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Raiders of the Lost Archive: the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Film Industry 1942

Roddy Flynn

¹ RICFI: Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Film Industry.

² Rockett (1988 and 2001) refers to the report as *The Film in National Life* and identifies 1943 as the date of its completion. In fact the document gloried in the more mundane title *The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Film Industry* and was submitted to Lemass in March 1942. The confusion over the title is understandable, however, give that part of its inspiration derived from an earlier British Report called *The Film in National Life*. By the same token were it not for Rockett's pioneering research in the 1980s, we might still be unaware of the simple fact of the report's existence.

³ The earliest references in the available files mention a proposal from a John E. Harding and George Carney to establish a Film Producing Company in Ireland and an April 16 1928 meeting between them and D. O'Hegarty from the Department of Industry and Commerce who reported on the meeting to his Secretary, Gordon Campbell. Nothing appears to have come of the meeting. See NAD S 13914A.

⁴ Leydon to Lemass 25 May 1937, R 303/GB/18.

⁵ Lemass to Leydon, 26 May 1937, R 303/GB/18.

⁶ Lemass to Leydon, 26 May 1937, R 303/GB/18.

In 1938, Sean Lemass, as Minister for Industry and Commerce, established a three-man committee with a broad remit to examine and report on every aspect – actual and putative – of the Irish film industry. This report would examine not merely the exhibition, distribution and production of film but also its potential as a cultural force and the extent to which the established censorship regime was fulfilling its obligations to 'protect public morality against any danger of contamination or deterioration which might threaten it through the influence of cinema' (RICFI, 1942: 44).¹ The committee spent four years working on the report but despite their efforts, it was never published and to all intents and purposes disappeared from both the Department of Industry and Commerce and the National Archive. As a consequence the report acquired an almost mythical status among film scholars: its contents (indeed its very existence) could only be inferred through a few tantalising references in Dáil Debates and National Archive documents. As a consequence academic references to the report have been – inevitably and unavoidably – partial and imprecise.²

However, the conclusion drawn by some scholars that since the report was never published it was never acted upon requires some revision in light of its recent 'rediscovery'. At 55 pages long the report represents the first substantial attempt to draw up a coherent policy covering all aspects of cinema in Ireland. Not only do its pages offer a fascinating insight into officialdom's often ambiguous (if not actually schizophrenic) relationship to the cinema but the various Department of Industry and Commerce memos relating to its genesis suggest much about the Irish cultural politics in the 1930s and 1940s. Most importantly, the content of the report suggests that it had a very real impact on Irish film policy in the decades after the Emergency.

The report was a response to two sets of pressures. First, the Department of Industry and Commerce had been receiving proposals relating to the establishment of Irish film industry (most of which centred on the building of a film studio) since 1928.³ Typical of these was a detailed scheme submitted in February 1937 by Eric Boden, an employee of the Irish Hospitals Trust in the US. Although Boden originally contacted the Taoiseach, Eamon De Valera, his proposal was quickly passed on to the minister in the department, Sean Lemass who in turn passed it to his civil servants for their assessment. The response was muted: although accepting the entertainment and cultural value of cinema, they questioned the finances of Boden's scheme. Boden did not propose investing any capital of his own whilst the unhappy state of the contemporary British film industry did not augur well for the prospects of an Irish industry. Summarising his colleagues' findings, the Secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce, John Leydon, told Lemass that 'the prospect of establishing the industry on a healthy basis in this country is extremely remote ... and I do not myself think that the stage has been reached when such a scheme should be seriously considered'.⁴

Nonetheless Lemass responded to the effect that the growing importance of the industry was such that 'a detailed examination of the difficulties of its establishment should be undertaken before an adverse conclusion is reached'.⁵ To that end he requested that Leydon establish 'a committee on the subject'.⁶

What Lemass's reference to the industry's 'growing importance' meant was not made



explicit. However the most likely answer draws us to the second factor driving the establishment of the committee: the intervention of Father Richard Devane, SJ. Devane had a long-established interest in things cultural dating from his tenure as head of the Irish Vigilance Association, a Catholic organisation which since the 1920s had dedicated itself to ridding Ireland of 'objectionable literature'. In 1926 he had testified as an expert witness to the Committee on Evil Literature, (the conclusions of which shaped the drafting of the 1929 Censorship of Publications Act) drawing their particular attention to the dangerous abundance in Ireland of literature on birth control.⁷ Given these conservative credentials Devane proved quite progressive when he turned his attention to the cinema.

As Rockett (2001: 161-164) notes, Devane's interest in cinema had been piqued by a 1935 *Irish Press* campaign which had castigated elements of the industry for its effect on public morality. Although supporting the campaign, Devane's critique of cinema was more nuanced than the *Press's* crude posturing: he called for a government enquiry into all aspects of cinema to enable a fuller understanding of its cultural, educational and 'national' potential. He repeated this call in April 1937 in letters to the *Irish Press* and *The Irish Times*. Notwithstanding the fact that in the interim Pope Pius XI had published an encyclical on the motion picture, *Vigilanti Cura*, which advocated a censorious approach to dealing with the cinema,⁸ Devane suggested that cinema be regarded in a more positive light. Referring to the official (State) attitude towards cinema – regarding it as 'a mere plaything or as a gift from the powers of evil' – he argued that 'as a consequence we have done nothing positively and constructively to use it as we should' (Devane, 1937a). He suggested that the establishment of an enquiry would enable Ireland to 'advance towards the position of regarding the cinema, not as something suspect or as an enemy, but as a powerful instrument in the cultural development of our people' (Devane, 1937a). Nonetheless he acknowledged the need to maintain a firm grip on the industry: for Devane the ultimate aim of the enquiry was 'to examine into the best means of establishing central State control through a National Films Institute.'⁹

Lemass might conceivably have ignored Devane's calls were it not for the fact that on 22 April 1937, the priest wrote to De Valera seeking a meeting to pursue an enquiry. In preparation for that meeting, De Valera sought the views of his cabinet on the cinema industry in the Saorstát (Free State).

Most of the departments had little or no comment to make in contrast to the Department of Industry and Commerce who responded immediately asserting that they had been considering the establishment of a film-production unit 'for some time'. Quoting figures quite obviously borrowed from the Boden proposal, their memo to De Valera stated that Lemass had

... recently decided that a full examination should be made of all the difficulties standing in the way of a national film-production enterprise. He also came to the conclusion that this matter could best be investigated in the first instance by a small inter-Departmental Committee composed of representatives of this Department and the Departments of Finance, Education and Justice. Steps have been taken to appoint this committee and it is the Minister's opinion that their report should be awaited before any further examination of the question is undertaken.¹⁰

In fact, Lemass had not instructed Leydon to establish such a committee until two days after De Valera informed his ministers of the imminent meeting with Devane. Given this it seems likely that the attempt to portray the department as having been long engaged in the consideration of the film industry (an assertion not particularly supported by available documents from the department in the National Archives) and the suggestion that any response to Devane should wait till after Lemass's own proposed committee had reported, represented an attempt by Lemass to head off any possibility

⁷ See NAI JUS 7/2/9 for details of Devane's testimony.

⁸ For example the encyclical noted of 'bad motion pictures' that '[t]hey are occasions of sin, they seduce young people along the ways of evil by glorifying the passions, they show life under a false light, they cloud ideals, they destroy pure love, respect for marriage, affection for the family.' From *Vigilanti Cura*, dated 29 June 1936.

⁹ 'The Cinema and the Nation', Article, Richard S. Devane, *Irish Press* 12 April 1937.

¹⁰ Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce to Private, Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach 24 June 1937. S 10136. In this regard it is worth mentioning the Department of Industry and Commerce were probably familiar with a November 1936 report by a British Board of Trade Committee on the British Film Industry which offered a detailed explanation of the dominance of the UK market by US films. It stressed the importance for the US industry not only of its large domestic market but also of practices such as block and blind booking by renters (distributors) operating within the UK market. Note that the estimated cost of the studio appears to have been based on the Eric Boden memorandum discussed in R 303/GB/18.



that the de facto determination of cinema policy might fall to Devane, with whose views Lemass did not entirely sympathise (Flynn, 2005).

On June 12 1937 John Leydon wrote to JJ McElligott at the Department of Finance seeking sanction for Lemass's proposed committee:

The Minister realises that the suggestion presents many features of difficulty... but, having regard to the growing importance of the cinema from many points of view, he considers that the problem should be thoroughly (sic) investigated.¹¹

¹¹ Leydon to McElligott
12 June 1937. S 10136.

The response of the Department of Finance was, even by that department's conservative standards, spectacularly negative, refusing to even countenance the committee's establishment. Their reluctance was predicated on a combination of economic and ideological grounds. McElligott pointed out that even a native industry which managed to produce 50 films per annum could only make a minor dent in the country's cinematic balance of payments deficit given that approximately 1,000 films were imported every year. He also pointed to the severe losses experienced by the UK industry 'notwithstanding the much greater financial resources of the former country'.¹²

¹² McElligott to Leydon,
14 July 1937. S 10136.

In the light of these facts the Minister cannot see how a film industry could operate here without sustaining heavy losses which would have to be borne by the Exchequer.¹³

¹³ McElligott to Leydon,
14 July 1937. S 10136.

McElligott firmly rejected the establishment of the committee. Clearly irked, Lemass wrote to one of his own civil servants:

The Department of Finance minute purports to be an answer to the question, or one of the questions, which the proposed committee was to examine. We are not trying to make a 'prima facie case' for the establishment of the film industry but to have examined whether it is practicable, and if so on what lines, and what are the advantages and disadvantages etc... There is no case which can be made against an enquiry directed to these aims. Please reply to Department Finance accordingly and say that I must insist on this committee being set up.¹⁴

¹⁴ Lemass to Ferguson,
20 August 1937, R 303
3/5.

Thus instructed Leydon and other departmental officers repeatedly sought sanction and participation for such a committee from the Department of Finance. They adopted a slightly altered rationale in their communications, however, stressing that they were not seeking to make a case for the establishment of an industry:

It was, perhaps, not made sufficiently clear in our official minute that we were not as a Department desirous of making a case for the establishment of the industry but wished to have as much information as possible made available in the form of a considered report. Assuming even, that the report contained sufficient evidence that it was not possible, except at an unreasonable cost to State funds, to carry on film production in the Saorstát, it was felt that this would have the useful effect, at least, of enabling the Department to deal with the series of proposals which have been for several years past put to the Department from time to time.¹⁵

¹⁵ R.C. Ferguson (official,
Industry and Commerce)
to JJ McElligott (Finance)
23 August 1937, R
303/Gb/18.

It is difficult to square the assertion here that the primary function of the committee was to collate information that would allow the Department to deal with (and implicitly reject) private proposals to establish film production with a quote from Industry and Commerce's response to De Valera's query about Devane which argued that a film industry 'adapted to the national cultural and educational outlook of the country' could only 'be done as a State or semi-State undertaking'.¹⁶ After all, why mention state intervention if it wasn't on the agenda?

¹⁶ Secretary, Industry
and Commerce to Private
Secretary, Department of
the Taoiseach 24 June
1937, S 10136.



Nonetheless Lemass got his way: in November 1937 after a few more inter-departmental iterations, the Department of Finance approved the committee on the condition that the report remain confidential to be purely used for ‘the information of Ministers and for Departmental guidance’.¹⁷ This insistence suggests a suspicion on the part of the department that – if made public – the report might form the basis for something more ambitious than simply answering questions relating to the film industry. After several more exchanges between the two departments, the following terms of reference for the committee were set out:

To examine and report on

- (1) the feasibility and approximate cost of establishing a film industry (producing, developing, printing &c.) in Éire;
- (2) the extent, if any, to which, and the conditions, if any, upon which, financial or other assistance should be afforded to such industry by the State, having regard to the use of the film for educational, agricultural, industrial, tourist, cultural and general propaganda purposes;
- (3) the present system of distribution of films in Éire and any changes in that system which may be desirable;
- (4) the extent to which it is desirable to limit the ownership and control of cinemas in Éire by non-national persons or bodies;
- (5) the extent to which it is desirable further to control the exhibition of films in Éire in the interests of moral, national and cultural development.¹⁸

Industry and Commerce immediately set about forming the committee with representatives of its own department, and from the Departments of Education and Finance: E.M. Forde (the chair) a principal officer from Industry and Commerce, Seoirse MacNiocaill, a General Inspector from Education, T S Kealy, an assistant principal from Finance and E J C McEvoy, a junior executive officer from Industry and Commerce who acted as secretary. As its composition suggests, the committee was far from expert in the field of the cinema. In June 1939, Leydon wrote to McElligott seeking sanction for committee trips to London and Kerry to observe the workings of British studios and assess the Killarney studio facility where five years earlier, local garage owner Tom Cooper and 250 locals had produced *The Dawn*.¹⁹ Noting with regard to exhibition and distribution that the committee had already ‘acquired a fairly intimate knowledge of these spheres of activity’, Leydon conceded that the same could not be said of production:

In this connection it may be stated that no member of the Committee has ever been inside a film studio, and, without a clear conception of what a film studio is like and some insight into the problem of production, any conclusion the Committee ... will have on the feasibility of establishing a film industry in Ireland must necessarily be restricted.²⁰

Hence the request (to which Finance acceded) to sanction a London trip,²¹ scheduled to begin on 11 September, 1939. However the outbreak of war led to the visit being cancelled and the committee ruefully concluded that they would have to ‘suspend almost entirely’²² their work. Nevertheless, as the war dragged on the committee recommenced its work in fits and starts. In consequence the committee’s deliberations were informed by evidence or representations received from bodies or individuals within Ireland. These mainly came from one of two backgrounds: those associated with the film industry in Ireland (i.e. distributor and exhibitors representative organisations and a handful of would-be film-makers);²³ and those associated with the Catholic Church.

¹⁷ McElligott to Leydon, 25 November 1937, R 303/GB/18.

¹⁸ Contained in a letter from R.C. Ferguson to the Secretary of the Department of Justice 28 January 1938, R 303/GB/18.

¹⁹ See Rockett et al (1987) or Barton (2004) for an account of the remarkable circumstances surrounding the production of this film.

²⁰ See Ferguson to the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 14 July 1939, R 303/GB/18.

²¹ The committee intended to visit Denham Studios in Buckinghamshire, Elstree, Pinewood, Pathe Studios in London and the laboratory of George Humphreys and Co. They also intended to visit the BBFC, the BFI and representatives from the GPO Film Department and the Cinematography Films Branch of the British Board of Trade. See Ferguson to the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 14 July 1939, R 303/GB/18.

²² Lorcan O’Brien to Assistant Secretary (Leas Rúnaí) (P Ó Cinnéide?) of Department of the Taoiseach 18 October 1940, R 303/GB/18.

²³ In fairness, this group did include several individuals/companies who had actually made films: Tom Cooper who had made *The Dawn* in 1934 and 1935, Richard Hayward who produced the featurette *In the Footsteps of St. Patrick* and the Educational Film Company of Ireland which had produced the feature length *Kilmainham Jail*.



These included Richard Devane who outlined his ideas on encouraging indigenous production and on adjusting the practice of censoring films (and whom the committee singled out in their concluding remarks as having offered 'invaluable help' to their work). The committee also met a committee of two bishops appointed by the Catholic Hierarchy.

The Committee finally submitted a completed draft of the report in March 1942. Despite having never made it to London, they did address the production element of their terms of reference albeit with the caveat that the production section would 'have been of greater value had the committee had a practical knowledge of production methods'.

The report was divided into chapters dealing with exhibition, distribution, production and censorship of films in Ireland. The penultimate chapter discussed how the establishment of a National Film Institute could address some of the problems thrown up in the earlier chapters. As a result it represented a comprehensive oversight of (and offered a profound insight into) official thinking on the role of cinema in Irish cultural affairs. Furthermore, the fact that it was written on the understanding that it would not be made public led the committee to express their views in relatively unguarded terms. As such the document is unusually revealing. It is also quite impressive in its nuanced grasp of the political economy of the film industry, including the implications for Ireland of the global nature of the industry.

The opening chapter focused on the exhibition sector. Dublin exhibitors had sought to convince the committee that the number of cinemas in the capital had reached saturation point and that further openings would inevitably cause existing theatres to close. As a corrective the exhibitors suggested licencing cinemas to prevent redundancy in the market. The committee retorted that it was unprepared to accept the contention that exhibition 'should be an exception to other forms of enterprise in which a reasonable amount of competition is regarded as desirable' (RICFI, 8). It was not entirely against state regulation of the sector, however. Noting growing concentration of cinema ownership in the form of cinema chains, it expressed a classical economist's concern with market tendencies towards oligopoly. Thus it approvingly noted the call by independent cinema owners to place a ceiling on the total number of seats cumulatively held by an exhibitor or group of exhibitors.

The threat of 'alien penetration' of exhibition prompted a call for state intervention on quite different principles – those informing the Control of Manufactures Act, the legal instrument which had instituted economic protectionism in 1932. Whilst acknowledging that this had not been a problem hitherto (with the possible exception of the Dublin market) the committee noted that there was nothing to prevent 'foreign interests' from securing control of Irish exhibition. Close reading of the report suggests that the committee was motivated not only by a desire to keep Irish cinemas in Irish hands, but also by a concern to prevent very particular hands from gaining control of exhibition. Half a decade earlier the *Irish Press* campaigned against three British-owned Dublin cinemas asking 'whether certain interests in this country are to use their trading position here to endeavour to influence the Irish attitude to moral and social questions' (*Irish Press*, 6 February 1935, cited in Rockett, 2001). The report was more explicit, singling out Jewish ownership of Irish cinemas as a cultural threat:

It was considered undesirable that a service such as the cinema, which nowadays plays so large a part in the social and cultural life of the community, should be controlled to such an extent as at present by persons whose *ideas and general outlook are alien to those of the majority of our people.* (p. 10, italics added)

Somewhat grudgingly the committee acknowledged that the Constitution did not recognise any racial discrimination between citizens and that 'legislation could not be introduced which would be directed, surreptitiously or otherwise, against Jews in



particular' (p.11). Nonetheless these views reflect Ruth Barton's point that in the middle years of the 20th century culture in Ireland effectively meant the expression of a collective identity designed to stabilise the still-nascent nation-state (Barton, 2004: 9). In a context where identities which deviated from the norms approved by cultural nationalism were regarded as potentially dangerous, 'alien' control of the means by which such identities were represented would not be tolerated.

However exhibition was not the only sector of the film industry influencing the range of representations available to the Irish public. Similar concerns are evident in the report's discussion of distribution, which adverted to the 'cultural significance' of that fact that alien film distributors 'determine[d] the extent and nature of the supplies that we may be allowed to receive' (RICFI, 13).

For the most part, however, a more hardnosed economic protectionist perspective informed the committee's examination of distribution. Whereas oligopolistic tendencies were only a theoretical threat in exhibition, they were demonstrably present in distribution. The committee described the position enjoyed by subsidiaries of Hollywood and British distributors in the Irish market as effectively creating 'monopoly conditions'. Noting that 'over £200,000 a year is exported in film rental from this country by representatives of foreign film companies', (p.14) the committee pointed out that the 'only contribution of any consequence that foreign renters are called upon to make in return...is that represented by the import duty on films' (p. 16).²⁴ Furthermore not only did these overseas agents afford Ireland 'little benefit by way of employment or revenue' but, crucially, their dominant position in the market hindered 'the growth of an independent film renting industry' (p. 13).

This last point was critical not because the committee was concerned with the development of a domestic distribution sector per se but because of the committee's recognition of the relationship between distribution and their core interest – production. The report noted that 'even if we acquired control of distribution we should still be in the hands of alien producers'. However, the obverse was also true: developing an indigenous production sector was pointless unless Ireland had some say over distribution both inside *and outside* Ireland. Noting that the cost of even low-budget films was out of proportion to the revenue which could be expected from the Irish market the report concluded that access to international distribution was a prerequisite for a commercially successful industry:

... the normal cost of producing a feature film of the less expensive kind is from £20,000 to £30,000. The maximum revenue that can be expected from the distribution of a successful film in this country is from £3,000 to £4,000. From this it is clear that the Irish market alone would be unable to support a major film industry. (p. 18)

Yet the committee was pessimistic about the prospects of securing such distribution, even in countries with a substantial diasporic Irish population:

In the United States competition is so keen and the market dominated to such an extent by the big Hollywood producer-renter-exhibitor trusts that the possibility of gaining a secure footing in that market is slight. In other countries, besides competition from Hollywood interests, opposition would be encountered from organisations endeavouring with Government support to develop a native film industry. (p. 18)

Even within Ireland, the dominance of US/UK distributors was such that Irish films would find it difficult to access local screens. The committee cited the widespread practice of block-booking whereby US and UK distributors forced exhibitors to book films en bloc, with the result that Irish theatrical schedules were fixed up to 15 months in advance which 'would make it difficult for an exhibitor to find a place in his programme for any Irish film that might be available' p. 15).

²⁴ It should be noted that this was not an insignificant contribution: the report estimated that the state raised £60,000 in import duties each year, a useful top-up to the £280,000 annually collected from cinemas in the form of Entertainments Duty.



Yet, having established that foreign dominance of domestic and international distribution posed difficulties for Irish production, the committee was tentative in proposing remedies. In the international arena, the report suggested that the Irish state could 'encourage' US distributors to acquire one or two Irish features a year by threatening to introduce import restrictions on Hollywood films if the distributors failed to play along. With regard to the indigenous market the report discussed how to bring about market conditions conducive to the establishment of an Irish distribution company. Specifically the report suggested replacing existing duties on imported films with a more progressive film hire tax. Such a tax would be levied as a percentage of a given film's gross theatrical earnings. In theory this might encourage Irish capital to undertake speculative investment in the distribution of riskier (i.e. non-Hollywood) titles whilst punishing the more successful (i.e. Hollywood) titles.

However, the committee was circumspect about the likely response of the distributors to such moves. The distributors interviewed 'made it clear that they would not suffer their income from this country to be diminished' (p.16). In practice this raised the possibility of distributors retaliating by:

withholding film supplies in the hope that the resultant dislocation of the Irish cinema trade would ultimately induce the Government to reconsider its decision. That renters would have little hesitation in adopting such tactics is indicated by the action taken by them in Mexico and in Italy when State measures threatened their interests.
(p. 17)

Thus the committee recommended that any state action with regard to distribution adopt at most a '*reasonably* firm attitude' (p. 17, italics added).

Having at least partially dealt with distribution the report cited far more prosaic difficulties in the chapter on developing production in Ireland. Chief amongst these were the absence of any substantial studio facilities or of any company regularly producing films on any scale. Neither gap was likely to be filled in the absence of state intervention. Given this, 'the first step in the establishment of an Irish film industry would be the setting up of a State film studio' (p. 20). The scale of studio envisaged by the committee was modest – £25,000 for initial capital costs and £8,000 per annum thereafter in operating costs – but was nonetheless likely to require government (financial) assistance 'for an indefinite period' (p. 20), given that few producers would be expected to make use of the studio in its early years.

Such indeed was the small scale of studios envisaged by the committee that the report seriously discussed buying out and improving the facility built in the mid-1930s by Tom Cooper for *The Dawn* since such an upgrade would be cheaper than building a new studio. Further since the committee felt that a single efficient studio would be ample for any likely demand 'for some considerable time' (p. 20), they reversed their earlier objection to regulating competition, effectively recommending that the studio be granted monopoly status 'in order to avoid uneconomic competition' p. 20).

Turning to the core question of the report – how to encourage native enterprise to actually produce films – the committee (inevitably) concluded that further state assistance would be essential. This might take the form of 'a partial re-imburement of production costs' (p. 21) via grants funded by the film hire tax mooted in the previous chapter on distribution. Given such assistance the committee pragmatically concluded that any native Irish film industry might be able to begin producing short films. Even shorts presented difficulties however. In addition to the need to regulate block booking 'so as to give exhibitors an opportunity to book home-produced short films' (p. 21), the report noted that the trend towards double features and ciné variety was squeezing the market for shorts. Obliging cinemas to reserve screen time for domestically-produced shorts was considered but ruled out on the pragmatic grounds that 'the initial output of a native film industry would not be sufficient to fill it' (p. 22).



Indigenous newsreel production appeared a more encouraging prospect. The report noted that newsreels screened in Ireland were produced by four overseas companies which generally failed to do justice to domestic stories:

Irish events of significance are often allowed to pass unchronicled and so-called Irish editions of newsreels may not include a single item of Irish interest. When Irish matter is recorded it forms only a small proportion of the news items shown and it is sometimes presented in an unsatisfactory manner. (p. 22)

The committee was confident that the public would welcome a higher proportion of Irish news. Furthermore the report cited several native enterprises which had expressed an interest in newsreel production. Unfortunately all of those enterprises asserted – and the committee accepted – that commercial viability required monopoly rights for newsreel production and the imposition by government of a quota for domestic newsreel on exhibitors to ensure access to theatres. Nonetheless the committee argued such concessions should be seriously examined as the only alternative means of increasing the amount of domestic content in newsreels – offering tax incentives to the existing foreign news reel companies – would still leave the ‘selection and mode of presentation of the news ... in the hand of foreign companies’ (p. 23).

In sum then with regard to production the conclusions of the report were somewhat gloomy:

... a native film industry could never hope to replace to any large extent imported films by native films. Apart from an occasional full-length film its scope would be restricted to the production of short films and to films for education, industrial, agricultural tourist and general propaganda purposes. Its prospects of ever becoming self-supporting would depend on the extent to which a foreign market could be secured, and while this would depend to some degree on the quality, artistic merit and general appeal of the productions, other obstacles in the way are so great that it would be wise in considering the question of the establishment of a small-scale film industry to proceed on the assumption that its products would seldom procure exhibition outside the country. The greater portion of the cost of films produced in this country would in these circumstances have to be met from public funds. (p. 25)

The question of precisely how those public funds might be dispensed was addressed in the next chapter examining the pros and cons of a National Film Institute. For the committee the prevalence of such bodies in European and Commonwealth countries demonstrated that although ‘the significance of the film is being increasingly realised elsewhere’ (p. 34), in Ireland ‘it has hardly begun to be taken seriously’ (p. 34). In words that echoed the 1924 Dáil Committee on Broadcasting (which argued for state control of that medium),²⁵ the report argued that cinema was too important to be left to ‘commercial interests ... but should be controlled and directed so as to serve the national interest’ (p. 34). Responsibility for this would fall to a ‘National Film and Cinema Board’ charged with the ‘supervision and direction of all activities relating to film and the cinema’ (p. 34).

More specifically it was envisaged that the Board would undertake some of the activities suggested earlier in the report such as regulating the scale of cinema chains and the extent of foreign ownership of exhibition theatres. It would also act as a focus for production activity, offering encouragement, advice and – on occasion – funding for prospective producers. Finally, the Board was expected to offer input on the question of who might run any state-funded film studio and was to offer advice on encouraging overseas producers to film in Ireland. In short the Board would effectively bear de facto responsibility for defining film policy in Ireland.

²⁵ The Dáil Committee viewed ‘the use of wireless telephone for entertainment, however desirable, as of vastly less importance than its use as ministering alike to cultural and commercial progress’ DD 28 March 1924.



However, the committee described as ‘perhaps the most important function’ of the board the promotion of film for ‘purposes of education, culture and general propaganda’ (p. 35). Demonstrating almost limitless faith in the power of the medium, the report asserted that there was ‘no subject of the school curriculum which does not lend itself in a greater or less degree to film treatment’. Similarly with regard to cinema’s cultural potential the report suggested that

An important contribution could be made towards the development of national culture by the exhibition of films dealing with the history and institutions, traditions and customs, literature, music, games and pastimes of the people. (p. 37)

However, it was at the nexus where culture and education met that the report identified cinema’s single greatest potential: ‘reviving the National Language’. Using words which would find an echo 50 years later in Michael D. Higgins’s legitimisation of state investment in Irish-language broadcasting, the committee opined:

It is outside the schools, however, that the film can make its greatest contribution to the work for the language. It is generally recognised that the main difficulty now to be surmounted is that of maintaining the use of Irish in the after-life of the young people leaving school. While a considerable amount of Irish is being spoken outside of the schools it must be admitted that the language has not yet found its way into the main stream of our national life, and it is to be feared that the majority of our young people rarely or never hear it after the termination of their school careers. The regular use of Irish in the cinemas would provide a remedy for this; indeed it may be regarded as essential for the restoration of the language. (p. 36)

In reading the report from a 21st century perspective, however, what is striking about such language is less its confidence in the influence of film than the inability of the committee to conceive of film as an art form in its own right. Barton (2004: 9) has noted that Irish cinema has ‘struggled to find its own place in a critical environment dominated by the literary’. Certainly the general approach of the interdepartmental committee unproblematically assumed that cinema was primarily useful for remediating (and reinvigorating) existing cultural forms rather than constituting an art form in its own right.

Nonetheless the emphasis on the potential power of cinema found further echo in the report’s final chapter which – following representations from the representatives of the Catholic Hierarchy and other Catholic organisations²⁶ – addressed the practice of film censorship. Rockett (2004) has recently demonstrated the extraordinary zealotry with which Irish Film Censors of the 1940s undertook their work. Notwithstanding this the Hierarchy asserted that even when the censor had finished his work ‘there were still sometimes matters to which exception could be taken’ (p. 44). The precise nature of these matters was not specified but the committee noted objections to films characterised ‘by a materialistic philosophy which Ireland as a small Christian nation was striving to resist’ (p. 44). Indeed the complainants argued that ‘some of the concepts presented in these films were in fact directly opposed to principles embodied in the Constitution’ (p. 44) although precisely which principles was not divulged. Given this the Hierarchy argued that the provisions of the existing 1923 Film Censorship Act were too general and that they should be replaced by a code of a more detailed character.

Particular attention was drawn to the negative impact of films on young people. The committee heard that although specific acts of juvenile delinquency could rarely be blamed on individual films, nonetheless the ‘cumulative effect’ of watching films ‘could be regarded as being definitively conducive to crime or immorality’ (p. 47). Furthermore:

²⁶ See for example the section on ‘Representations on existing censorship provisions’ on page 44 of the report.



There was also a number of films in which the way to wealth and worldly success was shown to be quick and easy, without the need for hard work and perseverance. The operation of films of the above kinds upon young minds was generally more subtle and insidious than in the case of the more markedly undesirable films but their influence was nonetheless real. (p. 47)

The implication was that juvenile cinema-going required special regulation. The obvious solution was to issue limited certificates but the committee counselled against this option, noting that existing practice had refrained from the issuing of 'adult only' certificates on the grounds that limited certs would cause more problems than they would solve, stimulating 'morbid curiosity' and inciting 'the precocious' to evade the law.

More paternalistic concerns militated against the committee's acceptance of the suggestion that children under ten should be entirely banned from the cinema. Although acknowledging that cinema was 'no place for the child of tender years' the committee noted that the circumstances of many Irish households - 'particularly those of the poorer classes' - were such that that a ban on young children would create hardship for such families. Instead the committee suggested that the proposed National Film and Cinema Board might circulate information about films they considered particularly suitable for showing to children.

Despite the views advanced by the hierarchy, the committee advised against making any substantive changes to the existing censorship code. Ironically they did so on the grounds that such changes might have the opposite outcome to that sought by the hierarchy, i.e. that forcing the censor to operate within a more strictly defined code might force him to pass films which the extant code permitted him to cut or ban. In a frank admission of how censorship actually operated in Ireland of the 1940s, the committee expressed the feeling that:

the efficiency of censorship lies with the censor rather than the code, and that the highest degree of efficiency is attainable when the censor has the largest amount of freedom consonant with the maintenance of the fundamental principles upon which the censorship rests. (p. 46)

With those comments the main body of the report concluded.

Lemass's immediate response to the report is not recorded but subsequent policy decisions suggest that he was most concerned with the prospects for establishing an indigenous production sector. To recap, the committee concluded that a financially viable Irish film industry required access to export markets, but that the oligopolistic nature of the US market and the protectionist nature of other national markets would make this difficult to achieve. Therefore any hypothetical Irish production sector would necessarily be small-scale and probably state-subsidised.

This was hardly encouraging: it effectively confirmed what Lemass's own civil servants and the Department of Finance had long asserted - that a commercially viable Irish film industry was impossible. In the event, however, this conclusion did not dishearten Lemass but prompted him to engage in some lateral thinking about the problem: namely, if an indigenous film industry was impossible, were there any alternative means by which film-making activity in Ireland might be encouraged? While he pondered this question, Lemass took a strategic decision to park the report lest its gloomy conclusions be seized upon by others (in particular, the Department of Finance) as definitively closing the question:

I think action on it must be suspended for the time being. I do not consider it necessary to circulate it to the Govt. I would prefer not to do this until I would submit recommendation as to action as well.²⁷

²⁷ Lemass to ???
(Leydon?) 20 May 1942.



Thus, despite several frustrated public and Dáil requests in 1943 and 1944 as to what action would follow the completion of the report, it remained unpublished. (These included several attempts by Richard Devane to include the document in his one-off publication, *Irish Film Handbook 1943*). Nonetheless, some of the report's recommendations relating to the educational potential of cinema were progressed. In February 1943, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Planning, constituted by Lemass along with De Valera and Sean MacEntee (the Minister for Local Government) instructed the Department of Education to 'examine the question of acquiring or renting education films ... and arranging for their display throughout the country'.²⁸ This was followed in December 1943, by the establishment of a further inter-departmental committee (this time representing Education, Finance, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture and Local Government and Public Health) which considered the report's recommendations relating to the promotion of educational films and films in the Irish language. This committee would ultimately recommend the advancing of funds to the National Film Institute of Ireland the establishment of which under Richard Devane (with the all-seeing 'patronage' of John Charles McQuaid, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin) had been announced in July 1943. Thus from 1945/6, as a consequence of the report, the institution which would later become the Irish Film Institute received an annual grant of £2,000 via the annual Science and Art allocation of the Department of Education for the purposes of acquiring a library of education films and producing films on behalf of government departments.²⁹

²⁸ Extract from minutes of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Planning attached to a letter from the Secretary of the Department of Education to the Secretary of Industry and Commerce, 10 February 1943. R 303/GB/18.

²⁹ These films were not necessarily produced by the Institute itself. A 1947 memo outlines the arrangement: '... a department desiring to have a film made on a particular subject makes application to the Institute, which invites tenders for the production of the film, enters into a contract with a film-producing concern, and makes all the necessary commercial arrangements, subject to the requirements of the Department commissioning the film, and to the sanction of the Departments of Education and Finance as to the cost of the production'. Memo prepared by the Department of Industry and Commerce on 'Use of Irish in Films' dated simply August 1947. R 303/GB/18.

However the report would ultimately have much more substantial impact on the shaping of the state's longer-term policy on film production. By impressing on Lemass the difficulties entailed in creating an Irish film industry, it led him instead to consider how to encourage the development of a *film industry in Ireland* i.e. one based on foreign direct investment from US and UK production companies. In effect then the 1942 report framed Irish film policy for the next 26 years, from Lemass's 1946/47 proposals that the state should build and run international scale film studios, through to the decisions taken between 1957 and 1960 that the state should entirely underwrite not just the building of Ardmore studios but also the production of overseas productions there via the Irish Film Finance Corporation. It was, therefore, not until the 1968 Report of the Film Industry Committee (the Huston Report), that that policy was reconsidered and the idea of promoting an indigenous industry revived (Flynn, 2005).

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Journalism education in Ireland

Nora French

The start of journalism education in Ireland is generally dated from the 1960s with the setting up of the journalism course in the College of Commerce, Rathmines. However, there were some earlier initiatives in the first decade of the 20th century. A series of lectures was organised by the Institute of Journalists in Trinity College Dublin in 1908-9 (Hunter, 1982; Institute of Journalists, 1909) and journalism is said to have become a degree subject in Queens College/University College Cork around the same time (Stephenson and Mory, 1990; Murphy, 1995). These efforts appear to have rapidly faded. They coincide with similar initiatives in Britain which were also unsuccessful, in contrast to the United States, where journalism education was developed in several locations such as the universities of Missouri, Wisconsin and Columbia University, New York, which to this day, remain strong providers in the field.

The reason for this activity in the early 20th century in the US and Britain is linked to unease amongst both journalists and public at the standards of journalism at that time. The commercialisation of journalism and the rise of the yellow press raised concern for the quality of news and for the working conditions of journalists. Attempts were made on both sides of the Atlantic to professionalise the industry. In the US, where the normal route to professionalisation of any group of workers was through higher education (McChesney, 2003), university level education in journalism was successfully established in the 1900s (Weaver, 2003; Johansen et al., 2001). In Britain, where the normal route to professionalisation was through the establishment of a professional body (Siegrist, 1994), the Institute of Journalists (IOJ) was set up by Royal Charter in 1890, but this was quite soon superseded by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), which as a trade union, proved itself a successful means of protecting journalists' interests. Nevertheless, there were attempts in Britain to establish programmes in journalism education. These included the setting up of a private school of journalism in London in 1887-88 (David Anderson's London School of Journalism, 200 The Strand), and various initiatives by the Institute of Journalists at London, Birmingham and Leeds between 1887 and 1909. They also included a 1908 conference in London on journalism education to which American speakers were invited, indicating an awareness of the development of education in the US. The most long-lasting initiative was the setting up of the Diploma for Journalism at the University of London which ran from 1919 until 1939. A small-scale operation, it closed at the start of World War 2 and never reopened (Hunter, 1982; Stephenson and Mory, 1990; Esser, 2003).

As Ireland at the time was politically part of the United Kingdom, both the lecture series in Trinity and the attempted development of journalism in UCC can be seen as part of the phenomenon occurring in Britain. Foley (2004) has argued that Irish journalism in the 19th century was distinctive from that in Britain in being more political and less a commercial enterprise than in the rest of the UK and the US. He also argues that Irish journalists were both more idealistic and more middle class than in Britain. Yet then as now, journalism in Ireland was closely linked to that of Britain, as evidenced by the organisation of Irish journalists by the NUJ. Likewise journalism education has always mirrored that in Britain, as distinct from that in the US or in other European countries (see Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha, 2003). The resemblance is reinforced by the relative similarity of the higher education systems in Britain and Ireland.

The 1960s were a time of expansion in higher education in Ireland in general but especially in the areas of vocational and technological education (Coolahan, 1981; White, 2001). The OECD reports *Training of Technicians in Ireland*, (1964) and



Investment in Education (1965), and the start of economic development in the country as a whole supported this expansion. However, the move to set up provision to educate journalists preceded the two OECD reports and was instigated by the industry rather than any educational body, perhaps energised in the early 1960s by the establishment of an Irish television service and by the opening up of press coverage of Northern Ireland (Horgan, 2001). This initiative can be closely related once again to what was happening in journalism education in Britain.

The 1949 report by the Royal Commission of the Press in the UK found the training for journalists to be inadequate. As a result of this report, all bodies representing the press – unions, editors, management and proprietors – came together to form what by 1955 had become the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). The NCTJ became the cornerstone of journalism training in Britain. It firstly set up day release courses which by 1965, had changed to block release. Alongside these a one-year full-time course in journalism was developed which was run in various colleges accredited by the NCTJ (Stephenson and Mory, 1990; Esser, 2003).

In Ireland, the NUJ instigated the setting up of journalism education in 1963 by writing to the then Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, on the need to provide training for young journalists. Lemass gave his support, a Committee for the Training of Journalists was established and arrangements were put in place to commence a part-time release programme in Rathmines that same year (see Aja, 2000). This course consisting of a half day weekly session over two years (Fox, 1967), was repeated for the next four years and, in 1968, was replaced by a one year full-time course. The course was accredited by the London-based NCTJ and was similar to that offered in British colleges at the time, with some adaptations to the Irish context. The Rathmines course was important as the only preparation for entry to journalism in the country. Admission to it was competitive and it was widely recognised as equivalent to a degree for employment within the print and broadcast press.

The development of journalism education

Since those first beginnings, there has been a gradual expansion in provision in the number of courses available, their level and duration (Horgan, 2001). Currently, the main higher education centres for professional journalism education in the Republic of Ireland are: Dublin City University (DCU), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), formerly University College Galway, and two private colleges, Griffith College Dublin and Dublin Business School. DCU runs a three year honours degree and a one-year masters' programme; DIT runs a four-year honours degree and a one-year masters' programme; NUIG has a one-year masters' programme. Griffith College's range of programmes comprise a three-year undergraduate honours degree, a three-year ordinary degree and a one-year graduate diploma. DBS since 2004 has a three-year honours degree.

The College of Commerce Rathmines was one of the six third level colleges under the local education authority, the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, (CDVEC) which were brought together informally in 1978 to form the DIT. DIT was set up by statute in 1992 (Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992). The programmes at DIT represent continuity with the original programme from the 1960s. This programme was developed and run in close relationship with the industry, both the union, the NUJ, and employers, NNI (National Newspapers of Ireland) and PNI (Provincial Newspapers of Ireland). The union had great influence over the course, insisting on restrictions in the number and age of students (maximum 21 years) admitted to the course, and through the NCTJ, determining the duration of the course and much of its content. The one-year certificate course was extended to two years in the late 1970s. Its curriculum reflected the NCTJ skills based approach, with the different elements of practical



¹ See Stephenson and Mory (1990: 192 foll.) for further details of the NCTJ syllabus.

journalism being complemented by courses in law, politics and public administration, and economics.¹ The Rathmines course went beyond the requirements of the NCTJ in these areas and also included Irish and French. Until the mid 1980s, one of the external examiners was from the NCTJ and a representative from the NUJ and the PNI sat on the interview board for student admissions. From the late 1970s, there were increasing tensions because of the restrictions insisted on the course by NCTJ and supported by the union and the college's desire to up-grade the course (Conway, 2006). In a paper from the Dublin branch of the NUJ, the union's feeling of ownership over the course is apparent in its expressed annoyance at its exclusion from decisions by the college, particularly over the extension of the course to two years. It, on the other hand, wanted the input to be reduced from 20 students per year to twelve and had its own proposals to make also about the course content and admissions procedures (NUJ, 1981).

In 1978, Rathmines, by then part of DIT, set up a three/four year course in communications that was originally intended to include journalism. However, the course developed into a film and broadcasting degree without any element of journalism. Apart from opposition from the industry, the eventual exclusion of journalism also reflected the views of the professional media lecturers on this course who, coming from RTÉ were accustomed to journalists being categorised as different and distinct from other media professionals.

In 1982, the newly founded National Institute for Higher Education Dublin (NIHE) developed a post-graduate diploma in journalism. It was able to take advantage of the blockage that was occurring in the development of the Rathmines course, and it reflected the development of similar post-graduate courses in Britain at that time, for example, at the University of Wales in Cardiff and City University, London (Stephenson and Mory, 1990: 19-21). The course was established without the agreement of the NUJ and without accreditation from the NCTJ. After initial opposition, the NUJ soon gave recognition to this course, despite the fact that it was contrary to its policy regarding the appropriate level of education and age of entrants to the profession.

The reason why NIHE developed a journalism programme and became heavily involved in media education more generally has, of course, to do with the original development of this institution in the seventies. The government at the time wished to develop higher level technological education in the country and proposed to set up two new institutions in Dublin and Limerick. In Dublin, the plan was that the higher level work of the DIT colleges should be moved to the new institution; courses and staff were to be transferred from one institution to the other. However, the plan failed, mainly because local government (through the CDVEC) and central government did not agree on who should control the new body. The government went ahead to set up a completely new institution, the NIHE. Although courses were not transferred, it went on to develop its own programmes in several of the areas already found in DIT, including journalism and the wider media/communications field (White, 2001:149-153; Duff et al., 2000: 28-33). NIHE was given university status in 1989 and changed its name to Dublin City University (DCU).

DCU up-graded its course to masters level in 1990. At that stage, the courses in DIT and DCU were, it could be said, in line with what the government had intended with the higher level professional course being delivered in the new institution and DIT continuing the lower level work. However, this situation was to change in the next few years.

DIT developed its post graduate diploma in journalism in 1994 and converted the diploma course to a masters degree in 1997. In the 1990s also, both colleges established four-year honours undergraduate degrees in journalism, in 1992 in the case of DCU and in 1994 in DIT. This again was following the trend in Britain and elsewhere in Europe where it was argued, for example at meetings of the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA), that the one-year masters courses were not a sufficient response to the need for graduate journalists. The constraints of a one-year



course greatly limited what could be covered in the curriculum. A more thorough education in all aspects of journalism could be offered in the longer undergraduate programmes. Also, the aspirations of those graduating with masters degrees did not match many of the job opportunities available in the industry, for example, for work with the local and regional press and for work as generalists rather than as specialists in the field which these post-graduates would have studied for their primary degrees.

The two degree programmes were relatively similar, both being situated in larger media communications schools, and both drawing on general theoretical work in media communications alongside the different elements of journalism practice. Languages were also included in both programmes. They have diverged more recently. Since 2002, DIT's programme has been titled 'BA Journalism with a Language', with less emphasis on communications theory and more on languages. DCU, in contrast, dropped languages in 2004, refocused more on law and politics and cut the length of the programme from four to three years.

The course in NUIG was established as a Post-Graduate Diploma in Applied Communications in 1988 (O'Sullivan, 2003). Despite its title, it was a one-year course in professional journalism. Its distinctiveness lay in being offered through both Irish and English, thus supporting the Irish language media many of which are based close by in Galway or the Connemara Gaeltacht. In 2002, NUIG extended its English language course to an MA in Journalism. The Irish language course remains a diploma under the old title *Árd Diplóma í gCumarsáid Fheimeach*, and has developed into a more general course in media practices. Galway has been the only centre for professional journalism education outside Dublin.

Griffith College was established in 1974. It was one of a number of private colleges set up for commercial purposes which, especially between 1980 and 2000, took advantage of the shortage of third level places in the public education system (White, 2000: 242). It concentrates mainly on business and law apart from journalism. In the mid 1990s, it took over the journalism course originally established by Newman College in the 1980s. Newman College, run by the Catholic organisation Opus Dei, closed a relatively short time after the journalism course was started because of financial difficulties. Griffith College has expanded the original two-year certificate programme and by 2004 was offering a three-year degree in journalism, a three-year diploma and a one-year graduate diploma. Its courses are validated by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) DCU, DIT and NUIG have the right to validate their own courses.

The journalism degree offered in DBS is a very recent development. DBS is mainly a business school with some humanities programmes. Its degree programme, validated by HETAC, started in 2004.

Elsewhere there are courses that include elements of journalism, in higher education in the universities and institutes of technology, and in further education colleges.

The BA in Media Studies introduced in the National University of Ireland at Maynooth in September 2002 suggested journalism as a career option for graduates. However, although the course content included some practical courses in media production, journalism per se did not figure in the curriculum and the reference to journalism has been dropped. The University of Limerick has a BA degree in English and New Media the content of which is purely academic yet journalism is again listed as a possible career opportunity for graduates. Mary Immaculate College, affiliated to the University of Limerick, offers Media Communications as a subject on its BA degree. This degree is intended as a liberal arts programme – the prospectus even quotes Aristotle's definition of the aim of liberal education as the education and studies 'that exist for their own sake'. However, the media communications section somewhat contradicts this as the programme includes 'a theoretical and practical approach to journalism, both print and electronic media' (www.mic.ul.ie, 10.5.06). Some of these



centres may go on to develop professional journalism courses. Currently, they do not offer them, nor do they have journalist lecturers on their staff or recognition from the NUJ.

Among the institutes of technology, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology has since 1998, run a degree programme BA Gnó agus Cumarsáid (Business and Communications) which includes a module in Irish language journalism. Cork Institute of Technology has been running a part-time certificate in printing for some time that includes some training in journalism skills. Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology has developed a course in radio broadcasting that attracts a National Certificate in Humanities (Radio Broadcasting) from HETAC.

It is worth noting that, notwithstanding their interest in the 1900s, the traditional universities have not become involved in journalism education with the exception of the minor engagement of NUIG and possibly Maynooth. The University of Limerick is a new university, and similar to DCU in having an explicit orientation towards applied, technological education. NUIG has a particular national role with regard to the Irish language and an orientation to the needs of the west of the country which explains its courses. Maynooth, the smallest of the universities, has most need to attract students and media courses tend to be very popular, which may have influenced the decision to move into this area. Its department of sociology was well positioned to contribute to the area and the non-profit-making media production company, Kairos Communications, on its campus also provided resources on which it could draw. The three largest and arguably most eminent universities, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and University College Cork, have remained aloof despite the fact that, under pressure from government and other sources such as the OECD and the EU to assist in the economic development of the country, the overall tendency has been for their programmes to become more vocationally oriented (White, 2001: 257). They have concentrated on areas of vocational education that are economically relevant such as information technology, business and biotechnology. Areas that are socially relevant have not gained their attention to the same extent. This is another similarity with the UK where, despite the many universities offering journalism programmes, only two are long established universities, the University of Wales at Cardiff and the University of Sheffield.

At the further education level, (i.e. post-secondary education below third level) a certificate in print journalism is awarded by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). There are a relatively small number of candidates for this award, coming mainly from Dublin and Cork. One college of further education in Dublin, Coláiste Dhúlaigh, has gained recognition from the NUJ, mainly through the argument that because of its location, this college gives an opportunity to the more disadvantaged students to become journalists.² FETAC's certificates in related areas such as radio production and media production include optional modules in, respectively, research skills for journalists and print journalism.

² The argument has been disputed as the majority of students have not come from the immediate vicinity of the college.

The Involvement of the NUJ

From the start, the national and provincial papers and the NUJ were involved in the Rathmines course but the latter was always the more vocal and influential. Yet the position of the NUJ is now greatly changed from what it was in the first two decades from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. Then, it had a great measure of control. Its perception of its role at that time can be clearly seen in the 1981 report from the NUJ Dublin branch which gives a detailed critique of the course and makes proposals in order

to control the input and output of the course in a way that reflects the realistic job opportunities, protects the interest of members in the industry and safeguards professional standards (NUJ, 1981).



The NUJ was stronger in Ireland than in Britain during this time, essentially operating a closed shop for entry to the profession (Stephenson and Mory, 1990: 222). It then started to lose its grip on educational developments. As already noted, the DCU course from 1982 was contrary to its policy regarding the level of education and the age of entrants to the profession. It gave recognition to this course however, once it was successfully up and running. The course in Galway was given recognition without any controversy because the issue of post-graduate qualifications had already been decided with regard to DCU and there was strong support from the regional press for the course. Newman College also had its advocates in the NUJ because of its links with the Roman Catholic Church and it was given recognition. This recognition transferred to Griffith College when the course transferred and has been expanded by Griffith College to its current three courses. The connections with Newman College and now Griffith College were not universally accepted, because of the religious ethos in Newman and because of the private, commercial ethos in Griffith College. The practical advantages of NUJ recognition for these courses is that all students are entitled to temporary union cards and 'stages' are more easily made available within the industry.

In 1989, the union set up a committee to review the situation regarding training because of the expansion in courses and because Rathmines was no longer the cornerstone (Stephenson and Mory, 1990: 223). Employers were represented on the committee; DCU and DIT preferred not to participate as members of the committee but agreed to co-operate in any way they could. The report in its draft form (NUJ, 1989) made far-reaching proposals for a comprehensive approach to journalism education. These included the setting up of an institute for journalists similar to those of other professions and the development of a multi-level approach to education, with certificate, diploma degree, post-graduate conversion courses and masters courses for experienced journalists. It speaks of the need for the study of journalism as an academic discipline, the lack of which has led to

the failure to engage in the type of rigorous study and examination of the role and nature of journalism, the role of the media in national life and the development of ethical standards and procedures in journalism (NUJ, 1989: 17).

This lack, it was felt, also

contributed to the relative paucity of serious media study and comparative and critical analysis of journalism output and media standards in general (NUJ, 1989: 17).

The chair of this committee was Christina Murphy, then also education editor of *The Irish Times*. The report was a reflection of her strong interest and views on journalism education. As a member of the management at her newspaper, she was in fact the NNI representative on the committee. Her subsequent ill-health was one of the main reasons why the report and the work of the committee never went any further. The other was that the Irish section of the NUJ gained a lot more independence from the London headquarters in the 1990s, was set up with its own executive council, and turned its attention to issues of more immediate day to day relevance to its members. Education had been one of the few areas within its remit before then.

In recent years, the only concern of the union regarding education has been to do with the recognition of courses. Its earlier view of its controlling role in journalism education in order to control entry to the profession has long gone. According to Michael Foley (2005), a member of the NUJ executive and of the 1989 committee on education, the former education committee has fallen into disuse and more recently the union executive has been making the decisions on course recognition. There is disquiet about how the decisions are made, as there is no firm policy or set criteria. As mentioned, some members were concerned at the recognition given to Griffith College and even more so to Coláiste Dhúlaigh. Requests have come in from other colleges in recent years



but a stop has been put to processing them in order to allow time for discussion and reflection.

The NUJ's position in the industry is not as strong as it was either. It does not organise journalists in some of the more recent press organisations such as the commercial television channel TV3, some local radio stations and the *Ireland on Sunday* newspaper. In education, DCU's and DIT's course development in the 1990s took place independently of the NUJ. Both colleges include input from the industry for the development and review of their journalism courses as they do for all professional courses. This input, however, does not come through the NUJ but through industry experts identified and chosen by the colleges themselves. The situation is thus different from professional education in other fields in the country where professional bodies have formal links with courses and accredit them, for example, in accountancy, engineering, and the medical sciences.

It is also different from the UK where industry accreditation and recognition of courses is more firmly established. There are three British accreditation bodies for journalism education, for the print industry (NCTJ: National Council for the Training of Journalists), for the magazine industry (PTC: the Periodicals Training Council) and the broadcast industry (BJTC: the Broadcast Journalism Training Council). (The on-line industry is not accredited). The NUJ gives recognition to courses with accreditation. However, there is dissatisfaction within higher education in the UK about the accreditation process (Taylor, 2002), over the lack of understanding of higher education systems and processes on some panels, the lack of academic representation on the panels, the old style separation into three separate bodies for different media which does not match the growing media convergence and cross media careers of most journalists. The Association for Journalism Education, (AJE) has been discussing alternative proposals for accreditation but so far, there are no firm proposals or decisions.

It might be noted that the BJTC in particular has made approaches to extend its activities to Ireland in recent years. They have met with some interest from the private sector colleges and broadcasters. However, there is currently no interest from those who might be regarded as the main players, DCU, DIT and RTE. Formal accreditation from the media has not been an issue of great concern to DCU or DIT. This no doubt reflects DIT's previous experience with the NCTJ, the current situation in the UK and the generally satisfactory relations between colleges and industry in this country.

The current situation

At present, DCU and DIT are recognised as the primary centres for journalism education. They both run highly sought after courses at undergraduate and masters level, courses that are aimed at the teaching of professional practice as well as more theoretical approaches to journalism. Both also are involved in research and have students taking research degrees up to doctorate level. DCU has an annual intake of approximately 40 undergraduate students and 25 post-graduate students each year; the corresponding figures for DIT are 30 at undergraduate level and 20 at post-graduate level. The points required for entry to the undergraduate degree in DCU was 455 minimum in 2005, in DIT, 440. It should be noted that these figures are in sharp contrast to those for the two private colleges which stood at 260 for Griffith College and 230 for Dublin Business School (DBS) in the same year.

Whereas DIT has a longer tradition, DCU has currently somewhat of a lead in journalism education as can be seen from the higher student numbers and the higher points required for entry to the undergraduate course. It also has been involved in journalism research over a longer period. In DCU, journalism is part of the School of Communications with a chair of journalism, the only one in the country. Journalism in DIT comes under the School of Media with one of the two departments in the school, the Department of Communications and Journalism, focussing on journalism and related areas.



NUIG has the status of a traditional university in Irish terms, compared with DCU and DIT, but the small scale of its activity means that it is a minor player in journalism education.

In line with private higher education in the country in general, Griffith College and DBS fall a long way behind DCU and DIT in terms of the level required for entry to their courses and in terms of research. Griffith College has been successful in running its journalism programmes in its own way. In the future, it will be interesting to see whether these two colleges will develop beyond their present teaching roles or whether they will fade away as the demographic and economic situation in the country becomes less favourable to them. Their focus has already changed to attracting foreign rather than Irish or other EU students.

Journalists and journalism education

In any discussion of journalism education, it is important to note that only a minority of Irish journalists have taken such courses. There is no standard educational requirement for entry to journalism, with the result that journalists exhibit a wide spectrum of educational levels and qualifications. Corcoran and Kelly Browne (1998: 9) in their profiling of Irish journalists found that 61 per cent of their sample had primary or advanced college degrees, 19 per cent had completed the Leaving Certificate only and 1.8 per cent had left school at 16 or less. A mere 25 per cent had studied journalism at college and a further 20 per cent had completed a formal journalism apprenticeship. Corcoran and Kelly Browne's survey was confined to journalists in the national print and broadcasting press where educational levels are likely to be higher than in the regional and local press. Their findings supported Declan Kiberd's view (1997:34) when he spoke of 'the haphazard nature of recruitment to the profession of journalism'. This phrase accompanied his more contentious assertion that one of the major problems of the media is 'the absence of top class training for journalists'. The overall confusion on the issue can be further highlighted by a quote from Collins, a former editor of the *Irish News* in an interview with Ivor Kenny (1994: 33) where he stated that 'journalism is essentially a non-academic trade. I like to think of it as a trade, not a profession'.

Such findings and quotations are indicative of the confusion surrounding journalism education in general, not only in Ireland but in most European countries and in North America too (Fröhlich et al, 2003). Delano and Hennington's (1995) survey of the British press found that only a minority of respondents (22 per cent) thought a degree necessary for entry to journalism, and as in Corcoran and Kelly Browne's survey in Ireland, British journalists were found to have the same wide range of educational levels and qualifications. Journalists argue strongly amongst themselves as to whether they are professionals or merely 'hacks'.

It is difficult to establish the basis for journalism education, when there is no clear agreement on the role of the journalist and the sort of education required for working in journalism. And indeed, journalism education has been slow to develop in higher education, compared with similar semi or quasi professional occupations such as teaching or social work (see Bines and Watson, 1992; Hoyle and John, 1995).

Newman (1995) can be said to have foreseen these difficulties. In *The Idea of a University*, written in 1852, he drew attention to what he saw as the antithesis between what is required for journalism or 'periodical literature' and what is required for intellectual training. He contrasted the former with 'its incessant demands for views at a moment's notice on all matters of the day' with the 'science, method, order, principle and system' required for critical scholarship. Journalism, though quite firmly established at this stage in Irish higher education, is still negotiating its way towards critical scholarship of its practice, and is still debating how journalism programmes should be structured and shaped in order to educate those who wish to become journalists.



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