

# Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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## Long line of terrible scandals

The story about the women who were told that their babies were dead in the womb but who sought a second opinion only to find out that the babies were actually alive is one of the most concerning stories that I have heard of in the long line of terrible scandals in our health service in recent years.

We seem to lurch from one scandal to another. In fact the story is so

bad that one is almost in despair at what will come out next in this broken country of ours. Every institution that we relied on over the years has let us down, the church, the politicians, the banks, big business, and now the health service.

The major problem about all this is not that mistakes were made, because human beings will always make mis-

takes in any field, but it is that ordinary people are very afraid to question the opinion of any doctor or consultant. It would be met with total indignation. "What do you mean I might be wrong" or "how dare you question a doctor" would be the attitude.

Only for the women in Louth and in Athenry sought a second opinion, their healthy babies would have been

destroyed. The next big question is how many women were told that their babies were dead, and who accepted the scan results, and allowed the procedure to remove the babies to go ahead? It just doesn't bear thinking about, and after what we heard this week, it is almost certain that it happened in some cases, which is terrible.

What will happen now is that an

enquiry will take place, costing tens of thousands of Euro. A report will be published and no one will take any responsibility at all and the situation will continue on as before.

The people in this country have got to learn to question decisions that affect their lives, especially when it comes to medical matters, regardless of whose nose is put out of joint.

### Wishing John Neilan all the best

I was surprised to hear that Judge John Neilan had taken a decision to step down from the bench two weeks ago.

John Neilan was certainly controversial, and while I would not have agreed with many of the things he said, I had great admiration for him because he was a person who was not afraid to express his opinion. There are far too few people like John Neilan in Ireland today and public life in the midlands will be all the poorer after his decision to retire.

I remember on one occasion when he made some controversial remark about something or other and he was under pressure to resign in the national media and they were demanding he make an apology at least. He called me to his house and we

came up with a suitable apology, which we recorded and which went out on Morning Ireland the following morning. It put an end to that controversy. He will be free now to improve his golf handicap and I wish him and his family all the best.

### Show quiz

The Roscommon Show Society are running a fund raising table quiz in Larry's Bar, Goff Street, Roscommon on this Friday night, 11th June at 9.30 pm sharp. Tables of four will cost just €30. There is a raffle on the night and all are welcome. Please support it if you can.



The choir of Scoil Mhuire Convent Primary, Roscommon, sang the Special Olympics anthem with their teachers Nicola Shaughnessy and Alastair Beegan when the Olympic Torch visited their school last Thursday.

### Callely's crocodile tears

The crocodile tears shed by Ivor Callely on the Sunday Independent last Sunday with regard to his expenses is the biggest laugh and most insincere story that I have ever read.

Who does this guy think he is? It is another indication that there are certain politicians out there who are totally oblivious to what the ordinary people are going through in this country

and how angry they are with what the politicians are at.

Callely says that he was rejected by the people of Clontarf and was depressed so he went to live in West Cork, well boo hoo Ivor! When you stand for election you have to consider the possibility that you might not get elected. When Mr Callely didn't get elected, he received a nice consolation prize in being nominated by

the Taoiseach to a senator's job that pays almost as well as a TD's job. Not satisfied with that, he decided to claim expenses from a home in West Cork to make up the deficit. This is the same Ivor Callely who was involved in a controversy in the last Dáil about a painting job on his home (the one in Dublin). It's a farce and the bottom line is that Brian Cowen should sack Ivor Callely without further ado.

And while I'm at it, it was revealed this week that the Seanad was closed all week because the leader of the house Senator Donie Cassidy was away playing golf in Turkey to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the houses of parliament there! Are these people for real? I said it many times and I say it again. It is time to close down the Seanad altogether. We don't need it. There is enough money being wasted in the Dáil as it is.

### Corner is nowhere in sight ...

If I hear one more person on the TV or on the radio saying that we have turned the corner with regard to the economy I'll scream, because we have not even reached the corner yet.

I have been talking to business people, publicans, hoteliers, and people in construction and the story from them all is the very same. Things are far worse this year than last year. A hotelier from outside county Roscommon told me last weekend that this summer, seven weddings have been cancelled in his hotel alone and he told me that talking to other hoteliers it is the same story everywhere. People just cannot afford it anymore.

Publicans are also saying that business is far worse this year than last. I spoke to a shopkeeper on Wednesday of this week who said that his trade is down 20 percent this year on last year. There are 450,000 people unemployed and that number is rising. The corner may have been turned with regard to the hedge fund managers and the people who trade in securities and bonds, but for the people on the ground the situation is dire at the moment and the people on the ground know it only too well, far better than the hedge fund managers.

We were told in 2008 by the government, the economists and by all

the so-called experts that the banking industry was sound and that the 'fundamentals' were correct. We know what happened after that.

Now these very same people are telling us that the corner had been turned. I would prefer to listen to the people who are on the ground who are trying to survive day to day. It will be at least two years before there is any light at the tunnel, and if the euro collapses it will be a long time after that.

Also, we have the very interesting finding by the banking reports this week that the government was directly responsible for the overheating of the economy and the property bubble bursting. I have personally been taken to task and abused for writing that exact thing here in this column over the past two years. Not alone have Brian Lenihan and Brian Cowen now admitted to mistakes, but the independent reports have found the same thing. I'm not saying that the same thing would not have happened under a FG/Lab government but the facts are that the FF-led government led by Bertie Ahern has been directly responsible for a lot of the problems that we have in the economy right now. They are taking steps to put those mistakes right, but remember there are two more savage budgets to go before we are out of the woods.

