**Seanad** [**Order of Business**](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad2014120400005?opendocument)

**Thursday, 4 December 2014**

**Senator Terry Leyden**:   Senator White provided some good facts and statistics. The reality, however, is that the Government is allowing low-cost selling of alcohol in supermarkets. That has had the effect of putting terrible pressure on the licensed trade, including bar owners, although I do not want to cite any vested interests.

**Senator Michael Mullins**:   I hope the Dáil bar is doing well, though.

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  Sunday newspapers are practically exclusively carrying advertisements for Tesco, SuperValu, Dunnes Stores, Aldi and Lidl. Last Sunday, they were advertising 25% off three litres of alcohol - gin, vodka and whiskey. People were urged to buy it fast in the store or get it delivered. Supermarkets are selling alcohol at a lower cost than publicans can buy it from wholesalers

That is a fact, which I can prove conclusively. Supermarkets are selling alcohol below cost to attract customers. More alcohol is being consumed but a larger percentage of young people are drinking at home, yet the publicans who run a good business and try to ensure their customers drink proportionately are being victimised in this regard. It has led to the closure of pubs throughout the country and this will continue next year unless the Government introduces a Bill to outlaw the below-cost selling of alcohol. All people are looking for is a level playing pitch. It is attracting the abuse that Senator White so eloquently outlined. The responsibility for this lies with the four people running the country - the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. They are the leaders of the country. There is no Cabinet responsibility anymore because it is not consulted. The remaining Ministers are cabbages. Will the Leader ask the Minister for Finance to come to the House to explain why he cannot bring in legislation to ban below cost selling of alcohol? I will leave all the other products out of the debate because there is a vast range but alcohol is a risky substance.

  Action is not being taken on petrol stretching but large legitimate garages have put up signs saying truthful, honest quality petrol and diesel is sold on their premises, as I suggested. Where is the imagination in the Government regarding marked fuel? This is a sophisticated society in the context of tax rebates.

**An Cathaoirleach**:  The Senator is way over time. He is taking as much time as a group leader.

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  This is important.

**An Cathaoirleach**:  I understand that.

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  The Leader and I experienced a nice evening out last night.

**An Cathaoirleach**:  I have to call time on the Senator.

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  There is no imagination from the Government. I call on the Minister for Finance to come to the House to discuss the details of what I put forward.

**Seanad** [**Order of Business**](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad2014120400005?opendocument)

**Wednesday, 15 October 2014**

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  Below-cost selling has not been tackled in the budget. This is causing great difficulty in the industry and should be looked at prior to Christmas because it is quite evident the major supermarkets are involved in below-cost selling of alcohol, which leads to other social problems and should be tackled. There was no reason for it not to be tackled in the budget.

  There is no plan to restore the full free electricity or free phone rental allowances. It would be very welcome to backtrack when it comes to these issues. The free phone rental was a wonderful scheme devised by the late Charles Haughey and it was welcomed by everyone. That was not restored in this budget.

  Adding 40 cents to the price of a packet of 20 cigarettes is fine. Everyone who is anti-smoking would agree with that measure. Customs and Excise and the Garda will have to be funded and geared up to prevent further smuggling of illegal cigarettes into the country, which is depriving the Revenue Commissioners of a considerable amount of badly needed money.

  The prescription charge, the abolition of which the Minister, Deputy Reilly, promised in the general election in 2011, has been increased to €2.50. This is a significant charge.

  On teacher numbers, additional teachers are appointed where there is an increase in the number of pupils, but four teacher schools will be reduced to three teachers, three teacher ones to two and two teacher ones to one if there is no change, which there has not been, in the pupil-teacher ratio.

  Borrowing to pay for this budget, which is a fact, has to be paid for. One would get the impression that somehow the country was not borrowing billions per annum to pay for the loans. One would think the country had reached a stage where we were earning additional money that could be given out. So be it. That is politics. I welcome the retention of the 9% VAT rate.

  The point is last Saturday was a wake-up call. I do not know if there will be a general election before the next budget - possibly not. This certainly was an election budget. There is no doubt about that. On Friday, the Government parties got the biggest shock-----

**Senator Ivana Bacik**:  Fianna Fáil got the shock.

**Senator Terry Leyden**:   -----which was followed on Saturday with the water charges protest. The people will realise on 1 January, when the bills start coming in for water charges that everything in this budget will be eliminated and any advantage will be gone.

**[Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Fund Bill 2014: Second Stage (Continued)](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad2014070200036?opendocument)**

**Wednesday, 2 July 2014**

**Senator Terry Leyden**:  As one of the signatories, I am honoured to support Senator Marc MacSharry's Bill. It would provide substantial funding for the implementation of a range of measures to reduce the rate of suicide in Ireland. It is broadly based on the Senator's policy document, Actions Speak Louder Than Words, which was published last year. I compliment him on taking the initiative to try to reduce the level of suicide, which is appalling. He has outlined his case very well and used imagination and research which is based on the document he published.

  I welcome the Minister of State, Deputy Fergus O'Dowd, and hope the Government will give serious consideration to the Bill. It is a good, solid suggestion because funding is always an issue in this area. As a former chairman of the Western Health Board and a former Minister of State in the Department of Health, I know that the effort made during the year is restricted because of the amount of money available. The Bill would provide a stream of funding for the Department to assist in reducing the incidence of suicide. Reducing its incidence is all that is possible at this stage, although its elimination would be the ideal.

  Far too often suicides are alcohol related. In many cases, people do not drink responsibly, but alcohol might be an added aspect when young people commit suicide, which is a tragedy for families. There is nothing worse. We cannot compare deaths, but suicide causes utter shock and devastation for the family and friends of the person involved. The total loss of life through suicide on an annual basis represents the equivalent of the population of an entire village. That puts the issue in stark terms. Mental well-being and suicide prevention policies and initiatives have always been starved of the resources they need to have a penetrative impact.

  The Bill would deal with the gap between the licensed trade and off-licences, including major supermarkets, in the price of drink sold. The Government has done nothing to try to level the playing pitch in that regard. It constantly increases excise duties on drink sold in licensed premises which are controlled environments in the sale of alcohol, while ignoring the position in supermarkets. People are buying excessive amounts of alcohol in supermarkets at a very cheap price. The Minister of State may not realise that rural publicans cannot buy Jameson or other spirits from their wholesalers at less than the price it is sold in Tesco, Dunnes, Aldi, Lidl, SuperValu and Londis. It is extraordinary. Having an involvement through the Castlecoote Lodge Bar and Lounge in Castlecoote, County Roscommon, I realise it more than ever having seen the level of competition in that regard. The public house is a controlled drinking environment.

  I was particularly disappointed when I read the Intoxicating Liquor (Amendment) Bill 2014, the signatories to which are Senators Imelda Henry, Maurice Cummins and Colm Burke. It would allow for the drinking of alcohol in pubs 365 days a year.