

# O'Brien 'is effectively suing every TD in Dáil'

DENIS O'Brien is trying to limit the 'future freedom of parliamentary debate', the State has argued before the High Court.

The billionaire is suing the Dáil's Committee on Procedures and Privileges (CPP) and the State in a bid to 'restrict Oireachtas speech in the future', senior lawyers for the State said yesterday.

Maurice Collins SC, for the State, and Attorney General Máire Whelan said that TDs must be allowed to speak freely in the Dáil even if their remarks might 'scandalise' the courts, have an impact on legal proceedings or even amount to a contempt of court. Mr Collins argued that Mr O'Brien is surely seeking to ban TDs from saying certain things in parliament by taking his court action. Mr O'Brien has taken issue

By Paul Caffrey

with the CPP because it sided with Social Democrats co-leader Catherine Murphy and Sinn Féin's Pearse Doherty after they spoke about his 'confidential' banking affairs in parliament last year.

The media owner says that Ms Murphy and Mr Doherty used Dáil privilege to reveal details of his alleged arrangements with IBRC (the former Anglo Irish Bank) linked to a €315million loan that should have stayed private.

The 58-year-old also complains that the remarks were made in the Dáil in May and June of last year, regardless of a High Court injunction he had already obtained to stop RTÉ broadcasting a news report covering similar ground. Mr O'Brien is taking

his current High Court case against the Clerk of the Dáil - who represents all members of the parliament - along with ten TDs from the CPP and the State.

Notably, he has chosen not to sue either Ms Murphy or Mr Doherty personally, and this 'was clearly a tactical, procedural decision', Mr Collins said yesterday. He added it was quite possible that Mr O'Brien will proceed to sue Ms Murphy and Mr Doherty personally at a later date.

However, Mr Collins said the businessman was effectively suing 'every member of the Dáil... by taking his action against the Clerk of the House'. In the witness box last week, Mr O'Brien claimed he was taking the case to protect the privacy of every citizen. The hearing continues.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# Life should be governed by just one law - that of love

**P**LATO said that you should not become a philosopher until after the age of 50. Without such long experience of life, how could you be expected to reflect on its deeper meaning? As I edge ever closer to that venerable age, I am discovering that the secret to a happy human existence is really very simple.

I used to think that the meaning of life could only be cracked through serious intellectual insight. Today, I realise that our lives are governed by only one law, which is that of love. The secret is to die to oneself in order to live for others.

It sounds simple, but like all great wisdom it is easier said than done. To defy your own needs and interests to serve another is a supreme challenge for most of us. And yet, once we surrender, we realise this is a blessed path.

The whole point of the Christian Gospels is to show how we must die in order to fully enjoy life. We must abandon all our own plans and projects so that others may fulfil theirs. That is what it means to 'lay down your life for your friends'.

In the age of the 'selfie', it seems an absurdity to think of others before yourself. Letting go of self is considered a recipe for failure and misery. Why, then, is this generation so depressed, stressed and hopeless?

Self-preoccupation ends with stress because you constantly focus on your faults and failings, your problems and pains. You endlessly compare yourself to others, seeing their success as a measure of your failure. When judged by such standards, you will always feel inadequate.

Despite all the unnecessary mayhem, the beauty of Christmas is that it directs us away from self and towards others. At its best, it is an invitation to lead a life of gratitude and grace. It asks us to do the impossible: to give without hope of reward.

Anyone who has parented children, or cared for the elderly or the sick, will know that accepting this invitation isn't always easy. To give the gift of time, to park your own ambitions to serve others, is something that demands great reserves of energy and goodwill. It is to give for its own sake, to see service as an end in itself.

Paradoxically, when you give like this you receive back one hundred-fold. Which parent would not die for their children? In sacrificing for your dependents, you see their growth and joy as a reward worth more than gold.

None of this requires great acts of heroism. A genuinely expressed 'thank you' to those serving in a shop

can change a life. When people feel valued, when they feel as though they are worth more than they can give, they often rise to new heights.

A kind word, a smile, allowing others to go ahead of you in the queue - all of these are simple gestures of self-surrender. They are small but important ways of doing unto others as you would have them do to you. The beauty of it is that nothing but good can come as a result.

We are preparing to honour a young man whose message was one of simple compassion. When you least feel like giving, that is the moment to give. When you least feel like loving, that is the moment to cross the road to offer the other a healing hand.

So much sickness and sadness, so much stress and anxiety, could be avoided by living life in accordance with this law. Indeed, the pain of our world is rooted in our refusal to look beyond ourselves to those who need us. When we cease to give, when we deny love, people never feel more alone.

When Scrooge urges us to 'keep Christmas all the year', this is what he has in mind. The surge of joy we all feel on Christmas morning is something we can have every day. In little acts of kindness, we can ignite the light of life in heavy hearts.

If the seed does not fall to the ground and die, it remains but a seed. At Christmas, the seed germinates and flourishes as it should. From nothing emerges something beautiful, something which provides rest to the weary.

**L**EARNING to let go is the hardest thing we will ever do. We cling to what we have for fear that, in letting it go, we shall be left with nothing.

And yet, it is only when we give of ourselves in this way, that we experience the benediction of true and lasting love.

Christmas has become associated with many things. At its core, however, it shines a radiant light across a world plagued by darkness. It tells us that the secret to real human joy is found when we let no appeal for help go unanswered.

And that, in the end, is what it means to be human. Our humanity is only partially revealed through the great wonders of the world. We reach our most glorious potential in those hidden moments when we sit in silence with another.

When we take a person's hand and, without saying a word, offer them our time and attention, it is then that the meaning of Christmas and of life becomes obvious.

In that silence, no presents are needed, for the greatest gift has already been received.

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## Christmas Voices

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