

HSE: An Organisation without a Conscience?



How We Think

On Sunday 31 January 2016, 'This week' on RTE 1 Radio interviewed the Director General of the Irish Health Service Executive about alleged child abuse cases and possible various cover-ups relating to them.

Introducing a question, the interviewer led in by saying:

"Surely an organization with a conscience...." .

A missed opportunity.

Only people - *individuals* - have minds and some may have developed consciences.

Two pointed quotes from 19th century magistrates make the point memorably:

- Did you expect a corporation to have a conscience, when it has no soul to be damned and no body to be kicked? (Edward Thurlow, English Jurist; Lord Chancellor, d.1806)
- A corporation cannot blush. It is a body, it is true; has certainly a head - a new one every year; arms it has and very long ones, for it can reach at anything; ... a throat to swallow the rights of the community, and a stomach to digest them! But who ever yet discovered, in the anatomy of any corporation, either bowels or a heart? (Howell Walsh, Speech, Tralee Assizes, c. 1825)

Worth holding in mind as reminder about all types of organizations - banks, car companies, universities - only people make decisions. Clarity about that fact would make for more powerful questioning and clearer public accountability.

Presumably the DG and the members of his management team have consciences - shall we have to wait long to see if they exercise them or if they continue to behave bureaucratically?

First published 2/2/2016 on LinkedIn