

Irish Federation of University Teachers,
11 Merrion Square,
Dublin 2.

Friday, 19 September 2008.

Madam,

I read Professor Tom Begley's article ("Paying for a knowledge economy", *The Irish Times*, 19 September) with great interest, not least because I think he quotes me.

"The union head" who found things "truly shocking" is, no doubt, the spokesperson on behalf of the Irish Federation of University Teachers: the pre-eminent representative body of academic and related staff in Irish universities.

What the Irish Federation of University Teachers found to be "truly shocking" was not that university staff can make a good case for high salaries (unlikely, don't you think?). No, what they objected to was the secrecy and selectivity which attended the award of exceptionally high pay to a few chosen people (many of whom, in a further challenge to Professor Begley's thesis, are not academics or researchers at all).

Insult was added to injury by the knowledge that at the same time that these secret payments were being arranged, those who were doing so were busy rubbishing IFUT's claim (in the Benchmarking process) that Irish university salaries were uncompetitive internationally.

The Irish Federation of University Teachers is also very concerned that this same lack of transparency (the HEA is still strongly resisting our Freedom of Information request for details of salaries paid by taxpayers' money) has occasioned the greatest threat to university autonomy in 40 years.

I genuinely wish Professor Begley well in his career. I am glad he is here. I just wish his article had even mentioned solid, well-tested university values like openness and collegiality. But maybe that's just my "union head" talking.

Yours etc,

Mike Jennings,
General Secretary.