

Statement by the Chief Justice, Mrs Justice Susan Denham

July 25th, 2011

I am very honoured to have been appointed to the position of Chief Justice. It is an office with heavy duties and responsibilities. I am very conscious of the distinguished men who have held the position previously, it will be a challenge, and I will do my best.

I look forward to continue working with my colleagues in the Supreme Court, and with all my friends and colleagues throughout the judiciary.

In this time of national financial crisis it is particularly important that the three branches of government retain their integrity and strength and work together for the benefit of Ireland. I look forward to working with the Government, in accordance with constitutional conventions, in the years ahead.

In particular the time has now come to develop a Judicial Council in Ireland, to support the Judiciary in their difficult task, whilst providing assurance to the public that all judges maintain our traditional high judicial standards;

with the growth in the number and complexity of cases coming before the Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeal, the State would be well served by a Court of Appeal; and we need to develop a 21st century infrastructure for the Judiciary of Ireland.

One of the important constitutional conventions to which I have referred is that judges refrain from engaging in matters of public controversy or political debate. In a world of instant communication and commentary the concept of silence may seem unusual but it is an inherent part of our democratic tripartite system of government.

Indeed, in these difficult times the need for an institution of independence and thoughtfulness, with an obligation to maintain the rule of law, is greater than ever.

We are living through a national crisis, and while we can be thankful that our children and grandchildren are not going off to war, and that famine is not stalking the land, we are in the midst of a financial storm which has shaken families throughout the country, and imposed enormous stresses upon individuals, families, and communities.

We shall persevere and prosper, but judges are very aware of the current crisis as the effects of the financial storm come before our courts every day: a trail of tragedy, fraught families, separating spouses, lost jobs, homes under siege, serious financial woes, companies being wound up, and stories of millions and billions of euros lost in the ether. In these areas, as in all others, it is critically important that judges administer justice and give an independent decision.

Judges are not immune from the effects of the economic crisis. Judges are not, nor have they ever been, opposed to playing their part in sharing the financial pain required of everyone in this difficult time. In particular, the judiciary has never

opposed, and does not oppose, a referendum

The people of Ireland have been well served by the judiciary since the State was founded. This tradition continues in these troublesome times.

It is an honour to serve in the third branch of the Government of Ireland, with such colleagues, and to hold the position of Chief Justice.