

# **My own observations and interpretation of Enterprise Ireland and Ireland's FDI process**

© Maurice D. Landers 2014 (excluding external sources and references within)

## **Introduction**

Having received my prior two communications, you now have a starting point at least from which to begin questioning the authenticity of some Irish Government business practices. I'd now like to finish off by adding a little more context based on observations, including my own, of Enterprise Ireland in particular. Included within are some direct observations of Enterprise Ireland, some information on the project/companies we were proposing to bring into Ireland, and some general recommendations and advice.

My communications to you over the past month or so will offer me a sense of justice, since I have very little confidence that justice will officially be served in this matter, and I'd like it on the record. And I won't mention any names publically unless of course Enterprise Ireland wants me to.

The Irish Justice system leaves something to be desired. I'm sure many of you have heard of the recent resignation of Ireland's Minister for Justice and Equality for his mishandling of the police whistleblower case – yes, even Ireland's Justice Ministers' are having to resign, reflective of the seemingly many conflicts of interest that are so pervasive throughout the Irish Government. The Irish Government rarely admits to any wrong doing (unless of course the wrong doing is a few generations old, and the current Government is safely out of the way), so what chance do I or the Irish people have of getting justice?

But we can only live in hope that the new Justice Minister will focus her efforts on ALL Irish Government Departments by setting up permanent independent external bodies to oversee these Departments and Agencies i.e. a zero tolerance policy (do we not already have one?)

### *Enterprise Ireland's Email to me back in 2011*

Let me first say that I can't imagine any scenario where I could give the same excuse to investment clients here in the U.S. or anywhere in the world for that matter that Enterprise gave to me in its email reply to me back in 2011 (Appendix A, Email 2 that you already received in Part 1 and 2 – links below)

<http://www.failte32.org/2014/05/my-experience-of-bringing-new-investor-groups-to-ireland-and-irish-government-business-practices/>

<http://www.failte32.org/2014/05/part-2-my-experience-of-bringing-new-investor-groups-to-ireland-and-irish-government-business-practices/>

## **Direct experiences I have had with Enterprise Ireland that might support my concerns**

At the risk of sounding petty, nevertheless this issue is too serious to worry about that, when I reflect back on some of the direct experiences I have had with some Enterprise Ireland representatives, what I thought were aberrations in their behavior, when taken in tandem with the aforementioned possible injustice (prior communications to you - Part 1 and 2), now seem likely indicative of possible widespread serious inadequacies at least at Enterprise Ireland. From one Enterprise Ireland representative (our Enterprise Ireland point of contact for one of our investor groups) turning up late to meetings with a client of ours and potential investor in Ireland, to that same representative saying to the group on more than one occasion that they would like a job out of it if the potential investor was successful in getting Irish Government support, and then trying to pass the remark off as being flippant by retracting it immediately. What do you call this? Said once, very unusual, but twice? If these representatives spent less time looking for a job out of it themselves, they may be able to create more jobs for the people they're meant to be finding jobs for.

I remember being told by two other Enterprise Ireland representatives while they were fully immersed and indulging in the social proceedings of the evening (always a good time to pick up info from those who so easily let their guard down in business) and taking time out to smoke a cigarette outside the London hotel where my group was staying to attend an Enterprise Ireland investor conference, that Enterprise Ireland doesn't like to deal with third parties (i.e. investor groups like ours) that interface between Enterprise Ireland and the company considering setting up operations in Ireland. I wonder why? Well they don't mind us introducing them to these companies and spending our own money attracting these companies to Ireland, companies they would otherwise have no clue ever even existed - but ultimately they don't like dealing with us even though they invited us to the investor conference above. And perhaps when they heard that we intended to act as independent fiduciaries to ensure that any funding awarded would be spent appropriately, it had the effect of striking the fear of God in them? (I know, tell you something you don't know). I must have naively thought that we were all trying to do what's best for **Ireland** now that they need everything they can get?

Myself and another colleague in our investment group were at the reception desk checking out of the same hotel very early the following morning, you know, after having been wise enough (perhaps it's old age) to get a good night's rest after spending an appropriate amount of time socializing the night before, when who did we see arguing with one of the hotel staff - you guessed it - none other than one of the above representatives from Enterprise Ireland who seemed to have been socializing all night. The poor crater (please excuse my use of Irish slang to describe the Enterprise Ireland rep) was being told that he like everyone else had to wait until opening hours to get breakfast, something you dare not say to somebody who works in the alternate reality known as Enterprise Ireland. I felt sorry for the poor young woman who had to deal with this outburst, understanding myself what it's like to work and make a living in the hotel service industry for many years both in the U.S. and abroad dealing with people like this.

I wish those representing Ireland in a formal capacity would know better than to act this way, particularly when the Irish taxpayer is most likely footing the bill for their flights, rooms, meals, perhaps drinks, perhaps dirty laundry and whatever else some of these prima donna's spend Irish taxpayers' money on at these investor conferences, during the height of the financial crisis mind you (p.s. although invited by Enterprise Ireland to this conference, I paid my own expenses).

**Rule no. 1:** Never become one of the party goers in a public event that you're hosting, especially when the Irish taxpayer is paying the bill.

I could go on about one or two other incidents that would certainly compel you never to trust introducing some of these Enterprise Ireland guys to your contacts/relationships lest they try to invite them all away from you, but I think you get the picture.

I will mention though one most unusual reply I received, unrelated to the above, from a TD (member of Irish parliament) in response to a Failte 32 email/newsletter announcing one of its new strategic partners and the unique way it may be able to help some of Failte 32's former affiliated organizations reach new charitable donors. The email reply has no words, just two \$ (dollar) signs, one on top of the other, and below the other the email is signed using the letter J, the first initial of this TD's first name. So what was this TD trying to tell me? Maybe this is usual reply protocol for Irish Government TD's?

**So now having detailed some of my personal experiences, how does an Irish Government agency such as Enterprise Ireland stand up generally to scrutiny based upon the documented performance of its mission, or lack thereof, on behalf of the Irish people?**

Although I can't go into much detail (maybe I don't have to) in this story on the performance of Ireland's enterprise agencies, I will refer you to some FINFACTS links below.

[http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article\\_1027089.shtml](http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article_1027089.shtml)

[http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article\\_1027251.shtml](http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article_1027251.shtml)

[http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article\\_1024185.shtml](http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article_1024185.shtml)

and its blog <http://www.finfacts-blog.com/2013/06/irish-economy-political-control-of.html>

Suffice it to say, the performance of Enterprise Ireland since it was established does not justify its existence in my opinion. It's questionable whether it has had any meaningful impact on job creation versus a scenario where Enterprise Ireland never existed, particularly since 2000. And client firms of this state agency, which is responsible for Irish indigenous firms specifically in the internationally tradeable goods and services sectors, export only around 10% of total annual Irish exports. This figure is most likely less at 9 or even 8%.

You will frequently hear Enterprise Ireland quote their performance in numerical terms (thousands of jobs!), when instead percentage terms should be used to give you an actual performance reference point – perhaps they just forget? And the use of superlatives over substance often times by Enterprise Ireland when describing its plans to transform (yes, again) the Irish economy into the greatest innovative smart global economic hub the world has ever seen, only seems to serve to distract attention away from its lack of success so far.

If Enterprise Ireland was a private company operating in the private sector, it might very well have been out of business long ago. Enterprise Ireland, although established by the Industrial Development (Enterprise Ireland) Act 1998, actually superseded two earlier bodies: Forbairt and An Bord Tráchtála (always a good strategy to change the name of underperforming entities) which were established in the very early 90's. In fact, Enterprise Ireland's beginnings trace back to Córas Tráchtála (my apologies to all

non-Irish recipients of this email for all the long Irish words...I get confused myself sometimes!) which was founded in 1959. That's a long time ago, and all Enterprise Ireland has to show for it is an export performance of a meager approx. 8-9% of total Irish exports!

*So what accounts for the more than 90% of Irish exports?*

At the other end of the spectrum, "Foreign-owned firms, mainly American, are responsible for about 90% of Irish tradeable exports and it's in the mid-90s in respect of services exports according to Forfás, the public policy advisory agency." Source: Finfacts

I don't mind foreign-owned companies using Ireland to access European markets. We should be proud of this. However, due to the 'Double Irish Arrangement', 'Dutch Sandwich' and Ireland's low 12.5% corporate tax rate, some **large** multinationals with operations in Ireland have clearly demonstrated that they can in effect significantly minimize their corporate tax rate to low single digits, resulting in very little going into Irish tax coffers.

Ireland is now joined with The Netherlands, Switzerland and Luxembourg as the main European countries providing American companies with tax-haven type services. Source: Finfacts

Foreign-owned multinationals should not be allowed to use Ireland to facilitate the compromising of sound business and financial practices, just because they're going to throw a few jobs our way. We're better than this. They should have to contribute their fair share from profits and taxes, support the creation of indigenous industry, and treat Ireland as a long-term investment. **Intel Ireland** is a great example of this, and we should all be very proud of the Intel Ireland business model and its world class manufacturing operation located in Leixlip, Co. Kildare. I used to make frequent sales call-in's to Intel Ireland during my time as a Sales Engineer, before the plant was even fully up and running, in an effort to win business supporting their wafer fab facilities. The presence of Intel Ireland was certainly an important hiring consideration for my position, during a period of high unemployment in Ireland, so I can certainly speak to the importance of attracting the right types of multinationals to Ireland.

We can't grant large multinationals access to Europe and then let them wipe their feet on us on the way over to the mainland. While this may provide jobs, arguably many of which are precarious (subject to consolidation and/or relocation whims of the foreign-owned multinational) and in administration and call centers if in the services export sector, can we not after all these years come up with a better

strategy that develops us 'within from without' (use FDI to develop our indigenous industry)? Why have we sold ourselves out this way? Why can't we attract smaller foreign owned startups that will seed indigenous growth of Irish industry?

There are plenty of fish in the sea i.e. international oriented companies to attract to Ireland, so why should our Government feel it necessary to look the other way when it comes to the overriding intention of certain larger multinationals in choosing Ireland as a host location. One thing I have learned when it comes to winning business (and this can be applied to FDI) is that it's all a numbers game. The more international companies you prospect, the greater the number of qualified leads you will find. Apply this strategy, and Ireland will never be dependent on the whims of larger foreign corporations.

These large foreign-owned corporations can up and leave anytime they want, creating a significant economic shock in local Irish communities. Aside from direct employment by these companies being lost, many small local family businesses that have built up around them go out of business, multiplying the economic effect particularly in terms of lost jobs.

Remember Dell Computers moving its Limerick production operation to Poland in 2009. This was a very profitable operation for Dell, and yet when Poland dangled an incentive carrot in front of it (a new facility and cheaper workforce), Dell bolted Limerick like there was no tomorrow, and down went 18 years of local pride and support, and a significant percentage of Irish GDP to boot (yes, one of these multinationals can significantly impact Ireland's GDP, even to the extent of a few %). How much money was spent in terms of Irish Government incentives to attract and keep Dell in Limerick before it up and left?

The danger of attracting large multinationals to Ireland or any country for that matter as a basis upon which its long-term jobs strategy depends is that many of these companies are beholden to the bottom-line even when they're making so much profit they don't know where or even how to spend it, and are habitually restructuring their organizations including along geographical lines to take advantage of foreign Government incentives, a kind of FDI arbitrage for lack of a better analogy. This does not bode well for a small open economy like Ireland.

Development of Indigenous industry on the other hand provides businesses that are firmly rooted in their home country over the long-term.

[http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article\\_1026577.shtml](http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article_1026577.shtml)

**Conclusion: It should be the other way around** where indigenous industry accounts for over 90% of exports (and jobs) and larger foreign-owned corporations the remaining 8-9%.

## **Recommendations and advice**

### *Why two Irish Government enterprise agencies?*

In my opinion Enterprise Ireland should be folded into IDA Ireland, the Irish Government agency responsible for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ireland, which itself should be restructured to include as its primary responsibility the development of indigenous Irish industry. Let's be honest, only IDA Ireland has the resources and capabilities to leverage indigenous industry in Ireland. IDA Ireland's strength and expertise lies in attracting foreign companies to Ireland (many being larger multinationals) and so it is well versed in engaging with international companies. Its focus now should be to attract primarily smaller internationally oriented high potential startup companies (HPSU's) that can seed indigenous growth, and it is already making efforts and progress in this area. And it should easily be able to leverage this same expertise to also assist indigenous Irish companies develop their overseas markets, and in a more efficient and effective way than through a separate Government agency such as Enterprise Ireland.

By consolidating these two Government agencies, you also eliminate what Government agencies are notorious for which is a lack of collaboration and information and resource sharing between agencies. This can have a significant effect on each agency's performance (and taxpayer funds!). When you think about it, if an individual like me, in my spare time and without day to day access to the resources of a Government agency, can attract excellent inward investment opportunities to Ireland to potentially seed indigenous growth in its important industries, then it's clear that this type of competency is not exclusive to Enterprise Ireland, and IDA Ireland should be perfectly sufficient to provide and support this type of competency without the need for another separate enterprise agency. It's not rocket science...it's just selling! Therefore the Irish Government needs as many sales people at this 'new' IDA Ireland agency as it has academics.

Over the years I have also heard reliable anecdotes (Ireland is a small world) of under productive Enterprise Ireland offices, and although there are some great people working at these offices, this on its own does not justify their existence. And high performing staff at Enterprise Ireland can be easily transitioned to the 'new' IDA Ireland.

I actually believe even Enterprise Ireland would agree with the above (not publically of course) that the agency should be folded into IDA Ireland's mandate. Why do I say this? Because the Innovation Fund Ireland program (IFI) blurred the lines between the individual mandates of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. The IFI program was in effect a FDI process which should have been under IDA Ireland's mandate.

Let me explain further. When I asked Enterprise Ireland, before the IFI program was in operation, what our group's prospects were of winning Irish Government funding (on behalf of the U.S. life sciences company we were trying to get to set up operations in Ireland), I was told that the problem with our group's proposal was that it did not fit neatly into either agency's mandate. It seemed to fit in between the mandates of both Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. I therefore believe that our unique life sciences proposal gave Enterprise Ireland the idea to establish the IFI program, and provided it a way to bring

into Ireland projects similar in concept to our life sciences project i.e. FDI oriented projects (and win a bigger share or allocation of the overall Government economic development budget/expenditure, and justify its relevance as a separate enterprise agency), but all this resulted in was a support structure (IFI) that in effect overlapped and duplicated the mandate of the other Irish Government enterprise agency, IDA Ireland.

Therefore, Enterprise Ireland clearly knew at that time that its mandate had evolved to the point that it was now similar to, in large part at least, the mandate of IDA Ireland. I don't know why Enterprise Ireland would not just have handed over the development of our project to IDA Ireland, but being a competing agency, I assume such an idea would probably have been blasphemous. I recall sending an email to our Enterprise Ireland point of contact for one of our investment groups, where I was trying to seek clarification and confirmation of a possible alternative funding source for our proposed project through IDA Ireland, which would have resulted in a different capital structure for our project than that of a VC fund (Enterprise Ireland's mandate includes VC funds). The reaction I got from the Enterprise Ireland point person on a follow up phone call (requested by the point person) was such that I was almost lambasted for even suggesting such an alternative, indicating to me that Enterprise Ireland was more concerned about losing complete authority over our project to IDA Ireland, and perhaps therefore its ability to justify to the Government a budget for the IFI program.

Incidentally, as per one of my emails to the Taoiseach above (in first email communication I sent to you), the IFI program sought applications that very closely matched our own life sciences proposal to the Irish Government. Unfortunately, our group's chances of being awarded funding were limited by the Tier 1 criteria/objectives of the IFI program. Our life sciences group, although proposing to bring very experienced fund managers including a CEO who is now widely recognized as the "pioneer" of the small company biotechnology industry in the United States, was not tier 1 as the group itself was technically a startup Irish Venture Capital fund. I'm still amazed that our project, which I believe spurred the idea for the IFI program in the first place, had its prospects for funding severely curtailed or excluded altogether under the program, but more so that we would be invited to apply to the IFI program by Enterprise Ireland when they possibly knew full well that they were not going to fund us. But that's a separate issue and we'll live to fight another day, hopefully the next time with institutions less characterized by at least unprofessionalism, ambiguity and contradictions.

Before getting back to my original point, I'd like to briefly describe what our life sciences project was proposing to bring to Ireland – we were going to bring **actual and immediate** companies and intellectual property (IP) to Ireland. The U.S. life sciences company (parent company) our investment group had engaged with planned to establish a European Headquarters in Ireland with an Irish Corporate Development office. The parent company had immediate access to many viable close to commercialization stage companies/molecules ready to bring to Ireland, with the intention of jumpstarting a commercialization stage biotech industry in Ireland. These companies/molecules had already benefited from considerable investment. The new money going into these companies from Iverna group (our investment group) would have been spent to move them forward in Ireland, bringing greater immediate benefits to the Irish economy relative to starting companies from scratch or funding earlier stage technologies.

***Iverna Group's Objectives included:***

☒ Establishment within two years of 4 to 7 export oriented biotech HPSU's in Ireland (when we first introduced this U.S. life sciences company to the Irish Government, we had proposed to bring even more (greater than 10) companies/IP to Ireland).

☒ Initially creating at least 250 high value knowledge based jobs, to be followed by at least 1000 high value jobs in the commercialization stage.

☒ Bringing additional biotech investment to Ireland through public and private follow on fundings of portfolio companies.

☒ Return of at least 25% net per annum to the Irish Government over a 6 to 8 year period.

The parent company has a proven track record of raising funds and generating superior returns over the past 20 years. Its unique blend of private market fundraising prowess, and successful public market fundraising through IPO's and in the secondary markets have allowed companies created by it to raise billions of dollars to move their products forward.

As an integrated drug development company and merchant bank, the parent company has created several dozen biomedical companies across a broad range of therapeutic indications in the 20 years since its inception, including 18 companies that currently trade on the public markets with billions of dollars in combined current market capitalization. Since its inception, it has generated substantial capital appreciation for investors in many of its companies, and investors in certain companies have generated returns equal to many times their initial investment. Many of its Incubated Companies have exceeded a \$500 million market capitalization and several have exceeded \$1 billion or more.

But back to my original point - what's the purpose of an Irish Government agency like Enterprise Ireland if all it does is duplicate the role of another Government agency. We can't waste Irish taxpayer's money this way. There is significant risk and cost to the Irish taxpayer in setting up a Government support program (IFI) that awards funds to a foreign entity, where the foreign entity is allowed to take these funds out of the country with little or no obligation to reinvest any of these funds back into Ireland i.e. Euro 50 million in this case. The Euro250 million budgeted for the IFI program Euro could just as easily have been allocated to IDA Ireland as part of its allocation of FDI resources, within the overall Government economic development budget, and I have no doubt this agency would have made better use of it.

In fact, IDA Ireland set up an Emerging Business division to attract smaller companies to Ireland, which is exactly what its mandate requires, so why is Enterprise Ireland overlapping this effort? Because it's probably clear to Enterprise Ireland that it has failed to develop indigenous Irish industry in any meaningful way. This new Emerging Business division of IDA Ireland seems to have a credible plan, when I last discussed it with them, to significantly impact the growth of indigenous industry in Ireland by attracting FDI to seed indigenous Irish companies. And the point on the learning curve reached by this

new division since its establishment a few years ago will make it easier for IDA Ireland to absorb Enterprise Ireland into its fold, thus saving the Irish taxpayer a lot of duplication and significant waste.

### *Culture within the Irish Government*

“Changing an organization’s culture is one of the most difficult leadership challenges.” Source: Forbes

Organizational culture is a very complex construct, and can take many years to change. When politicians negatively refer to culture in their country, don’t mistakenly believe that there is a problem with the culture of the people of Ireland i.e. societal culture, which is what the politicians would like you to think, rather they are really referring to the culture of the organizations and institutions within Ireland, including the Irish Government.

According to the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) referring to comments he made recently at his Fine Gael party’s annual conference on a more sustainable Irish economy going forward “This is a plan based on enterprise, not on speculation. I want you to know we are never going back to the culture that almost destroyed our country”.

And that sounds very nice....I just hope when the Taoiseach uses the word “enterprise”, he’s not referring to Enterprise Ireland. And after my experience with Enterprise Ireland, it seems we never left “the culture that almost destroyed our country”. With all due respect to the Taoiseach, I hope he understands, having some knowledge and experience myself of ‘culture’ in a corporate context, that culture is not something that changes overnight. Major corporate mergers have failed due to the inability of their respective cultures to synergize, or even gel to some extent. I don’t think the Irish Government has any understanding of ‘culture’ in the context of large organizations, never mind on the scale of a Government, however small. Numerous books have been written on this subject, and it is still one of the most important strategic concerns for corporations considering for example a merger or takeover. The culture the Taoiseach is referring to has not changed in practice, and however well meaning the Taoiseach’s intentions may be, it will take a lot more than rhetoric and token gestures by his Government departments and agencies to change it. If I were the Irish Government, I would seek advice from people such as Michael Porter (Bishop William Lawrence University Professor at Harvard Business School), a world-renowned expert on the subject, and from large or even small corporations with some experience in this area.

### *Is there corruption within the Irish Government?*

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2013, Ireland is ranked 21st out of 177 nations (25th in 2012). Ireland is not that far ahead of a country like Botswana, which for a developing African nation with many other significantly corrupt African nations surrounding it, is an adequate result, but for a 'developed' nation like Ireland, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves to be so close to this country in these rankings (and that’s not a criticism per se of Botswana, which has the lame excuse of being a developing nation). How can we as a people counteract nepotism and political

dynasties in Irish politics, and retain greater influence in Government affairs after our vote has been cast?

Until Ireland is at least in the top 5 of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions rankings, I'd be reluctant to engage with certain Irish Government agencies. We simply can't go on accepting the inappropriate behavior implied by these rankings just because Ireland is in desperate times and the mission of certain agencies is to develop Ireland economically, if all that does is exacerbate the possibility of corruption. Corruption thrives on desperation.

We need serious oversight of all our Government agencies to regain trust in our economic and political system. We're too small a nation not to have serious oversight particularly of Government agencies that are responsible for the awarding of significant taxpayer funds to **foreign-owned** companies. If the Garda Siochana (Irish police force) needs oversight through an independent Garda Siochana Ombudsman Commission (GSOC), I see no reason why these other public agencies should not have similar oversight.

*If you're a potential investor...*

I would still recommend Ireland to foreign corporations (smaller-sized) as a place to set up operations, but now I'd tell them to initially avoid going through Irish Government enterprise agencies, and instead go direct to the Irish people and indigenous Irish companies and industry, and directly set up strategic alliances and partnerships with them. This will accelerate the growth of indigenous Irish industry, and give these now stronger indigenous Irish companies more leverage if subsequently they decide to explore support facilities provided by the 'new' IDA Ireland (with Enterprise Ireland folded into it) to further scale their business.

I must clearly differentiate between the Irish people and the Irish Government. Your first consideration when exploring the setting up of an operation in Ireland should be its people. You will not get an accurate feel for the private sector and Irish workers in general by first going through the Irish Government, as it is geared more towards attracting investors primarily using financial incentives, which is not the best approach (when you think about it, why would you first go to the civil service to ultimately engage with the private sector?). Financial incentives should be ancillary to what is the most important incentive and asset a country such as Ireland has to offer - its people! You won't find a better educated and skilled workforce than the Irish people. Treat the Irish people fairly, and they'll reciprocate ten-fold, and the Irish people are highly innovative if given the opportunity. Financial incentives will pale in comparison.

*How can we the Irish and Irish American people play our part? This is important too*

I can only convey to you my own community experience stateside that might shed some light on this.

I've been very fortunate to have been welcomed into many Irish American community organizations since arriving in the U.S., including the Limerick Society NY, United Irish Counties Association NY, Irish Network NYC, AOH and many others. These organizations prepared me well to jointly develop the Failte 32 (Failte32.org) initiative, and have enabled me to see first-hand how members of the Irish American community have been able to at times very effectively influence Government officials in a positive way supporting a range of issues pertinent to the Irish American experience.

It took the formation of Failte 32 to set precedence for the creation, shortly thereafter, of an Irish Government funded program to support J-1 visa holders. We didn't expect this to be honest for such a simple initiative, and we were very happy with this development, but it just goes to show you how easy it can be sometimes to influence the Irish Government, whether inadvertently or not, to financially and actively support, or further support, something it would otherwise probably have not. Had we taken a different approach and instead demanded Government funding to support J-1 visa holders, we'd probably still be demanding today....

It's very reassuring to see new initiatives being started back in Ireland such as the recently formed **New Land League** with the aim of stopping evictions by Irish banks from Irish family homes.

And here stateside, the Irish Government masterminded the setting up of a brand new network of Irish organizations in the U.S. which represent a younger demographic when compared to the older traditional Irish organizations in the U.S. that are dying due to dwindling membership numbers. It did this initially by guiding the establishment of the Irish Network-NYC in 2006/7 (I was one of the co-founders), and subsequently the establishment of IN-USA, which is the umbrella organization for the 'Irish Network' brand in all major U.S. cities. Clearly, the Irish Government sees the importance of expanding its influence. Shouldn't we?

You can ramp up support for your community initiative pretty quickly to a couple of thousand supporters on your email lists, and a few thousand unique visitors per month to your website. What if we had multiple simple Failte 32 type initiatives covering a range of issues?

### **So what have you or I learned from all this?**

For someone who has never had a falling out, or an argument of any kind, and always thought that I had a very good relationship with the members of the Irish Government that I met and got to know by engaging with them in a very positive way, because ultimately I hoped it would help the Irish people, I find the actions and behavior of the Irish Government departments/agencies and some of their employees referred to within, very unusual and difficult to reconcile.

In addition, I now receive very few invites to Irish Government events (I used to be invited to many)so apparently there's been a deliberate attempt to remove me from almost all Irish Government invite lists as per my first email to the Taoiseach (Appendix A)?

That said, I have met some very good men and women within the Irish Government, some former Consul General's and their staff, and feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to have met them.

I hope I have been able to shed some light on Irish Government-Diaspora dynamics and pose the question why the Irish Government, including its agencies, engages (in a business context at least) with the Irish Diaspora in way that seems so exploitative. Has anyone else in the Diaspora felt similarly exploited?

Just as a matter of interest, I attempted to get an expert opinion on this matter from a number of lawyers back in Ireland as far back as February 2014, but not one has yet replied to my request. Granted I did point out in my communication to these lawyers that my only caution dealing with Irish domiciled law firms in getting an objective opinion is their past and present business dealings with the Irish Government, which to me can present a conflict of interest. Perhaps that's why I have not yet heard back from any of them?

When you emigrate from Ireland, and live in another country, you realize just how well regarded the Irish people are at home and abroad. You meet those who have gone before you and paved an easier path for many Irish that follow, making it easier for the Irish in general to find a job and be given opportunities in a new country. At home, we have always shown the world that we are a welcoming, caring people with a great work ethic. I just hope our Government officials (and non-profit executives) haven't done anything to tarnish our good image at home and abroad, and negate this hard earned respect and goodwill which is invaluable particularly for those now having to emigrate.

It is terrible to read how the Executives of so many charities in Ireland (and some here in the U.S.) are receiving such exorbitant salaries while the Institutions which they serve are crippled from lack of funds. I am sure there are many good people out there who would do the same job and maybe even better for a modest salary and if a person of means may even do it for nothing.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to segue into my own startup charity efforts, and leave you on a positive note.

The Irish people have always had a charitable heart, and I can say with confidence that, at least when I was growing up, every home in Ireland had a Trocaire, Concern or other charitable box on the kitchen window sill to support the charitable missions abroad. **The Shamrock Fund** will endeavor to continue, in the spirit of the charitable nature of the Irish people, this type of support stateside and elsewhere. We are in the process of putting together a program and a core team to assist the most needy in society, most likely those in high-risk situations and areas.

The Shamrock Fund (link to its principles below) was inspired by my Uncle and Aunt, Henry and Eileen Horkan from Westport Co. Mayo in Ireland. Many years ago my uncle Henry and Celine O' Donoghue

together with five Transition Year students paid their own fares, worked with the poor while they were there and raised donations from the townsfolk in Westport and directly brought aid to the most needy in Africa. All donations were applied to aid, and none used to pay for salaries and/or bonuses for those involved. I know whose book I'll be taking a leaf out of.....

<http://www.failte32.org/about-failte-32/useful-articles/shamrock-fund-principles/>

© Maurice D. Landers 2014 (excluding external sources and references within)