

System assures hypo-allergenic cleaning with Germastat®. It's ideal for allergy sufferers.

With an Oreck XL there's virtually no after dust.

It's the lightest full-size vacuum available. It weighs 8 pounds. So stairs are a snap. Its powerful pile-lifting roller brushes revolve at an incredible 6,500 rpm to remove the deepest embedded dirt.

The Oreck Helping Hand® handle is orthopedically designed.

There's no need to squeeze your hand or bend your wrist. It's the favorite vacuum of those who suffer from hand or wrist problems.

The Exclusive Microsweep® gets bare floors super clean, without manual adjustments or any hoses or attachments to crack or break.

A full 10-year guarantee against breakage or burnout of the housing. Plus a full 3-year warranty on the Oreck XL, Xtended Life, motor.

Free Super Compact Canister. The 4-pound dynamo you've seen on TV. It's so powerful it lifts a bowling ball. Hand-holdable and comfortable. Cleans anywhere. With 8 accessories, and it's free when you purchase an 8-pound Oreck XL from this ad. However,

this offer is limited,
so act now.



FREE
GIFT

Call toll free **1-800-286-8900** ext. 29043

Or Mail In This Coupon Today 29043

- ☐ Yes, I want to learn how I can get my home Oreck clean. Please send me a free information kit without cost or obligation. I understand I will receive absolutely free an Oreck Super Compact vacuum with the purchase of the Oreck XL vacuum cleaner.
- ☐ Yes, Please call me to arrange a free 15-day home trial of the Oreck XL.
- ☐ Also include details of Oreck's 12-month Payment Plan. No Interest or Finance Charge.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____

ORECK

Nothing gets by an Oreck.

Oreck Corporation, 100 Plantation Road, New Orleans, LA 70123

R-2R

Trinity College but first became active in politics while attending Harvard Law School in 1967 and 1968. Robinson loved the style of politics reigning on campus at the time. As her fawning biographer Lorna Siggins puts it, “The clash between the [American] culture she had just come from and relished, which expected young people to get involved and to contribute, and [Irish] culture, was total.”

Americanizing the Emerald Isle

That is, Robinson—who, in the less diplomatic days before she became Mother of the Nation, once dismissed her country’s folkways as “the stagnant pool of Irish life”—sought to remake Irish politics in the image of the American left. In the early 1970’s, as a senator for Trinity College (under Ireland’s wacky representation system, senators are elected by the students and faculty of both Trinity and University College Dublin), Robinson set as her priorities the introduction of divorce, contraception, and abortion—all of them illegal at the time, and all of them legalized under her presidency. (Contraception was legalized in 1979 under strict regulation, but wasn’t freely available until 1993.) In 1986, she and other supporters of divorce had seen their referendum to introduce it blown out by a two-to-one margin, but in 1995, they put a second referendum forward. The “yes” side was favored by all the political parties, and backed with \$750,000 in government funds. Robinson was not allowed to endorse the measure. But to the dismay of such divorce foes as Billy Binchy (Maeve’s brother and a Trinity College legal scholar), she supported it with all the bully pulpit at her disposal, at one point saying, “Looking back over the last twenty years, I’m much more impressed with the *changes* in Irish society than [by] certain issues that still need to be addressed.”

Abortion, too, was legalized on her watch, although few Irish people and even fewer foreigners are aware that that is what happened. One in ten Irish pregnancies now ends in abortion—lower than our rate of one in four, but still much higher than the Irish generally acknowledge. The catalyst for introduction of abortion rights was the 1992 “X” case in which a 14-year-old girl, pregnant from a statutory rape by a family friend, and suicidal, had traveled to England for an abortion. When her father notified the Irish national police to ask if the aborted fetus could be used by prosecutors for a DNA match, the girl was ordered back to Ireland and restrained from leaving the country for nine months. It was in the wake of this event that Robinson forwarded a bill to the Supreme Court stipulating that young women would be permitted to travel outside Ireland for abortions if there was a “probability” that the life of the mother was in danger—from anything, including suicide.

It’s also thanks to Robinson that Ireland has gay rights laws as liberal as any in Europe, for it was she, along with the flamboyant senator David Norris, who put a suit before the European Court for Human Rights that would have pulled the rug out

♣

People see and hear so much of their leaders that they begin to mistake them for close friends, judging them on the basis of their charm, or glamour, or niceness, rather than their beliefs or policies.

from all of Ireland’s subsidie if it did not bring its statute on the matter into conformity with the other European countries’. Whatever the merits of the gay rights suit Robinson’s foes accused he of the kind of elitist jobbing o the legal system that ha

wrought so much harm in the country where she learned it. An uncharitable reading of Robinson’s reign, then, is that it has been a Hillary Clintonesque mix of well-meaning mush, leftist social policy, and a tactfully dissembled loathing for Ireland as it has always existed.

New Class, New Politics

And yet, there appears to be a large measure of no-means-yes in the Irish electorate’s stand on sexual issues. For even though abortion remains anathema and divorce divides the country right down the middle, Robinson has become the most popular—and most important—president in Ireland’s history, with approval ratings at 93 percent when she left office. Even the most conservative and cynical Irishmen give her such accolades as “She helped us get over our national inferiority complex” and “She put us on the map.” So a more charitable explanation for Robinson’s success is possible: Although a self-described socialist, Robinson has never been as interested in class issue as she has in gender, rights, and race. She is the perfect embodiment of a generation whose political priorities are not answered by the old, hidebound, non-ideological parties, which date from splits in the Irish Civil War of 1921-23.

Working to Robinson’s benefit was a gender aspect to Ireland’s politics, a tendency to view the church as a patriarchal institution that has systematically oppressed women. This is at best an oversimplification, at worst an outright inaccuracy. Even the most vitriolic and influential attack on church power, Tom Inglis’s 1987 *Moral Monopoly*, holds that the essential link in Irish society was one between women and priests to shut the country down sexually. Given the realities of immigration, which saw more women go abroad than men, Ireland has for almost all of this century been the only European country in which men outnumbered women—and sometimes vastly. The sad rural bachelors of William Trevor’s short stories, commuting to the pub on bicycles, are an Irish type. But, to update Chesterton, once you stop believing in the church you’ll believe in whatever the chicest ideology on television is. The result is that this country, always unusually sensitive to women’s wishes, now has a particularly radical, angry, and strident brand of feminism. Robinson has played this constituency to the hilt, setting up *Mna na hEireann* (Women of Ireland), a network of clubs of influential women all over the country, who are her primary political organizing base. Certainly the other political parties think her formula is a winner: all four of the party-picked and council-endorsed candidates to replace her in November’s presidential elections are women.

It’s tempting to see Ireland’s change as merely the result of a country developing its economy, and the erosion of religion as a

The Biggest Consumer Fraud In America

NEARLY 60 PERCENT of today's high school graduates enter college—an impressive number considering the fact that tuition rates have grown nearly three times as fast as inflation and twice as fast as the economy. A college education is, it seems, no longer a four-year expense; it is a lifetime mortgage.

What kind of return do students receive for their investment? According to national surveys, tens of thousands of college seniors do not know when Columbus sailed to the New World, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, or why the Civil War was fought. In one recent test, half of the graduates could not even interpret a simple bus schedule. No wonder higher education has been called "the biggest consumer fraud in America."

On many campuses, students pay as much as \$20,000 a year for the privilege of being crammed into classrooms of 500 or 1,000. Seldom do they come into contact with professors—most of their courses are taught by other students who are called "teaching assistants." And so few sections of required courses are offered that it takes them five to six years to complete their degrees.

One educator admits that all this "is a condemnation of higher education. If we were running an automobile plant, we would be out of business." He knows, however, that most colleges and universities stopped acting like businesses a long time ago. That's because they have gone on the dole. Government subsidies are their "bottom line."

But Hillsdale College refuses federal funds and federal control. The bottom line is success, not subsidies. Students are offered an outstanding four-year liberal arts education and intensive contact with talented professors who really care about them. The College's educational mission also extends far beyond campus to reach more than 750,000 subscribers through *Imprimis*. This free publication features some of the most important scholars and leaders of the day on timely issues of national interest.

IMPRIMIS—Hillsdale College's award-winning monthly speech digest of challenging ideas—is **free upon request**. Please sign up today and join our audience of more than 750,000 subscribers!



☐ I would like a FREE subscription to *Imprimis*.

NAME Mr. Mrs. Dr.
Miss Ms. _____

TITLE/ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE () _____

MAIL TO: *Imprimis*, Hillsdale College,
Dept. AS-4, Hillsdale, MI 49242

OR CALL TOLL-FREE: **1-800-535-0860**



predictable—if late-arriving—fallout of prosperity. But the New Ireland is more revolutionary than evolutionary, due paradoxically to the church's very clout. For the erosion of the church's "moral monopoly" creates not just a moral vacuum but a logistical one as well. In 1972, Ireland removed the article in its constitution recognizing a "special role" for the Catholic Church, but such a special role continues *de facto* up until the present day. Two decades ago, Ireland had no public school system, properly understood; the church controlled all primary and secondary education. Since then, government funding has been introduced piecemeal, but government control over schools has been asserted boldly in this decade, all of it in the direction of secularism. The result is ironic: Rightly or wrongly, the Irish boast that their recent boom is due to their "educated work force." But most of today's work force was educated in a school system that is being consciously disassembled.

This moral-monopoly problem leaves the church unable to play *any* role in the New Ireland without scaring people, and education is not an isolated case. Ireland never developed the institutions to mediate between the religious and the political that are enjoyed by other European countries where Catholicism has been less dominant: Catholic unions, Christian Democrat parties, Catholic sports clubs. Nor did it ever develop any non-Catholic conservatism. As David Quinn, editor of the weekly *Irish Catholic*, puts it, "It's impossible today to raise the slightest objection to any radical change going on in the country without being condemned as sectarian."

To Quinn's mind, the New Ireland carries a lot of the intolerance and dogmatism that its apostles attribute to the Old. He has a point: The Irish bring an unusual piety to their "post-Christian ideology." The extremism that Ireland's poets used to brag about—Yeats's "excess of love" and "fanatic heart"—has not disappeared, it's just been delivered up to the service of a new religion. There is, for instance, an unusual, almost liturgical, earnestness to the psychobabble one hears among teetotalers in pubs (which may also have something to do with the huge numbers of Irish people who, probably for genetic reasons, receive treatment for such psychological ailments as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia). But practically every *tendency* by which secular Westerners live gets enunciated by the New Irish as a sacred principle, and with a particular boldness. Sen. David Norris, for instance, doesn't just say that gay people need civil rights. He says: "We Irish must learn that every person has a right to sexual pleasure." Many Westerners behave as if that were true, and arguably most believe it. But it would be hard to find a politician outside of Ireland who was actually willing to say it.

Earning Green

This type of do-your-own-thing regime is, of course, easier to carry on in prosperous times, and to one who has been away from Ireland for longer than a decade, the prosperity is positive-

♣

**Robinson set as her priorities the introduction
of divorce, contraception, and abortion—
all of them illegal at the time, and all of them
legalized under her presidency.**

ly alarming. Any medium-sized town viewed from across fields appears as a forest of construction cranes. Dublin itself is reminiscent of some of the fairy-tale development stories one reads about Southeast Asia, and business analysts refer to Ireland unfail-

ingly as the "Celtic Tiger." Growth has been over 6 percent for most of the last decade—10 percent in 1995—to the point where Ireland's GDP per capita now exceeds Britain's, according to OECD figures. The U.K., in turn, looms less and less as an economic presence. Since the early 1980's, Ireland has gone from doing half of its foreign trade with Britain to only 25 percent—with other countries in the European Union making up 45 percent.

Where does the prosperity come from? Since joining the European Union in 1973, Ireland has been the cheaper of the two EU countries that speak English, and as the global economy has grown, speaking its language has been an increasing boon. True, Ireland remains the most centralized government in Europe, far more so than even France, with most big business decisions in the hands of the Dublin government and the public sector of the economy taking up over half of GNP. But the government has been canny in putting all its eggs in the basket of high-tech industry, offering a generous flat tax of 10 percent to high-tech startups. (These have come under attack from European Commission president Jacques Santer as "beggar-thy-neighbor" policies and "predatory taxation," and are likely to be frozen in the near future.) The country also has extremely favorable demographics for a European welfare state: with a median age of 25 and a free-falling birth rate, it has the highest ratio of workers to dependents in the EU, and this advantage is likely to persist for quite some time.

Some would argue that all the prosperity is based on handouts—on the billions of dollars in "structural funds" the EU lavishes on traditionally poor member states like Ireland, ostensibly to build roads. These grants, now at about 3 percent of GNP, have been as high as 7 percent over the last twenty years, and could be said to underwrite both the business tax breaks and a continuation of Ireland's preposterously generous welfare state. Thus, while Ireland's voluntary unemployment rate is certainly *zero*, with every shop, pub, and construction site you pass pleading for workers and promising high wages, the rolls still show 10 percent. Be that as it may, for the first time this century, there is a sustained net *immigration*, most of it made up of Irish people returning home—this in a country whose leading export was always unemployment.

Costs of Prosperity

Everyone is happy to see large numbers of Irish emigrants coming home to work, of course. They're less happy to discover that there's no reason for this influx to be limited to those who were born here. Ireland now has a tradition of immigrants that dates back to...oh, six months ago. There are several thousand Bosnians in Dublin, and the indications are they are not being received

graciously. They have a reputation for idleness and dole-sponging—a thoroughly undeserved one, if the Bosnian Community Project, a storefront office on Pearse Street given over almost exclusively to job-search services, is any indication. Then there are the approximately 1,000 Central Africans who have arrived in Dublin since the turn of the year. They stand out, they are even less popular than the Bosnians, and the papers are full of screeds about how they don't work and how the dole office is paying for 981 of them to live in bed-and-breakfasts while the Irish-born homeless are forced to sleep in less-cushy hostels. With even these tiny levels of immigration making the Irish so angry, one worries that Mary Robinson's first visit to Ireland as human rights commissioner may be an official one.

Robinson and other politicians of the left had previously latched onto Ireland's "travelling people"—the semi-nomadic gypsies of the Irish west who were known as "tinkers" in pre-politically correct days—as an underprivileged class over whom to wax lachrymose. Since minority issues are so amenable to TV-and-sympathy politics, these pols have taken to the new immigrants like ducks to water. Of the two girls chosen to bring flowers to Robinson's official farewell, one of them was African-Irish. The resulting ridicule came less from any resentment towards the girl than from the thought of how desperately Robinson's staff must have scoured the country to find her. Thus Ireland—the only country in Europe never to have invaded another—gets political correctness without ever having had anything to be politically correct about.

There has been a worrisome increase in violence in the country, with a record number of murders in Dublin this year. There's also a burgeoning drug trade. Social workers estimate that there are 7,000 heroin addicts in Dublin. That would seem to be a money-seeking exaggeration, but some of the most spectacular killings in recent times have been drug- and gang-related. In September, a legendarily violent enforcer for Dublin's Italian chip-shop mafia was knocked off. That same week, Irish police asked Britain to extradite John Gilligan, the largest marijuana importer in Dublin, for assassinating a *Sunday Independent* investigative journalist who had written about him. (The order is pending appeal.) And Paddy Farrell, the heroin kingpin of South Armagh, who had used IRA-linked guerrillas as smugglers and enforcers in that border area, was assassinated by his girlfriend while blindfolded for a sex game. The girlfriend, distraught that Farrell was planning to move to Miami with his wife, then turned the gun on herself.

The Irish are willing to pay an ever higher price for change. In part, one can't blame them. Separation of church and state is not a bad thing. Nor is a politics based on ideology rather than patronage. But a desire for American-style democracy does not seem to be what's driving the process into zealotry and excess. More likely the impatience has been created by years of being shut off from sex—that lifeblood of Western economies and cultures—while being bombarded by MTV and other advertisements for a more open society. The Irish seem to be under the impression that while they've been living in poverty with their huge families, the increasingly childless Occident has been spending all its money on mistresses, new cars, and trips to Spain.

A Contrary Mary

If that's true, then Ireland's revolution is one that's based not on the rights of man or on self-government, but on a bunch of grass-is-greener misconceptions, and it is far too early to tell whether Ireland will consider what it gave up worth what it gets. That's the subject of Mary Kenny's brilliant recent book, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland*. Kenny, a 1960's feminist who smuggled condoms into Dublin as a publicity stunt and introduced Mary Robinson to the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, supported many of today's changes thirty years ago. Now, however, she's not quite sure what has been gained, and she is appalled at what has been lost.

One can admit that the old Ireland was conservative and quaint, Kenny says. But that doesn't mean the current purging of Catholic influence on Irish life is either fair or advisable. Kenny notes that while the church was harsh, it was not insular; with its far-flung missionaries and its links to Catholic Europe, it was probably the most cosmopolitan force on the island. While it was rule-bound, many of its rules created a decent society, in which citizens were so scrupulously honest that they would write letters to devotional magazines asking whether it was a sin to have a bus ticket stamped twice. (Answer: Yes.) And because the Old Ireland is now being so systematically demonized, we can't know yet what the New one will look like. According to Kenny:

The most optimistic period in which to live is when a conservative society is becoming liberal. At this moment, it still has its moorings and its self-confidence; every window that opens on a formerly stuffy atmosphere proclaims a new dawn; every improvement seems for the best. For a short time, it is possible to imagine that the security and self-assurance of tradition can be maintained alongside the brightest and best of innovation. For a short time, people have the best of both worlds, before the stability of the old dissolves and the anxieties of the new invade.

Kenny is clearly thinking of Robinson when she warns of the delusion that one can meld the security of tradition with the best of innovation. For throughout her presidency Robinson sought to have everything both ways. She thought Ireland could produce more rock bands without producing fewer poets. She claimed a special role for herself in the Third World on the grounds that Irish missionaries have done so much for Africa, yet repudiated any teaching role for the church in her own country. She delighted in the new Irish-language television station, and seemed to find nothing droll in the fact that it spends much of its day airing rap videos. She liked to say—indeed, it remains her mantra—that Ireland must “continue to open up as a modern society while retaining the Irish qualities.”

Robinson is either deluded or Machiavellian. For the fact is that the “Irish qualities” she's talking about are *anti*-modern ones. Robinson and others have convinced the Irish that they ought to have a new, rich, televised, sexy society. Fine: there's no reason their wishes should be subordinated to those of a few wistful foreigners who want the country to remain quaint and archaic for tourism purposes. But Robinson never admitted to herself or to her people that getting to the New Ireland means parting with a way of life that, whatever its flaws, is old, noble, and in some quarters still much loved—and parting with it forever. ❧

THE REAL

ORRIN HATCH

CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW RIGHT. NOW NEW'S UNCONSERVATIVE
MAY BE THE LAB OF ORRIN HATCH'S REFORM, WHICH HOWEVER, WOULD
UNCONSERVATIVE THE NEW RIGHT WHICH IS A MOVEMENT AND A VIOLENT CONSERVATIVE
GO CONSERVATIVE CONSERVATIVE IS A MOVEMENT AND A VIOLENT CONSERVATIVE.

BY DAVID BROCK

Even in a period when conservatives are attacking one another with the fervor they used to reserve for the Clintons, the recent assault against GOP Senator Orrin Hatch by conservative movement leaders and the right-wing press stands out. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page regularly chides the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman for being too soft on Clinton nominees, impugns his motives. Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform (and a *TAS* columnist) labels a child health-care bill Hatch co-sponsored with Senator Ted Kennedy as "socialism." Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation calls Hatch a "liar" and says he needs "psychological help." And in a full-scale attack on Hatch's Senate record, *National Review* recently branded him a "Latter-Day Liberal," a sobriquet that the Senator considers to be not only false, but also a bigoted reference to his Mormon faith.

Ideologues typically reserve their harshest judgments for those on their own side who they see as turncoats. Since politics is the art of compromise, few Republican politicians, including such stalwarts as Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich, have been spared the sort of treatment Hatch has received of late. But Hatch's problem with the conservatives is not, as they have charged, that he "has grown in office," presumably moving in a liberal direction to advance his career since coming to Washington in 1976. Rather, it is rooted in their mistaking him from the beginning as a creature of the rigidly doctrinaire New Right.

In Hatch's first Senate campaign—his first political race—ties between Hatch and Beltway conservatives like Weyrich were a marriage of convenience. But as soon as Hatch took office, he showed he was too independent and not partisan enough to please his benefactors in the conservative movement. He quick-

ly crossed swords with Weyrich, who denounced him for being insufficiently vocal in opposing Paul Warnke, President Carter's nominee to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Hatch didn't want to dishonor the new president's prerogative in naming his own Cabinet with a brash partisan display. "One thing I am not going to be is a captive of the ultra-conservatives in Washington," Hatch told Weyrich two decades ago. To that pledge, Hatch has remained true.

As Hatch sees it, the tenor of our politics, especially in the once august Senate, has changed more than he has in three Senate terms. Before the GOP take-over of the Senate in 1980 and the emergence of the sound-bite attack ad, major bills almost always had Republican and Democratic co-sponsors. Today, the Hatch-Kennedy collaboration is seen as a strange aberration. "There used to be 62 Democrats and 12 of them were free-marketeers and socially conservative. Now there are zero," Hatch says. "Republicans have become more ideologically conservative, which is fine as long as it doesn't become an oppressive ideological dictatorship. When that happens, the party is insensitive to human needs and in some cases bigoted." The polarization, gridlock, and vitriolic rhetoric of the Senate has led thoughtful, ideologically eclectic members of both parties—David Boren, Sam Nunn, Bill Bradley, Warren Rudman, John Danforth, and Alan Simpson—to retire from the body in recent years. Few senators fit this mold anymore. To turn conservative suspicions on their head, if anything stands in the way of the media conferring such "statesman" status on Hatch, it would be his dogged adherence to conservative principles.

Surveying Hatch's Senate record, which has earned him a lifetime American Conservative Union rating of 92 (compared to 90 for the arch-conservative Strom Thurmond, and only 82 for Bob Dole), it is hard to see how it could be described as anything but rock-solid. He has been consistently pro-life and tough on crime, and has fought for an end to racial preferences and to enact the balanced budget amendment since he first introduced it in 1982. Since 1994 alone, Hatch was the prime force

DAVID BROCK is an investigative writer for *The American Spectator* and author of *The Real Anita Hill* (Free Press) and *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (Free Press).