

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Litter and a cost-cutting exercise

Sir — I have been struck by the number of letters to your paper on the subject of litter. Walking past two smashed Adshel shelters in Cornelscourt, Co. Dublin, the other day, I felt surely tis is an area where we could do better immediately and without too much effort. The glass from the shelters in question lay strewn across the pavement and road for a number of days posing a threat to children and elderly and an eyesore to any visitors.

I discovered through a number of phone calls that these shelters are completely Adshel's responsibility. Adshel recoup the cost of building and maintaining the shelters from the revenue generated from the advertising on the shelters (approximately £75 a week per poster). I contacted Adshel and enquired as to why they persist in using glass that can be smashed. They claim that alternatives do not work, perspex tends to discolour and can be set alight. When I asked why 10 millimetre glass is used rather than a smash resistant 15 millimetre plated glass the representative said that it is down to cost!

Given that Adshel shelters are popping up all over the place and the number of shelters installed throughout Dublin will rise to over 1,100 this year it is a problem that will only get worse. Also given that litter is usually a considerable problem around bus shelters it has to be asked is it acceptable that (unlike in other countries) a litter bin is not built into all these profitable Adshel shelters?

EOIN COSTELLO

Killiney, Co. Dublin

LIFE AFTER DUTY-FREE

Sir, — I recently passed through Dublin Airport on my return from holidays. I was struck by a large advertisement, which stated: "Aer Rianta Duty Free/Euro Bonus Shopping. Prices stay the same, just a new name."

Given the recent consternation in the Duty Free Association and its dire warnings about 2,000 job losses, it's ironic that business will continue as usual for shops in the former Duty Free locations. It shows two things:

1. There is life after duty-free for these businesses.
2. The fact that these businesses are prepared to continue to offer duty-free prices shows the large profits they were making for many years, courtesy of a concession made at the expense of the Irish taxpayer. — Yours, etc.,

EOIN COSTELLO,

Abberley,
Killiney,
Co Dublin.

12/8/99

All letters should be addressed:
Letters to the Editor, The Irish
Times, 10-16 D'Olier Street, Dublin

APATHY OF YOUNG VOTERS

Sir, — I read with interest a piece concerning a survey carried out by the National Youth Council of Ireland which found a high degree of apathy among young potential voters (*The Irish Times*, April 27th).

As a first-time candidate in the local elections for Fine Gael, when calling door to door I have made a point of asking young adults why this high degree of apathy exists. Some common replies I have received include:

1. On the polling date of June 11th the vast majority of newly qualified voters will be sitting down to the Leaving Cert maths and Irish papers, which pretty much ensures they will not have the time or the inclination to vote.
2. The whole decision-making process of local and national politics is so distant and remote that young adults feel there is no point in getting involved.
3. Young adults have the impression that local politics is the preserve of retired people with time on their hands.

To start to interest young adults in politics, the decision-making

process could be simplified and made more transparent. The State could encourage more involvement by students in local politics (get transition-year students to visit local council meetings, for a start).

It is a tragedy that, at a time when the input and idealism of our greatest resource (young adults) is most needed to breathe life into a jaded body politic, they feel the most excluded group in our political system. — Yours, etc.,

EOIN COSTELLO,

Abberley,
Killiney,
Co Dublin.

1/5/99

All letters should be addressed:
Letters to the Editor, The Irish
Times, 10-16 D'Olier Street, Dublin
2. Please include telephone numbers
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address. The same procedure applies
to letters by fax and e-mail. Letters
may be edited for length and clarity.
Anonymous or pseudonymous letters
will not be published. Nor do we
publish copies of letters to a third
party. We regret we are unable to
acknowledge unpublished letters.

ELECTORAL EXCITEMENT

Sir, — I have read many letters to your paper that complain of a lack of interest and excitement in local elections. As a first-time candidate in the Ballybrack ward of Dún Laoghaire, this is anything but the case! During the campaign I have been bitten by two dogs (requiring a course of three tetanus injections) and I have done a parachute jump in aid of Ballybrack Athletic Club.

One little girl answered her door and, on seeing my election rosette, asked me "Did you win a prize at the gymkhana as well?" After knocking another door, I saw a small boy's face pressed against the frosted glass momentarily. He ran into the kitchen to report his findings. Then the door slowly opened as he proffered a bottle of milk with the sentence: "My mammy said to say she's not in and she has nothing else for you."

Having read a piece in your paper about the apathy of young voters, I had the bright idea of ringing the local school with a view to getting permission to stand at the gates and give out leaflets. I rang the principal and started the conversation with an enquiry as to how things were going for her. I was told: "Fine, except we're having terrible problems with a flasher around our school gates at the moment."

On calling to one property with six-foot railings and an automatic gate we were very pleased to find the gates open. We called to the house, which was empty. To our horror, as we turned to go down the drive the automatic gates started to close. Despite a dash, we couldn't get out in time and spent the next 15 minutes trying to clamber over the wall.

However, some people saved us the bother of calling to their door with messages printed into their doormats, such as: "Oh no, not you again!" "Not today, thank you!" "GO AWAY!" Or, "Don't blame me, I didn't vote!"

So who said local elections aren't exciting? — Yours, etc.,

EOIN COSTELLO,

Abberley,
Killiney,
Co Dublin.

10/6/99

COUNTERING VOTER APATHY

Sir, — In the recent local elections I was elected to serve on Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. When I was calling door to door I promised, as a first-time candidate, to try and make the council more responsive to local needs and local concerns. I saw this as one of the ways I could tackle voter apathy in a practical way.

In "An Action Programme for the Millennium and Better Local Government", the current and previous government set out their commitment to the restoration of real decision-making and power to local authorities and local people. The Strategic Policy Committees (whereby elected members of the council and members of the local community were to sit together on committees to decide policy on local issues) were to be the cornerstone of this delegation of power to councils and the people.

Imagine my dismay to be informed, within the first couple of days of being elected, that the Minister had written to our council to suspend the appointment of chairpersons of all the Strategic Policy Committees. He stated that a commission had been appointed to review the operation of Strategic Policy Committees. We all know that the appointment of commissions to review operations is organisation-speak for: "Normal service should resume soon but don't hold your breath!"

I would ask the Minister to try to ensure the rapid re-implementation of the Strategic Policy Committees so I can look voters in the eye again and reassure them that things can indeed change for the better! — Yours, etc.,

EOIN COSTELLO,

Abberley,
Killiney,
Co Dublin.

10/7/99