

THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



SHANE ROSS

Ireland needs heretics who do not genuflect to the establishment, who challenge the consensus, who will rattle every official cage in sight. To hell with the prisoners of conventional thinking, those comfortable creatures of the authorities and their puppets in politics and the media. More than ever we need people not beholden to the oligarchs who have seized such a grip on the nation. It is a time for heresy, not orthodoxy.

MORGAN KELLY

Compelling expert who predicted financial meltdown

MORGAN Kelly, the economics professor at UCD, is undoubtedly the most heroic voice of the financial meltdown. He predicted the apocalypse. And he was right. While banking economists were dismissing Morgan as a maverick, he challenged the economic conspiracy, the orthodoxy that landed Ireland in its current mess.

At first, no one listened. Morgan was rubbished as a mad monk ranting on about the orgy that would end in doomsday. It did. He caused delicious consternation among Ireland's conventional economists when he spoiled their annual love-in at Kenmare by attacking Nama as 'cash for trash' and fingering Ireland as stuffed with zombie banks. The response from the economists was so hostile that one of their number even questioned Morgan's right to speak his mind. Happily, Morgan is fearless. He confines most of his media appearances to writing beautifully crafted pieces for the *Irish Times* and makes very few outings on television. His indifference to the views of his colleagues, the banking establishment and the Government have made him the most compelling independent commentator on the economy. Morgan always marshals his figures to back up his arguments.

His most recent prediction, that the next disaster will emerge from unpaid mortgages, has eerie resonances of his prescient earlier warnings.



EAMON DUNPHY

Slaughterer of sacred cows and champion of ordinary people

EAMON Dunphy is Ireland's leading iconoclast. The former international footballer, who left school at 14, fearlessly attacks sacred cows in Ireland with a panache that verges on the reckless. Few people in Ireland have expressed such a genuine sense of outrage as Dunphy at what he sees as institutionalised corruption in Irish public life. His willingness to admit his own imperfections and a human tendency to fly off the handle in public appearances has endeared him to a large section of the Irish people. And to me.

Eamon is best known as a football pundit, but has made his name as a serious commentator on the burning issues of the day. His success as a journalist in both the *Sunday Independent* and later on Today FM's *Last Word* programme has brought him love and loathing in almost equal measure. His books on Matt Busby, U2 and Roy Keane have proved his versatility, but it is his beautiful writing style that has impressed publisher and public alike.

A stroll down any street in Dublin with Eamon will leave you in no doubt that he is not only a figure of fame, but that the ordinary citizen feels that Dunphy is on his side, always challenging the establishment of whatever hue. The vague aura of an *enfant terrible* helps his undoubted street cred. His views have changed over the years, making it hard for him to join any political party, although he has received several approaches.

Best-selling author, controversial commentator, football pundit and good friend, Eamon is constantly self-effacing, at his most entertaining when telling stories against himself.



OLIVIA O'LEARY

Among the immortals of Irish broadcasting, her wit and perception helped her succeed at home and abroad

OLIVIA O'Leary has established herself among the immortals of Irish broadcasters. Her weekly political column on RTE's *Drivetime* is possibly the most perceptive radio commentary on any Irish station, radio or television. It is hard to recall that Olivia, many years John Bowman's junior, was the pioneer of *Questions & Answers*, well before he took it over. She lifted RTE's *Today Tonight* to dizzy heights in the Eighties, as one of the station's first front-line women interviewers. She was soon poached by

BBC's *Newsnight*, where she became its first regular female presenter.

Olivia was only one part of a great partnership. Her husband Paul Tansey was one of Ireland's leading economists before he died suddenly two years ago. Together with their delightful daughter Emily — not surprisingly, an economics graduate — the family formed an instant think tank that any government could have happily hired as consultants. Breakfast at the Tansey/O'Leary household must have been a heady hotbed of ideas in the days when Paul and Olivia were both pumping out ideas on the national airwaves.

Olivia combines a razor-sharp scepticism with cutting humour that means she is in huge demand for conferences and media events. She is the best of company and ranks high in the roll of honour of Irish people who have effortlessly succeeded overseas.



MICHAEL D HIGGINS

Outstanding orator whose eccentricity distinguishes him from the banal majority of modern Irish politicians

FIRST came to know Michael D in 1984 when he led a group of four of us as parliamentary observers to the Nicaraguan elections. It was there — and later on a similar mission to Chile — that I learned not to agree with him, but to love him.

Michael D is the most passionate politician in Leinster House. He is the only orator left in either the Dail or Seanad. No one else is ever likely to persuade his peers to turn up the volume on the monitors in their offices, let alone to head for the debating chamber to listen. The man who took part in the anti-Vietnam marches in the Seventies had lost none of his ideals by the end of the Noughties. No one challenges the president of the Labour Party in Ireland's corridors of power as the champion of human rights around the world.

Sometimes the Galway poet seems eccentric, even delightfully barmy, but his eccentricity is the most precious commodity he possesses. It distinguishes him from the mediocrity that has come to envelop nearly all members of the national parliament.

He was minister for the Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht in the brief Labour-Fine Gael coalition of the mid-Nineties. Anyone ready to dismiss this truly great Irishman as an impractical idealist should know that he is an unlikely, but passionate, president of Galway United Football Club, where the old socialist's chief executive officer is none other than the rogue trader Nick Leeson, who brought down Barings Bank.