

THE IRISH TIMES

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'Yes' men defend The Old Values

Rugby forecast to grow to £10m

Court orders Revenue to repay £206,822

New technology makes air travel safer than road

Zoo to get rare monkeys

Ewing US visa proposed in bill

Civil servants may reorganise

South of 17 gets 5 years for making

Weather forecast and chart for next 7 days

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'Yes' men defend The Old Values

WHAT WE need around here is a few zygotes to liven things up.

You'll notice that the volume of letters to this paper on the SEA debate hasn't quite matched the tidal wave of correspondence that swamped the page in the last couple of referendums. It must be that people don't find the foggy issue of neutrality, or the fate of the CAP, as rivetting as the Cyclopiian questions of deciding just when is a zygote old enough to stand on its own two feet — two micro-seconds or three? — or whether an Irish marriage breakdown has reached the irretrievable stage 20 years after the husband has run off to the islands of Tonga with a young wan and hasn't been heard of since.

Yes, the great debate on the SEA does seem to be just a mite more boring than, say, watching scum from the Kowloon Bridge working its oleaginous tracery on what used to be the pristine beaches of Cork.

But, for those who seek them out, there are some piquant facets to the plebiscite campaign to relieve the enervating *ennui*. Not least of these is the manner in which the referendum has brought together, in each camp, the most unlikely and incompatible bedfellows making common cause when, normally, they'd be dug out of each other.

In this corner of the Ring, representing the "no" challenger, we have the hard core of left-wing groups who would be expected in most circumstances to set their nose against Ireland cosyng up closer to a Europe (or part of it) that wouldn't seem to blink or blush at digging out silos for nuclear missiles all over the place. But they have been joined by unregenerate nationalists and sovereignty vigilantes, most of whom would be comfortably to the right of the ideological divide, and a rag-tag collection of self-styled moral majority types from the bleaker, more remote climes of the far-out right. This motley rag-bag of political, cultural, ideological and religious all sorts seem, against all the odds, to be maintaining a solid front in their campaign to give the cold shoulder to Europe.

And in this corner, representing the "yes" champions, we have a possibly even odder political cocktail, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Pee Dees, and at least a rump of Labour, if Dick Spring and his more orthodox Coalition-tinged acolytes can be so