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'Minister, you've crucified my business... why not take the keys?'

Limerick City Centre businesswoman **Sinead Tierney** is at the end of her tether with the Government over the 21% VAT rate which, she says, is crucifying business. Ms Tierney organised an open air meeting of retailers on O'Connell Street this Monday lunchtime, at which she symbolically offered the keys of her premises to Finance Minister Brian Lenihan, for presiding over a VAT rate which she fears will close her business down. She is urging the Finance Minister to reduce VAT to 15pc in next week's Emergency Budget. **SEE FULL REPORT ON PAGE 4.** *Picture: Keith Wiseman*

Hands off our City

Respected journalist lashed for references to Limerick in article

EXCLUSIVE REPORT
By Rachael Finucane

A JOURNALIST who has come under criticism locally for references he made to Limerick in last weekend's *Sunday Times Magazine* last weekend has said that he visited the city and his information came from local sources.

Mayor John Gilligan is so angry about Limerick references in 'Recession: The bad luck of the Irish' that he is demanding an apology "on behalf of the City".

The *Limerick Independent* tracked down respected freelance journalist, John Arlidge, on assignment in South Africa this Tuesday evening, and managed to speak briefly with him about the controversey, before the international phone connection was lost.

Standing over his article, Mr Arlidge said: "I spent a couple of days in Limerick and went to a hell of a lot of places there."

Mr Arlidge insisted: "The information in the story was based upon conversations about experiences in the areas."

The journalist acknowledged that local people "might feel in a slightly different way" than a visitor to the City.

However, he said, "when you're travelling to places you talk to the people there, and you tell it how you see it".

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Fury at 'hatchet job' article

...from Page 1

Mayor Gilligan said that some references—including "in the worst estates, where unemployment is 70%, corner shops sell single cigarettes and single tea bags" and "a man accused of not repaying debts to a local family saw his children doused in petrol and set on fire"—are "outrageous".

"The claims are downright stupid and reflect very badly on any newspaper that would print such tripe. I challenge them to show me any shop in Ireland, not to mind Limerick, that does that [sell single cigarettes and teabags]," he fumed.

"We had one incident in Moyross in 2006 [when local children, Gavin and Millie Murray were in a car that was petrol bombed] but there hasn't been anything like that since. That [the incident described in the article] is a figment of a paper's imagination. Let them say when, where and how it happened. The hospital and the Garda should have a record of it."

Community activist and Republican Sinn Féin member, Sean O'Neill, branded the portrayal a "hatchet job on the Stab City tag".

"To the best of my knowledge, no shops engage in these practices in our housing estates. *The Sunday Times* paints an appalling picture of people wandering around the street in pyjamas and claims that children have been set on fire because of non payment of debts. This is giving out a false picture of Limerick as a lawless place," he said.

He added that many ordinary Limerick people "failed to gain from the economic upsurge" and it is unfair "to tarnish them with such unsavoury and damaging coverage".

Laura Ryan of Limerick Co-Ordination Office said that representatives from local authority housing estates are "baffled" by certain references and she has also emailed Mr Arlidge about the article.

A representative for 'The Sunday Times' declined to comment on the article but the Limerick Independent hopes to speak further with Mr Arlidge when he is available.