

NEWS

Tax inspectors target Tony Quinn organisation

RICHARD OAKLEY

TAX inspectors are to investigate the self-styled lifestyle guru Tony Quinn's organisation to establish the extent of its activities in Ireland.

Dublin-born Quinn currently lives in the Bahamas as a tax exile. However, parts of his organisation are based in Ireland. It is understood that the Revenue Commissioners have been approached about the tax affairs of the Irish arms of the Quinn organisation and is expected to try to determine where the money earned ultimately ends up. There is no suggestion of any wrongdoing on the part of the Quinn organisation.

The tax inspectors have agreed to examine the Quinn organisation following contact with Dialogue Ireland, a group which provides information on religious and lifestyle groups. Dialogue Ireland said it was in the process of suing tax inspectors with copies of cheques and receipts relating to Quinn seminars.

Over the past few years, Dialogue Ireland has been approached by people who attended Quinn seminars and claimed to have had un satisfactory experiences. A multi-millionaire, Quinn charges over €18,000 per person for his seminars, which are attended by up to 50 people at a time.

In 2001, an investigation by this newspaper showed there were questions about Quinn's teachings.

The investigation showed that a significant period of time at the seminars was taken up by Quinn advising those attending that his "life system" would work best for them if they sold it to others. They were given taped recordings of this part of the seminar to take home and told to listen to them daily. A copy of the tape was obtained by this newspaper and an independent typist said that the people, who could be heard crying out and applauding as Quinn spoke, were in some form of relaxed state and under Quinn's influence.

A number of academics then examined Quinn's lifestyle philosophy called Educio. Professor Ciaran Benson, head of UCD's psychology department, said the system was "simplistic in the extreme and without any acceptable research".

Teachers' unions to discuss merger

HELEN MURRAY

THE country's two main secondary teacher unions, the ASTI and the TUI, will discuss a merger during this week's annual Easter conference. The unions will consider the move in an effort to become a more significant force to pursue improved pay and conditions for teachers.

TUI president Derek Dunne said a joint second-level teachers' union would give teachers tremendous strength within the public sector. "The pay campaign, which has dominated the last three years is a good enough reason in itself for greater unity," he said.

Elsewhere on the conference circuit, the ASTI will reconsider its position outside of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), with a motion to rejoin Congress

taking top priority at the convention.

At its convention in Limerick, the ASTI will discuss solutions to the growing problem of behavioural problems exhibited by pupils. General secretary Charlie Lennon has called for the implementation of a National Action Plan on Promoting Student Behaviour, which includes greater home/school interaction and professional development training for teachers.

One topic expected to ignite sparks at the ASTI convention is the issue of expenses after it emerged that the honorary treasurer of the union, Patricia Wroe, had concerns that areas of the ASTI expense system were non-compliant. Last week, *The Sunday Tribune* confirmed that Wroe had informed all members of the union's powerful Cen-

tral Executive Committee of her strong misgivings over double and false claims which may have been made (and paid) for non-ASTI business.

Substandard school buildings will dominate the INTO convention in Bundoran, where primary school teachers will consider a day of all-out strike action in a bid to coerce the government to commence all building/refurbishment work in schools with substandard accommodation.

Following the dismissal last August of a Co Meath Gaelic club principal after a row over religious instruction, the INTO is expected to initiate discussions with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to establish an appropriate religious programme to reflect the growing diversity of pupils.



'The Man from Aran' by William Orpen: sold at Christie's for £500,000 in May 1999

Irish collectors of art to seek compensation in class action

HELEN MURRAY

MANY of Ireland's leading art collectors, such as multi-millionaire Michael Smurfit and Merrion Hotel owner Lochlainn Quinn, may seek compensation from the world's top art houses in a class-action lawsuit to be heard in the US later this year.

The action has been taken following the criminal conviction of former Sotheby's chairman, Alfred Taubman, who was jailed and fined £5.4m in 2001 for operating a massive illegal price-fixing cartel with arch-rival Christie's.

Anyone who participated in non-internet auctions with Sotheby's and Christie's outside of the US between 1983 and early 2001 is eligible to be included in the 'Kruman action', scheduled to appear before a New York court in June.

All Irish customers, including galleries and individual buyers and sellers, were sent notification of the pending Kruman case last week and will be automatically included in the class action unless they inform the American court otherwise by 23 May 2003.

The action follows a domestic class action taken in 2001 when American buyers and sellers were awarded \$512m in compensation for the price-fixing. Sotheby's and Christie's have each contributed \$26m to the settlement fund.

Everyone included in the action will receive a minimum of \$20 compensation depending on the price of their purchase, but those who wish to pursue their own individual claim could receive substantially more.

The European Commission ruled last October that Christie's and Sotheby's had violated the European Union's competition rules by price-fixing and consequently fined Sotheby's \$13m.

The commission did not fine Christie's because it had come forward and confessed the collusion in January 2000.

Although the former Sotheby's chairman Alfred Taubman has been convicted and jailed, his opposite number at Christie's, Sir Antony Tennant, has refused to appear before a US court and cannot be extradited because price-fixing is not a criminal offence in the UK.

It is a measure of the massive scale of the international art trade that Sotheby's \$13m fine was the equivalent of only 0.6% of the house's annual turnover. A prime example of the staggering sums earned on sales was last summer's auction of a rediscovered Rubens masterpiece, *The Massacre of Innocents*, which was sold in London for £49.5m.

Closer to home, Irish artist Louis Le Brocq's *Travelling Woman with a Newspaper* was sold at Sotheby's for £1,158,500 in May 2000. William Orpen's *Man from Aran* was sold at Christie's for £500,000 in May 1999.

Multi-millionaire Michael Smurfit's extensive collection is due to go under the hammer in May, with the first 10 of 500 paintings to be sold by Sotheby's.

The art house anticipates sales in excess of £1.8m for the batch of Irish paintings, which includes important works by Sir William Orpen, Jack B Yeats and Louis Le Brocq.

Christie's and Sotheby's are the leading players in the auction world, controlling 90% of the market. Christie's was established in London in 1788. It has been a subsidiary of the French Artemis company since 1998.

Sotheby's, also founded in the 18th century, is publicly listed on the London and New York stock exchanges. Taubman is its major shareholder.

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