

Pecha Kucha talk Burren Law School 30-4-11

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Last week I was party to a casual discussion on women in academia. A senior academic in a very influential admin post said "women will not progress because they do not publish, do not contribute to their disciplines over and above their teaching hours, its too hard to get published, you have to work weekends and nights and holidays and women want to look after their families".

Meanwhile I gently choked on my lunch... in a sort of feminine way... I thought of how the system mitigates so much against people who care for others and modestly do their work, benefiting others not seeking personal glory.

Why are women not rising to management and influential positions in universities?

Our society in Ireland upholds a set of deep rooted values that are not developmental or socially useful anymore

I want to imagine a new republic that is run by women:
Where 86% of seats in the Dail are held by women
83% of Seanad seats and 88% of parliamentary committee members are women, 75% of Cabinet Ministers are women!

A corresponding majority in the top jobs in business, financial sectors and major private enterprise are women - 95%

But can we imagine the economic worlds inhabited by men in this new republic - as well as employment in the official economy, earning 16% less than women all round they are also 55% working in the home or communities as carers, and a huge unknown number of men employed by families as domestic servants and overlapping with that the underworld of male human trafficking and the sex trade in men and boys!

Would it be possible that our powerful women would bear to think of or tolerate their men suffering such inequities - our brothers, sons, husbands, lovers?

It would be undignified, ignoble and an insult to principles of human justice!

In the new republic, we would not benefit only women but all of society!

But our new republic has a precedent!
Icelandic women have taken over power from the exclusively male culprits of their financial crash.

Their new female politicians promote trust modesty and people skills

Women managers have been put in place to lead the country's collapsed banks, which are now turning profits. And they are running them with the new ethos - not to engage in business deals that will be at other people's expense tomorrow.

Female banker Halla Tomasdottir who now heads up the only profit making Icelandic financial investment company (who believes in emotional capital & profit with principles) says they have brought greater female values into the financial world.

I believe we should similarly adopt - greater female values - into our society

In the new republic I am imagining here are some initial applications of such values:

Irish people (like in Iceland) would refuse to pay a debt incurred by financial sharks without being consulted

Our womanly government (like in Iceland) would launch an investigation to determine legal responsibilities for the fatal economic crisis and will arrest several bankers and top executives closely linked to high risk operations. This situation will lead scared bankers and executives to leave the country en masse.

Interpol (as in Iceland) meanwhile, will issue an international arrest warrant against the former president of the worst of the Irish banks.

In the context of our current crisis, an assembly of Irish people, men and women from all walks of life will be elected to draft a new constitution that would reflect the lessons learned (as Iceland did)

One of the first principles of this new constitution will be absolute openness and transparency of all institutions and information in this state - this too happened in Iceland!

We are not Iceland (the small matter of one letter in our names!) we have our own way of doing things but I think an Irish women-led new republic could achieve equally enlightened results if we were to take the opportunity to do so