

THE MEDIA

## THE MEDIA (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Newspapers

1. Two morning papers are printed and published in Belfast - the NEWS LETTER and the IRISH NEWS: one evening paper - the BELFAST TELEGRAPH: and one Sunday paper - the SUNDAY NEWS. Four morning papers from the Republic circulate - the IRISH TIMES, the IRISH PRESS, the IRISH INDEPENDENT and the CORK EXAMINER - as well as four Sunday papers, the INDEPENDENT, the PRESS, the WORLD, and the TRIBUNE.
2. All the main national newspapers circulate in the Province. Readership fluctuates, but the combined circulation of the two most popular tabloids, the MIRROR and the SUN, exceeds 100,000.
3. There are 40 local newspapers. All are weeklies with the exception of the DERRY JOURNAL which appears twice weekly. Miscellaneous publications include two specialising in farming and industry.
4. Here is a brief newspaper guide with approximate Northern Ireland circulation figures and key names:-

Northern Ireland

- i. NEWS LETTER (Editor: Sam Butler - circulation approx 42,000 privately owned), circulates widely among Protestants, particularly in rural areas and has a small distribution South of the Border; is unambiguously pro-Union and Loyalist in its editorial policy; strongly supports the security forces (with marked leanings towards the RUC); and has little sympathy with the concept of power-sharing in Government. (It was beset during the summer of 1984 with serious labour disputes and for a period ceased publication).
- ii. IRISH NEWS (Editor: Jim Fitzpatrick, 41,000 privately owned) is widely read by Catholics and is strongly Nationalist in outlook.

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Since 1982, under new editorship, the paper has undergone considerable change and improvement; it has, for example, distanced itself from its former ghetto mentality and has shown strong resistance to the pressure from PIRA and other extreme Republican groups (it stopped carrying PIRA death notices). Markedly pro-Dublin.

- iii. BELFAST TELEGRAPH (Editor: Roy Lilley; 152,000) is regarded as the outstanding newspaper in Northern Ireland, and one of the best evening papers in the United Kingdom. It circulates throughout the community. It takes a balanced and liberal, though often highly critical view. We enjoy particularly good relations and close contacts with the TELEGRAPH, but we are not immune to criticism from it. It is part of the THOMSON organisation.
- iv. SUNDAY NEWS (Acting Editor: Pat Carville; 60,000), considers itself a crusading newspaper, campaigning on behalf of the consumer and man-in-the street. It tries, although not always successfully, to maintain a circulation - boosting middle-of-the-road course in a not untypical Sunday-sensational way while showing tinges of being anti-Establishment (though it comes from the same publishers as the NEWS LETTER). It is, on the whole, lightweight.
- v. PROVINCIAL PRESS: These papers tend to concentrate on purely local efforts, but are useful - and generally helpful - vehicles for disseminating Government information in the rural areas of the Province; they are read avidly by the provincial population.

### Television and Radio

There are three regional broadcasting stations in Northern Ireland, the first two located in Belfast, the third in Newtownards (about seven miles from Stormont):

- i. BBC (Head of News and Current Affairs: John Conway; Political Correspondent: Denis Murray) provides regional news, current affairs and magazine type programmes on television and radio.
- ii. ULSTER TELEVISION (News Editor: Colin McWilliams; Political Correspondent: Norman Stockton) is one of the contracting companies of

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Independent Television and transmits most of the national programmes, as well as injecting into the network. It also puts out local news and current affairs programmes.

- iii. DOWNTOWN RADIO (Programme Controller: John Rossborough; News Editor: David Sloan; Political Correspondent: Eamonn Mallie) is a commercial station on air from 4.55 am to 1.05 am with pop music its major output. It carries newscasts on the hour and headlines on the half-hour through to late afternoon; its major news bulletins are at 1.00 pm, 5.15 pm (15 minutes) and midnight.
- iv. TV AM (Gerry Foley - Reporter) has a Belfast studio which provides live "feeds" to the networked programmes of ITV.
- v. Two American TV companies, CBS and NBC, have representatives in Belfast.

### THE MEDIA (REPUBLIC)

#### Newspapers (circulation figures are for NI only)

- i. IRISH TIMES (Northern Editor and Political Correspondent: Ed Moloney, 6,000) is the "quality" newspaper which comes nearest to being an organ of record in Ireland; has a high business and professional readership; reports Northern Ireland affairs quite extensively; but in its editorial line tends to carp at British Government efforts in Northern Ireland.
- ii. IRISH PRESS (Northern News Editor: Paddy Reynolds; 7,000) is an aggressive hardline pro-Republican newspaper, supporting the Fianna Fail Party in the South.
- iii. IRISH INDEPENDENT (Northern News Editor: John Devine; 7,000). Less hardline than the IRISH PRESS but not in general sympathetically disposed to British Government efforts in Northern Ireland. Aligns itself with FINE GAEL.
- iv. CORK EXAMINER is a morning daily, with an evening off-shoot, circulation mainly over the southern half of Ireland.
- v. SUNDAY PRESS (30,000), SUNDAY INDEPENDENT (20,000), SUNDAY WORLD (53,000) and SUNDAY TRIBUNE from Dublin - the PRESS and INDEPENDENT follow broadly the lines of their daily counterparts above. The SUNDAY WORLD is a sensation-seeking, somewhat scurrilous, publication which few people take seriously. (The paper itself made news during the summer of 1984 when gunmen attempted to assassinate its Northern Editor, Jim Campbell). TRIBUNE first appeared in November 1980, stopped publication for a time, but re-appeared in 1984.

#### Television and Radio

RADIO TELEFIS EIREANN (RTE) (Northern Ireland Head of News and Political

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Correspondent: Jim Dougell) is the State-controlled broadcasting organisation in the Republic of Ireland, based in Dublin. It has a technically restricted television-viewing audience in Northern Ireland beyond the Border areas, but its radio broadcasts, which include regular news and current affairs programmes, are received all over the North. It has a permanent and competent television and radio reporting and interviewing staff in Belfast, and takes an active interest in Northern Ireland affairs.

### THE MEDIA (GREAT BRITAIN)

#### Newspapers

i. The TIMES, DAILY TELEGRAPH, GUARDIAN, FINANCIAL TIMES, DAILY MAIL DAILY EXPRESS, DAILY STAR, DAILY MIRROR and SUN maintain staff or stringers in Belfast and Dublin, but are inclined to concentrate on reporting hard news or off-beat stories. The GUARDIAN, TIMES and DAILY TELEGRAPH, particularly the first-named, deal with Northern Ireland affairs in greater depth and are the newspapers on which we concentrate most to project a balanced view of Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom. The main news agency, the PRESS ASSOCIATION, has two staff reporters in Belfast.

#### ii. Sunday Newspapers

All the English and Scottish Sunday papers circulate in Northern Ireland.

#### Influential Journalists

- i. OWEN HICKEY, Associate Editor and Chief Leader Writer of the Time He has a Southern Irish background but, being highly anglicised, takes an understanding and informed view of Irish affairs.
- ii. T E (Peter) Utley, Deputy Editor and Chief Leader Writer of the Daily Telegraph. Utley, blind since childhood, has a passionate interest in Northern Ireland. Once Stood for the Unionist Party against Rev Ian Paisley in North Antrim. Frequently comes to Northern Ireland - for holidays as well as business - and listens to the voice of the Unionism. Despite the general political stance of his paper, he is often highly critical of Conservative Governments' policies in Northern Ireland.
- iii. GEOFFREY TAYLOR, Assistant Editor of the Guardian writes their editorials on Irish affairs and is a frequent visitor to Belfast and Dublin. He attends

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established discussion forums on Irish matters in both Great Britain and Ireland.

- iv. JOHN COLE (BBC Political Editor). An Ulsterman who was previously Deputy Editor of the GUARDIAN, and also of the OBSERVER. Well respected and well connected pro-unionist with a small u.
- v. MARY HOLLAND, a serious, well informed and perceptive journalist, a nationalist but hard on terrorism. She is a freelance and a regular writer for the NEW STATESMAN and has a weekly column in Irish Times. Her material is often syndicated abroad and she is a frequent broadcaster.
- vi. MALCOLM RUTHERFORD, Political Editor of the FINANCIAL TIMES, write their papers' leaders on Irish affairs. MARGARET VAN HATTEM of the Financial Times produces well researched pieces.

Nicholas Hurman provides much of the Economist's political coverage - usually well disposed to the efforts of and problems facing NIO Ministers.

Other Westminster-based journalists who take a particular interest in Northern Ireland affairs include NICHOLAS COMFORT (Daily Telegraph) JULIA LANGDON (The Mirror) PHILIP WEBSTER (Times), and PETER SIMMONS (Mail on Sunday) who has produced some spectacularly over-optimistic pieces on the Anglo-Irish talks.

### Irish Lobby

DESMOND McCARTAN, London Political Correspondent of the BELFAST TELEGRAPH, Northern Ireland's leading (and only evening) newspaper, which editorially believes in the continuance of NI within the UK coupled with improved relations between the two communities in NI and between NI and the Irish Republic. McCartan is an Ulsterman, hard-working and penetrating and enjoys good Westminster political contacts on all sides.

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BRIAN MOONEY, (Reuters Chief UK and Ireland correspondent) an experienced foreign correspondent who is not yet attuned to the subtleties of Lobby-style writing. His coverage of the Anglo-Irish talks will be fairly crucial.

MIKE STEELE, a partner in the Westminster-based newsagency NEWSPOINT, which services leading provincial English dailies and ITV regional companies with news. An Australian he represents Ulster Television at Westminster.

CONOR O'CLEARY, is in his second spell as London Editor of the Dublin based IRISH TIMES. He still has good Dublin contacts, so his stories though datelined "London" often emanate from ROI Government sources.

AIDEN HENNIGAN, the doyen of the IRISH LOBBY and London editor of the IRISH PRESS, whose editor Jim Pat Coogan takes a robust pro-Republican line on British involvement in NI. Hennigan is a rumbustious engaging character, but he is also a lawyer and his disarming approach hides a penetrating brain. His personal stance through long exposure to the "Brits" is more moderate than his paper's, and he frequently contributes leaders from London.

NICHOLAS LEONARD, is the London editor of the IRISH INDEPENDENT and appears open and receptive, as does his colleague MARY PUNCH.

JOHN O'CALLAGHAN, London Editor of Radio Telefis Eireann, who provides round-the-clock news from London. A Southern Irishman, he used to work for the GUARDIAN. A good journalist but he can be sometimes difficult to deal with. He seldom has time to dig too deeply.

The two Belfast morning papers, NEWS LETTER and IRISH NEWS do not have full-time representatives in London. The NEWS LETTER will occasionally send its political editor MERVYN PAULEY TO COVER DEBATES AT Westminster; the IRISH NEWS relies on KEVIN ROOLIS, who also freelances for the GUARDIAN and the NEW STATESMAN, and who is strongly nationalist and critical of HMG's policies and actions.

### OVERSEAS PRESS

The London-based foreign press corps - particularly the Americans and the Europeans - maintain a continuing interest in NI affairs,

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notably the terrorist campaign and the involvement of British troops in combating it, and the search for a political solution.

Apart from the daily Foreign Office briefings and the weekly No 10 briefing, the more important of these Journalists are individually briefed and provided with significant Press statements by the NIO London Press Office. A number make regular visits to NI and are given full co-operation by the Information Service, including access to Ministers and senior officials. When important announcements are being made they are collectively briefed in London. On a keeping-in-touch basis, past Secretaries of State have occasionally addressed the Foreign Press Association and the Association of American Correspondents in London.

### ON-THE-RECORD BRIEFINGS

#### (Current Issues of Major Interest)

- i. The Anglo-Irish talks and prospects for an Autumn Summit.
- ii. Continuing terrorist campaign and all aspects of Security, including restoration of primacy of RUC and parallel reduction of Army involvement.
- iii. Chronic unemployment situation and generally poor economic position.
- iv. Political developments in Northern Ireland, particularly those dealing with the Assembly.
- v. In the case of the Americans, in particular, "gun-running", the IRA, NORAID, and links with the world terrorism, and "discrimination in employment" springing from the disinvestment campaign running in the USA.