



put norris into your Árás

January is not just a time for pointless New Year's resolutions - it is also a time when, lacking any real news, the pundits and hacks set about making their futile predictions for the year ahead. As a very wise Minister once said - Forecasting is difficult, but forecasting the future is particularly difficult.

Most forecasts have focussed on the possible date and outcome of a general election. I will not bother with such mundanities, except to look deeply into my crystal ball (available under cash plan B of BUPA) and predict the following. The Labour Party, unfortunately, will not suffer a major political meltdown and will retain more seats than others are predicting. The most likely outcome of the election is a Fianna Fáil/Labour Government. Two years into the Government Dick Spring will resign to become Vice President of the European Commission. Ruairi Quinn will then inherit the leadership of the Labour Party and set about his life's ambition of reintegrating the Labour Party into its true home in Fianna Fáil. This should happen about a week before Michael Jackson has the final operation and asks Martina Navratilova to become his husband.

While the General Election is important, the more important plebiscite this year will be the potential Presidential Election. I say potential as it all depends on whether President Mary Robinson and her *de facto* Vice President Bride Rosney decide to seek a second term. If they decide to go again then it is a racing certainty that no one will oppose them. However, if the President with a Purpose decides that there are other purposes she has yet to pursue outside this country, then we might have a race. Already there has been some pre-emptory speculation with John Hume's name being touted as a possible agreed candidate. Although he had scotched the rumour, his name remains in the frame and could be the bookies' favourite.

There are several potential challengers in the Fianna Fáil stables. The one-time forerunner Albert Reynolds is now a distinct outsider after his poor showing in the *Sunday Times* Chase and while David Andrews and Mary O'Rourke have been showing good form of late, seven years out on grass in the Árás is not as tempting as five years in the stirrups as a Minister. Fine Gael have picked some lame runners in the past. They have a potential thoroughbred in Peter Barry; however, the old workhorse Jim Mitchell and the shire horse Garret Fitzgerald cannot be discounted.

So who will be the Labour nominee? Realising that old Big Beard himself Fergus Finlay will have his mind on other things this year, the New Republic is proud to suggest a nominee. Here is a candi-

date who will capture the nation's imagination as Mary Robinson did last time. After having a woman (if you pardon the expression) as President, here is the next logical step. Led by the Artane Boys Band, I give you the New Republic's next President - Senator David Norris.

David Norris has several things in common with Mary Robinson. This makes him the perfect successor as he would represent both change and continuity. Both he and Mary Robinson were Trinity College academics. Both were Senators for the Trainers Panel. Both were Independents. In David's case the complete absence of any history with the Labour Party makes him the ideal Labour Party candidate. But why does David have to be nominated by the Labour Party, I hear you cry.

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Because otherwise he would find it difficult to get the requisite nomination from twenty serving Oireachtas members of four county or county borough councils.

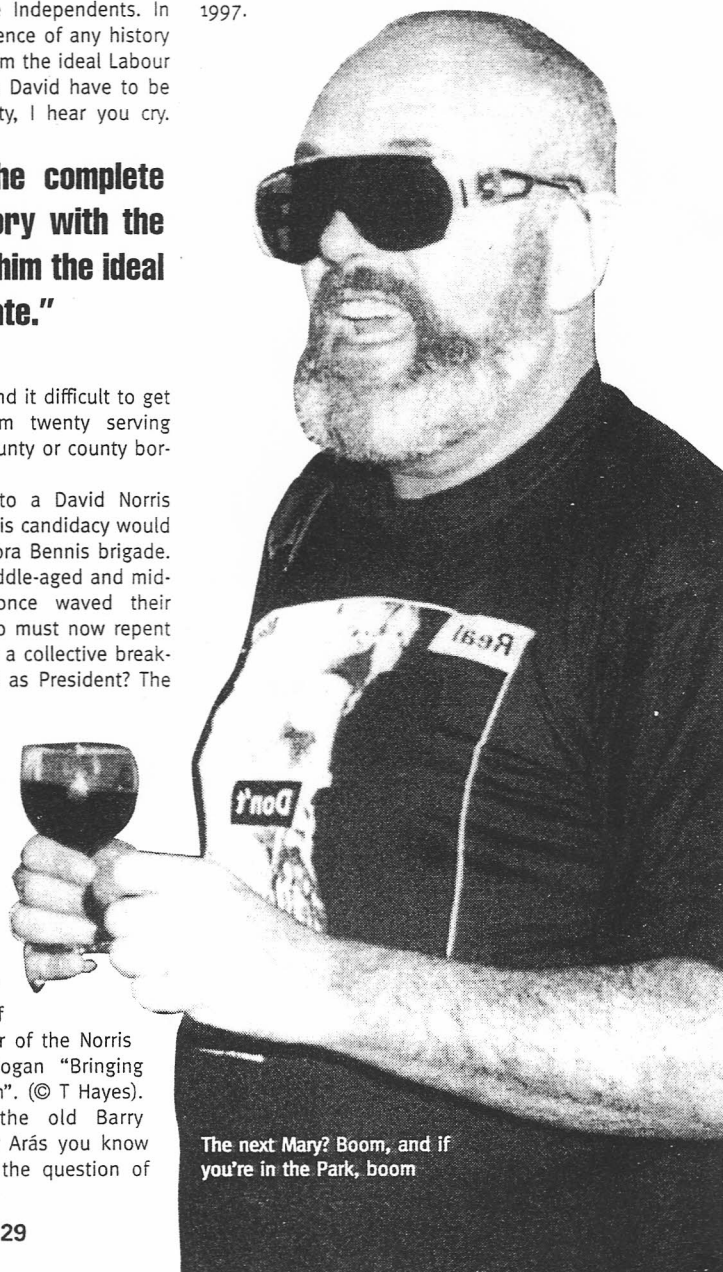
There are many advantages to a David Norris Campaign. Think of the terror his candidacy would strike into the hearts of the Nora Bennis brigade. Can't you imagine all those middle-aged and middle-class housewives, who once waved their knickers at Tom Jones and who must now repent for this evil fornication, having a collective breakdown at the thought of David as President? The thought of Norris in the Park would have them reaching for their rosaries and their canvassing brogues, ready to ring the doorbell and stuff the letterboxes for God and heterosexuality. I can hear their slogan now - "Don't put the Vice back in the Vice-Regal Lodge."

As if this was not a sufficient reason for him to run, think of the sheer joy of a supporter of David's being called a member of the Norris Camp or of chanting the slogan "Bringing Gaiety to the life of the Nation". (© T Hayes). Maybe we could re-work the old Barry Goldwater slogan to: "In your Árás you know he'd be right." There is also the question of

what he would replace Mary's light in the window with.

There is no doubt that David would be well suited for the job; indeed the job may be beneath his talents. What does being President entail? Your working hours are daily from noon to 2pm with an hour and a half off for lunch and you get to travel abroad when Dick isn't using the plane.

The New Republic has done its part, except to say that the nation must not deny itself the pleasure of a Queen's speech next Christmas Day. Happy 1997.



The next Mary? Boom, and if you're in the Park, boom