

From: "HARRY BROWNE"
Date: 27 March 2015 10:42:32 GMT
To: "John Hamilton"
Subject: Statements to committee by Ms Geraldine Kennedy
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27 March 2015

John Hamilton
Principal Clerk
Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis
Houses of the Oireachtas Service
Kildare House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2 (by email)

Dear Mr Hamilton,

Having heard and heeded the advice of the committee's legal team to avoid naming names, especially negatively, during my testimony of Wednesday, March 25, I was surprised to hear Ms Geraldine Kennedy mention me a number of times during her testimony of Thursday, March 26. Three points she made require a response from me to clarify the record.

1. Twice, under questioning from Senator Barrett and Mr Doherty, Ms Kennedy made definitive and unchallenged statements about my present emotional state. 'He has an antipathy to the Irish Times', she said, arising from 'the circumstances of his departure' from that institution. On the second occasion, she said this knowledge of my feelings was shared by people within the newspaper. Ms Kennedy is entitled to her opinion, which presumably is based on her recollection of an email I sent her in 2003 when I was relieved of my position as radio columnist, 15 months after I had happily left the day-to-day staff of the paper under a voluntary redundancy scheme. However, that is the only significant communication I have ever had with her -- Ms Kennedy and I have never, ever, had a conversation beyond pleasantries in a lift; her speculation as to my feelings is unfounded, as is her implication that those imagined feelings are relevant to understanding the thrust of my testimony. I had a critical perspective on the Irish Times (and other papers) during the years I worked there, often expressed in writing and public speaking, and I have continued in a similar vein during my subsequent career: the academic research agenda I shared with the committee was initiated while I was still on the newspaper's staff. I enjoy cordial and friendly relationships with many Irish Times journalists, including the editor, and contributed an article to the newspaper last year. I would have been more than willing to explain to the committee the colourful history of my relationship with the Irish Times, but the question did not arise, nor did I single out the paper or any of its journalists, let alone its editors, for opprobrium.
2. Ms Kennedy said that I together with my interlocutors on the committee had given the misleading impression that a 'scam' had occurred in the Irish Times 'during the boom', that is to say during her editorship. As Mr Doherty later pointed out, I made no such statement, but located an incident of an inappropriate relationship between a property journalist and

an outside company, which I never described as a 'scam', near the beginning of my career as a professional journalist, which commenced around 1989-1990.

3. Most seriously, Ms Kennedy erroneously stated that this incident I referred to took place in the early 1970s, subsequently described in Frank McDonald's 1985 book, *The Destruction of Dublin*. Although I imagine this was not Ms Kennedy's intent, the effect of her testimony was to accuse me of lying to the committee, since I made clear under questioning from Senator MacSharry that I had knowledge during my own career of the incident. Anyone checking Ms Kennedy's account against my CV would have to conclude, as I was a nine-year-old fourth-grade pupil in School 26 in Paterson, New Jersey, at the time of the scandal documented by Mr McDonald, that I misled the committee in describing my familiarity with the situation.

As members of the committee are aware, I do not consider the personal foibles of individual journalists to be of importance for understanding the structural relationship between media organisations and financial/property institutions, examined within the wider context of neoliberalism. I have absolutely no wish to rehearse the specific circumstances in question. But I must ask that the record is made clear: Ms Kennedy was entirely wrong in her unambiguous and unchallenged assertion that I was referring to the story she cited from the 1970s. The separate incident to which I referred, and which has presumably escaped Ms Kennedy's memory, did indeed take place, as I told the committee, near the start of my career, not more than a decade earlier.

I trust this clarifies the position as to my feelings (insofar as they are relevant), my motives and the honesty of my testimony, all of which have been impugned, however unintentionally, by Ms Kennedy's statements.

Yours sincerely,

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