

E. R.

cc: PS/Mr Stewart (B&L)
PS/Dr Mawhinney (B&L)
Mr Stephens
Mr Burns
Mr Coston
Dr Alford
Mr Brooker
Mr Hassall

PS/SOS (B&L)

CONFIDENTIAL TELEPHONE - PUBLICITY

In the context of Mr Smyth's (UTV) indiscretions and your minute of 21 September, the Secretary of State, Mr Stewart and others may find it helpful to have the following resumé on Confidential Telephone publicity.

1. Background

The Confidential Telephone system has been in existence for at least 15 years, but RUC reservations about a single number for the entire Province were not finally resolved and the Freefone number introduced in March 1988.

A base level of press publicity has continued through these years with occasional bursts of additional press, radio and television publicity as appropriate eg in the aftermath of an outrage; during a particularly difficult security period; or when usage appeared to have fallen away. Annual expenditure in recent years ran to about £50,000, but was often greater in earlier years.

2. Current publicity

The present campaign originated with Ministerial direction to produce a hard-hitting TV commercial which would encourage community support for SF and vividly portray the way in which terrorism threatens everyone's family, way of life, livelihood, personal safety etc.

The resultant commercial was launched on 18 January 1988.

Despite early expectations and Ministerial approaches BBC and UTV offered only lukewarm and limited help in the way of free showing etc.



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For that reason, and to capitalise upon an excellent, if relatively expensive, commercial it was decided that it should become the centrepiece of the current comprehensive all-media campaign.

3. IBA/BBC Views

The commercial was intended to be hard-hitting - even shocking - and it succeeded.

The IBA made several fairly minor suggestions/requests for changes and these were accommodated, where we could not change their views. In particular they decreed that the commercial should not be screened before 9.00 pm; whatever their own views, UTV offered no formal comment.

BBC showed the film to their NI Council and several members expressed reservations about "putting out propaganda". They made no decision but referred it to the Director General. BBC finally decided not to screen the film as a "public service" exercise but to use a (different) voice-piece on both radio and television with a suitable frame from the end caption on screen. This notwithstanding, BBC(NI) - both Council members and programme makers - remained unhappy about the whole exercise.

4. Campaign and Costs - 18 January-3 September 1988

1987-88

1988-89

£154K

£175

Television

£

60 second commercial - 103 screenings)
3 X 30 second commercials - 162 screenings)

82,000

Press

10 advertisements in 5 Belfast papers)
3 advertisements in 40 provincial papers)-
Title corners - Belfast papers)

74,000

12,000

Posters

2 posters on 40 sites provincewide

19,000

Radio

90 X 60 second commercials)	
520 X 20 second commercials)	25,000

Production costs, repeat fees, research etc (TV commercials)	(approx) 105,000
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317,000

5. Evaluation

- a) The RUC report that since 22 March 1988 the Freefone service has received 3445 calls, of which 2420 were nuisance calls, giving 1025 calls with information of varying degrees of usefulness.

All Sub-Divisional Commanders support the service and CID officers assess that a percentage of the information has been helpful and important. Because such information may be contributory only, or not have its value proven for years, they cannot indicate what arrests and charges have followed.

In the opinion of the RUC, the facility has more than proved itself and given value for money; its retention is unreservedly recommended.

The cost of operating the system for 6 months is £80,500 (including £2,300 capital costs but excluding call charges).

- b) The launch of the commercial attracted a high level of free publicity in news coverage, including national and some international reportage.

Political reaction locally was broadly predictable - minority representatives viewed it as slanted and aimed only at violence from nationalist extremists, while majority leaders regarded it as a poor substitute for "real action" against terrorism.

Virtually all opinion however regarded the commercial as being very well done, dramatic and effective.

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- c) In television terms, audience research indicates that during the initial 13 day launch 90% of all adults saw the commercial at least once; 45% saw 4 or more; the 16-34 age group saw 4 transmissions.

Between 22 February and March 8, on $\frac{2}{3}$ initial expenditure, 80% of adults saw it once and 25% saw it 4 times or more.

Between 22 March and 4 April, on $\frac{1}{2}$ initial expenditure, 72% of adults saw one transmission and 15% saw 4 or more.

- d) An overall survey was conducted by Ulster Marketing Surveys covering the period January-April. The results indicated that over this very short period i. the number who would use the Telephone rose from 40% to 43% with a reduction from 26% to 19% in those who definitely would not; there was little shift in attitude among working class and Protestants were twice as likely as Catholics to use the facility.

- ii) 26% of people recalled seeing the advertising, compared to 19% for "employment" and 54% for "aids" advertising. Bearing in mind the tremendous weight of the national campaign on aids and its attendant public debate, this is regarded as quite satisfactory.

- iii) Among those who recalled the advertising there was a high level of understanding of the message.

Recall of the new number was low, with 14% claiming they could do so and 5% able to do so correctly.

These figures relate to a very short period of which only one month included press/poster/radio advertising. In addition the subject matter is emotive and contentious, and public opinion likely to be heavily entrenched. Viewed in that light and by comparison with the impact/recall of much more expensive and prolonged campaigns the results appear very satisfactory.

With overall production costs of around £100,000 a fair value for money assessment could only be made after longer usage and greater exposure of the TV and radio commercials in particular; the campaign was designed on that basis.

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v. Future Options

Publicity on 'Confidential Telephone' has 2 aims:

- to create awareness of the existence of the facility and the Freefone no;
- to persuade people that it is proper, sensible and in everyone's interests to offer information.

The existence of the system is now well known, needing only occasional low key "reminder" publicity. The actual number however is not as well known as we would wish - although it can be easily discovered by anyone wishing to do so.

The key issue, in considering future publicity needs, is therefore, that of persuading people that they should give help and information to the police. This is a "hearts and minds" problem which will not easily be solved and certainly not in a short time scale. Indeed there will be many minds not capable of persuasion. It is also subject to the influence of events such as Enniskillen or Loughgall on public attitudes, and of the police desire to make special appeals for information in certain cases.

Any future plans should therefore be flexible and recognise the "long haul" nature of the task.

Dealing with the remainder of 1988/89 the options are:

- a) cease all advertising now and depend on the publicity to date for public awareness;
- b) continue with the regular small title-corners in the Belfast Newspapers (2+3 times per week) - cost £18,000 to March 1989;
- c) continue the title corners, with judicious use of existing TV and radio commercials - cost est. £25,000 to March 1989. It would also be prudent to anticipate RUC requests for publicity in some specific cases (largely press advertising) - cost est. £20,000 to March 1989.

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- ✓ d) continue with the planned campaign. This would necessarily involve new TV and radio commercials, since continued heavy use of those existing would be likely to produce a negative reaction. It would also be desirable to slant the effort more to the "hearts and minds" than to the number itself.

Contingency work only has been done on this, and there is no commitment either to production or air-time. Nor is there any commitment to future television slots for existing commercials.

- cost est £225,000 (including production costs of £90,000-£100,000).

The view of the Information Service and of our advertising agency on these options is:

- a) barely appropriate in the present security climate, and would not be taking best advantage of efforts and expenditure to date;
- ✓ b) the minimum we feel Government could countenance;
- ✓ c) in our view, offers the best balance between what is needed to sustain the message, meet possible specific circumstances, and capitalise on production cost of existing material; and, on the other hand, the desire to seek economies wherever possible.
- ✓ d) should be considered again in the light of a further review (to include the police experience) to be carried out in say 3 months time.

I confirm that the appropriate videos will be available on Monday.

F S WOODS
Information Service

23 September 1988

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