



## Richard Macartan (Dick) Humphreys

# Family Solidarity founder and well-known figure in motor trade

**R**ICHARD MACARTAN (Dick) Humphreys, who has died aged 70 of a sudden illness, was an engineer, businessman and political activist.

He first came to prominence as a campaigner during the 1983 abortion referendum as a leading member of the Pro-life amendment campaign. A founder member of Family Solidarity, he acted as a spokesman for the group in the 1986 divorce campaign.

In later years, he became active on European referendums, campaigning against the Nice Treaty. Six weeks before his death, he helped to establish a new body to oppose the Lisbon Treaty, EUREform, with himself as co-ordinator.

His Catholic beliefs informed his political philosophy, but his was not an uncritical or unexamined faith.

In his view, arguments were to be decided on their merits, and he was not an automatic respecter of rank, whether political, episcopal or otherwise.

While an occasional member of Fine Gael, he was at heart a freelance activist. In his view, politics was not just for the professionals, but rather a calling for those who had a contribution to make to improve life for others. He had an innate sympathy for mavericks and underdogs.

He had campaigned in recent years against embryo research and also did considerable work on developing the economic case for an international wealth tax.

On the EU, he feared a deepening democratic deficit but was keen to emphasise that he and many potential No voters favoured European economic co-operation. He felt that recent attempts by Bertie Ahern and Dick Roche to label the No side as fundamentalists, or Eurosceptics, were ill-judged and designed to stifle debate on the treaty.

He was born in Dublin in 1937 to a family steeped in republicanism. His father Richard was a 1916 rebel and his mother Eithne was a daughter of Sinn Féin TD James O'Mara.

He was educated at Blackrock

College, Dublin, playing on the school's rugby senior cup team in 1955. He studied engineering in UCD, where he was auditor of the Mechanical Engineering Society, before graduating in 1959. Thereafter, he remained a life-long inventor and developed a number of patents and designs related to engineering and vehicle safety.

He first went into business in the 1960s when he acquired a licence to quarry marble in Recess, Co Galway.

He later moved to Dublin and joined the Gowan Group, becoming a well-known figure in the motor trade in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, he qualified as an MBA at UCD, and 20 years later he became president of the MBA Association.

He was a former president of Mount Merrion Residents' Association, and was actively involved in the Co Dublin parish where he lived for 36 years, including founding the Deerpark Tennis Club in 1976.

He was a pioneer, and an active distributor of the *Alive!* newspaper.

After leaving Gowans, he pursued a number of business and investment projects, including the restoration of the Old Town Hall in Limerick, a building in which his ancestor Stephen O'Mara had served as mayor.

He is survived by his wife, Deirdre, his four sons, Richard, Mark, Frank and Joe, and six grandchildren. A seventh is expected this month.

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Richard Macartan Humphreys:  
born March 26th, 1937; died  
February 27th, 2008



**Dick Humphreys: campaigned against embryo research**