

# THE IRISH JOURNALIST



Newsletter of the National Union of Journalists in Ireland

May 2018



Members of the Dublin Broadcasting Branch demonstrating outside the Israeli embassy in Ballsbridge in protest at Israeli attacks on journalists. See story page 18 Photo: Paula Geraghty

## Betrayal of trust

By Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary

The revelation that data of journalists was accessed on the instructions of the former chairman of INM represents a fundamental breach of trust.

While Judge Seamus Noonan has reserved his decision on the judicial review sought against the attempt by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement to seek the appointment of an investigator to INM, there is no doubt that the confidential data of employees and former employees was compromised.

That should concern every citizen who cares about press freedom or corporate governance.

The NUJ successfully called on the Data Protection Commissioner to undertake an investigation into whether personal data held at Independent House, Dublin was accessed externally.

The affidavits filed in the High Court by the director, Ian Drennan, sent shock waves

throughout the company.

We continue to support staff and to discuss a framework to prevent further breaches.

In constructive meetings with senior editorial executives the NUJ conveyed the intense level of anger of staff that their privacy rights were breached as part of corporate shenanigans which merely serve as a distraction to the core business of INM.

The editorial integrity of a media organisation must never be compromised by corporate interests.

Journalists cannot do their job in a climate of fear.

To borrow a quote attributed to Lesley Buckley in the High Court affidavit: "Do you not get it lads?"

Those responsible for these actions must pay the price.

*'We all pay price of corporate battles': page 3*

# Calling all members

The Irish Journalist, the newsletter of NUJ Ireland, is here for you.

In this turbulent media climate, the Irish Journalist works to keep members aware of issues that affect the changing media landscape as well as the work NUJ officials and union activists are taking on to ensure members' interests are protected.

We also want to celebrate and share the achievements of union members. NUJ members are placed across the island of Ireland, across all media sectors. Our members are making their voices heard in print, over the airwaves, and online.

For the Irish Journalist to be able to share this great work with all members, we need to hear from you.

Send us your stories. Is your branch or chapel holding an event? Tell us about it. Have you received recognition for your work? Let us know. Are you taking part in a conference of interest to members? Drop us a line. If there is something you would like to see covered, let us know.

You can get in touch with the Irish Journalist by email at [irishjournalist@nuj.ie](mailto:irishjournalist@nuj.ie).

We are communicators, all of us. Let's communicate.

## Tributes to Bernie

In his report to the 2018 Delegate Meeting in Southport, Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley paid tribute to the lay activists in Ireland who work at local and national level on behalf of the union.

He had a particular word of praise and thanks for Bernie Ní Fhlatharta (pictured right) for her work with ex Connacht Tribune colleague Brendan Carroll in revitalising the online edition of The Irish Journalist.

Bernie was also warmly thanked at a recent meeting of the IEC, where Carolyn Farrar was appointed to take over the voluntary post of Irish Journalist editor.

A Donegal-based freelance, Carolyn is a member of Derry and North West branch and a member of the IEC.



Bernie Ní Fhlatharta. Photo: Maxwell Photography

## Competition Act victory celebrated at Southport DM

The enactment of new legislation granting freelance workers the right to collective bargaining and trade union representation was cited as a major achievement by the NUJ at Southport.

General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet and President Tim Dawson referenced the success of the union's long campaign in Ireland,

while Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley encouraged delegates to celebrate the power of strategic persistence in the face of major obstacles.

Séamus paid tribute to all who had stuck with the battle over many years and said many lessons had been learned, including the importance of co-operation with sister unions, SIPTU, the IMU, Equity and with ICTU.

# We all pay price of corporate battles

Trust in integrity of journalism undermined when corporate interests take precedence over editorial values



Séamus Dooley addresses a protest outside INM's EGM last year as part of the successful campaign to halt the attempt to unilaterally wind up the Indo's pension fund.  
*Photo: Maxwell Photography*

**By Séamus Dooley,  
Irish Secretary**

The decision of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Ian Drennan to seek the appointment of a High Court inspector to Independent News & Media arose from a protected disclosure made by then Chief Executive Robert Pitt.

Pitt had opposed the proposal by his board chairman Lesley Buckley that INM should acquire the loss making Newstalk, owned by Denis O'Brien's Comunicorp, at an inflated price.

O'Brien is the controlling shareholder at INM, Buckley was his nominee to the board. Pitt ultimately won that battle but the development was a sign that all was not well in Independent House.

The publication of Drennan's leaked High Court affidavit, mainly in the Irish Independent, provided a unique insight into the boardroom battles at INM and terrified those who rely on the publicly quoted company as their employer.

Data relating to a number of former and current staff - including journalists and former directors had, according to Drennan, been removed from the company's premises, taken out of the jurisdiction and "interrogated" by a company with links to O'Brien, in October 2014.

We learned that 19 people had appeared on a "persons of interest" list discovered by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) during his year-long investigation into a range of corporate governance issues at the company.

The decision to remove records from the premises to another jurisdiction in itself compromised the privacy rights of employees and former employees.

At meetings with senior editorial executives, including a private meeting with Editor in Chief Stephen Rea, it was clear that the concerns of

the NUJ were shared by journalistic staff at every level.

The company took on board an NUJ suggestion that external evaluation of current IT systems and measures to protect data should be put in place.

Less satisfactory has been the inability of the company to provide any level of comfort to staff worried about what data was accessed.

Following publication of Drennan's affidavit the Data Protection Commissioner acted swiftly to calls by the NUJ for an immediate investigation into the scale of the breaches and her report is awaited.

In January, I had sought specific assurances from the company and was advised that INM was not in a position to respond while a legal case was underway.

The matters which concerned me then are likely to trundle through the courts for some time.

Trust and confidence in the integrity of journalism is undermined when corporate interests take precedence over editorial values.

Editors and journalists must operate secure in the knowledge that editorial independence will not be undermined through commercial expediency. Rea and his colleagues need unequivocal board support.

Independence *is* compromised when sources are undermined.

All journalists pay the price when trust is broken.

The failure of successive governments to tackle the ownership and control of the media in Ireland by powerful forces has yielded a bitter harvest.

As the story unfolds more and more questions will be asked of INM, of the BAI and of government.

Meanwhile Mr Buckley denies any wrongdoing.

## SOUTHPORT POSTCARD

# Sun, sea and standing orders: Observations of a first-time delegate

By Emma Ní Riain

The NUJ's 2018 Delegate Meeting was my first time to be fully immersed in the mechanics of union business — how decisions are made and what sets the agenda for the following two years.

I have been a member of the NUJ for less than a year, but have already been faced with some turbulent times and I am all too aware of the importance of having the NUJ's backing and one of its officials in my corner.

Despite encouraging words from my branch chair, standing up in front of a room full of delegates in Southport to speak on a motion was frankly terrifying. I admit that getting a cheer after telling the conference that it was my first DM, and having my motion on pension changes in Ireland passed, helped, but it was still a pretty daunting experience.

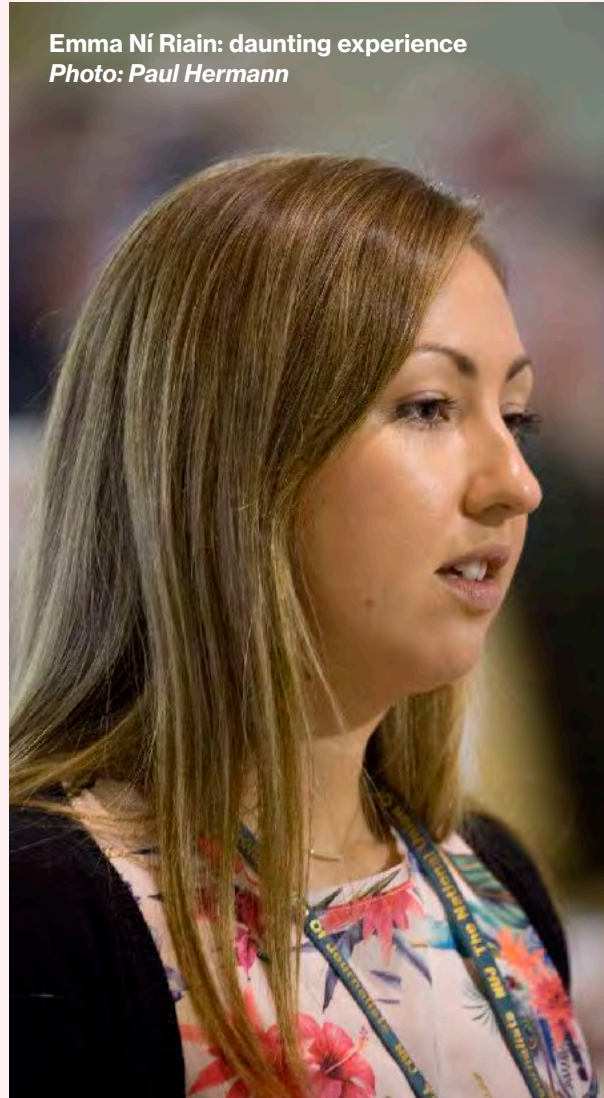
My highlights? Having the chance to get to know branch members and other journalists both on a professional and personal level, seeing a motion on increasing subscriptions fail — I find it tough enough to recruit new members without having to explain an increase in their monthly payment — and getting a better understanding of the big issues journalists across Ireland and the UK face every day.

I was also delighted to support a call for better information for new members from a fellow NUJ newbie. I had no idea of the supports, training and advice on offer when I first got my green and white card in the post. I knew the union was there for me when it came to problems in my workplace but the courses and training available? I hadn't a clue.

The lows? I was added to the Irish Executive Council in the last few months and was immediately confronted with the fact that I was one of the youngest members. I am also one of a few females on the IEC and that is a trend that was reinforced at DM.

It is disappointing that female and young journalists are in the minority at conference, a meeting that is supposed to reflect and make decisions around the concerns of all members, whether they are men or women, young or old.

Emma Ní Riain: daunting experience  
Photo: Paul Hermann



The DM offers a huge opportunity to reflect the make-up of newsrooms and to bring about change, and for conference not to have a diverse mix of journalists is frankly disappointing. The issue was raised at conference, and I know it is not something that is idly being ignored. To that end I hope this is an issue that will undergo a positive change by DM 2020.

*Emma Ní Riain is a reporter with FM104/Q102, co vice-chair of the Dublin Broadcasting branch and a member of the IEC.*

## 2018 DELEGATE MEETING



Members of the Irish delegation at the 2018 Delegate Meeting in Southport last month. *Photo: Paul Hermann*

# DM seeks review of how NUJ meets its members' needs

The National Executive Council has been called on to set up a working group to examine members' needs and whether those needs are being met effectively, in a motion tabled at the 2018 Delegate Meeting in Southport.

The motion, brought forward by the Dublin Freelance branch, instructed the NEC to present to the 2020 delegate meeting the blueprint and proposals for any necessary rules changes stemming from the review.

The conference approved that motion two years ago but it was not acted on, so the branch decided to bring it back.

Kieran Fagan, treasurer of Dublin Freelance, told the Irish Journalist that the union has adapted and worked well since it was established more than a century ago. Still, he said, "The world of work has changed so much recently."

Those changes and their impact were reflected in the motion, which noted: "The

working group should take as its starting point the fact that many of the rules and practices that served us well in the 20th century do not necessarily equip us well for the 21st, and that a complete review and rethink is required."

Kieran said they wanted to have "a blank piece of paper on which ideas could be kicked around – just put everything on the table". Such a broad-ranging review could include everything from the way the NUJ recruits and encourages members; to rethinking the way branches and chapels are organised, given the increasing number of media professionals who may work outside of newsrooms and other traditional media workplaces.

"I suspect that where there are good ideas they will come out of co-operating with each other," Kieran said.

Kieran said union officials are working very hard on the daily issues that the union addresses, "but we don't seem to have a forum where we think long-term".

## 2018 DELEGATE MEETING

# Barry McCall stands down from NEC duties



Barry McCall (left) at Southport with Slobhan Holliman, Gerry Carson and Seamus Dooley. Photo: Paul Herrmann

In between motions, procedural wrangles and moves to remit issues deemed either too hot or too cold to handle, Irish delegates took a brief moment for a family picture, in the style of EU leaders and important people gathered at Davos.

Southport is no Davos and, with selfless sacrifice, the Irish delegates were billeted in a hotel far removed from the luxury often associated with such shindigs.

However, the sun shone for the picture and Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley took the opportunity to thank outgoing NEC members Emma O'Kelly, Paula Geraghty and Barry McCall for their service.

Throughout DM there were references to Barry, who has stood back from NEC activity after a punishing record of service. As former president and chair of the Finance Committee, Barry has made a significant contribution to the union's financial recovery.

Active in the union since 1981, Barry served as

finance chair from 2014-2018; as NUJ president from 2012-2014; twice as cathaoirleach of the Irish Executive Council, from 1996-1997 and from 2005-2006; and as president of the NEC and a member of the NEC on and off since 1989. He has also served as branch chair of Dublin Freelance and Dublin P&PR a few times over those years.

"It's been an honour and a privilege to serve members of the NUJ for all these years and I've made some great friends along the way," Barry told the Irish Journalist.

"I felt it was time to step away and let somebody with fresh thinking come forward, and I think the union is in a strong position to continue to do marvellous work for its members."

Barry will continue work on behalf of the NUJ at IFJ level and as a member of the Appeals Tribunal.

Paula was unable to attend DM but her job-share Emma was asked to convey thanks to the Dublin-based freelance photographer.

## 2018 DELEGATE MEETING

# Sharing victories with members

The NEC has been called on to publish an updated version of its “Organising to Win” pamphlet, which detailed the union’s industrial relations victories.

The motion was tabled at the 2018 Delegate Meeting in Southport by the Derry and North West branch and passed unanimously. “Organising to Win” was a pamphlet the NUJ published about 15 years ago to highlight the union’s industrial relations successes.

“Since the pamphlet was published in 2003 we have won some great victories,” Phil Mac Giolla Bháin, Derry and North West said, pointing to such recent victories as the

organisation at Alpha Newspapers and the right to negotiate collective rates for freelancers.

“I’m sure that stories of similar victories could be told in every branch area and every industrial sector,” Phil said. He added, “What I said at DM was that the irony was for a trade union of media professionals, we really should be better at communicating.”

Phil said updating and republishing the leaflet will help the union move forward by energising members and potential members, with the reminder that, “when we organise collectively we win, and when we win, everyone wins.”

## Crossed wires or a line crossed?

The Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley told DM delegates in Southport that Communications Minister Denis Naughten had crossed a line in accepting a call from a PR consultant representing INM during the deliberative process regarding the proposed acquisition of the Celtic Media Group by Independent News & Media Plc.

Explaining the background to the case, he said Mr Naughten has ultimately made the correct decision in referring the proposed sale for consideration by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. The NUJ had unsuccessfully sought a meeting “at an appropriate time” but no meeting was granted – Naughten had not even responded to a meeting request following the ultimate collapse of the deal.

The Irish Secretary rejected Mr Naughten’s claim that it was widely understood that he was likely to refer the transaction for review under

relatively recent legislation, pointing out it was in fact the first time he had chosen to do so. Engaging in any conversation with the agent or representative of a vested commercial interest was inappropriate.

“It was entirely inappropriate to have discussed his thinking with a PR company or any individual acting for one of the parties. The minister refused to engage with the National Union of Journalists on this issue at any stage yet a majority shareholder in INM had access to Mr Naughten and was aware of his view long before they were made public.”

Séamus also reminded delegates that the NUJ had been criticised in some quarters for opposing the INM acquisition. The union’s actions have been vindicated by a recent revelation by CMG chief Frank Mulrennan that the BAI’s insistence that editorial posts at CMG should be retained for a defined period was unacceptable to INM.

# MacDonald walks the border of history

In his new book, journalist and author Darach MacDonald explores the sociological, historical, cultural and familial impacts of the Irish border, which seems to have been one of the most underestimated and least considered implications of Brexit.

“It struck me from the beginning that everybody talks about the Irish border as though this is just a logistical problem, and everyone assumes, and unionism assumes, that if they can find a technological solution around the customs problems, everyone will be fine,” Darach said.

But this is far from the case, he said.

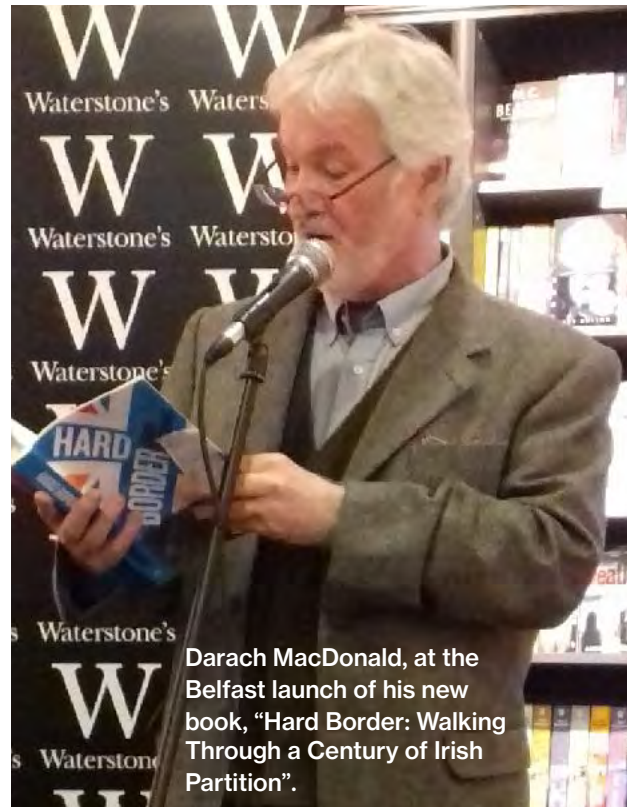
“Hard Border: Walking Through a Century of Irish Partition” (New Island Books, 2018) explains the ways in which the border looms large in people’s lives, and why the more obtrusive it becomes, “the more it makes people feel uneasy”, he said.

Darach’s new book, his fifth, is something of a travelogue of the abandoned 46-mile route that he walked along the Ulster Canal, from Lough Erne to Lough Neagh, but it is far more than that. Using journalism, memoir, history, and culture, Darach covers the history of the border through the people he met there, the lives lived there, and the decisions made elsewhere whose impacts are still being felt in communities the border runs through.

“It surprised me that so much of the history of the region has been ignored and neglected,” Darach said. “The historical narrative on both sides ignores what happened on the border simply because what happened on the border didn’t concern them. It was peripheral.”

Rather, Darach described the border as “hugely pivotal”. He said he believes that the Irish people have suffered two huge national traumas in modern history: the Famine and partition.

Partition “altered our vision or our concept of the Irish nation. It divided us”, he said. Until then, Ulster unionist leaders such as Edward Carson



Darach MacDonald, at the Belfast launch of his new book, “Hard Border: Walking Through a Century of Irish Partition”.

and James Craig considered themselves Irish men, and Dublin considered them Irish men as well.

“After partition, unionists in the six counties appropriated the name Ulster and excluded the 70,000 to 80,000 [Unionists] in Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal,” Darach said. “They felt utterly betrayed and sold out by fellow unionists who had signed a covenant to stand by them.” In the same way, nationalists in the six counties felt abandoned by the Free State.

“We didn’t fight a Civil War over partition; it barely entered the treaty debates,” he said. “But it happened, and it was traumatic.”

The border tore apart communities that had existed there. For example, Darach, a Clones native, noted that the hinterland of his home parish stretches into Fermanagh. Arlene Foster, Northern Ireland First Minister, “comes from my parish,” MacDonald said, adding, “But I don’t come from hers.”

He said if unionists along the border don’t see partition as being successful, at least they see it as being complete. And that view has dictated unionists’ lack of appreciation for how concerning the border issue is to nationalists, who see any strengthening of partition as an aggression.

“The ‘best’ border that we’ve ever had is the one that now exists, simply because it’s barely there,” MacDonald said. Whatever happens, he said, that ‘best border’ has been compromised by the Brexit referendum.



# Celebrating equality: Colin's Bird takes to Olympia stage

NUJ member Colin Murphy has written a drama documentary based on Charlie Bird's book, *A Day in May*.

That book tells the story of the marriage equality referendum and focuses on May 23rd, 2015, when Ireland became the first nation in the world to introduce marriage equality by popular vote.

The world premiere of the drama documentary, directed by Gerard Stembridge, takes place at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin at 7.30pm on Sunday 24th and Monday 25th June, with profits going to Pieta House.

The event is supported by Dublin Pride and tickets from €25.50 inclusive are on sale now from Ticketmaster Ireland

Charlie, now retired from RTÉ, is a former NUJ activist and accidentally became involved and then immersed in the Yes Equality campaign. The drama documentary marks a unique collaboration among three significant figures in the Irish media.

Charlie, inspired by the 'Yes Equality' campaign, travelled across Ireland to meet some of the people most deeply affected by the referendum result. In his book, he brought to life their stories of living in the shadow of inequality and oppression.

From these stories playwright Colin Murphy has created a drama documentary charting the 35-year struggle for equality for the LGBT+ community in Ireland, which culminated in the marriage equality referendum.

The play will form a central part of this year's Dublin Pride festival. Clodagh Leonard, Dublin LGBTQ Pride chairperson, said, "As long as we keep celebrating that day in May, we must keep telling the stories of the people behind it."

Brian J. Higgins, Pieta House CEO, said three



A DRAMA DOCUMENTARY FOR STAGE  
BASED ON THE TRUE STORIES & STRUGGLES  
LEADING UP TO THE MARRIAGE EQUALITY REFERENDUM

years after the referendum, stigmas such as homophobia and transphobia still lead people to their doors. The vision of Pieta House is of a world where suicide, self-harm, and stigma have been replaced by hope, self-care and acceptance.

"Funds raised by *A Day in May* will help us support those young members of the LGBT+ community who need us most via our partnership with BeLong To, and we are grateful to Charlie and everyone involved in the creation of this wonderful book and play for their support," he said.

# Tommy enters the GAA's Hall of Fame

Tommy Callaghan, sports editor at the Leinster Leader in Co Kildare, has received one of the highest sporting honours in the country, as he marks his 50th year at the newspaper.

Veteran NUJ member Tommy was one of 10 recipients of the 2017 GAA MacNamee Awards, receiving the 2017 Hall of Fame Award at a special banquet held at Croke Park in March.

In announcing the awards, Alan Milton, GAA director of communications, said Tommy had been selected for his “outstanding contribution and services to the GAA through your coverage and passion for our activities over a prolonged period”.

Celebrating Tommy's work anniversary in the pages of the Leinster Leader last October, Tommy's colleagues called him, “one of our most treasured, respected and widely read staff members”, and credited him with essentially creating the job of sports reporter and editor at the newspaper.

It was the first Monday of September 1967, when Tommy entered the green timber gates of the Leader office to begin his career in the printworks.

“To all of us who work here, he is a friend, mentor and rock of sense,” the Leader tribute said.

Tommy has been described as a man with a wry sense of humour, who is unflappable in a crisis. His family, with his wife, Ann, are his pride and joy. Tommy's family joined him for the special occasion at Croke Park, where he was interviewed by Alan Milton about his 50-year career in the media and his views on Kildare football.

Mr. Milton also said that Tommy's attendance at games and events over the years and the attention to detail and passion that he brought to his work continue to be a hallmark of journalism that has been highly valued and respected by his peers and Leader readers.

Also among MacNamee Award recipients were the Donegal Democrat, which received the Provincial Media Award for their in-depth 180-



**Leinster Leader Sports Editor Tommy Callaghan (left) receiving the 2017 Hall of Fame Award from GAA President John Horan, at the 2017 GAA MacNamee Awards at Croke Park.**

page book, “Donegal '92 History Makers”, which recalled the team's famous campaign under Brian McEniff's stewardship. “Packed with interesting interviews, player profiles and photographs, the Donegal Democrat's supplement is a classy and comprehensive account of Donegal history,” the GAA said in making the announcement.

This was the third MacNamee Award won by the Democrat in the past seven years; the Democrat also won a MacNamee in the 1990s.

Vincent Hogan of the Irish Independent received the 2017 National Media Award for his interview with Galway hurler Joe Canning, which appeared in the Independent on Saturday, August 5th, 2017. The piece was called “everything a great interview should be”.

“Canning has been in the public eye for a long time and spoken to the media on countless occasions, but we learned more from this superbly written piece about the nuances of his personality and what really makes him tick, than from any other interview heretofore,” the GAA said in announcing the award.

LMFM received the 2017 Best GAA-Related Radio Programme Award for, “When Sam Crossed the Boyne”, which was broadcast on October 30th, 2017. The documentary looked back at Louth's victory in the All Ireland Football Final of 1967.

The programme gave listeners a chance to relive the glories of the distant past, “and gives a great insight into the ability of athletes and supporters to remember vividly things that happened on the field of sport two generations ago”, the GAA said.

# Alpha Newspapers staff get pay increase and better terms

NUJ members in Alpha Newspapers in Northern Ireland have voted to accept a pay deal negotiated by union officers and the company.

Management resisted offering more than 1 per cent, claiming it had to balance its books and it was still facing financial challenges. However, the NUJ managed to secure other concessions, such as an increase in mileage from 37p per mile to 45p per mile.

The company also offered an additional four weeks on half pay on sick leave in a 12-month period for those with five years' or more service. That is in addition to the current entitlement that everyone with more than a year's service has, of four full weeks' sick pay in a 12-month period.

While the 1 per cent pay increase came into effect on March 1st, 2018, the other two parts of the deal came into effect as soon as the members voted in favour of the agreement.

This agreement comes a year after the NUJ negotiated new pay structures for its members in the company.

The deal covers all seven chapels: Coleraine Chronicle, Antrim Guardian/Ballymena Guardian, Tyrone Courier, Newry Democrat, County Down Outlook, Tyrone Constitution/Strabane Weekly News, and Ulster Gazette.



The agreement will be applied to the 39 NUJ members in these papers.

Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, thanked all of the chapel reps who travelled to negotiations and liaised with the Irish Office: "Every chapel in Alpha was represented, which yet again shows that when members come together in a workplace to organise an NUJ chapel, they can win better terms and conditions for themselves and their colleagues. This couldn't have happened without the input of the MOCs and FOCs."

Talks have now begun on a pay claim on behalf of Alpha Newspapers NUJ members in the Republic, working at the Tullamore Tribune and the Midland Tribune, Birr.

## Irish News accepts 3 per cent pay offer

Members at The Irish News in Belfast have voted to accept a 3 per cent pay offer by the company.

The offer came after the NUJ met with management and lodged a pay claim late last year. The 3 per cent increase is payable from January 1st.

However, the company has said that the offer did not apply to a small number of self-employed journalists and columnists who work for the daily newspaper, despite the NUJ stating at its meeting with the company that it was lodging a claim on behalf of all its members.

As a result, the NUJ Irish Office has written to the company, seeking a meeting about the pay

rates for the freelance journalists concerned.

The chapel is also seeking to open house agreement talks with the company and has formally written to management seeking a start to discussions on that matter, too.

NUJ Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, paid tribute to FOC Kenny Archer and Deputy MOC Bimpe Archer: "Kenny and Bimpe have been stalwart activists for many years now and without their involvement the work of the Irish Office would be nearly impossible.

"The example of The Irish News chapel proves that where you have a chapel and active reps, you are more likely to secure improved terms and conditions for the members," he said.

## Stella leads chapel to success at Galway Bay FM

Galway Bay FM's NUJ members are getting an extra €20 euro a week after members voted to accept an agreement negotiated on their behalf.

SIPTU and NUJ negotiated the agreement, the first leg of which was backdated to June 1st, 2017 and runs until August 31st this year. A further €20 per week will then be paid on top of this, with this leg of the agreement running from September 1st, 2018 until August 31st, 2019.

In return the members agreed to being paid fortnightly instead of weekly. The company had wanted to move to a monthly payroll but the fortnightly payment compromise was agreed.

The company also agreed to pay a Christmas bonus in 2017.

Stella Meehan, MOC, played an important role in guiding the negotiations throughout. Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness praised Stella: "Having an MOC on the ground is vital and Stella was pivotal in organising the NUJ members on this. She liaised with the NUJ Irish Office, our chapel members and SIPTU and kept everybody up to speed. This result shows the importance of organising a chapel in your workplace and electing an MOC/FOC."

## Radio stations' staff organise in face of redundancies

NUJ members in FM104 and Q102 have organised a chapel and elected officers. The stations are owned by the Wireless Group, which in turn is owned by NewsCorp.

Full and part-time employees at the Dublin-based radio stations were involved in a long-running redundancy consultation and restructuring process, which began in June 2017 and ran for nearly six months.

The company refuses to collectively recognise unions but the NUJ Irish Office provided representation and advice during individual consultation meetings.

Four full-time and three part-time staff were made redundant on the enhanced voluntary redundancy scheme offered by the company. Despite protests by the NUJ that the company was profitable (it made over €4.9 million in the 2015 financial year, up from just over €4.6 million in the 2014 financial year) and that redundancies could hurt the quality of the output; the company proceeded with its plans. While there were no compulsory redundancies, the NUJ has serious concerns about the workload and stress that will fall on the remaining staff and will be monitoring the situation carefully.

## Johnston Press staff secure a pay rise

NUJ members in the Newsletter, Derry Journal and Mortons newspaper group have received a 2 per cent pay increase, following negotiations with management.

Johnston Press, which owns all of the titles, agreed to pay 1 per cent backdated to July 1st, 2017, and a further 1 per cent from January 1st, 2018. The proposal was overwhelmingly accepted by union members in all three chapels.

Talks are now underway to update the three separate house agreements, which are very old and give different entitlements to staff. One problem that will be addressed as part of the house agreement talks is the issue of public holiday entitlements.

Meanwhile, the NUJ is concerned about heavy workloads following yet another round of

voluntary redundancies in these JP titles last year.

NUJ Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, praised the FOCs and MOCs who had taken part in the talks: Philip Bradfield, Ellen Barr, Carmel Robinson, Ruth Rodgers and Brendan McDaid.

"Once again it has been the chapel reps who proved vital in the talks," Ian said. "They were able to articulate the members' ideas and concerns and ultimately helped win the pay raise for the NUJ."

He added: "We are intent on maintaining the relationship we have with management and will be working hard to update the house agreements, solve the issue of public holiday entitlements and address concerns about heavy workloads."

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP



Editor of the Galway City Tribune, Mike Glynn, was presented with his Life Membership of the NUJ recently. The presentation followed a seminar on Data Protection and Libel hosted by the West of Ireland branch in Galway.

Pictured above are Siobhan Holliman, chairperson, West of Ireland; Dara Bradley, West of Ireland branch and Connacht Tribune; Gerry Carson,

cathaoirleach, IEC; Enda Cunningham, West of Ireland branch and Connacht Tribune; Mike Glynn, editor, Galway City Tribune; Stephen Corrigan, West of Ireland branch and Connacht Tribune; Judy Murphy, secretary West of Ireland branch and Connacht Tribune; and Bernie Ni Fhlatharta, West of Ireland branch and formerly Connacht Tribune.

*Photo: Ray Ryan*

## Belfast & District fighting Ulster Rugby ban

NUJ members in Belfast took swift action on Ulster Rugby's decision to bar news journalists from a match press conference on April 24, calling on the ban to be lifted.

A formal open letter to Ulster Rugby was agreed, and within 24 hours some 90 members from Belfast and District and Derry & North West had added their names to the letter, which was sent on Thursday, April 26th.

Shortly after the letter and signatures were delivered, Ulster Rugby agreed to meet with Belfast and District representatives Gerry Carson, branch chairperson; and Ciarán Ó Maoláin, branch secretary.

On May 1st, Gerry and Ciarán had a lengthy meeting with Shane Logan, Ulster Rugby chief executive; and director of marketing and communications, Fiona Hampton.

The outcome of that meeting is expected to be confirmed shortly.

Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley and Irish Organiser Ian McGuinness joined Gerry Carson

and Ciarán Ó Maoláin in explaining the NUJ's action in a number of media interviews.

The open letter reads:

"We, as members of Belfast & District and Derry & North West branches of the National Union of Journalists, protest at the decision of Ulster Rugby to bar news reporters from participation in pre-match news conferences.

"This attempt to stifle media coverage of the context and consequences of the recent trial is an unjustifiable interference with the freedom of the press, and with the rights of everyone to freedom of information and expression.

"The sports journalists among our membership fully understand the wider public interest in this matter. We reject and condemn the attempt by Ulster Rugby to divide us by restricting access to rugby correspondents, while denying other bona fide journalists the right to ask questions and inform their readerships and audiences.

"A free and open media is the cornerstone of democracy in which openness and transparency of information is crucial."

# Journalists' ethics and the Special Communications Unit

By Michael Foley

It is a miracle that, as far as we know, no regional newspaper published material concerning the Government's Project Ireland 2040 without it being clearly labelled as advertorial or special features, or written as a legitimate report. It's a miracle because the pressures to do so are enormous.

Every day understaffed and under resourced newsrooms are bombarded with material from well financed and well staffed public relations companies designed to look like editorial material. It might be well crafted news stories, videos and other online content, but the hope is a hardworking hack might just use it without any checking or without any health warnings that would let the readers, listeners or viewers know the provenance of a story.

The now defunct Special Communications Unit was just another example of this, albeit pushing a rather big story.

There have always been attempts to manipulate journalists, to confuse the public as to what is the result of independent journalism and where something is insinuated into editorial columns that has come from the advertising or PR industries. Property coverage comes to mind, and there are other areas where the editorial copy bears an uncanny similarity to the nearby advertisements.

Today the pressures are even greater. The traditional barrier between advertising and special features is breaking down. So-called 'native advertising', advertising designed to appear as editorial copy, is now ubiquitous. There are bloggers, often described as 'influencers' who are in receipt of money and products from the companies they promote online. And they see no conflict of interest.

The people running the Special Communications Unit were probably from that world and could see little wrong with trying to slip something past, to get their expensively produced 'copy' accepted as editorial.

But the real sin as far as Government is concerned is that this exercise, whether successful or not, would undermine independent journalism, sow distrust and further dismantle



Michael Foley  
Photo: Maxwell Photography

the barrier between ordinary editorial and advertising copy. A government, of course, that has stated its support of journalism when faced with the Independent News and Media issue around journalists' information and sources.

If journalism as an independent source of news is to survive, and if journalists are to differentiate what they do and what 'influencers' public relations and others do, it will be through a very public adherence to ethics and ethical codes. Journalists must make it known that they can be trusted, and that the information they publish or broadcast is there because it was gathered in the public interest. The NUJ's Code of Conduct is clear on this, it states: 'A journalist strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair'.

*Michael Foley represents the Republic of Ireland on the NUJ's Ethics Council*

# Is it a pay cut or a pension?

***Ian McGuinness, Irish Organiser, advises members in Northern Ireland to remain in their workplace pension schemes***

Members north of the border will have noticed a bit of a reduction in their pay packets recently. That's because from April this year the amount you have to contribute to your workplace pension has tripled to 3 per cent.

All employees in the UK, who did not previously have a pension provided to them by their employer, and who meet the qualification criteria, must have a Workplace Pensions scheme set up for them by the company they work for. When the Workplace Pensions scheme began, the employer paid 1 per cent into each employee's pension plan and the employee paid 1 per cent, giving a total of 2 per cent.

Since April this year the combined total that must be paid in on each pay day is 5 per cent: 2 per cent from the employer and 3 per cent from the employee. This is due to rise to a minimum of 8 per cent in April 2019: 3 per cent from the employer and 5 per cent from the employee.

Employees get tax relief related to being in a Workplace Pension, but it will still feel as though the employee has suffered a pay cut and this feeling will probably be worse when the employee contribution goes up to 5 per cent next April.

However, it should be noted that not only is there tax relief for those in a Workplace Pensions scheme but they also get money from the employer (currently 2 per cent and next year 3 per cent of their salary) paid into their pension pot, which they would not receive if they were not in the scheme.

The temptation for NUJ members may be to pull out of the scheme, thereby not suffering the 'cuts' to their take home pay of 3 per cent currently and 5 per cent from next year. However, that would be robbing Peter to pay Paul and the union is advising its members not to leave their Workplace Pensions scheme

without first contacting the union to discuss the matter and without also taking independent financial advice.

In recent months the NUJ has won pay rises in a number of media organisations in the North and the first way to defend against the aforementioned perceived 'pay cuts', is for chapels to lodge a pay claim with their employer. The NUJ Irish Office and the two relevant branches – Belfast and District and Derry & North West – can assist in lodging such pay claims. The union can also seek, via negotiations, to increase not only salaries but other terms and conditions such as mileage and expense rates given to journalists.

The NUJ can also enter negotiations with employers to see if the pension contributions can be altered. At present a minimum of 5 per cent of an employee's gross pay must be paid into their pension pot, rising to a minimum of 8 per cent next April. Some employers, if they are not open to the idea of a pay rise, might entertain the idea of altering the contributions so that they take on more of the burden. Any cut in contribution from the employee would have to be matched by an equal increase in employer contributions. For example an employer might agree to pay 3 per cent now while the employee pays 2 per cent, which still meets the current bar of 5 per cent gross pay per employee. Negotiations to try to affect the same type of change could also be held in advance of next April's contribution changes. The rules of the individual Workplace Pension schemes might be crucial in this regard.

The message that the NUJ wants to send to its members, is the reduction they see in their salaries is not a 'pay cut' but an investment in their future. It is an attempt to lessen the chances that they will live in poverty in old age, by ensuring they have a pension (or pensions) in place when they retire.

**Remember: don't leave your Workplace Pension scheme without first seeking advice from the NUJ and without also taking independent legal advice.**

# Conference backs probe into O'Hagan murder

A motion seeking support for an international dimension to the NUJ's ongoing campaign for an independent investigation into the murder of journalist Martin O'Hagan has been backed by delegates at the Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Biennial Delegate Conference.

The 2018 Delegate Meeting at Southport also agreed a similar motion, tabled by the Irish Executive Council.

The motion brought to the ICTU delegate conference noted that more than 16 years after the murder of the Belfast-based investigative journalist and trade union activist, there have been no convictions for the crime. The NUJ has expressed no confidence in the willingness or ability of the PSNI to pursue those responsible for his murder.

Speaking on the opening day of NIC-ICTU's Conference in Derry, IEC delegate Bernie Mullen re-iterated that O'Hagan exposed criminality and corruption in Northern Ireland without fear or favour. He was shot dead on September 28th, 2001 as he walked home from a night out with his wife.

The motion called on the Northern Ireland Committee and the ICTU Executive to support the NUJ campaign for an independent, external investigation into the O'Hagan murder and to engage with relevant authorities in Northern Ireland, the British and Irish governments; with international institutions including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN, in support of such an investigation.

NIC-ICTU's 'Better Work, Better Lives' conference was held in the City Hotel on April 11-12th.

The motion agreed at Southport instructed the NEC to enlist the support of the Organisation for



**Bernie Mullen**

*Photo: Maxwell Photography*

Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the UN to carry out an effective and independent international investigation into the murder of Mr. O'Hagan, and acknowledged the failure of the investigation by UK police, especially the PSNI.

Gerry Carson proposed the motion on behalf of the Irish Executive Council and explained to delegates that he had worked with Martin, and knew his life was constantly under threat. He said the lack of justice for Martin cast a dark shadow on the police and public prosecution service – only a few days earlier another member of the Belfast branch had received death threats.

Kathryn Johnston from the Belfast branch seconded the motion. She said Martin was her friend and comrade, he had recruited her to the NUJ and gave her her first byline story. Kathryn added she was proud of the union for keeping up the struggle in Martin's name.

## Surviving the first years as a journalist

The NUJ Irish Office is planning to hold a seminar in the autumn, advising students and newly graduated journalists how to survive the first few difficult years of their careers. Details will be announced later but it is intended to ask

freelance and staff journalists from a broad spectrum of the media to talk about their experiences and offer advice to young and emerging journalists on what to do and what to avoid in the formative years of their career.



## MARKING MAY DAY



Members of the Belfast and District and Derry and North West branches took part in annual May Day rallies and marches.

In Belfast, participants gathered at Writers' Square for speeches from union speakers, before the parade, including trade unions, marching bands and drummers, wound through a sunny city centre.

The theme for this year's march and rally in Derry was Internationalism, Peace and Solidarity. In a passionate and wide-ranging address, Eamonn

McCann, one of the speakers at Guildhall Square, credited trade unionists for their involvement in the civil rights movement over the past 50 years and reminded the rally that the struggle continues.

Above, from left, in Belfast: John Ley, Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Kathryn Johnston, Gerry Carson, John Coghlan, Michael Fisher, Gerry Coghlan, Bob Miller and Una Murphy. Below, from left, in Derry: Anton McCabe, Bernie Mullen, Felicity McCall, Darach MacDonald and Eamonn McCann.



# Robert sweeps the board

RTÉ Prime Time reporter Robert Shortt has been elected to the board of RTÉ in a by-election caused by the departure from the organisation of outgoing worker director Aengus MacGrianna.

Following a lively election campaign, Robert topped the poll with fellow Dublin broadcasting branch member Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh runner up.

Both NUJ members secured support from across the workforce. Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley said the combined vote of the top two candidates was a reflection of the work done on the ground in RTÉ by union members. He also paid tribute to Aengus for his service as a board member and former chapel officer.

Robert celebrates 20 years in RTÉ this year. He joined the RTÉ newsroom in May 1998 and has been FOC of the Current Affairs chapel since 2012. In September last year he stepped down as chair of the RTÉ sub branch and as vice chair of the Trade Union Group. In the latter role he was part of the negotiating team that secured pay restoration in 2015.

He has worked in various roles in the newsroom and served as business correspondent and Washington correspondent prior to joining Prime Time.



Robert Shortt

Photo: RTE File

## Dublin Broadcasting stands up for Palestinian journalists

On April 12th, the Dublin Broadcasting Branch held a demonstration outside the Israeli embassy in Ballsbridge in protest at Israeli attacks on journalists, including the shooting and killing of Palestinian journalist Yaser Murtaja.

Thirty-year-old Yaser, who was wearing a vest clearly marked, "Press", was shot by Israeli forces as he documented the recent Great Return March demonstrations.

The post-work demonstration was organised

at short notice and was addressed by RTÉ's former Middle East Correspondent Richard Crowley, former RTÉ producer and human rights activist Betty Purcell, Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley, and Oonagh Smyth of RTÉ; and chaired by branch chair Emma O'Kelly.

Addressing the gathering, Richard spoke movingly about how western media relied heavily on local Palestinian journalists, and of the much greater risks those local journalists exposed themselves to in order to cover the story.

# World Press Freedom Day marked by plea to Varadkar

The Irish Executive Council marked World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd with a renewed call for a commission on the future of the media in Ireland.

In a letter to the Taoiseach and opposition leaders, Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary, said recent developments underline the need for all-party support to tackle the issue of media ownership and control, as well as addressing other vital issues.

In a statement he said: “There is a crisis in the media in Ireland. Recent developments at INM clearly vindicate the NUJ concerns over media ownership and control but the crisis is multi-dimensional. The dire financial position of the public service broadcaster, the closure of so many regional titles, the absence of diversity within our newsrooms combined with a failure to address the democratic deficit caused by media dominance need to be addressed in a coherent fashion.

“Political fear of retribution by powerful figures may well have inhibited politicians from taking a stand on this issue to date, but in the current grave situation there is a need for political courage,” he said.

In his letter, Séamus said, “Much has changed since the last major reviews of the role and function of the media in Ireland: The 1996 Report on the Commission on the Future of the Newspaper Industry and the 2002 Report of the Forum on Broadcasting.

“Given the significance of media policy on our democracy, it is surprising that successive governments have failed to address the challenges facing the print, broadcasting and digital media sectors in a structured and coherent manner,” the Irish Secretary said. He noted that in 2008, an advisory group was established to review the existing legislative framework regarding media mergers and asked to examine the relevant provisions of the Competition Act 2002. The group’s recommendations were incorporated in the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014.

“The issue of media ownership and control remains a major concern in Ireland and recent developments vindicate the position of the NUJ regarding the absence of adequate safeguards to protect journalists from direct and indirect

interference by corporate interests,” Séamus said.

He said that while an examination of media ownership and control would form part of the terms of reference of the proposed commission, other issues would include the role of the media in democracy, the protection of editorial independence, the promotion of media plurality, funding models for public and private media across all sectors and the possibility of State supports, including taxation measures; legal constraints on freedom of expression, including defamation law; the role, function and funding of public service broadcasting; access to professional careers in the media in Ireland; training and professional development of media workers in Ireland; diversity; employment standards; and media ownership and control, including a review of the regulatory framework. Séamus added: “I believe that the current ownership and cross-ownership structures may have inhibited elected representatives from agreeing to the establishment of a commission. There is now a public demand for leadership from the government on this issue and a cross-party consensus is emerging, which is encouraging.”

## Commission on media future

Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin have added their voice to the campaign for the establishment of an independent commission on the future of the media in Ireland.

The Social Democrats and Labour have long been supportive of the idea, and following the union’s World Press Freedom Day statement Séamus Dooley has received letters of support from Micheál Martin, Fianna Fáil Leader, and Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald.

“The Commission would be in an ideal position to review the regulatory framework over control and protecting editorial independence,” Deputy Martin said in his letter to the Irish Secretary.

In 2017 Fianna Fáil abstained on a Social Democrat Bill on the issue, making their support now especially significant.

# PR professionals get ready for GDPR

By Séamus Dooley

GDPR. The term is likely to send a shiver down the spine of many readers.

This month I have been working closely with Dr Martina Byrne, CEO of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland, and have reached an agreed understanding on how GDPR impacts on the work of PR professionals interacting with journalists and media organisations

PR practitioners, many of whom are NUJ members, have legitimate reasons to contact journalists and journalists have an expectation – or in GDPR terms, a “legitimate interest” – in receiving information from PR professionals. GDPR impacts differently on working journalists so our emphasis has been on how our PR members deal with GDPR provisions.

With that in mind I met PRII members at their Dublin office on May 10th, and it was interesting to hear their perspective on what GDPR means – and does not mean.

Much of what is sent on behalf of clients or employers by public relations professionals to journalists is unsolicited, and unlikely therefore to have involved informed opt-in consent from the recipients.

*Here is a summary of key points raised by Dr Byrne and myself, but of course it comes with a health warning: It does not purport to be a legal guide:*

Generally public relations practitioners and press officers have access to a media contact list or database/s in some form. Many use Excel sheets. These databases contain journalists' names, who they work for, their work and possibly personal email address, their work and possibly personal mobile number. According to the GDPR, storing such data electronically, or in hardcopy, constitutes processing of personal data.

**(Continued on page 21)**

## Basic steps for the PR industry

### Step 1:

Whose and what personal data do you hold? Who has access to it? Why do you hold/store/use it? How do you secure it? How long do you hold it for? Is it on mobile devices? If so, are they encrypted? Are mobile devices wiped clean when obsolete and about to be replaced?

Document the legal basis on which the organisation relies in relation to the data it holds and processes.

### Step 2:

Agree and publish a data protection policy (or privacy notice). This should confirm that only necessary data is held, that it is held for the legitimate interest of doing business, that the data is secure, that it will not be shared, and that it can be amended or deleted at the request of the individual data subject within one month, on request. This policy document should be easy to find, for example, on an organisational website and can be signposted on the organisation's 'boiler plate' on emails.

### Step 3:

'Clean up'/update media contact lists/data regularly, delete old and unnecessary details e.g. date of birth, home addresses. If in doubt, check the details and get clear, informed consent from the individual to retain the personal data e.g. if a personal mobile is being used to contact a journalist who also has a mobile number for work purposes.

### Step 4:

Take care to target media materials to those journalists for whom a case of 'legitimate interest' can be made. Don't 'scatter-gun' media materials to entire media lists. Use bcc (blind copy) when using mailing lists in emails.

### Step 5:

Be ready, willing and able to respond in a timely manner to requests from journalists or others to have their contact details removed from the PR organisation/team's database. Ensure no one else in your organisation continues to contact that journalist if the request for deletion has been made.

**(Continued from page 20)**

Journalists have the same rights in relation to their personal data as any other person under the GDPR. Public relations practitioners and press officers must therefore ensure they are compliant with the GDPR. Breaches of these regulations can have a severe impact on organisations, including onerous fines. For more information on GDPR see [www.gdprandyou.ie](http://www.gdprandyou.ie)

**Legitimate bases**

There are six legitimate bases for processing personal data and two are of particular interest to PR professionals: consent and legitimate interest.

**Consent:** Defined as freely given, specific and informed, unambiguous consent which provides a clear indication of a data subject's wishes, by statement or action, signifying agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him/her. It must be easy to withdraw consent. There is no such thing as opt-out consent or consent by inactivity.

**Legitimate Interest:** This means there is valid, legitimate interest to the data processing, storage etc. being carried out; the data processing is strictly necessary in pursuit of that legitimate interest; and the processing is

not prejudicial to, or overridden, by the rights of the individual.

Seeking explicit opt-in consent from journalists and other stakeholders to store and process their contact details is preferable and should be sought with new media contacts, including bloggers.

Where legitimate interest is the legal basis on which personal data is processed, the PR person needs to be able to demonstrate that:

- there is a valid legitimate interest
- the data processing is strictly necessary in pursuit of that legitimate interest
- the processing is not prejudicial to, or overridden, by the rights of the individual.

a) the recipient's name and contact details are held on a database managed by the sender's organisation

b) the contained/attached material is being sent to them because the sender has a reasonable expectation the recipient may be interested in the content and

c) the recipient can have his/her data removed from the sender's database. This opt-out from receiving similar communications or request to have one's data removed from the central database must be clear and easy to do.

If and when a request is made to have personal data removed from an organisation's database/s by a journalist the PR professional must ensure this happens promptly.

## Gerry stays at the helm of Belfast and District

Retired public affairs and media consultant and Sunday Life sports correspondent Gerry Carson (pictured right) has been re-elected chairperson of the Belfast and District branch of the National Union of Journalists.

At the branch AGM, Mr Carson said professional communicators face challenging times as the so-called "fake news" onslaught causes grave misunderstandings about what is truly happening in society.

"With 700 members in our branch and all fully committed to the union's strict code of conduct, people can rely on what they see, read and hear from our membership," he said.

Freelance writer Kathryn Johnston is the new assistant to secretary Ciarán Ó Maoláin; digital journalist Una Murphy has taken on the role as training officer, and photographer Mark Winter is now responsible for the branch's social media activity. Photographer Freddie Parkinson remains



Gerry Carson

Photo: Maxwell Photography

as recruitment officer, former Irish News sub editor Peter O'Rourke continues as honorary treasurer, and former Belfast Telegraph feature writer Louis Mc Connell retains the role of welfare officer.

## TDs' alarm over bogus contracts at RTÉ

Members of the Dáil's Public Accounts Committee have raised serious concerns over the plight of workers forced to accept bogus self-employed contracts by RTÉ.

Director General Dee Forbes and Director of HR Eimear Cusack were challenged by David Cullinane (SF) and Social Democrats co-leader Catherine Murphy on the high level of workers forced to register as self-employed and therefore denied employment rights.

Both TDs echoed the NUJ concern that "forced freelancers" who wish to challenge their employment status are automatically denied the right to trade union representation. Ms Cusack said RTÉ only negotiates with trade unions representing employees.

Deputy Cullinane played a recording of Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley's interview with Philip Boucher Hayes broadcast on Drivetime last year. In that interview the Irish Secretary said the NUJ were aware of members who wanted to be regarded as employees but were required by RTÉ to declare themselves self-employed. The alternative to signing was no income.

In that context, Cullinane asked how RTÉ could justify not allowing these workers the right to be represented, when well-paid presenters are represented by an agency which negotiates with the company but those on contracts for service have no such access. Ms Cusack was unable to explain why this happens.

Ms Forbes conceded there were "issues", but the RTÉ team failed to clarify how or why workers doing the same work can be treated differently.

Both speakers referred to the ongoing review of contracts by Eversheds, an external law firm appointed by RTÉ following pressure by the NUJ and the RTÉ Trade Union Group. That report was due in March but will now be published at the end of May.

Responding to the PAC debate Séamus Dooley said: "This was the first time RTÉ appeared before the committee and it was encouraging to see parliamentarians taking such a strong stand on employment rights. Committee members got an insight into the difficulties faced by the NUJ in securing justice for our members who work alongside employees, doing exactly the same job but yet are treated as 'contractors' without any objective criteria.

"The Evershed report will be the latest in a long list of reviews," he said. "At the heart of this problem is a culture rather than a legal issue. RTÉ's requirement for flexibility does not excuse unacceptable employment practices."

### IN BRIEF

#### NUJ requests Irish Daily Mail inspection

The NUJ has requested a Workplace Relations Commission inspection of DMG Media Ireland for suspected failure to pay annual leave and public holiday entitlements to part time and casual employees. The company publishes the Irish Daily Mail and Irish Mail on Sunday, as well as a number of web sites.

Such inspections do not require individuals be named as complainants by the NUJ or any other representative body. An inspector has been assigned to the case and an outcome is awaited.

#### Pay and house agreement talks to restart

Negotiations with management at the Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life are to restart this month. Talks were suspended by management a number of months ago but the NUJ is determined to seek an early conclusion to these long-running negotiations.

As well as submitting a pay claim, the union is seeking to update the house agreement, which is approximately 15 years old. A number of ancillary issues, such as car parking, will also be dealt with.

#### Christmas bonus restored

Management at the Clare Champion has agreed to pay NUJ members a €250 Christmas voucher this year. The payment was not made last year but during conciliation talks at the Workplace Relations Commission the company agreed to reinstate the voucher.

#### Donegal Democrat suffers redundancies

Three journalists were made redundant at the Letterkenny office of the Donegal Democrat, which is owned by Iconic Newspapers. The company does not recognise unions and refused to negotiate with the NUJ. The union assisted the three members of staff and also asked local politicians to make representations to save the posts.

However, despite a number of prominent politicians intervening publicly and privately, the company ignored their calls and made the journalists compulsorily redundant.

## Union supports National Symphony Orchestra

The National Union of Journalists has supported the call by the RTÉ Group of Unions for the retention of the National Symphony Orchestra within RTÉ, following the publication of the Boaden Review.

The review by Helen Boaden and media consulting firm Mediatique recommended that the NSO would be separated from the national public service broadcaster. RTÉ would continue to pay for broadcasting rights.

In a statement supporting the Trade Union Group position, Séamus Dooley said:

"The report correctly diagnoses the problem but suggests a solution which would seriously undermine the public service broadcaster. If there is a case for retaining the National Concert Orchestra under the umbrella of RTÉ – and there most certainly is – the same, compelling case can be made for the NSO.

"We share the concern of Helen Boaden that without a properly funded and staffed set of orchestras, musicians may have no option but to leave Ireland for work. Starving the service would be an act of cultural vandalism but I am unconvinced that breaking up the orchestras is a desirable or viable solution.

"RTÉ as the public service broadcaster must continue to play a key role in the protection and promotion of our cultural heritage. The NSO, like the Irish language services and RTÉ archives for example, is a significant part of that heritage and deserves to be funded within the public service broadcasting model.

"Outsourcing is a slippery slope. We have already witnessed the undermining of the Young People's department, through outsourcing. The board needs to have the courage to defend its mandate and demand funding for the NSO, rather than handing it over to a new or redesigned cultural institution. Given the mixed record of such institutions, music lovers share with RTÉ employees a genuine fear that the



NSO and RTÉ will both suffer because of this proposal.

"RTÉ is unable to deal with the scale of the current financial crisis without a radical overhaul of the licence fee collection system and a licence fee increase. That would require leadership from the Government but if we want a genuine, all-encompassing public service broadcaster it must be properly resourced."

## Johnston Press restructures again

Members in Johnston Press in the North have undergone the third restructuring in two years. The company sought the redundancy of one whole-time equivalent post, although it is understood it fell short of this goal. The restructuring will involve some staff moving between the company's sports, news and communities teams. Meanwhile, two new posts

have been created in the Newsletter, including a full time reporter.

Elsewhere the company has appointed a local democracy reporter, tasked with covering Derry and Strabane District Council. Local democracy reporter posts are being recruited by local media throughout the UK, in conjunction with the BBC, to cover councils and related stories.

# Confusion reigns over pledge on Northern Ireland press review

Confusion reigned this month over an apparent commitment by UK Culture Minister Matt Hancock to establish what DUP MP Ian Paisley described as a “Leveson for Northern Ireland”.

No sooner had the NUJ demanded clarification of the proposed review of press standards in Northern Ireland than Mr Hancock’s officials were stressing that there would not be a special inquiry for Northern Ireland, but there will be a different type of review.

In the House of Commons on Wednesday, May 9th, the government appeared to accept a proposal for a review of press standards in Northern Ireland while successfully opposing a proposal for a second stage Leveson Inquiry in the UK.

The promised Northern Ireland review would coincide with a UK-wide review of journalists’ compliance with new data protection regulations.

Northern Ireland was excluded from the remit of the original inquiry, although a number of Northern Ireland witnesses gave evidence to Lord Justice Leveson, including local newspaper editors.

Mr Hancock caused widespread surprise when he appeared to agree with Mr Paisley that he was proposing a special inquiry and appointed an individual to oversee the review.

The following day, Assistant General Secretary Séamus Dooley responded by saying there was

Séamus Dooley: different model may be a good idea.

Photo: Paul Hermann



a need for “absolute clarity” on the scope and nature of any inquiry.

In a statement he said: “The NUJ will be seeking full consultation on the terms of reference of the proposed inquiry by an independent reviewer appointed by UK Culture Minister, Matt Hancock.”

That was Thursday.

By Friday morning the Irish News was reporting that there would be no special inquiry for the North, vindicating the NUJ’s call for clarity. Yes, there would be an independent person appointed but there would also be an independent person appointed in England, Scotland and Wales.

So when is a review not a review?

Séamus commented: “There is a compelling case for a broad-ranging commission, which would examine the range of challenges facing journalism in Northern Ireland, including economic challenges faced by the industry, conditions of employment, recent threats to journalists and the failure of the PSNI to properly investigate the murder of Martin O’Hagan. The lack of media diversity and difficulties faced by those seeking to enter the profession, including women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds is also of concern. If there is to be an inquiry into the press in Northern Ireland let it be independent, meaningful and worthwhile. The issues raised by Leveson were not relevant to Northern Ireland, so a different model may be a good idea.”



## Cearbhall appointed to TUG post

NUJ activist Cearbhall Ó Síocháin has been appointed to the post of full-time secretary of the RTÉ Group of Unions.

He will be taking secondment from his current role as Producer/Clár Reachtaire, Raidió na Gaeltachta.

Cearbhall is a member of the NUJ's Irish Executive Council and is an NUJ representative on the Trade Union Group executive. He has worked across television and radio as a researcher and producer.

An MA graduate of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth he holds a graduate diploma in journalism from Dublin Institute of Technology.

In recent years Cearbhall has worked closely with the NUJ and SIPTU in re-organising unions within the radio centre at Donnybrook.



## Celebrating Connolly with a fight

The Lord Mayor of Dublin Mícheál MacDonncha will open the doors of the Mansion House on June 5<sup>th</sup> to members of the NUJ, SIPTU, Equity, and the Musicians Union of Ireland. The occasion will be the launch of a campaign highlighting the rights and needs of freelance workers in an increasingly difficult marketplace.

The "Fighting for Freelances" seminar will fittingly mark the birthday of former journalist and writer James Connolly who, with Jim Larkin, was a staunch defender of what are now regarded as precarious workers.

NUJ activist Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh will chair a panel discussion which will include writer Colin Murphy, Galway freelance Bernie Ní Fhlatharta, singers Karan Casey and Niamh Parsons and actor Conor Mullen.

They will give an overview of what it is like to work in the media, arts and culture sector as a freelance while Michael Doherty of NUI Maynooth will give an overview of the legal position of freelance workers – and how it might be improved.

It promises to be an engaging event with special guests and lively, audience participation.