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'Move them on'

Co Waterford's policy on travellers is in disarray, says Dick Grogan

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Delia Murphy: Blackbird of ballads

New biography tells how she sang through good times and bad

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Why the UK election means a great deal to Ireland

● Patrick Smyth: 16

Cabinet agrees £30m damages offer to victims of hepatitis C

A REVISED offer of an estimated £30 million for aggravated damages has been presented by the Government to the groups representing people infected with hepatitis C through contaminated blood products. The Minister for Health met representatives of Positive Action last night to outline an agreement that had been reached at Cabinet yesterday morning: [page 9](#)

PDs would phase in home water meters by 2010

DOMESTIC water should be paid through a metering system which would be phased in from 2001 to 2010, the Progressive Democrats said yesterday. The party proposes that a basic water allowance be provided for each household, free of charge. A rate of tariffs would apply to usage above the basic allowance: [page 8](#)

Central Bank supports pound: The Central Bank has intervened heavily in the currency markets, holding up the value of the pound against sterling: [page 18](#)

Saddam defies 'no-fly zone': Saddam Hussein yesterday flew pilgrims home from Saudi Arabia in defiance of the US and Britain "no-fly zone": [page 18](#)

Dunne business associate confirms Haughey

Fujimori sends in troops on 126t





Four with a thriving singing career in The Capuchin Annual.

in Australia, "and Delia hated it." started drinking excessively; there were two embarrassing incidents and she returned to Ireland on her own for the dance halls and parish halls of the country, playing to packed audiences drinking late into the night.

her last years, she found some peace, on a small farm in Canada but died in Ireland where she died, in

ere is an aching sadness to Delia's life story. Ill-equipped to come between the boisterous informality of rural Ireland and the rigid formality of dramatic circles, and prevented, much of the time, from singing, she resorted to comfort of alcohol. Not that Aidan would ever say she was an alcoholic. That wouldn't be a word to use about someone you've grown fond of. Indulging is how he puts it.

her best epitaph comes in a quote from Clancy: "Her main contribution was she made us feel that we could respect- ing our own songs."

Live Till I Die by Aidan O'Hara is published by Drumlin Publications, price

Dropping off the escalator

Next year, a young Japanese man will cycle from Osaka to Dublin.

Alva Mac Sherry finds out why

AFTER he graduated, young Yasuyuki Ozeki landed the kind of good job in a good company that all Japanese graduates dream of. But it didn't last. He'd been tainted.

Around him, other young sales executives slogged far into the night, sacrificing health and family lives for careers, some of them heading for *karoshi*, the death-by-overwork syndrome that is a fact of life in Japan. But not Yasuyuki.

Yasuyuki had been to Ireland, where people couldn't get out of work fast enough to their pubs and their families. He loved it: it ruined him for life as a "salary man", for the pollution and pressure of life in Japanese cities.

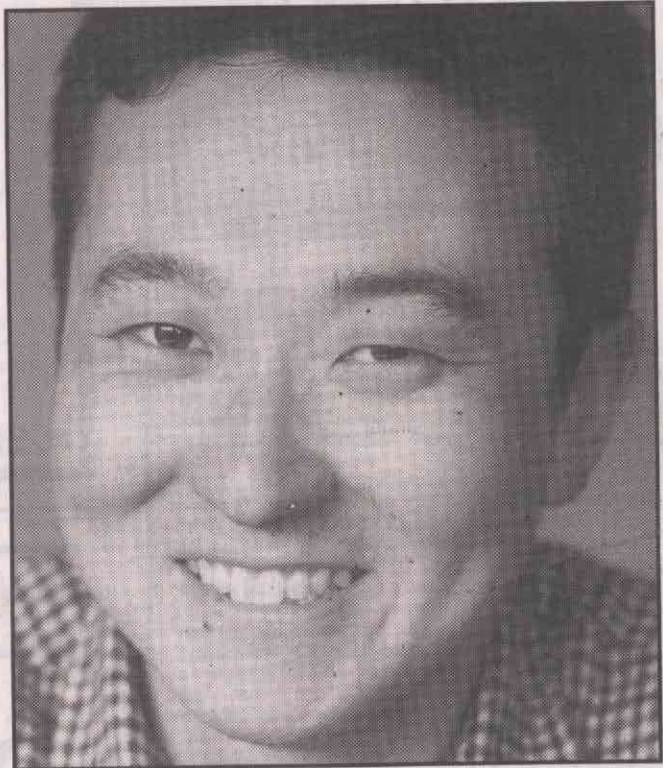
So, prompt at the official quitting time every day, he would leave his desk, his colleagues fuming silently at his departure: he would hop on his bike, and cycle for miles in the countryside around his home in Osaka, dreaming of changing the system, of the future, of Ireland and its smiling natives.

Indeed, it is hard not to return Yasuyuki's smile: the 25-year-old cyclist's wide grin and enthusiastic espousal of the pub culture and fresh air of Ireland clearly won him friends wherever he went, three years ago, on a month's holiday between university and his first job, visiting a land he had found through a travel tale by his favourite author.

But Yasuyuki is far from alone in bucking the Japanese system. Of the graduates who joined his firm when he did, he reckons about 15 per cent have given up the long nights of heavy-industrial machinery sales. Many have gone abroad — perhaps the most acceptable way to drop out of Japanese society.

"Dropping off the escalator," he calls it, explaining that "the escalator" is the term used to describe the steady progress an executive expects to make within a Japanese company.

Yasuyuki, meanwhile, found a unique, not to say drastic response to his discontent. He



Cyclist Yasuyuki Ozeki... bucking the system in Japan. Photograph: Frank Miller

threw up the machinery sales six months ago to work on a building site, to save money and firm his muscles. In March of next year, he will set off to cycle from Japan via China, Mongolia and Russia, across Europe, to Dublin. He will arrive, weather and whim permitting, in October 1998.

Quitting that good job scandalised his parents, and in a land where respect for your elders is highly prized, this caused Yasuyuki great pain.

"It was a terrible time," he says. "My mother and father are typical Japanese. My father cried, my mother cried... It was a family tragedy."

"But they are changing. They feel Japan is changing." As time goes on, he says, his parents can see a little, if not through his eyes, at least "through my sunglasses".

TO Yasuyuki, this journey is as much in his head as on the road, as much a chance for months of introspection as an exploration of the Eurasian continent. Both journeys are symbolised on his cycle-helmet, which will bear the Irish flag on the front, the Japanese flag on the back, between them a map of the continent and his route. And there will be spaces on the helmet for new friends to write names or greetings: and as the spaces fill, so will the chasm between his Japan and his Ireland — or at least, so Yasuyuki hopes.

"And I wish to end my project on O'Connell Street, surrounded by millions of Irish people waiting for me with millions of pints of Guinness, (just like on St Patrick's Day)," he jokes. And if he makes it I, for one, intend to be there.