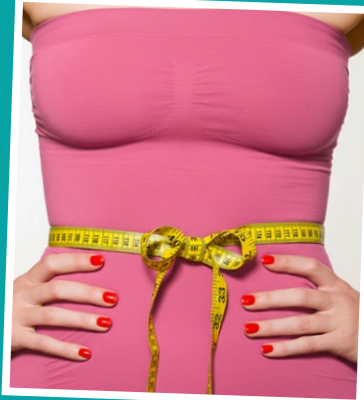


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As Eoin Hayes attends think-in after being readmitted to party over shares controversy, he admits to dressing up as Obama at Halloween party – and it's Holly Cairns's first day back as leader

SOC DEMS TD 'SORRY' FOR 2009 BLACKFACE PICTURES

CONTROVERSIAL
Social Democrats
TD Eoin Hayes
dressed in 'black-
face' at a party in
2009, the Irish Daily
Mail can reveal.

EXCLUSIVE
By **Craig Hughes**
Political Editor

Mr Hayes appeared as Barack Obama in full blackface at the Halloween bash in Cork city.

The TD was only allowed to

re-enter the Social Democrats parliamentary party two months ago, after admitting that he misled the public about his shares in a company working on Israeli military projects.

In a statement to the Irish Daily Mail last night, Mr Hayes said he was 'profoundly sorry'

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Controversy:
Eoin Hayes in
blackface in
2009 and,
left, the
TD now

WAS SYDNEY SWEENEY SHUNNED AT EMMYS OVER TRUMP? SEE PAGE THREE

'It was a huge mistake'

Continued from Page One

and accepted his blackface Halloween outfit was racist.

This fresh controversy comes as the Social Democrats meet for their parliamentary party think-in in Dublin today.

It will mark the return of the party's leader Holly Cairns, who has been on maternity leave since giving birth to her first child in November last year.

Mr Hayes told the Mail of the blackface incident: 'I take full responsibility for my actions and acknowledge this was a huge mistake.'

'While I did not recognise the behaviour as racist at the time, I understand and completely accept that it was. I'm not making any excuses.'

'It was an idiotic and deeply reprehensible thing to do. I'm profoundly sorry.'

In 2009, Mr Obama was in his historic first year as US president, marking the first time a non-white person had held the office.

The practice of a white person darkening their skin for entertainment or comedy known as 'blackface' or 'brownface' is regarded as being linked to historic racist imagery and cultural appropriation.

It is the first controversy in an

Attended Obama's inauguration

Irish context of a politician being pictured in blackface. However, there have been several international incidents of high level politicians apologising for dressing blackface.

In 2019, images of then Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau in blackface during his early 20s engulfed him in significant controversy that threatened his political career.

Mr Trudeau apologised when the photos emerged, saying it was something he 'deeply, deeply' regretted.

The images of Mr Hayes, a TD for Dublin Bay South, are likely to place his future in the Social Democrats in doubt after he was controversially re-admitted and given a 'second chance' on July 25 following an eight-month suspension and paying a \$51,000 donation to Palestinian charities after misleading the party about his \$199,000 shareholding in the controversial firm Palantir, which is profiting from the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Mr Hayes graduated with a degree in chemical engineering



'Reprehensible thing to do': Eoin Hayes in blackface dressed up as Barack Obama at the Halloween party in Cork city in 2009

from UCC in 2009 but remained on campus for another year after being elected as president of the students' union.

It was during this time, when Mr Hayes was aged 22, that the picture was taken at the Mardyke in Cork city centre.

Mr Hayes would go on to work for Mr Obama on his re-election campaign from its headquarters in Mr Obama's hometown of Chicago.

In 2013, Mr Hayes attended Mr Obama's second inauguration in Washington DC.

An article on the UCC website from the time quotes Mr Hayes as describing it as a 'real privilege' and a 'dream come through'.

Mr Hayes hailed the technological capabilities of the team of 'exceptional' computer scientists and political organisers.

'What the team was able to achieve on the Obama campaign was really incredible,' he said.

'Oftentimes I had to pinch myself. They were definitely the

smartest group of people I ever worked with; I think this kind of technologically-focused, data-driven, grassroots campaign is more of what we'll see in politics all over the world.'

Mr Hayes is a dual Irish-American citizen, having moved to rural Pennsylvania with his family when he was aged six, and returned to work in the US in a high-level consultancy firm and later for Palantir.

Mr Hayes was dramatically suspended from the Social Democrats in December, before he had taken his Dáil seat for the first time, after lying to the media and his party about when he divested his \$199,000 worth of shares in Palantir.

Mr Hayes claimed he had divested the shares prior to being elected to Dublin City Council in June 2024. However, he actually did not divest them until a month after his election.

The Irish Daily Mail revealed that Mr Hayes previously worked

and held shares in Palantir, which provides military technology to the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).

He did not fully disclose this to the party.

The NGO, Privacy International, has said that Palantir uses big data to 'expand the capacity of governments to quietly spy on their people'.

In 2014, the New York Times

'Profiting from the genocide in Gaza'

reported that some Palantir staff raised concerns about the company working with Israel.

The Social Democrats have long campaigned for the Government to do more about Gaza, including calling for the Occupied Territories Bill to be enacted which would ban trade with the occupied West Bank.

Mr Hayes's readmission to the

party, which will grant them greater speaking rights in the Dáil over the Labour Party, has already led to several resignations from within the party.

Galway City councillor Eibhlín Seoighthe, a former chairwoman of the party, Síle Ní Dhubhgaill, and Martha Ní Riada, a former employee of deputy leader Cian O'Callaghan, all quit the party in the aftermath of Mr Hayes's readmission.

Labour Party TD Conor Sheehan wrote to the Oireachtas Business Committee last week about the readmission of Mr Hayes to the party ranks.

Mr Sheehan wrote that Mr Hayes had been involved in 'significant controversy' in relation to the shares which he said 'has been identified as profiting from the genocide in Gaza' and that 'Deputy Hayes has to date not provided full details as to his specific role and involvement in that company'.

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Transatlantic exports plunge due to Trump tariffs

THERE has been a slump in transatlantic trade sparked by US president Donald Trump's tariffs, latest figures show.

The value of goods exports from the Republic to the US, Ireland's largest export market, dipped to €4.4billion in July, down 17.2% from the same month last year, according to figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

However, over the first seven months of the year, the value of exports to the US had more than doubled compared to a year earlier, to €80.4billion, as importers and exporters rushed to stockpile before

By **Christian McCashin**

the tariffs came into effect. Janette Maxwell, a consultant at Grant Thornton Ireland, said the data highlighted an 'ongoing fluctuation in global trade'.

She added: 'A variety of factors are likely to be at play, such as stockpiling earlier in the year in anticipation of potential tariffs, as well as currency and cost pressures.'

'A stronger euro and increased production costs may have also reduced competitiveness in the US market.'

Carol Lynch, head of customs and international trade services at consultancy BDO, said the decline in US-bound exports was 'to be expected' as stockpiling decreased when tariffs began to kick in.

She added: 'July exports reflect the pause period between the introduction of tariffs at a 10% universal rate in April across most sectors, excluding pharmaceutical and semiconductors.'

'At this point, it was unclear what the outcome of EU-US trade negotiations would be,' she said.

CSO statistician Jane Burmanje said:

'The US remains one of our top exporting and importing partners. The US was our largest exporting partner in July with Ireland exporting 25.4% (€4.4billion) of all goods to the US.'

'This was followed by the Netherlands, which accounted for 12.6% - €2.2billion - of total export goods, and Germany at 8.6% or €1.5billion.'

'Ireland imported 14% (€1.7billion) of all imported goods from the US in July, making it our second-largest import trading partner, after Germany, which was 15.2% or €1.8billion.'