



## SEAN "QUINN DIRECT" V. THE TRIBUNE

THE LATEST move in a high stakes poker game between Quinn Direct and the *Sunday Tribune* came recently with an *Irish Times* report that a document showing serious wrong doing by the insurance company was a forgery. The document, published by the *Turbine* last April, was part of an investigation alleging that Quinn Direct used serving gardai to settle claims and offered 'bonus' payments to claimants solicitors to expedite claims.

Since then the gardai have launched an inquiry into the allegations while Quinn Direct has sued the newspaper and has made repeated demands that the paper apologise and concede that its story was incorrect. However, the *Turbine* has ploughed on regardless and has continued to published stories critical of the insurance company. The paper has also amassed a large dossier on dozens of insurance cases which, its journalists claim, indicate malpractice. The *IT* story stating that the garda investigation had concluded that the document was a forgery was published a fortnight ago but there has been no withdrawal or apology in the two editions of the *Turbine* published since then.

The newspaper has lodged a defence to the libel claim and has also devoted much energy since the story to researching claims and allegations of similar stories about Quinn Direct. The paper's editor, Noirin Hegarty and managing director, Mick Roche, are relying on the outcome of the Beverly Cooper-Flynn High Court case with RTE and Charlie Bird where Flynn proved her argument about the particular story in contention but RTE research unearthed a wealth of other evidence that damned her.

Quinn Direct is relying on the garda inquiry which has so far failed to find that any of its personnel have behaved improperly.



Sean Quinn



The company also believes that the country's second richest man, Tony O'Reilly, will not be willing to fund the *Tribune* in the mother of all libel battles against the country's richest man, Sean Quinn, owner of Quinn Direct.

There now appears to be a Mexican stand-off with Quinn Direct making emollient noises. Its statement accompanying the leaked report to the *IT* said it could "understand that mistakes can happen in any context" but requested that the paper acknowledge its 'mistake' and correct it as soon as possible. The *Turbine*, on the other hand, believes that the insurance company is loathe to go to court where a bucket load of evidential accusation would be produced about its *modus operandi*.

**ISN'T Kevin Myers only gas? The witty scourge of anything to the left of George Bush recently suggested in his Irish Independent column that Shell ought to employ someone to "bump off" a few of the "cranks and fools" protesting against the Shell pipeline in Mayo. Feigning mock incredulity, Myers then recounted how ridiculous it was that such an act was illegal and demanded, more seriously, that the protesters should be jailed.**

**You have to hand it to the Colonel. Whenever his light is fading, he comes out with something special designed to stimulate a controversy. Illegitimate children, or "bastards" as he wittily put it not so long ago; disabled athletes, single mothers, gays, travellers – all these irksome creatures have been targeted whenever the colonel needs attention.**

**The 'controversial' Myers could not possibly be unaware that in the most**



Ken Saro-Wiwa

**celebrated international incident in which Shell was involved – in Nigeria where an entire tribe, the Ogoni people, had their lands ravaged by Shell and a compliant government – the ensuing protests saw ten protesters executed by hanging. Nigerian poet and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa along with nine other 'cranks and fools', were hanged by Nigerian dictator, General Abacha in 1995 for obstructing Shell and other oil multinationals.**

## RICHARD DELEVAN: THE MODEST HACK

*SUNDAY TRIBUNE* business editor, Richard Delevan, a "native New Yorker" and one of George Bush's most voluble fans (he is a former Republican Party activist), has struck back at those pesky PR types in Dublin who fail to communicate properly with him. Delevan has also taken a swipe at the *Turbine*'s sister title, the *Irish Independent* for predicting the demise of his newspaper.

Delevan regularly upbraids business PR messenger boys and girls with withering sarcasm, delivered via e-mails, about their inability to get it right when sending in their pleas for plugs in the business section. Last month, Delevan sent the PR firms another sneering missive about their inadequacies with the suggestion that they were "not getting enough time on the beach" and that some of their releases were written by "some idiot lawyer who thinks he can write". The no-nonsense neocon told them that failure to communicate properly "might trigger a relapse to less pleasant reactions", a reference, presumably, to his jocular threat issued last year to "hunt down and kill" the next PR person who plagued him with phone calls instead of e-mailing interesting info to him. Richard signed off by announcing, humorously, that "it is helpful to read my stuff aloud in the voice of John Wayne". What a card.

Also incurring Delevan's displeasure recently was Lorna Reid of the *Irish Indo* who opined that the loss of Paul Howard's Ross O'Carroll Kelly creation "would be a big blow to the *Tribune*" as "it was the lynchpin of the paper". John Wayne wasn't taking this lying down and he invited the business PR community to read his personal blog where, under the headline: "Is the *Tribune* fucked? It is not", he boasts of the "awesome power" of his blog to keep the paper going.



Richard Delevan

