

PRESS RELEASE/ REVIEW COPY

STRICT EMBARGO : 11.00 am, Friday 19 November 2004

PRESS CONFERENCE

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH
HAVE LED TO A DISASTROUS DECLINE IN THE
NATION'S HEALTH**

At 11.00 am on Friday 19 November 2004, a press conference will be held in the Alexander Hotel, at Merrion Square, Dublin 2 to launch *Growth - The Celtic Cancer*, edited by Richard Douthwaite and John Jopling.

Speakers will include Ireland's leading health economist Dr. Douglas McCulloch of the University of Ulster, and Dr. Elizabeth Cullen of the Irish Doctors' Environmental Association, the author of a major report included in the book, which shows the disastrous toll successive governments' pro-growth policies have had on the public's health.

Dr. Cullen cites survey after survey to show how the stresses and time pressures generated by the economic growth process left people with too little time to maintain their social relationships and also caused their health to deteriorate. She claims that these effects were largely due to the way that the growth was brought about.

"Although studies around the world had clearly shown that ill-health and certain crimes increase if the gap between rich and poor is allowed to widen, the Irish government deliberately increased the width of the gap by its tax policies in order to improve competitiveness" Dr. Cullen says. "In other words, they sacrificed the health of the people to improve the health of the economy. I was shocked."

Health spokespersons of all the main political parties are being invited to attend and respond to Dr. Cullen's challenging findings.

THE DISTURBING FACTS AND FIGURES

Only half the number of people say that they are very satisfied with their lives than did before the rapid growth took off.

33% of men surveyed believed they had little control over their lives - and 4% had actually planned their suicides. Between 1990 and 1998, male suicide in Ireland increased from 14 to 23 deaths per 100 000 of population.

The percentage of babies born with low birth-weights increased by 20% between 1993 and 1999. This reflects the widening gap between rich and poor.

Irish mortality rates are now worse than the EU average for almost all diseases - including cancer, heart disease and suicide.

Poverty in old age has increased from 2.8% to 18.2%.

MORE DISTURBING FACTS AND FIGURES

Although the average income increased by 73% between 1994 and 2002, house prices rose by 250% nationally, and by 300% in the Dublin area.

In 2003, research involving women in four European countries found that women in Dublin were more susceptible to depressive disorders, with 33% suffering from depression.

Between 1989 and 1999, alcohol consumption increased by 40%. Since 1996 public intoxication by teenagers has increased by 370%.

In 2002, €50 million were spent on anti-depressants, a staggering increase of €42 million since 1993.

Above information from ‘Unprecedented growth, but for whose benefit?’ by Elizabeth Cullen, one of the essays in the book.

INFORMATION AND INTERVIEWS

Richard Douthwaite and Elizabeth Cullen are both available for interview and comment. If you would like to arrange an interview, please contact **John Harrington** at **Dublin 6746415** or **mobile 087-7533039**, who will be very glad to help you. Alternatively, if John is not available, please contact **Liam Carson** of Lilliput Press at **Dublin 6711647** or **mobile 087-2912797**.

GROWTH
THE CELTIC CANCER
Feasta Review number 2
Edited by Richard Douthwaite and John Jopling

Paperback: €15

‘Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.’
Edward Abbey, Radical US environmentalist (1927-1989)

Economic growth corrupts a society in the way a cancer destroys the human body on which it feeds. Growth is simply an increase in the size of the monetarized part of the social arrangements by which we live, relate and support each other. All too often, however, this increase is at the expense of our personal relationships or of natural resources.

Elizabeth Cullen’s lead essay in this collection shows that recent rapid economic growth in Ireland has been achieved at a heavy cost. More people have to work, and work harder, than ever before. Some have coped with the stress by drinking to excess while almost everybody finds they have not enough time to maintain their social bonds. The people who have fared worst, however, are those with the smallest share of the increased income. They feel less good about themselves, for example, making them more prone to depression, diabetes, arthritis and osteoporosis and more liable to die prematurely from heart disease or a stroke.

Economic growth is only one of the topics covered in this book. Others include globalization, fair trade, interest-free banking, genetic modification, the conflict between the dollar and the euro, eco-taxes and finally, how Irish democracy can be reformed so it can respect ecological principles. Taken together, these essays present a convincing picture of how a more humane society might be built.

Distributed in Ireland by Lilliput Press
Distributed in Britain by Green Books