

Mary Carr

mary.carr@mailonsunday.ie

COLUMNIST OF THE YEAR

Hindsight doesn't explain bad judgment, Mary Lou

IN AN effort to put the Niall Ó Donnghaile scandal behind her, Mary Lou McDonald acknowledged that 'with the benefit of hindsight' she shouldn't have praised him so glowingly in her statement announcing his departure.

So that clears that up that then, does it? Well, not exactly.

Despite what Mary Lou seems to believe, invoking the benefit of hindsight neither excuses or explains her paying homage to a Sinn Féin rising star in the Dáil, let alone permitting him to claim expenses courtesy of the taxpayer long after he quietly resigned his post as Seanad leader, and generally awarding him a hero's leave-taking, inflicting even more pain on his teenage victim.

The benefit of hindsight is not a slippery concept that can be freely leveraged by dissembling politicians to get themselves off the proverbial hook.

As a term, it is perfectly self-explanatory; it is an often rueful acknowledgment that, in retrospect, we'd have made a better decision if we knew then what we know today.

THE new Covid inquiry, or 'evaluation', may legitimately invoke the power of 20/20 hindsight to explain NPHET's more questionable judgment calls.

Covid was an unprecedented health emergency that closed schools and sealed off nursing homes in a way that seems, in the rear-view mirror, unnecessarily harsh and panic-driven.

But perhaps health authorities might have made different decisions had they known more about the virus's transmissibility from the start.

Similarly, the thousands who gathered in Dublin on Halloween in expectation of a ghoulish parade down O'Connell Street might also claim that, with the benefit of hindsight, they should not have fallen for a mistake on the internet.

And miracles might happen, and the IRA might agree

What price fame Maura? The paps come with it...

FOR a reality TV star who carved out her career on Love Island, inviting notoriety by breaching the bonkfest's conventional gender roles with her up-for-it approach to sex, her potty mouth and her assertiveness, Maura Higgins, right, seems to begrudge the price of her style of fame.

The Longford beauty has suffered mental health problems, heartbreak, trust issues and being 'chased by the paps everywhere I went'. Life in the public eye takes its toll but surely when fame-hungry and savvy Maura traded her looks and sexuality in a Faustian bargain, she knew that rightly or wrongly, being hounded by the paparazzi was part of the deal?



Parents who stood up to cruel teachers were heroes

IF there is a silver lining to Leathered, RTE's harrowing documentary about the vicious brutality in Irish schools right up until the not-so-distant 1980s, it is that today's schoolchildren would hardly believe it.

Like the idea of kids being given edible cigarettes to get them ready for the real thing, or of memorising friends' phone numbers by heart, even being slapped on the hand by a teacher with a ruler – a mild punishment in its day – is weird and unthinkable for them.

If children today are afraid at school, it's usually because they have come to the attention of the class bully, rather than teachers.

Being bullied traumatises children and marks them for life but it can also leave parents feeling hamstrung. Parental instinct is a double-edged sword in that it compels us to protect our children from harm, but also hardwires us against challenging authority lest our children have to pay the price.

New guidelines and growing intolerance of school bullying, while welcome, don't make it easier for parents when the school's default position is to uphold the fine line between the rough and tumble, teasing and cliques that are a normal part of school life, and the exclusion or bullying of a child.

It means that the best remedy for parents is to enrol their child in another school rather than staying on to fight their corner.

But in the rigidly authoritarian era of corporal punishment, when teachers were high-status figures and the population was relatively ignorant, how much more daunting must it have been for parents to walk the infernal tightrope of standing up for their kid while not making life more difficult for them by antagonising their formidable teachers?

Silence was understandable, but the courage of the few who complained was heroic.

» IN a move that may further delay MetroLink, residents of Dartmouth Square in Dublin 6 argue that the €75,000 maximum compensation for damage to property by the construction project is 'wholly inadequate'. And considering that amount of cash would hardly fix the fanlights in their period beauties, they might well have a case.

that in hindsight its long campaign of violence was futile.

But while hindsight gives us a clearer picture of the past, it confers no benefits whatsoever on Mary Lou when it comes to Niall Ó Donnghaile.

Try as she might to pretend otherwise, the reality is she knew as much about the Sinn Féin senator when she praised him to the heavens in public as she knows today.

But while the passage of time has yielded no new insights or information about his character, it has certainly been revelatory about Mary Lou's.

She has had a career in training for the job of Taoiseach,

convincing the country that she is ready to take the levers of power and that her party had become respectable.

YET she showed appalling judgment, knowing Ó Donnghaile's victim could blow the whistle any time, risking her own painstakingly created reputation to shower a sex pest with plaudits.

Her leadership was also deficient when she opted to court the eternal gratitude of the Ó Donnghaile family, Sinn Féin royalty, over shoring up her party's electoral prospects.

Worst of all, she mislaid her moral compass when she paid that tribute. Politics aside, the right thing to do was to stand with the victim, not ape the Catholic hierarchy dealing with a clerical sex abuse crisis.

If Sinn Féin fails to meet election targets, McDonald's atrocious handling of the Ó Donnghaile affair might well be seen as the turning point. That's with the benefit of hindsight, obviously.

» ACCORDING to Barack Obama, daughter Malia, left, dropped her famous surname and used 'Malia Ann' on her first movie because she is very stubborn about avoiding any sign of nepotism. Another explanation: Malia wants it both ways. She wants Hollywood doors to open, and also wants people to think her work is valued on its merits. Honesty about her identity might be a better tack.

