Free Sample

In the mid-1880s, the youthful, red-bearded George Bernard Shaw and his friend, William Archer, decided to collaborate on a play....

*... Six weeks later, Shaw startled Archer by saying: *Look here, I've knocked off the first act of that play of ours and haven't come to the plot yet. In fact, I've forgotten the plot. You might tell me the story again.'...*

... Three days later, Shaw again visited Archer.

T've written three pages of the second act and have used up all your plot,' Shaw said in a matter-of-fact manner.'Can you let me have some more to go on with?'

--MYRICKLAND

In the beginning was the Act.

--GOETHE

Irish television went on the air for the first time on the last, cold, night of December 1961.

At Donnybrook, the celebrities picked their way through pools of mud to reach the half-completed studio building. In O'Connell Street, outside-broadcast cameras panned across the crowds near the Gresham Hotel. Inside the hotel, 'a tremendous party'[1] was in progress under the observing eyes of another pair of cameras.

The festivities in O'Connell Street were 'live' and punctuated an evening's transmission of otherwise largely recorded material. The station opened with the Anthem at seven o'clock.

The traditional national proprieties were observed.

President Éamon De Valera inaugurated the service. The Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, and the Minister, Michael Hilliard, 'also spoke'. The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr McQuaid, gave Benediction. The artists added their *imprimatur*: Siobhán McKenna and Micheál Mac Liammóir.

The show was on.

Jimmy O'Dea, Maureen Potter, Mary O'Hara, Dermot O'Brien's Céilí Band gave a cead mile failte. The Newsroom contributed film of major events throughout the country. The three women continuity announcers led a tour to 'Meet the People'. Every so often the 300,000 audience at 35,000 sets were whisked back to the Gresham to see the spree.

To mark the occasion, there were no advertisements.

Among those who must have watched with special interest were Eamonn Andrews, Chairman of the Authority, Edward Roth, Jnr., Director-General, and Michael Barry, Controller of Programmes.

It was half past midnight before the little white dot shimmied from the screen. As the floor manager, Charlie Roberts, counted down the last few seconds to the New Year on the floor of the Gresham ballroom, the newspapers were preparing to tell a bemused and bedazzled television audience what they thought of the night's doings.

They liked it, was the consensus--and they'd wait and see.

A group in the Irish Club in London telephoned three times during the night for reports on how things were going.

Passengers on late night flights out of Dublin were questioned by Irish exiles on arrival in Britain: how had the whole thing gone?

As television Producers, performers, writers, technical crews, engineers, administrators and salesmen readied themselves for the next night and the next week and the next month of filling the screen five hours a night with information, education and entertainment; as advertisers, religious interests, cultural groups, political parties, purveyors of 'canned' programmes prepared their wares for the hard sell or the soft sell; as cinema

owners, theatre owners, sound broadcasters, churches, political parties, pundits and cultural groups revised their warnings on the dangers of The Box; as the neighbours returned to their own houses chatting away about 'what your man said' and about 'how your woman looked', the nation sat back to gaze at the circus that had arrived in its front room.

If the people liked it, the critics had their doubts. There was talk of a square-eyed population in the next generation. One critic complained petulantly:

The people most to be pitied last night were Sean Bracken's Loch Gamhna Céilí Band. They were launched onto the screen and abandoned ...

Another asserted that there was, after the first night, little to distinguish Irish television from the standard pattern of commercial television.

But the nation was in no mood for Jeremiahs. The 'mass' medium, the new technological toy, the goggle box, the great communicator had come to dance with us in Ireland. A pretty dance it was to be.

* * *

That night in December had been preceded by more than forty years of statements and counter-statements; questions and reports, advice, appointments, debates, decisions and action.

* * *

The only exhaustive history of broadcasting in Ireland is Maurice Gorham's invaluable Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting.

Unlike his book, this chapter is not intended as a history of Irish television. Its intention is, rather, to tell the story of the station's policy vicissitudes so far as the present writers saw them in their experience or research. It is, necessarily, selective. We are programme people, not historians.

It is more than forty-three years since the word 'images' in relation to broadcasting cropped up in an Act of the new Irish Parliament and since the first Irish television picture was seen in Co. Down.

The word occurs in the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1926, in connection with the setting up of the National Sound Broadcasting Service, Dublin2RN.

The first television picture was transmitted in the previous year by a curate, the Rev. Luke Donnellan, from his house in Dromintee near Newry to a shed four miles away. The picture was a fellow-curate's eye, peering into the tube-like contraption.

James Logie Baird, the Scottish television inventor, is said to have visited Dromintee to compare notes with Father Donnellan. They, in fact, never succeeded in meeting. Baird himself lectured on television in Dublinon 8th February 1927at the Theatre Royal. Little official note was taken of what he said, but one Dublinjournalist thoughtfully found a practical application for the remarkable invention:

A piquant point arises in the case of bookmakers now that their calling is legalised. Intending punters can be present at a certain hall where the racecourse would be shown and betting only conducted on those horses present at the post. What a relief to those who are continually backing the nonstarters!

The Irish Independent wrote in consternation:

The practical influence of television in everyday life excites the imagination. Will it kill man? No longer will it be necessary to reconnoitre an enemy's position as of old. A general has only to tune in to a certain station where he will see hostile assemblies at work and hear decisions meant to be secret. We tremble when we visualize the effect of television on our Dáily life. Will privacy be non-existent? Perhaps the growth of modern science is too rapid to be beneficial and further inventions may be needed to counteract it.

It was twenty years later, in 1947, that Mr. Paddy Little, Fianna Fáil Minister for Posts and Telegraphs told Radio Éireann's Advisory Committee that the possibilities for Irish television would be borne in mind in the designing of a new Broadcasting House, on the grounds of Ardmoreon the Stillorgan Road. Radio would be first to move there from its cramped quarters in Henry Street.

Twenty-two years later, the first sod was cut for the radio building.

Statements on, and interest in, television began to increase from the early fifties.

In 1952 Mr. Erskine Childers expressed the fear that television might well destroy the art of conversation in Ireland. Mr. Childers (Paddy Little's successor as Minister) told the Dáil in 1953 that the Government had no immediate plans to start a television service. In that year programmes were being received in Ireland both from Wales and from the new BBC

transmitter in Belfast. In the same year Erskine Childers gave radio a measure of independence by setting up Comhairle Radio Éiireann, a group of five advisers.[2] He employed a professional in communications, Mr. Maurice Gorham, as Director of Broadcasting.

Between them, Gorham and the Comhairle ran the policies and programming of Radio Éireann for the next seven years. The Comhairle's non-statutory status kept them dependent on each successive Minister's views on broadcasting. The staff of Radio Éireann remained Civil Servants.

In 1953, also, a committee was set up by Leon Ó Broin, Departmental Secretary, comprising T. J. Monaghan, Maurice Gorham and himself. Its purpose was to investigate and report on the implications (financial, technical and programming) of an Irish television service.

They submitted two reports--both, as the fortunes of General Elections determined, to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs of an Inter-Party Government (1954-57), Mr. Michael Keyes. They recommended a service publicly owned and managed.

References to the possibility of television for Ireland continued to be made in the Dáil.

Mr. Childers expressed the view that when television did come it should be absolutely first-class and involve itself in the development and preservation of our national culture. Some apprehension was beginning to be felt at this time at the increasing availability of

British television programmes, and a consequent conditioning of our people to the British view of life.

It was not to Dáil Éireann but to a meeting of the Wireless Dealers Association in Dublin, in October 1956, that Michael Keyes declared the Government's intention that television, when it did come, would be publicly owned and managed, as had been recommended by Leon Ó Broin's committee.

Into this atmosphere of expressed intention the statement of Mr. Neil Blaney, Keyes's successor, fell a year later.

An Irish television service was to be largely commercial in character, depending on its revenue from advertisers. He went on: 'the Government are prepared to consider proposals from private interests' who would provide and operate studios, transmitters and capital 'in consideration of a licence to operate commercial programmes for a term of years'. 'The television system,' the statement said, 'will become State property and will be under the control of a television authority to be set up.'

Public reaction was like the curate's egg--good in parts.

The Irish Times on 8th November said: 'Our Irish television, in a sentence, is likely to compare with the great majority of sponsored "sound" programmes from Radio Luxembourg--and for that matter from Radio Éireann. Who the lucky commissionaire may be is still unknown and does not matter; he will be at the mercy of his advertisers and will transmit the type of programme that his advertisers wish.*

The Irish Independent did not agree.

In a leading article on 9th November 1957it regarded the Minister's attitude as 'thoroughly sound': 'Television is a luxury service and those who enjoy it will have to do so without grant or subsidy'.

Again: 'The national finances are such that it is out of the question to introduce any scheme that will involve a charge on the revenue'.

Culturally, there was little awareness at that time, in either the official, political or popular mind, that committing a television service to commercial enterprises might compromise the national identity. There were, however, some thoughtful and experienced men who had grave misgivings; Mr. Maurice Gorham, Leon Ó Broin, Dr. Roger McHugh, etc. Mr. Gorham even expressed doubts about the advisability of embarking on television at all in our circumstances. The Comhairle of Radio Éireann shared these misgivings.

Mr. Blaney had a short innings as Minister and was succeeded by Mr. Seán Ormonde early in December. Three months after his appointment he set up the twenty-man Television Commission which was to report the following year on proposals for a service in Ireland.

The Commission came into being in March 1958. It represented most business, religious, Irish language and political institutions in the country.

The Commission had no practising broadcasters, journalists or artists among its members. The only practising theatre man was the Earl of Longford, and he resigned from the Commission six months after it began its sittings, on the grounds that it was useless.

The course of its deliberations was surprising.

* * *

Now to the banquet we press;

Now for the eggs and the ham;

Now for the mustard and cress,

Now for the strawberry jam!

--SIR WILLIAM S. GILBERT

Some of the sittings appear to have been colourful; some even amusing. The proposers, nine in all, came mainly from Britain and America. Promises were prolific and of astounding generosity. At one stage, the scene took on the air of an early Evelyn Waugh novel. Tycoons arrived with documented portfolios; a dazed Irish artist came from the Aran Islands; Monsignori from the Vatican in full regalia stood in discreet ecclesiastical patience, waiting to be called. They were part of the retinue of the most exotic of the proposers, a man whose nationality was never satisfactorily established. On a polite enquiry from an official as to what their purpose was, they modestly admitted that they didn't know.

One applicant made the astonishing promise to a stunned Commission that he would, as a bonus, on receipt of the television franchise, provide the State with a commercial medium-wave radio station which would cover the North American Continent! In reply to a question from an incredulous member of the broadcasting service as to how he proposed to reach the North American Continent on medium wave, he replied grandly and mysteriously that he knew of a band on which it could be done but he wasn't going to tell.

It would be impossible to convey credibly the picture of intrigue and reconnoitring that went on in Dublin during those months.

One clear fact emerged: whatever the Irish authorities wanted they could have, for nothing--except, of course, the grant of the franchise. As we write, this whole episode takes on an extraordinary plausibility if one accepts The Sunday Times account (3rd August 1969) of the promises made by those bidding for the commercial franchise of the new ITA companies in 1967.

The Commission met weekly for more than thirteen months and submitted an Interim Report nine months after it had begun. The report was never published. The final Report was published on 8th May 1959, containing a Minority Report.

Neither of these is wholly intelligible, since each presupposes that the reader will have access to a Supplementary Report. In fact, nobody among the Irish public has access to it. It was never published. Nobody knows why, or, at least, nobody who knows will tell. We enquired of the Secretary of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, Dr. Leon Ó Broin, now retired. He refused in the public interest (sic) to discuss the contents of what he said were 'secret State papers'. What an intriguing document this Supplementary Report must be.

The most important framework to which the Commission's hands were tied was its basic term of reference. This required that it proceed 'on the basis that no charge shall fall on the exchequer either on capital or on current account, and that effective control of televised programmes must be exercisable by an Irish public authority to be established as a television authority'.

And thus the native hue of

resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale

cast of thought

And enterprises of great pith

and moment

With this regard their currents

turn awry

And lose the name of action.

--SHAKESPEAR

It had been required to examine the technical practicability of establishing a television service; to recommend arrangements for its ownership by the State; examine proposals already received by the Government from commercial firms; indicate the powers and duties of the television authority and its constitution. In particular, it had been obliged to specify the special arrangements that should be made

(a) to provide for the use of the Irish language and for the adequate reflection of the national outlook and culture, and

(b) to govern the presentation of information and news in the television service.

Further, it was enjoined to look into the desirable relationship between the television service and the sound broadcasting service and any other relevant matters to which 'the Commission deems it advisable to draw attention*.

The Commission referred on a number of occasions to the financing term of reference. One revealing quotation from their report runs:

if the necessary capital was available television should, if possible, be provided on the basis of a public service[3]. A television service on ... [this basis] ... is, however, not possible within the terms of reference of the Commission.

What was possible was a television service which would be set up as a profit-making enterprise, under a governing authority exercising on behalf of the State the duty to maintain and direct it. The programming was to become the responsibility of the selected proposer, financed mainly by revenue from advertisements. The selected proposer was to be represented on the authority. This was the main recommendation.

Briefly, the Commission's other recommendations were: the establishment of a television service based on private profit; further consideration be given to a changeover to a public service system when circumstances should favour it; control of the commercial organisation operating the service; the authority, with a chairman, should comprise nine members; a method of appointing the members of the authority should be the responsibility of the Taoiseach, possibly after consultation with the leaders of the Opposition.

It also recommended impartiality in the treatment of news and information. It suggested that broadcasting should occur for a minimum of twenty-one hours per week in the early period with a possible rise to a maximum of fifty hours after a suitable interval.

* * *

Obviously no member of the Commission had the remotest notion of the resources needed to provide fifty hours of transmission.

It stated that, perforce, the amount of Irish material would at the beginning be small but this could grow as the television service itself expanded. The Commission was satisfied that 'Irelandwould certainly be the poorer if it did not have this material available as part of the total programme fare*. It was convinced that 'as a nation it cannot accept the flow of other nations' culture without running the grave risk of a cultural osmosis that could dilute and finally eliminate its own national characteristics*.

For radio, the Commission's recommendation was that it be controlled 'for some years to come' by a separate but independent body which would give it equal standing with the television service.

* * *

On 29th June 1959 Mervyn Wall wrote, on behalf of the Arts Council, an open letter to the Television Commission. It was a thoughtful and valuable contribution to the debate and proposed that no system whatsoever of commercial television should receive the sanction and support of an Irish Government. Among other things it said:

in commercial television not only does self-interest, of its nature, over-ride cultural values for the sake of appealing to mass audiences but, in doing so, produces a proportionate and progressive vulgarisation of public taste as a whole;

and

the establishment of commercial television here, far from diminishing the influence of television from elsewhere--not to speak of eliminating it--will, on the contrary, by increasing the habit of televiewing among the public, make this influence more and more widespread.

It was also argued that any really effective control of the objectionable features of commercial television had been proved by experience to be impracticable.

Fears of the influence of commercialism run right through the Majority Report of the Commission. They are explicit in the Minority Report. This had suggested a non-commercial television station, financed from funds raised by international commercial sound broadcasting, like Radio Luxembourg. This suggestion, which had been put forward some years before, had been turned down by the Government. The contradictory implications are, however, clear both in the Commission's Report and in the public debate which followed: broadcasting must pay its way and the standards of national culture must be preserved and improved.

Broadcasting has been sitting on the horns of this dilemma ever since.

* * *

On 8th August 1959 Mr. Michael Hilliard, the new Fianna Fáil Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, announced yet another approach. The essence of this departure on the part of the Government was given at a concert by the RE String Quartet in Cork. It involved not only the setting up of a public authority for television, but the transfer of Radio Éireann's functions to it.

The statement was a bombshell to the commercial interests and the public alike.

The Minister seemed to cut the ground from under the Television Commission, reverse its terms of reference, reject the public-service concept of the Minority Report, turn down the offers of the commercial proposers, retain Government control by appointing an 'independent' authority, promote the national cultural aims by a service required to run its finances as if it were a private enterprise dependent on advertisers.

* * *

'I know what you're thinking about,' said Tweedledum; 'but it isn't so, no how!'

'Contrariwise,* continued Tweedledee, 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were not so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic.*

'I was thinking,* said Alice very politely, 'which is the best way out of this wood: it's getting so dark!'

* * *

As the Minister was to say in the Dáil on the Broadcasting Estimate, May 1960:

Private interests with considerable experience in this field were satisfied that they could make a profit without any assistance from licence revenue. If they could do so, I do not

see why a public authority, supported to a very substantial extent by licence revenue, cannot do likewise.

So, the State was proposing to enter into competition with private enterprise, the British commercial networks, the Irish and British newspapers and magazines, the display advertisers. Apart from maintaining itself, broadcasting was, in Mr. Hilliard's words, to make a profit. He was right. It did.

* * *

Perhaps a review of the proposals put before the Government by foreign and domestic enterprises may have helped it to make up its mind. We understand that a novel and modest proposal put forward by Gael-Linn was set aside. The Government's plan was designed to have the best of both worlds--profitability and public utility.

As Mr. Gorham said on hearing the news. 'Not Gaelic merely, but free as well*.

Mr. Gorham tendered his resignation as Director of Broadcasting on 24th August 1959. On the 27th of that month, Mr. Eamonn Andrews called on the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. Two weeks later Mr. Andrews was announced as chairman of an advisory committee which was to be set up to steer financial, technical and programming affairs until the Bill should be drafted and the new Authority chosen and established.

The other members of the committee were Mr. E. B. McManus, a businessman and Fianna Fáil party member, Commander George Crosbie, a newspaper proprietor from Cork,

reputed to support Fine Gael, and Mr. P. P. Wilkinson, a solicitor from Naas, allegedly Labour. Both McManus and Crosbie had been members of the Television Commission.

Eamonn Andrews' post was part-time. He had refused the position of Director-General. He wished to continue his BBC commitments. He intended to keep in close contact with the BBC in planning the development of the Irish project.

The committee met Dáily during the Summer. Land bought for RE in 1947 at Ardmorehad later been exchanged with UniversityCollege, Dublin, for a site on the opposite side of the road, at Montrose. Plans for studio blocks at this site had been entrusted to Mr. Raymond McGrath, architect for the Board of Works, by the Commission.

The Bill was now drafted and was simultaneously debated in both chambers of the Oireachtas.

* * *

Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat;
I see him forming in the air and darkening
the skies; but I'll nip him in the bud.
--IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS
1780

* * *

The sections which came under most intense fire in both Houses were those which remain a matter of public controversy up to the present. These, mainly, are the method of selecting the members of the Authority; the possible pitfalls over the business interests of its members; the rights of the Minister to interfere either by way of suppression or by way of requirement to broadcast particular matters; the section dealing with impartiality and the exemption for political party broadcasts; the sections enabling the Authority to sell advertising time, and those instructing it to keep in mind, always, the national aims and promotion of the Irish language.

The Bill was debated in the Senate first--a measure which caused many Senators to express their gratification with almost maidenly pleasure. The proceedings in the Senate had something of the quality of a minuet in their exquisite formality; those in the Dáil resembled more closely the sweaty 'tackiness' of the Siege of Ennis. Both debates were lively and stimulating; the Senate being particularly well-informed. The debate in the Dáil was marvellously colourful and unhindered by any knowledge of the facts. It was, however, strong on matters of opinion.

The four-man Committee with its Chairman, Eamonn Andrews, had become designate members of the new Authority. In the absence of other nominations for the Authority, much of the debate revolved around the compromising nature of those business interests of members which might be in conflict with their public duties.

Noel Browne put forward an amendment that any member of the Authority should divest himself of his interests or resign. Dr. Browne also had much to say on the matter of the conflicts and contradictions of a national service which was also a commercial enterprise. He

believed that monies to subsidise such an enterprise should be public money in order that the lower paid would benefit and those whose incomes warranted increased taxation should bear the brunt.

Patrick McGilligan, among others, was not in favour of the method of appointment of the new Authority. It was suggested in both Houses that appointments should be made by an independent body, or after consultation with the Opposition leaders.

The Minister, Michael Hilliard, demurred.

He was sure apprehensions on a conflict of interests were ill-founded. In discussions between the Taoiseach, himself and Eamonn Andrews, when first interviewed, Andrews had made it clear to them that in the event of any conflict of interests he would resign.

The setting up of a public body to run television should, the Minister felt, prevent commercial interests from dictating the policies of the new venture. The Government, he informed the House, had come to this view after reading the Commission's recommendations and taking into account other factors, including 'the improvement in the capital position'. In spite of the need for the service to pay its way, he did not see that 'its policy should be dominated by the profit motive'.

This was in diametrical opposition to his feeling expressed during the debate on the Estimate in May of the same year, 1960.

Senator George O'Brien addressed himself to the question of advertising and the function of advertising in television: 'I think it important to emphasise that advertising is not all bad, that it is really a form of conveying information'. Senator O'Brien could hardly have foreseen the claims which advertisements were to make, but the ring of confidence already surrounded his prognosis.

He continued: 'Advertising has a definite commercial value in that it makes competition more keen. The more successful products tend to supplant the less successful ... [and] ... the public is getting the article cheaper because it is advertised. ... There is no doubt that advertising plays its part in maintaining competition in the modem world'.

Senator Ó Maoláin welcomed the Bill. He said: 'This is a good Bill; its provisions show that we have grown up'.

There was debate on the section in which the Minister may direct the Authority in writing to allocate broadcasting time for any announcement on behalf of a Minister of State in connection with the functions of that Minister. It came in for criticism in both Houses. This section was in fact somewhat curiously amended in the Act itself. The insertion 'by or on behalf of any Minister of State in connection with the functions of that Minister' replaced 'by or in connection with the functions of any Minister of State'.

Senator O'Quigley, adverting to what he regarded as preferential treatment given to Government spokesmen and party members on radio, said that he was 'scandalised at the audacity of people in public employment using Radio Éireann for party political purposes'. He continued on the section about impartiality saying that no amount of statutory regulation

could legally secure the need for impartiality 'because, in the last analysis you must depend on the integrity of the people who are in charge of that service*.

Senator Sheehy Skeffington referred also to the section on impartiality: 'Occasionally in the news you get a kind of thing that should never happen, that a Minister's reply to a question or some kind of criticism is given by itself, without any reference at all to the criticism. This is clearly not impartial and should never happen.' He, too, went on to refer to Section 31, which gives the Minister a complete and absolute veto, without appeal, on any particular matter that is to be broadcast.

Mr. Michael Hilliard, the Minister responsible, continued to maintain throughout the debates that the power vested in him to require the Authority 'to refrain from broadcasting' was a proper one in view of the responsibility which the Government had for the maintenance and policies of the service, particularly under circumstances of national emergency.

The question of priorities in the nation's economic progress was referred to by Deputy Oliver Flanagan: 'I wonder if the Government have really sought an answer to one question, namely, whether in present economic circumstances expenditure on a television service is necessary'. He went on, in his inimitable way: 'If the proposed television service is to be anything like RE then I ask the Minister to drop the matter because RE is not alone disgusting but it provides probably the most useless broadcasting service that any broadcasting authority in the world puts on the air.'

All through the debate much play was made of the 'power of television' and the kind of uses to which it would be put--from the educational and highbrow, to song and dance of a

national character, to Senator Quinlan's view that farmers could be told when to sow early grass.

In many of the contributions there was much of that innocent hopefulness that accompanies total professional ignorance, yet is the main ethical strength of the democratic theory of law. There was a sense that the Bill was potentially a good one, provided that the Authority should be a body of cultured and courageous men, chosen with care and, also, providing that the sections dealing with the powers of the Minister to interfere were redrafted. This reflected no doubt in the mind of either House about the personal integrity of the Minister.

The Bill passed into law on 6th April 1960 and the Authority members were nominated one month later.

The nine names were: Eamonn Andrews, Chairman; Ernest Blythe, then of the Abbey Theatre and a former Minister for Finance; Fintan Kennedy, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and a member of the National Executive of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Charles J. Brennan, Chairman of Brennan Insurances Ltd., who had been the Chairman of the old Comhairle Radio Éireann; Dr. T. W. Moody, Senior Lecturer and Professor of Modem History at Trinity College Dublin, also from the old Comhairle; Aine Ni Cheannain, Gaelic teacher and writer; James Fanning, Editor of the Midland Tribune and a founder of the Birr Little Theatre Group; E. B. McManus and Commander George Crosbie, who had been members of the advisory committee.

The members of the Authority were paid £500 a year and the Chairman was paid £1,000. All nine remained in office for the maximum term of five years permitted under the Act. Four of them were then replaced when the new temporary Authority was set up in 1965 for a term of one year. Fintan Kennedy, Theo Moody and James Fanning remained members of the Authority to the time of our resignations.

* * *

Erect thy tabernacle here,
The new Jerusalem send
down,
Thyself amidst thy saints
appear,
And seat us on thy dazzling
throne.
--HYMN

A week after the new Authority took up office, it advertised for its first Director-General. The advertisement stated that essential qualifications would include experience of administration and organisation in television, preferably with knowledge of programming and production. Sound broadcasting and commercial experience would also be desirable.

* * *

In the middle of June the plans which Mr. Raymond McGrath had prepared for the design of the studio building at Montrose were abandoned in favour of Mr. Michael Scott's, an eminent Dublin architect, who was engaged by the Authority to prepare designs for the building of television studios at Montrose.

* * *

In November 1960 the Authority actually appointed its first Director-General for a period of two years. He was Mr. Edward Roth, an American. He had been a consultant in management with the National Broadcasting Corporation of America and had set up broadcasting stations in Peruand Mexico.

The Sunday Independent commented on 13th November. 'Roth is to be paid £7,500 per annum. Surely he will be the highest paid official in Government or semi-Government service in Ireland. Are we to take it that the Government puts a higher value on television than on anything else?

'Members of the Government who have to work hard and for many hours, day and night, are not paid half that amount.

'Funny world, isn't it?'

Yes, it's a scream--Juno's peacock.

Mr. Roth gave a press conference in Dublin in the middle of November and was the subject of a number of press interviews and comments around that time. He intended, he said, that as far as possible Irish personnel would be recruited; it would be the experts in the television service--the programme makers--who would determine the type of service and programmes. He would have as many Irish-originated programmes as possible--about thirty to sixty per cent Irish material in the beginning.

Roth was optimistic about the influence of commercials, although he saw that it would require strong direction to prevent the servicing of public needs being reduced in favour of sheer entertainment programmes.

He saw the Authority as responsible for the selection and production of normal programmes and the sponsors as being restricted to buying time for their advertisements. He did, however, see that the willingness of people to spend money was always conditioned by the returns they expected.

On the extent of programming in Irish he said that this would depend on the demand from viewers.

Asked about the sort of programmes he would expect to buy from abroad he said: 'Say for children, the *Bugs Bunny* cartoons. Then a mystery on the lines of Perry Mason. A comedy show like *Father Knows Best* or the *Life of Reilly*. A Western--I love Westerns--for relaxation. Say, one like *Gunsmoke*.'

Asked whether the station would have to follow the policy of the Government in order that the service should have an Irish outlook he said he didn't think so. Juno's peacock said nothing.

The listenership of Radio Éireann at the time of the take-over was 493,000 providing an income from licence fees and advertisements of some £530,000 a year. Sound radio was running at a loss. The Authority's initial capital was advanced by the Government.

Work was begun on the site at Montrose early in 1961. Temporary offices had been taken in Clarendon Street and in Chatham Street. The Authority and its chief executives made their headquarters there.

The new Authority took over a staff of just under four hundred with eleven sound studios in Henry Street, two in Cork; the Phoenix Hall and Portobello, which were used for musical transmissions mainly. They also took possession of the transmitters, sites, offices and equipment at Dublin, Corkand Athlone. Under the Act they were a corporate body legally able to hold and dispose of property; able to sue and be sued.

Irish television was in business.

* * *

In March, Mr. Niall Sheridan, Advertisement Sales Manager of Irish television told a meeting of the Irish Press Club in Dublin that if all went well, broadcasting should start before the end of the year.

The advertising rate was struck. A caption in The Irish Times read: 'Advertising on television at £93 a minute'.

By the end of March the first appointments of production staff began, appointments in the engineering and administration areas being well advanced.

At the end of April it was announced that a five-month course of training for production trainees would begin in June in the Marian College in Ballsbridge. Courses were conducted for every kind of production staff.

In the public mind the planning was over. The assembly began. In a sense it was, for many, the return of the Wild Geese. Every Irishman with a usable skill working abroad seemed to be on his way home.

The public shared something of this excitement. Newspapers ran features and photos with learned explanations of electronic mysteries. Enthusiasms were geared to prodigies. Prodigies gave free rein to enthusiasms, miracles and muddles. Some sane and experienced foreign experts assessed the situation coldly and declared it to be impossible. Others caught the atmosphere and waded in.

Gardeners became vision-mixers. A Coca-Cola bottlewasher became a sound operator. A motor car salesman became a cameraman. A ship's wireless operator became an electronic telecine engineer. Insurance salesmen became interviewers. A hotchpotch became

a team--of a kind: 'The Irish have a genius for ad hoc organisation' as Mr. De Valera once pointed out during the Emergency and as Miss Bernadette Devlin has confirmed in Derry.

The impossible is more difficult in Ireland than the improbable --but it takes a shorter time.

During the late spring and early summer of 1961 appointments of Heads of Programme Departments began.

Here there was, perhaps, more to build upon. There was a tradition of theatre from which to draw. There were people with radio production and administration experience. There was an excellent body of Public Affairs and Sports journalists.

The basis of a News Division already existed in radio and its expansion was under way.

Traditions for the organisation of these activities were already native and workable.

* * *

By July, vision equipment for Kippure was beginning to arrive at the Pye factory at Dundrum. Three weeks later test signals were received in Galway, Limerick and Tipperary.

* * *

At the beginning of August Richard Butterworth's design for the St. Brigid's Cross, which was, in developing form, to be the station symbol for the next nine years, was seen by the public for the first time, in the newspapers.[4]

By the middle of August new rates for licence fees had been announced. The combined television and sound licence was to cost £4. The single radio licence was to go up from seventeen and sixpence to £1.

While signing contracts for the building of transmitters at Mount Leinster, Mullaghanish, Maghera and Truskmore, Mr. Roth, on 19th August 1961, stated that Irish television would show a profit in two years. The staff of the new television service was reported at 140 persons.

All the senior appointments had now been made, except that of Controller of Programmes for television. This was, surely, the key position under that of the Director-General, yet it was said that it had not been possible to find a suitable Controller up to that time. It might have been regarded as advisable and necessary by any broadcasting organisation that as the making and transmitting of programmes was its main reason for existing, the man most essential for the formulation and proper orientation of the organisation was a television controller. Apparently, this was not considered of vital importance.

On 30th August the appointment of Mr. Michael Barry as Controller of Programmes (Television) was announced.

Michael Barry had an established reputation, both in theatre and television in Britain and America. He was a writer who, at the time of his appointment, was Head of Drama at BBC television. He was seconded to Irish television for a three-year period and his duties, which began at the end of September, included day-to-day responsibility for establishing a programme schedule.

A man of quiet courage and energy, he was too sensitive and modest to shine. He had considerable organisational ability and a fund of persistent enthusiasm but little stomach for intrigue, backstairs politics and infighting. His military background, perhaps, gave him an instinctive loyalty to his subordinates and a certain stubborn determination to shield them from criticism by interposing his person between them and his own superiors.

The organisation which Mr. Barry found upon arrival was a mixture of broadcasting organisation ideas from Britain and America with local adaptations. Administrative and Management sections looked after personnel, services and finance; there was an Engineering section which looked after maintenance, development and electricians, telecine (the nerve centre for recordings and transmissions), film, video-tape recording, television operations (including cameramen, lighting-men and sound-men) for studios and for outside broadcasts. There was already a News Division which was not regarded, BBC fashion, as having any direct relationship to the Programmes Division of radio or television.

Finally, the Programmes Division itself was organised on mainly BBC lines--that is, with Departments for particular sections of programme-interest, each with its own Head and group of Producers, Production Assistants, Scriptwriters, Researchers, and so on. It must have been all quite familiar to Mr. Barry and all something of a *fait accompli*.

The brave, new, Irish experiment, entering into the 'new' field of television wound up with an organisation that could be interchanged with that of any other broadcasting organisation, anywhere in the world[5].

With something less than three months to go before the first night, the prospects must have seemed daunting. There were about a dozen half-trained, untrained and fully-trained Producers; semitrained and experienced technical staffs.

In a matter of days after his arrival, the new Controller was handed two Authority decisions: (1) to provide forty-two hours of programmes a week; (2) to open the station before the end of 1961--'even on the last day'.

Michael Barry asked the Director-General to make it quite clear to the Authority that in the circumstances he could not promise more than the News and perhaps one half-hour programme of home origin by the end of the year.

He soon saw, however, that disappointment of public anticipation would bring about a situation of outrage and anger. So, he concluded: 'We would have to take our coats off and do a great deal better than that. Financially we were going to programme at an average of £214 an hour. At that time the BBC were programming in the order of £2,500 an hour: therefore, to obtain programmes, we would have to rely on simple things, ensuring that they had a quality of their own sort, and this is what we set out to do.

'What happened was that we stuck our necks out and began to record programmes in the Marian College Hall. The first programme to be recorded was with Frank O'Connor, I believe. Then we rented the studio which the Strand Electric people were preparing in Abbey Street. They hastily made this available to us, so we set-to and recorded programmes back-to-back from morning to evening, sometimes three to four programmes a day, for the first six months.'

In the first week in December 1961, four weeks before the opening of the service, the first issue of the Authority's official Journal appeared. In an interview the Controller referred to the amount of advertising and said that he expected it would be about ten per cent--or six minutes in any clock hour. The Minister was prepared to allow up to seven and a half minutes in a clock hour.

In the next issue, on 8th December, there was an interview with the Director-General. He insisted that in the early stages of Irish television we would have to rely heavily on the purchase of American filmed programmes. The reason for this was quite simple and evident. There was virtually no other source. We would buy only what was necessary (that is, 75 per cent of the programme material) and it would be of the 'best available quality'. Irish programmes were being created which, he believed, would make a lasting contribution to the growth and development of Irish culture. The Irish people must appreciate that this was a major effort and might very well take years to develop. Later he explained:

'So, our problem is, we've got to please the people by giving them what they want, and we've got to please the advertisers by giving them big audiences and we must conscientiously obey the law of actual practice.'

The peacock died.

We went on the air on the last day of December, as required.

* * *

A vast automaton, composed
of various mechanical and
intellectual organs, acting in
uninterrupted concert for the
production of a common object,
all of them being subordinated
to a self-regulating force.
--DR. ANDREW URE, 1835

During the first year of its life, the service transmitted close on eighteen hours per week of home-produced material (about four hours less than it is currently producing, and with approximately one-third the present number of Producer-Directors).

In January 1962 the number of licence-holders was 35,766. By February it had almost doubled. A year later it had reached a figure of 150,000.

In April 1962 the staff moved out to Montrose from the offices in the city.

Among the early television projects realised in Public Affairs was *Broadsheet*, with John O'Donoghue, Ronnie Walsh and P. P. O'Reilly; there was *Let's Draw* in Children's Programmes, which is still running; *Beirt Eile*, a programme of traditional music and dance; *The Late Late Show*, *Pick-of-the-Post*, sports coverage and reports both on G.A.A. and foreign games. There were fashion, cookery and magazine programmes. Besides all this, fourteen drama productions were done up to March of the following year.

The new service was obviously affecting the public. There appeared to be constant debate at every level about the quality, temperament or personality of those who appeared in front of the cameras. The tone of the debate was acrimonious in the Irish fashion, and almost all of it had to do with the home-produced programmes. The nation had its usual love-hate relationship with anything that deeply concerned it. Why not with television?

One happy and angry man rang up and said he would throw his television set out the window if Verona Mullen appeared again on the Late Late Show, were not for the fact that he didn't want to miss the show on the following week!

* * *

Up to this, the new television service and the public had effected a marriage of sorts. Life is a temporary expedient. Now the honeymoon was over. The domestic scene in TE was dominated by housekeeping and kitchen chores. The Programmes Division held a weekly meeting for discussion of programme ideas. It was chaired by the Controller and discussed and criticised programmes already screened; it debated future proposals.

The dialogue between the station and the public became, perhaps, a trifle shrill. The pressures of work within the station, the widespread inexperience, the disappointments about the 'abundance of Irish talent', all began to be sorely felt by Producers. Public relations were neither sufficiently extended, intense nor sustained. The main source of disappointment is, perhaps, best expressed by the Controller's ambition for the station--'not just to get a station on the air but to get an Irish voice on the air, making Irish programmes with Irish people about Irish things'.

We have a self-satisfied confidence in ourselves as talkers. If this ability existed, the electronic camera could pick up little of it. Enthusiastic recommendations of talented persons and characters from all over the country were, for the most part, eagerly followed up and tried. They were almost uniformly disappointing. The pool of talent in a population of under three millions was pathetically small in terms of the broadcasting philosophy of 'professionalism'[6]which our competitive relationship with the British networks forced upon us.

It was soon discovered, too, that the frontiers of debate were tightly constricted. Subjects that could be freely discussed in a pub were regarded as shocking or unsuitable on the screen. The Producers quickly learned that the nation had little stomach for satire, irony or criticism of revered institutions or personalities. It had two standards. In private anything could be said and often was. In public--on television particularly--wit flagged, ideas evaporated, humour became pawky and gauche. The new Irish, apparently, were determined to be terribly, terribly respectable. They were, to a depressing extent, terribly, terribly dull.

The mechanics of production in studio seemed to intimidate those amateur participants who are the lifeblood of professionally produced television. It proved virtually impossible to convey to most people that accepted television techniques just didn't allow adequate development of points in the sense people were used to in conversation.

The conflicting demands for programmes of different kinds made it impossible to please everybody, which was normal, and difficult to please anybody, which was irritating.

To the Producer, the Dáily grind was a mad scramble for new talent that seemed like Hamlet's father: "Tis here! 'Tis here! 'Tis gone! ' The public that could participate had no notion of the split-second timing that television requires, nor, indeed, of the need of punctuality. Understandably, the production staff became disillusioned about the entertainment value of 'talking heads'; in fact these are the finest entertainment in the world--if there is anything in them. The public became disillusioned with a technique so cold, remote and foreign to their still largely rural temperament.

An audition that resulted in a rejection often ended in a feud. Accusations of favouritism, nepotism, 'pull', prejudice and bolshevism were frequent.

Sacred cows were being continually insulted, people said, by arrogant, overpaid and overbearing upstarts out in Donnybrook.

Programme makers were not free from pressures during this period: never having enough time, never enough money, or perhaps, enough expertise--they were, on occasion, subject to external and direct influences from public institutions or personalities. These were

not taken very seriously, yet a Dublin newspaper has referred to this time as one in which 'unwholesome touting and lobbying' was widely thought to be practised. Our people can always be depended upon to expect skulduggery, except when it is actually happening. We then become terribly, terribly judicious and fair-minded.

* * *

Of course, there were members of the Authority who were regarded as being partisan Fianna Fáil members. There was a certain member of the Authority (now deceased) who was regarded as a Fianna Fáil 'hatchet man'. He, on at least one occasion, exerted pressure to have staff members who had 'overstepped' the bounds of impartiality, sacked or suspended.

The first major policy decision that Michael Barry had to try to implement in 1962 was to provide adequate budgets for better programmes with little hope of increasing the amount of total money available. Secondarily, he had to try to relieve the inhuman pressure of work upon an already exhausted staff. His plan was simple: to cut back heavily on Summer production and transmission of home-originated material.

The cost of foreign material was working out at about £20 per hour in a projected average of £214 per hour for home-made programming.

He stepped up the transmission of imported material massively for the summer of 1962. He sought sources other than the U.S.and Britain for film and began to plan and stockpile home productions for the Autumn programmes. Such a major policy decision had the concurrence of his superior and the Authority.

The public outcry was immediate. They didn't like it and said so. Criticism began to pour in day after day.

Mr. Barry was of Irish descent but of English nationality. He was genuinely concerned about the Irishness of the station, perhaps to the point of exaggeration. This counted for nothing with public institutions or personalities. He was socially isolated and as soon as the criticisms reached crescendo he became aware that Mr. Roth, also a foreigner, was being subjected to similar criticisms and pressures.

The two men gradually withdrew confidence from one another in a mutually protective attempt to disguise these public antagonisms, each from the other. Roth passed the criticisms of the Authority to Barry, without added personal comment. Barry tried to hold the buck for his staff at his own desk.

Behind all of this, there were three factors: the first, that the almost superhuman performances of the opening year's work had led the public to expect an output that couldn't be maintained because the public were fundamentally ignorant of the size of the task. They had been conditioned to measure everything against the criterion of the British networks which had more than twelve times our resources of men, money and talent. Secondly, apart from Eamonn Andrews, the Authority knew nothing of the professional consequences of the decisions they passed down for implementation. Thirdly, the Government, the Authority and the public required, without realising the fact, basically incompatible things.

None of these need have brought about a crisis, if Roth, Barry and their senior executives had had the professional solidarity to withstand them and at the same time make their difficulties intelligible to the Authority and the public. They could not do this and the station's public relations resources were inadequate to the task.

Unable to stand together, they fell separately.

Four months after the opening night of the television service Mr. Ernie Byrne, the Executive Producer, resigned because of 'differences over policy between myself and the television chiefs'. This was not surprising; they had not agreed among themselves.

Relations between the Authority and their senior executives were already strained. Mr. Barry offered his resignation in September and commented: 'When the Authority were criticising individual programmes and individuals in programmes, I made the point that on such occasions I should be present at their meetings because I was not prepared to receive notes from other persons about criticism of individuals, which I would then have to discuss with them. Yet I myself was unable to face these criticisms at source.*

Mr. Roth retired at the end of 1962.

Upon leaving RTE Mr. Roth, in interviews with the Press, remarked on the impossibility of the station's ever being able to improve the quality of programmes under the terms of the Act:

'We are keenly aware of ... [the shortcomings and weak spots of the service.] ... One of the ironies of that situation was that no member of the Authority was claiming, nor was any member of the station, that we had a first-class service at that stage; much of the criticisms seemed to suggest that we believedwe had' (our italics).

On future prospects:

'The dilemma of Irish television is that it combines two objectives; one, to establish and maintain a service which will further national culture and aims and have regard to the prestige of the nation, and, secondly, that the service must be a paying commercial enterprise.[7]'7

* * *

Studio 1 had become operational in May 1962 and Studio 2 in September of the same year. Productions, therefore, at the studios in Abbey Street had ended in the last days of May.

An office had been acquired in London. This was to house the London Sales staff for advertising promotion and was acquired in October 1962 at Oxford Circus.

Home produced programmes, from April to June 1962, occupied nineteen hours a week--fifteen hours a week in the three summer months, and eighteen hours a week from October to March[8]. This output, including News and News Feature programmes, made up about 45 per cent of the total transmission output. The balance, of course, was imported or foreign material.

The demand for home produced programmes was, as we have said, insatiable.

The Authority's first Annual Report declared: 'The Authority would wish to have been in a position to meet this demand more fully but could not do so because of the expansion in staff, equipment and facilities that this would have entailed'.

From April 1962 to March 1963 the total transmission output had been 2,200 hours; of this 990 hours were home produced.

On a selected day in 1963 Ireland was found to be broadcasting a greater number of hours than any of the following: Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Holland and Austria. This was being done for a licence fee substantially less than those countries. Income from advertising on television was £700,000 and over £122,000 for radio in the first full year of operation. This £822,000 was the direct product of staff sweat and anxiety. Due to Mr. Barry's unpopular skill it was possible to raise the average budget per programme hour to about £400. This figure may be misleading if one is not clear that it included the cost of imported programmes running, as we saw, between £18 and £20 per hour--cheaper even than Hong Kong television!

* * *

The post of Director-General to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Roth was not advertised but the search began in autumn 1962. That for the new Programme Controller was advertised in November. Mr. Kevin McCourt was appointed Director-General the following month.

The new Director-General arrived on 1st January 1963--one year after the opening of the television service.

A Kerryman, his career had been in the business field--as successor to Erskine Childers as Secretary to the Federation of Irish Manufacturers; later as a founder member of the Industrial Development Authority and as a Director of Carrolls, the cigarette manufacturers. Immediately before his appointment to Telefís Éireann he had been vice-president in charge of international operations in a firm based in The Hague. He had had no previous experience in radio or television.

Again, there were public questions about his salary, about his expenses and the provision of a house for him by the Authority. It was stated in the Dáil by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs that Mr. McCourt's salary was to be £5,500 per annum with an official motor car and a contribution to insurance for superannuation. Free housing, it transpired, was not being provided for the Director-General. He was to have a house at an economical rent, and the rent was fixed at £500 per annum.

There was little understanding that the kind of experienced executive needed for a growing enterprise of this character simply could not be engaged at the Irish 'rate for the job'. In fact, we can say authoritatively that Mr. McCourt accepted the appointment at a scale of remuneration that involved a considerable personal loss.

There were, we believe, more than 300 applications received for the post of Programme Controller to replace Michael Barry. Gunnar Rugheimer was appointed to the job in March 1963 and took up office shortly afterwards.

* * *

'... impartiality is fundamental to the concept of a national service; a complementary duty, which must equally be recognized, is to bring issues of controversy and debate before the public'.

The Authority tried to clarify:

'... it is of the greatest importance that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that conflicting interests and viewpoints shall be fairly represented[9]'.

* * *

Ominously this was the broadcasting situation into which Kevin McCourt and Gunnar Rugheimer stepped early in 1963. These two men were to work in tandem for the next three and a half years--a period of pressure, advance and continuing contradictions.

Man is a political animal.
--ARISTOTLE

Gunnar Rugheimer had come from television broadcasting in Canada where he had worked since 1947 as a Producer and later as Programme Director of the CBC English language television network. Subsequently he moved to the Music Corporation of America's

London office. He had visited Ireland in connection with sales of television programmes, which our station was negotiating with MCA.

The two men made an interesting contrast of temperament and style. Kevin McCourt was fastidious and dapper, gifted in organisational ability, a Daniel in money matters, and, according to those who knew him well, a man of charm, humour and imagination--and something of a dreamer. If he had an Achilles heel, it was a certain sensitivity which may have laid him open, in his role as a representative of broadcasting, to the thin winds of Dublin society's backbiting gossip.

He was an experienced and shrewd business administrator. When he was able to maintain the necessary stolid detachment, he was a good judge of people and their capabilities. Like many men whose experience was derived from the competitive field of commerce, the subtle bonds of *esprit de corps* and corporate loyalty to dependent subordinates, whom he did not personally know, were not instinctive to him. This is not to say that Mr. McCourt was by nature a disloyal superior but, rather, that a conflict of loyalties was resolved for him within a framework of priorities. These were determined for him by consideration of the greatest good of the greatest number and not by any instinct to protect those for whose dissident judgments he was responsible. This was to have unfortunate consequences for him in the years which followed.

Gunnar Rugheimer, his Controller of Programmes, was of a different piece altogether. A large man--physically and mentally --he was a political animal; forthright, vigorous and inventive. His deepest interest was in Current Affairs, News and topical events, which he regarded as the nerve centre of a broadcasting service. He was a strong man who enjoyed and

was used to all the demands on stamina and nervous energy which the Dáily slog of television make. He required the same commitment from others and could be merciless when he regarded their performance as falling below standard. If he had an Achilles heel, this was it. His decisiveness, in a society that abhors it, built up for him a reputation for ruthlessness. As a foreigner, he knew his time was limited. Dealing largely with an untried production staff, he saw his task as one of testing each of his subordinates to find their breaking-point. He encouraged strength where he found it. He rammed vagueness and indecision against the wall. He made many enemies but he also made good friends. His personality pervaded not only the station but its whole output.

The first years of the McCourt-Rugheimer partnership produced many changes, both in organisational terms and in the tone and volume of programmes.

* * *

The Kennedy visit had been announced just about the time of the new Controller's arrival. This left very little time for preparation. The coverage, if it was to do justice to what the nation expected, would be a major event. In these circumstances, Michael Barry agreed to remain temporarily as Controller of the normal run of programmes, while Gunnar Rugheimer ran the Kennedy operation.

The station had only one Outside Broadcast Unit and with this, and some additions, it could field six television cameras. Estimates of what could be done by these available resources were either conservative to the point of futility or imaginative to the point of

impracticability. Rugheimer decided that more equipment was necessary. He just went and got it, with the co-operation of the BBC.

The visit was finally covered by thirty cameras, at least three times as many sound inputs and a large research, script and commentating team--as well as a number of film camera-units working both for the News Division and for the Programmes Division.

This was probably the first large foreign sales/exchange effort on the part of Irish television. Stations in America, Britain and the Continent wanted coverage of the visit and shipments of video-tape and film went twice and three times Dáily from Dublin and Shannon.

Plans were co-ordinated by Rugheimer himself, Jack White, Head of Public Affairs, Padraig Ó Raghallaigh, Head of Presentation, Pearse Kelly, Head of News, and, on the engineering side, Phil Parker and Tom Hardiman who was in charge of the Outside Broadcast operations. The enterprise must have given the new Controller a sharp insight into the workings of his organisation and into the mettle of his production staffs.

Co-operation between the Programmes and the News Divisions was perhaps closer during Rugheimer's time than before or after.

* * *

The Head of News, Pearse Kelly, had been a professional newspaper man in Dublin as Editor of the Evening Herald.He was now responsible for the work of a large number of journalists on both the radio and television news services. The Newsroom is always a

sensitive pressure point in a broadcasting service and it was Mr. Kelly's business to face the consequences when Ministers and politicians of all parties rang up to protest, which they frequently did. This may have made him, understandably, nervous of his own staff. A lack of candid communication between them and their chief may have led to a recalcitrance on their part. The suggestion was made at the time to bring the News Division under the responsibility of the Programme Controller. This did not materialise.

The News Division had its internal professional and Trade Union difficulties which resulted in a strike in March which lasted for six weeks. This industrial action was not supported throughout the house; this led to further strains. Mr. Jack White resigned his membership of the National Union of Journalists--a socially representative act in a sense that couldn't have been foreseen. It was, we suggest, the first tiny fissure which later widened into a distinction between management and workers more proper to private than to public enterprise. It also had the unfortunate result of leaving him unprotected in an area where the equivocal position of Public Affairs programmes, of which he was Head, was determined by the ambiguities of the Act and the ambivalent constitution of the Authority.

Mr. Kelly's position was equally, if not more, difficult.

The avoidance of personal unpleasantness, failure on all sides to meet problems face-on, and a damping down of the situation by pragmatic solutions of particular problems undoubtedly had much to do with the sense of unease and bad morale which existed in the News Division and continues to this day.

The professional traditions of the News staff derived from the procedures of newspaper offices in Dublin and the Provinces. They were not always readily adaptable, we understand, to the conditions of television newsrooms. The background and intellectual training and formation was literary rather than visual and the structures of control and responsibility often had different requirements in the two media. They carried into television one asset of enormous advantage which the Irish public do not always sufficiently appreciate: a high professional integrity. There had never been a 'gutter' press in Ireland and the whole bias towards sensationalism, so characteristic of certain levels of reporting in Britain and the US was totally foreign to the radio and television News staff.

McCourt and Rugheimer now had to face the strategy of steering an Autumn programme schedule through the Board. They had to overcome difficulties of re-organisation which this output was going to need. McCourt's attitude at that time was: 'Look, I know about money and organisation. I'll look after that. You know about programming; you tell me what's needed and we'll get it between us.' There was now a triumvirate: Eamonn Andrews, McCourt and Rugheimer. They had a common attitude to broadcasting.

The financial situation looked healthy enough. Income from television advertising was almost twice as much as income from television licences, a relationship which has remained more or less until the present. There was an increase in the licence fees, from £4 to £5 for a combined television and sound licence and from 20/- to 25/- for a sound licence only, in Autumn 1963. This created an income expectancy for the coming year that was quite comfortable, bearing in mind the continuing rise in advertisers' interest.

By September 1963 some changes had already been made in the structures of organisation. There were now seven divisions. Administration, including Services and Finance, headed by John Irvine; Personnel, headed by Hugh Duffy; Phil Parker had been made Director of Engineering with John O'Keeffe as his deputy and George Waters as his assistant; Sales and Promotion, managed by John Talbot; News Division (radio and television) was headed by Pearse Kelly; Radio Programmes, with Roibeard Ó Faracháin as Controller; and Television Programmes controlled by Gunnar Rugheimer.

In the Television Programmes Division, Jack White was promoted to Assistant Programme Controller. He still retained responsibility for Current Affairs. Pádraig Ó Raghallaigh had moved up from Presentation to be the second Assistant Controller. A programming group consisting of Rugheimer, White, Kelly and 6 Raghallaigh came into being and produced its first plan for an Autumn programme schedule to carry the station through 1963-64.

When we speak of 'the necessity
for the protection of the Irish
nation' we mean it not as a
protest against imitating what
is best in the English people,
for that would be absurd, but
rather to show the folly of
neglecting what is Irish.
--DOUGLAS HYDE

The idea was to create a programme service which was to give a closer, more accurate and up-to-date reflection of Irish life. Rugheimer saw TE as a national electronic newspaper, in which the topics of the day would be given prime treatment. Features, sports interests, entertainment interests, business interests would be satisfied as well. Its bias was frankly informative, even educational, in as entertaining a fashion as possible. It was hoped that this would bring about a closer identification of the station with a diversity of audiences and their needs and, at the same time, reduce the dependence of the service on imported film. The vast bulk of this imported material was still coming from America, due to copyright and language difficulties. There was considerable unease, among programme-makers and Authority alike, about its indifferent quality and its outlook on life.

The new policy was, by reducing the amount of foreign entertainment films, to increase the possibilities for making a more critical selection of the films which unavoidably would still have to be bought. At the same time it was intended to make greater use of Eurovision for programmes with a non-American bias. The strange fact was (and remains) that the Government, the Authority and the Irish public were unconvinced that these imports were necessary at all. But they would not agree to cutting down transmission hours.

There was simply no public realisation of what a gluttonous medium television is. It devours talent, energy, money and ideas nightly for 365 nights a year--perennially. No production system anywhere in the world can meet television's mindless and voracious needs. The sad thing is that the 'needs' are created by this view of the medium.

The intention of the new schedule was to diminish this appetite by providing special-interest programme nights.

Its main features were to be liveliness and informality. It would run five nights a week, Monday to Friday inclusive, from 6 p.m.to 11 p.m.Children's programmes which were transmitted before six o'clock did not fall under the scheme; nor did Sports programmes, nor News. These would, however, co-operate closely at the planning stage in order to obtain the fullest integration.

Newscasts were to be more frequent and shorter and would be transmitted at rigidly set times. The remainder of the evening would be filled as fluidly as possible; not fixed to half-hour or one-hour'slots'.

Sunday was dedicated to the
mystery of the Holy Trinity,
Monday to the Holy Ghost,
Tuesday to the Guardian Angels,
Wednesday to Saint Joseph,
Thursday to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar,
Friday to the Suffering Jesus,
Saturday to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
--JAMES JOYCE

Each night would have its own special character, with a host to give it a personality and develop its theme:

Monday would have a rural flavour. Programmes of information and technical instruction to farmers; provincial news-reels; reviews of the provincial press; programmes featuring the activities of rural organisations and the social aspect of country life would get special treatment.

Tuesdays would have a leaning towards the sciences, the arts (including drama and nature study); serious music and, maybe, good jazz.

Wednesday would impress an accent on young people's interests and needs. Programming would be fairly light-hearted, with pop music and dancing, though not ignoring the interests of serious young people. It would include student debates, advice On careers and so on.

Thursday the general theme was to be current affairs, politics, comment, foreign affairs, features, documentaries, political interviews and discussions.

Friday, family night, covering the special interests of women; housekeeping affairs, Monica Sheridan's cookery, consumer information, fashion spots--a family series or serial.

Saturday and *Sunday*: On these nights the magazine format would be dropped and there would be a leaning to entertainment programmes, such as feature films, to start early. This was to be made possible by moving the News back to eight o'clock. There was also an idea to run a dance in Studio 1, with a top band and dancers from clubs around the country in order to get, as one memorandum of the time noted, 'the ordinary people involved with us and our "Crystal Palace", seeing it as theirs too'.

It was hoped to get as much 'live' Sport as possible on Saturday afternoons and again on Sundays. On Sunday night News would be earlier, again at eight o'clock, in order to allow the night's programming to be built around two main entertainment features, possibly a quiz and a ballad-singing contest.

Rigid programme departments, already in existence, were to be 'softened up', except for Drama, Children's and Sports Departments. Producer-Directors would emerge in new groups with project-teams of Production Assistants. Interviewers, Scriptwriters, Researchers. Three such groups, each with an Editor in charge and an Executive working Producer, were planned.

Team One was to be responsible for *Monday* and *Friday* nights. It had P. P. O'Reilly as Editor, Edith Cusack as Assistant Editor and Michael Johnston as Executive Producer.

Team Two was to be responsible for *Tuesday* and *Thursday* nights. It had Pat Kearney as Editor and Denis O'Grady as Executive Producer.

Team Three was to have responsibility for *Wednesday*, *Saturday*, and *Sunday* nights. For this team James Plunkett Kelly was Editor and Burt Budin was Executive Producer.

The Drama Group was headed by Jim FitzGerald and was a permanent group, with Bill McCrow as a permanent designer.

Maev Conway was Head of Children's programmes. It remained an entity also.

An Outside Broadcast group was formed.

The ramifications of the new programming ideas were viewed in many quarters with apprehension and alarm. More office accommodation would obviously be needed. Great demands would be made on the administrative section, on the typing pool, on the section responsible for contracting artists, on car parks.

Rugheimer had discovered, shortly after taking up his duties, that the studio capacities and machine-loading were underemployed. His new plan was determined to use them to their limits.

This profoundly affected the engineering personnel who rose to the occasion manfully and gained an increase in their staff establishment to cope with the new load.

The scheme came to be known as 'vertical' planning and went into operation in the Autumn. It had, of course, undergone a number of changes and refinements in the course of implementation.

Victory lies with him who can get there firstest with the mostest.
--GENERAL FORRESTER

The first and obvious thing to be said about this plan is that it was a good idea.

The second thing to be said is that the Irish tendency to mock at anything with which it is not familiar, may have led, both inside and outside the station, to a slow but inexorable return to the *status quo ante*.

Third, the plan perhaps required too many factors to mesh at the same time. It was one thing to gather together a bunch of people to storm the Bastille. It was another to ask them to storm it 365 nights of a year and then begin all over again. A team of crack professionals might have done it, if they had been able to form themselves into ad hoc groups and be masters of their own resources. The difficulty with any large organisation (and Telefís Éireann was getting larger every day) is that it tends to preserve its life as *an organisation* at the expense of the very work which it is organised to do.

Eventually the needs for orderliness in the scheduling of engineering and technical crews, in the arranging of the work of administrators and secretaries, in the placing of time bought by advertisers, all tended to smother the very thing for which the plan itself had been set up.

It is possible, too, that the youth and inexperience of our personnel, 'long' on enthusiasm and dedication, 'short' on training and expertise, may have foundered on a plan of such imaginative scope and vision.

Our tendency to revert to the tried and familiar was irresistible.

Rugheimer's energy and clarity were not enough; he needed an enormous 'back-up' of enthusiastic and skilled staff who shared his view. They were not ready and they never did share it, wholly.

All this was not to say that the plan was not a success. It was by no means a failure. It might well have grown into an organic thing had it been given a chance to start in a smaller way, and at a slower pace. For all that, it kept the public interested to the point where another 70,000 households wanted to see what was going on, and bought television licences and sets in order to find out.

* * *

Overall planning was run by the Programmes Planning Board, which now included the Head of Sport, Michael O'Hehir. Its composition was intended to ensure that attention would be given to all facets of the country's life and interests. It was to guide the overall planning of the service and to ensure balance on matters of opinion and sparkle in matters of interest; to stimulate the Producers and to review their suggestions and ideas. More important, besides looking after broad planning, the board was to keep the actual Dáily output under constant review.

Gunnar Rugheimer and Jack White involved themselves closely with Producers in an attempt to stimulate and develop them in the exercise of their own maturing programme judgments. This was seen by some as dictatorship, by others as participation. The Controller had, himself, a Producer's mind. Many of the programme ideas during the next months and years came from his office. Those Producers who were not intimidated by him were given

responsibility. They were allowed to exercise it. Those who were intimidated by his energy and very un-Irish frankness of expression retired into an uneasy and, at times, defiant isolation. The general body of Producers carried on reasonably with their work, in the belief that 'the show must go on'.

* * *

There were other new appointments and changes in the team system as it got under way. The teams became known as groups. Group A looked after weekend programming, including religion and entertainment, and was headed by Tom McGrath as Executive Producer. Group B, into which most of the Public Affairs and documentary programmes fitted, was headed by Michael Johnston.

Group C, with Denis O'Grady as Executive Producer, looked after family programmes, such as Home for Tea; young peoples' programmes; and eventually some religious programmes. The system of supervising Editors melted after the first months into thin air. P. P. O'Reilly moved on secondment to the 'Buy Irish' Campaign. Edith Cusack left to get married. Pat Kearney returned to production on agricultural programmes. James Plunkett Kelly became Executive Producer in charge of Special Projects.

* * *

The expanding activities of the station required new personnel with special knowledge, experience and skills.

The appointment of Father Romuald Dodd was the first to be announced in November 1963.

Another important appointment on the religious programmes staff came in the middle of January 1964 when the Rev. Fergus Day became religious adviser for Protestant programmes.

In January 1964 a new Head of Drama was appointed. Chloe Gibson had been a distinguished Producer with the station in the early days, left, and had returned from London as a Drama Producer. She now replaced Jim FitzGerald who had resigned as Department Head some weeks previously.

Liam Ó Murchú, a higher executive officer in the Department of Health, and a prize-winning playwright in Irish, was appointed as Editor of Irish programmes early in 1964. He wrote the first Irish teaching programme for television--*Labhair Gaeilge Linn*-- and co-operated with its first Producer, Michael Garvey, in its screen realisation. Later in the year 6 Murchú is quoted in The Irish Times as saying that the programme was 'designed to unfreeze the knowledge of Irish learnt in schools--we'll be using some very attractive actresses'. They did use some very attractive performers; it did 'unfreeze' some Irish learnt in schools.

The first agricultural adviser, Patrick Jennings, was appointed in March of 1964.

***

There are two kinds of attention, spontaneous and voluntary .

In spontaneous attention the object and the immediate

motive of attention coincide, while in voluntary attention
the object and the motive are distinct. We fix our
attention on a difficult book, not because the book itself
interests us, but because it will help us to acquire
knowledge which we desire for another motive.
--J. F. DONCEEL

'The land of saints and scholars' has had a curious attitude to scholarship--and religion.

We have, as a people, a profound devotion to both--profound, indeed, to the point of passionate and partisan commitment.

It may seem like a cheap paradox to say that our attachment is one of loyalty rather than a labouring pursuit of the virtue of either.

There is nothing that we need more than education--sacred and profane. There is nothing we resist more violently than straightforward instruction in either.

On the other hand there were and are changes of attitude clearly detectable to the broadcaster. Particularly among the lower income groups there was what W. B. Yeats called a 'self-improving' streak. This, of course, varied from disinterested curiosity to a straight-on-the-line determination to get on. The business of broadcasters is to be aware of and use these attitudes helpfully.

Television certainly and radio probably can be used in either of two specifically different ways:

i. As 'closed circuit' information media;
ii. As an emergent art-form seeking its specific idiom.

We think that each is necessary in itself and each is essential to a national broadcasting service.[10]

The closed circuit use of television is its employment as an information medium in the same way as it might be used in a store or a hospital. It simply conveys information to limitless numbers of people. It has the same value as a telescope with the addition of sound. It brings the object closer than the unaided human eye can do. It is not the characteristic use of television but it is important because it can be used on a national scale. Gunnar Rugheimer with Kevin McCourt's backing determined to use it in this role in two sectors: schools education and agriculture.

In January 1964 Telefís Éireann announced its first plans for direct educational broadcasting on 'closed circuit' television used on this national scale. At a press conference to announce the proposed *Telefís Scoile* series, Mr. McCourt expressed the view that educational programmes should be made in Ireland for Irish teachers and Irish students and said that the success of the project depended on the teachers.

Investigations had been made among other broadcasting services and it was discovered that two possible attitudes had emerged. One was to provide an audio-visual *aid*

to conventional school teaching. The other view was straightforwardly a teaching role. Both of these possibilities were what we have described as 'closed circuit' uses of the medium. In most countries television was regarded as an ancillary aid to education except in Italy where illiteracy is a special problem.

Plans were drawn up and approved by the Authority which merely stated as a first principle that Telefís Éireann would not get into the field of supportive enrichment but would try to do a job of direct teaching. The Minister for Education, Dr. Patrick Hillery, welcomed the plan, which at that stage was to transmit two forty-five minute programmes weekly, from January 1964. The yearly cost was to be £17,000 to the station.

The areas proposed were Physics and Chemistry, in parallel with the Intermediate Syllabus 'A' Schools Course.

There were two important reasons for going into these areas of education: television techniques could be used to prime advantage and there were shortages and weaknesses of teaching strength in just these subjects in the schools.

The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs decided that the Authority could only undertake schools broadcasting if it was financed from sources outside the Authority's own revenue, in other words, by the Department of Education. This held up the announcement of the plans and gravely embarrassed McCourt and the Authority who felt that Dr. Hillery might well see them as playing a double game: exciting his interest to the point of public commitment and then sending him the bill! McCourt believed the Department of Posts and Telegraphs to be wrong, not merely from the broadcasting point of view, but also because at

that time the revenue situation in TE was good. It was felt that this cultural venture would take some of the taint off the commercial character of the station's activities.

However, the round was lost to the Civil Servants; the Department of Education footed the bill, and has been paying it ever since. This was to prove a mixed blessing. Many broadcasters regarded it as detrimental to the service. The Department of Education's calling the tune was now inevitable. So it turned out to be.

The vexed question of commercial advertising was evidently in the mind of the Authority at this time. Its compliance in plans to open up the schedule to more home-originated material gives some evidence that it was aware of its predicament. Perhaps, too, it had been affected by a tart reminder from Professor Moody in which, it was alleged, he had complained to his fellow-members that the mixture of the programme schedule had been conveyed to them by means of a promotional letter from the Sales Division to advertisers. These gentlemen's ears were very red.

This was reinforced by the fact that, it was reported, the Government was casting long looks at our output of 'cowboys and soapsuds'. This was felt to be due largely to the advertisers' requirements, who, because 'spots' were so expensive, wanted to make sure that their advertisements would go out before, during or after a 'pop' programme.

Why, asked The Irish Times, not have a radio station financed by revenue from the State? The Government, it went on, should not have direct control over RE.

Another report of the same time, November 1963, stated that the general impression in broadcasting circles, meaning, presumably, the Authority, was that opposition to more direct control from Government should be strong; however, it should not be explicit 'but diplomatic'.

In the Dáil on 23rd November 1963 the Minister, Mr. Michael Hilliard, referred to Government concern that programmes were not representing Irish culture fully. His listeners were reminded of the aims of the service--on the one hand to further national cultural aims, and on the other to remain a self-supporting commercial enterprise.

He had expressed similar views, on his own part, to people who, he knew, shared his concern for the quality of the service and the need that it be distinguishable from any other station. He, like Mr. Childers, was always listened to with respect by friends and opponents when he spoke about his feelings for the Irishness of broadcasting affairs. It was difficult to agree with either in his expressed view; it was impossible not to acknowledge the real depth of their concern.

Mr. Hilliard went on to say that it was with considerable misgivings that the Government had granted the Authority its present 'independence'. The Government might have to 'reconsider' its implications.

* * *

How do Jacobs get the figs

into a fig roll?

Who cares, Habibi, they're

gorgeous.

--OVERHEARD

The Jacobs' Awards for outstanding television achievements had been instituted. These awards were given by a firm of Dublin biscuit manufacturers. The first was held in December of 1963. Ria Mooney, the celebrated Abbey actress and producer, refused to accept such an award as best actress. Jimmy O'Dea turned down his award on the plea that he had won too many! James Plunkett Kelly refused a nomination for an award on the grounds that as a writer he had never entered into any competition and the selection of nominees in different categories could place the artists in an invidious position.

Angers that are like noisy

clouds have set our hearts

abeat.

--W. B. YEATS

By the beginning of 1964 a new booster station had been opened in Cork, in order to improve reception in the Munster area. By the end of the year twelve other satellite transmitters had been brought into operation with the same end in view.

The contradictory aims of the service were now being raised insistently in public. Irish Actors' Equity complained of the underemployment of Irish actors, the range of Irish-made material, the meanness in setting fees by the two services.

A Dublinman, Proinsias Ó Mianáin, on 24th March 1964 was reported in the Dublin newspapers as having been jailed for refusing to pay his television licence, in protest against the Authority's attitude towards Irish language and culture on Telefís Éireann.

250 students marched from the Mansion House to protest about the poor standards of programmes and handed in a letter to the Director-General. Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann called for more native music on RE.

Paddy Belton of Fine Gael asked that there should be a ban on British-produced commercials.

Bishop Michael Browne of Galway criticised Telefís Éireann for its attitudes towards Catholic missionary activities in African countries.

Mr. Dónall Ó Móráin, then Chairman of Gael-Linn, complained about nearly everything.

The Authority 'piped not one note'.

Gunnar Rugheimer denied giving in to political pressures. He was asked to comment on a remark in Dáil Éireann by Labour Deputy Jack McQuillan, referring to Mr. Eddie McManus: 'if Eddie says no, it's curtains for the show'. Rugheimer replied: 'We are completely independent'. We were. He was supported by Jack White and Pearse Kelly in this statement.

Kevin McCourt, at student debates and speaking to various institutions, defended 'canned' programmes and said that BBC also used them--*The Flintstones* and *Paladin* were, he said, as well known around the world as they were in Ireland.

The public was appreciative. It was critical. It was vociferous. The station was not apologetic or ashamed. It gave back as good as it got.

* * *

It cost the average viewer 3/4d per hour to watch television or listen to radio. In July 1964 a television surplus of income over expenditure was announced. Telefís Éireann was in credit to the tune of £258,000 and radio was afloat with £14,000 to spare.

In a leader in *The Irish Times*, a few days later, it was remarked: 'while progress has been made, the inanity of some of the interviewing on TE is beyond belief ... TE has failed, we think, to get down properly to the recruitment and training of its own staff'

* * *

There were new programmes that Autumn of 1964 which now seem part of the national landscape: *Newsbeat*, a news-magazine programme running five nights a week; a serial about a farming family--*The Riordans*; the Irish language refresher course mentioned earlier--*Labhair Gaeilge Linn*; *On the Land*, for the farming community. Ireland for the first time entered the Eurovision Song Contest in which Dickie Rock was to sing us into fourth

place at Luxembourg the following year. There were some special projects; one, an hour-long programme on Éamon De Valera--and a visual autobiography of Jimmy O'Dea.

In *Teen Talk*, young people talked about themselves and current topics; *The Professors* sat around in leather chairs and pronounced on weighty matters. Serious music (always difficult on television) was offered a grain of incense once a month on a programme called *Music in View*. In variety there was to be *Music Hall* with Joe Linnane; the *Showband Show*; *Cover Story*, a quiz; *Melody Fair*, with the R.E.L.O., and *Jamboree*, an Irish style Country and Western programme. '

There was to be a television workshop for new actors and writers on the Drama side and a new series, under Public Affairs, entitled *Open House*, an outside broadcast programme for local communities with a politicians' panel to answer questions. Weekly Current Affairs were handled in depth in *'64*. *The Changing Face of Ireland*, an occasional series, was intended to look at the economics of the country in its social context; and a series--*As Others See Us*, would provide films about Ireland made by foreign companies, with a panel of Irish people to comment.

The *Late Late Show* was coming back, with Frank Hall in the chair. Gay Byrne, its first Chairman, was working in London, first with Granada, then with the BBC. He was to bring his loved-and-hated touch back to the show the following Spring.

* * *

I withstood him to his face.

--*ST. PAUL*

The station now got itself into hot water with the Government over a Public Affairs programme in the *'64* series on the turnover tax. Mr. Lemass insisted that the programme had shown an anti-Government bias and that a 'make-good' programme be devised.

Kevin McCourt went to see Mr. Lemass and stood his ground. The Taoiseach was told that if he insisted on this McCourt would call the Authority into emergency session immediately.

The matter was dropped and no 'make-good' programme was in fact transmitted.

* * *

These are glorious times for
the engineers.
--*JAMES NASMYTH C1850*

During 1964, Mr. McCourt and his executives had been taking a close look at the organisation of the service. Staff figures now ran at over a thousand and this inevitably posed problems, many of which had not been satisfactorily solved.

During 1965 the Director-General decided to call in the services of Dr. Bill Murray, a research consultant, to investigate the existing structures and their relationships and make proposals for change and improvement where it might prove necessary.

A long investigation in great detail ensued.

The main outcome of his proposals was to move all of those services and facilities which were most immediately related to programme-making out of the Engineering Division into the Programme Division.

This was done under a Steering Committee comprising Vincent Finn, the Financial Controller, and Tom Hardiman, Head of Studio and Outside Broadcasting Operations, working with a firm of independent consultants.

This new Engineering group was called 'Production Facilities'. Hardiman was in charge of it. He had the title of Assistant Controller--Production Facilities, reporting to the Controller of Programmes (Television).

The Production Facilities Group was to have five departments for actual programme servicing and a sixth, Planning and Control, which would be, as its title suggests, a centre for assessing the implications of programme decisions in money, production resources, manpower and scheduling. The Group would also maintain administrative cost control procedures for the whole Programmes Division.

All the services, artistic and technical, that were needed to make a programme were incorporated into this Group: design, lighting, cameras, floor-managers, vision-mixers, contracts and casting, film production, studios and outside broadcasting unit, etc.

The investigation, proposals and planning for these changes took almost two years to implement fully. They continued, in the interim, to exercise an influence on the conduct of events.

The new system worked well, partly because it was logical, partly because the Controller of Programmes was a strong man, partly because his new assistant was gifted in organisation, had long contact with programme-makers in both services and knew the plan inside out; partly because the News Division's demands on resources were at that time confined to four film cameramen and some part-time freelance 'stringers' around the country. There was, in those days, a predictable duration for Newscasts, either in the small Studio 3 or in the Newsroom itself. This was also being used as a News studio. These film cameramen continued to operate under the direction of the News Division. One cameraman who had been working for the Sports Department remained in that capacity.

The only part of the operation which was untouched by any new system was the 'creative' side of production. Here, to be sure, changes had already taken place and the groups, in principle, remained.

With the passage of time, and the comings and goings of Producers and their swapping over from group to group, the 'vertical' system began to revert, over the next couple of years, to a semi-departmental system. The group edges became blurred. The specific identity that each night's programming was intended to have, ceased to be clear. In any event, the consultant's work stopped short of a re-organisation of the Producers. The Irish passion for formlessness was well under way. The artists' splendid disregard for fixed organisational

structures permitted the administrators' need for departmentalism to grow where the Executive Producer was an administrator, and to collapse where he was an artist.

To the Producers it didn't seem to matter; the programmes were made. The girl Production Assistants kept order and calm. The Programme Controller kept up the impetus of the attack on the real target, production.

There were, during 1965, a number of wage claims and strike threats (as well as an actual, if brief, strike, again by the Newsroom's journalists). There were demands by Producers, Production Assistants and film editors. In one case conciliation machinery was put into effect. But this was all done without rancour in the Programmes Division. It was even found difficult to get sufficient numbers to a meeting in order to back the vigorous wage claims that were being made by Jim Plunkett Kelly and the usual small number of public-spirited enthusiasts.

A report by Eric Spain, manager of Engineering Planning and Equipment, on foot of a visit to three Scandinavian television stations, made a number of invidious comparisons between the scale, size and kind, of their operation and our own.

Spain's report suggested:

a) the use of joint industrial committees for management and staff;
b) the use of close working committees for building development;
c) the wide use of large specialist technical departments, based on the idea that RE is the basis for any future national electronic industries;

d) regular meetings with formal minutes and questions;

e) proper rest facilities;

f) the provision of an engineering information officer to keep the public informed about new transmitters, reception difficulties and so on;

g) the provision of safety engineers and committees--to ensure the protection of staff and members of the public who came into the studios.

Some of these recommendations were implemented, many were ignored.

* * *

What were known as 'brain-storming' sessions were held by the Controller in the Montrose Hotel with key members of the programme staff. Secrecy is traditionally difficult among communicators. These were, in the cliche phrase, 'both frank and open discussions'.

RE's agricultural adviser, Paddy Jennings, had been on secondment from Local Government by way of protracted leave of absence. He was to help to lay the foundations of RE's agricultural policy. His relaxed studio manner and ability to deal with rural people and his great personal charm made him popular both inside and outside the station. His return to his duties in his original professional role was a matter of real regret. He continued to be associated as agricultural adviser to *The Riordans* for the remainder of the season.

By the middle of March 1965, Justin Keating had been appointed editor of agricultural programmes. He was a gifted and original research scientist in the agricultural field and he already had an established reputation in TCD. He had a deep social commitment

and was to prove a brilliant acquisition as a creative television programmer. Four days later, Joe Murray was appointed as his assistant.

Plans which had been under discussion between Telefís Éireann, the Department of Agriculture and various farming groups around the country were reversed by a new plan which Keating put forward and which, after some resistance, was agreed. This was *Telefís Feirme*. It was to become one of RE's most brilliant social programme experiments. It had an almost immediate and deep effect on Irish farming attitudes and practice.

Meanwhile there was the General Election of April 1965 to be handled. Politicians, extraordinarily touchy at the best of times, tend to become even more sensitive around election time. However, all the arrangements were finally hammered out for the party political broadcasts: who should get how many programmes, in what proportion, on what nights.

Predictions of television dullness and disaster were common on political broadcasting. The critics had an even more depressed anticipation of this event. Ken Gray wrote:

My own guess is that we will have a series of party political broadcasts as dull and unexciting as anything we have seen to date, with potential T.D.s stolidly using the electronic camera and teleprompter in much the same way as they have used the back of a lorry and the crumpled, rain-sodden bundle of notes in elections of bygone, pre-television days

As Fianna Fáil's seven, Fine Gael's five and Labour's two campaign broadcasts on television wore inexorably on, the predictions were fulfilled. The only politician discovered as having any flair for the medium was Mr. Charles J. Haughey, Minister for Justice. He was

described as relaxed and informal: 'he must have won a few votes with the only touch of humour yet introduced--the prefacing of his message to vote for his party with the phrase "And now the commercial..." '

The election itself was given full coverage in News and Public Affairs comment. The first of the marathon election programmes was mounted, John O'Donoghue unflappable in the chair, with results coming in through the night.

This time the critics were pleasantly surprised. 'The whole mammoth programme--all ten hours of it--was full of interest, never dull or boring. Most important of all, it cannot have failed to increase the political consciousness of the nation.'

The results were foreseeable and were foreseen. Fianna Fáil came back to power. There was a new Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Mr. Joseph Brennan.

The first Authority ended its undistinguished legal life in May.

Soldiers of the Legion of the

Rearguard!

--I.R.A SONG

Four of its members, Ernest Blythe, Charles J. Brennan, Áine Ní Cheannain, and George Crosbie, were replaced by Mrs. Sean T. O'Kelly, wife of the former President Seán T. O'Kelly, Ruairí Brugha, son of the Republican hero, Cathal Brugha; Michael Noonan, a former President of Macra na Feirme, and Donall Ó Morain, Chairman of Gael-Linn.

Much criticism had occurred about the use of the Irish language in programmes, both from private citizens and from public national institutions. Dónall Ó Móráin had more than once criticised this aspect of the service--and his appointment, too, was seen as a concession to this point of view. At least he was now assimilated into the system and would himself be at the receiving end and be responsible for whatever Irish policies the Authority adopted.

The new Authority was to have a life of one year. This was in order to allow a review of the Broadcasting Authority Act. Legislation, it was believed, was in draft form.

In the event, there was no legal change of any great importance. An amendment in 1966 changed the name of the service from Telefís Éireann to Radio Telefís Éireann and made some changes in the arrangements for yearly audit and for the distribution and exchange of programme material, including the provision of services 'for and on behalf of Ministers of State'.

Eamonn Andrews remained Chairman of the Authority.

The House of Peers, through-
out the war,
Did nothing in particular.
And did it very well.
--SIR WILLIAM S. GILBERT

At a meeting with this Authority in June 1965, Mr. Brennan the Minister, complimented the outgoing Board on the success of its broadcasting over the past five years and made special reference to the really successful way in which they had handled revenues and expenditures. The more a State body depended upon the Government and on the Exchequer for assistance, he told them-- particularly financial assistance--the more the Government and the State Departments would seek a voice in its affairs.

He enjoined strict impartiality upon them. The Government sometimes felt that the Authority was not quite aware of this responsibility. They must beware of allowing their interviewers to put the wrong answers in the mouths of persons being interviewed.

On the cultural side, he was not looking for 'crash' Irish programming but rather would prefer to see television brought to the stage at which it was processed with a distinctive Irish tone and character. This kind of service, he explained, could have been given if the Government had decided that there need be no commercials on television.

But, for good reasons, he said, advertisements were necessary.

Nevertheless, it was the duty of the Authority to arrange programmes so that they did not play up to commercialisation. He saw the difficulties all right but felt that the members of the Authority, who had his complete confidence, would not fail to surmount these difficulties.

He congratulated them on what they had done in this regard in the past and said that they had made some lovely programmes. Their task would now be to fuse two objectives; independence in money matters, and culture.

He recommended to the Authority absolute co-operation within itself, outspoken opinions, collective decisions and the tying up of all loose ends. Cabinet decision-making was, he remarked, of this kind and he commended the thought to the Authority. He hoped always to be able to work in harmony with the Authority and undertook not to interfere in their very responsible work.

On this admonitory note of reflecting a dynamic, progressive Ireland, without plunging into any major changes which might be dangerous, the Minister's participation in their meeting ended.

* * *

If the Authority was disconcerted by this extraordinary discourse from their Minister, they failed to keep it to themselves. Everyone knew all about it within twenty-four hours.

An Authority which accepted and even reflected views such as these and advocated the pursuance of them, views which charged it with the task of fusing the incompatible into a coherent programme policy, was obviously going to split from stem to stern.

That they remained together, at least on the surface, was largely due to the teamwork of Eamonn Andrews, Kevin McCourt and Rugheimer--and below them, to the ingenuity, nerve and hard slogging of production staffs and crews. There were now open divisions within the Authority. Mr. Eddie McManus and Mr. Ó Móráin became mutually surprised allies in opposition to their Chairman. Professor Moody was also occasional make-weight. Ó

Móráin pressed for Irish popular programmes and Moody for serious culture--particularly music and history.

Irish radio and television was now producing an output comparable, roughly, in quantity to that of its British competitors on routine evening schedules; but at one-tenth the cost. None of this prevented the public from continuing to fling brick-bats, many of them cranky, some constructive and well-founded. Most Producers are self-critical anyway and almost childishly anxious to know what the people think of their work.

* * *

Imagine a distraught Producer, his discussion programme carefully organised, coming in to his desk in the studio block. He would push past Frank Hall with a bundle of provincial newspapers on his way to the carpark to write his script, in his car, for that evening's Newsbeat. He would enter a room about fifty by thirty feet. At one end, a group of intense and concentrated people would be beating out the time to a Showband tape-recording, stopping and starting it again and again, in search of a good 'cut-in' point for a programme. The noise would be unbelievable. At another desk, another Producer would be conducting a telephone conversation in Irish with a shy piper in Kilrush. Three or four other production teams would be trying to concentrate on their special problems. Everywhere, Production Assistants and clerk-secretaries would be typing out incomprehensible camera-scripts, replies to complaints, financial estimates, prop lists and polite postponements of programme suggestions about the emigration habits of wild duck.

Our Producer would make his way to his own desk, riffle through the desperately urgent messages beside his telephone while his Production-Assistant was informing him that his star performer for that night was down with tonsilitis. Not to worry; she, with the characteristic calm and resource of her kind, had short-listed three experts on thatching cottages on the Western seaboard. Three rapid telephone calls added to the pandemonium. Could Mr. Exe come to the studio? Yes, yes. Straight away? Terribly sorry but that is the way television is made. Yes, they could meet in the main hall and discuss it over a cup of coffee in the canteen. Of course, of course, a taxi could be sent down straight away.

Our Producer would say three quick 'Hail Marys' that Mr. Exe was as talkative as he was learned and that he had no ambitions as an amateur Producer himself.

At the reception door of the studio block Mr. Sean Exe would turn out to be a modest, scholarly man. They would make their way up the spiral staircase into the canteen, throwing a startled glance to three nuns sitting on bentwood chairs in the lobby, their skirts drawn up to their green-stockinged knees, smoking like chimneys and arguing about a straight flush.

A troupe of girls in glittering tights mingling inconsequentially in the doorway with a group of Swedish folk dancers would cause a momentary blockage in the traffic. On entering the canteen, which had no windows, a queue, three-deep, stretched from the door to the service counter as it shuffled animatedly forward.

Mr. Exe and the Producer would already have begun their conversation on thatching patterns and means of securing the roof-tree against Atlantic storms.

At one table Jim FitzGerald, fresh from producing a play in the Gate Theatre and now planning a drama for television, would be engaged with the Rev. Romuald Dodd, O.P., and Tony Barry, senior cameraman, in an argument on the five proofs for the nonexistence of God.

Luke Kelly of the Dubliners at another table would share fish and chips and views on the validity of eighteenth-century political ballad forms with Christy Killeen, Mike Slevin and a bevy of girls from Accounts. Mike would inevitably bring the conversation round to the success of streamer-flies for trout-fishing on Loch Sheelin.

At a top table, three Cavaliers and two ladies in crinolines would eat sausage and mash with baked beans while Producer Peter Kennerley, in cavalry twill trousers and a knitted cardigan, would hold a ferocious conversation with Stuart Hetherington about some film stock that had been temporarily mislaid at Dublin Airport and finally turned up in the Drama Department in Airfield House.

The queue was now passing a rumour back about someone who, it was alleged, had been beaten to death by cocktail glasses the night before. Mr. Exe laughed uproariously--but completely missed the point.

A floor manager would break his way through the queue, scoop up the Cavaliers and their ladies from their baked beans, and exit.

John Cowley and the cast of *The Riordans*, away from rehearsals in town for a costume fitting at the studios, mixed incongruously with the cast of *Tolka Row*, let out from the bowels of Studio One for a tea-break, around a table presided over by Charles Mitchel.

Mr. Exe and our Producer, coffee sloppily in hand, would now be ensconced at a half-vacated table. Mr. Exe suddenly declared his adamant opinion that the slides that the Producer had shown him would not suffice. Eddie McEvoy (with thirteen photographs of thatched cottages) materialised; a graphic artist busily sketched the method of tying down thatch in a gale; the Production Assistant noted busily what was being decided; a designer drank coffee busily and the lighting director altered his lighting plan busily. Mr. Exe was now developing his thesis on the migratory habits of thatchers in the nineteenth century at alarming length, in what he evidently saw as a fourteen-part serial.

A cool floor manager would politely break up the discussion and lead a bewildered Mr. Exe to the make-up room for 'a bit of a dust'. Mr. Exe's egghead shone somewhat.

He would suddenly find himself in a studio that looked like a mausoleum converted into a filmset, with suspended lamps and huge artillery-like cameras bearing down menacingly on three empty chairs. Men with lighting metres shouted incomprehensible instructions to someone who seemed to be in heaven. Sound men tinkered with microphones between the chairs. The Producer had totally disappeared. The floor manager introduced Mr. Exe to the chairman of the discussion, Mr. Brian Cleeve, and to Mr. 'Patch' Wye, the famous thatcher.

The floor manager would then ask them to take their places. Brian would try to keep them both relaxed. For some reason, everybody seemed keen to prevent them from discussing the programme before the recording started; this was just a technical rehearsal, you see. Mr. Exe and Mr. Wye would be asked to say a few words to test their voice levels. The 'top' and 'tail' of the programme would be rehearsed. Disconcertingly, then, the floor manager would ask them to go for a walk while further technical adjustments were made.

Returning to studio half an hour later in a state of delicately controlled nervousness, Mr. Exe and Mr. Wye would take their seats on each side of a bland Brian Cleeve. Brian would watch the floor manager who would begin a countdown from ten seconds to programme commencement. Mr. Wye would remind himself to sit upright in his chair; Mr. Exe would be careful not to kick the microphone, while Brian calmly and with awful relaxed casualness introduced them to their hundred thousand accusers, packed in serried ranks with sneering hostile faces--somewhere out there.

Somehow, and suddenly, the discussion was launched. Two lifetimes of close study and experience in the arts and sciences of thatching cottages seemed to be put through a meat grinder. Odd fragments of learning, detached from their vast sociological context, would somehow get caught up in the machinery. Within what seemed an outrageously inadequate time, the programme was over. Everything worth saying had been left unsaid, of course, but it was too late. The opportunity had passed forever. It was sadly obvious to Mr. Exe that the Producer had failed to realise the importance of the subject and had given it unworthy treatment. 'Was it all right?' he asked, however.

Mr. Wye was innocently astonished to discover that he was to be paid £5 for his trouble.

* * *

For the Autumn schedule of 1965 new programmes were necessary. *Telefís Feirme* was finally launched, as was *The Course of Irish History* ,a bow to Professor Moody, maybe. A detective thriller, *Ó Dúill*,was launched in Irish--perhaps a reflection of Mr. Ó Moráin's new voice--or with the intention of pleasing him.

The Autumn schedules were always designed to open the new season with a flourish, to bring viewers back from their Summer sleep, increase audience ratings, and so increase advertisers' interest.

It was reported in a Dublin newspaper on the 24th September 1965 that an attempt to increase the cost of advertising by a scale ranging from 10 per cent to 25 per cent had been successfully resisted by two groups representing the advertising interests. These had made a joint delegation to the Director-General and got a promise that the increases would be reduced by 10 per cent until the end of the year.

The set count, upon which the advertising rate is based, had risen by almost 100,000 and, as the Authority was to say in its report for 1964-65, 'the increased advertisement charges are still lower than warranted by this growth'.

* * *

Wheresoe'er I turn my view

All is strange, yet nothing new;

Endless labour all along,

Endless labour to be wrong.

--SAMUEL JOHNSON

In a creative organisation, the administrator gradually forms the impression that he has his finger in a hole. If he takes it out for a moment, the deluge will pour in. The slow war of attrition to rationalise the organisation, to bring it up to date, to give it shape and a contact with the public, went on. Kevin McCourt had pioneered a number of changes and was to institute others, with the intention of ordering without destroying. In 1965 he set up an Audience Research Unit to amplify and give some qualitative assessment to the merely statistical TAM-rating system, and to be of assistance to Producers and programme planners. As he said at the inauguration of the Unit:

No audience research can replace the need for creative thinking about programmes, and professional skill and judgment in planning and producing them. But it is a unique link between the public and those who provide the programmes and, as such, it should be fully and wisely used.

It was well done but poorly used. Mr. Fred Littman and his staff have fashioned a fine instrument. RTE needs training to use such tools.

If programming stretched the studios beyond their capacity, the demands on the use of film cameras and the Outside Broadcast Unit were also enormous. In fact, RTE's experiments

with the Unit pioneered new techniques in the use of electronic cameras and video-tape, in programmes like *The Riordans*, *Location*, etc.

It was frankly amazing that so much was possible with so little. During the 'vertical' programming schedules, an ancillary unit described by broadcasting people as a 'lash-up', using two cameras which had been removed from one of the studios, did an out-and-about type of programme series around Dublin. The need for more mobile equipment of this kind was clearly seen. In spite of suggestions to start with single camera-units, which would provide more mobility and flexibility, the tried and trusted was again reverted to. It was decided to buy another Outside Broadcast Unit, larger than the last, but with a greater range of equipment. Mr. Eric Spain, Project Engineer, and some Producers, had questioned the wisdom of this purchase on the grounds of its immobility. Time proved them right.

* * *

Having organized and trained
her manhood through her
secret revolutionary organisation...

The spring of 1966 was the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising. It was now only six months away and planning was already advanced to celebrate the events. Again, the real cost had to be estimated. With the demands on time, resources and manpower that programming would make, some areas had to suffer. The chief victim was the Drama Department whose normal output of plays, about one a fortnight, was now cut back. Drama production was merged into an effort to achieve the most ambitious possible commemorative

production. This was to be Hugh Leonard's scripted documentary drama of the Week of the Rising. It ate up huge amounts of money and facilities. Filming was directed by Michael Garvey. Studio and outside broadcast recordings were produced by Louis Lentin.

... having resolutely waited
for the right moment to reveal
itself ...

It was in November 1965, while these plans for Easter 1966 were in preparation, that the criticisms of Rugheimer, already publicly voiced by Irish Actors' Equity, the Gaelic League and some Dublin newspapers, who had spoken darkly of 'foreigners' and 'foreign influence', began to be actively prosecuted by members of staff within the station.

A group of Producers, some at senior level and some Heads of Department, including James Plunkett Kelly, Maev Conway, Aindreas Ó Gallchóir, Jim FitzGerald and Padraig Ó Raghallaigh made representations to the RTE Trade Union Group who sent a memorandum to the Authority on 18th October. It complained about staff conditions, lack of facilities, overwork, the debasement of professional standards, and, in particular, the personal and professional qualities of the Controller of Programmes. The memorandum was published in part in The Irish Times on 4th November. 3

... strikes in full confidence
of victory.

The Authority ignored the letter and refused to have anything to do with it. They handed it to the Controller to deal with it in any way he saw fit.

The rot, however, had set in; there was an anti-Rugheimer lobby and it was to become increasingly effective.

He was naturally annoyed. He might justifiably have been surprised that his Producers had not made their corporate criticisms directly to him, particularly as these criticisms voiced complaints about his undue influence as a non-national; that he 'can and does dictate the content of our programme-schedules without the leavening influence of those who have a life-long understanding of national ideals and the Irish way of life'.

Some of the statements in the document were, he was advised, libellous.

Rugheimer's contract of employment, which had been for a three-year period, had been due to expire in June of 1966. It had had six months to run. He had indicated to Mr. McCourt his intention to leave Telefís Éireann, on expiry of his contract. The intervention on the part of his staff strengthened this resolve.

There were rumours and malicious gossip in the Dublin cocktail circuit to the effect that Gunnar Rugheimer was the man who really ran the station. These rumours which Rugheimer believed to be, and McCourt knew to be, false, nevertheless affected their working relationship. They may have unnerved McCourt. From Rugheimer's point of view he could see that such sentiments and attitudes were unlikely to improve the morale of the station.

A suit for libel, which he was being urged to take, would wreck the service both inside and out, and permanently damage working relationships among production staffs. Philosophically, he regarded it as part of the price he had to pay; some of the locals would get together and form a cabal. He was being paid to ride out that sort of affair. It was also clear that not all the staff was involved and that relationships must be mended rather than further marred. This proved in great measure possible. The hard core of the Producers who were active in complaining about their Controller, had transferred from radio at the outset of the television service. They continued to mutter about 'high-handed tactics', but this 'push' collapsed--for the moment.

* * *

Jim Plunkett Kelly had been a Trade Union official in the Workers' Union of Ireland, and a member of the old Radio Éireann sound broadcasting staff. He is a short story writer, a playwright, novelist and musicologist. He is a man of wide and deep culture and very great talent.

Of complex character, he has simple and unaffected manners. In normal social and work intercourse, his style is gentle, even shy, although never aloof.

From his earliest years, he was a passionate admirer of the great Labour leader, 'Big' Jim Larkin, and a close friend and confidant of his son of the same name, who was also General Secretary of the Workers' Union of Ireland. Jim Plunkett Kelly is a man slow to

make friends but with a great capacity for close and loyal affection where he can discover grounds for trust and a common area of sympathies.

His mind is that of an artist. Circumstances and his great compassion for the inarticulate and the defenceless often turned him, one feels reluctantly, into the field of action as a Trade Union militant. In such circumstances he was of resolute and often obstinate character.

In moments of crisis in the station, the years of back-breaking and painstaking work that he had devoted to the good of clerk-secretaries, Production Assistants, Producer-Directors and others, commanded their immediate and instant loyalty and respect. They simply knew him in action to be a man of principle, and they followed him.

No respecter of rank, he was intimidated by none and utterly indifferent to the personal consequences, on his own standing and fortunes, of any action that he thought it right to take.

He was capable under provocation, or in the presence of intellectual dishonesty, of a sudden blaze of frightening anger. It was followed almost at once by a remorse that invariably found expression in a generosity of withdrawal so evidently sincere and so respectful of the dignity of those he had offended that in a long career in broadcasting, packed with incident and conflict, it is true to say that he has few lasting antagonists and no enemies.

If he suffered a disadvantage of temperament, it was that of the novelist--a tendency to live and re-live and to flavour and assimilate the past into the pattern of his present experience.

* * *

In the debate on an administrative Amending Bill (to the Broadcasting Act) in the Senate in February 1966[11] there were, yet again, references to Telefís's pandering to what was popular for the sake of advertising revenue. There were critical references to drink and cigarette advertising, the revenue from which in the previous year had been £184,000 from drink and £176,000 from cigarettes.

The Hurler on the Ditch came in for comment; political commentators shouldn't be allowed to make or break politicians and Governments, the way Telefís Éireann had allowed them to do. Far too close a tie-up was seen by some perceptive members between this programme and Backbencher.

In the Dáil debate, the same issues were raised. On the question of the filming or recording of Dáil debates, the Minister said he was totally opposed to this.

* * *

Knight to Queen's Bishop.

--CHECK

February was a busy month. There were 'incidents' on the *Late Late Show*. One such incident has passed into our folk mythology, and is known as 'The Bishop and the Nightie'.[12]

The item had occurred on the programme on 12th February 1966, As part of a game, a husband was asked, among other things, to name the colour of his wife's nightie worn on their honeymoon. The husband replied that his wife's had been transparent. She, having been out of the studio while he was questioned, said when she returned, that she hadn't worn one at all. She discreetly changed her mind and said that it was white.

'Vigorous protests' arrived.

The Bishop of Clonfert asked members of his congregation to add their protests to his telegram, sent to Gay Byrne after the show on Saturday night.

The nation was agog again a few weeks later. Brian Trevaskis, a student, on the *Late Late Show* abused both Galway's Cathedral and its Bishop, referring to the latter as 'a moron'. The studio audience waded in. Some didn't want to listen to degrading remarks about 'both our Church and our Bishops'. Another said that he was glad to see Trevaskis was not afraid to express his opinion, even if 'he spoke a bit harshly'; another thought Trevaskis was right in his criticism and agreed that Ireland had developed little since the Proclamation of 1916. A man in the audience told Gay Byrne that it was up to him to stop characters 'coming up here to slag the clergy'. Gay replied that he didn't bring people on to the programme to 'slag the clergy'. The programme was one in which free speech was allowed and the audience was entitled to disagree with anything that was said.

* * *

Knight to Bishop 2.

--MATE

Trevaskis had objected to Galway people having to pay for a new Cathedral when they lacked such things as theatres or art galleries. He also criticised the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin over the dismissal of the Dublin school teacher and novelist, John McGahern.

The blandness of the Dublin Diocesan Press Office comment should take some beating:

It would appear from newspaper reports that during the show Mr. Brian Trevaskis expressed his personal opinion on various subjects, including architecture, our primary schools educational system, and social services. The Archbishop of Dublin would have no comment to make on such personal opinions.

The Bishop of Galway was, as usual, more forthcoming. He would expect no more, he said, from a student of Trinity College.

Mr. Oliver Flanagan thought the *Late Late Show* was now 'an objectionable programme'.

Kevin McCourt said that he regretted remarks made on the show about the Bishop of Galway and the Archbishop of Dublin. There had been few such lapses during the four-year run of the programme. The show's whole essence depended on its being spontaneous. Those

invited to take part were chosen in the belief that they would contribute in a fair-minded way. Without discounting their undesirability, such breaches as had been referred to had been few.

Trevaskis came on the show the following week and publicly apologised to the Bishop, in a stimulating programme which ploughed the same ground again!

The reactions of public groups, revered institutions and letter-writers had been righteously intense during both incidents, particularly over Trevaskis. It is interesting to compare that reaction with the outcry which followed another, a few years later on the same programme. This time it was the John Feeney affair, with Feeney saying much the same things as Trevaskis had said. It is a reflection of the changed times that it was not now Mr. Feeney who was unanimously castigated for his views, but Gay Byrne for his attack on Feeney's.

On this occasion, it was Mr. Byrne who was thanked by the Archbishop of Dublin.

Perhaps it is not unfair to suggest that the public was not as mindless as officials thought in their reaction to these affairs. It might simply be that the public will tend to defend *whoever* is attacked, whether he advocates murder or charity, cowardice or courage, integrity or depravity.

This may be deplorable but as the practical men say: 'it's a fact of life, let's face it'

The *Late Late Show* had been, since Michael Barry's era, a place where anybody could discuss virtually anything. The show had been planned as open-ended, spontaneous,

topical and involved with the community. It has erratically but regularly done all these things. Without exaggeration, it can be said that the show has let some healthy air into dank and mouldering corners of Irish life. It has always been viciously criticised and lavishly praised. One hopes that it always will be. Its critics are its most ardent viewers.

The large corporation has
been the leader in the retreat
from risk.
--J. K. GALBRAITH

The felt-lined caterpillar tracks of order and administration moved inexorably on.

A Management Appreciation Conference held in a hotel in Greystones at the beginning of February was the second of its kind. The Irish Management Institute had been asked to run these courses by Kevin McCourt. It was certainly a useful idea to provide creative programming people with some grasp and insight into the techniques of management.

There were fifteen RTE participants drawn from Engineering, Administration and Sales. Four came from the radio and television Programmes Divisions. Subjects ranged from management techniques and the need for clearly articulated objectives to motivation theory. There were lectures on management control systems and quantitative methodology, group discussions and working groups--all of this over a weekend.

The four production people thought it was an Orwellian nightmare. Their characteristic defence-reaction was an amused 'sending up' of the whole mentality of 'scientific management'. They were profoundly wrong.

What is not clear is whether methods of business management developed by the Irish Management Institute, largely concerned with business and industry in the private sector, was readily adaptable to the needs of a broadcasting public service. Of course, RTE's commercial bias may have compounded the problem, since one could hardly have argued that RTE's work was a public service operation, except in the spirit of its professional broadcasters.

The manipulative methods of the management 'ethos' should not have seemed so out of place after all. Indeed, a list of the objectives of RTE seems to have emerged from these conferences. A dissertation, in 1967, on the allocation of resources for television programmes by Mr. George Waters[13] (then Head of Production Facilities), lists them in the following way:

a) from the broadcaster's point of view :

1. maximise audiences
2. maximise quality of programmes (*sic*)
3. entertain
4. inform
5. educate

b) from the audience point of view:

6. obtain maximum satisfaction
7. minimum cost

The dissertation goes on to say that in the particular case of Radio Telefís Éireann the following objectives might be added to (a) above:

8. to maintain financial viability
9. to be impartial and objective in the presentation of programmes

If this was the order of priorities, it might be argued that RTE had already given up the ghost of the old Hag of Beara and was firmly planted in the commercial sector.

Creative people, always chary of systems, despite amused scepticism, were intrigued.

The truth is that the station's professional broadcasters *needed* skills for the management of complex machines and staff. A television programme, unlike a painting, is not made by a man working alone in a garret but by one who has at his fingertips the ability to handle intricate machines and even more complicated humans. Such courses, had they any sensitivity to our special problems, might well have been a means of liberating RTE staff from hindrance, time-wasting and drudgery. We did not need these techniques like a set of scalpels to be picked up and used mechanically. Above all, we did not need the neatly packaged and philosophically unexamined assumptions about man, work and society which this management 'philosophy' purveyed. It was horrible in its second-hand pretentiousness.

The greatest single blockage between the 'management' mind and the 'creative' one seems to be this: because the creative person decries quantitative managerial solutions, it is concluded that he is an anarchist with no regard for order. The truth is the opposite of this

view. The raison *d'etre* of a creative person is the *organisation* of material--always of a conflicting kind--into an organic unity. As Virginia Woolf said: 'the artist consumes all impediments'[14].15

There is another fundamentally important characteristic of the creative person. His work is built on the concept of *communicating* with others, not *transmitting* at them. Again, this is a difference of approach from that expounded by conventional managerial theorists: to the artist, the communication is *always* multiple and complex, and always essentially ambiguous; never a refined one dimensional me-to-you transmission.

Of course, management theory will admit this: it will insist that communication is never brought about by one-way transmission. It requires, the manager would say, 'feedback' before communication can take place. What he doesn't seem to realise is that his idea of communication is really two transmissions on a me-to-you-you-to-me basis. Two transmissions don't necessarily make one communication. In short, he doesn't understand communications, but explains them. The artist understands but can't explain them.[15]

Communication for the artist in all its ambiguity and multiplicity of intention and reception only exists when it adds a new dimension of awareness to a community. The manager's notion is like a game of tennis: the artist's is like a flight of birds changing direction.

If, as we suggest, creative techniques are community-forming techniques and that these differ from the transmission techniques of managers, it obviously follows that a broadcasting service must replace transmission by communication in its managerial thinking

if it is to implement the purposes for which it was set up. Mr. Ivor Kenny, Director of the Irish Management Institute, regards television as being a 'commentating' medium.[16] Something happens; television provides a means of transmitting somebody's view of it. This may evoke a response--what he might call 'feedback'. This is an oddly Marxian notion of the mass media. We've no doubt he would deny this, indignantly. Nonetheless, this is a view of communications as an ideological superstructure, reflecting the 'real' causes of action within the body politic.

The professional broadcaster, when he concerns himself at all in reflections about his work (he seldom does), would see it in quite different terms. Art, television, radio and the newspapers are, in themselves, the community's attempt to bring the whole complex of its beliefs, feelings, fears and hopes to a level of consciousness that need never be conceptual at all.

The *Late Late Show* may provide no comment that anyone can articulate in a transmittable message on, say, the revival of Irish. It represents a great and internally contradictory uprush of thought, feeling and desire. In Mr. Kenny's sense, it conveys nothing. In the communicator's sense, it brings the community to a tacit but intense awareness of its own nature and attitudes. For this reason, it has always seemed to us that Gay Byrne's judgment in progressively including substantial religious, political, social and cultural topics in the *Late Late Show,* is of vital importance for the healthy development of the community's self-communication. Otherwise, these topics will tend to be transmitted *at* the viewers by experts. This will, inevitably, inhibit and wither the thought, feeling-habits, and engagement of viewing audiences with real life. Serious matters must be discussed gaily and spontaneously. This is communication. It cannot be managed.When it is achieved it is, in

abstract rational terms, a 'miracle'. When it fails, it is a mess. The principle of its 'organisation' lies in the creative, aesthetic judgment of its makers--not in the 'principles' of management. These are there, discreetly, in the wings. If they dominate or obtrude--the butterfly dies upon the wheel.

* * *

Billy the Music here broke in:

**The person I would have liked to hear more*

of is Cuchulain, for he is my own

Guardian Angel and it's him I

'm interested in. The next time

I meet him I'll ask him questions'

--JAMES STEPHENS

Perhaps, again, owing to the presence of Dónall Ó Mórdin there was, at that time, a statement from the Authority *For the Guidance of its Staff in Regard to the Use of the Irish Language in Broadcasting* (January 1966).

The Authority had not uttered a word on its policy on the language to staff before this time, although there had been a memorandum from the Controller of Programmes two years previously. This had been brief and merely stated that Irish should be introduced, where it fell naturally into programmes, by those who were proficient in its use. This had resulted in such programmes for adults as *Club Céilí*, *Labhair Gaeilge Linn* ,the Irish thriller series *Ó Dúill*,

and magazine items in *Newsbeat*. The new Authority policy was introduced to staff members by the Director-General in Studio 2 at a special meeting in January.

Based on the thesis that restoring the language was a feasible aim and that television programmes were going to throw in their weight, in an unexamined way the document laid down certain broad, and certain specific, requirements.

RTE was to nurture the language by presenting it in a sympathetic, positive and imaginative way.

It was to build a better public consciousness of national identity by means of programmes on Irish history and culture.

We were to try to see to it that:

- the boat was not rocked by presenting 'unbalanced' discussion on the national aim of restoring Irish;
- localised vocabulary and pronunciation would be avoided by announcers and newscasters and standards of pronunciation, grammar and diction would be at least equal to those required in English;
- Nuacht would go on carrying the main News headlines but would have secondary News items of its own;
- Irish be extended in Children's and Sports programmes, that Producers and interviewers in information, magazine and light entertainment programmes should include items in Irish; they should lose no opportunity to encourage members of the

public to use the language 'in part' when being interviewed; at least one programme in Irish of special interest to adult viewers was to be broadcast weekly on television; the Guide and other publications were to assist in the extending of bilingualism;

- quantitatively, more Irish was to be introduced into sports commentaries, but in such a way 'as not to diminish general communication'.

The last paragraph of the document is a classic piece of self-contradiction, the kind of contradiction that seems to be a guiding principle of Irish broadcasters' lives. It said, simply, that jobs which required bilingualism should be carried out by bilingualists, even if they had to equip themselves after recruitment.

But it [the Authority] is anxious that those who do not know Irish should feel secure in their positions, *while recognising that bilingualism cannot but make their usefulness and access to opportunities appreciably greater* (our italics).

Questions and comments from those present ranged from sheer bewilderment to polite rage. A rather uneasy gathering left the studio after the meeting and one colleague was heard to say: 'my next trick is impossible'. Out of this welter of expedients, one adult programme in Irish was to emerge--and one quiz. Those who loved the language despaired; those who were indifferent shrugged: a qualitative problem was to be solved quantitatively.

The Editor of Irish programmes, who had had nothing to do with the formulation of the 'policy', made recommendations on the extent to which Irish could be introduced in running programmes such as *Home for Tea*, *Jackpot*, *Teen Talk*, *Melody Fair*, *Ballad Session,'65*, *Cine Club*, *Spectrum*, *Discovery*, *Cover Story*, the *Late Late Show*, *Pick of the*

Pops, *School Around the Corner,*Sports programmes, *Newsbea*t, 1916 programmes, Children's, Agriculture, Drama programmes, and continuity announcements.

In the jigsaw, the Irish pieces could be identified: they were marked 'Security*.

These recommendations were implemented, in part; most of them never saw the light of day again. Another pinch of incense had been rubrically burned.

* * *

In May 1966 the first phases of the plan already mentioned to move Production Facilities into the Programmes Division as a new major unit under the direct supervision of the Programme Controller, was initiated.

The production crews welcomed it. By temperament and inclination, they were programme people. Many of them were fine artists. From the earliest days when the crews, operators and Producer-Directors had been trained together, through the hectic scramble to get programmes on the air, Producers and their crews had managed to maintain an identity of purpose. There was not a programme in the schedule that did not owe its flashes of style and imagination to their contribution. Designers, graphic artists, photographic stills men, prop men, wardrobe and make-up, cameramen (both film and electronic), lighting men, film editors, film processing personnel, sound-men, vision mixers, floor managers, carpenters--all have the same orientation as Producers: to do that little bit extra; to try it another way; to, somehow, make the damn thing work.

Revolutionary as the Production Facilities move must have seemed at the time, it may not have been quite revolutionary enough. Inevitably, after a time, those structures of line management which had been set up to regulate crew proceedings--section heads, supervisors, managers--tended to draw Producers and crews apart again. The Producers then began to see these managers and supervisors as blockage points.

Some Producers, in their assessment, even went so far as to confuse the issues by lumping the crews in with the managers, as a target for their frustrations.

What they did not realise was that the crews felt their own frustrations just as keenly. In some cases they had to work with Producers who had been insufficiently trained--some of them by the very technical staffs who were now supervisors or managers in the Production Facilities Department. Others were frustrated because the facilities necessary to realising the Producers' intentions were unavailable, inadequate or broken down.

Some crew members found ways out by applying for appointment as Directors; others did work outside the station in their own time which they found more rewarding--and there were some who left.

Arrivals, Departures, Delays.

--HEUSTON STATION

By the end of May 1966 the one-year-old Authority was due for retirement or renewal. The Authority was not renewed; it was re-instated. It lost its Chairman.

Eamonn Andrews resigned at the end of May. His comment at the time was that the station was going too far too fast.

It was trying to be self-sufficient, without enough experience.

He felt, he said, that output was dominating the staff's energies instead of trying to create standards of professionalism. The aimless and quantitative insistence on Irish was not successful. It was lowering the quality of programmes without increasing the status or use of the language, meaningfully. The following day the Authority publicly expressed its regret at his resignation. The staff was amused.

There were hints that Dr. C. S. Andrews might succeed him and a newspaper editorial of the same day urged that a strong independent man should be selected to chair the Board.

Dr. Andrews was appointed as predicted. The newspapers announced it on 3rd June 1966. It is reported that the unseemly wrangles that had gone on in the Authority during the previous years ceased and that they were a well-disciplined group soon after Dr. Andrews' arrival.

Gunnar Rugheimer was to have left at the expiry of his contract on 1st June 1966. However, no suitable replacement had been found. In April, it was said by Irish Actors' Equity at their annual general meeting, that RTE should have an Irish Controller of Programmes. It was incongruous, Equity said, that a nonnational should be trying to evolve a philosophy of Irish consciousness. The Gaelic League backed them up in May, protesting that the Controller of Programmes did not understand the Irish way of life. They did not say who

did. Whatever history is finally written on this period of Irish broadcasting it will have to consider these accusations. It seems to us that Gunnar Rugheimer had more insight into the Trish mind' than many a native and had done more to reflect it than those who employed him. It would be less than honest on our part not to say this. His great defect was not that he did not know the Irish mind; rather he had an uncanny gift for exposing it to its own gaze. The gift was attributed to him as an arrogant vice. It is therefore hardly to be wondered at, that in spite of repeated attempts on the part of McCourt (and Eamonn Andrews, while he was there) to have him remain, Rugheimer was to leave. The Authority had demanded an Irish national.

On 13th December 1965the post of Controller of Programmes had been formally advertised in Irish newspapers. The announcement, also published in many newspapers abroad, yielded no acceptable result. Mr. McCourt travelled extensively to interview applicants but by the following June there was still no one in prospect. Rugheimer stayed on, and gave what assistance he could in the finding of a new Controller.

The earlier affair of the eighteen Producers' complaint to the Authority was an unfortunate one, not merely because of the course adopted, not merely because it lacked support among the rest of the staff; it represented the frustrated aspirations of a group of people whose vision of the role of a national broadcasting service, though well-intentioned, may have lacked insight and a full realisation of the commercial and cultural contradictions which govern the Authority but are borne by the Directorate.

The Controller, as the strongest man in their immediate orbit, whose forcefulness they Dáily experienced, was the natural target for their anger. It may be a reflection on the

accuracy of their aim that the shots went wide and landed in the cotton-wool bed of the Authority.

The saddest aspect of this matter was that it partially cut off from the main body of Producers a valuable group of colleagues who remained in virtual 'exile', though they continued to carry on their duties in the making of programmes. Like most exiles, they lost touch with the changes among new and incoming programme staffs and tended to lapse into a nostalgia for the days and ways of the station's beginnings. It was not until the 7 Daysrow that the majority of the programme staff and this group came together again in any full sense to make common cause. More than one of them has since expressed regret at their having to take a course which, at the time, they felt it their duty to pursue. Jim Plunkett Kelly, Maev Conway and Aindreas Ó Gallchóir have done this generously in our presence. We believe that others would concur.

Gunnar Rugheimer did not finally leave Ireland and the station until December 1966. In the meanwhile he carried on.

The President shall be elected by direct vote of the people.

--CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND

ARTICLE 12

The Presidential Election was due in June 1966. Mr. Tom O'Higgins of Fine Gael was contesting it. The incumbent was Éamon De Valera who also stood for election.

The Controller and the Director-General decided that this was a political event in the sense of the Act and that a broadcasting service had a duty to cover it as such. Rugheimer accordingly wrote to the Directors of Elections of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in these terms, so that each could see that the other had been invited; stating that RTE intended to cover this as a political election and that time was therefore offered for party political broadcasts on behalf of the candidates.

There had been no consultation with either party prior to the sending of the circulars. The station had simply taken the initiative, which it deemed to be its right.

Fianna Fáil was not pleased. The President, their Director of Elections, Mr. Charles J. Haughey, said, could not campaign. To this the polite reply was that in that event there was no objection to his having people to speak on his behalf.

Mr. Haughey rejoined that the President was above politics and that Radio Telefís Éireann was committing itself to a political act.

RTE was sorry that the Director of Elections should feel like that but it was a matter for Fianna Fáil to accept the invitation or not as they felt inclined. The invitation to the other party would, in any case, stand.

The service carried the campaign on the basis of party political broadcasting under Section 18 (2) of the Act, which permitted departure from impartiality--by the parties. An appearance was made on behalf of Eamon De Valera, not by the Fianna Fáil Party as such, but by the friends of Mr. De Valera--among them Nora Connolly.

Mr. Haughey may, by now, have realised the mettle of the man he was dealing with. In the event, it is ironical to note the bitterness with which Fine Gael attacked RTE for what it called a biased coverage of the campaign.

* * *

Notwithstanding the fact that no new Controller had been appointed, plans for the Autumn schedule were brought under way by Rugheimer. There were to be new programmes, and a shake-up on the Current Affairs side.

Three of these programmes were to have important consequences for RTE--and involve the present writers. We feel it necessary to deal with them at the expense of other, equally pivotal, programmes--like *Newsbeat*, the *Late Late Show*, *The Riordans*, *Telefís Scoile* and *Telefís Feirme*.

The weekly programme *'66*, which had finished its season in June, was to be replaced by a new programme with more scope--*7 Days*.

Home for Tea, a chatty family programme, was to go in favour of a family advisory programme in depth, Home Truths.

The Hurler on the Ditch and *Strictly Politics* were to be replaced by *Division*, a programme which would concern itself with Irish politics and to which politicians and others would be invited.

... patiently and unremittingly to sustain the vigilance
of reason in the presence of failure and in the presence
of that which appears alien to it, philosophy is the principle
of concentration through which man becomes himself,
by partaking of reality.
--KARL JASPERS

As Gunnar Rugheimer was to say to the present writers prior to their takingup these new commitments: it might well be that we were not ready for such a departure. The station, however, must grasp the nettle of its Irish commitment. It had to face the Irish realities and it had to take the consequences, even in the teeth of resistance or possible failure.

The ground that had been rough-dug and planted each year with a sturdier growth had to be prepared for the new crop. A letter from the Controller to the three Party Whips in the Summer of 1966 had stated that RTE did not feel happy about the party political broadcasts in the form in which the parties wanted them. The station did not think it desirable in the interests of good political broadcasting to institute party political broadcasts again, except in an election situation. Instead, it intended to cover politics in a programme, entirely produced and devised by itself, for which it would select both the topic and the participants.

The station would invite politicians to take part.

The object of this departure was to take political television out of the party-line. Under the old scheme, any Deputy selected by his party merely reproduced the official party view. He spoke with the dull solemnity of any man required to enunciate ex cathedra.

The new scheme, being the responsibility of RTE, would leave any participant free to speak informally. Since the responsibility for impartiality was now the station's, everyone would force the pace and liven the proceedings--it was hoped. It might also encourage politicians to take television seriously--as part of the nation's debate with itself. The success of the programme '64, '65 and '66 nourished this hope.

The three parties were agreeable to the new arrangement but Fianna Fáil wanted the invitations to Deputies to continue to go through the Whips. Gunnar Rugheimer and Jack White on behalf of RTE argued against this arrangement, pointing out that in, say, the event of a split in the Fianna Fáil Party some members might refuse the Whip and RTE would be bound by an agreement not to approach them.

At length, after more discussion at a higher level inside the Fianna Fáil Party, RTE agreed to be responsible for the invitation, naming the particular member it wanted but passing it through the Whip. However, if the Whip declined to produce the member, RTE would consider itself free to invite him direct. The other two parties agreed in the amendment.

The notorious 'Whips' Agreement', often referred to darkly by political correspondents, never, in fact, existed. The only written document was a joint memorandum about this agreed method of approach. There was no reference to the number of politicians

that should be invited or whether the programme should be restricted to politicians. This memorandum was not published.

The fact that any agreement with politicians, *for normal programming*, was entered into, was to prove, in the long run, unfortunate.

What appeared to be bothering the Whips was that RTE would deliberately select Deputies who were 'characters', in order to increase entertainment value. This argument was a little thin in view of the kind of programmes that Telefís Éireann had already been doing in that area.

What finally transpired was that the parties wanted to keep the discipline of their members firmly in line. Rugheimer pointed out (as he had pointed out to the Bishops' Interim Committee at an earlier stage) that RTE did not wish to interfere in the disciplinary affairs of other bodies.

Division was to have its problems and its triumphs in the following season's programmes. But inevitably, the old form of the party political broadcasts, unadulterated, was to return in The Politicians.

During the Summer, on the Chairman's providing himself with an office in the station, an advertisement appeared for the post of Secretary to the Authority. Mr. Oliver Maloney was appointed to the post early in September. Shortly afterwards, the selection of a Controller of Programmes was finally made.

* * *

The man chosen was Michael Garvey. He was a graduate of U.C.G. He had produced in the theatre, and had worked in radio for several years as a Producer before moving into television in 1962 where he had become one of the outstanding Producer-Directors in the service. He had not applied for the position but had been approached by Mr. McCourt with the concurrence of the Authority. He agreed to serve.

This appointment was made after a protracted search by Mr. McCourt, both at home and abroad, for a candidate who was both an Irish national and an experienced programme administrator. The Authority was made fully aware by Mr. McCourt that Michael Garvey's inexperience in executive administration would create great difficulties for him. They were aware, too, of the modesty and shyness of his temperament, often disguised by a certain airiness and even flippancy of manner. Having consulted with Gunnar Rugheimer, Mr. McCourt is believed to have made this recommendation in the conviction that, with a strong supportive Directorate, Michael Garvey's qualities of orderly production methods, so clearly evident in his own programming, his high intelligence and almost encyclopaedic erudition would make it relatively easy for him to develop the necessary qualities of leadership.

From the point of view of the Authority, he had other qualities of great worth. He was an artist whose distinction was not confined to theatre, radio or television. He painted and had a really profound sympathy with architectural, painterly and sculptural idioms. His command of Irish was both fluent and scholarly. He had an extensive knowledge of Irish, English and European literature and a passionate attachment to music, in the production of which he excelled.

An essential characteristic that facilitated television programme control, and which Michael Garvey had to a supreme degree, was a tolerance of characters foreign to his own mental temperament. He had worked successfully with some of the most difficult people in both radio and television. He is a man of great charm.

The staff were astonished and delighted. He was 'one of their own'. At the time of his appointment, announced on the 24th September, he was engaged in the production of The Real Charlotte--a serialisation of the Somerville and Ross novel, the first venture of this kind that RTE had undertaken. It was being recorded by outside broadcast on locations near Dublin and he was occupied with it well into October. His 'take-over' period under Gunnar Rugheimer's guidance was, unfortunately, less than two months. He was to take up office officially on 31st December.

It is not sufficient to make a
hole in the ground, bundle in
the roots of the tree or plant,
cover them with soil, and stamp on it.
A plant so treated may grow, but it
will be in spite of the treatment
and not because of it.
--GARDENING MANUAL (1913)

The Autumn programmes opened with an insistent clash of cymbals which resembled the sound of a telephone bell. It originated in the Newsroom but it affected the whole Public Affairs area.

Programmes there were in a state of intensive reorganisation and were undergoing the normal daily pressures.

7 Days had opened, as had *Division* and *Home Truths*.They were to have a close inter-relationship not only because of their material, which was social, political and economic, but because of the personal relationships of their Producers, Directors, reporters and research teams.

The three approaches were different. *7 Days* aimed to give an Irish view of the larger public issues, at home and abroad, which affected the people's lives and thought: it intended to broaden the viewer's outlook and intensify his involvement.

Lelia Doolan, its Producer, had, apart from a spell on *Newsbeat*, worked predominantly in Drama--on the production of *The Riordans* in its early days. She believed that Public Affairs on television were intrinsically dramatic and only extrinsically technical. Her two young Directors, Eoghan Harris and Dick Hill, had mutually opposite and complementary qualities.

Eoghan Harris was intensely interested in social and political affairs with a sharp, incisive and constructive mind.

Dick Hill was organised, scientific and methodical with the Anglo-Irish sense of dedication and concern for the public wellbeing.

A brilliant team of reporters, John O'Donoghue, Brian Cleeve, Brian Farrell, were already well-known to the public, and trusted by them.

Division was devoted to trying to get the Irish public interested in its political institutions, personalities and issues.

Under Muiris Mac Conghail, who had extensive knowledge of the Irish political scene from his excellent work on *Newsbeat* and *Headlines and Deadlines*, a new attempt to bring the nation and the station into a stimulating dialogue with the Oireachtas and Local Government bodies was launched.

He was ably served by Paddy Gallagher, Ted Nealon and, (characteristically associated with The Politicians) David Thornley --all tremendously well-versed in the detail of their subjects and experienced political commentators.

Home Truths operated with a totally new staff. Forty-three economists and social scientists were interviewed, from whom Mary Murphy and Tomas Roseingrave were chosen. Jimmy Flahive, executive chef of Aer Lingus, was chosen from a panel of chefs suggested by the Trade Unions. The Minister for Health promised the co-operation of his Department and provided medical advisers. The Institute of Research and Standards undertook to carry out scientific research on household products. Mary Leland became Home Truths Munster correspondent.

230 members of the Irish Housewives' Association and the ICA acted as purchasing agents throughout the country.

Jack Dowling, the Producer, had just finished his Producer-Director course, as had Eoghan Harris and Dick Hill. Dowling's previous experience had been in scripting and interviewing in religious and socio-religious programmes.

7 Days aimed at the greatest possible extension of interest; *Division* aimed at the greatest possible intensity of involvement; *Home Truths* aimed at being as particular as possible.

Their styles might be put like this: *Home Truths* might trace the cost of *this* mackerel; *7 Days* might investigate food prices in the cost of living index; *Division* might mount a programme on the Department of Fisheries.

Programme pressures in these three areas were particularly intense. Every programme had to be planned in the knowledge that it might have to be abandoned in favour of a new idea in the face of a new event. Research by experts was the keynote of the three programmes. A slip in *Home Truths* could result in a Court action for libel; a mistake in *7 Days* in a controversial storm; an error in *Division* could bring about a confrontation with a 'pride' of politicians.

There were no working hours or days. People rested when they could.

Each programme had its special and its common difficulties.

The common difficulties were lack of time and experience.

The special difficulties were that in *Home Truths* research and checking facts was endless and exhausting. The unit worked in a constant atmosphere of threat, recrimination and influence.

For instance, a programme on patent tin-openers had been prepared for a particular Wednesday night. Script, research and production arrangements were more or less complete. Jack Dowling, Mary Murphy and Tomás Roseingrave decided to take the Sunday off. On Sunday afternoon, a member of the Irish Housewives' Association telephoned Jack Dowling at his home.

She asked him why the slump in cattle prices, about which the farmers had been complaining, had not been reflected in a reduction in the price of meat. He noted this for future reference. His interest was immediately alerted when she went on to add that she had just paid eight shillings a pound for round steak during her weekly Saturday shopping. The previous Saturday it had cost her six shillings a pound. Jack Dowling asked her if she had any reason to believe that this was anything more than a local phenomenon. She said yes: there appeared to be an agreement among the master butchers to raise the price of meat. The Housewives' Association was concerned. Could he do anything?

Jack Dowling telephoned Mary Murphy and Tomás Roseingrave. He sent word to Mary's assistant, Noelette Gannon. They met in a pub in Baggot Street within the hour and

drew up a sketch plan for a replacement programme for the following Wednesday. Tomas undertook to spend the night reviewing the Stock Market prices for beef for the three previous months. Mary undertook to meet officials concerned with the compilation of the cost of living index. Jack Dowling went to the station and cancelled the arrangements for the can-opening item and set up new design, graphics and presentation methods with Sid Neff, who arrived in a Land Rover with his hat full of fishing flies. Jack Dowling explained the scheme. Sid was a graphic artist of extraordinary ingenuity. He was required to provide a means of showing the price of meat by townlands from Belfast to Dingle; to devise some means of comparing the profits to farmers, wholesalers and retailers and, at the same time, show the average cost of the previous three months, now being researched by Tomás Roseingrave.

Jack Dowling rang Rickard Deasy in Tipperary, who immediately placed an N.F.A. statistician at Roseingrave's disposal. Dowling rang Mary Leland in Cork and his agents in Galway, Longford, Belfast and Dundalk, instructing them to have the I.C.A. and I.H.A. panel each buy one pound of round steak in butchers' shops wherever they had members throughout the country.

Arrangements had to be made to reimburse them.

On the Monday morning, every telephone in Group C was manned. Michael Johnston of Group B co-operated by putting the telephones of his group at *Home Truths'* disposal.

Tomás Roseingrave was installed, with Noelette Gannon, also a social scientist, to analyse the incoming data and feed it down to Sid Neff, who incorporated it into a Heath-

Robinson contraption that he had constructed during the night. It looked like the marker board on the London Stock Exchange.

Denis O'Grady procured a camera crew out of thin air. Dowling, Mary Murphy and the crew conducted filmed interviews in butchers' shops, bus queues, the abbatoir, the N.F.A. office, the meat wholesalers' headquarters, and with the President of the Master Butchers' Association.

Tuesday was spent editing film, collating the figures, writing the script, rehearsing the whole programme, of which this was one item. A production conference with design, graphics, floor manager, lighting, sound, vision mixer and technical operations manager, rearranged the programme in minute detail.

The conference was interrupted by a group of angry butchers who had got wind of what the programme was up to.

By the time recording took place on Tuesday evening, everyone was exhausted but triumphant. Tomás Roseingrave was able to assure the Producer that the figures were accurate to what he characteristically described as 'point five of a penny'. The crew was mesmerised, and entered into the spirit of the project with great enthusiasm. A verifying procedure had been arranged, in which the buying and analysing operation was virtually repeated on the day after transmission. It was discovered that the price of meat had fallen by an average of tenpence[17] per pound since the previous purchase, three days earlier.

The team slept for twenty-four hours. Then the grind began again.

In *7 Days* the endless flux of events made planning enormously difficult, and the conservative and Establishment view--whether business, religious or political on any issue--was almost impossible to find defenders for. This made balance a critical and exhausting matter.

Last-minute change was here the rule rather than the exception. The programme was transmitted on a Monday night and its subject matter was never finally chosen until Sunday or even the Monday.

Obviously, then, segments had to be pre-planned and stockpiled with an eye to what was coming up on the national and international scene. For example, the farmers were in dispute with the Department of Agriculture. It might or might not develop into a major political crisis. Clearly, one couldn't be caught napping. Internationally, the tensions in the Middle East were beginning to warm up; there was Aden, as well. Elections in Germany were in the offing, and at home the L.F.M. were becoming vociferous.

Some sort of line of development had to be aimed at. The availability of experts had to be traced and a visiting pundit had to be utilised--perhaps from the mere fact of his being in Dublin-- anticipating a future transmission. We had to find and instruct reporters and contributors abroad who still had sufficient awareness of the Irish scene and an insight into their local milieu.

Always one had to be prepared for the 'special' programme to cover an unpredictable event. These were generally hour-long programmes. Many of them had to be compiled at short notice in addition to carrying on the routine weekly transmissions.

The deployment of the team was a continual organisational nightmare. Stretching and leap-frogging was the order of the day. Travel down the country and, on rare occasions, abroad, consumed time and frustrated communications.

A sudden opportunity-programme might well find all the staff dispersed and all the facilities engaged. Yet the opportunity could not be ignored. Lelia Doolan became a temporary Director on these occasions. Facilities were borrowed from Division.Help was sought from Home Truths.Telegrams and telephone calls attempted to find experts and speakers on the topic and to recall one of the harassed reporters, perhaps calmly discussing co-operatives in Connemara. Cameramen, film editors, sound-men, designers, crews, changed course in midstream and threw their help in. Somehow, the thing just got done.

Often, the most hastily assembled programme came off with unexpected brilliance; sometimes it was ghastly. The most riveting talker on a telephone might turn out to be a dummy in the studio. An expert flown in from, say, London, would give no one else a chance to get a word in edgeways.

But there were two lines of dependability and unruffable calm: Brian Cleeve, Brian Farrell and John O'Donoghue worked endlessly and painstakingly; scripting, interviewing, researching. Whatever the mayhem that may have preceded the floor manager's countdown, they could always be depended upon to give the programme an air of thoughtful deliberation

and authority. Behind them, Eoghan Harris and Dick Hill coaxed, cajoled, organised, wrote and calculated, week in week out, with unflagging energy.

It was television at its most exhilarating and its most exasperating.

Division's particular difficulties were of a similar kind, sharpened by the Irish resistance to frank talk in public--on matters which involved close scrutiny of its own accepted political attitudes, institutions and leaders.

Perhaps the man who carried the burden of this reputation was Mr. Charles Haughey. The fact is that *all* politicians of any party *anywhere* have an almost paranoid conviction that they are being done down.

The Minister for Agriculture was not peculiar in this. It's just that he was singularly un-shy.

SAMPLE ENDS

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1. Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting, Maurice Gotham, 1967
2. Its members were: Pádraic Mac Con Midhe, Patrick Lynch, Seán Ó Suilleabháin, Theodore W. Moody, Charles J. Brennan.
3. The term 'public service' broadcasting is current among professional broadcasters in the rather special sense of a television or radio service financed wholly from public funds by way of licence fees, grants and/or subsidies. Its alternative is some form of commercial financing by trading profit, like the sale of advertising-

time.
4. The design published on 9th December 1969, in which the cross of St. Brigid is retained by the ingenious device of incorporating one of its arms into the 'R' of the station's initials, is a fit subject for the vitriolic pen of Myles na gCopaleen. It is so incredibly vulgar that one wonders if it is not thought to be some kind of error or joke. It is no joke.
5. Professor James Halloran, Director, Centre for Mass Communication, Leicester University, made, when a University Lecturer in Sociology there, tentative approaches to the new service soon after it was set up. He pointed out that there was a unique opportunity of setting up a phased research programme to study the effects of television on an English-speaking urban community (he suggested Cork) which had not hitherto been exposed to it, by conducting 'before-and-after' research. His object was to gain empirical evidence of television programming effects. As television transmissions went on, they could be progressively studied and the data analysed and used. This would have provided the Authority with a scientific base upon which to build a programme policy. Professor Halloran has made two further approaches which have been received affably. Nothing has been done but talk. A member of RTE's programme staff, Michael Morris, had attempted to do work of a similar kind in his spare time but failed to get sufficient support. His project had to be dropped.
6. Professionalism is ambiguously used in television. We can only make our own view clear. Real television is professionally produced to allow the nation to talk to itself.'Professional' television aspires to produce 'professional' talkers to talk at amateurs. See chapters on Culture and 'Count Me Out'.
7. Gorham, Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting.
8. Cf. Radio Éireann Annual Report 1962-63.
9. Annual Report 1962-63
10. See chapter on Culture
11. Debate on the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill, 1966.
12. Title of The *Irish Times* Editorial on the incident.
13. *The Allocation of Resources in the Production of Television Programmes* (unpublished dissertation), George Waters, 1967 (see Appendix II)
14. See Appendix I, *Leonardo and the Leviathan*
15. 'Stradivai *knew* every detail of how to make a perfect violin- but this knowledge was tacit. He was not able to specify the details of construction, to be explicit about them, and could only pass them on *by example*. He knew, in other words, but could not tell' (*The Tacit Dimension*, Michael Polanyi) This philosopher is undoubtedly right, but it will no longer suffice for the artist working in television. If he has no muscularly worked out philosophy of his work, the management institutes will not be shy of providing him with one!
16. After-dinner speech to IMI Business Management Programme II '68/'69
17. *2017 note:* There were 12 pence in a shilling.