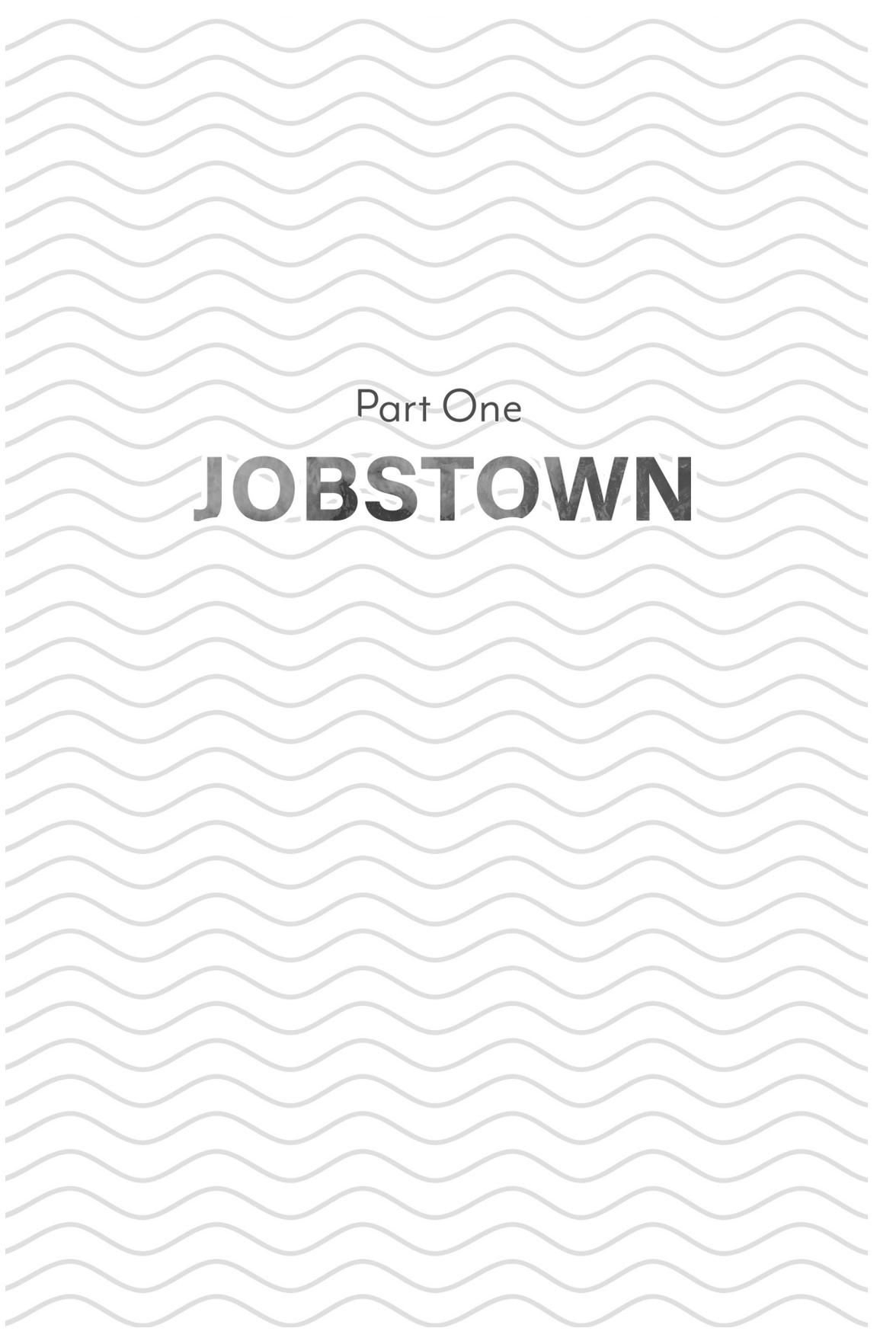


IN DEEP WATER

How People, Politics and Protests
Sank Irish Water

Michael Brennan



The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of light gray, wavy lines that resemble a stylized ocean or a textured surface. The waves are uniform in size and spacing, creating a rhythmic, undulating visual effect.

Part One

JOBSTOWN

THE JOBSTOWN REVOLT

There had been no public announcement that Tánaiste Joan Burton would be visiting the local education centre in Jobstown for a graduation ceremony on the morning of 15 November 2014. But the protesters had been told about it by some of the sixty graduates because a small number of them were unhappy about getting their certificates from Burton.

It was just a month after the introduction of water charges nationwide in a country which was in the midst of a deep recession. Contractors around the country were installing meters, at a rate of over 30,000 per month, in order to measure how much water people were using. The protests against water charges were growing.

The word about Burton's impending arrival in Jobstown spread through postings on the Facebook pages for water charge protesters. The most influential page was 'Tallaght Says No', which had been involved in organising protests against water meter installations on the fringes of Tallaght. It posted a message at 8.56 a.m.: 'Joan Burton will be attending an event at An Cosán next to Mary Mercer Centre Kiltalown, Jobstown this morning. Event starts 10.30 and we believe she will be there about 12 noon (unless she bottles out like she did yesterday for her event in Blanchardstown)'.¹

The news was spread by other protesters living in the local area on their own personal Facebook pages: 'Dear Joan the phone Brutal. If you have the neck to turn up in my home town of Jobstown today just want you to know I've a hangover and I'm in a bad mood,' wrote one protester on Facebook.²

The protesters were going to ensure that Burton's visit to a graduation ceremony in Jobstown would be an eventful one.

There had been warning signs of growing unrest over water charges in Jobstown. Two weeks earlier, there had been an anti-water charge rally of 8,000 people in the Tallaght and Jobstown area as part of a nationwide Right2Water protest. There had also been a confrontation during the local elections between a young Labour council candidate and a husband and wife involved in the

anti-water charge campaign. The YouTube clip of Carole Purcell and Martina Genocky had gone viral. Carole and her husband, Ken, lived just around the corner from the education centre where Joan Burton would be. They were going to be there.

The Facebook pages of the water charge protesters began appealing for a good turnout outside the local education centre. But despite these warning signs, local gardaí had no advance intelligence of the protest. They did discuss the possibility of a protest taking place, but only one garda inspector, one sergeant and three rank-and-file gardaí were assigned to go to An Cosán.

By now, some of the protesters were on their way from housing estates in the vicinity of the local education centre. Anti-Austerity Alliance TD Paul Murphy wanted to be there, but he was delayed by a meeting. He had been elected to the Dáil to represent Dublin South West in a shock by-election victory just a month before. He had been arrested four times in his short political career for being involved in protests. He was stuck at a meeting of the Socialist Party's national committee in their Thomas Street headquarters in the Liberties that morning. 'Those are important meetings and meetings you shouldn't miss,' said Murphy.³

It was coming up to the lunchbreak. Murphy knew the Jobstown protest had been due to start, so he discussed it with a few other party members. They agreed that he should go. 'I think I grabbed the megaphone from the office and I headed out. I drove there by myself,' he said. Just like a plumber would bring his toolbox to work, the megaphone was a 'tool of the trade' for political activists like Murphy.

Jobstown had originally been created to rehouse families from the slums in the inner city and remains one of the poorest areas in the state. It is twenty kilometres from Dublin city centre. The unemployment rate among men at the time of the protest was forty-nine per cent. Around sixty-one per cent of families were headed by a lone parent.⁴ It had a food bank operated by Crosscare on the grounds of the parish church. Demand for the bare necessities – tea, sugar and pasta, frozen food, chilled foods, vegetables, toiletries and washing powder – was constant. But it always soared during the summer holidays – when children were not getting their free school meals – and in the run-up to Christmas – when parents were under extra financial pressure.

Burton had a habit of turning up late for events. She had been due in

Jobstown at 11.30 a.m. This time, she was ten minutes late. Around fifteen protesters had managed to assemble across the road and chanted the slogans of the anti-water charge movement as her car passed them. ‘No way, we won’t pay.’

Burton noticed them but thought little of it. She had gone hiking in Jobstown as a child and had friends in the area. Nothing had happened when Burton visited flooded houses in Jobstown in 2011–12, which had required state funding to refit them. It was the same six months earlier when she’d visited An Cosán (the Pathway) education centre, which had been set up fourteen years earlier. The centre had a ‘one generation’ solution – get people in Jobstown into third-level education to boost their own prospects and their children’s.

Burton got into the robing ceremony in An Cosán without incident. Normally, the full graduation ceremony would have taken place in the centre, which had been funded with a IR£600,000 grant and a free site from South Dublin County Council. But with sixty students graduating this time, there was not enough space. So Burton and the students would have to walk eighty-five metres down a pathway to the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, which was big enough to host the graduation ceremony.

By now, the group of protesters had more than doubled and they were shouting slogans outside the front door of the centre. An Cosán’s chief executive, Liz Waters, came outside to appeal to the protesters to stop ruining the occasion for the graduates. ‘It’s their day,’ she said. A female protester responded: ‘I don’t care. Tell her [Burton] not to come out to us.’²⁵ Waters bowed her head in disappointment, turned on her heel and went back into the centre.

Burton had a small team of her own people with her in Jobstown. There was Karen O’Connell, her special adviser, who had driven up in her own car from a Labour Party event in Portlaoise. She had joined the Labour Party while studying in University College Dublin (UCD). Chatty, gregarious and intelligent, she was a popular member of the party. She was also utterly loyal to Burton, whom she had worked for as a parliamentary assistant. O’Connell knew what protests were like. During her student days she had travelled to Rosspport in Mayo to protest against the construction of Shell’s Corrib gas terminal and its underwater sea pipe. O’Connell stood outside the doorway of An Cosán, waiting for Burton to come out.

The gardaí on the scene advised Burton to use her state car and garda driver to make the eighty-five-metre journey to the church. The protesters started chanting ‘Out, Out, Out’ and ‘Traitor, Traitor’ as the first graduates emerged in their black caps and gowns at 11.50 a.m. Then the protesters changed the chant to ‘Bring her out’, as it became clear that Burton was still inside the building.⁶

Burton decided to walk with the graduates. She knew that there were protesters assembling, but she was not worried about them. She was determined to carry on with the function. She was accompanied by Senator Katherine Zappone and her wife, Ann Louise Gilligan, who had set up the centre in Jobstown.

A staff member at An Cosán started to clap the graduates in an attempt to encourage them as they walked out past the protesters. Karen O’Connell immediately joined in. So too did a garda standing beside her. Gradually, the protesters clapped too, as it dawned on them that their chanting might be getting to the graduates rather than Burton. ‘Well done, lads,’ shouted one of them.⁷

The protesters starting booing and shouting when Burton emerged behind the last of the graduates. O’Connell quickly moved to her side, as did her plain-clothes garda protection officer. The protesters pursued them along the footpath. They surrounded Burton as she walked and some of them were sticking phones in her face. The officer in charge, Garda Inspector Derek Maguire, told two of the gardaí on duty to move in front of Burton so they could force their way through. Some protesters shouted abuse at Burton: ‘Labour scum’, ‘Traitor’ and ‘Joan, you’re a liar.’

Burton noticed one of the protesters in particular – a tall teenager wearing a blue tracksuit top with white stripes. That was Jay Lester (fourteen), who lived a five-minute walk away in an estate in Brookview. He was not involved with any political party but had been active in his area, campaigning for a children’s playground. He was motivated by issues like unemployment and homelessness. ‘That’s what influenced me to get up off my arse and get involved,’ he said. Lester recorded Burton as she walked along the pathway to the graduation ceremony in the Church of St Thomas the Apostle. ‘Talk to us, Joan; talk to us, Joan,’ he said. Lester said he was there to ask questions: ‘I wasn’t there to antagonise somebody.’⁸

Another protester held up a poster which had an uncomplimentary reference to the Woman of the Year award Burton had been given by *Irish Tatler* magazine two weeks earlier. It said: 'Woman of the Year? Traitor of the Decade.'⁹

By this stage, it was clear that the water charges were the main issue on the minds of the protesters. 'No way, we won't pay' was the loudest chant, followed by 'Shame on you, shame on you.' One woman called Burton a 'bloody traitor', while another protester shouted: 'You're not welcome in Jobstown.'¹⁰

Some of the protesters had their children with them. One woman pushed a buggy alongside Burton with a young child in it. By now, Burton and O'Connell were hemmed in by protesters. They included Frank Donaghy, a retired construction worker (seventy-one) from Derry. He lived around four kilometres away in the Alpine Rise estate in Tallaght. A member of the Anti-Austerity Alliance, he had been buying petrol that morning in the Applegreen station in Jobstown and had spotted the protest outside An Cosán. He wandered over and joined in.

Burton was an easy target because she was making such slow progress down the footpath. She was hit by a small object on the back of her neck. She thought it might have been a small ball. It was actually a plastic water bottle.

Then she was hit by a red water balloon on the right side of her face. She flinched from the impact and the water soaked her white jacket and the bottom of her hair.¹¹

Burton checked briefly with her garda protection officer and then carried on walking. Her aim was to look as calm as possible rather than show the protesters that she was actually frightened. Then a female protester made a mocking remark: 'Where's your phone, Joan?' Burton had once accused the water charge protesters of having 'very expensive phones'. Now she was being filmed by multiple smartphones.

Ann Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone each put their right hand up in the air to appeal to the protesters to clear the path for Burton. Burton and O'Connell got through a gate into the grounds of the Church of St Thomas the Apostle.

Inside, Burton took off her soaked white jacket and O'Connell gave her a loan of hers. She dried her hair with a tissue, which another person had given her, and tidied herself up as much as possible before her speech to the graduates.

It was around 12.25 p.m. and Paul Murphy had just arrived at the protest with his megaphone. He and the other protesters waited outside the church for Burton to re-emerge. 'We need people on the other side as well because she can get out over the other side,' said one female protester.¹²

GETTING OUT OF THE CHURCH

Garda Inspector Derek Maguire could see that there were already protesters gathering near the state car Burton had been granted as Tánaiste. So using it was no longer an option. Maguire decided instead to sneak Burton out through a side entrance to an unmarked garda car, a grey 2006 Toyota Avensis.

The driver of the patrol car, Detective Garda Gavin Cooke, had been on drug patrol before he got an urgent call to get to the church. He and his colleague tried to get in through the main entrance to the church at 12.05 p.m. The protesters blocked them. Their car might have been unmarked, but it was a familiar sight around the Jobstown area – and the protesters recognised it. They started to shout: ‘Rats’, ‘Traitors’ and ‘Shame, shame, shame on you.’

Detective Garda Cooke rolled down the window and told the protesters to move aside. They let the car through. But Cooke had no idea that the Avensis was going to be used as a getaway vehicle. He parked it facing the wall of the church, which meant it would have to be reversed out.

The graduation ceremony was still going on. It was now 12.30 p.m. Burton did not know the time because she never wore a watch. Having finished her speech, gardaí told her to leave immediately, before more protesters arrived. They brought her through the sacristy, the room where the priest gets ready for mass, and opened the side door leading to the waiting car outside.¹

There were now around fifty people outside the front of the church – twenty men and the rest were women and children. They had a clear view of both the side entrance and the Avensis car lined up beside it. They rushed up to the car as soon as they saw Burton and O’Connell get into the back seat. ‘Here she is, here she is,’ they shouted.

Now the position of the car facing the wall of the church became a problem. The protesters got there within nine seconds. The car could not be reversed because it was surrounded. The protesters banged on the car windows and shouted, ‘Shame, shame, shame on you.’ Then the chants became more abusive towards both Burton and O’Connell, with the words ‘bitch’ and ‘cunt’ being used.²

The banging on the windows became more intense. One of the protesters tried to take the air out of the tyres of the trapped patrol car and to pull off the wing mirrors. All the gardaí at the scene rushed to the car to try to move the protesters out of the way. Katherine Zappone became deeply concerned for Burton and O'Connell's safety. She called 999.

More protesters arrived. The banging on the windows continued. Burton said some of the protesters were very wild. 'They were banging on the car, they were screaming and shouting. And some people were just completely carried away,' she said.³ O'Connell started crying. She was petrified and Burton tried to calm her down. The two of them put their arms around each other. One woman banged repeatedly on the windows and shouted that she wished Burton would die. She was beside herself with rage.

The protesters started to shake the car back and forth. Burton's main fear was what would happen if the protesters got the main car doors open. 'Are they going to drag us out? And all the time I kept looking – where are we going to run to?' she said.

Garda Cooke had locked the doors from the inside. Burton's full-time garda driver, Barry Martin, stood outside beside one of the back doors to prevent anyone from opening it.

Burton could not believe the number of young children in anoraks and hoodies who were wandering around the protest. She wondered where their parents were. 'There were little kids around. There was no harm in them. There was just a lot of excitement and a lot of noise. I think had they [the protesters] any sense of responsibility, they would have sent those children home,' she said.

Then Burton spotted Paul Murphy, who had been elected to the Dáil just a month earlier on an anti-water charge ticket. He was standing around the back of the car. He had a megaphone and was chanting slogans through it. Burton had only met Murphy before on a radio panel and did not know him well. But O'Connell did because they had attended UCD at the same time. Both were involved in student protests in the college, as well as protests in Rosspoint against Shell's gas refinery. Murphy knew O'Connell enough to say hello to during his college days. But he did not recognise her in the car alongside Burton.⁴

Some of the protesters started singing: 'You can stick your water meter

up your arse.’ Paul Murphy, still at the back of the garda car, did not join in the sing-song. But he got going for the next familiar protest chant. ‘They say cutbacks – we say fight back.’

At this stage, Burton and O’Connell had been trapped in the car for about ten or fifteen minutes. Detective Garda Cooke revved up the engine to warn everyone that he was going to reverse. But Paul Murphy and four other protesters sat down on the ground behind the back of the car. ‘Joan Burton’s in the car. There’s a surge of the crowd towards the car. People are standing up. It’s me who sits down first. It was my experience that it’s a much more controlled situation if people are sitting down. It’s much more clear that people are peaceful protesters. They are sitting down,’ he said.

Paul Murphy said his sit-down tactic was inspired by his experience in Rossport, where protesters used to do the same in front of gardaí. He spoke briefly to another sit-down protester called Michael Banks, who had set up the ‘Brookview Says No to Water Meters’ Facebook page against water charges. They had never met before. Banks told Murphy that he had voted for Sinn Féin’s Cathal King in the recent by-election.

Frank Donaghy, the retired construction worker, was another of those sitting down at the back of the car for several minutes. He rapped the back of the car and chanted, ‘No way, we won’t pay.’ He later said, ‘It was a sit-down protest. People have been doing it for years. I think it’s fairly legitimate.’⁵

Another person sitting down behind the garda car was Scott Masterson, who worked as a delivery courier. He was a member of the republican socialist party Éirígí, which had been involved in protests against the household charge and now water charges. Masterson got up shortly afterwards and stood at the back of the car. He shouted at the gardaí beside him: ‘Tell her to get out and answer our questions.’⁶

Karen O’Connell was filming the protesters from inside the car, using her smartphone. As another rendition of the ‘You can stick your water meter up your arse’ chant came to an end, she captured one protester making a rude and vulgar gesture. ‘Up your arse, Joan,’ the protester said. As the chanting continued, one of the gardaí in the car told O’Connell sympathetically: ‘Bet you’re glad you came in to work today?’

‘I chose to be here today,’ she responded.⁷

Garda Inspector Derek Maguire had seven gardaí under his command at

this stage, but they were outnumbered by around fifty protesters who were surrounding the car, and up to 100 more milling around in the church grounds. He called for urgent assistance through his garda Tetra radio unit. The garda command and control unit in Harcourt Street started to dispatch gardaí from other garda divisions around the Dublin region.

Inspector Maguire then issued a direction to the protesters under Section 8 of the Public Order Act, which gives gardaí the power to clear people from an area if they are posing a risk to the safety of others. He told them to move back from the car, desist from what they were doing and leave the area in a peaceful manner. However, Maguire's warning to the protesters to leave the area had to match the legally required wording of Section 8 of the Public Order Act. It did not, so it had no force in law.⁸ The protesters stayed put. Maguire spoke to Paul Murphy, but he later said the TD did not respond to him.⁹

The water charge protesters were using their smartphones to film every second of the discomfort of Burton and O'Connell inside the car. They had discovered that uploading videos of their protests was a potent political weapon. It allowed them to publicise their actions to a much greater audience. It was also a way of 'shaming' their enemies – Irish Water contractors, gardaí and politicians – and getting a reaction. If their targets snapped and retaliated, then it would get even more views online.

But there was also a deeper purpose. Every new video showed that the government and the gardaí were powerless to stop the water charge protesters from doing what they wanted – stopping water meter installations, blocking roads, blocking the gates to Leinster House. And now their smartphones were recording the Tánaiste of the country stuck in a garda car, unable to get out of Jobstown.

Burton and O'Connell were in complete darkness at times because the protesters covered all the windows with their placards. Burton was becoming increasingly frustrated. She took out her own iPhone and started recording the protesters herself.

Gardaí tried to pull back the protesters out of the way of the car so that it could reverse back, but they were outnumbered. A female detective sergeant was hit on the back of her head with an egg. Jay Lester, the teenage protester from Brookfield, held the megaphone for a woman who appealed to young people in the crowd to stop throwing things at the gardaí. 'The gardaí were

being pelted by stuff, which isn't right. Everyone in the protest wasn't happy about that. They weren't part of the protest,' he said.¹⁰

Councillor Mick Murphy of the Socialist Party, a veteran protester, was also becoming concerned about what was happening. He suggested to gardaí that they should move Burton out of the car and back to the church she had come out of. 'Give her sanctuary in the church, it is the only place she will be safe,' he said.¹¹ Paul Murphy said that it was an attempt by his party colleague to provide a way out. 'They were stuck, like, and they had a problem,' he said.¹²

But Inspector Derek Maguire was worried about the safety of Burton and O'Connell if he tried to move them out of the Avenis car. He decided to wait for reinforcements to arrive before he came up with a new plan.

At around 1 p.m. gardaí tried to drag Paul Murphy away from the back of the unmarked garda car by pulling on his black jumper. It went up around his neck and he grimaced in pain. Mick Murphy pulled it off him in case he would choke. 'Animals,' shouted a female protester at gardaí. Another protester in a blue top lay down on top of the now bare-chested Paul Murphy to stop gardaí from dragging him away. 'That's a TD you're mishandling there,' shouted another man.¹³ The irony that gardaí were trying to rescue another TD who had been hit with a water balloon and subjected to personal insults was lost on him.

Gardaí were called 'dirtbags' and 'tramps'. A female garda with a blonde ponytail, who was trying to pull Paul Murphy away from the car, was singled out by one female protester. 'Look at the woman. Watch what you're doing, you fucking bitch. I'll kill you what you did [*sic*],' she screamed.

Inspector Maguire gave the order to gardaí to pull back. 'Everyone calm down,' he said.

'You started this – this was peaceful till you started dragging people out of it,' responded a protester.

The protesters linked arms to stop the gardaí from pulling them away from the back of the unmarked garda car where Burton and O'Connell were. Then another water balloon was thrown and it hit a garda on the head. Some of the protesters called this behaviour out. 'Stop it. Stop throwing them,' said one. 'Calm the fuck down,' said another. 'Don't throw fucking anything,' said another.

Paul Murphy was still bare-chested on what was a cold November

morning. ‘Where’s your shirt, Paul?’ asked one of the protesters. Councillor Mick Murphy did not want to see him left like this for the rest of the protest. He took off his coat and gave the cardigan he was wearing underneath to Paul Murphy. The TD put that on, but he eventually got his own jumper back from Mick Murphy, who had been handed it by a garda.

Superintendent Daniel Flavin arrived on the scene at 1.30 p.m. and took over as the commanding officer. He believed it was time to move the two women from the car because there was a risk to their safety. He thought about moving them to a nearby building. But he was afraid that would lead to a siege situation, with the protesters moving to surround the building.¹⁴ He decided to bring up a garda jeep instead. Inspector Maguire came up to the back window of the car to pass on the news to Burton and O’Connell. They were going to have to run through the crowd to get to the garda jeep.

GETTING OUT OF THE CAR

Inspector Maguire ordered gardaí at the scene to form a human cordon around Joan Burton and Karen O'Connell once they got out of the car, so that they could be moved into a garda jeep parked at the church gate which leads onto the main road. At around 1.36 p.m. Maguire went back to Burton and O'Connell in the car. It was time to move.

The protesters surged forward when they saw that the two women were getting out of the car. One protester grabbed the collar of O'Connell's coat. The roaring and shouting became more intense. 'Come out and face the people, you're a fucking disgrace,' shouted another protester towards Burton.

'When we got out of the car, the guards surrounded us, and the crowd charged the guards. I think it was probably a very frightening experience for the gardaí as well. They were very badly treated,' said Burton.¹

Garda Sergeant Michael Phelan was hit on the back of the head by a can of Red Bull as he tried to help Burton move from the car to the jeep.²

Burton was terrified that she was going to fall while she was moving along a narrow passageway between the two lines of gardaí. Inspector Maguire was in front of her, walking backwards. He repeated: 'Look at me, look at me, look at me' to try to keep her focused. Burton could feel her left shoe starting to come off. She was afraid that she would not be able to run away from the protesters if she was wearing only one shoe. 'Don't worry about your shoe,' said Maguire.³ Burton managed to stoop down and get it on again. She was able to get into the garda jeep that was parked at the gates of the church. It had taken ten minutes for her and O'Connell to walk the thirty metres from the Avensis car to the jeep.

Garda Cooke, the driver of the unmarked Avensis car, had followed after Burton and O'Connell. He took up a position beside the jeep. A man ran up and punched him on the side of the head.

Some of the protesters tried to close the entrance gate to the church yard to prevent the jeep from leaving. Gardaí shoved them out of the way. In the crush of bodies, a female garda was stuck between the gate pillar and the

jeep. A person in the crowd pulled her forward to get her to safety. A garda helped a female protester up off the ground, after she had been knocked over accidentally by another protester. A male protester called him a ‘woman beater’, a ‘coward’, a ‘bully’ and a ‘uniformed scumbag’.⁴

Paul Murphy was one of the first to get to the front of the jeep after it got onto the road outside the church. He sat down in front of it and invited other protesters to do the same. Children on the street tried to block the jeep themselves, copying the adults. The crowd was growing all the time. Some of the protesters outside the jeep started shouting abuse at Burton again: ‘Cunt.’ ‘Bitch.’ ‘Let’s just petrol bomb them all out of here,’ shouted one protester. There was a female garda standing at the front passenger side of the jeep. She later complained that two men continuously pushed up against her.⁵ The sit-down protest in front of the jeep lasted ten minutes. Then the protesters got up and started walking slowly ahead of it instead.

The main chants from the protesters were loud and repetitive: ‘No way, we won’t pay.’ ‘From the rivers to the sea, Irish water will be free.’ ‘Labour, Labour, Labour, out, out, out.’ But Burton did not pick up all the chants. Her hearing had been badly damaged by an ear operation that went wrong when she was a child. She would say herself that she was not good at hearing people in noisy places.⁶

The protesters were momentarily distracted by the garda helicopter overhead. The Eurocopter had come from its base in Baldonnell Airport, just six kilometres away, and was filming the scene below from 1,500 feet using its broadcast-quality, high magnification digital camera. The jeep had only moved a few metres beyond the church gates with a force of at least twenty gardaí in yellow high-vis jackets surrounding it. The direction of travel was back past An Cosán to the roundabout, which would provide an exit to the Tallaght bypass.

One protester kept putting his foot in front of the front wheel of the garda jeep to prevent it from moving. He shouted that the jeep was going over his foot. He banged the front windscreen and cracked a small hole in it. People stood up on the railings outside the houses across the road to get a better view of what was going on.

In the hour Burton and O’Connell had now been inside the jeep, it had only moved around thirteen metres, even with a human cordon of gardaí surrounding it. Burton was trembling with fear because the crowd outside were

shouting and banging on the sides of the jeep. As a distraction, she picked up a copy of *The Irish Times* from the floor of the vehicle. It had an article about Michael Collins and how the IRA attacks he organised were described as ‘outrages’ and ‘dastardly crimes’ by the *Irish Independent*. ‘I remember saying to myself: Okay, what would Michael Collins have done?’ said Burton.⁷ She also thought of the advice from family members who had served with the Defence Forces in the Lebanon about keeping cool in a crisis. ‘The one thing in those types of protest is to try to stay calm, try to keep smiling, try not to look frightened. The more frightened you look, the more dangerous things potentially get,’ she said.

Burton had no idea how many of the protesters were from Jobstown itself. But from the back seat of the jeep, she could see some of the locals standing outside their houses off the Fortunestown Road. Some of them gave her a thumbs up. Burton took it to mean they sympathised with her.

By now, Burton was stiff and cold. She was worried in case she needed to go to the toilet. One of the gardaí in the jeep told her: ‘Don’t worry, adrenaline will take care of it; you won’t need a toilet.’ Her only daughter, Aoife, a lawyer, rang her. Public Expenditure Minister Brendan Howlin, who had heard what was going on, also phoned to speak to her for a few minutes.

‘It was a very, very unsavoury situation for two women to be trapped like that. What was going on around them was unacceptable. I just wanted to express support and solidarity,’ Howlin said.⁸

At 2.30 p.m. Paul Murphy and Mick Murphy decided to have a discussion with the Jobstown protesters about bringing it to a conclusion. ‘It was on our initiative. We weren’t happy with what was going on. We decided this had to end at a certain point,’ said Mick Murphy.⁹

Paul Murphy picked up his megaphone on the road outside the An Cosán centre. A large group of protesters were blocking the road in front of the garda jeep holding Burton and O’Connell. He asked the protesters to be quiet for a minute while he outlined two potential courses of action. The first was to march in front of the jeep for half an hour to the Tallaght bypass. Paul Murphy checked his watch on his left hand to see what time that would be. That would have Burton leaving at 3 p.m. ‘Right. And the other option is that we just keep her here. Okay?’ he said.¹⁰

Paul Murphy proposed having a speaker for each of the two options,

followed by vote on what to do. 'Who wants to speak for stay?' he asked. A female protester took the microphone from him. 'I, as a resident of Killinarden, am proposing that we keep Joan here. Keep her here. Joan Bruton [*sic*] is on our turf now and she is staying until we say,' she said. There were cheers from the crowd around her, which included children.

Then Paul Murphy brought up his party colleague Mick Murphy to speak in favour of letting Burton go in half an hour. Mick Murphy said he did not think that staying – keeping Joan Burton where she was – was an option.

'If we decide to stay what is going to happen is, the garda will push through,' he said. 'Now, we can live with that but there are a lot of young fellas here, there is a lot of potential for argy bargy and I have to say that is not really what we came for, right?'

A protester shouted back at him: 'That is what they came for,' referring to the gardaí.

Mick Murphy said that he was proposing to allow the jeep carrying Burton to get to the bypass by 3 p.m. 'That's twenty minutes. That's what I propose we do. And then we let her off. We've done what we came to do. That's what I am arguing,' he said.

There was another woman talking about keeping the protest going until 3.30 p.m.

Paul Murphy took back the loudhailer and came back in. 'So people know the two different arguments. So are we ready for a vote on it? Okay?' he asked.

He had to fend off a young boy who tried to grab the loudhailer from him. Then he put Mick Murphy's proposal to the crowd first. He put up his hand and so did Mick Murphy and a few others. Then he asked for votes on the proposal to stay at the protest. More hands went up and there was a big cheer. But it was hard to see how many.

Paul Murphy decided to hold a second vote. 'Most people genuinely didn't vote either way on that. Can people actually vote? Be prepared to vote whatever you want, it doesn't matter, I am going to do whatever people decide,' he said. He put Mick Murphy's proposal to slow march Burton out by 3 p.m. 'Looks about twelve people,' said Paul Murphy. 'All those in favour of staying?' he asked. More protesters put their hands up again than had voted for the slow march. 'Okay, I think staying marginally has it,' said Paul Murphy.

One protester in blue jeans and a black jacket had been filming the entire

discussion about what to do on his smartphone. At one point, he captured the garda helicopter hovering directly overhead.

By now, an acclaimed war photographer had arrived on the scene. Crispin Rodwell, from Surrey in England, had got a call from the news desk of *The Irish Sun* to ask him if he would go out to photograph the Jobstown protest. He made it over quickly from his home in Rathmines in south Dublin. He got up close to the jeep, in the middle of the protesters and the gardaí.

While the gardaí were shocked by the intensity of the protest, Rodwell did not find it intimidating. He had seen much worse before, having started taking pictures of the Troubles at the age of nineteen. He had captured some famous riot images, such as British Army troops under gun and petrol bomb attack in west Belfast. And he had taken a photograph on the day of the IRA ceasefire in August 1994 that was used in newspapers around the world. It showed a young boy throwing a ball up against a red-brick side wall of a house. The wall had a slogan on it in white letters – ‘Time for Peace’.¹¹

Rodwell took pictures of Joan Burton stuck inside the jeep, reading the newspaper and making phone calls. Then one or two eggs were thrown at the windows of the jeep. That gave him another element to photograph. He zoomed in close again. A male teenager, aged around fifteen or sixteen, suddenly stuck up his middle finger at Burton while she was talking inside the jeep on her iPhone. Rodwell’s lens was zoomed in so tightly on the jeep window that it just captured the upturned middle finger of the teenager’s hand.

‘It was fleeting. It was fortuitous. It was a stroke of luck for me, to be honest,’ said Rodwell. ‘I had lots of other pictures of Joan looking somewhat anguished, but the added component of the egg on the window and the finger made it into a whole different piece.’¹²

Rodwell knew that his photo now had an element of rebellion in it. It became the defining photo of the Jobstown protest – and it later won him the award for Irish news photograph of the year.

Nationwide demonstrations and protests, confrontations in housing estates between contractors, gardaí and smartphone-wielding protesters, cabinet rows, and arrests - all because of Irish Water. How did everything get so out of control?

Irish Water was set up in 2013 by the government in order to manage and upgrade a nineteenth-century water system that was badly in need of repair. But key decisions were made behind the scenes that left the company in trouble from the very beginning. The situation only worsened when a frustrated public, already at breaking point from years of recession, discovered that they would have to pay water charges to this new company.

With access to previously unpublished material and interviews with key personalities on all sides of the issue, *In Deep Water* provides a fast-paced and compulsively readable account of the controversy that divided Ireland.



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