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# Fianna Fáil and the Origins of *The Irish Press*

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## Introduction

In order to win political support for its programme of economic self-sufficiency in the 1930s, Fianna Fáil appealed to a number of constituencies: Irish manufacturers, the smaller farmers, and the urban working class. The success of this appeal depended on a number of factors, one of the principal being that an effective means of communication should be established. *The Irish Press* was founded in response to an immediate and pressing need for a mass circulation daily to assist in Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony against the ideas of the ruling party, Cumann na nGaedheal. Manning (1972:42) remarks that the significance of *The Irish Press* could hardly be overestimated in view of the hostility of the existing daily papers towards Fianna Fáil.

The role of the newspaper in organizing the party and winning new supporters for Fianna Fáil is emphasized by Carty (1981) in his study of clientelist politics in Ireland. In his view, the constant anti-Fianna Fáil propaganda of both the Catholic clergy and the existing national press had to be countered for two reasons. Firstly, Fianna Fáil supporters had no organizational linkages other than those of the electorally oriented party machine. A continuing stream of information and propaganda was therefore necessary to reinforce their political convictions in the face of determined attempts to discredit Fianna Fáil (Carty, 1981:103). Secondly, new supporters could only be attracted by a consistent ideological campaign. *The Irish Press* was therefore central to Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony in the early 1930s.

This discussion gives an account of the campaign to establish *The Irish Press* in the aftermath of the Civil War. Attention is focused on the various strategies employed by de Valera in order to finance the newspaper: the bid to gain control of the Republican Bonds in America, the appeal for commercial backing, and finally, the appeal to ordinary people who sympathized with the republican cause in Ireland and abroad. Next, the ownership and control structures which vested full control of the paper in the hands of de Valera are investigated. The article concludes with a review of the ideology of the early Irish Press and examines the role of the newspaper within Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony.

## *The Nation*

In March 1927, Fianna Fáil launched a weekly paper, *The Nation*. This paper was established by Sean T. O'Ceallaigh, a close associate of de Valera. *The Nation* served as a precursor to *The Irish Press* wherein Fianna Fáil developed its populist programme. The paper provided a space for the editor, Frank Gallagher to develop the populist style which would later set the tone of the Press. From the outset, *The Nation* made a strong bid to win the support of the lower classes and rural poor. In the first issue, the paper asserted that the Irish people were suffering from the worst economic depression since the famine. The paper branded the Free State government as allies of Britain, asking whether it was 'not more than a coincidence that this deplorable depression and misery and emigration occurs during the present day government of the imperialists' (March 1927).

Although central to Fianna Fáil's propaganda of populist anti-imperialism, *The Nation* was, in itself, insufficient for the party's needs. Its circulation peaked at 6,000

copies weekly. Popular support for the more radical republican papers was declining rapidly. In 1930, Frank Ryan, editor of *An Phoblacht*, indicated that circulation had fallen from 18,000 to a mere 4,000 in the space of four years (Cronin, (1972:150). Although *The Nation* was the direct predecessor of *The Irish Press*, it did not achieve a sufficiently wide readership to suit the needs of Fianna Fáil. It seemed clear that the days of the small-scale republican press were over. For Fianna Fáil, *The Nation* was merely a stop-gap measure. Nevertheless, the paper played an important role in establishing the local party cumainn which were to prove effective in raising funds for the Press in rural Ireland.

In June 1927, de Valera wrote to Joseph McGarrity about the problems facing the new party and the urgent need for a national paper:

The newspapers here make it almost impossible to make any progress. We must get an Irish national newspaper before we can hope to win (NLI', Ms. No. 17441).

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1. NLI, National Library of  
Ireland Manuscript  
Collection.

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The established daily newspapers were indeed hostile to Fianna Fáil. In this they reflected the concern of both the establishment and the Catholic church to maintain political stability and the existing economic relations with Britain. One aspect of church thinking, however, was favourable to the aims of Fianna Fáil. It also was concerned about the extensive circulation of British popular dailies, with their low moral standards, in the Free State. Hence, Fianna Fáil sought to use the church campaign against imported popular newspapers in order to promote the cause of a national daily newspaper.

In 1926, the Free State Minister for Justice established a Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature to prepare for the Censorship of Publications Act which would be passed in 1929. The public debate on the issue was led by a number of Catholic organizations, notably the Catholic Truth Society and various Irish vigilance societies (Brown, 1981:69). The campaign was directed primarily against the imported popular newspapers and magazines. These popular publications were considered a threat to moral standards, not least because they might carry information on topics such as birth control.

Fianna Fáil took up such arguments with enthusiasm. If the project of a national daily newspaper could be linked to the church campaign against sordid British publications, so much the better. The campaign against the British press dovetailed neatly with Fianna Fáil's populist campaign against dumping and monopoly domination on the Irish market. The church campaign also presented an opportunity for Fianna Fáil to present itself as the most genuinely Catholic of the political parties. Cumann na nGaedheal's reluctance to impose tariffs on British newspapers could be used to win the support of the Catholic intelligentsia. The opinion of Professor Thomas O'Rahilly, that 'in matters of the spirit we are becoming more and more England's slaves' (1927:561), seemed more in keeping with Fianna Fáil rhetoric than that of Cumann na nGaedheal.

### **Financing *The Irish Press***

Financing the new paper was to prove a major obstacle for de Valera. The original intention had been to gain control of what remained of the first Dáil loan, the infamous 'Republican Bonds', and to use these funds to establish a Fianna Fáil paper. On failing to achieve this, de Valera began to seek support from businesses and commercial interests in the United States. Again, this attempt was not a success. Finally, the committee in charge of fundraising realised that it would be necessary to rely on support among the lower classes, both at home and abroad. Paradoxically, the predominance of small shareholders made it easier for de Valera to gain control of the paper than would have been the case had it been financed in the main by commercial interests.

In 1919, de Valera and two other members of the first Sinn Féin party had been made trustees of a loan raised in the United States to finance the struggle for independence. De Valera intended to secure what remained of this loan for the purpose of founding the newspaper. The original fund amounted to \$5,800,000. Over half of this sum had already been remitted to Ireland. By the time of the treaty split, the unspent remainder amounted to \$2,500,000, held on deposit in New York banks. Collins and de Valera as leaders of the opposing factions had agreed not to use the funds for party purposes. Towards the end of the civil war, however, de Valera made clear his intention to seek control of the bonds. This move was immediately contested by the Free State government.

In August 1922, the Cosgrave government applied to the American courts seeking an injunction to restrain the banks from handing over the funds to de Valera or to Stephen O' Mara, the original trustees, or any of their agents. The application was supported by Dr. Fogarty, the third trustee named. The matter was raised in the Dáil (*Dáil Debates*, 13 Sept 1922) where the government announced that new trustees would be appointed. The new trustees were Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Richard Hayes, T.D., and General Richard Mulcahy, T.D. and Minister for Defence. Gavan Duffy gave the opinion that O'Mara was not a suitable person to act as trustee as he had 'made very considerable difficulty in America for our delegates there'.

In May 1927, the New York Supreme Court declared that neither side was entitled to the funds and ordered that the monies be returned to the original bondholders (Cronin, 1972:146). The outcome was clearly a triumph for Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal. De Valera, as trustee, had no title as owner of the funds, and had been denied his demand to be left in possession. The Fianna Fáil leader, however, was not easily deterred. Having failed to secure control of the funds, he urged subscribers to invest their bonds to in another great national project: the establishment of a daily paper whose principles were those of Irish Ireland. Republican sympathisers began a sustained campaign to convince bondholders to transfer their holdings to de Valera. This campaign became the subject of acrimonious debate in the Dáil after Fianna Fáil came to power (IP, 28 June 1933:1, 7 July 1933:1).

From the opposition benches, Cumann na nGaedheal TDs were to allege that unscrupulous methods had been used to convince would be investors. It was alleged in the Dáil that republican fund-raisers were assuring the Irish-American community that President Cosgrave was fully behind the new venture. Whether the charges had any substance or not, de Valera was faced with the problem that most of the Irish-Americans who had given support to the original republican loan had subsequently supported Cosgrave and the Free State government during the civil war. Support for de Valera was on the wane in the aftermath of the civil war (Sarbaugh, 1985:18). The difficulty of raising funds from republican supporters was compounded by the onset of the Great Depression. Perhaps for this reason, de Valera declared that the paper was to be politically independent. When the new paper was announced in the *Wicklow People* on 31 December 1927, it was publicly stated that the paper would not have any party allegiance. The Board of Directors would contain one Cumann na nGaedheal member, two Fianna Fáil members, and four members 'of no party' (Moss, 1933:69)<sup>2</sup>.

## Appeal to business and to the people

In December 1927, de Valera travelled to the United States in an attempt to raise funds for the paper. The main priority was to establish support among business circles. On 28 December 1927, de Valera wrote to Joseph McGarrity stating that the total capital required would be £250,000, of which £100,000 was expected to be raised in Ireland. In the United States, subscriptions would be for blocks of value \$500 and over (NLI, Ms. No. 17441). De Valera wished to contact at least one thousand people in the United States who would invest at least \$500 in the enterprise. He expressed optimism at the prospect of raising the money, commenting

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2. This promise was not borne out; the directors were unanimously in favour of protectionism and supported Fianna Fáil. Some, such as Dowdall and Connolly, were Fianna Fáil Senators and prominent Irish businessmen. Others, such as Pierce and Gallagher, were public supporters of Fianna Fáil policy.

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that 'as the proposition is purely a business one, I expect that it should not be difficult to get them' (NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

McGarrity replied to de Valera in January 1928, giving his opinion that substantial business support would be required and that it might be worthwhile to seek the backing of an entrepreneur such as Hearst.

My own thought is that under present conditions you must get men of means to subscribe for large blocks of stock. I think this method essential even if all organizations here were working together (McGarrity to de Valera, 10 January 1928, NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

It seemed clear that the financial and distributional problems which had afflicted the republican press could only be overcome by a fully-fledged commercial venture. Yet, raising the required amount was no easy matter. Even with extensive organization, the fundraising drive would not be easy. De Valera was fortunate that some of the organizations which he had established during his 1919 fund-raising tour were still in operation. It was to organizations such as these that he turned for support. Hence, the newspaper was to be named *The Irish Press* after Joseph McGarrity's *Irish Press* which was founded in Philadelphia in 1918.

De Valera proposed to use organizational methods to raise the money similar to those employed on his earlier fund-raising trip. Once in America, he set up an umbrella organization called the American Promotion Committee. Members of this organization were responsible for drawing up lists of people whom the group might approach for subscriptions. The committee members were instructed on how to conduct business and to find the people who had at least \$500 to invest in shares. Members were to work closely with the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR). All funds collected were lodged with the Harriman Bank of New York City.

The problem of finding subscribers was greater than de Valera had anticipated. Even in California, one of the few remaining strongholds of de Valera support, the response was weak. The first meeting organized by the AARIR in San Francisco was poorly attended; only thirty people showed up. This was partly due to the short notice at which the meeting was organized but it also reflected the underlying weakness of de Valera's position. It was quickly recognized that the response in business circles was poor. The onset of the Depression severely restricted the availability of capital for investment in a venture such as *The Irish Press*.

Within a few months, the Promotions Committee announced that the \$500 minimum investment had been reduced to \$50 (*The San Francisco Leader*, 12 May 1928:6, 14 August 1928:4). In September 1928, when the prospectus of *The Irish Press* was published in the AARIR papers, McGarrity wrote to de Valera, expressing his pessimism about business support.

Things in a business way are bad in the country at present. Many of those who would give are not making and avoid gatherings where subscriptions are likely to be asked (25 September 1928, NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

Efforts were redoubled to raise the money in the United States. In October 1928, Frank Aiken arrived to promote fund-raising. In California, he established Irish Press Committees in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton and Los Angeles. Since business support was weak, the organizers began to organize door-to-door collections in an attempt to meet the quota. The organizing committee began to stress the need for a paper of the people, one that would provide them with the truth about affairs in Ireland. The newspaper would be committed to providing the necessary leadership for social and political development in Ireland. In an article published in *The San Francisco Leader*, entitled 'Our Central Purpose', de Valera wrote:

The only reason in fact why I am engaged in this enterprise is to provide the Irish with a paper which will give them the truth in news, without attempting to colour it for party purposes also to supply the leadership for the necessary economic, political and social reconstruction in Ireland today (SFL, 19 April 1930:1).

Conscious of the strategic interests of the United States, de Valera implied that an independent Ireland would give allegiance to the United States rather than to Britain.

We want Ireland to look west to America, rather than look to the east to England. We want an Irish paper that will be as Irish as the London *Daily Mail* is English (SFL, 28 January 1928:1)

De Valera appears to have wanted greater autonomy from British capital, but was not necessarily averse to encouraging the support of American capital. It seemed that he was prepared to modify the rhetoric of populism depending on the constituency whose support he sought.

## Fianna Fáil Support

The campaign in Ireland provided an early example of the organizational proficiency of the local Fianna Fáil party Cumainn. Fianna Fáil Árd Fheiseanna were used to publicize *The Irish Press* among party supporters. At the third Árd Fheis in 1928, a resolution was passed which called on all local party branches to become involved in the project. Each branch was assigned to canvass its local area for subscriptions, while a key party member was put in charge of fund-raising in each constituency or district. While canvassers sought out individuals who could subscribe for blocks of at least one hundred shares, it seems that the majority of £1 shares were sold on an instalment basis. This indicates that in Ireland, as in the United States, the majority of shares were sold to the poorer sectors of society.

On his return from America in February 1928, de Valera toured Ireland to rally support for *The Irish Press*. Robert Brennan was put in charge of the fund-raising campaign, a position which called upon all his previous experience as Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin. De Valera was evidently in great haste to incorporate the company, in spite of the shortage of funds.

In September 1928, the company was incorporated and a prospectus was published in *The Nation*, setting out the share capital as £200,000 in £1 shares. What seems clear is that even with business support and popular share-ownership, the company was extremely short of capital. De Valera was in the difficult position of having to maintain to a business constituency that the paper would be purely a commercial concern, while simultaneously being forced to look to popular support and promise a radical nationalist paper. The publicity material produced by Frank Gallagher shows this contradiction quite clearly.

On the one hand, Gallagher wrote material which was clearly destined for circulation among business sectors. Subscribers were assured that 'guarantees of considerable financial support in Irish business circles' were already forthcoming. Publicity material also stressed that the company wished for subscriptions of at least one hundred shares. On the other hand, the promotional literature stressed that the paper would represent the genuine interests of the people of Ireland. Gallagher wrote that the people longed for a national paper that would express their own sentiments and feelings. For too long, the republican electorate had been compelled to subscribe to newspapers whose outlook was pro-imperialist. This electorate would turn immediately to a paper expressing the true national point of view (NLI, Ms. No. 18361).

The common theme which could unite business classes and the popular masses, whose support was necessary to Fianna Fáil and *The Irish Press*, was that of anti-

imperialism. Gallagher pointed to Father Devane's article in *Studies* and the figures presented by the Catholic Truth Society in relation to British newspaper circulation in Ireland. In his publicity material, he announced the project to establish in Ireland a daily newspaper that would be truly Irish in purpose and in character. 'We are', he wrote 'in the strangle hold of an alien press'. The Irish people were in a condition of mental bondage, purchasing from their British former masters practically all the material which sustained their minds. The number of national dailies had fallen from seven to three, while the English dailies were increasing their circulation with 'astonishing rapidity'. Gallagher reiterated the arguments put forward in *Studies*, echoing the opinion that national culture and language could not be revived without the existence of a 'cheap, healthy and independent native press'.

The new daily will not be a propagandist sheet or a mere party organ. It will be an Irish national newspaper in the broadest sense, championing the full rights of all the people of Ireland. The policy of the paper will be under the control of Mr de Valera (NLI, Ms. No. 18361).

### Ownership and Control

While de Valera's control of the paper seemed to be taken for granted by the majority of Fianna Fáil supporters, the party leader nevertheless took steps to ensure that this control was legally enshrined in the Articles of Association of the paper. Hence his control was not contingent upon continued success as leader of the party but was permanently established in legal terms. While de Valera's populist rhetoric created an impression of other-worldly asceticism, the means by which he gained control of *The Irish Press* provides ample evidence of his shrewd business sense.

From the outset, it was made clear that de Valera intended to maintain a firm hold on the new venture. At the Fianna Fáil Árd Fheis in 1927 when the new paper was first announced, the party leader stated that the paper was not going to be the property of any party, even the Fianna Fáil party. The paper had a mission to the Nation, and this would be jeopardized by party control.

It was going to preserve such independence as would enable it to do its national work, and that was to criticise impartially certain actions and even certain policies of the Fianna Fáil party, and to make suggestions from time to time as to what should be done (IT, 27 October 1927:7).

On the contrary, Mr de Valera was to be the controlling director, and stated that he would 'not be bound in his control of the paper by the decisions of anybody'. To underline his absolute authority, de Valera's asserted that

if there was a question in which a decision would be given, and it was on an important matter, he would give that decision and take public responsibility for it (IT, 27 October 1927:7).

The Articles of Association listed the Board of Directors as follows: Article 70: The number of directors shall not be less than three or more than twelve, and Article 71: The following persons shall be the first Directors of the Company:

EAMON DE VALERA, Controlling Director, 84, Serpentine Avenue, Sandymount, Co. Dublin, Teacher, Chancellor, National University of Ireland.

JAMES CHARLES DOWDALL, Villa Nova, College Road, Cork, Merchant, Director, Dowdall, O'Mahony and Co., Limited, Cork.

HENRY THOMAS GALLAGHER, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, Merchant, Chairman and Managing Director, Urney Chocolates, Limited.

JOHN HUGHES, Laragh, Killiney, Co.Dublin, Merchant, of John Hughes and Co., Dublin.

STEPHEN O'MARA, Strand House, Limerick, Merchant, Chairman and Managing Director, O'Mara, Limited, Limerick.

PHILIP BUSTEED PIERCE, Park House, Wexford, Merchant, Managing Director, Philip Pierce & Co., Limited, Mill Road Iron Works, Wexford.

JAMES LYLE STIRLING, Granite Lodge, Dunlaoghaire, Merchant, Managing Director, Stirling, Cockle & Ashley, Limited, Dublin.

EDMUND WILLIAMS, Correen, Ailesbury Road, co. Dublin, Maltster, of D.E. Williams, Limited, Tullamore.

The Board of Directors, therefore, consisted of prominent Irish industrialists and businessmen who had an interest in the cause of promoting native Irish industry. Most were members of NAIDA, the organization for the development of Irish industry and agriculture. This organization was to develop close links with *The Irish Press* in the 1930s. Each member of the Board of Directors was required to invest at least £500 in shares.

The Articles of Association enshrined de Valera's position as Controlling Director with absolute powers over the running of the newspaper:

Article 75: The first Controlling Director shall be Eamon de Valera who is hereby appointed such Controlling Director and who shall hold in his own name Shares of the Company of the nominal value of Five Hundred Pounds. He shall continue to hold the said office of Controlling Director so long as he shall hold the said sum of Five Hundred Pounds nominal value of the Shares or Stock of the Company. The remuneration of the said Eamon de Valera shall be determined from time to time by the Shareholders in General Meeting.

In Article 75, the right of de Valera to an effective lifelong tenure of the position of Controlling Director was established. Articles 76 and 77, under the subheading 'Powers of Directors', granted him what amounted to sole control over the running of the paper and over the policy, management and staff above the heads of the general shareholders. Article 77 also represented a total safeguard against any attempt to wrest control from his hands. In later controversies which would emerge in the Dáil and elsewhere, de Valera justified his position by asserting that he acted as trustee for the ordinary Irish people who had invested in the project of a national daily newspaper.

## **Ethos of *The Irish Press***

*The Irish Press* was clearly intended as a mass circulation daily newspaper. Nevertheless, it was also aimed at a particular readership, i.e. those sectors of the population which Fianna Fáil hoped to rally against the dominant political party, Cumann na nGaedheal. Therefore, the paper was not simply 'popular' in the sense of appealing to the mass of the people. If it had been merely popular, the paper would have been identical to the majority of the British papers circulating in the Free State, and would probably not have been very different from the *Irish Independent*. *The Irish Press*, however, established a distinct identity on the basis of its populist politics. Populism entailed a discourse which represented 'the people' as a political category with interests separate and distinct from the pro-metropolitan interests of the 'elite' in power. The construction of a populist discourse required that at least some of the



journalistic staff should be sympathetic to the aims of Fianna Fáil and its particular variety of republicanism.

Many of the key editorial and managerial staff of the paper had gained their formative newspaper experience in the underground republican journals during the independence struggle and in the course of the Civil War. These individuals were drawn together by a political commitment to the cause of the Irish nation. Some, including the editor, Frank Gallagher, were fiercely loyal to de Valera. Gallagher had contributed significantly to the propaganda activities of Sinn Féin. He had previously worked on the *Cork Daily Free Press*, *New Ireland*, *the Irish Bulletin*, *Poblacht na hÉireann*, *Éire*, *Sinn Féin* and *The Nation* (NLI, Ms. No. 18361). In terms of ideological commitment to republicanism, he appears to have been more radical than the party leader. For instance, he opposed de Valera on the question of taking the oath of allegiance and entering the Dáil in 1926, although he ultimately submitted to de Valera's arguments. Gallagher's ideological commitment to the tradition of radical republicanism was later to bring him into conflict with the Board of Directors of the Press. It seems that while Gallagher was prepared to canvass the support of business leaders in order to finance the paper, he believed that the cause of Irish republicanism took priority over financial or commercial success.

Many of the journalistic and technical staff were recruited on the basis of connections with the republican movement. Certainly the goodwill and assistance of republican sympathisers was important in the weeks prior to publication. Although some staff appointees had backgrounds on Belfast Unionist papers, the majority were journalists, teachers and writers, the lower-middle class intellectuals who had provided the cadres of de Valera's republican movement since the Civil War (IP, 5 September 1981:V). Robert Brennan, the General Secretary, had worked in the past on the *Enniscorthy Echo*, which had published the *Irish Volunteer* between 1914 and 1916. Brennan had taken part in the 1916 Rising in Wexford. Later, during the War of Independence, he was Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin, turning the *Irish Bulletin* into a daily organ of Dáil Éireann when most of its representatives were underground. Paddy Clare, who worked as a night reporter for the paper, had been an unemployed ex-IRA comrade who had previously written for *An Phoblacht* and *The Nation*. Patrick Kirwan, appointed as an assistant editor in 1934, had previously worked on *An Phoblacht*. Paddy Devlin, in charge of reporting on Gaelic games, had written for *Sinn Féin*. Another Gaelic games reporter, Mitchel Cogley, had previously been a contributor to *An Phoblacht*. The appointment of Gaelic games correspondents reflected a determination to emphasise Irish culture even in the realm of sports coverage.

## **Content**

Anti-imperialism was combined with an emphasis on rural culture as the authentic culture of the people. It was proposed, for example to mount a campaign against foreign street names, to include articles on the Gaeltacht, on the old industries of Ireland, and to include features on the Irish cities of England. Gallagher was particularly conscious of the national interest in his instructions to sub-editors, which included the following directives (NLI, Ms. No. 18361:3):

Always give the Irish angle in the headlines.

Do not use agency headlines; the other papers will have those.

Be on your guard against the habits of British and other foreign newsagencies who look on the world mainly through imperialist eyes.

Do not pass the word 'bandits' as a description of South American revolutionaries.

Pirates and robbers in China are not necessarily communist and therefore should not be described as such.

Propagandist attacks on Russia and other countries should not be served up as news.

Gallagher's perception of the international news agencies pre-empted the vast body of literature on media and dependency which would emerge in the post-war era. Hence, great emphasis was laid on the need to stress what was distinctively Irish in the news. The guidelines for sub-editors reflected a conscious determination to align the Press with anti-imperialist and revolutionary movements elsewhere in the world, even to the extent of giving limited sympathy to the Soviet Union.

Gallagher also reminded his sub-editors not to make *The Irish Press* a Dublin paper. There were, he observed, O'Connell Streets in other cities. Clearly, the paper was to make a determined appeal to the rural population which provided the mainstay of Fianna Fáil support. The appeal to the rural population reflected an ideological tendency which was ambivalent towards the question of urbanization and large-scale industrialization. Gallagher's instructions also revealed a profound ambivalence towards the institutions of the state, particularly the police and judiciary. The staff were reminded not to quote jokes made by judges 'unless they were real jokes', while it was advised that there was no necessity to report every word of praise spoken to policemen. This reflected a radical populist hostility to the apparatus of the state which was undoubtedly sharpened by Gallagher's personal experience of the legal system. While the paper clearly aimed to win the lower classes in both urban and rural areas. Gallagher was also aware of the need to win specific audiences among this group. In particular, he stressed the need to include items of interest to women readers.

In conclusion, *The Irish Press* was founded as a newspaper that would assist Fianna Fáil in its struggle for political hegemony. In order to establish the paper in the face of extensive hostility from the existing press and the political establishment, the organisers looked to support from a number of quarters: Irish-American businesses, Irish commercial interests, and the ordinary Irish and Irish-American people who were sympathetic to de Valera's aims. The paper was thus presented as the genuine voice of the people of Ireland. It could not have been established without the support of the urban and rural working classes and marginal sectors who contributed to de Valera's fundraising drive. Hence the ethos of the paper was populist and anti-imperialist. The control of the paper, however, rested in the hands of Eamonn de Valera, leader of Fianna Fáil. In organizational terms, the Board of Directors consisted of prominent Irish businessmen who had an interest in the protection of industry and in seeing a financial return on their investment in the paper. Within this hierarchy of control, it can be seen that de Valera was a mediating force between the interests of the mass of the people and the business interests who supported the paper. In practice, however, the potential existed for the interests of the people to be subordinated to the interests of de Valera and the Board of Directors. In this sense, *The Irish Press* was a microcosm of the populist alliance in general.

### **Critique of monopoly capitalism and communism**

*The Irish Press* did not simply focus on the needs of Irish industry. It consistently sought to present the project of industrialization in terms of the needs of the ordinary people. This was done in a number of ways. First, it was argued that industrial society was facing a crisis and that the only alternative was a programme of ruralization, i.e. the development of small-scale industries throughout the country. Second, while maintaining the ideal of rural society, the paper advocated a programme of state intervention to resolve pressing problems such as housing and welfare. By highlighting the problems of the working classes, and by appearing sympathetic to the trade unions, the Press sought to win the support of the working class and at the same time to present Fianna Fáil as the real party of the working classes. In presenting the alternative of a 'third way' between monopoly capitalism and communism, *The Irish Press* sought to channel working class radicalism towards support for Fianna Fáil.

From the outset the Press discussed at length the idea of small-scale production. For example, the ruralization of industry was frequently advocated by members of the lower clergy, whom Gallagher cited at length. Citing the Rev. J.M. Hayes, whose address to a meeting of An Rioghacht raised the question of the real national economy, Gallagher pointed to the need to restore rural life. Industrialization as it existed had 'come to a dead end' (*IP*, 10 December 1931:8). Gallagher added that the alternative to the present system was the ruralization of industry described by Father Hayes. The state, he argued, should promote the establishment of small industries and help them in their struggle for existence.

The Press reflected populist concern for the perceived evils of mass society and large-scale industrialization. It also reflected the belief that late developing countries could turn to their advantage the lack of capitalist development and promote a more egalitarian social order where the ravages of competition could be regulated by some measures of state control. For example, a weekly column devoted to social issues, written under the pseudonym 'Catholicus', pointed to the possibility of a 'third way' between capitalism and communism. While critical of monopoly capitalism, the author suggested that the present crisis could only be resolved by the co-operation of capital and labour. It was asserted that large-scale industry huddled men in undesirable numbers. Livelihoods became precarious. Man became dehumanised through specialization and rationalization. The sole *raison d'être* of monopoly capitalism was efficiency, with the result that 'the vast armies of the property-less earners lived no full human life. The solution was 'not the large port mill', but 'the village mill in the midst of its wheat fields', not 'one central furniture depot' but 'groups of woodworkers in every town'. We want, asserted 'Catholicus', 'the local lime kiln, not Imperial Chemicals' (*IP*, 19 December 1931:6). The estate of the capitalist had been placed in jeopardy by the unleashing of rampant commercialism. Only by welcoming his workers as real co-partners could the capitalist hope to save any part for himself. The alternative was the ruralization programme advocated by Fianna Fáil.

While opposed to communism and the idea of class conflict in society, the populist ideology of the Press in its radical phase could incorporate a number of grievances of the workers. For example, the paper reported on low wages in the catering trade. An official of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union interviewed by the paper was critical of proprietors whose low wages forced girls to survive on tips. The opinion was given that the majority of waiters and waitresses would prefer to see tipping abolished and wages increased. In some cases, the question of wages and conditions was given front-page coverage, particularly where Fianna Fáil and Labour seemed in agreement on an issue:

#### **DAIL DISCLOSURES ON BUS WORKING CONDITIONS**

Sixteen Hours A Day.

Ten Shillings A Week For Employees.

(*IP*, 13 November 1931:1).

This article related to a Dáil debate in which Sean Lemass, in alliance with Labour deputies, denounced the 'scandalously low' wages in some of the bus companies. It was the duty of parliament, Lemass declared, to see that appalling conditions of work should be altered. By drawing public attention to the difficult conditions of the working classes, the Press sought to create a cross-class alliance of all those affected by Irish economic dependency. It seemed that the only solution to the economic and social problems of the day was the election of a Fianna Fáil government which stood for the workers and small farmers against the corruption of the old order.

### **Conclusion**

In its first months of publication, *The Irish Press* made a radical populist appeal to the working class, the rural poor and the smaller manufacturers. It actively publicized

the policies of Fianna Fáil and mounted a strong challenge to the legitimacy of the government. The mass circulation newspaper offered advantages other than the size of audience which could be reached. Clearly, a mass circulation press would prove more difficult for the government to suppress using traditional means. That is, the government would find it more difficult to stifle a modern daily newspaper than to ban the traditionally small-scale republican publications. The Press' claim to represent all the people of Ireland was a safeguard against the kind of suppression that had hindered republican papers in the past. It seems that Cumann na nGaedheal hoped that the new paper would fail to establish a commercial basis and would disappear of its own accord. When asked in the Dáil whether he would suppress *The Irish Press*, Cosgrave replied that 'by the looks of the first issues it will suppress itself' (IP, 5 September 1931:III).

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