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Letters may also be sent by post to: Letters to the Editor, Belfast Telegraph, 124-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1EB. Fax: (028) 90554518

Better alcohol than the 'alien' cannabis drug

JOHN Rentoul (DebateNI, January 9) is right to question the de-criminalisation of cannabis here, following Colorado's decision to do so. Our failure to control its consumption does not mean it should be legalised.

Our national drug, alcohol, although harmful to some, is well-understood and plays an important role in society: from the toasting of great events, to the celebration of the Eucharist. It is unlikely that Western civilisation could have evolved without it. Cannabis, on the other hand, is an alien drug not fully understood. Better the drug you know.

SL
By email

Church change not just Pope-led

I WOULD like to ask a bookie to give odds on whether or not Pope Francis would agree with the ideas in Philip O'Neill's letter (Write Back, January 13).

The first big mistake is in thinking that all change comes from the top.

I'm sure Pope Francis would be embarrassed to think he was the only hope for the Church.

Mr O'Neill is also confused about the doctrine of infallibility. Infallibility doesn't mean moral perfection; it means guidance in correct teaching i.e. doctrine.

KEITH KAVANAGH
By email

HIV a growing issue in Uganda

IN recent media coverage of Uganda's new draconian anti-homosexuality laws, there has been no mention of the massive and growing HIV/Aids problem.

Recently, Uganda's President Museveni publicly took a HIV test to raise awareness of the epidemic among the population. Currently, there are 1.5m people with HIV in Uganda and one million children orphaned because of Aids. In all, 7% of the adult Ugandan population are living with HIV.

How these statistics interplay with the Uganda government's new laws is a matter for further discussion.

MARGARET HICKEY
By email

If parties are not self-serving, they will be fine

I, LIKE many others, was disappointed — if not surprised — that the Haass talks did not have a successful ending.

There does, however, seem to be agreement that the momentum built up within the Haass process will be continued within the parties. I remember that, when I was appointed speaker/presiding officer of the Transitional Assembly, we set up a committee for the

preparation of government, which comprised members of all the parties and had, as its remit, to discuss various issues that would form the basis of a fully devolved government.

I remember that when I, as presiding officer, welcomed the members to the first session, I pointed out that this was the first time we had a meeting which would not be chaired by an outside person.

This committee worked tirelessly throughout the summer of 2006 and set up sub-committees to deal with specific items.

The rest of the Assembly worked through debates, discussions in the chamber and generally made preparations for devolution.

The people have had enough of fear and intimidation and the majority do want a stable, equi-

table society, which can be achieved by political society working with civil society in a constructive, positive way.

Politicians should have no fear of elections if they clearly show that they can work for the future good of all and not primarily their own parties' futures.

EILEEN BELL CBE
Bangor, Co Down

Second chances help our young people succeed

FROM joining the gym to learning a new language, this month many of us will have resolved to make positive changes in our lives.

But, for each of us who feels hopeful about the future, there are thousands of young people feeling desperate about theirs.

Earlier this month, we launched The Prince's Trust Macquarie Youth Index, which was a particularly sobering read.

To read our full report, visit www.princes-trust.org.uk/macquarieryouthindex.

IAN JEFFERS
Regional director, The Prince's Trust (NI) Belfast

Join fight against coronary disease

WE are fighting for everybody who suffers with a heart condition — from babies born with life-threatening heart problems, to the many mums, dads and grandparents who endure the daily struggles of heart failure.

But there are still so many people who need our help.

On Friday, February 7 we need everyone to Ramp up the Red to help fight the UK's single biggest killer — coronary heart disease.

Visit bhf.org.uk/red, or call 08000 316 316 for your free fundraising pack.

GARY WILSON
British Heart Foundation (NI)

Why not mark the end of war?

HAVING read lots of articles, comments and letters, I'm afraid I still don't understand why we so determinedly insist on celebrating the beginning of a world war and not the end of this occasion of death, misery and destruction.

SONJA KARL
Bangor

Please note that letters should be short and to the point. Letters will be edited as deemed necessary and should be authenticated with a full name and postal address, not necessarily for publication. A daytime telephone number would also be useful.

Picture of the day: out of the blue



The sun rises over flood water still present in fields on the Somerset Levels near Langport yesterday MATT CARDY/GETTY

Online

Ian Paisley's wrath for DUP successor

So this is an epilogue of a man who rose to fame and greatness on the backs of others, established a Church, several forces to defend Northern Ireland, through his influence caused a hatred of Catholicism in the minds of many, or stirred that hatred up in the minds in which it was dormant. A man

who cannot be relieved of responsibility for the deaths, injuries and losses suffered by everyone who lived here. A man who brought lots of others to the forefront of fame and fortune. And, as it seems, was cast aside by those same people in his moment of weakness. As far as Peter Robinson, Nigel Dodds et al, it is a case of a collective "Et tu, Brute?" **ArthurM1**

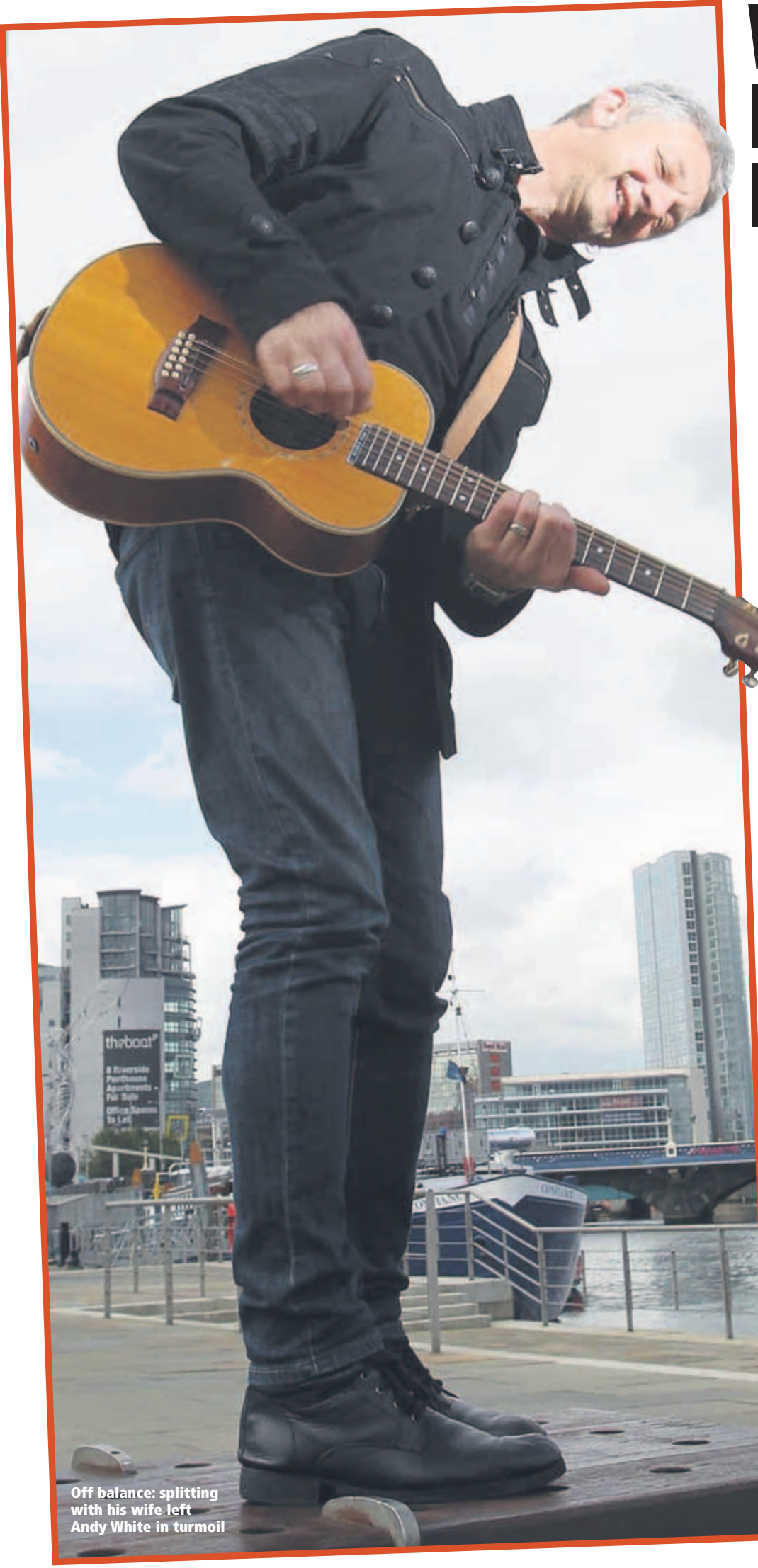
Did he not realise that "That's life"? It happens everywhere, even in the animal world, where the lead animal is ousted by a

younger, more ambitious one. How often, when a new manager, or director, takes over a company does he bring friends and acquaintances into the company with him to try and ensure none of the existing staff, who feel resentful that he got this position, will try to oust him? Is it possible that's why, in industry, we do not always have the best people in key positions? **Paddywakk**

"Do not go gentle into that good night/Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Thus wrote Dylan Thomas. But I very much doubt

that he meant to include a megalomaniac whose entire life has been motivated and fuelled by enraged hatred — often against his betters — and caused untold misery. It is comforting to know that his dreams of ongoing political domination of Catholics/nationalists are in tatters. **Europeophile**

I'm not usually one for schadenfreude, but watching the DUP self-destruct over the coming years is going to be a whole lot of fun. Death by a thousand cuts. **Coilsandco**



Off balance: splitting with his wife left Andy White in turmoil

When his wife walked out he had lost his best friend, his lover and companion ...

The day that Andy White's world turned upside down



As the Belfast-born star comes home for a gig, he tells **Ivan Little** of the pain following the break-up of his marriage

In his teens, Andy White used to hide behind a pillar on the stage of Belfast's Errigle Inn because in the eyes of the law he wasn't old enough to be playing his music there. But the singer/songwriter won't be shying away from anything as he returns an older and wiser man to his cherished stomping ground from his new home in Australia later this month.

He says: "It was a very instinctive thing to do at the time. I was

far from family and friends to talk to and instead wrote about it all in songs. I didn't go back to them for quite a while and initially I thought about bringing them out in a double album but this is the first chapter."

Andy's Swiss-born wife Christine told him that she wanted to start life again and that no-one else was involved. In the songs Andy writes of his regrets and of "living in a brand new hell" in the aftermath of the break-up and of wishing she'd told him sooner.

The 51-year-old sometime poet will be showcasing an album **CONTINUED ON PAGE 28**

Advertisement for Belfast Telegraph Dating. Includes text: "SIGN UP TODAY FOR A HAPPY 2014! JOIN TODAY dating.belfasttelegraph.co.uk Meet your match" and an image of a smiling couple.

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One of the last lines he sings on the album is "I don't make you happy — that's the end of the story".

In notes which accompany the record Andy writes: "She walked and I'd lost by best friend, lover and companion ... Love at first sight? Yes that Romeo and Juliet moment does exist. I know how lucky I am that it happened. Even just once is amazing."

The sentiments are obviously intense and highly personal for Andy, but he knows they'll resonate with thousands of people who've been through a similar break-up. And, while the album may be wracked with sadness, it's not from the Leonard Cohen wrist-slitting school of misery because Andy's melodies — a mix of rock and acoustic folk — often belie the words.

"For me it is a kind of uplifting and beautiful thing as well as being a traumatic thing," he says. "As soon as you put something to music it engages emotions in a really joyous and positive way and it is something that just telling the story couldn't convey."

It feels almost like an intrusion to ask Andy to talk in more depth about the marital difficulties that he's put down in song but he's willing, if not happy, to elaborate. He says he didn't see the end of the marriage coming. "It was really bad when it happened, but we are getting through it."

The couple's student son Sebastian lives in Melbourne with Andy and he sees his mother regularly. Sebastian was born in Belfast and lived with his parents in Dublin before they moved to Australia in 2002.

Away from his studies as a graphic designer, Sebastian, who travelled extensively with his dad on his musical journeys, is also a drummer. He first learnt to play

'I stood on the steps of Good Vibrations to get autographs'

'Playing with my son on album was a real bonding experience'

"I've never had a real plan about where to go and what to do," he says. "I just go with the flow and follow the opportunities. Dublin was becoming too expensive to live in. And things were happening in Australia for me and we decided to move to Melbourne. I liked the idea of Sebastian having the chance of growing up in a summery outdoor life."

Another major break was his collaboration with Aboriginal singer Christine Anu on Coz I'm Free, a song about iconic Australian 400m Olympic medal winner Cathy Freeman, which was performed at the Sydney games.

Still, coming back to Belfast is always special for Andy. "I can't wait to come home," he says. "And the Errigle holds a myriad of memories."

Not only did he take refuge behind that aforementioned pillar so that no one would catch on that he was underage as he played bass guitar in the upstairs music lounge, but his music-teacher grandmother also lived just a few doors away from the Ormeau Road pub.

"Part of my childhood was spent in her house," says Andy.



Another outstanding memory is of seeing Van Morrison singing a couple of songs with James Brown's All Stars in 1984. He was also to play support for Van on his No Guru, No Method, No Teacher tour of the British Isles a couple of years later. He admits the Belfast singer was a huge influence on him and there's a nod to Morrison's music on a song called Separation Street on the new album.



"I grew up with Moondance and Astral Weeks and they're really deep inside me. I listened to Astral Weeks last week with tears in my eyes," he says. "The way Van puts Belfast street names into his songs was just as inspiring as punk groups having their records played by John Peel. "I always wanted to do that too, to be proud of the names. It doesn't have to be Memphis or Sausal-

ito. It can be Carrickfergus and Ballymena if you want it to be. And you can make it feel like poetic reality wherever you are and reach out and touch people's hearts." Recently, Belfast came to Melbourne in the shape of the premiere of the Terri Hooley biopic Good Vibrations, which was written by Andy's "oldest and closest" friend and former Methody

schoolmate, Glenn Patterson, who along with Colin Carberry, has received a BAFTA nomination for the screenplay.

"They asked me to write a piece for the introduction of the film and it was a real honour," Andy says. "I remember I was on the steps of Good Vibes when I was 14 or 15. It was almost too cool for me to go in but I used to queue up to get autographs."

He adds: "I was knocked out by the film. I was 10,000 miles away but it took me right back to Belfast. The crowd went crazy for it."

"And for me it was particularly special because my son Sebastian was there too. I was delighted that he could see a little bit of what life was like in Belfast in the '70s and '80s."

Andy, whose father Barry was an acclaimed writer for the Belfast Telegraph, says he had a "lucky upbringing" in the midst of the Troubles but adds: "They did affect everyone."

Andy was writing poetry from the age of nine and it was influenced by what was starting to happen on the streets of Northern

Happy family: Andy White with son Sebastian and (below, from left) Andy in Belfast in 1989, and his sisters Ali and Cathy, (below right) his father, former Belfast Telegraph writer, Barry White

... great break-up albums

There's nothing quite like a relationship meltdown to create some great music, as these famous names discovered:

■ **Fleetwood Mac Rumours (1977)**
The TransAtlantic band's seminal album was recorded against the backdrop of Christine and John McVie's marriage breakdown and Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks' tempestuous relationship, while the marriage Mick Fleetwood himself was disintegrating. Despite such unpromising origins, the album went on to sell over 40 million copies

■ **ABBA The Visitors (1981)**
The Swedish quartet's final album followed the divorce of the couple's two and included such wistful

songs such as When All Is Said And Done, Slipping Through My Fingers and One of Us

■ **Bruce Springsteen Tunnel Of Love (1987)**
With lyrics such as 'Another fight and I slam the door/ Another battle in our dirty little war', Springsteen poignantly captured the relentless demise of his whirlwind marriage to model and actress Julianne Phillips, in what is regarded as one of his most personal albums

■ **Alanis Morissette (left) Jagged Little Pill (1995)**
A broken affair with actor-comedian Dave Coulier helped flavour this Nineties classic, which includes the strident song You Oughta Know



Ireland. He left to study and graduated from Cambridge in 1984. But his first single in 1985, Religious Persuasion, was his early take on the Troubles. The punk revolution in Belfast had shown young singers like Andy that they didn't have to go to Los Angeles to record their music. Instead, he went to Randalstown.

"Punk gave me and the group Therapy, who were also at the studios at the same time, the confidence that you could record for yourself in Northern Ireland."

Religious Persuasion was eventually released by the revered Stiff Records label in England and Radio One DJ Janice Long picked it up, playing it regularly on her show, which opened doors — and ears — across the UK.

His first LP — Rave On, Andy White — was also driven by his feelings about politics and violence here.

"I wanted to bring something beautiful out of the chaos," he says. "That is what a lot of what art is about."

Many of Andy's subsequent 10 solo studio albums have also been autobiographical, ranging from his observations on his travels or his early days as a father.

But the response to the Troubles songs like Religious Persuasion still surprises him.

"I didn't think they would mean anything to people outside Northern Ireland. But even if they don't understand the words they can understand the attitude of it."

Even now, nearly 30 years later, Andy still includes Religious Persuasion on his set-list because it's such a crowd favourite. "I was taught that you should always sing the songs people want to hear," he says.

Andy is keen to pass on his experience to young musicians in Australia and he's been recording a number of them in his studio.

He's happy, however, that his son has no plans to become a full-time musician.

"He's lived in a musician's family long enough to know that he's going to have to choose something else," Andy says. "I've always brought him up just to enjoy music and not to think about it as a career, though he would be good enough."

Andy, whose sisters Cathy and Ali are actresses, has been spreading his creative wings with other artistic pursuits. He's written two Lagan Press volumes of poetry and an often hilarious book called 21st Century Troubadour which, along with a double CD of the same name, is essentially an account of the good times and the bad times of a singer on the road.

There's preparatory work going on to turn 'Troubadour into a stage play and the Australian writer Kieran Carroll is confident that the show will hit the road.

"It's a fantastic journey about the joys and hassles of gigs from Alaska to Italy," says Kieran.

Andy is optimistic too, adding: "I've seen a first draft of the play. And it's great. I would love it to be staged back home in Belfast. Which is where it all began."

Andy White will be playing at the Errigle Inn, Belfast, on Thursday, January 30. For details, visit www.errigle.com. His new album How Things Are, is released through Floating World Records on February 17

Tuesday fashion

Kerry McKittrick checks out the style in Victoria Square, Belfast

PICTURES BY BRIAN LYTLE/PRESSEYE



Rachael Westwood (22)
Monthly spend £100-150



Christine Armstrong (24)
Monthly spend £200

Student, Nottingham
Wore what? Coat, £15, shirt, £15, jeans, £15 all from New Look; boots, £20, Asda; bag £8, Primark.
Why? I like shirts and jeans with leather jackets, so I'm not particularly girly. I don't like anything too pink or glittery, or anything with diamante.

Who? Kate Moss and Kate Middleton have nice, classic styles. I don't like how Rihanna dresses, though — she shows too much flesh, and I'm not a fan of that.

PR executive, Belfast
Wore what? Coat, £40, Primark; blouse, £28, Topshop; leggings, £20, River Island; boots, £120, House of Fraser; bag, £60, Zara.
Why? My style changes depending on my mood. It's probably classic but girly. I don't like it when people wear clothes that are too tight — I don't mind what size a dress is, as long as it fits.

Who? I love Molly King from The Saturdays as she has a classic but feminine style. I don't have much time for chavvy styles like Tulisa's.



Samantha Seaton (21)
Monthly spend £100

Paediatric nurse, Belfast
Wore what? Jacket, £50, Superdry; jumper, £18, Tesco; disco pants, £25, New Look; boots, £20, Primark; scarf, £10, Next; bag, present.
Why? My style is a bit rock chick so I go for leggings and jeans a lot. I don't like floral print tops or trousers.
Who? I like what Fearne Cotton wears as long as it's not too girly. Cheryl Cole is too over-dressed for my taste.



Melissa Copeland (23)
Monthly spend £200

Nursery assistant, Belfast
Wore what? Hat, £8, Dunnes Stores; coat, £50, Next; top, £10, H&M; skirt, £10, Exhibit; shoes £17, River Island.
Why? I go for a vintage style with bright colours and I'm not afraid to be a little different. I don't wear anything that's too short or revealing.
Who? Alexa Chung has a nice vintage style but Lady Gaga is too out there for my taste. She takes 'different' to another level!



Holly McCusker (19)
Monthly spend £50

Student, Belfast
Wore what? Coat, £110, Topshop; dress, £20, H&M; bag, £25, Accessorize; shoes, £30, New Look.
Why? I like colour and I'm very girly, so I wear lots of dresses. Think like trainers with heels just make your feet look really chunky, though.
Who? I like Dannii Minogue's style, as she likes block colour and dresses, but Nikki Minaj takes colour too far with lots of neon.