



LARISSA NOLAN

Straight talking...

Passing of referendum could be mothers' ruin

DON'T be surprised if the "woman's place is in the home" referendum is defeated.

It may be wives and mothers themselves who vote against it, knowing its deletion from the constitution could end up changing things for worse rather than better.

Even if it is passed, what's the win, exactly?

That we get to go out to work all day and come home to do the vast majority of housework and childcare too?

Most of us are too busy to have time to be offended by old-fashioned diction in the constitution, written in 1937.

It's what it means to our lives that matters.

The Government finally announced the date of the referendums on the family this week, to a lukewarm reception.

It cleverly chose the symbolic March 8, International Women's Day, to put it to the people.

But if it expected a full-house, standing ovation from Ireland's femi-

nists, it didn't get one. I think our leaders have got this one wrong and now risk a political backfire.

It's assumed all modern working women with families support the removal of this clause, described by various female politicians as "an anachronism", "sexist" and "patriarchal".

First of all, let's look at the wording, beyond the snappy soundbite, "the woman's place is in the home".

Here's what Article 41.2 actually says: "The State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved."

"Therefore, the State shall endeavour to ensure mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

It is enshrining our roles. It's saying mothers shouldn't be forced to work when they are doing the most important job in the world: raising kids.

That's a grand ambition we all aspire to and few can afford, but it's a noble one. Survey after survey shows most women would prefer to stay at home and mind their children, if finances allowed.

The outdated wording could have been amended or reformed to make it gender-neutral.

It could be tweaked to read "the dependent spouse" or "person working in the home" and then everyone would vote for it.

This amended wording was called for by the National Women's Council, the Citizens Assembly and the Constitutional Convention.

They wanted the article changed, not abandoned altogether. But next spring, we will be asked to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Furthermore, one of the greatest legal minds in Ireland has said it could have negative knock-on effects for women in Ireland's generous maintenance regime. Professor Geoffrey Shannon, author

of legal tomes on family and child law, now a circuit court judge, urged prudence. He said it could affect maintenance payments in family law cases.

Ireland is unique in its maintenance regime in the event of marriage breakdown, faring better than any other jurisdiction in the world.

Our system guarantees lifelong financial support for a dependent spouse, he explained.

This standard hangs on the constitution, which is: "The express law by which all other laws and rules must comply."

Early polls showed men are more likely to be in favour of the removal of the woman's place clause from the constitution. Women are more likely to be against it.

Think before you cast your vote on March 8, 2024. As it happens, it's also my first wedding anniversary.

But I'm not sure I'll mark it by voting for the complete removal of Article 41.2.

What's more important? Correcting "offensive" language in the constitution?

Or economic and social protections for women in the home?

Time to get real about State help..

MAKE it stop. We're now handing out tents and sleeping bags and money to asylum seekers, because we have nowhere to put them.

Worse, they may sue the State for being left on the street, the Integration Minister Roderic O'Gorman says.

What a fiasco. Why offer protection to people and then leave them to sleep rough? What a false promise.

The overnight tripling of handouts to €113.50 a week is a new departure.

Politicians go on about how there's no "magic money tree" - now, it seems there is.

The ruling parties and the opposition support this nonsense.

The independents are the only ones to point out it is a Government failure.

Senator Michael McDowell said we need to have "a mature, national conversation" about immigration and asylum.

He added: "We are struggling unsuccessfully to cope with the realities of a collective failure to deal with economic migration."

"This issue is not going to disappear."

Clare TD Michael McNamara said it is sinister to shut down debate on such a difficult and sensitive subject as migration.

We have ourselves tied up in knots, putting the appearance of virtue over realities and practicalities.

Help people when you have the wherewithal to help them or don't help them at all.

Lar's ZERO of the week

BUSYBODIES making an issue of the 30-year age gap between Rufus Sewell, 56, and his new fiancée Vivian Benitez, 26.

Men often like younger women, get over it. Rufus and Vivian look great together.



Lar's HERO of the week

OPRAH WINFREY TV icon Oprah was a knockout in a violet gown at the premiere of the remake of The Color Purple.

Oprah starred in the original film 38 years ago. Now 69, she's in great shape and looking better than ever.



CRIMBO MOVIE IS REALLY SPIRITED

IT'S Christmas. Since yesterday. I'm usually sick of it by the time it officially starts on December 8.

It's rammed down our throats since Halloween and you wonder how much more you can take. And it goes on until mid-way through January.

But this year, I'm getting into the seasonal spirit and I'm blaming Ryan Reynolds.

Fast becoming my favourite actor, he stars in Spirited, which I saw last weekend. It's the best Christmas movie in ages - possibly, ever.

It's a musical comedy with an edge and co-stars the great Will Ferrell from Elf.

Reynolds shines as Clint Briggs, a heartless yet charming media mogul, in a modern retelling of Dickens' A Christmas Carol.

It's the most expensive Christmas movie ever made, costing \$75million, and it's a cinema spectacular.

The last movie I saw and really loved was Free Guy, which also

starred the gorgeous Reynolds, 47, and also poked fun at political correctness.

Spirited is funny, irreverent and the songs are great. Behind the laughs and the show tunes, there's a serious message about the dangers of cancel culture.

Go see it, for a good afternoon.

