

THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



JOHN DRENNAN

IRELAND needs inspirational figures, and fast. But a country facing its lowest moral ebb since the Fifties is struggling to find them. In compiling this list it says a great deal that no one from the judicial, legal, academic or mandarin classes qualifies, though some academics such as Tom Garvin and Joe Lee would come close. The great fall of the Church means there is no one from that institution either. Some would reference Diarmuid Martin, but there is too much of the Vatican diplomat surrounding him to qualify. Yet for all of the damage done by our colonial past we are a warrior race. So who among our civic leaders can lead resistance to the cold legacy of Cowen?

EAMON GILMORE

His ability to connect with people sets him apart



WE start, surprisingly, with a politician. There is no shortage of questions surrounding the real intentions of Ireland's 'pink but perfect' one. However, no one can get away from the fact that the key role of politicians is to inspire the nation. That, in essence, is their job — and in fairness to Gilmore he has the most critical capacity any politician can aspire to. He is able to connect with the people.

MICHAEL O'LEARY

Cunning and mischievous — and politicians hate him



DEFINITELY a hard old hound to love, but this mischievous, cunning, driven achiever is one of the last remaining success stories in the business world. The detestation all politicians and bureaucrats have for O'Leary also indicates that he is doing something right. Mind you, for all his virtues we wouldn't like to have too many of him in the country.

BONO

Shamanistic rocker who wouldn't embarrass us if he represented the country

FROM one form of showbusiness to another. For many, when it comes to Bono, the first sentence that comes to many people's mind is 'what's there to like?' about a pop star not lacking in the vice of self-importance. Outside of his artistic and political successes, Ireland needs his shamanistic qualities. And unlike others, he would not embarrass us if he was the country's foreign representative.



David Conachy

GARRET FITZGERALD

'National grandfather' who can elevate public debate

EVERY country, particularly if in trouble, needs a national grandfather, and Garret is ours. He is probably the sole public intellectual in Irish politics at a time when Ireland desperately needs an elevated, thoughtful public discourse. It is a measure of how we have slipped as a nation, after close to 15 years of Fianna Fail rule that Fitzgerald's previous achievements of promoting openness, a spirit of inquiry and a culture of public debate in a repressive society need to be repeated.



Tom Burke



JANE O'BRIEN

Ordinary citizen who took on the State in Hep C scandal

AN ordinary citizen and journalist who took on the State over its shameful cover-up of the Hepatitis C scandal in which hundreds of Irish women were effectively poisoned by the Blood Transfusion Service Board. Fought callous bureaucrats, self-serving politicians and civil servants intent on covering up their own incompetence. Helped secure a tribunal and a compensation scheme, and then, in a typical measure of how Irish public life ignores talent, she seemingly disappeared — though she now serves on the board of the Irish Blood Transfusion Service. Should any new government create the Ministry of Citizens' Advocate — and you can be sure it won't — she would be the perfect choice. A good second choice would be Rosemary Daly, formerly of the Irish Haemophilia Society, for her role in a similar battle on behalf of Irish haemophiliacs.

Tony Gavitt