

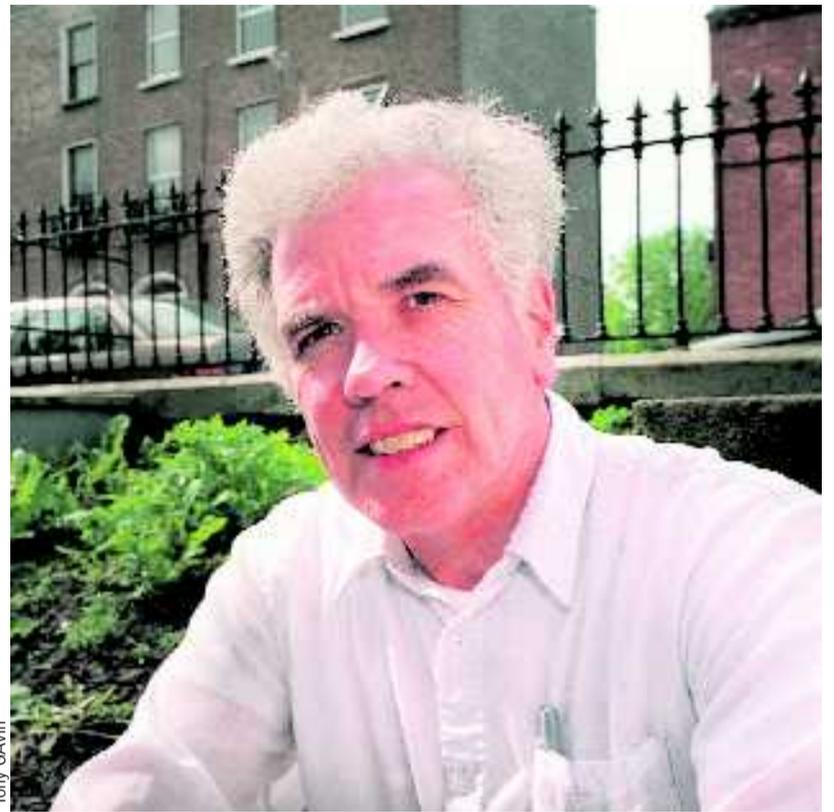
"When man starts planning his future, God smiles."
— Gay Byrne

ORLA TINSLEY

Energy and anger to question treatment of CF sufferers



I'M inspired by tenaciousness. Sufferers from cystic fibrosis have been persistent through many years in pursuing the authorities over their failure to provide the resources appropriate to the disease. Treatment for cystic fibrosis isn't enough, patients' lives depend on isolation units — a simple infection that the rest of us might shrug off can kill CF patients. Shamefully, the running on this issue has been left to chronically ill people. The number and calibre of CF patients who have spoken up fiercely on the issue is remarkable, none more so than Orla Tinsley — a child when the campaign began, she's now a young woman writing with energy, anger and determination.



Tony Gavin

FR PETER McVERRY

An alternative to the view that only money matters

I'M inspired by social solidarity. In a time when acquiring ever-greater quantities of money was celebrated as the purpose and the very stuff of life, Fr Peter McVerry quietly represented an alternative to the prevalent vulgarity. He is a prominent example of a whole army of social activists without whom this country would be in even worse trouble. At community level, he seeks to make a positive difference in the lives of young men who have become detached from the rest of us. At a political level, he represents an argument that officialdom perpetually evades.

JOE DUFFY

His programme forces officialdom to pay attention to ordinary people



David Conachy

I'M inspired by a diversity of debate. In the days before the bank collapse became public in September 2008, *Liveline* was electric with the worries of people who feared losing their life savings. It later emerged that insiders were furious that "taxi drivers and hairdressers" got to publicly express their views on such matters — didn't they know that only the elite and the experts have a right to an opinion? The value of Joe Duffy's show is that it allows the direct expression of the voices of the citizens, unmediated by journalists. People of experience, people of insight — and, yes, a few headbangers too — have created a constituency that forces officialdom to pay attention to people they might otherwise ignore. Isolated people listen and realise that their experiences and their anger aren't unique, that they are part of a greater whole. And it's terrific radio.



EMILY O'REILLY

Ombudsman who staunchly resists any official attempts to hamstring her role

I'M inspired by conscientious public service. The office of the Ombudsman takes up cudgels on behalf of the powerless, and does so professionally and free of charge. One of the benefits of the crisis is that questions are being asked about how our weak democratic structures allowed this to happen, and how we can improve them. The Ombudsman's office enlarges democracy by weakening the crippling "leave it with me" relationship between politicians and citizens. The first Ombudsman, Michael Mills, faced down Charlie Haughey's efforts to dilute his powers. His successor, Kevin Murphy, maintained the independence of the role. Today, Emily O'Reilly staunchly resists the current Government's attempts to curb the independence and effectiveness of the office.

MORGAN KELLY

Wasn't afraid to issue an explicit warning of the property meltdown

WE ARE all inspired by frankness. Public discourse is liberated when someone says what they mean, questioning the received wisdoms without regard to the consequences — and that applies whether or not we agree with what is said. It has long been clear that Professor Morgan Kelly of UCD wasn't the only economist who knew that the Government, the banks and the developers were gambling with the economy. But he was unique in the explicitness of his analysis. Some of those with the expertise to back him up were working for the loan sharks. Others seem to have been intimidated by the possible consequences of speaking out. Their silence did us no service. Some issued warnings in impenetrable jargon. Kelly spoke in plain language.

Kelly is a mainstream economist, none of his suggestions is particularly radical. His value is in the fact that when he says something, we can be sure it's what he thinks, and not what some vested interest would like him to say. Accept or reject his view, none of us dare ignore it.

