

Conscience and Conscientious Objection in Contemporary Public Life

The President of Ireland's Ethics Initiative

Panel Discussion on "Whistle-blowing"

24 November 2014, 6pm, Royal Irish Academy, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2

What is whistle-blowing? Is it a kind of conscientious objection? If so, what makes it different from e. g. civil disobedience or objection to military service on religious grounds? What is the difference between anonymous leaks and public whistle-blowing? Is loyalty an issue and if so in what way? It is helpful to think of whistle-blowing in terms of conscience? Should it be legally protected?

These and other questions are the subject of a panel discussion on whistle-blowing that will be held at the Royal Irish Academy on Monday 24 November at 6pm. The discussion, organized by UCD School of Philosophy in conjunction with the Royal Irish Academy and generously supported by the UCD President's Office, is part of a series of events exploring the place of conscience and conscientious objection in contemporary public life. These events are being held under the aegis of the President of Ireland's Ethics Initiative. For further information on the UCD School of Philosophy "conscience project" see

<http://www.ucd.ie/philosophy/newsevents/conscienceproject/>

Each member of the panel will speak for ten minutes addressing central questions raised by whistle-blowing. This will be followed by an open discussion.

The event is open to the public. Admission is free but space is limited and prior registration is essential: conscienceproject2014@gmail.com

The discussion will be moderated by The Hon. Mr Justice Colm Mac hEochaidh

Colm Mac hEochaidh is a High Court Judge, appointed in 2012 by President Higgins. In 1995 he and Michael Smith, the head of the environmental group *An Taisce*, placed a small ad at the

back of the Irish Times offering a £10,000 reward for "information leading to the conviction or indictment of a person or persons for offences relating to land rezoning in the Republic of Ireland". He later explained that he believed corruption was a problem in Irish political life and in particular in the planning process. Information was indeed offered, leading to the resignation of an Irish Government Minister and, subsequently, the Mahon Tribunal was established to investigate corruption in the planning process.

The Four Panellists

Mr Peter Dempsey

Peter Dempsey is an Irish barrister, practising as a solicitor in London and at the Paris Bar. In 2013 he uncovered matters at his firm requiring explanation; receiving no answers but various threats, he made a report to the legal regulator (SRA), HMRC and the Police. In retaliation he is currently being sued in France and in the High Court in London. The SRA, who are investigating and have intervened in the case, have described it as the first case of a law firm suing its own compliance officer for having reported it.

Dr Kate Kenny

Kate Kenny is a Reader at Queen's University Belfast Management School and a research fellow at Cambridge University's Judge Business School. Her research focus is on organisational cultures and identity. Since 2013 she has held an Edmond J Safra Lab Fellowship at Harvard University. This fellowship is based on her research work, begun five years ago, that takes an in-depth focus on the experiences of whistle-blowers in banking and finance organisations. She has produced a manuscript from this work and a number of articles.

<http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/kate-kenny%28d63aa461-7e0a-4326-a97f-eca1c6c418e1%29.html>

Senator Susan O'Keeffe

Susan O'Keeffe was elected to Seanad Eireann in April 2011. She is the Tourism, Culture and Public Reform spokesperson in the Seanad and is a member of the Banking Inquiry. She is a journalist by profession and worked in print and for BBC TV and Granada TV in the UK. In the

early 1990s she investigated scandals within the Irish meat industry, centring on the Goodman International group; this led to the setting up of a tribunal of inquiry (“Beef Tribunal”), which endorsed much of her criticism of the industry; however, she was threatened with prison in Ireland for refusing to reveal her sources. The case became a cause célèbre. In January 1995 she stood trial for contempt of court but was cleared. of the charge. She received the 1994 Campaign for Freedom of Information Award in the UK.

<http://www.susanokeeffe.ie/>

Dr Daniele Santoro

Daniele Santoro is a political philosopher. He teaches at Luiss University Rome, and is Fellow of the IMÉRA Institute for Advanced Studies - Aix-Marseille Université. His work focuses on whistleblowing, democratic transparency and the foundation of constitutional rights.

<http://docenti.luiss.it/santoro/>