

# EXHIBIT B



Dáil Éireann



Seanad Éireann

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**Seanad Éireann - Volume 132 - 09 April, 1992  
Adjournment Matter. - National Library Bequest.**

**Mr. Norris:** I want to raise the question of certain bequests to the National Library of Ireland by the late Mr. Paul Léon and to ask the Taoiseach to investigate the circumstances under which some items of this bequest were abstracted apparently from the collection and given into the possession of a private individual, a collector of Joyceanna who is not a citizen of this State but is related to the late writer James Joyce. This is a wonderfully Irish situation; I recall Deputy Haughey saying in the Dáil some time ago after Deputy Lenihan wrote a book that there was a good healthy tradition of rows about books in Irish public life. This, in a sense is, another one and it hinges around ownership and censorship.

Certain qualities have made James Joyce a writer of interest internationally. He is probably the greatest novelist of this century and one of the world's greatest artists. He was an innovator and a man of extraordinary moral and intellectual courage who had difficulty with every book he wrote. The proof galleys of *Dubliners* were first pulped and then burned because of objections by the self-appointed censors. The printer, John Faulkner, refused to stand over the setting of this book, occasioning Joyce considerable distress. Joyce experienced [543] difficulty with *A Portrait of the Artist; Ulysses* as we know was banned in many countries and recently occasioned a volume all of its own on the legal complexities of that case, a book with the wonderful title *The United States of America versus one book named Ulysses*. *Ulysses* was eventually judged not obscene; to be, as Judge Thomas Wolsey said, emetic rather than erotic. *Finnegan's Wake* was regarded as so resistant to understanding that no attempt was made to ban it.

Joyce always had difficulties with publishers because of his honesty. In the letters to which we have access, one can see Joyce continually insisting upon his right to present material as it was. He says about *Dubliners* that he writes "with the conviction that he is a very bold man indeed who dares to alter in the presentments, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard." There has previously been trouble about Joyce's letters which were regarded as a private matter. I sympathise with the remaining members of Joyce's family with regard to the erotic correspondence that James Joyce engaged in with his wife, Nora Barnacle, in 1909 when they were separated — he in Dublin and she in Trieste; it was to a certain extent an invasion of privacy to publish those letters. They had been available to scholars but there was a ban on their publication from the American library in which they were kept. Access was granted to a French scholar who subsequently pirated material and it then became necessary to publish the entire collection. Those prurient critics who reprinted the letters and then expressed contempt or horror at the content of the letters were complete hypocrites. Nobody asked them to investigate this side of Joyce. They did so and then affected to be horrified.

Those letters were useful in a literary sense for one reason. They demonstrate clearly that Joyce never wrote pornographically in his fiction; none of his published work was pornographic. It deals with sexual matters in great detail and honesty but also dispassionately. [544] Joyce achieves the Olympian detachment he speaks of in a *Portrait of the Artist*, where he distains the arts

that he describes as kinetic, saying that they are pornographic and didactic on the one hand but he, the great classical artist, is looking for stasis, an Olympian godlike detachment and as a result of which, he can contemplate with equanimity all the doings of mankind on this planet including those that are regarded as too humble or too squalid to be described or depicted by previous artists. If one examines the letters of 1909, where Joyce writes with the deliberate intention of exciting sexual emotion in the reader because this was a correspondence where he wished to convey the electric current of sexual excitement between himself and his wife when they were apart — a matter of privacy — he writes in a completely different way to the Nausikaa episode of *Ulysses* or the “Nightown” episode of that novel.

In 1906, Joyce speaking about sexual honesty said:

If I put down a bucket into my own soul's well, sexual department, I draw up Griffith's, and Ibsen's and Skeffington's and Bernard Vaughan's and St. Aloysius' and Shelley's and Renan's water along with my own. And I am going to do that in my novel (*inter alia*) and plank the bucket down before the shades and substances above mentioned to see how they like it: and if they don't like it, I can't help them. I am nauseated by their lying drivel about pure men and pure women and spiritual love and love forever: blatant lying in the face of the truth.

Joyce refused to lie; the evidence is there in his records and one of the remarkable things he does in a *Portrait of the Artist*, an early work, is to cross a divide which the Victorians found impossible to cross — the divide of sexual honesty. Even great novelists like Dickens and the Brontes find that with the onset of puberty honesty goes out of the window and in comes wish fulfilment. Joyce maintained honesty ruthlessly with regard to his own sexual life and sexual history and [545] makes it clear that this is vitally important to an understanding of the human mind. In a *Portrait of the Artist*, for example, having been very frank about his early sexual experiences he recounts them to his friend Davin who is a portrait of George Clancy, the Lord Mayor of Limerick murdered subsequently by the Black and Tans. Davin is upset by this information.

I'm a simple person, said Davin. You know that. When you told me that night in Harcourt Street those things about your private life, honest to God, Stevie, I was not able to eat my dinner. I was quite bad. I was awake a long time that night. Why did you tell me those things?

A little later Stephen gives him the answer: “The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of.” It is clear throughout the novel that there is a constant parallel drawn between sexual energy and the creative imagination. This is important and central to my argument.

What took place in the National Library was an extraordinary distorted echo of genius. There was an absurd irony about the proceedings because Joyce was once again censored, this time at the instigation of a person bearing the name of Stephen, the name of Joyce's character in *Ulysses*. Can I say why there is an irony in it?

One of the episodes of *Ulysses*, “Seylla and Charybdis” takes place in that library which we can see from the window of this House. In that episode the young Stephen Dedalus attempts a complicated hypothesis about the nature of Hamlet and his psychology. In order to do so he creates a system which employs an understanding of the sexual intimacy between William Shakespeare and Ann Hathaway. It is biographical, highly speculative and detailed in its sexual implication. He started off by saying:

Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death speaking his own words to his [546] own son's name (had Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been Prince Hamlet's twin) is it possible, I want to know or probable that he did not

draw or foresee the logical conclusion of these premises: you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen. Ann Shakespeare born Hathaway? And then Russell breaks in, the voice of the literary establishment, the flabby conventionality of Dublin life: "But this prying into the family life of a great man, Russell began impatiently." Interesting only to the parish clerk. I mean, we have the plays. I mean when we read the poetry of King Lear what is it to us how the poet lived? As for living, our servants can do that for us, Villiers de l'Isle has said. Peeping and prying into the greenroom gossip of the day...

This is the argument that Joyce's grandson employed in order to mutilate our understanding of James Joyce by abstracting material from that collection. I want to make a few points about the collection and say why it is dangerous that this was allowed.

The collection is a very important one and has been carefully handled by the Library. There are over 2,000 items in it ranging from significant correspondence about the publication of *Ulysses* in America, proof sheets of *Finnegan's Wake*, right down to Joyce's gas bills for his Paris flat and some amusing items such as the shared indignation that both Joyce and O'Casey felt when *Finnegan's Wake* was attributed, incorrectly, by *The Irish Times* to Sean O'Casey instead of to Joyce. The items have been well catalogued and described. However, there is a very disturbing paragraph in the introduction which goes as follows:

The National Library of Ireland has released a limited number of papers of a purely personal family nature to Stephen James Joyce, grandson of James Joyce, and, having regard to the wishes of Paul Léon, had decided not to allow access to or publication of [547] certain papers prior to the 31st day of December 2050.

It then goes on to say that there was no erotic correspondence. That concerns me because, as I understand it, this very important collection of material was made available to the Irish people by the late Paul Léon. It was left in trust to the National Library for the Irish people with an embargo of 50 years; that time has now elapsed. There is nothing that suggests that material should be abstracted and physically given to anybody. I do not wish to engage in any attack — I know it would not be allowed — but I was in the presence of Mr. Stephen Joyce in Venice at a public meeting during an international academic gathering when he gloated over the fact that he had destroyed some family papers. I do not think they were particularly important and I think he did it to tantalise but it is irresponsible to allow material to be transmitted to a private individual when it is held in trust by the National Library for the people of Ireland.

The tragic history of Paul Léon is another consideration. Léon became acquainted with Joyce in the early 1930s, became his unpaid amanuensis, secretary and adviser on contractual legal matters. In 1940 Joyce went to St. Gerard Le Puy in France where he was visited by Léon. They had had some kind of a quarrel but they made up. After Joyce died in 1941 Léon was back in Paris and very courageously rescued the contents of the Joyce flat and also deposited with Count O'Kelly de Gallagher, the Irish ambassador to Paris, his own personal collection of correspondence entered into between himself and Joyce and between himself and other interested parties acting on behalf of James Joyce. I make that point because the documents were clearly the property of the Léon family, and not the property of the Joyce family. I know that copyright resides with the writer of the letter but possession, legal ownership, does not; that resides with the addressee. The Léon collection is precisely that; the Léon collection.

[548] Were the wishes of the Léon family in this matter consulted? Was Mr. Alexis Léon consulted about the abstraction of material from the collection

and its donation apparently to Mr. Stephen Joyce?

Dr. Donlon, for whom I have a good deal of sympathy, indicated that she embarked upon this course of action because she wished to assuage the possible fears of future donors about the fate of manuscript material. She certainly did not assuage mine. I am now a lot more fearful than I would have been before this action. I would hate to think, did I ever consider myself significant enough to deposit my papers with the National Library, that a grandniece or a grandnephew of mine could walk in, demand to see the papers and take some of them away with him or with her. I believe the former Librarian, Paddy Henchy, who was the subject of a particularly bitter and ill-founded attack at that ceremony behaved in the most honourable correct and proper way in handling this collection and also helped to establish the reputation of James Joyce by collaborating with Richard Ellmann in the creation of the great biography of James Joyce.

I note that Dr. Donlon said in a newspaper article that the material in the collection was dealt with in a manner "consistent with the instructions by the donor". That may be the case; I do not think it is, but that is a weak statement because it contains no assertion that the giving of this material, legally the possession of the Irish people and part of our cultural inheritance, was required by the terms of Mr. Léon's bequest. I do not have the wording of the bequest; I attempted to get it from the National Library but it was not possible this afternoon. They promised to have it for me tomorrow but, unfortunately, tomorrow is too late. I am aware of the general trend of the wording and I know that Alexis Léon was not made aware of what items were taken. How many items were removed and what was the general tenor of those items? One is entitled to ask those questions.

The subject of the letters and this [549] controversy will continue. The international James Joyce symposium at which there will be between 500 and 1,000 scholars in Dublin in June this year, is devoting a special session in the Library to the question of the Paul Léon collection and there is no doubt that the question of ownership and the behaviour of the National Library will be brought up.

I would like to make another point with regard to sensitivity about the letters. Mr. Léon, in his instructions, indicated that he felt the wishes of the Joyce family should be borne in mind; that includes Stephen, James Joyce's grandson. A number of other relations of James Joyce, including several nephews and nieces, were present in the Library; some of them mentioned quite frequently in the letters and more frequently than Mr. Stephen Joyce. I would like to ask if they were consulted about publication because "family" does not just mean the immediate family in terms of linear genealogical descent; James Joyce in the passage I quoted in the discussion about Hamlet says paternity is a legal fiction, so he dismisses the claims of sons, let alone grandsons.

Joyce was considerably censored throughout his life. He fought a lonely struggle for freedom with extraordinary courage and integrity. He demanded in that very building the right to use access to private information about the sexual intimacies of great writers in order to explain and understand the nature of their genius; yet last Sunday in the place where James Joyce struck his fictional blow for freedom and for the right to use that kind of information an act of censorship and act of mutilation was perpetrated. Items were abstracted, in my opinion, illegally, and an absurd new date was set — 31 December, 2050. Stephen James Joyce will be 119 years old in 2050 and I will be a vigorous 106. I very much doubt if I will be bothered about James Joyce and his letters at that stage; I will probably be crawling around the floor looking for my false teeth if I am still alive. I do not see the necessity for that time span. Cabinet papers are revealed [550] after 50 years but we are now

going well over 100 years for this material. It is time for some explanation. There has been a difficulty between the Joyce family and this country arising from the time that W.B. Yeats, a former Member of this House, was ceremonially exhumed from the south of France, taken by naval destroyer to Sligo and reburied. Mrs. Joyce felt something similar should have been done for her husband. She felt snubbed by the Government of the day and as a result the manuscript of Finnegans Wake was given to the British Museum Library rather than to the National Library. This feeling has continued unfortunately. There is little likelihood that we will receive any material from the continental branch of the Joyce family. That should not affect us but that strong feeling extends far back.

It was irresponsible to violate the trust placed in the National Library by abstracting items and then by restricting access by scholars.

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Mr. T. Kitt):** The decision to give a limited number of papers of a purely personal, family nature to Stephen Joyce, grandson of James Joyce, was taken by the National Library in consultation with the Taoiseach and other Government agencies. The decision arrived at took account of the instructions received with the bequest and of the National Library's policy of respecting the wishes of donors of personal papers and diaries.

There is a considerable gulf between censorship and the respecting of personal privacy. In a debate like this we should consider the implications for potential donors. The Library has to be seen to be honouring privacy. As the Senator rightly pointed out, these were private personal papers which came to the Library in exceptional circumstances and were given to the Library in trust. We are fortunate to have 2,018 items and these Joycean papers are available to the public. The Léon letter provides for consultation with representatives of the family before publication is allowed.

[551] **Mr. Norris:** I thank the Minister for redoubling the irony by making the argument about privacy which Joyce defeated in the National Library.

[552] The Seanad adjourned at 6.25 p.m. until 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 14 April 1992.