

AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

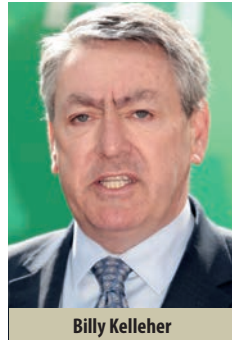


TRUMP ENERGY DEAL

URSULA VON der Leyen's recent trade deal capitulation to Donald Trump was humiliating on several grounds but the most farcical element was her promise that the EU would buy \$¾ trillion worth of US energy over three years.

This equates to \$250bn a year of fossil fuels. The MAGA regime has waged all-out war on climate science and on US climate action (partly a payback by Trump to his Big Oil donors) and now the US president is using the tariff threat to try to bludgeon Europe into undoing its climate action.

But this energy deal is never going to happen. The US exported \$318bn of fossil fuels last year, of which about \$75bn went to the EU. To keep Ursula's promise, the EU would need to more than triple its intake of US fossil fuel – and the US would need to stop selling it to almost anyone else.



Billy Kelleher

Also, the EU can't tell member states (or companies) who to buy gas from. And, crucially, gas demand in the EU has been falling due to climate action.

But even if only a fraction of Ursula's promise comes to pass, the deal can still do huge damage to EU climate action, especially because of the signal it sends to investors.

This farce is a timely reminder of the chaos and uncertainty Ireland will be subjected to if the Government gets its way. We're told *ad nauseam* that an LNG import terminal is vital for energy security, when in reality it would mean putting ourselves at the mercy of volatile global forces such as Trump.

Fianna Fáil MEP Bill Kelleher was at it again last week on RTÉ radio, arguing in favour of a state-led "strategic gas reserve". This proposed floating facility is effectively an LNG import terminal by another name. It would be naive to expect the facility would not end up permanently supplying the Irish market.

Kelleher's repeated use of the word "temporary" and references to "catastrophic events" involving our gas import pipelines from Scotland give the impression this gas reserve would be strictly for emergency use only. And our "climate commitments" mean it won't become permanent, he asserted.

This doesn't really tally with Kelleher's (and the Government's) unstinting support for a separate project, Shannon LNG, a private

commercial operation that very definitely would be a permanent import terminal for gas.

He even cheered on the granting of planning permission last March for a giant 600MW gas-burning power station next to the proposed terminal, calling it a "victory for common sense over ideological dogma".

During his radio outing last week, Kelleher had the gall to cite, as an example of our energy insecurity, the fact that poor old Jeff Bezos had to cancel a planned Amazon manufacturing plant in Dublin because it could not secure an electricity supply.

The biggest driver of energy insecurity in Ireland is data centres, and Amazon is one of the biggest players in that sector.

If Kelleher really wants to improve Ireland's energy security, he should try to convince the Government to stop allowing new data centres.

MEDIA COVERAGE of AI is strong on hype but invariably ignores its disastrous climate impacts. Listeners to Brendan O'Connor's radio show last Sunday were treated to a half-hour of breathless techno-optimism from RTE's favourite scientist, Luke O'Neill. Apparently AI will save us from everything – even from climate change.

Unfortunately, along the way O'Neill told listeners they should use ChatGPT more – even for booking a restaurant. An AI search uses 10 times more energy than a traditional web search and AI hype is causing a global boom in data centres, with disastrous climate consequences.

MIAMI MURDERS:
LOYALISTS
CELEBRATE

JULY 31 was the 50th anniversary of the Miami Showband massacre in which members of the notorious Glenanne gang – made up of UVF, RUC and UDR members – killed three of the band.

The gunmen were UVF/UDR members. Two of them, Harris Boyle and Wesley Somerville, died when the bomb they were planting in the band's minibus exploded prematurely.

A commemoration of showband players deaths was held at the spot on the recent anniversary. It was attended by surviving members and also, significantly, PSNI chief constable Jon Boutcher. There was widespread coverage by the media.

What also received coverage was a commemoration on Saturday August 2 of Boyle, one of the killers. Fifteen bands with 400 marchers and many supporters left Levaghery Orange hall and marched around the loyalist Killycomaine estate in Portadown. One of the bands was the Sons of Ulster Flute Band from Moygashel. Boyle's fellow killer, Somerville, was from Moygashel, where there

was a large parade for him in April. After Saturday's unveiling of a mural in honour of Boyle, the parade and supporters dispersed.

Unionist politicians regularly rail against IRA commemorations in the north but, while nationalist and Alliance politicians condemned the Portadown parade, unionist politicians had to be approached for comment. Only one, former UUP leader Doug Beattie, condemned it outright, saying it was "utterly appalling".

Sinn Féin's response from first minister Michelle O'Neill was that calls for the Portadown parade to be banned were wrong: everybody should have "the space to remember their dead" and do so in a "dignified and respectful manner." She didn't say whether she thought what was essentially a UVF march and new mural fitted her criteria.

The Orange Order said it was nothing to do with it, although organisers used an Orange hall as the assembly point. Bands get around accusations that they are UVF supporters by calling themselves the 36th Ulster Division Regimental Bands Association, referring to the 1912 UVF. They regularly drill in Orange halls.

Saturday's parade, coming so soon after the formal 50th commemoration of the Miami murders, threw a spotlight on the whole scene of loyalist or Orange marches, flags, murals and demonstrations, which receives little attention after the '12th' but continues unabated until September. Each weekend there will be 40-plus marches by the Orange

Order, Royal Black Preceptory or Apprentice Boys of Derry led by bands, many of which commemorate UVF and UDA figures, often with their name on the bass drum.

The vast majority take place in unionist districts and pass off peacefully. The last serious disturbances were 10 years ago in north Belfast, after which marchers gave up trying to force their way through contentious Catholic districts. Nevertheless, when parades

are planned, posters and flags are erected in mixed districts, some provocatively close to Catholic churches and schools. Posters with photographs of Somerville have been regularly tied to telegraph poles in and around Moygashel. They cause annoyance and distress to families of his victims – he killed several people in east Tyrone.

Nationalists are greatly aggrieved because the PSNI claim it's not its function to remove them but police remove racist graffiti. The PSNI also know removing UVF posters will lead to a tit-for-tat contest as the posters are replaced with twice as many. It becomes a game of whack-a-mole.

Boutcher says he's trying to get legislation from Britain extended to the north to give the PSNI extra powers to remove posters and prosecute those who affix them.

In the meantime, the attention Saturday's parade attracted has thrown into perspective the small number of sparsely attended IRA commemorations in the north compared with regular loyalist ones accompanied by bands with hundreds attending.



Doug Beattie