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Kilkenny AGSI delegates in Shatter walkout snub

FOUR delegates from the Carlow-Kilkenny branch of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors snubbed Justice Minister Alan Shatter as he addressed the AGSI conference in Sligo.

The Carlow-Kilkenny representatives walked out of the 35th AGSI conference on Monday as Minister Shatter began his speech.

And the Minister's assertion that the AGSI and GRA (Garda Representative Association) had done a disservice to members of the force by not being at the negotiation table for recent Croke Park pay talks was greeted with silence.

The AGSI say they have seen huge changes in their work practices and conditions of employment and they've also experienced an average 20% reduction in their wage packet.

Delivering the address of AGSI President Tim Galvin, the Vice President Liam Brady, accused Minister Shatter of lying about garda station closures.

"You told us that the lack of consultation in relation to the first series of closures would not be repeated. 12 months on and nothing has changed. Your words were lies. 100 stations were earmarked since then and despite numerous requests to Garda Management and you Minister, we find out what stations are clos-

ing on the Garda Portal system while you stand in the Dáil making the announcement."

Minister Shatter rejected the 'lies' accusation and said it was not possible to consult with every individual in relation to station closures which he described as an operational decision made by the Garda Commissioner which he would not second guess.

The conference opened with a minute's silence in memory of Detective Garda Adrian Donohoe, shot dead on duty in Co Louth in January of this year.

And yesterday morning (Tuesday) members voted to seek to have the Uzi submachine gun, which was withdrawn, immediately reissued to detectives.

A senior member of the AGSI executive, Inspector Walter Kilculen, claimed that detective Garda Donohoe might still be alive if the Uzi submachine gun had not been withdrawn.



'Walkout' sergeants back down in row with garda chief

Tom Brady and Barry Duggan

FOUR garda sergeants at the centre of a disciplinary row have pledged their full support for Commissioner Martin Callinan.

The pledge followed marathon talks with the garda authorities at the Garda College in Templemore, Co Tipperary.

The four had previously said they had no confidence in Commissioner Callinan after walking out on him at a conference.

They had been summoned to a meeting with Assistant Commissioner Fintan Fanning, who is in charge of human resources in the force.

After more than six hours of talks, the four stepped back from their previous statement that they had lost confidence in the commissioner.

But their association leader John Redmond made it clear the meeting centred solely on the comments referring to the commissioner and they remained at odds with Justice Minister Alan Shatter.

An official statement issued on behalf of the commissioner said the four representatives from the Kilkenny-Carlow branch of the association indicated they meant to cause no offence to Mr Callinan.

The four personally had full confidence in him, and he also enjoyed the full confidence of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors. The statement said the speech by Mr Callinan to the annual conference, and his public comments earlier yesterday, had been particularly helpful and had reinforced the excellent relations between the two sides.

Garda management had warned that the men's comments to the media, in which they said they had been mandated by their branch in Kilkenny-Carlow to say they had lost confidence in the

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'Walkout' sergeants back down in row with garda chief Callinan

Continued from Page 1

commissioner, could be construed as a breach of the force's disciplinary code.

Senior officers made it clear to the group that they wanted to adopt a sensible approach to the problem – and it appeared to observers that the disciplinary threat could be withdrawn if the men reflected on their position and gave their support to the commissioner.

It was felt that if the meeting ended without either the withdrawal of the controversial remarks or a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances in which they were voiced, the men could end up facing disciplinary action.

The sergeants – Joe Hanley, of Tullow, Pat Baldwin, of Kilkenny, Ted Hughes, of Thomastown, and John Foley, Carlow – have more than 100 years' service in the force between them and are all highly respected by their peers.

They said they had no alternative as conference delegates but to fulfill the mandate which had been given to them by their branch at an extraordinary general meeting last January.

Mr Callinan said earlier yesterday that the four men should reflect on the way they had behaved.

He said that while people were entitled to protest, "the manner in which they protest is the issue".

He added that it was a time for calm and reflection on what had happened, for the matter to be dealt with and to move on.

An Garda Síochána was a very disciplined force, Mr Callinan said.

The official statement late last night said all parties considered that the issue was now resolved and they were now looking forward to serving the community.

It also said that members of the association would never shirk their responsibility to either the garda commissioner

or to members of the public.

Mr Redmond said afterwards that his association had reaffirmed its confidence in Mr Callinan, which had never been an issue.

It fully supported the four men for fulfilling the mandate they had been given and the association felt it was never a disciplinary matter. That had been confirmed at the meeting.



Clockwise from top left: Pat Baldwin, John Foley, Joe Hanley and Ted Hughes. Right: the four sergeants leaving Templemore.

ALAN DOWLEY: LIAM BURKE/PRESS 22



Martin Callinan: statement



Discipline not 'for political debate'

Opposition TDs accused Minister for Justice of attempting to silence gardaí

Shatter is treating rank-and-file gardaí with 'nothing short of contempt', Dáil told

MARIE O'HALLORAN

The Government has no role in Garda discipline, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore has insisted as Opposition TDs accused the Minister for Justice of attempting to silence gardaí and of being vindictive towards them.

Four Garda sergeants faced a disciplinary hearing yesterday after their walkout earlier in the week when Alan Shatter and later Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan addressed the conference of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors.

In the Dáil, Sinn Féin deputy leader Mary Lou McDonald described the disciplinary attempt as "utterly wrong" and accused Mr Shatter of treating rank-and-file gardaí with "nothing short of contempt".

She claimed he was attempting to silence gardaí and of being vindictive against them in their protests against the renegotiated Croke Park deal.

But Mr Gilmore said "the Government is not disciplining anybody. The matter of Garda discipline is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. It's not a matter for the Minister for Justice, it's not a matter for the Government and it should not be a matter for political debate and discussion or political interference . . . it should be left with the Garda Commissioner."

Ms McDonald asked why Mr Shatter was "so hell-bent on silencing members of the Garda Síochána . . . if they are critical of the strategy pursued by the Government". She said the gardaí needed to be disciplined but they should not be silenced as citizens of the State.

But Mr Gilmore accused Sinn Féin of political opportunism and said to the party's deputy leader "can you tell me how many voices of gardaí were silenced permanently by your organisation".

Prejudiced

Independent TD Mattie McGrath accused Mr Shatter of being prejudiced against gardaí and said it was "totally unacceptable" to discipline the gardaí in this way. The Tipperary South TD said Ireland looked less like a democracy and "more like Russia or a military junta" with the four officers, who had 130 years' service between them, being summoned to a disciplinary hearing. And then in a personalised attack, he claimed the Minister had refused to allow gardaí protecting him at his home use toilet facilities there.

Mr Gilmore said: "Well, if we ever needed a demonstration as to why the management of the Garda Síochána and matters relating to discipline in the Garda Síochána should not become a matter of political debate, we've just had it."

Mr McGrath also called for a management board, a "buffer zone" between politics and the Garda to be set up claiming the commissioner was "compromised" because of his own continuing service beyond his pension age. Mr Gilmore called on the Tipperary South TD to "reflect seriously on the personalised attack he has just made on the Garda Commissioner".



Garda disciplinary threat lifted

Four sergeants who staged walkout
protests not to face disciplinary measures

Agsi confirms its full confidence in **Garda Commissioner** after meeting yesterday

CONOR LALLY
Crime Correspondent

The threat of disciplinary action against four Garda sergeants who walked out of conference speeches by Minister for Justice Alan Shatter and **Garda Commissioner** Martin Callinan has been lifted.

The men had been facing potential disciplinary action ranging from a verbal warning to dismissal when they were summoned to a meeting in Templemore yesterday with senior officers led by Assistant Commissioner Fintan Fanning, who is in charge of human resources across the force.

Earlier this week they had walked out on speeches by Mr Shatter and Mr Callinan at the annual conference in Sligo of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (Agsi) as a means of registering their lack of confidence in them over pay cuts and reduced resources.

The four sergeants from the Kilkenny-Carlow division were accompanied to the meeting by members of the Agsi national executive led by general secretary **John Redmond**. An agreed statement was released after a meeting lasting more than six hours stating that "all parties consider the matter now resolved and look forward to continuing to serve the community".

The statement said: "The four representatives of Kilkenny-Carlow branch of **Agsi** indicated that they meant to cause no offence to the commissioner. They personally have full confidence in the commissioner of An Garda Síochána. The commissioner enjoys the full confidence of [Agsi]."

It added: "The speech by the **Garda commissioner** to conference and his comments on the

RTE *News at One* were particularly helpful and magnanimous and have reinforced the excellent relations between **Agsi** and senior Garda management.

"Members of Agsi will never shirk their responsibility to either the **Garda commissioner** or members of the public. The representatives of the Kilkenny-Carlow branch regret that this whole matter has been played out on TV and in the public arena".

The four Garda sergeants staged the first of their two walkouts when they left the Agsi conference hall on Monday evening as Mr Shatter was due to begin speaking. They repeated the action again when Mr Callinan addressed delegates on Tuesday afternoon. They explained that their protest had been mandated by their local branch in a vote last month as a way of registering the lack of confidence held by sergeants and inspectors from the branch in Mr Shatter and Mr Callinan.

Agsi said that while it did not agree with the walkout, it believed it was "outrageous" that members of a staff association would be disciplined for staging a protest.



Talks to resolve Garda dispute ongoing

by Jimmy Woulfe and Stephen Rogers

Talks were continuing through the night at the garda college in Templemore between four Garda sergeants and an assistant commissioner in a bid to

resolve the row over their walk out and criticism of Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan.

The sergeants — Pat Baldwin from Kilkenny City, John Foley from Carlow, Joe Hanley from Tullow, and Ted Hughes from Thomastown — arrived in full uniform for the meeting with Assistant Commissioner Fintan Fanning, about an hour before it was due to begin at 4pm.

The assistant commissioner is in charge of human resources for the force and also has responsibility for professional standards, internal affairs, and training.

The four sergeants were

accompanied at the talks by the president, two vice-presidents, and the general secretary of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI).

It was at the AGSI's annual conference that the four men staged a walk out as the commissioner was starting a speech. The men have also expressed no confidence in Commissioner Callinan.

The officers also walked out during a speech by Justice Minister Alan Shatter.

It has been speculated the four officers could face being stripped of the rank, fined, or suspended.

It had been thought yesterday's meeting with the assistant commissioner

might only last 45 minutes, but the parties remained in the Garda Síochána College in Templemore at time of going to press and a source said they were expected to sit through the night.

Earlier Commissioner Callinan, said the meeting was important to the force and the public's perception of the force.

"We are a disciplined force and we have responsibilities over and above other public servants.

"What has happened, has happened. This is a time for cool heads and appropriate reflection on what has happened.

"It is a time for dealing with that and moving on."



REBEL GARDAI GIVE CALLINAN SUPPORT

Walk-out officers back Commissioner — but not Minister

■ By MICHAEL O'TOOLE
Crime Correspondent

THE four Garda sergeants who walked out on speeches by Commissioner Martin Callinan and Justice Minister Alan Shatter last night expressed confidence in their immediate boss — but didn't mention their political master.

The four men were locked in talks with union representatives and Garda top brass at the force's college in Templemore, Co Tipperary, for much of yesterday.

They arrived around 4pm — but an expected 45-minute meeting turned

into a marathon.

The four — Pat Baldwin, Joe Hanley, Ted Hughes and John Foley — are all uniformed sergeants from the Carlow-Kilkenny division.

Move

They had staged the two separate walkouts at the annual conference of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) in Sligo earlier this week.

The move infuriated Commissioner Callinan — who then initiated disciplinary proceedings against all four sergeants.

The officers had staged the walk-out after being mandated to by a meeting of their branch in January.

They had faced a range of possible sanctions — from a fine to a reduction in rank or even dismissal and the AGSI had vowed to defend the officers to the hilt.

However late last night an agreed statement was released following the six-hour meeting which indicated that the issues at stake had been resolved between top brass and the union for middle-ranking members.

"The four representatives of Kilkenny-Carlow branch of the **AGSI** indicated that they meant to cause no offence to the Commissioner," the statement read.

"They personally have full confidence in the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána.

"The Commissioner enjoys the full confidence of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors.

"Members of AGSI will never shirk their responsibility to either the **Garda Commissioner** or members of the Public.

"All parties consider the matter now resolved and look forward to continuing to serve the Community."





If Gardai snub a Minister, they're snubbing us too



CATHAL
McCARTHY

WE have often in this column alluded to that peculiar Irish genius for involving ourselves in matters of public debate and contention with an enthusiasm and energy that is invariably in inverse proportion to a demonstrable grasp of the issue being debated.

Translated for the benefit of any visitors from Tipperary who have picked up this paper and are struggling to make sense of that, we are saying that the louder the average Irishman talks about an issue, the further he seems to move away from a complete understanding.

An example of this hilarious tendency is furnished by the controversy surrounding the row between Justice Minister Alan Shatter, **Garda Commissioner** Martin Callinan and the four sergeants who walked out of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) conference before either the Minister or the Commissioner spoke.

I don't care particularly what the Gardai think of Alan Shatter. I would guess that he is not a man who suffers too often from self-doubt or feelings of inadequacy.

I mightn't like what Mr Shatter says or believes and I'm perfectly entitled to let him know that I don't like it.

But that's a long, long, long way from Minister Shatter standing up to address an audience of police officers who are sworn — and paid — to uphold the law of the land, for which he is the Cabinet Minister responsible, and being snubbed and insulted by several of those police officers.

That's a different kettle of fish entirely and

when people, particularly a body like the AGSI, can't tell the difference then, brother, we have got a problem.

At the same conference at which this walk-out took place, proper testament and tribute was paid to the Garda Adrian Donohoe, who was murdered recently in Dundalk.

That murder shocked a nation and is very consciously placed in a special category of infamy and crime precisely because Garda Donohoe was a member of the force that is sworn to uphold the law of the land. He represented the State — and therefore us — in a way that is unique.

Members of the Garda Síochána represent the Irish State and, through that, they represent us: the citizens of that state. The force and its members derive their prestige and widespread respect and affection through that connection.

If you appeal successfully — and rightly — for the murder of one of your colleagues to be placed into a special category of crime because you are sworn to uphold and defend the laws of the State, then you cannot abuse that same State and treat it in the manner of a sulky teenage girl, turning her back and flouncing out of the kitchen when mammy says she can't go to the dance that night.

The Gardai are one of the most — if not, the most — visible expressions of the Irish State and it cannot be acceptable for members to insult their State in any way.

Minister Shatter is a senior member of the duly elected government of that State and he's entitled to no less respect as a representative of the State than are the Gardai when they go about their business on behalf of the State.

If we don't like Minister Shatter, if we don't think he's doing a good job, then there is a well established procedure for us making our displeasure known. It's called a General Election.

In the meantime, he is a sworn and paid representative of the State — which means us — and it is absurd to permit other sworn and

paid representatives of the State to insult and snub him and, by extension, us.

We are the State. How many times does this have to be explained?

The snub at the AGSO conference drained valuable respect from both the Gardai and the State. But, still, it's nice to see one drain working. They'd give a lot in Blackpool to have a working drain, or 'culvert' as those of us who did Engineering out in UCC will always refer to them.

Those businesses in Blackpool who have just suffered their second flooding in nine months have appealed for a rates holiday on the (fairly obvious, I would have thought) grounds that they can't actually open for business and therefore can't make any income out of which to pay the City Council's Danegeld.

City manager Tim Lucey has announced a series of measures that will go some way to

addressing the issue of repeated flooding. In the meantime, we learned that some of the Blackpool businesses affected have put their staff on protective notice following the latest swamping.

Try and imagine a district of Dublin — Blackrock, for example — being seriously flooded four times in a decade. The State would have purchased the Tunnel Boring Machine they used for the channel and constructed a drain that left the place as dry as the Sahara.

There doesn't seem to be the same urgency when it comes to our own Blackpool and this is absolutely unacceptable.

Cork's TDs had better start shouting because the time for watery complaints is over.

● **TOMORROW: Ailín Quinlan takes Minister Shatter to task for his response to the AGSI conference snub.**



TARGET: Justice Minister Alan Shatter was insulted by members of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors who walked out before his speech, says Cathal McCarthy

“

Try and imagine a district of Dublin — Blackrock, for example — being seriously flooded four times in a decade. The State would have constructed a drain that left the place as dry as the Sahara.



Walk-out gardaí back down in row with Commissioner

FOUR garda sergeants threatened with disciplinary action for snubbing their chief have been cleared after declaring their full confidence in the commissioner.

An agreed statement from the officers from Kilkenny-Carlow division and garda bosses following a six-hour meeting last night said the matter was now "resolved". A Garda Press Office spokesman said no further disciplinary action would be taken.

The four were summoned to a meeting with Assistant Commissioner Fintan Fanning yesterday afternoon over their demonstration at the Association of Garda Ser-

geants and Inspectors (AGSI) annual conference earlier this week.

They had staged a walkout when Minister for Justice Alan Shatter got up to address the gathering and – in an unprecedented move – again when the **Garda Commissioner** Martin Callinan took to the podium.

One of the members also remarked that he had no confidence in Mr Callinan.

A statement released by An Garda Síochána after the meeting at Templemore Garda College, said the four sergeants "indicated that they meant to cause no offence to the Commissioner".



Garda unrest

Discipline in doubt

The garda who confronted Taoiseach Enda Kenny while canvassing in Meath East was not in uniform. He reportedly remained calm and polite throughout the chance meeting. He stressed that he felt that the salaries of gardaí were being unfairly reduced.

In response, the Taoiseach criticised the Garda Representative Association and the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors for walking out on pay talks.

Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan has called for a report into the chance meeting with the Taoiseach. There must be no hint or suggestion of any victimisation in this instance. There are already signs of disconcerting unrest within the force.

An Garda Síochána ought to be seen as a disciplined organisation. But some recent behaviour has brought that discipline into serious question.

The **AGSI** received Justice Minister Alan Shatter and the **Garda Commissioner** with a pointed but discreet silence at its conference in Sligo. The walkout by four supervisors in protest, however, was a sad reflection on both their discipline and their solidarity with their colleagues.

The GRA has every right to invite, or not to invite, the justice minister and the commissioner to its forthcoming conference, but the publicity afforded to suggestions that it would deliberately snub them appears gratuitously insulting.

This behaviour has been further compounded by suggestions that elements of the gardaí are considering industrial action that would violate the law. This would be intolerable, as it would undermine the basis on which An Garda Síochána was founded. It would also amount to a challenge to the rule of law and the fundamental civilian control of our democracy.

Security forces have acted above the law in other countries, but where such conduct was tolerated, it has usually led to a form of fascism. Such conduct should never be tolerated in a democratic republic.



'Uzi would not have saved Garda Donohoe'

Valerie Robinson

MURDERED Garda Adrian Donohoe would not have been saved if he had been equipped with an Uzi submachine gun, the Republic's most senior officer has said.

Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan said the force would not bow to pressure to return the weapons to detectives.

The high-powered firearms were removed from service a year ago but Mr Callinan said "certain" units within An Garda Síochána still had access to Uzis.

He also insisted that Regional Support Units were very well equipped and well armed.

Donegal gardai led calls for the return of Uzis at this week's Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors conference in Sligo.

Delegates heard Inspector Walter Kilcullen of the **AGSI's** national executive suggest Garda Detective Donohoe, right, might not have been shot dead by a cross-border criminal gang outside Lordship Credit Union in Co Louth if he had been carrying an Uzi.

However, Mr Callinan yesterday said the "salient facts" relating to the January murder indicated an Uzi would "not have made the slightest bit of difference" when the detective and a colleague were attacked.

Earlier, former justice minister Nora Owen branded Mr Kilcullen's comments "insensitive".

Ms Owen said she believed the remark would have "distressed" the Donohoe family.

AGSI general secretary **John Redmond** also said it had been "inadvisable" to refer to the murder.





Garda Commissioner accused of being mouthpiece for Shatter

Seanad

JIMMY WALSH

The Garda Commissioner was obviously just a mouthpiece for Minister for Justice Alan Shatter, Diarmuid Wilson (FF) said.

It would be a sad day if four members of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) were to be disciplined for taking democratic action in the only way open to them, he said.

Calling for the Minister to be invited to the House to facilitate an open discussion on the difficulties facing the force, Mr Wilson said the AGSI members who had walked out during the Minister's speech at the association's annual conference had been mandated by their branches to do so.

Acting Seanad Fianna Fáil leader Marc Mac Sharry said he thought it would be highly regrettable if disciplinary action were taken against the four.

Members of the Garda had very limited tools at their disposal to highlight the difficulties that they had at any given time. Surely they should be entitled within the confines of their own conference to register a protest in a peaceful and meaningful way.

"I would regret very much if the Garda Commissioner felt it necessary to proceed to take disciplinary action against these members," said Mr Mac Sharry.

A letter in yesterday's *Irish Times* about the direct provision system for asylum seekers was "a must-read" for all parliamentarians, Jillian van Turnhout (Ind) said. Penned by a doctor familiar with the accommodation provided, it highlighted the harrowing system that had been put in place.

There was a need in particular to debate the appropriateness of the system for the welfare of the 1,725 children who had been in it for several years.

Ms van Turnhout urged the establishment of an independent complaints mechanism and

an independent inspection system of direct provision centres.



It's wrong to discipline four gardai

THE THREAT to discipline four gardai who walked out on the Justice Minister and Garda Commissioner is wrong. The officers, who made their protest at the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors' conference, are to be hauled before an assistant commissioner.

It now appears unlikely that they will face any of the severe sanctions - such as suspension or demotion - available to the authorities. But the fact that Justice Minister Alan Shatter sanctioned the disciplinary move against them would seem heavy-handed.

Every garda must respect the commissioner and minister in the line of duty. But these four officers were attending a representative conference at which Mr Shatter and Commissioner Callinan were invited guests.

Their protest was different, for example, from disobeying an order while on duty. The disciplinary move will do little to bridge the widening gap between the commissioner, the minister and gardai.



Rank-and-file gardaí snub Shatter

by Sean O'Riordan

The body representing rank-and-file gardaí has confirmed it is not inviting Justice Minister Alan Shatter to its annual conference at the end of April.

The Garda Representative Association also confirmed its executive will decide in the next week whether or not to invite Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan.

GRA president John Parker said the decision not to invite Mr Shatter to the conference in Westport had been made by grassroots members. It is the first time a garda association has not invited the minister to its annual conference.

The move came as the association representing Garda middle management said its legal team will defend four sergeants who are facing disciplinary proceedings for walking out of a conference as Mr Shatter and the Garda commissioner delivered speeches.

The sergeants, who have a combined 130 years of unblemished service, will appear before an

assistant commissioner today to be questioned about the walkouts.

Mr Shatter yesterday sanctioned disciplinary procedures against Sergeants Joe Hanley, Tullow; Pat Baldwin, Kilkenny City; Ted Hughes, Thomastown; and John Foley, Carlow. They could face being stripped of the rank, fined, or suspended.

They walked out of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) annual conference in Sligo earlier this week after being mandated by their colleagues in the Carlow/Kilkenny division to do so.

They were also mandated to say they had no confidence in either the minister or commissioner.

AGSI general secretary John Redmond it was "outrageous that they would be threatened with discipline for bringing the views of their membership to delegates at the conference".

Mr Redmond said he did not believe the commissioner had any

right to investigate or prosecute AGSI members who were elected to voice the frustration over pay cuts already endured by members of the force. He said the sergeants had no option but to bring those views to conference because they were mandated to do so.

"Those brave people did what they were told to do by their membership. They should not be facing the threat of discipline."

In an interview on RTE radio, Mr Shatter said it was a matter for AGSI members as to how they conducted themselves when guests are invited to address their conference and he would not comment on disciplinary actions the commissioner may take.

Meanwhile, the commissioner is awaiting a report to see if an off-duty garda could be disciplined after he confronted Enda Kenny in Ratoath, Co Meath, last Sunday about his pay and conditions.

Mr Parker said the garda was entitled to express his views to Mr Kenny.