

ARE YOU FINANCIALLY COMPATIBLE AS A COUPLE?

Joanne Hunt
Business



OLYMPICS 2024 ★ A bluffer's guide to rugby sevens ★ Ireland star Harry McNulty interview

Sport



A PIANO TUNER IN KYIV 'EVERYTHING IS UNPREDICTABLE, SO PEOPLE LIVE FOR TODAY'

Daniel McLaughlin



Former Ku Klux Klan leader mentoring Irish far-right extremists online

Former prisoner one of several US white supremacists assisting Irish activists

Investigation

CONOR GALLAGHER

A former senior member of the Ku Klux Klan and convicted terrorist has been meeting remotely with Irish far-right activists to provide advice and encouragement in relation to anti-immigration protests.

Frank L Silva, who also goes by Frank DeSilva, was a prominent figure in the US white supremacist movement of the 1980s. As well as being the leader of the Los Angeles chapter of the Ku Klux Klan and holding the rank of "grand dragon", he was a founding member of "the Order", a neo-Nazi terror group that carried out a string of violent crimes across the US before being dismantled by the FBI.

Silva, who was sentenced to a

40-year prison term in 1985, is the most prominent of several US white supremacists who have been offering advice to Irish activists on issues including how to maximise publicity for their cause and avoid prosecution in the courts.

In some cases, US activists have offered to help fund anti-immigration activity in Ireland or to provide legal support to people arrested at anti-immigration protests.

In recent months Silva, who did not respond to requests for comment, has been joining online meetings of Irish right-wing extremists where he provides advice on tactics derived from his own clashes with authorities.

He has been present in at least five meetings, often speaking for several minutes. These meetings have been attended by up to 100 people, including sev-

eral well-known Irish anti-immigration activists who have large followings on social media.

The Irish Times has obtained transcriptions or recordings of several of these meetings. During one meeting which ran for more than three hours, Silva is heard offering advice to Stephen Butler, a young anti-immigration activist who has been involved in protests outside a site earmarked for Ukrainian refugees in Clonmel, Co Tipperary.

Video of Butler's interactions with gardai at the site have been widely shared in far-right circles in Ireland and overseas. During the meeting, Silva offered pointers on how Butler can exploit future interactions with gardai to "go viral" and mobilise sympathisers. He said the Irish man should "have a minimum of five guys" with him and he should try "get in the heads" of gardai.

"I've been there. And I knew how to handle myself," Silva told Butler who responded with gratitude for the advice.

Butler (26) of Brown Street, Portlaoigh, Co Waterford, who has a conviction for manslaughter,



■ Above: Frank L Silva, who also goes by Frank DeSilva, was a prominent figure in the US white supremacist movement of the 1980s; Left: In his online social media portrait. PHOTOGRAPH: LOS ANGELES HERALD EXAMINER

regularly discusses his far-right views during the online meetings. In recent meetings, he has described himself as "a bit of a National Socialist" and has discussed the possibility of burying dead pigs on the grounds of proposed sites of international protection centres to deter Muslim asylum seekers. "I absolutely despise the Jews, man," he said in another meeting.

In one recent post, Butler, who claims to have previously served in the Defence Forces, recorded himself walking the streets of Limerick city giving a Nazi salute. He refused to comment when contacted yesterday.

In other meetings Silva has ad-

vised Irish activists not to be too upfront with their racist views, referencing a particularly offensive term that should be avoided.

Silva, who lives in California, was 27 when he received a 40-year sentence for federal racketeering and conspiracy charges in connection with violence carried out by the Order, which included multiple armed robberies and the murder of Jewish talkshow host Alan Berg.

He was released in 1998, having served about 13 years. He went on to write many books and articles focused on his racist beliefs. A review of his social media posts shows Silva has recently taken a keen interest in Irish affairs. He devoted part of a recent episode of his podcast to anti-immigration protests in Ireland.

Statutory inquiry into sex abuse in schools proposed

Scoping report initiated by allegations of sexual abuse at Blackrock College

Redress scheme funded at least in part by religious orders likely to be established

PAT LEAHY
Political Editor

A scoping report on historical abuse at boarding and day schools run by religious orders is understood to recommend a statutory inquiry be set up to examine the sexual abuse of potentially thousands of children.

The leaders of the Government parties discussed the issue on Tuesday night with the Minister for Education Norma Foley, whose department commissioned the scoping report by senior counsel Mary O'Toole last year.

The report, which runs to more than 700 pages, was expected to be discussed by the Cabinet on Wednesday but that was postponed, three people familiar with the issue said. It is expected that officials will continue to work on a plan for publication of the report, and to work with survivors of abuse.

Past pupils

It is likely to be approved by the Cabinet and published in September, after which a statutory inquiry is expected to be established.

Once an inquiry has been

concluded, it is likely that a redress scheme, to be funded at least in part by contributions from the religious order, will be established.

The scoping inquiry was instituted last year by Ms Foley after allegations of sexual abuse at Blackrock College in Dublin were made by a number of past pupils.

The allegations first emerged when two brothers, David and Mark Ryan, spoke publicly of being sexually abused by priests at Blackrock College and its affiliate junior school, Willow Park. Both schools were run by the Spiritan congregation, formerly the Holy Ghost Fathers.

The brothers first spoke about being sexually abused as boys in the south Dublin secondary school in an RTE radio documentary, Blackrock Boys, in 2022.

They discovered each other's abuse only in 2002, many years after it took place. Mark Ryan died last year in London after suffering a suspected heart attack.

The documentary led to a wave of revelations and hundreds of survivors reporting they were also abused as boys in schools run by the Spiritans,

as well as other congregations who ran day and boarding schools in the past.

It later emerged that more than 140 people reported incidences of child sexual abuse involving 18 abusers to gardai investigating such allegations at the schools in south Dublin.

The scoping inquiry was set up by the Department of Education to advise the Government on the nature of the issue and the possible next steps. It was broadened to include allegations of abuse in religious-run boarding and day schools, and received more than 200 submissions. It is understood the report features schools runs by many different religious orders.

Survivors

The report was delivered to Ms Foley in early June. It is understood it has estimated that there may be thousands of cases of sexual abuse in the schools.

Ms Foley and her officials have been working on proposals which will be heavily influenced by the wishes of survivors of abuse in the schools.

The terms of reference for the scoping exercise specifically required that Ms O'Toole, in making recommendations to the Government, should have regard to "alignment with outcomes sought by survivors of historical sexual abuse in schools run by religious orders". It says this should be "informed by the survivor engagement process" which has been part of the scoping inquiry's work.

Government urged to consider congestion charges

CORMAC MCQUINN, EÓIN BURKE-KENNEDY and MARTIN WALL

Congestion charges would be more "efficient" and "equitable" in achieving environmental goals than a car parking levy, the Department of Finance has argued in its annual batch of papers aimed at informing budgetary policy.

Finance officials have recommended that the Government

does not implement a car parking levy at present after a review of its potential impact against various alternative approaches to achieve reductions in emissions in the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) papers.

However, officials have raised the prospect of making it mandatory for anyone receiving an inheritance or a substantial gift over the value of €3,000 to report the details to the Revenue Commissioners as

the Government looks to strengthen the State's inheritance tax system.

A paper put together by the group also said raising the parent-to-child tax-free threshold of €335,000 to €350,000 would cost the exchequer €15 million while raising it to €400,000 would cost €52 million.

The Tax Strategy Group also noted that the top 10 per cent of income earners in Ireland (those earning more than

€102,000) would account for almost two-thirds of the income tax and universal social charge collected this year.

Separately, briefing material prepared for Jack Chambers on his appointment as Minister for Finance last month warned that recent industrial policy developments could threaten Ireland's economic competitiveness, in several key sectors.

Department of Finance officials said small open economies

were unlikely to benefit from looser state aid rules within the EU, with larger member states having far more spending power for subsidising manufacturers.

The documents also note that the hospitality sector saw a business failure rate three times worse than any other sector in the first quarter of 2024.

➔ Editorial Comment, page 11; Tax Strategy Group reports, page 12

Weather

A mostly cloudy and humid day, with patchy rain and drizzle. Some coastal mist and fog. Highs of 16-21 degrees.

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Sports Wednesday

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