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Politicians fought the mná and the mná won

I WAS walking down a street near my home in south Dublin on Sunday afternoon when a large car pulled up beside me. The driver, a woman in her early 40s, rolled down the window and leaned out with her thumbs aloft. 'We got the No!' she said delightedly, 'We got the No!' And then she drove off, leaving me much perplexed.

She didn't look like a 'far-right' nutter. She didn't look 'confused'. She didn't seem ill-informed or misled. She didn't look like a downtrodden, oppressed, surrendered wife horrified at the thought of 'neglecting' her 'duties' in the home. And yet she must have been one, if not all, of the above, right?

Because she obviously voted No to the proposal to take the words 'mother' and 'woman' out of the Constitution. And as we've been told by our betters on the Yes side, the only reason women voted No is because they were ignorant, bigoted or just plain stupid.

Stampede

Since Saturday, there's been a stampede of experts to explain why we got it so wrong. It seems that if only the Government had done more campaigning, we'd have been dazzled by their cleverness and persuaded to do as we were told. It was all down to those pesky agitators on the No side spreading misinformation (and paying for it out of their own pockets, by the way) which the Government parties, all the Opposition bar Aontú, and all the NGOs with their millions of euro in taxpayers' money were just powerless to counter.

After all, it couldn't possibly be that women read the Government's proposal to remove Article 41.2 of the Constitution, didn't like it, and made an intelligent, considered decision to reject it. It couldn't possibly be that they trusted Senator Michael McDowell more than every member of the Government, Sinn Féin and Labour put together. It couldn't be that women prefer being described as 'women' rather than 'family care-givers'.

Of course not. The only explanation for such an overwhelming No vote – the strongest ever rejection of a proposed constitutional amendment – is that women are even more in need of saving from their own foolishness, gullibility and weakness than anybody realised. Honestly, they just deserve to be left chained to the kitchen sink since they're so ungrateful for the efforts of Leo, Roderic, Mary Lou and Ivana to rescue them.

That, at least, has been the narrative from the Yes advocates in politics and the media since Saturday's astonishing landslide for No. Personally, though, I'm inclined to take the whingeing of the sore losers with a large grain of salt. Since becoming accidentally involved in the No campaign, because I'd written a few columns calling out these referendums for the load of virtue-signalling, gesture-politicking, identity-griev-

ance nonsense that they were, I've spoken with a lot of women about their voting intentions.

I've spoken to women Travelers, for whom the role of the mother in their culture is paramount, as well as women barristers, businesswomen, neighbours, friends and strangers on the street. I've spoken to older women and teenagers and all ages in between, and I was bewildered by the polls that suggested



Snap happy? The family photo that has sparked a commotion

Kate needs to put us in the picture over her wellbeing

ONCE you start noticing glitches in that 'proof of life' photograph of Kate Middleton, now withdrawn because it's clearly Photoshopped, you can't stop. There's Kate's blurry right hand, while the rest of the image is sharp. There's the flawed pattern on Prince Louis's right sleeve – I very much doubt it was darned. But Princess Charlotte's kilt is the biggest mess of all: a bit of the fabric seems superimposed on her left sleeve, and there's another piece adrift under her right elbow too. It's like one of those 'spot the deliberate error' puzzles, and so far at least 16 mistakes have been identified.

And this was the picture that was meant to end speculation about Kate's wellbeing, not send it into a frenzy. Now she's issued a statement apologising for her own 'amateur' editing errors, but at this stage, nothing less than a shot of her holding today's newspaper will do.

an easy Yes win, because I was hearing the very opposite. Women were angry that their care of their families and households was being dismissed as demeaning, they were indignant that the reality of their lives was to be erased, and they were outraged at the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) for belittling stay-at-home mothers as somehow less worthy of representation.

But then the NWCI refuses to represent any women who don't believe men in dresses are fully authentic females, and it seems to me this massive No vote is the strongest statement against such woke bovine-manure that this country's women could deliver.

Patronising

And the parties and NGOs will compound their error, and deepen that anger, if they refuse to acknowledge the informed and sophisticated sentiment behind this result. Unless they credit women with a conscious decision, they risk making their reaction even more patronising than their campaigns.

Armed with just his knowledge, indignation and learned fluency, Michael McDowell almost single-handedly took on the Government and the Opposition, the publicly funded army of NGOs and the sneering certainty of the woke commentators – and he stood up for the silent women of Ireland.

The current blame game between the losing factions misses the point: if you are speaking the truth with passion and conviction, you don't need fancy campaigns, sound-bites and expensive posters. Women listened to Senator McDowell and they trusted him – they listened to the Government, to Sinn Féin, to Labour and to the National Women's Council, and they didn't trust them.

So take heed, folks: you mess with the mummies of Ireland at your peril. You fought 'mná' and 'mná' won.

Oscar swag bag is just a token gift

THERE'S the usual carping over the fact that the top Oscar nominees, including Cillian Murphy, were gifted €128,000 goodie bags on the night, as if they were in need of free holidays, skincare products and €1,600 designer wine coolers. Since they mostly seem to be vouchers, though, for Swiss chalet stays, Caribbean breaks, wellness retreats and 'clinical sleep consultations', I wonder how many will actually be used. Like most people, I suspect, I

have vouchers and tokens for meals, spa treatments and hotel stays lying unused or forgotten. A Marks & Spencer voucher, still tucked into the 'congratulations' card I got when my 20-year-old was a newborn, recently turned up in an old handbag. I'd say these celebs are just showered with invites that they never take up – if Cillian, right, feels like a Caribbean holiday, I just can't see him digging out his voucher and ringing up to see if it's still valid.



Rupert has no time to waste

RUPERT Murdoch was 93 yesterday, 'so he wants to get on with it', was the perfectly understandable reason offered by an aide for the scheduling of the media mogul's fifth wedding on June 1 next. He's just announced his engagement to a 67-year-old Russian-born microbiologist, Elena Zhukova, and the invites have already gone out to the lucky guests. This is his second engagement while the ink was

still drying on his divorce from Jerry Hall, so he is commendably willing to let hope triumph over experience and take another plunge – and in your tenth decade, let's face it, you might as well marry in haste if you're going to marry at all. Never mind the naysayers; hats off to anyone who is so clearly determined to squeeze every bit of joy out of life, and find every excuse for a party, until the very last moment.