

## Declaration

I, Ronan Kelly, being a candidate for the the degree of Master of Arts, as awarded by Dublin City University, declare that while registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been a registered candidate for another award of the Dublin City University or another awards body.

Secondly, that none of the material contained in this thesis has been used in any other submission for any other award.

Further, that the contents of this thesis are the sole work of the author except where an acknowledgement has been made for any assistance received.

Signed: Ronan Kelly (29.8.'92)

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**"A Breed Apart: A Study of Television Production Practices in Radio Telefís  
Eireann, 1989-1990"**

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## Introduction

"It is a peculiar facet of broadcasters that they do not see themselves as being members of the public, or even of the viewing audience which is being addressed  
They are, somehow, a breed apart "

(McLoone et al, 1984 134)

This is a study of some of that 'breed apart' broadcasters working for Irish State Television (Radio Telefis Eireann) in 1989-90

In the academic literature, they and their ilk are often portrayed as a mischievous lot. It is said that they have a tendency towards "brainwashing a susceptible and defenceless public" and "manipulating the masses". That they could be "fundamentally biased", often "assuming what interested them would interest the audience"

(Curran et al, 1977 58, Ang, 1985 17,  
Schlesinger, 1978 164, Gunter, 1987 318)

Those impressions are not confined to academic researchers - they are often heard expressed in daily life - by columnists, politicians, lobbyists, clerics, callers to radio shows. In short, anyone who has an opinion about those who work in television and cares to express it. So, one of the tasks of this study will be to allow the reader to judge the extent to which those impressions are true in the case of a selection of production staff working in Irish national television at the end of the 1980's

As well as watching them at work, this thesis also records how they feel about aspects of their work. It asks them, for example, how they make decisions, how they allocate resources based on those decisions and how they know whether those decisions were the 'right' ones or not

Readers can also indulge in some production decision-making for themselves. The thesis includes detailed diaries of the making of two programmes. These lay out the array of original material gathered in research for the programmes and show how that material was whittled down to produce the final reports. Readers can judge the way that whittling, or selection, was done and perhaps imagine how they might have done it better

Finally, this thesis will also serve as an historical document, a snapshot. It records the techniques and practices of a European state television station in the late 1980's

Furthermore, this work's historical importance is enhanced by the fact that the research was undertaken from August 1989 to November 1990, during an significant period in Irish broadcasting history. A period when

- \* New technology and new work practices were introduced by RTE management
- \* The franchise for Irish commercial TV was awarded, heralding the end of the RTE TV monopoly
- \* RTE management were seeking cutbacks and redundancies
- \* Dail Eireann (the Irish parliament) enacted the 1990 Broadcasting Bill, one of the aims of which was to curtail RTE's earnings

The thesis is arranged into five chapters

### ***Chapter 1 Literature Review***

This is a review of literature related to this study - most is from the UK, there are relatively few studies of Irish television, and fewer still written by full-time members of a television production team, as this one was

The works available are varied, but most combine studies of the practices and politics of television production

For example, "Sit Down and Be Counted" as well as commenting on the cultural function of RTE in the 1960's, it also describes production techniques of the time. Or, "Framing Science" it is a diary of the production of a BBC documentary but also includes a critique of the documentary form

The Literature Review gives the reader an idea of the kind of research that has been done into television production but it also shows how that work has suggested ideas for the methodology of this study. And none more so that the two books mentioned above

### ***Chapter 2 Methodology***

This chapter describes how the research was carried out. Two methods were used

Participant Observation Detailed Diaries were kept on the production of two television feature reports which were made for an RTE TV health programme

Also, three Programme Production Meetings for the same programme were observed and notes were taken

Interviews While the results of Participant Observation are useful, they merely record the work and attitudes of one programme team, it's a small group with which to try and answer many of the issues and ideas dealt with in the Literature Review

It was decided that, to give a more comprehensive picture of practices and attitudes among practitioners in RTE TV, a group of television producers would be interviewed. This group was chosen because, of all personnel, they have the greatest direct control over programmes. That is not to say that they are free of influence from the prevailing culture of 'professionalism' at the station, from crews, colleagues, managers and administrators. But for the purposes of this research it was considered preferable to isolate this group and leave research on the other staff groups to another study.

At the time of research, RTE had 62 television producers - a sample of 16 were chosen for interview. Unfortunately their selection depended greatly on their availability for interview. Efforts were made to include producers of as many different programme types as possible but it was not feasible to select a sample with proportionate numbers for each programme area. Nor was it possible to select a sample that was accurate with regard to the ages and genders of the television producer group.

It was hoped that each producer would be interviewed while watching a programme they had made and would comment on it, explaining how it was made and the decisions involved in the production. After that, it was intended that each producer would be interviewed on a set number of topics.

This was done once (Chapter 4 - Section B) and found to be extremely time-consuming. None of the producers approached would have the time to spend, both watching one of their programmes and giving a wide-ranging interview. So, it was decided that, of the two parts to the proposed interviews, the greater value would be gained from interviews on the set topics.

Although, the topics were covered in a series of questions, the producers were not given questionnaires. Again, it was felt that better information would be gathered if the questions were used as the basis for interviews - these would be less restrictive than questionnaires and would allow the producers to expand on particular topics and pass over others. The disadvantage of such an approach is that, in many cases, it was not possible to confine the producers' answers to particular categories - hence the catch-all category of "Technique & Procedure" (See Chapter 4).

The questions appear in Appendix C. The producers were asked about their skills and techniques, their programmes, their relationships with management and about broadcasting in general.

Their answers are reported on in Chapter 4, Section A.



### ***Chapter 3· Results of Participant Observation Research***

The Participant Observation research took two forms a) Production Meeting Notes and b) Diaries In this is the part of the study reader can follow the programme-making process, and see how production staff took information and opportunities and made decisions about them

The chapter opens by discussing Production Meetings For many people outside the media, the Production Meeting is one of the most fascinating aspects of the production process (perhaps they can relate to it more readily than those aspects involving particular skills or technology)

The Production Meeting is where the whole team sits down together to discuss programmes, past and future It is a marketplace of ideas, but it is also a sort of jungle where, theoretically, only the best ideas will survive

For the team, the Production Meeting can be a theatre where the proposing of an idea is a virtuoso performance or it can be a battleground where an idea is fought over (although the battle is more often because of egos and personalities and the idea, in the middle, can suffer no matter what its merits)

Section A includes notes on three programme Production Meetings The three meetings were held by the team of "Check Up", the RTE TV health programme

The first meeting recorded was the first of the season, a particularly useful meeting to record as it included discussion on many of the ideas various team members wanted to see the programme cover over the season It also included the Series Producer's ideas on how she saw the programmes being made and what she thought their most important functions were Finally it included a discussion on the facilities available to the programme

The other two meetings are regular weekly meetings in the "Check Up" series Here the reader can see how such meetings are used to assess programmes just broadcast Also, how they are used to make detailed decisions for the following week's programme, and to draw up plans for the allocation of people and facilities for programmes in the weeks and months ahead That is, the allocation of the researcher, reporter, presenters, production assistants, producers, crew time, editing time, graphic artist's time and studio time

Chapter 3, Section A concludes with an analysis of each meeting This includes comments on the interaction of the team members and their reactions to various ideas and suggestions The analysis also includes an explanation of the background to particular attitudes and decisions

The most interesting feature of the notes on the Production Meetings is the fact that they allow the reader to watch the life cycle of an idea, and to see how it is proposed, how it is 'sold' by the proposer to the rest of the team, the kinds of questions or

criticisms it must weather and how the status and ability of the proposer has an enormous influence on its chances of acceptance

Once an idea is accepted by the Production Meeting it goes into production, or at least onto the next stage of the production process research

Sections B and C deal with the research and subsequent steps in the process They are diaries of two reports made by the "Check Up" programme in the 1989-90 season One, an 18-minute report on the subject of infertility (Section B) The other, a full programme on the work of Irish physiotherapists with victims of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, which killed 25,000 people (Section C)

The diaries are day-by-day and sometimes minute-by-minute records of the research and filming of the two reports With the diaries the reader can see the production selection process at work the choice of arguments, points, interviewees, sequences and the allocation of time and facilities that go to make the final programme

Each diary is prefaced by a discussion of the work on the relevant report

## *Chapter 4: Results of Interview-based research*

Each interview with the 16 television producers was recorded on tape and transcribed. The producers' responses to questions are included verbatim in this chapter with the minimum of editing. This may, at times, make reading the answers a little difficult but it does preserve, as much as possible, the full sense of their replies. Most of the responses can be included fairly easily in the categories outlined below; but some are more general comments on television production in RTE and these are more suitably included in the catch-all Section A.13, entitled, "Technique and Procedure".

Section A.1 deals with the topic of **Interviewees**: Producers spoke of the use of reporters and researchers in setting up the interview; how interviewees behave off- and on-camera; using 'bad' and risky interviewees and what makes a 'good' interviewee.

In A.2 they talked about **Structure and Format**, referring to the way they order their programme material. Some did not admit to using a formulaic structure at all. Others say they always open or close the programme in a certain way. They talked about the use of introductory scripts, how the structure is affected by a programme's place in the schedule, or the availability to it of various people and facilities.

The producers are asked about **Relations with Management** in Section A.3. Most said they were relatively autonomous, but most also had stories of some management involvement in their programmes. Some complained that too much autonomy is a bad thing, that it reflected an unhelpful disinterest in, or ignorance of their work by management. One producer even said management did not work them hard enough.

In A.4, the questions about **Presenters** were put to the producers. They described how presenters were recruited and trained as well as their importance in different programmes. They explained why they chose particular presenters; how they gauged their audience impact and the role the presenter played in the programme's production.

Section A.5 concentrates on **Resources**, and how producers reacted to cutbacks. One producer believed RTE had become like 'a sausage factory', another thought cutbacks resulted in exploitation of certain staff. Others said cutbacks did not effect them or said that they could be accommodated. Producers also specified areas of programming on which cutbacks were having an effect.

To get an idea of where they were feeling the pinch, and what their priorities were, the producers were asked to identify one area on which, if they could, they would spend more money. The answers varied from, 'time to paint the studio floor blue', to more researchers, more producers, more editing and, a luxury, a group of people to do nothing more than sit around and think up ideas.

**TAM ratings**, or measurements of audience size are discussed twice in Chapter 3. The first time is in Section A 6 where producers talk about the importance of ratings in assessing past programmes and making decisions about future ones. Ratings actually occupy an interesting position in RTE. It is a public service broadcasting organisation, so the quality of its programmes should be more important than the numbers who watch them. But RTE is also a commercial television station, so audience size often matters more than in other public television stations.

The station is often serving two masters and the reactions of the producers to questions about the TAM ratings reflect the inherent tension in this arrangement. For most of them, ratings mattered, but for different reasons. One describes them as important in terms of the internal politics of the organisation, in promoting the programme to peers and management. One view was that good TAMs justified good resources (this was contradicted by the producer who pointed to the relatively generous resources received by low-rating Irish language programmes).

Good ratings were also thought to be good for the morale of the programme team. They were generally seen as a source of information on the composition of the audience, although two producers disagreed with this and found ratings pretty useless in that regard.

Ratings are also referred to in Section A 7 which deals with **feedback from the audience** - the input producers get on their output. Because they work with a one-way medium of communication, television producers have limited knowledge on who they are communicating with and what their viewers' reaction is. This section shows the quality of the information they have on the audience and its responses.

Producers cite ratings as one source for that information and they are gleaned by those who want to find out the audience's age, gender, social class, location and preference for other similar programmes or other programmes on at the same time. The fluctuations of audience size around, and during programmes allowed producers assess their structures and slots.

One sports producer notes that TAMs were of little benefit to him as they did not include those watching in pubs and clubs, and an Irish language producer complained that there was a disproportionately small number of Irish language speakers surveyed.

In A 7 b, the producers talked about **Scheduling**. They gave examples of how it affected their ratings and audience profile.

Other sources of reaction from the audience came in the form of **letters and phone calls** to the station (A 7 c), although whether you heeded them or not depended on the programme you were working on, according to some producers.

**Newspaper reviews** (A 7 d) mattered more, but according to most of those who spoke about them they were important for raising a programme's profile with managers who may not have seen it

Producers working on young people's programmes saw face-to-face contacts with the audience (A 7 e) as an important means of gauging audience reaction to the programme and especially to its presenters. Two producers commented on the importance of audience age to them (A 7 f)

The question of the audience's reasons for watching television at all yielded a variety of answers. Because it "wants to see itself", said one, "because it doesn't get boring" or "to listen to adult conversation" said others. Another producer said he hoped the audience used his programmes to take courage from and to fight injustice

Section A 7 h contains producers' views on **Qualitative Testing**. Because RTE did not have this form of testing in the way the BBC had (the BBC used audience panels regularly to grade programmes with a qualitative Appreciation Index, AI), the producers assessed audience reaction to their programmes by 'feel'. Others thought testing an audience's appreciation of a programme was often of little value as they believed audiences were not expert enough in television to make useful judgements

Two important functions of a television producer, generating **ideas** and making programme **decisions** are the subjects of Section A 8. Producers were asked where ideas come from and how decisions came to be made on programmes

They described how ideas came from production meetings, or from discussions with management. Although discussions with management seemed to only influence ideas at the start of production on a new programme - and in some cases that influence was minimal

In Sport decisions about what sport was covered were often made on the basis of the different levels of popularity of each sport

Other producers got ideas from book publishers, newspapers, members of the public or while working on other different ideas. They gave examples of how ideas came from unforeseen changes of plan ('Necessity is ') And two producers admitted that ideas were lifted from other programmes

In A 9, Producers referred to the possible threat of competition from commercial television (**TV3**). Two welcomed its arrival, one did not and two thought that it would never get off the ground

What did get off the ground was the **1990 Broadcasting Act**. The producers' attitudes to it are given in Section A 10. A few had little idea of how it would affect their work, more said exactly how they were hampered by the legislation. One said its overall impact would be determined by management's reaction to the measures.

The topic in Section A 11 is **Crews**, including editors and studio staff. Producers talked about the difficulty of motivating crews under a heavy work schedule and how this is made easier by a show becoming successful. They explained the importance of the goodwill and interested involvement of the crew and how producers could destroy this. However, they also told of how the contributions of a crew could get out of hand.

In A 12, producers were asked about the **politics** of their work - whether what they did was politically-motivated in the broad sense. One said he worked to contribute to "an ongoing suspicion" of Irish society and its structures. Others agreed with this notion of the purpose of their programmes being to question society and contribute to change.

Despite their intentions, though, one of those interviewed thought the overall thrust of the station, because it included advertising, was to support a consumerist view of society. And two respondents said their programmes merely reflected the way society was.

Section A 13 is the catch-all category referred to above. It opens with responses to questions on **Meetings, Planning and Analysis** (A 13 a). In this subsection the producers described their production meetings and told how they were used to analyse past programmes and to plan future ones.

In A 13 b they talked about **systems** they operated in running a programme, like assigning a week's programming to one producer or how they organised filming time available to them.

The design of **sets** is dealt with in A 13 c where the producers explain the factors to be taken into account like getting a good variety of shots, fitting the audience in, being able to assemble and disassemble quickly, thereby saving studio time. And, of course, how a certain impression of the programme is created.

In Section A 13 d (**Shots/Visual Variety**), one producer said he thought his colleagues tried for too much variety - that they should use more of the 'talking head' shot (the basic shot of an interviewee). Others said this was a shot-type to be avoided, not just to have variety for variety's sake but to tell the story better.

The subject of **Content** is dealt with in A 13 e. A news producer described what he considers a 'weak' story, another producer talked about working on a programme where the content did not exist for the time available, while another told how the slot he had was unsuitable for the content of his programme. For some producers the difficulty was in mixing serious and light material, matching the material to the audience or to the programme brief.

The important element of Music and Variety programmes, the **studio audience**, is commented on in Section A 13 f. Producers described what was a 'good' studio audience, difficulties of working with a studio audience and how a studio audience had an enormous influence on the show almost regardless of its content.

**Pieces-to-camera (PTCs)** used to be very popular in the early days of television. In A 13 g, all the producers who referred to them said they would keep them to a minimum preferring to show, as much as possible, the people or places being talked about.

Two producers mentioned **programme types** in A 13 h, they distinguished between Features and Current Affairs and Young Peoples'. And in Section A 13 i, they spoke about the differences in working with **film** or **tape** and in the **studio**.

A significant event in RTE (and the country) during the research period was the soccer **World Cup** in Italy. In A 13 j, a sports producer explains how some aspects of the programmes were put together.

Producers' thoughts on **quality control** or monitoring output are recorded in A 13 k. Programmes referred to include a soap, a magazine programme and a news programme.

Producers talked about the importance of **entertainment and information** in their programmes in A 13 m, and in A 13 n one producer spoke about **scripting**.

Section 13 ends with two producers talking about working with **studio directors** (A 13 o) and a Variety producer on the delicate nature of using the tricks on the audience as part of an entertainment programme (A 13 p).

To the interested layperson, the interviews should give an idea of the pressures and demands on RTE's TV producers and the resources and skills available to them. The reader should have a better understanding of why the producers make the programmes they do.

In addition, Section B contains further illustration of the above. In this section a producer reviews one of his programmes and explains how the finished product came about. Frank Hand, producer of "The Nature of Things", a science and environment programme, is recorded watching a half-hour edition of the programme. It is a report on the ongoing dispute between metal detector operators and archaeologists.

He begins by giving the background to the story, telling why he decided on the subject, why the programme is completely on film and how he was aware of potential bias. He goes through the programme scene by scene describing how, for example, the opening sequence was made, why certain sound effects and music were used, why particular shots or answers from interviewees were used at particular points.

He also recalls why the story was told in the way it was, why the various arguments were introduced at the times they were and how, because he was unable to attend some interviews (due to commitments elsewhere on the programme), the thrust of the report was affected. Throughout the film he also points out how he thinks it could be improved upon.

### ***Chapter 5 - Discussion of Findings***

This chapter includes a précis of the answers given in the producer interviews. It uses these, and some of the information gathered during Participant Observation, to describe the work and attitudes of television practitioners in Irish State Television during the research period. This information is also discussed in relation to some of the issues raised in the Literature Review.



# CHAPTER 1

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This work is part of a tradition of broadcast research that is richer in the U K than in Ireland. The few books studying the production of Irish television include, "Sit Down and Be Counted", "Television and Irish Society", and "Irish Television Drama"

"Sit Down and Be Counted" was written by three former RTE TV producers, Lelia Doolan, Bob Quinn and Jack Dowling and was published in 1969. The title refers to demonstrations by RTE staff in the late 1960's over interference in programmes by management and government and the book records the series of events leading up to and subsequent to those demonstrations. It also describes production techniques and relations between staff and management and includes an account of the working experience of one of the producers as well as critiques of the political and cultural function of RTE.

Fifteen years later, "Television and Irish Society" was published. This is a collection of essays edited by Martin McLoone and John McMahon and was published by RTE to mark 21 years of Irish TV. The collection covers some of the same ground as "Sit Down and Be Counted", studying aspects such as drama, current affairs, production staff and notions of professionalism and all related to the station's role in Irish society.

To mark 25 years of Irish television, RTE published, "Irish Television Drama" by Helena Sheehan. This is a detailed study of the subject, including reference to its political and social importance. It analyses various productions and includes interviews with writers, producers and managers among others.

Studies of British TV that bear a similarity to this thesis are "Framing Science", a diary of the making of a science documentary, and "The Making of a Television Series", a study of the production of a series on prejudice. " 'Crossroads' The Drama of a Soap Opera", "Boys from the Blackstuff", "Journalists at Work" and "Putting 'Reality' Together" are also studies of television production which use a combination of interviews and direct observation. ("About Midnight" is a similar study based in Israeli television.)

As with the Irish publications, all of these books use the findings of the empirical research to support conclusions on the social, cultural or political nature of the practitioners and productions studied.

For example, in "Boys from the Blackstuff Making a TV Drama", Bob Millington and Robin Nelson write about those involved, describing their roles within the production as well as their wider function.

"The writer, director, actors, designer and all those contributing to the making of a television drama have effectively been shaping the text. In structuring the images they

are restricting the bounds of the message, providing closures that is, an attempt to convey a circumscribed meaning, to establish one of several possible readings as 'preferred' or 'dominant' " (Millington et al, 1986 153)

Roger Silverstone argues that the 'language of television', "narrowly defines the range of expression and the limits of response" (Silverstone 1981 182)

This view is shared by Kevin Rockett for whom this "limitation of doubt or questioning on the part of the audience" is achieved through what he calls "conventions or established patterns of making programmes " (McLoone et al, 1984 134)

In the opinion of Roger Silverstone, these conventions are incorporated into professional standards which combine to make broadcasting a conservative force and because of them, "it is always hard for an original or radical voice to be heard " (Silverstone 1985 177)

Rockett says such standards are part of the notion of 'professionalism' which "really means the maintenance of a homogenous world view that generally corresponds to a reflection of the dominant characteristics of the programme makers white, male, middle-class and heterosexual " (McLoone et al, 1984 134)

In BBC News, Philip Schlesinger found dominant characteristics which meant that the organisation's news output necessarily embodied "social and political values" (1978 164) In ATV, Philip Elliott witnessed a production team working on a programme about prejudice, identifying and establishing its "basic value position" (1972 138) on prejudice While, after her study of RTE current affairs staff in 1984, Mary Kelly provided a list of what she saw of their dominant values

"They have aligned themselves with

- Parliamentary democracy and its forms of debate and discussion
- dutiful, responsive, honest and efficient government
- 'public opinion' and 'the people' - as interpreted by the presenters themselves
- the opinion of the expert, the professional and high status journalists
- a belief in the possibility of ameliorating social problems conflict and injustice by piecemeal reform and progressive improvements usually to be undertaken by the state

They have aligned themselves against

- official neglect, inefficient or unfeeling officialdom
- dishonest and inefficient government

- the lack of state policies, social services and institutions to deal with social problems and social conflict
- speculators and profiteers
- individuals who promote violence, crime, drugpushers, etc "(McLoone et al, 1984 98)

Schlesinger found similar alignments in the BBC, he quotes a journalist who sums it up as

"Middle-class liberalism Strikes, Communists, Black Power, Fascists are all bad Social Democrats and Tories are good But on the whole you discuss whether a story has been done well or badly in the context of the system You rarely discuss whether the organisation is good or bad, or what its global view is " (Schlesinger 1978 166)

According to Schlesinger, being part of this consensus means that the BBC cannot be impartial, and he goes on to say that, "the outputs of broadcasting are, in general, supportive of the existing social order " (Schlesinger 1978 165)

Helena Sheehan (1987 7), Alan Rosenthal (1988 50) and Stuart Hood have all found that practitioners deny that their work is influenced by, and communicates, a dominant view of the world, "to them what they transmit represents a commonsense interpretation of events in the world and in their own society " (Hood 1980 22) And echoing his above point about the conservative nature of television, Silverstone writes "Television and common sense do not enquire into why things should be as they are only that they are so but have somehow to be lived with " (Silverstone, 1981 182)

But there are other imperatives suggested for the use of repetitive and familiar conventions in television

Philip Elliott (1972 165) and Richard Paterson (Dyer et al, 1981 59) believe that they are used to satisfy the audience But, for other theorists, this desire to satisfy the audience is merely a desire to participate in their continued oppression

"According to Adorno and Horkheimer, for example, the experience of pleasure in mass culture is a false kind of pleasure, even part of the trick of manipulating the masses more effectively in order to lock them in the eternal status quo of exploitation and oppression " (Ang 1985 17)

Martin McLoone doesn't fully agree He says if the time is right a television programme can successfully question the social order from within which it has been made He chose as an example, "Strumpet City", an RTE historical drama set in Dublin of the early 1900s culminating in the lockout and starving of thousands of workers in 1913

"('Strumpet City') speaks to the present of the past. Its ideological thrust towards a liberal social democratic consensus, in itself a profoundly radical break with dominant Church ideologies. However, through a combination of its own aesthetic devices and the ferment in contemporary Ireland, it opens up other, potentially more radical modes of struggle " (McLoone et al, 1984 86)

And there are establishment figures in many countries who feel that broadcasting does indeed support radical and subversive struggles

For example, Roger Bolton tells how, after the BBC broadcast a report on the ill-treatment of suspects by the RUC in Castlereagh, Airey Neave, Conservative Shadow spokesman on Northern Ireland in 1977 criticised the organisation

"He accused the BBC of undermining the propaganda war and helping terrorism " (Bolton, 1990 25) Neave is quoted as saying, "The BBC have given the impression that they are not really on the side of the propaganda war in Northern Ireland " (Bolton 1990 26)

Another reason for using conventions in television is that it allows television companies to meet the huge demand for programmes economically, according to Richard Paterson (Dyer et al, 1981 59) and Stuart Hood

"Programmes tend to fall into well-defined categories, to be made according to formulae which will 'work', and to be turned out very professionally using a limited number of well-tried production techniques. These techniques, which are certainly effective, especially when a director and team are working under the pressure of time (in television as elsewhere in industry time is money) are rarely questioned, although it is clear that there are other and equally effective ways of presenting pictures on a television screen. Instead they have been accepted as 'the grammar of television' " (Hood 1980 37)

But according to Hood and others, this use of formula television may be good for the station but often means a diminished quality of work experience for crews. Bob Quinn described what he felt was happening to RTE in the late 60's, "The station had all the verbal trappings of a factory, as well as the alienation of the employees of such an enterprise " (Doolan et al, 1969 222)

Roger Silverstone notes the tension this can produce

"The ideologies of film crew and production diverge and sometimes conflict. Partly these divergences are generic expressions of the conflict between craft and education, between practical and cerebral, and uneven and unsteady interdependence of two kinds of creativity

Partly they are specific, an expression of the inevitable differences of commitment to a given project, a given location, a given film. This in turn is an expression of time and responsibility. The crew may be assigned at short notice to a particular film and may not, as in this case, be involved with the whole of it. The filming is a job to be done. For the producer the emphasis is the reverse - the job is the film, and the filming is only part of it - the primary extraction of ore still to be refined " (Silverstone 1985 101)

Dorothy Hobson reports on an interview with a studio director of a soap who said "In studio the important thing really is getting a nice atmosphere " (Hobson 1982 77) and that he had a responsibility to make people feel "involved". Nevertheless, Stuart Hood believes the overall result of the system of production in most television stations is "a state of alienation - a situation where the worker is divorced from the products of his or her own skills " (Hood 1980 35)

Another convention is the repeated use of the same presenters. Mary Kelly explains the benefits of this in current affairs television, "This means having a team of trusted and credible presenters who appear, week in and week out, fronting the programme, giving it a sense of televisual identity and an authoritative style. Establishing a 'personality system' is important to the programme makers, to the station as a whole, and to the viewers " (McLoone et al, 1984 91)

This can also result in tension as Michael Leapman describes in "Treachery? The Power Struggle at TV-AM". He is explaining why the proposition that they would have a say in the content was so attractive to the station's first presenters

"To appreciate just how seductive a proposition it was, it is necessary to understand something of the constant tension in TV between people who appear on the screen and the production staff who actually get the programme on the air. The presenters are sarcastically dismissed as 'magic puppets' by the backroom people, who envy the inflated sums they are paid for doing little more than reading off an autocue. In return, the presenters resent being treated by production staff as dimwits with no constructive ideas of their own

They feel highly insecure, and with reason, for the price of their high salaries is the knowledge that any time they could fall from grace, losing their crowd appeal and earning power. They know too that it is the competence of the production crew that prevents this happening - and by the same token it is the staff's fault if things go dreadfully wrong. They are quite at the mercy of others. Thus the prospect of a piece of the equity, coupled with the notion that they would now be less dependent on the people behind the cameras, was irresistible " (Leapman 1984 9)

The convention of the "pictorial imperative" is widely referred to in the literature. This is the phrase coined by Philip Schlesinger to describe the convention in television news which dictates that every story must have a picture to go with it

Although, as he notes, some pictures are more acceptable than others, "The second-best presentational mode which receives most opprobrium is the 'talking head' This is the dismissive phrase used in the TV world to describe a person in vision (on the screen) who is, in one way or another, speaking to camera " (Schlesinger 1978 129)

And the opprobrium for the 'talking head' isn't confined to newsrooms In his record of the making of a science documentary, Roger Silverstone records the producer's enthusiasm for pictures that were dramatic in the extreme, "As the 'rushes' (unedited pictures straight from the camera) from Bangladesh pass through the (editing machine)(the producer) is alternately excited and depressed excited by the women - 'You can't have something as moving as that and not have it as central', and dismayed by the lack of dramatic images of poverty The poor farmers in Bangladesh did not look poor enough " (Silverstone 1985 107)

This is related to another imperative the demand for storytelling of which "telling has become the predominant medium " (Sheehan 1987 5) In his advice to potential interviewees, Michael Bland explains why stories are necessary on television, and especially for the interviewee, "This is because people love stories people listen to stories They are also much more difficult for the interviewer to interrupt Ideally the story should be a true one, though it may be necessary to stretch things a bit to get the point over more forcibly " (Bland 1980 28)

Roger Silverstone believes that the stuff of television is stories, "Television is a central cultural institution of our society In its centrality it articulates the primary concerns of human existence and in ways which are themselves primary These concerns, questions of life and death, of the familiar and strange, of male and female, of nature and culture, are incorporated even into our own advanced culture through the messages that television communicates The forms of that communication are themselves basic They are simple and one supposes they are effective, they consist in the mythic narratives, part myth, part folktale, and in magic and ritual " (Silverstone, 1981 181)

And Kevin Rockett says that crucial to these stories are their characters, "Success or failure will be determined by the ability of the mythical average viewer to identify with the individual at the centre of the dramatic conflict This may be a "character" in a play, current affairs or the news but it is also true of sport, whether it concerns snooker or soccer " (McLoone et al, 1984 136)

Jeremy Tunstall came to a similar conclusion, "Events which can be presented through personalities are more likely to become news, especially if the audience can be expected to identify with the personalities in question " (Tunstall, 1971 19)

And if the characters are missing, the producer has a problem as Roger Silverstone saw in the making of a documentary on agricultural research in the Third World, "The difficulty for Martin (producer) is that there were no 'natural' heroes and no 'natural'

villains in the story he wished to tell. Indeed it is clear that though the task, the object of search, was clear enough - the resolution of the dilemmas consequent upon the introduction of new technologies - no one in the film was going to be able, and Martin himself was not able, to offer a clear resolution or a solution.

Equally there were no mini-stories of any significance, no fragments of significant or powerful interaction which would demand attention and a concern with the outcome. And finally no one scientist or individual appearing with any consistent charisma, no one to turn into either a clearly defined hero or villain." (Silverstone 1985: 171)

Alan Rosenthal thinks that, in science documentaries, as in all factual documentaries, the interviewees are the 'characters' ("Interviewees never lie" 1988: 56). They are speaking the thoughts of the producer in much the same way an actor does in a feature film. This, says Rosenthal, is part of the denial, mentioned earlier, of producers of their influence over the programme. Instead they subscribe to, "the treacherous simplicities of an unquestioned empiricism (the world and its truths exist, they need only be dusted off and reported). Many documentarists would appear to believe what fiction-filmmakers only feign to believe, or openly question that filmmaking creates an objective representation of the way things really are." (Rosenthal 1988: 50)

Michael Bland warns interviewees of this role television will expect them to play to entertain the audience, "A newspaper journalist can discuss things at length with you and distill the results into a short piece. The television interviewer not only has to interview you, he also has to make the interview entertaining. This means a lot more cut-and-thrust - a tough interview is advantageous, but the unaccustomed interviewee takes it as a personal affront." (Bland 1980: 15)

A belief in the power of the interviewee-character in the telling of a story is perhaps shared by the British and Irish governments who have banned members of Sinn Féin and organisations proscribed by law from being interviewed on radio and television. Robert Bolton feels this approach is misguided.

"The militant Republicans have to win hearts and minds if they are to achieve their aims. Is this likely to be prevented by enabling them to avoid challenge and scrutiny and to perpetuate myth and romance?" (Bolton 1990: 39)

"I believed then and I believe now, that if the interviewer is thorough and determined (and he or she would be an idiot if he or she wasn't in these circumstances) then the usual result of these interviews is to reveal the true nature of the interviewee and his activities." (Bolton 1990: 38)

The telling of stories implies a certain assumed knowledge of the audience's reaction to that story. But, as Hood writes, assumptions are as far as producers get. "While the programme-makers make important assumptions about their audience they have

considerable difficulty in discovering how it reacts to the messages which are constantly being transmitted to it " (Hood 1980 22)

"A lecturer or politician at a public meeting can see and gauge the size of their audience, a newspaper editor has a return of sales which gives a measurable approximation to the size of readership, but the television professional often has a desperate feeling that the programme just broadcast, on which a great deal of time and energy has been spent, may have been both unseen and unheard " (Hood 1980 15)

Audience attention to programmes is often quite poor Patrick Barwise and Andrew Ehrenberg stress that, while in some western countries, people with televisions have them on between 25 and 30 hours a week, just because they are 'on' doesn't mean they are being 'watched', "Some of this viewing is combined with activities such as housework, eating or talking, and can be at a very low level of concentration " (Barwise et al, 1988 12)

Barrie Gunter also says audience concentration on television is low He describes a study by Bechtel, Achelpol and Akers (1972) who videotaped viewers in the television room and asked them to estimate how much television they had actually watched during the recording period, "over half the time respondents reported watching television they were not actually doing so " (Gunter 1987 136) A more recent study conducted similarly (Anderson, et al) found that the television room was actually empty for 14% of the time that the television was switched on

On the question of practitioners attitudes to their audience, Gunter quotes reports which show that producers have "considerable doubt as to what the audience really want and a feeling that it is not good professional practice to play up to the needs and requirements of the audience too much " (Gunter 1987 317)

He also reprints a quote of one executive in America who said, "I sometimes have the feeling nobody is watching No conception of the audience, except on the smallest possible sampling, namely me, affects my news judgement " (Gunter 1987 318) Another study he cites showed that US network news journalists don't actually work with the audience in mind, but "filmed and wrote for their superiors and for themselves, assuming that what interested them would interest the audience " (Gunter 1987 318)

Philip Schlesinger also found a similar difficulty in identifying the audience among BBC news journalists "This relative insulation from the world is widely acknowledged at the operational level in remarks such as these 'There's no direct feedback, there's only letters and calls and these are usually cranky ' 'All you're left with ultimately is a feel' " (Schlesinger, 1978 115)



And he quotes another journalist who says almost exactly what was said on the other side of the Atlantic in a study referred to by Gunter: "The only thing you think about is what other journalists are going to think about it. And anyway, you write stories for the Editor, not the audience." (Schlesinger 1978:107)

BBC journalists told Schlesinger that their impressions of the audience came from their families, "I'm really writing for myself and the wife" (Schlesinger 1978:119) and this led some of them to believe in the notion of news as entertainment:

"I can only take what goes on in my own home as an indicator of interest. There was a great thing about the Prices and Incomes Board folding up, but everyone was bored. But when there was an item about typhoid-carriers, we had a half-hour discussion. We're supposed to be an informative medium, but we've got to entertain the public." (Schlesinger 1978:119)

A producer of a drama or comedy can look at the ratings to judge the entertainment value of their programmes to the audience. These ratings are especially important in commercial television as Richard Paterson illustrates with an example from "Coronation Street":

"Bill Podmore's taking over from Susi Hush is an illustration of the pressures to which 'popular' programmes are subject. In this case they became public because of Granada's obvious disquiet at the downturn in ratings with the introduction of 'serious' issues. The company's central concern was commercial, and only aesthetic inasmuch as that was seen to determine the ratings. Bill Podmore's reputation as a producer of comedy signalled a change in direction away from 'drama' and a quest for humour and entertainment, and within two years the programme had re-established itself as a ratings success." (Dyer et al, 1981:56)

High ratings were and are important for RTE. T.P. Hardiman, a former Director-General believed the station was obliged to cater for a 'mass' audience,

"This is not to say that minority groups have no rights. They can and must be given a service. But the operation of television is too costly and too complex to be run for the benefit of a handful of people. If a service does not justify itself in terms of the mass audience then it cannot be justified." (Doolan et al, 1969:271)

Doolan, Quinn and Dowling didn't see it that way,

"Audiences are not 'masses' if what we are broadcasting is culture in the sense that we have proposed. They are 'families' of culture interests with overlapping memberships. Consequently, then, except for great public events which would command the interest of every member of the community, all programmes are minority programmes." (Doolan et al, 1969:280)

The authors of "Almost Midnight" found that despite the difficulty of broadcasting with limited feedback from the audience, producers didn't always welcome audience research. They tended to respond in three ways,

"In the best of cases, he may actually attempt to modify or change a program's format/contents on the basis of audience response. Such changes take place gradually - without blatantly linking them to the results of the research. Some broadcasters, however, may even be willing to incorporate research findings into their formal and conscious decision-making process.

On the other hand, the broadcaster may activate his or her defense mechanisms in order to avoid injurious information - if that is the case. Clearly this option, a difficult one psychologically, is accompanied by much rationalization as to why research findings are invalid, irrelevant, or even totally wrong and misleading. Yet despite these attempts at avoidance, the broadcasters may display behavior which indicates that the research findings had some impact on them after all.

A third, perhaps middle-of-the-road strategy for coping with research findings is using the information for reassurance and moral support (if the findings are "good") or for "rethinking" the accepted course of action (if the findings are "not so good") (Roeh et al 1980 131).

Bolton places great value on the feedback from those audience members who write newspaper reviews, "If the programme was good, the reviews may well say so, and so may my colleagues in the corridor" (Bolton 1990 2). "I felt 'Panorama' was really humming along, the reviews were good again" (Bolton 1990 119).

As to why the audience watch at all, there are several theories. One of these is dismissed outright by Dorothy Hobson. She recalls that she had been told by some programme-makers that viewers watch programme just because they are on the screen at a particular time. Hobson spoke with a number of "Crossroads" viewers about their reasons for watching and one of those reasons is indeed 'habit', although she makes the point that this is not

" a derogatory or negative statement. It should be seen in relation to the notion of 'habit' and 'routines'. The regular scheduling of programmes which are transmitted at the same time means that those programmes become part of a certain 'time band' in people's lives. If you have to get the tea every evening at a certain time, put your children to bed, and watch a television programme, then the routine or habit includes the watching of that television programme. However this does not mean that you only watch it because of habit" (Hobson 1982 115).

Other reasons given are to relax, kill time, escape from worries. People often watch in company and enjoy the group activity, others, with no company, watch 'to avoid being lonely'. It offers a neutral topic of conversation and common experiences. People also watch for the information, to educate themselves and follow what is happening in the world (Barwise et al, 1988 Chapter 2). Also "TV is used as a babysitter" (Alley 1987 16)

But Ien Ang, Barwise and Ehrenberg give the primary reason, "for a great majority of the population, television viewing is associated with entertainment" (Ang 1985 21)

"Television's informative and educative functions do not explain why people give it so much of their free time. Its main role in people's lives is to entertain, more often by soothing than stimulating" (Barwise et al, 1988 19) □ □ Despite the audience's vast consumption of television programmes, they are not a good source of ideas for new programmes, entertaining or otherwise. This is according to Roeh et al, "Viewers everywhere are notoriously unwilling and unable to make suggestions for new types of programs, invariably affirming that they want more or the same amount of things they are already getting" (Roeh et al 1980 159)

With regard to the variety of sources and reasons for new ideas, Luke Gibbons and Alan Bleasdale give examples in "Television and Irish Society". Gibbons mentions the establishment of a new rural soap on RTE in the 1960s, it was called 'The Riordans'. "Initially 'The Riordans' was conceived as a didactic agricultural programme, as a vehicle for imparting, if not smuggling in, the latest information on farm modernisation and machinery" (McLoone et al, 1984 35)

Writer, Alan Bleasdale remembers that the original idea for the series, "Boys from the Black Stuff" and for one of the main characters, 'Yosser', came from the same source

"I'd heard this marvellous story about this character who works on the asphalt with all the lads who always wants to be the focus of attention. And he'd go into a transport cafe on the East Lincs Road on his own and go up to the counter and order 'Six eggs on toast, please girl!'

And there'd be a terrible silence while they'd look for the five midgets who were with him or whatever. And everyone'd mutter, 'He's just ordered six eggs on toast and he's on his own!' Then the eggs on toast would come and he'd go (gesturing plates on forehead). And the eggs on toast would smear all the way down him, and he'd turn around to everyone and say, 'I'm Yosser Hughes' and walk out! Now, I'd heard that story about three days before and I just told David Rose that story and he laughed and said, 'That's it!' And that's how 'The Black Stuff' happened."

"Sit Down and Be Counted", told how the idea of a consumer affairs programme on RTE television was justified

"Quinn felt that if we were aiming at a full-blooded consumer society in the American style, and RTE was actively, through commercials and canned films, endorsing this, the least it might do was to provide a consumer advisory service. This could play a valuable part in educating our viewing public into the intricacies of such a society, with open discussion of possible pitfalls. This was of course assuming that the public had voluntarily decided to become such a society." (Doolan et al, 1969 223)

The programme was called "Home Truths" and the book describes how the original idea fell foul of management interference. "The programme went on exposing the excessive profits and claims of pharmaceutical preparations - particularly cosmetics - which it was then pursuing in a series of items each week.

The Controller appears to have found this policy unpalatable. Early in January, Mr Gahan (Advertising Sales Manager) protested that the policy of 'Home Truths' was resulting in a loss of revenue. While the programme said nothing untrue, he agreed, the station could not afford to expose the kind of truth the programme was transmitting. "We had a duty to our advertisers." (Doolan et al, 1969 96)

"Almost Midnight" told the opposite story, the idea of a late night news show was kept alive, mainly because of management support.

"Classical patronage of the arts allowed artists to take risks at the expense of their patrons. In modern broadcasting organisations, the patrons are the managers who provide resources and backing which enable the project to develop - at the expense of the stockholder or taxpayer. With the support and encouragement - nominal or otherwise - of the director-general, the director of television and the head of news, Almost Midnight was initiated as a junior partner in a hard-working and hard-pressed news department in which it had to compete for survival." (Roeh et al, 1980 184)

In "Framing Science", Silverstone told an unusual story of management interference. The final version of the documentary film had been sent to America to be considered for transmission on American public television as part of a science series. The editor of the US series wrote back saying they would not be buying the programme because it was "dull, slow and boring at times. Its structure was all over the place with seeming repetitions and redundancies which, far too late, emerged as relevant new ideas." (Silverstone 1985 150) The producer replied "with vigour" but wasn't aware that the American editor had sent a copy of his comments to the producer's Head of Department.

The department head viewed the film, which was unusual, and asked for changes. "He also finds the programme dull, the story not well told." (Silverstone 1985 151) The film has to be recut and in the end, the producer expresses his gratitude for the American editor's intervention.

But Schlesinger says that management's involvement in production is rarely so apparent

"The command structure does not usually perform its work of editorial through obvious routine intervention at the production level. Rather, in general, it works according to a system of retrospective review, as a result of which guidance is referred downwards and becomes part of the taken for granted assumptions of those working in the newsrooms. The general unobtrusiveness of this system, through which orientations first defined at the top of the hierarchy become quite unquestioningly adopted by those at the bottom, permits an orthodox ideology of editorial control to flourish " (Schlesinger 1978 162)

In relation to RTE in particular, several documents published in the '80's and 90's provide information on the resources of the station and the climate in which it was operating at that time

In 1985, "Review of Radio Telefis Eireann 1985 - A Report to the Minister for Communications" was published by the Irish government. It was a report of a study of RTE by Stokes Kennedy Crowley Management Consultants who were commissioned to carry out a "largely 'value for money' analysis to assess the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the management, activities and operations of RTE " (SKC 1985 1). The company were also asked to make recommendations for improvement and change.

In the Television Division, SKC recommended there should be a reduction of at least 5 in the TV Programmes area (from 303 to 258) with a target of a reduction in costs and staff by at least 15% over the following 3 years. SKC felt staff could go in all job categories. The report noted that at the time RTE was producing 35% of its own TV output, short of the target of 50%.

In terms of cost, SKC said RTE TV was "good value", with its hourly costs less than 20% of the main stations in the UK. Part of the reason for this, they said, was because RTE's own programmes were "the cheaper type of programme ".

Other recommendations made by SKC for the Television Division were that producers should be made accountable for their use of facilities and that facilities should be operated on a commercial basis.

As well as facilities, they recommended that the services of support staff should be charged to programmes and that the importance of "good business management in programme-making" should be reinforced. (SKC 1985 56)

(At the time, and at the time of this research, producers were allocated budgets, but in-house staff and facilities were not charged )

In 1990, in "The Irish Film and TV Programme Production Industry," Curtin Dorgan & Associates gave a picture of the external environment in which RTE were operating. They also provided a useful potted history of RTE up to 1990, the year of the Broadcasting Act.

"RTE commenced operations in 1962 as a Government-owned TV broadcasting company and is funded by licence fees and advertising revenues. Competition from British broadcasters for audiences has stimulated RTE to broadcast a high proportion of home produced programming. At present this is running at about 50% of total broadcasting.

Eliminating news, sports and current affairs, RTE's annual internal programme making capacity is about 1,750 hours and costs about 25 million pounds. Since 1986, the company has sourced about 170 hours per annum or about 5% of total home produced TV programming with independent producers at an annual cost of about 3 million. In the near future it is expected that a second, privately owned, television company will commence broadcasting at the rate of about 2,500 hours per annum of which about 250 hours might be sourced with Irish programme makers " (Curtin Dorgan 1990 15)

And summarising the perceived effects of the 1990 Broadcasting Act

"This empowers the Minister for Communications to reduce the amount of revenue which RTE can raise from advertising. The monetary effect of the "capping" provision is estimated to be a reduction in RTE's revenues equal to about one fifth of RTE's current receipts from advertising. It is expected by the Government that this capping of RTE's revenues will make "room" in the advertising market for the independent television company " (Curtin Dorgan 1990 14)

An impression of what the RTE Authority might have thought about revenue constraints is available in their document, "Change and Challenge: The Future for Broadcasting in Ireland "

"If this should happen it would become impossible for RTE to maintain the broadcasting standards generally expected in Ireland. Reducing costs can achieve a certain amount but the fact remains that it costs as much to make quality programmes for a small audience as for a large one. Public service broadcasting, like all broadcasting, must plan ahead and enter into commitments for future programme-making. It therefore needs a secure system of adequate financing to compete in the new environment " (RTE Authority, 1989 27)

But, they state, "RTE sees itself as an enduring element in the uncertain, potentially exciting and undoubtedly changing environment of Irish radio and television " (RTE Authority, 1989 6)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Two techniques were used in the research Interviews and Participant Observation

#### **Participant Observation**

During most of the research period I worked as a reporter on the RTE TV health programme, "Check Up" In many ways the programme was typical of the programmes which were produced from within RTE TV's Features Department at the time It was a weekly half-hour programme broadcast at 8 30 on Tuesday evenings from Autumn to Spring The show had one full-time film crew (Cameraman, Soundman, Assistant Cameraman and a Lighting Technician when necessary There were and are, at the time of research, no women technicians in the film crew section ) It also had one full-time film editor assigned to it

The production staff consisted of two producers, two presenter/reporters, one reporter, one researcher and two production assistants

The research for this thesis began at the beginning of the 1989-90 season Programme meetings took place weekly and I took notes at three meetings Two ordinary weekly meetings and the first meeting of the season

The team were aware that their discussion was being recorded, but the note-taking did not appreciably affect the discussion The first meeting was chosen because it is the meeting at which more ideas are presented, usually than any other meeting during the year

This is because team members have had some time before this meeting during which they can work on ideas solely Later in the season they will often be producing one idea while developing another Also, they may present a wide variety of ideas at this meeting before they know the limitations presented by facilities, resources or style For example, someone may propose filming a story abroad only to be told that the budget does not stretch to foreign travel, or they may suggest a report on the economics of medicine to be told that the programme reports will focus on human interest items

Other reasons for deciding to take notes at the first production meeting include the fact that it is the meeting at which most information about the facilities available to the programme is given, and it is the meeting at which the Series Producer usually outlines his/her hopes for the series

I noted the two weekly meetings to illustrate the mundane decisions of such meetings, the analysis of past programmes and the detailed allocation of studio time, crews, editing and staff for the following programmes

Just before the first programme meeting I began keeping the first programme diary. This was a record of the work that went into making a report on infertility for the programme.

The diary includes notes on research interviews and research material gathered from other sources. It shows how knowledge about the subject was gathered and then used to decide on the points to be covered and on the interviewees to convey those points. The diary also includes the shooting schedule for the story, the draft running order and the draft edit schedule which grew out of it. Finally it contains the dubbing script, the studio script, the promotion script and a factsheet.

The diary shows quite well how a bulk of material about a topic is whittled down to be used in a half hour programme. It also shows the process of choosing interviewees and pictures.

However the diary is insufficient in its detail in two important areas: editing and shooting.

One of the problems with a reporter keeping a diary on a story like this is that the reporter is not always present at every stage of production. Because he or she may be dealing with two or three stories at once, the reporter may leave shooting to work on upcoming stories. For the Infertility story I was present for most of the shooting, but neglected to take my own notes or to get copies of the production assistant's shot list.

With regard to editing, the only person who sits in on all editing is the editor. The producer (in the case of most programmes) sits in for a good deal of time, reviewing edits and leaving instructions for the editor. The reporter is called in to view important passages in which, for example, the facts may need to be checked, and to view the final cut. Also, while one report is being edited a reporter is often away setting up the next report. So for a reporter using participant observation, recording the editing stage in programme-making is difficult.

Consequently, although the record of the research process is very informative, the programme diary for the Infertility story was incomplete and unsatisfactory. I decided to keep another programme diary and regard the Infertility diary as a pilot.

The programme I chose to monitor for the next diary was a "Check Up" special report on Irish nurses working in Armenia. This was not a typical report for "Check Up" – the programme team rarely went out of the country (or outside Dublin for that matter), and the crew would be a two-person team using video rather than the usual three- or four-person crew using film.

As against this, most of the research could be done before shooting as normal, and other standard programme-making techniques would be used. Also, for the



purpose of researching the thesis, being so far away from the office meant I would have a better chance of recording all the shooting. And, as the programme was the last before Christmas, I thought I would have time to sit in on the editing.

The diary for the Armenia story includes a record of research and pre-production and a more detailed diary of the shoot. It also contains research material, including names of possible interviewees. There are also Production Assistant's shot lists, Producer's editing notes, dubbing scripts and the studio script.

As a record of the making of a programme, the Armenia diary is far more detailed than the Infertility diary. Sadly, however, it is still weak on editing. Although it contains producer's notes, I was not present to take my own.

When we returned from Armenia, I was assigned to publicise the programme, we had invested much time, energy and money and it was felt this should be reflected in boosted ratings. So there were photos from Armenia to be processed and sent to the papers and I had to write an article for a Sunday newspaper.

So, by the time I got to the editing suite, the editor and producer had already been editing the programme for two days. My record would require not only a description of what was happening with the sounds and pictures on screen, but also a commentary from the producer and editor on their choice of those particular sounds and pictures. That was not possible at the Armenia story edit.

The editor and producer were both busy and working together intensely. They had 20 tapes to cut to 24 minutes in 4 days. They had looked at all the tapes together, so by the time I arrived, they were progressing quickly and speaking in their own shared code.

(Example 'We'll take third question from the old woman at the house and then mix in the long shot of the village.') Unhappily, it was not an edit session to interrupt with questions about every frame.

Unfortunately it wasn't possible to keep a third programme diary which would include the sort of detail that had been achieved with the Armenia diary.

### **Interviews:**

The interviews with producers began in May 1990. I chose this grade to interview because they have the greatest direct influence on a programme's production, they occupy a "central position as leader of the production" (Elliott, 1972: 138).

(Typically, every other grade, including technical staff, contributes to the production, often with suggestions and ideas unrelated to their own jobs. Apparently, RTE is relatively unusual in this regard.)

Initially, the idea was to interview a producer while watching one of her or his programmes. In this way I hoped to gain specific information about production decisions and use the programme to prompt more general questions.

I began with two producers, one from Features and one from Variety. In the case of the Variety producer, we stopped and started the tape quite often to discuss parts of the programme and related topics. The time allocated for the interview ran out before we had a chance to review the whole programme. Also, the producer asked for anonymity, which precludes me from using any of his/her comments specific to the programme, by which he/she could be identified.

The Features producer had a shorter programme to watch, and we had more time so we managed quite a thorough review of his programme. However, I knew I would not have the same amount of time with other producers so I would have to decide between asking each to review a programme or to answer general questions, one or the other. Based on the results of the first two programmes, I felt that to ask each producer general questions would yield more research material of greater value.

Also, if I decided not to review a programme with each producer that would mean I would not have to match up the availability of a given producer with the availability of viewing facilities. This meant I could make an appointment to meet a producer anywhere (usually in the RTE canteen) and just go along with my list of questions and a tape machine.

I had decided on a sample of 10 interviewees (RTE has 69 television producers) - I actually interviewed 16 in all. I tried to choose producers from as many different programme types as possible, but did not have the time or resources to include gender, native place or class origin as variables in the sample.

I drew up a list of 51 questions, arranged into 10 categories. They were prompted by the literature review and the results of the first two interviews.

The producers were also asked questions related to their own programme type (Gay Byrne "Do you warm up the audience?"), they were asked as many general questions as time allowed, and of course, they were asked specific questions that arose naturally during the interview (John O'Brien "Did you have any worries about using Eamonn Dunphy on the panel?").

During the research period, Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act and the related RTE regulations were in force. Because of the RTE regulation (prohibiting interviews of any nature with members of Sinn Féin) the issue affects all producers, not just those working in current affairs or news.

All of the producers were asked several common questions, including one on the effects of the newly-enacted Broadcasting Act. They were not asked about earlier broadcasting legislation. Section 31 which bans members of Sinn Féin and various proscribed organisations from being interviewed on radio and television.

The attitude of producers and journalists in RTE to this law is well documented and evidenced by the fact that their two unions, NUJ and SIPTU, funded an unsuccessful action in the European Court to have Section 31 declared to be in breach of human

rights This study intended to investigate less documented attitudes to practical concerns of programme-making among producers in RTE, and the bulk of work required to properly research the producer's attitude to Section 31 could not be accommodated

It must be noted that while there is an almost uniform rejection of Section 31 among RTE production staff, there are contradictions and nuances in that rejection that deserve thorough study

The last interviews with the producers took place in November 1990

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Results of Participant Observation Research**

This chapter contains three sections a record of three production meetings for the "Check Up" series (Section A), a diary of the research for a "Check Up" report on infertility (Section B), and a diary of the research and shooting for a "Check Up" report on Armenia (Section B) Each section is followed by a discussion (A 1, B 1, C 1) and more detailed information related to each section is in the Appendices at the end of the thesis

#### **SECTION A: PRODUCTION MEETINGS**

"CHECK UP" 29 8 89 (First meeting of the season)

Presenter 1 (P1) - talks about bone marrow operation planned for tomorrow That would be too difficult

Series Producer (SP) - welcomes everyone and reads out list of facilities available to the programme for the season

Talks about an editor who has his suite in Bray, who has been assigned to the programme There are not enough producers on the programme to allow them to make the long journey back a forth to Bray

Explains to Producer (Pd) (who is new to the programme) how filming operated last season could shoot four long days a week instead of five regular ones

General discussion (Gen) - over requesting an extra half hour in studio May be a problem because of knock-on effect to other programmes using the same studio later in the day

Gen - what about a repeat showing?

SP - thinks programme may get an early afternoon spot For example, before 'Live at 3'

Gen - about how that would affect the hotline services offered by associations and help groups after the Tuesday evening show that deals with their condition? (NB After a show on epilepsy, for example, the Epilepsy association would staff an information phone line )

Gen - on the link with 'Liveline' radio programme (NB 'Liveline' often followed up Tuesday night's 'Check Up' programme with a phone-in on the same topic on Wednesday afternoon's radio show )

SP - wants it to go ahead They benefitted from us Any ideas for the coming season?

Researcher (R) - Feet(1)

Pd - doesn't want to touch feet Hates feet (7)

R - this attitude is typical of the problem Most people want to forget their feet (2) They look after their hair and teeth, but don't care about their feet We abuse our feet

We can help people avoid problems

Pd - has friend with children who have flat feet The proper shoes are very expensive

R - wants to do corns, callouses, smelly feet

Gen- jokes about doing interviews incognito - interviewees in silhouette

R - (3) Wants to do verrucas They look awful and are highly contagious  
Then Athlete's Foot, also highly contagious  
Spreads in families through towels It's controllable  
Then more severe problems like fallen arches and bunions, which require an operation

There are two types of chiropodists Health Board recognised and those not recognised R wants to do the recognised ones

Sp - We want to make it funny (8)

R - Then we should do shoes Do they make a difference? At

six or seven a child grows at a size every six months

Gen- Who can check on cheap shoes?

Pd - The main thing is to get measured We should do fashion shoes Children who wear Doc Martens don't have the same problems We should do fashion shoes through the ages

R - (4) 'Has' (knows) a shop called 'Tall Order' for large sized feet People don't have to go to London to buy large shoes Great shop

Pd - Can you get grants for special shoes? (9)

Sp - Would it make a full programme? (10)

R - We could do a piece on the foot And then there's film and slides (5)

Gen- How would we separate the different items? What about people on their feet all day?

R - We could do vox pops (short 'man in the street'-type interviews) with nurses, waitresses and hostesses I have a model who squashes her feet to fit into shoes because of fashion (6)

Gen- How would we use studio? Shoe display Foot spas (11)

R - Would liven it up with cartoons

Sp - Jill S in graphics is good

PA - Jill S doesn't do cartoon, has list of cartoonists

Sp - Is feet ready for filming? (12)

Gen- Would need someone with smelly feet

P1 - Gay Byrne Show on radio had a piece on smelly feet and had a herbalist on who was able to help (13)

Then talks about bone marrow Explains about the problem of the bone marrow donation operation and the difficulty of getting bone marrow donors

This item came to the programme through Joe Mulholland (Controller of Programmes) who had been written to by the Bone Marrow Appeal Fund (18)

The Bone Marrow Appeal set up a Marrow Bank and need a commitment from 100,000 people

P1 thinks it would be a good show, but not a whole programme

There's a possible interviewee who is very good

Gen- Bone Marrow sounds like a good half programme "Emotional"

Sp - Will it be ready to go the week after next?

P1 - Depends on the priority of the meeting

Pd - Read an article in a medical magazine about radical doctors from Ireland in London with an advanced GP service including a midwife service

P1 - That's a possibility if we go to London Easy to do in one or two locations (14)

Talks of children in hospital We could follow a child through hospital (15) Look at the uncertainty over hospitals Preparing for hospital Playing in hospital

Also London, because London hospitals have a good policy on children in hospital In Ireland it's varied from hospital to hospital

It's not just about money it's about a welcoming attitude

One woman I talked to is very good Good talker Worked in UK, has written a paper Speaks with authority on play Funny on new doctors

Parents have different attitudes

Sp - Should we base it in one hospital?

P1 - A lot of children end up in general hospitals so we should do two places We need to talk to parents to get the full picture

Some old footage available about people in the 50's who changed attitudes to children in hospital

We can give plenty of practical information on preparing for hospital Can do it from the child's view

There is a debate over whether to prepare all children for hospital because of accidents Only 1 in 4 end up in hospital It may upset three-quarters of all children

Sp - What's it worth?

P1 - Half a programme

Reporter (Rp) - Says infertility would be a good topic

Pd - Thinks we should refer to church teaching

Sp - Wants technical information included

Presenter 2 (P2) - Proposes strokes A lot of people don't know about strokes Explains strokes Lot of young people get strokes Strokes have lots of extra traumas, because they are so sudden

Some people have to be taught to speak all over again P2 wants to include a speech therapist working with someone Wants to get someone physically well but who has language and emotional problems

There is a shortage of therapists here in Ireland The facilities aren't here There's little visiting from the speech therapists when you go home from hospital There are speech therapy volunteers who visit for 3 or 4 years

Pd - Has book at home of person in England who survived

Sp - Might bring her in

PA - Stress is causing young people to get brain haemorrhages

P2 - People can have no bowel control They look different at home - dribbly mouth Kids don't like what their father looks like

The stroke clubs are good, we should film them, especially the ones around the country

Sp - Do we need a case history of one person?

P2 - No, we need various people because there are various types of problems



P1 - We have animation of how a stroke happens

Sp - Thinks it'll make a good programme

P2 - Yes Have woman who was beaten up - had stroke because the beating dislodged a clot

Rp - Will we learn how to deal with people?

P2 - We might help groups set up around the country Also, a stroke occurs differently in a diabetic  
Not a full programme

PA - Why do a lot of sports people have diabetes?

P2 - Wants to do something on dentistry

R - Talked to a dentist There are problems with community dentistry Children have to wait 6 years for an orthodontist

P2 - Own family gets good service in the public clinic in Blackrock

Pd - Is there a story in dental charges?

Sp - No Maybe a story on cutbacks (16)

P2 - Asks about a follow-up story on the Siamese twins featured in the newspapers (17)

Gen- All decide it's too voyeuristic

R - Only if they are successfully separated should we do it

With regard to doing a story on a public health nurse, R has put in a request to talk to one, but everyone is tightlipped

Pd - Wants to do a piece on ethical decisions and priorities  
For example, not giving operations to old people

Sp - Wants to look at CEO's decisions

Pd - That's different, Pd wants to do a detective-type story, looking at who makes the decisions affecting the quality of a patient's life

Also wants to look at

The effect of a hospital closure on an Irish town

Employment - the focal point of birth and death

Gen- Other ideas Alzheimer's - get Jonathan Miller

The death of a child in family, not as easy to handle as the death of an older person - psychological problems

Strokes

Childhood illnesses - should cover the fact that the Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) inoculation campaign has had a low uptake

P1 - Why there is a problem with it - could look at similar public health campaigns against colds, small pox and even nits Could we do it in studio?

Pd - Could do it with just cartoons or a script

Sp - Could use a chatty GP or good parents

Pd - What about something on backs?

Gen- Done last year

Pd - Epilepsy? Haunted by this doctor to do a story on it, but actually thinks it would be a good story (19) He has some sort of operation, don't think we need to do a whole programme on that We could do a programme on epilepsy which included the operation

Sp - Could refer to Miley in 'Glenroe'

Pd - Other ideas speech defects and genetic counselling

Sp - Good guy in Belfast

Pd - Explains what genetic counselling means Other ideas accidents in hospital and deafness

Sp - We should look for good stories rather than just good topics

Pd - Have you an overview of what the series should do? (22)

Sp - Everyone has their own thing Last year we ignored technology, food and nutrition and preventative medicine

Pd - Pamela Stephenson

Sp - The odd time we touched on alternative medicine, we didn't get round to tackling it Last year we wanted three items in the programme and one small technology item, but we ended up with long items

Pd - Wants to feel something comes out of the show

P1 - Last year, it was quite people-centred A lot of people thought it was informative Most of the information came through case histories

Sp - What was encouraging was that the health profession had heard of us, for example, in the teaching hospital in Cork

This year I want to keep the studio identity I want to break up and come back to studio with demos and graphics Last year we didn't do unwieldy film reports, we kept coming back to studio

Pd - What you can say to camera in 30 seconds is good, but studio is very frustrating

Sp - We'll start the year with a philosophy and then get practical

P1 - The philosophy hasn't changed we're not expert-centred We could change the approach, maybe a bit lighter People themselves are expert and we treated them with respect, unlike the medical profession

We gave them digestible information We gave them hope, and a phone number to call for further information

Sp - We do a lot of the downside of health, we should more about being healthy - lifestyle

P1 - Body image We can't keep talking about dieting

Rp - Hygiene

Pd - Microwaves

P1 - Have you any philosophy?

Pd - Just don't want to end the series thinking - we haven't done this

Gen- Who's available for filming this week

Sp - In London week after next to talk to a doctor there about AIDS among the Irish there

Pd - Could we do something about abortion and the numbers going over And about post-abortion counselling

Sp - The Heart Foundation were on about Apple Day (20)

P1 - They were looking for publicity

Sp - Bob Collins (Head of TV) was on about the European Year Against Cancer and the possibility of inserts into the programme (21)

Pd - We've done enough on it

Sp - The first programme will be on strokes, the second will be on feet and maybe the cancer code The third programme will be on infertility

Pd - I think something on the health cuts should be done in the first three programmes

Sp - A story on a health nurse would take time to do

Pd - How about we do ethics, maybe for the 3rd programme?

R - Something on nits should be done

P1 - Ethics could be dull - like a late night discussion between doctors late night on Channel 4

Pd - I could get a few doctors - let me work on it Say possibly the third programme - 20 minutes on ethics, 6 on school

Sp - Filming next week infertility and feet

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#### MEETING OF 26 9 89

Sp explains the content of next week's show The subject is food We eat more pre-prepared food There are more food scares nowadays We have Dr Richard Lacey

(food specialist and safe food campaigner) over from the UK to explain how we get so many bugs in food

Then we look at how we are protected in Ireland we are filming in Cherry Orchard laboratory which is where testing is carried out We want to know, 'who gives the red alert if listeria is found?' In studio we will have an Environmental Health Officer and we will ask him that

P2 - How many EHOs are there in the country?

Pd - We should also ask 'What do I do if I buy something that's off?'

R - That's the whole idea they'd (EHOs) be delighted to be asked that

Sp - We'll bounce those questions off him, including why they are so reluctant to have an alert

Gen - Is the public domain adequately covered?

Pd - How do we know what to look for in a shop?

Sp - There's lots in the show, but I want to bring it back to the private domain  
The Department of Health held back on the launch of a leaflet on food hygiene  
Also, I want to put an expert in a kitchen in the studio

P2 - How do you actually know if you have been poisoned?

R - Lacey is not a GP but a microbiologist

Sp - We need a doctor (1)

Pd - Can I pass it on if I am poisoned by food

R - A lot of people who are carriers shouldn't be in touch with food

Gen - We should discuss the difficulties with cook-chill  
Can Lacey or the EHO talk about symptoms? (2)

R - We need to highlight the fact that GPs are underreporting

Gen - Can the EHO say this? Food poisoning is massively underreported But we can't use Lacey to talk about Irish underreporting

Sp - We need anger and punters (3)

R - There are two women One who complained to the Gerry Ryan Show and a woman who lost her child as a result of listeria

Sp - The two presenters can do the kitchen and for the do's and don'ts they can rely on the expert

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MEETING 29 89 (just after the recording of the food programme)

A general discussion of today's show

- Studio shows (i.e. where most of the content originates in studio) are very difficult - we went over time today
- We will be sued by Bisto because of the mention by the scientist
- It was balanced to have the government scientist in
- The programme was tame compared to the rows backstage (between the experts) - but glad we didn't have too much hype

P1 Fed up with her performance - the GP stumbled, she wanted to do it again, but there was no time in studio (1)

Sp Told the other producer that she should keep her shooting ratio down to 8 rolls (i.e. only use up 8 rolls of film when filming a story) - she said the story on strokes took 20 rolls

Pd replied that that was because one of the victims took ages to talk

Sp (2) We have permission to interview a haemophiliac who has AIDS Will shoot it on Wednesday and possibly another day for a family interview and shots of his sculptures

Programme on the 10th will be infertility

Programme on the 17th will be on the blood pressure machine

- and explaining blood pressure

We will put it on one of the presenters and follow them through the day

Gen Follow them with a film crew? no, we will get two stills photographers and follow the two presenters It's basically a set-up to explain the machine

## **Section A.1: Production Meetings - Discussion**

Production meetings are an integral part of the programme-making process in RTE. Unless a programme is run by just one or two people, it will have a production meeting. They are where ideas are raised and discussed. They are also where time, people and facilities are allocated to those ideas. In many cases, production meetings are also used to review the work of the team.

The following notes on three production meetings on the "Check Up" programme illustrate the above points very well. But within the first few pages there is an interesting sequence which is a good example showing how ideas are raised and discussed.

An idea is usually proposed by a person and 'sold' by them to the meeting (1). In selling the idea, the proposer says if it is novel (2), what the various aspects of the story are (3), possible locations (4), the availability of library footage (5) - which saves on filming time, and the availability of good interviewees (6).

During this presentation, the others throw in reactions (7), suggestions (8), questions about the topic (9) and questions about its treatment on the show (10,11,12).

Further on the record illustrates the dynamic of the production team. An idea may have merits, but whether it gets accepted or not often depends on how it's sold and who is selling it.

On this production team, P1 and Pd are strong characters. P1 takes the floor by contributing to other ideas and while s/he has the floor, s/he changes the subject to a proposal of his or her own.

So at (13) s/he contributes to the discussion on feet and switches to talking about bone marrow. The same thing happens again at (14) where s/he contributes to a discussion on GPs in London and switches to proposing a story on children in hospital.

The success of this technique depends on the detail of the proposed idea. When P1 takes the floor the idea is delivered as a neat, self-contained package of information in which many of the above points are dealt with. In other words, the sell is not tentative, P1 does not propose piecemeal as the Researcher did earlier - the questions about interviewees, locations and so on are anticipated and, there is even the bones of a structure (15).

For a variety of reasons, including the selling of the idea, the stories on bone marrow and children in hospital were shot in the 1989/1990 season. The story on feet was shot the following year.

Other points of interest that occur in the record of the first meeting

(16) Cutbacks - an example of deciding on a story type and looking for a story to suit it

(17) Siamese Twins - a highly visual, made-for-TV, emotionally-charged story - rejected

(18,19,20) Examples of pressure or encouragement to do stories

(21) Discussion on the thrust of the series

In the second programme meeting (26 9 89) note the need to get the right expert (1,2) Like a good lawyer, the programme should know the answer to the question before asking it, and should have someone who can answer it

Also note, the demand for material to balance the scientific expertise (3)

The third programme meeting (2 10 89) took place after the recording of the programme discussed in the meeting of the 26th. The team are unhappy with the show - particularly they felt there was not enough time to redo mistakes (1). The meeting then moves on to a discussion of forthcoming shows (2)



## SECTION B: INFERTILITY DIARY

### Day 1

First day on programme for new season Met Series Producer for coffee Suggested seven ideas for stories including three major reports food, infertility and occupational health

Suggested food because it's in the news, we didn't do it last year and we could do it well as a series of studio items (Studio items are always welcome as Check Up only has facilities to produce 18 minutes of the 26 minute show on film - so every show has to have a studio item )

Suggested occupational health because the Department of Labour contacted me with a view to getting some publicity on the subject of health and safety in the workplace, also because I'm sitting on a good exclusive story about industrial workers' receiving enormous compensation

Finally, suggested infertility because of a recent experience of it within my family and because the Infertility Support Group had called me to suggest we cover the topic

Series Producer expressed interest in Infertility and Occupational Health (She said she has a friend who has problems with fertility) She said that food was in the plans and that I should work on it with a view to a studio 'strand' (or series of one per programme) of three reports

She also mentioned that she heard the Chief Executive Officer of a particular Health Board is a good talker - suggested that I investigate the possibility of a story on cutbacks in his area

### Day 2

Went to library Found 10 items on infertility in back issues of the Irish Times on microfiche and on shelves Looked at 4 tapes of programmes/reports on infertility from current affairs and news programmes on RTE TV

Today Tonight 1487 Comprehensive programme, well made -includes excellent footage of 'assisted reproduction' operation (GIFT) This programme seems so comprehensive that at first it seems there's no need for us to do another infertility report

Today Tonight report emphasises the infertility clinic at St James' Hospital - extensive extracts of an interview with Professor Harrison Almost second half of report dwelt

on Catholic Church attitude to infertility treatment techniques (The Catholic Church had just issued an instruction on the topic )

Infertile couples interviewed on the programme - only one shown full face The rest were in silhouette All good speakers

Decided at this stage there was no point doing the report if we couldn't get couples on full face The silhouette technique has overtones of the sinister and sensational and wouldn't suit, I believe, the educational/informational tenor of the Check Up series

#### Day 5

Read Irish Times article which indicated that ovulation predictor kits, used by couples wishing to have a pregnancy are of dubious value Contacted a manufacturer who agreed to send a kit

Met Megan Dunne of Infertility Support Group She had been onto us last year looking for publicity - had her name on file since then

She spoke at length about their problem (Appendix 1) she is the secretary of the support group and herself and her husband were featured on the Marian Finucane's phone-in programme on Radio 1 She'll send a copy of their newsletter and a copy of the radio interview

She said she'll talk to husband about doing interview for us, and said she'd contact another couple (the Maddens) who've tried IVF twice and have now given up

#### Day 6

Called Clane Private Clinic looking for Dr Rynne, who set it up He's away - will call next week

Read through cuttings - drew up first menu of items or issues we could cover (Appendix 2)

Impromptu office meeting with two presenters, researcher and Series producer Decided to give slot to infertility in one of the first 4 programmes Along with 'feet', 'children in hospital' and 'strokes' (i.e. each would take up the bulk of a programme)

I thought after the meeting that we would need

- 1 A couple with a test-tube or GIFT child
- 2 A couple about to undergo operation for assisted conception - follow them to see if the woman becomes pregnant

Called Dr Traub, Belfast who does IVF (test-tube) there - perhaps Northern couple more will int to talk He's away, call next week

## Day 7

Found name in cuttings of another doctor associated with Clane -Dr Walsh Called him to arrange a meeting and to see if he can help get a couple with an IVF/GIFT child He'll call back to arrange a time to meet

Called member of National Association for Childlessness in Northern Ireland - good talker, not available for interview (Appendix 2b)

## Day 8

Saw information in Irish Times, re fertility testing in UCG Called Prof Houghton He's English, good speaker, well able to express in lay terms the work he's doing to assist the diagnosis of male infertility (Appendix 3)

Took notes from book given by Megan Dunne (Wilson - "Infertility -the Sympathetic Approach") on the emotional responses of infertile couples to the problem (Appendix 4)

Series producer says we can shoot infertility during the week of Sept 4th (Day 16) She has scheduled the crew for 4 long days (9 am to 9 pm) Monday to Thursday I tell her I doubt if at this stage we'll have enough material to to fill 4 full days filming She suggests also that we have 18 minutes of film plus a studio contribution

Gave video of Today Tonight programme from 1987 and audio cassette of Marian Finucane interview with Megan and Donal Dunne to Series Producer to take home

Drew up second menu of possible items to include (Appendix 5)

Received call from Martin Madden (he'd been contacted by Megan) Himself and his wife have decided to give up treatment and accept their infertility - they're fed up with tests They think that the doctors trade a bit on couples' hopes Will talk to his wife about doing an interview (Appendix 6)

Called Harrison, Rotunda Fertility Clinic - will meet Friday

## Day 9

Called Clane Clinic re Dr Walsh - not there

## Day 10

Met Harrison - said he thought previous programmes on infertility have tried to do too much on what is a complex and broad-ranging subject, as a result they have ended up

being superficial Thought there was too much emphasis on the teachings of the Catholic Church Will try to get couples with IVF/GIFT children to talk -says it might be easier now than when Today Tonight programme was made because of greater awareness (Appendix 7)

Called Imelda Keogh, counsellor to infertile couples in the Rotunda (on the suggestion of Harrison) She said infertility puts a great strain on a marriage and if it is weak, gaining fertility does not always solve the couple's problems Says society should support infertile couples more (Appendix 8)

## Day 11

Decided to ask Imelda Keogh to help find 3 couples to represent 3 emotional responses she meets (Obsession with children, avoidance of occasions involving children and anger over abuse of children or abortion )

Asked Clane to help find IVF/GIFT child Think we could shoot good stockshots of children and babies in parks, shops, hospitals, shots of magazines on parenting at supermarket checkouts, TV ads for disposable nappies

Use these stockshots to punctuate statements from infertile couples - stockshots could be used in slow motion

Harrison mentioned that work to help couples have children where the male is paraplegic, is being hampered by religious sisters who object to the use of an electroejaculation machine This story has a good Irish angle because the machine was invented by an Irish vet working in the US who is studying ways to protect endangered species This could be a 'newsy' teaser to precede the more substantial infertility report by a week

## Day 12

Main planning meeting for Check Up

Talked to Series' Producer afterwards re infertility She decided on the following areas

- Explain the problem, outline the treatments, their availability and the chances for success they provide

- Research work being carried out in UCG

- The work of the Infertility Support Group counsellors and the kinds of call they get

2 main interviews with details of their case histories -  
Donal Dunne and a couple who've given up on the  
treatment.

Megan &

Hope to get pictures of an IVF/GIFT child.

Interview with Harrison re. recent technical improvements and  
chances for success with IVF.

The main thrust of the programme: What treatment available? Where to go for help?

Our audience: People who think they are, or might be infertile. Wider audience:  
General public who should be made more aware of the problem and the hurt caused by  
jibing infertile couples.

Called Madden - he'll do interview, wife won't. Must try to get couple who've given up  
treatment and haven't adopted. Feel adoption would be a distraction because it's not a  
feasible option any more.

Day 13

Called Jane Tuohey from Infertility Support Group. She appeared on Today Tonight.  
Good talker, will do interview. She is a counsellor with ISG, so she will cover the  
part of the programme dealing with their work. Herself and her husband have  
adopted. (Appendix 10).

Called ISG country-based counsellor. She's excellent on rural society's response to  
infertility - has a sad personal history - wonderful talker - won't do interview.  
(Appendix 11)

Called ISG counsellor A - not a great talker - has adopted - will try to think of a  
suitable couple who haven't adopted who would do interview. I sense she'd love to do  
interview herself.

Of the other ISG counsellors, one is Scottish (might not get through as well to  
prejudiced home audience if they are making a point about Irish societal attitudes) -  
the rest have adopted.

Called Fottrell UCG - he explained two techniques for infertility testing he's  
developed, quite technical but he's a good talker - sounds very kind and sympathetic.  
(Appendix 13)

Talked to Series Producer. Told about Madden's wife being reluctant to do interview.  
She says he'll do on his own - no need to worry about couples who've adopted - we  
can use them without referring to the children.

Told her about the excellent country counsellor - like the story -hopes the counsellor and her husband might 'crack' in the next few days I'll request the interview again but the chances are very slim

Series Producer thinks Fottrell sounds good - could do a half day shoot in UCG and pick up another half-day or day-long story in Galway to justify the cost of the trip

We'll firm up on shooting schedule for next week, tomorrow Series Producer suggests substantial interviews at the start of the week and reconstructions of situations mentioned in the interviews for later in the week

Called Megan - they're o k for evenings next week - she's o k for daytime, can get off work

#### Day 14

Called ISG counsellor B - has interesting personal history, a bit taciturn - found out that she had a terrible experience with an interview on the Gay Byrne Radio Show (Appendix 14)

Talked to Series Producer - she has structure worked out (Appendix 15) Decided to divide the show between doctors in studio giving medical information and infertile couples on film telling of their experiences

The filming will be mostly interview Stockshots needed in out-patients waiting-room of Rotunda, children playing, magazine racks, schools Wants to include Galway Any research to show infertility a result of stress or environmental factors like pollution

Called senior nurse in Clane clinic - has written to relevant parents of IVF/GIFT children Says they expect GIFT twins to be born there in a month but consultant says parents can't be approached about appearing on TV as woman is at a delicate stage in her pregnancy The nurse says Clane is completely ignored in media reports about infertility and is only known as the place where people go to get sterilised She says Dr Walsh has left the clinic and we should talk to Clane's new consultant, Subash Kohli

Called Dr Kohli, made all sorts of statements on fertility treatment in Ireland - many of them completely contradictory to what I had heard so far - fudged on the clinic's success rate -emphasises that they always offer hope to the parents and encourage them to keep trying (Harrison says he always stresses the chances of success through assisted-conception are very very low and he tries to discourage them from wasting their money Kohli gave a very hard sell Don't trust him at all (Appendix 16)

Called Madden - can't be interviewed in his own home, neither can Megan and Donal

Day 15

Called Jane Tuohey, set up interview for Thursday morning. She doesn't like the idea of interviewing couples who've quit and adopted because nowadays, she says that adoption is just not an option. Suggests we call the Scottish counsellor and her Irish husband. She makes the point that there's no coordination of infertility treatment here in Ireland. Unlike the UK where the British Pregnancy Advisory Service has walk-in centres with all the specialists in one location and where the couple go through a logical progression of tests together.

Contacted husband of Scottish counsellor - he's o.k. for interview - thinks his wife might need persuading - meeting them on Monday night.

Got call from country counsellor. I had asked her to jot down any ideas she might have for the programme. (Appendix 17) Again she said, she wouldn't do the interview.)

Tuohey also said she thought GIFT was being practised quietly in several large hospitals around the country. Also mentioned an IVF/GIFT clinic in Cork and infertility research in Ballinasloe.

Called Cork - consultant away - assistant said they've had not successful pregnancies there yet.

Called Ballinasloe - doctor there doing research into improved uses of ultrasound to diagnose infertility and monitor treatment - sold himself well - keen to get on TV - well aware of what we need, will provide photos and videos of his work will be in Dublin week after next.

Told Anne about Ballinasloe - suggest we call on the way to Galway if we do UCG. She has a cancer centre story for Galway so we can make a week-long trip of it.

Called UCG (Fottrell says he has plenty of machines with flashing lights for us - what's this? Are doctors suddenly becoming media conscious? He'll also set up the filming with Houghton) arranged to film them on Sept. 19th. Called Ballinasloe - arranged for Sept. 18th.

Arranged to use Series Producer's flat for Dunne and Madden interviews on Monday.

Madden - arranged to meet for lunch on Monday to talk over interview - will shoot interview at 2.30. Wife still not interested in doing interview.

Series Producer will shoot stockshots in Dun Laoghaire on Monday morning. Meet her in coffee shop 9.30 Monday to work out questions for interviews.

Called Dunnes - talked to Donal, husband - keen to do interview -talkative, more at ease with the problem than other infertile couples as has been indicated by my phone calls. This is unfortunate as he and Megan won't be representative - I suppose it's because they're unusual they're agreeing to do the interview. They'll have to convey

the difficulties affecting other infertile couples who won't come on. It's not entirely satisfactory but it's better than interviews in silhouette. We pick them up in Sandymount on Monday at 7 pm for an interview in Monkstown at 7.30 pm.

### **Section B.1: Infertility Diary - Discussion**

The first thing to note about the Infertility story is that it had a head start in life. Many stories are conceived as weak notions, suffer from apathy or resistance and die prematurely. The infertility story was lucky: the reporter was enthusiastic, having some family experience of the problem; the producer was enthusiastic having similar experience and the Infertility Support Group were keen.

There were a few things to be wary of in a story so readily welcomed in to the world. Because the producer and myself had personal experience of the condition, there was a greater danger that we would transmit our own prejudices or opinions, than if we came to the story cold. Also because we had more knowledge of the problem, we might have tried to pack in too much information, too many angles, forgetting that there was a time when, we, like most of the audience didn't know what IVF meant. Also, while the interest of a support or lobby group is usually welcome - they can be too easily relied upon and their point of view can predominate.

On the positive side, the interest of both the producer and the reporter means they'll be more committed to the story and won't treat it too coldly - I believe a certain amount of emotional investment improves a story. Also, the team's experience of a topic can mean that they can find interviewees more readily -although in this case that didn't happen. Which is why the help of the support group was invaluable. They provided contacts of widely different experiences and attitudes. Fortunately, they were a listening and information service rather than a lobby group and only wanted to see the issue raised and so didn't put any pressure on the team to follow a certain line.

The first step in the research was, and often is, to go to the library to look at periodicals and tapes of previous TV programmes. The radio library is in a separate building and is not often checked by researchers on TV programmes. This is because the periodicals usually provided ample background information and the tapes of TV programmes give an idea of the sort of useful pictures that are available. In this case



the radio library would have yielded a tape of an edition of the Liveline on Radio 1 programme in which Marian Finucane conducted an interview on infertility. Fortunately a copy of this programme was provided by one of the interviewees.

The library search gives a good grounding in the basics of a topic. It helps the researcher prepare for background interviews, provides names of possible interviewees and shows how other journalists have covered the topic. So, with the infertility story, the information about the research in UCG was found in the Irish Times cuttings, the interviewee, Jane Tuohey was found in the Today Tonight programme of 1.4.87 and the determination not to have unidentified interviewees came from viewing that programme.

Actually looking at that particular Today Tonight programme was depressing. It was a good explanation of the options available to infertile couples and conveyed their anger towards, the Roman Catholic church very well. It seemed at the time that Today Tonight had said all there was to say and had done it only two years previously. However, if the Check Up programme could put faces on the problem and bring it out of the shadows to show it being discussed in public, it would be doing something new and therefore worthwhile doing.

Day 5 was an important day in the research because of the meeting with Megan Dunne. Often while researching you can be feeling around for the story; you know there's one there but you can't nail it down. It's not until you find a particular piece of information or a particular interviewee that you know you have the makings of a programme. Megan Dunne was such an interviewee. She provided the right combination of information and emotion required by Check Up. She spoke plainly about the medical techniques but wasn't so matter-of-fact that she couldn't show sadness at her situation. Nor was she so out-of-the-ordinary that she couldn't giggle at the more obvious sexual references. She was somebody, I felt, a lot of people would identify easily with.

From Day 5 on, the thrust of the research was aimed at finding infertile couples to agree to be interviewed.

The producer (Day 14) wanted to see some medical technology, to have the assisted conception techniques explained and to see what hope the scientists could provide for the future. This was all dealt with using the sequences from Ballinasloe, Today Tonight library pictures and UCG, and was relatively easy to set up.

Ballinasloe and Galway were attractive to us as they presented an opportunity to get out of Dublin. A lot happens in Dublin and RTE reflects this, overemphasises it and is criticised for it. Note on Day 13, the justification needed for the Galway trip (the extra story was about a centre for cancer victims in the city.)

In the entry for Day 15, it's interesting to note the remark about the doctors becoming TV conscious. When Check Up began, many doctors and medical scientists frowned on TV's 'say-it-simple, say-it-quick' approach to the complexities of medicine. They often refused to participate in a programme and were provided by a useful excuse by the Medical Council who ruled that doctors who appeared on television or radio

should not use their own names as this was a form of publicity-seeking and advertising. Reluctant medical interviewees interpreted this regulation as a general discouragement to appear on television. There were a few who defied the Medical Council and participated in Check Up programmes (and were secretly reported on by their colleagues afterwards), but in the early days of the programme it was often quite difficult to find medics to agree to be interviewed.

What changed the situation, and it changed remarkably, was the attitude of doctors' families. They followed the programme and liked it; so when we would call up a doctor, s/he would know of our existence, often from their family. Whether because it came recommended by their families or because they saw the power of the programme to convey information, or for reasons of vanity, the number of doctors refusing to come on the programme diminished noticeably over time.

While other stories cropped up in the research (Predictor kits -Day 5; Clane Clinic - Day 14; Treatment of paraplegic men - Day 11) these were not pursued. The producer was more interested in a straightforward explanation of the problem and available solutions rather than including more sensational, but ultimately distracting stories. For the same reason it was decided to omit any discussion of the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to some forms of infertility treatment. We had both seen the Today Tonight programme of 1.4.87 (Day 8) and decided they had dealt with that aspect sufficiently.

Concentrating almost completely on finding couples to be interviewed I called Clane Clinic (unable to provide anyone), the National Association for Childlessness in Northern Ireland (Appendix 2b, unavailable for interview), the Rotunda (Appendix 8 - unable to provide anyone). Finally I ended up calling committee members of the Infertility Support Group. 5 agreed to be interviewed. One excellent interviewee dithered, before refusing. Our reaction to her refusal on Day 13 is interesting. However, none of the other phone calls were a waste of time. I was adding to my knowledge of the problem (Appendices 11, 14, 17) which would allow us to decide on areas to be covered and allow me to stand over general statements in my dubbing script. (P2 - 4:07).

Four of the five who agreed to be interviewed were used in the final production. The fifth (Susan McHugh) had agreed to participate after filming had begun. That interview was dropped as the producer felt it wasn't as strong as the others and didn't add to the programme.

Throughout the production I gave the producer rough menus or running orders (Appendices 2, 5, 23). These were designed as discussion documents which collated all the options available to us. There is the possibility that some producers would see this as an attempt, by the reporter, to determine the nature of the programme. A good reporter will consider the options, in terms of pictures, interviewees or issues that should be available to the producer. Inevitably the reporter will form an opinion on how these elements should be used and how the programme should be structured, and he or she can make constructive suggestions accordingly. However, if the producer is

at all insecure, or the reporter is inclined to be 'producer' as well, there can be plenty of unhealthy tension as a result.

After the interviewees had been chosen the producer also had to allow time to shoot general shots relating to the topic. These are sometimes known as 'wallpaper'. In this case they were shots of toys, children in a playground, babies on the street, parenting magazines. (See Dubbing script P1 - 3:43 and Edit List No. 4)

Sometimes the 'wallpaper' is directly related to the interviews. Shots of interviewees doing something innocuous like walking on the seafront (Dubbing script P4 - 0:18 and Edit List No.8) or making and serving tea (Dubbing script P1 - 1:33 and Edit List No.2). These shots are used to add visual variety to the standard head and shoulders ('talking head') shot used in interviews.

Shots like this also serve to introduce the interviewee to the audience: you can tell so much about someone by the way they move, what they wear, their possessions and their home. Although in the infertility programme, this didn't apply so much, as three of the four interviewees were interviewed in different rooms of the producer's own home. (They had requested not to be interviewed at home and it was quicker to set up in the one location.)

In the programme itself, all the interviewees were on film except for one. This was the consultant gynaecologist, Professor O'Herlihy, who was in studio. We had tried to get Professor Harrison from the Rotunda but he was unavailable. He has been on radio and television many times and normally we would shy away from someone who has had so much 'exposure', so as to be as original as possible. But Harrison presents himself and his subject so clearly and interestingly (he is what is known as a good 'performer') that he was by far the most desirable. Most of the other specialists in the field were also unavailable, some of them were out of the country at a conference on the topic of infertility. This caused some panic in the days before the programme was recorded, because without a medical expert, we felt we could have no programme.

We always tried to include a medical expert in our programmes. Firstly to answer questions of a medical nature. Secondly, to correct any unforeseen inaccuracies that may be in the film inserts. And thirdly, to help fend off critics of the programme. We always felt that there were plenty of medical people who thought TV should keep its grubby hands off medicine and that the public should get its health information from GPs. So, particularly in the first few years of Check Up, we thought that if there were a medical expert on the programme the medical profession would feel consulted and also would be less inclined to criticise one of their own.

One of the specialists in the field of infertility who was in the country was Professor O'Herlihy and I didn't manage to talk to him until a few days before recording. Even then the conversation was to find out if he was suitable to invite on; and as far as he was concerned it was just a conversation to garner background information. This is always a difficult situation for a researcher: you badly need someone to appear on a programme and all you want to do is see if they're willing and available and invite them on. Instead you have to behave as if you have weeks to go and you are still drawing up a list of potential interviewees. The temptation is strong to 'never mind the quality, feel the width' of the slot you have to fill - and book them. I would be easier to ring

up potential interviewees, tell them straight out what you need and audition them over the phone. Easier, but not possible, especially with people who regard themselves as experts in their own field

As it happened Professor O'Herlihy was quite impassive and measured on the phone, but he was clear in his explanations and more importantly he didn't dismiss the emotional difficulties of childlessness. We decided to ask him on the programme and he agreed

We also compiled a factsheet on infertility (Appendix 28) for the viewers in association with the Infertility Support Group and RTE provided phones and lines for an information service open to the viewers after the show

These phones were staffed by members of the support group, including some of the interviewees. I watched the programme with them while it was being transmitted and their reaction was positive as was the reaction on the phones

Reaction to the programme from colleagues in RTE, family and friends was also positive. The phone reaction told us that we had indeed reached and informed many people who were or thought they were infertile (Day 12), but really, we have no way of knowing whether it reached the second audience identified on Day 12 of the research

"General public who should be made aware of the problem and the hurt caused by jibing infertile couples"



## SECTION C: ARMENIA DIARY

On December 19th., 1989, the Check Up series featured a report on the work of Irish nurses in Armenia - the scene of a huge earthquake that had left 25,000 dead one year previously.

This section contains a diary of the research and shooting of that report. Various documents related to the report are contained in the appendices at the end of the thesis; these include the dubbing script, the shot lists, the producer's edit notes, and the studio script.

In the second week of November, 1989, the Researcher in the office was calling around the various aid agencies: she had heard of Irish specialist medics, like consultants, giving up a month over Christmas to work in Third World countries. The Researcher had suggested to the Series Producer that to film an Irish medic in the Third World would make a heartwarming Christmas programme; she had read an article about an individual who had done it. She was assigned to try to find such a person.

WED NOV 15

I was working on an item on First Aid and called the Irish Red Cross for some assistance. During the conversation with their PRO, I asked if they had any medics working abroad at the time, who might be of interest to the researcher. The PRO said that they

had three people working in Armenia with victims of the earthquake:

Mary Bradfield, a nurse, Vivienne Moffitt, a physiotherapist and Mary Fitzgibbon, a nurse.

Moffitt and Fitzgibbon, according to the Red Cross, are experienced aid workers and good talkers (Moffitt was interviewed by Morning Ireland and came across very well). Bradfield, on the other hand, has never worked for an aid agency outside Ireland and is quiet.

She also gave me the name of Mary Walsh, an physiotherapist who had been there and who had just returned a few weeks.

I gave this information to the Producer.

FRI NOV 17

During a programme meeting the Researcher mentioned that she was having little success with the aid agencies. The Producer referred to the Armenian story - lukewarm response.

The week allocated to shooting was the one beginning December 4th. The meeting wanted to know, how long the Irish Red Cross people would be in Armenia.

Called Irish Red Cross PRO, she said they would be there for a while, at least until after Christmas

But when I talked to Mary Walsh she said, that according to a recent letter, two of the three people in Armenia would finish on the 27th of November. One of them, Vivienne Moffitt, would be travelling around for a while before coming home, the other, Mary Fitzgibbon would be travelling home immediately

Mary was enthusiastic about the idea of a story on the Red Cross work in Armenia. The Soviet Union, she said, had no tradition of rehabilitating the disabled and this was something they were trying to do in the Yerevan clinic. You don't see wheelchairs in the streets and they were bringing the paraplegic patients out onto the streets of the city occasionally

Many of the survivors were still in tents. It would be possible to see reconstruction, especially in Leninakan (Armenia's second city devastated by the earthquake), there they were building a new city and it would be possible to see 150 building cranes in one area alone

The cemeteries are quite amazing - the headstones have lifelike carvings of the deceased on them. We would be there at a good time if we went the week of the 4th as the anniversary of the earthquake would be Thursday the 7th

This last fact was, perhaps, the most important piece of information Mary had given us. It was yet another reason to travel to Armenia. "A-One-Year-On"-story

Also, if we can organise it, it would be an occasion to file reports for RTE News from Armenia which would provide added publicity for the programme

The Producer is interested in the possibility of us being there on the anniversary of the earthquake, but still we must find out if there will be any Irish there for us to talk to and film

Mary Fitzgibbon's mother confirmed that her daughter would be home in Ireland on the 30th of the month. The Red Cross headquarters in Geneva said that two of the three Irish in Armenia would be finishing their contracts on the 27th, however, they were hoping they would consider extending the contracts as they were short of skilled staff in Armenia

The Producer asked for more information on the numbers of Irish in Armenia during the week of the 4th of December. She called Aeroflot in Shannon to ask about sponsorship. The man to talk to was away but if we put our request in writing and they would see what they could do for us, the letter was sent immediately

The Producer had to leave the country for a week, before going she said that if there were only two Irish Red Cross people in Armenia the story would not be worth doing

MON NOV 20

Tried repeatedly to telephone the hotel in Yerevan, Armenia where Moffitt was staying - no luck getting through Sent her a telex through the Red Cross in Yerevan and continued to try by phone  
The telex told her that we wished to make a programme about herself and the other Irish, that we could only travel on the 4th December at the earliest and was it true that she finished in Yerevan on the 27th November

TUE NOV 21

Continued to try to call Moffitt in Armenia

WED NOV 22

Received a telex from Moffitt today She'll be in Spitak (one of the worst hit areas) on the 6th and 7th of December and in Yerevan on the 8th and 9th She says Mary Bradfield will be the only Irish nurse left

This is looking good We can film Moffitt on a home visit in the disaster region which would be good way of introducing the area and the survivors who live there Also, it would suit us to be in the Spitak area around the 7th to film commemoration of the anniversary

Finally, if she is in Yerevan on the 8th and 9th we can get her to recreate some of her work in the clinic, even though she has finished there

The next thing is money The programme does not have a huge budget and there is no point even thinking about such a trip until we find out about finances

Called Aeroflot The boss is still away, they gave us standard ticket prices - over 500 per person

Talked to RTE staff who had been to Soviet Union, they said accommodation was very expensive - about 100 per night per person

Called USSR embassy They said they could process our visas in three days as soon as we got 'visa support' (an invitation to travel to the USSR from an organisation based in the USSR)

In the experience of other RTE staff who've been to the Soviet Union, this visa support takes ages to come through and you have to get it from Soviet State Broadcasting (Gostelradio) who provide a thoroughly uncooperative liaison person and who charge enormous sums of foreign currency for everything

Talked to Mary Walsh again She says the accommodation would not be as expensive in Armenia

Notes on the conversation with Walsh

Yerevan is quite large; the same size as Dublin with 1 million population.

A major problem with the work in Armenia is the lack of psychological support: they had one woman who was impossible to treat as she kicked and spat at the staff. Her spinal cord is broken and yet she can't understand why they don't make her walk again.

The hospital also has an orthodist, who makes braces for the patients.

On the social side, Mary had Armenian friends who she visited in the evenings (Vivienne would do this too - worth a sequence to allow us tell something of the Armenians and to show the Irish integrating; some of them have learned Armenian).

THU NOV 23

Drew up budget for Series Producer. She is keen on the idea of the story but money could turn out to be the deciding factor.

Sent a telex to Yerevan to ask the Red Cross there to send visa support to the USSR embassy in Dublin; also to ask Vivienne if we could recreate a home visit with her in Spitak and to find out from her if there will be any special ceremonies on the 7th.

Called Walsh again. Notes:

The Red Cross will be building a Spinal Rehabilitation Centre in Yerevan which will be a showpiece for the Soviet Union.

She arrived in March. They had trouble finding patients - they had been evacuated all over the Soviet Union. The Red Cross took over the wing of a local hospital and staffed it with 20 foreign staff - four of them Irish. The new unit had the staff of a typical spinal unit: spinal nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. They had no equipment to work with and had to work with the patients on mats..

The Red Cross set up training programme for Armenian staff. The nursing staff would be trained by ex pats for two years.

Patients started to arrive on the doorstep when the unit received some publicity in the local Armenian media.

All hospitals in the USSR have relatives who stay in the wards. They cook food for the patients.

If the patient's spinal cord is damaged there is no cure. The patients thought the staff had a cure for everything.

Some of the patients are not really badly injured at all. These would be old people who never got up out of bed after being pulled from the ruins and they have lost the use of their legs temporarily..



The Armenians are wonderful They are very grateful and hospitable - they would give you flowers in the street and they wouldn't let you pay for things in shops

She learnt Armenian and Russian

The people dress in ordinary clothes - they do not wear traditional costumes everyday

The occupational therapists always go out with the patients on their first visit home to assess the conditions

Spitak is one hour's drive from Yerevan and Leninakan is about 2 hours away

Most of the patients she was treating were between 14 or 15 and 35

FRI NOV 24

Red Cross in Geneva offered to help with our arrangements Sent them a fax with details of our travel plans and telling of our need for accommodation and facilities to make news reports back to Ireland on the 7th

Aeroflot boss not back yet, due back later today or tomorrow They will call me at home if any decision is made

Photocopied articles on the earthquake and its aftermath from 'Time', 'Newsweek' and the 'Economist' Also photocopied articles from the 'Irish Times' on the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno Karabakh

Carried out computer search of video and film material in the RTE library relating to Armenia

SAT NOV 25

Drew up list of facts about Armenia from the photocopies  
100,000 Armenians who had fled from Azerbaijan were in Armenia at the time of the earthquake

The Armenians are fiercely nationalistic - among the first of the republics to test perestroika by demanding the return of Nagorno-Karabakh

The Armenian quake registered only 6.9 on the Richter scale This was weaker than the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City and yet only 10,000 died there compared to 120,000 in Armenia (December '88 estimates)

67 countries contributed aid to the relief effort 2,000 rescue workers arrived along with 100 plane loads of earthmoving equipment, medical supplies, tents and clothing

In the week before Christmas 1988, 600 protested in Yerevan that

Armenian orphans were being evacuated to non-Armenian families as a deliberate attempt at cultural dilution

11 41 a m the earthquake hit 500,000 were left homeless  
Leninakan had a population of 200,000, Spitak had a population of 30,000

Armenia has a population of 3 5 million, 90% are Armenian

The epicentre of the earthquake was 25 miles NE of Leninakan Almost all two-storey buildings within a 30 mile radius were flattened A population of 700,000 was affected

Yerevan is 65 miles from the epicentre

The earthquake lasted for one minute at 6 9 then 4 minutes later there was another sharp tremor at 5 8

At the time it struck all public buildings like factories and school were full Elementary School No 9 on Gorky St in Leninakan collapsed killing 50 children

Spitak is 45 miles north of Leninakan

Mexico City in 1985 had an earthquake measuring 8 5 - 10,000 died  
Armenia is a series of mountain ranges and fertile valleys It's people have been massacred, conquered and divided for centuries

Armenia has an area of 11,500 sq miles, Maryland is 10,777 sq miles

After the earthquake, the smell of the dead was so strong that French sniffer dogs couldn't pick up the smell of the living

Foreign rescue teams criticised the organisation of the disaster relief effort

Many of the multi-storey buildings (9 or 12 storey apartment blocks) were built with concrete panels that contained too much sand and too little cement Older buildings survived

Victims photographs were placed in front of a school

Leninakan was 80% demolished

Some refugees from Azerbaijan were settled in Spitak, but were not yet registered so it was impossible to identify many of the dead

Armenia is the smallest of the USSR republics The first state to adopt Christianity as the state religion From the 16th century most of the country was under Ottoman rule It gained independence during the First World War but was taken over by the Soviet Union in 1920

Since February 1988, according to official figures, 70 people have died in violence between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis

MON NOV 27

Still no decision on sponsorship from Aeroflot - sent them a list of intending passengers names just in case the whole thing does come off but at this stage no one is putting any money either way

Also, still no reply from Red Cross in Armenia - sent another telex requesting visa support Also sent telex to Mary Bradfield telling her our plans and asking if what we intended to do was o k by her her cooperation Red Cross in Geneva have heard nothing from Red Cross Armenia An information officer there says the official figures for deaths during the earthquake is 25,000, she cannot give a precise figure on homeless

She says that all of the homeless will be out of tents before the Winter The Red Cross Press Officer in Armenia is a Bulgarian with excellent English

The information officer sent a fax of a Red Cross newsletter with information on Red Cross activities in Armenia This is very informative It gives an idea of the scale and variety of the work and provides a suggestion for a location In the city of Kirovakan there is a psychology clinic which caters for 900 children and attempts to help them deal with the trauma of the event with the use of painting, drama and counselling We decide this place is a must if we can get permission to film there

TUE NOV 28

Called Mrs Fitzgibbon to get details of her daughter Mary's return to Ireland later this week She mentioned that we were expected in Armenia She had been talking to Mary on the telephone and told her she had received a call from RTE Mary said, "Yes, they're expected out here on the 4th "

This is great news - it means that at least our telexes have reached them even if we have received no replies

Aeroflot still have no word on the sponsorship but they have information on flight times It won't be possible to fly to Moscow and then transfer immediately to Yerevan

We can either overnight in Moscow (if it's `100 per night per person this could really push up the cost of the trip and we are not too keen) Alternatively we could leave Ireland in the afternoon stay in one of the Moscow airports overnight and leave for Yerevan at 6 50 in the morning (this sounds gruelling and is greeted by the team with even less enthusiasm than the former option)

The two options are discussed by the team and a vote is taken: 3 want to overnight in Moscow and 2 want to travel straight through - so we decide to overnight.

A fax arrives from Geneva with details of information we should telex to Red Cross in Armenia to enable them to send visa support to the USSR embassy in Dublin.

Word from Aeroflot: they will 'help us out' in some way. Nothing definite but Producer and Series Producer decide to go ahead. There is definitely a story there and everyone is quite excited about the idea.

WED NOV 29

Things are moving at last. We send the telex for visa support to Armenia, the passports are brought to the USSR embassy, bookings are made with Aeroflot, accommodation is booked in Moscow.

Mary Fitzgibbon is home, but only just so I say I will call tomorrow.

THU NOV 30

Met Mary Walsh along with the Producer to get some more information on the situation in the Spinal Injuries Unit.

Notes on the conversation:

The first thing we learn is that there are only 28 beds in the whole Unit. We are shocked. We were thinking more in terms of hundreds; if there were 13,000 injured surely there must be hundreds, we reasoned.

All this effort, all this money and there are only 28 beds!

Then she explained that so many of those died because they received inadequate medical treatment after they were rescued. Many died, she said because of bedsores all of the patients who came into them had bedsores because those looking after them did not know to turn them.

In many cases the patients' rehabilitation was delayed for 6 or 7 months while their bedsores and other problems due to neglect and inexperienced treatment, like bladder infections, were treated.

The nursing is different in the Soviet Union - the nurses are poorly paid and the patient must bribe them to have anything done, like the bed made or an injection given.

For some of the patients rehabilitation, even after the bedsores are treated, is very difficult because of the stigma surrounding wheelchairs and disability in general. One patient told Mary she would rather be dead than in a wheelchair.

In the Soviet Union if you become disabled, you are put to bed and left there - she could only see one wheelchair ramp in Yerevan and that was outside the hotel

Armenia had 100,000 refugees from Azerbaijan in the year just before the earthquake - such is the Armenian paranoia, they believe that the earthquake was started by a nuclear explosion set off by the Russians, Turks or Aseris Only 30% of those made homeless will be properly housed this winter Most of the casualties were in schools, factories and hospitals

Karine is a local doctor in the Spinal Injuries Unit - Vernon Hill is an Australian doctor who is the director

Ararat is visible from the hospital - it is the symbol of Armenia and it breaks the Armenians hearts to see it in Turkey Also near the hospital is Titinaka Memorial Park built in memory of those killed in the genocide

When patients are well enough they are brought down to the gym where they do exercises, initially to help them become stronger When Mary first arrived there was no equipment in the gym - one weighted cuff was all they had Later, they had some equipment made in Yerevan

They won't discharge a patient to a tent

There are 4 prosthetic centres in Armenia - Mary thinks this is too many, that there is not the need and this is an example of poor coordination of the aid

She gave us some phrases in Armenian VOONSAS (hello), SHNORA-GALA-TZOON (thank you), CONTREM (please), STEY-TZOON (good bye), YAYS IRLANDIA (I'm Irish)

Possible interviewees among the patients, Mary suggested Dagjik, Guyaney, Angela, Vard (23, in bed, wild)

In the Prosthetic Centre in the hospital, Marcel is a Swiss national who makes the prostheses

There's an excellent Norwegian earthquake-proof hospital in Spitak but in her opinion there are too many hospitals and not enough homes

The Red Cross nurses are training the Armenian nurses to turn the patients to dress the bedsores and to deal with bowel problems Every nurse has two Armenian helpers

She gave us the names of people who might interpret for us and provided us with more mundane information (bring chewing gum, crayons and colouring books as gifts as they were in short supply in Armenia )

Some of the patients are sent to America for treatment - for some this is unnecessary but because there is a lot of American aid money washing around and taking a child to hospital in America is a very public way of spending this money, even if the child would receive exactly the same treatment from the Red Cross in Armenia.

There is a perception among the patients and their families that America has the cure - they think they are the only ones in the world in wheelchairs and that if they went to America they would be put on a big machine which would make them walk again. They refused to accept that if they're spinal cord was damaged they would never walk again, even with American medicine.

Had a long telephone call with Mary Fitzgibbon; she told me the following;

Moscow is 3 hours ahead of Ireland and Yerevan is a further 1 hour ahead.

Only 7 of the patients being treated in the 28-bed Spinal Injuries Unit are actually earthquake victims. The rest are victims of accidents, for example there is a gymnast and a high diver. There is also a soldier who was shot in Nagorno-Karabakh.

(This is terrible, our vision of Florence Nightingale-type scenes of huge wards with rows and rows of beds has disappeared - 7 patients is not exactly a cast of thousands. The Producer says it's too late to turn back now; we must go ahead and bring back what we can.

Patients and former patients who may do interviews:

VARD, has been there 9 months - speaks some Irish, "Tabhair dom do lamh."

AZATUHI, 27; came in March, has a broken back and lives in the Italian village in Spitak. She's married and had her child in hospital with her; the child slept in her bed.

If the victims were paralysed from the waist down they still have the power in their hands and can learn to walk using crutches and splints.

Very few of those paralysed from the neck down have survived.

NAIRA, 21, paralysed from the waist down.

NAZIK, lives in a tent in Spitak.

MAKYERTICH, still in hospital, paralysed from the waist down, lost part of one leg.

The main problem with the work is pressure sores. When patients come in we start by constantly changing their position. They have been lying in the same position and have developed enormous bedsores - because they have no sensation they don't feel them.

Some of the bedsores on the patients were so big you could put your fist into them - I've never seen anything like it

Armenian nurses go to bed at night - they don't provide after hours care, they have their own bedrooms in the hospital

The relatives don't want to turn the patients and this has to be done 2 hourly The dressings must be changed 3 times a day

The Cork Examiner wrote an article in August which I was really annoyed about It sneered at Soviet medicine and their efforts to cope with the crisis caused by the earthquake

GUYANEY is another patient you should talk to

She gave me two names of possible interpreters

The epicentre was near the village of Shirakmout which had a population of 2,500 and now has only 900 200 children were lost in the area

Other possible interviewees who she met while travelling in the earthquake area

VALODIYA (Male) He lives with his family in a tent just outside Spitak The family includes a small baby and a 90-year old grandfather all living together His 11-year old daughter, VARSIQ, was trapped for 11 hours in the school Her father had to break a chair she was sitting on to get her out The little girl will show you the size of boulder (about 10' by 4') that trapped her She gave an interview to British independent television in April or May Her mother, MARIETTA, will read a poem she has written called "Unforgettable Day"

There is a health centre under construction in Shirakmout

Only 2% of the new housing is being provided by foreigners The Red Cross feel that if they build houses the government will sit back, they are building some temporary houses

Outside Leninakan the building looks very well The State Agricultural Committee is responsible for construction

The blockade has caused transport difficulties and patients in Spitak and Leninakan need home visits

There's also a shortage of cement and steel which is hampering the reconstruction

The Spinal Unit has an out-patients' clinic

The unit will be opening an extra 20 beds for the winter for patients who are having difficulties with their accommodation

The outpatients' clinic is on a Tuesday and patients come into Yerevan from the earthquake region

Patients who are discharged come back for a check up after a month

Patients who cannot be sent home because they have no homes to go to

ARSEN, LEILA and HANUM Leila is from Georgia, she was visiting Lenmakan when the earthquake struck - her nephew was killed

GUYANEY, 23, made Mary Fitzgibbon her 'sister' and gave her a bottle of champagne to bring home to her family

In educating the Armenian staff, main thing is to pass on knowledge about pressure sores Two women died in the Unit from complications due to pressure sores

Paralysed patients have no sensation, poor circulation and a bad diet  
The nurses have to be educated about skin, bladder problems, bowel problems and sexual problems associated with paraplegia

The foreign staff have to adjust their standards - they are, naturally, very conscious of washing but there just is not the water to wash very often

Up to the 14th of November the Unit has treated 65 patients, 40 of whom were earthquake victims

The Red Cross are building a permanent Spinal Injuries Unit in Yerevan costing \$Fr60 It will be the first unit of its kind in the Soviet Union and will have 60 beds  
The team working in Yerevan think this number should be reduced and money should be put into permanent houses for the disabled which would help their rehabilitation much more

Mary feels there is too much emphasis on the provision of medical aid - the need for medical aid is declining One French organisation have closed a children's rehabilitation

There are several prosthetics workshops, all of which are not needed, in her opinion  
Although the aid organisations work closely together, there is some duplication of buildings and ideas

In the unit they have had terrible problems with staffing The plan is that the foreign staff will eventually pull out and the new unit will be staffed solely by Armenians

The Armenian nurses give medication without knowing why they are giving it The State Minister for Health sent 20 graduate students in April



The unit has lost 4-6 through marriage, their husbands do not want them to do night duty (The graduate nurses work the Western-type 24-hour shifts) /

Each Red Cross nurse has 2 or 3 Armenian trainees Although, some of the Western nurses are not specially trained spinal nurses One nurse from Japan is a midwife and Mary Bradfield is actually an orthopaedic nurse

In fact, Mary Fitzgibbon, thinks that because Mary Bradfield is not a specialist nurse, she does not train Armenians or make home visits (Mary Bradfield is only in Armenia a few weeks, so along with being reputedly quiet spoken, she is certainly not the kind of interviewee we would choose if we had the choice, nor would we travel thousands of miles to interview her if the circumstances were any different )

The Armenian nurses cannot discuss their work with their families because they are dealing with men's bowel and bladder problems and the families would refuse to allow them carry out that kind of nursing care

There is also a problem with absenteeism - if an Armenian nurse doesn't feel well, she just won't come in and won't call in or try to arrange someone to cover for her

There are lectures for the nurses on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Originally there were 10 foreign nurses, then there were 13, now there are 7

Patients who will or will not describe the earthquake Guyaney, no,  
Leila, yes, Vard, yes

On the 7th , people will visit the graveyards There are no building materials and yet the graves are made of elaborate stone with realistic images carved on them There is a woman just outside Spitak we should go to see She lost three little daughters and has made their bedroom into a shrine

There's another woman, Zoe, who lives in a garage in Leninakan who is very nice - they are living in their garages because their apartment buildings are unstable

For some reason a very high incidence of diabetes has cropped up in Leninakan

Religion is absorbing some of the problems In 2 or 3 years, patients who are preoccupied with their disability now will discover that they have lost a whole network of family and friends Coping with that hole in their life may be even more difficult than coping with their disability

Researched the following in the library history of recent earthquakes in the Iran-Turkey region, history of recent earthquakes in the world and their strength, especially the SanFrancisco earthquake CSO figures on populations of towns and cities in

Ireland; Ordnance Survey data on province and county land areas in Ireland. All these facts were to be used in news reports, allowing me, for example, to say that Spitak was the size of Dundalk; Leninakan was twice the size of Cork and Armenia was a third the size of Ireland.

Drew up list of possible shots, locations: Piece-to-Camera in front of the only ramp in Yerevan; the new city at Stepanavan; 4 or 5 different patients helped by the Irish nurses; shots of the architects' plans of the new rehabilitation centre.

FRI NOV 1

Received fax from Irish Red Cross detailing projects using money raised in Ireland:

Kindergartens to be built at Dsech and Shirkamout by Red Cross Societies from UK, USA and Ireland.

Clinic to be built at Akhurian by societies from Denmark, Norway, UK, US and Ireland.

Shirkamout is near the epicentre, which apparently looks completely devastated; we could visit the village, show the site of the kindergarten, get a few shots of the children it will be serving and at the same time get a few shots of the epicentre.

The Producer receives an article about Armenia a friend that appeared in the 'Observer' colour supplement. It was written in August and the Producer likes it and asks me to note the names of the people in it as possible interviewees.

At 4.30, we leave RTE for Shannon. We have no hotel accommodation arranged in Yerevan, no interpreter and no transport arranged. At 5.00 a fax arrives from Geneva. It tells that the Red Cross in Yerevan have organised accommodation and are ready for our arrival.

That night at the hotel in Shannon, I draw up a list of the following:

A list of possible locations

A list of possible interviewees

A list of possible interpreters

An information pack for the team containing, Elementary Armenian phrases, photocopies of articles on the earthquake and its aftermath and a brief on the background to the story including a brief, very brief history of Armenia.

SAT NOV 2

Overnight in Shannon. Airport is fogbound; Aeroflot flight to Moscow is coming from Gander but overflies to Dublin. At 2.30 p.m. we leave for Dublin by bus and arrive at 6.00. There is little information and much confusion about the flight to Moscow. At one stage the RTE team are put on a flight bound for Havana; fortunately we are taken off just in time.

The flight to Moscow was delayed indefinitely. As the night went on it became too late for us to make our hotel accommodation and then it became too late for us to make our onward connection to Yerevan.

### SUN DEC 3

The flight eventually leaves at 3 a.m.

After a stopover in Luxembourg, the flight arrives in Moscow at Noon local time. We manage to transfer to airport for internal flights in time for 4 p.m. flight to Yerevan but it is full.

While in the airport we meet an Austrian group who have built 27 earthquake-proof houses outside Leninakan. The project was begun just ten days after the earthquake by the go ahead-sounding managing director of an Austrian prefab construction company. 18 of the houses are designed especially for the disabled.

The flight at 8.25 is full but with some persuasion and a few bottles of perfume distributed carefully among the supervisors we manage to make the 9.05 flight and arrive in Yerevan just before midnight.

### MON DEC 4

Yerevan airport is crazy: journalists and aid workers milling around. No transport available; we call the hotel, they have never heard of us and have no rooms for us. Clare meets a Dutch Armenian and his wife who live in Armenia. They help us get transport to the hotel, interpret for us there, where we manage to persuade them to give us rooms. Finally, the couple promise to make arrangements for a van and interpreter for our stay.

At about 10.30, call the Red Cross, the phone is answered by a woman named Marianne, she has been assigned to us as an interpreter. Arrange to meet with her at the Physiotherapy Institute later.

Call the Institute, Mary Bradfield not there until 3 pm.

At the Institute we meet Mary. She's quiet but o.k. -also met with Guyaney to say hello. Producer met with Arthur and his mother. Marianne arrives - a bit keen. Also talked with Jean, an occupational therapist from Texas - interesting woman.

We arrange to come back Tuesday morning at 9.30.

Went to the Red Cross to meet the Press Officer. He's not there, has been to meet us twice at the airport - they replied to their telexes, but we never received them. One of the Red Cross volunteers tells us something of the situation in Armenia:

- \* The task of clearing away unsafe buildings and rubble has been enormous
- \* 40,000 families (200,000 people) have yet to be rehoused
- \* The majority of these are living in containers

- \* The problems of Armenia are tied to those of the the USSR itself, for example materials shortages and transport difficulties
- \* The USSR has done a "hell of a lot" to provide relief
- \* There are 12 aid agencies working in Armenia (he mentioned a few that were providing prostheses for children)
- \* On Thursday, there will be a memorial concert in the soccer stadium and a memorial mass at the cathedral at Itchmaidzen - the main church of Armenian Christianity
- \* Most of those in the earthquake area have reconstructed or repaired their own houses - many are with relatives
- \* Because of the blockade, there have been shortages for two or three months of cement, steel and fuel
- \* 85% of goods, especially fuel and kerosene, come through Azerbaijan -15% come through Georgia
- \* The Armenians fear that Iran is extending its influence into Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan

See notice outside Red Cross telling of press conference at Red Cross on Tuesday at 5 pm

Met Press Officer and assistant at their hotel - a bit slick They have a bus to Spitak organised and locations and accommodation arranged - we feel grateful but a bit herded

On the 7th, they tell us, nothing will be open, the roads will be jammed and it will be difficult to travel We may have to decide between Leninakan (collapsed buildings, bells tolling, massive reconstruction, the Austrian village, Zoe, tents and satellite phone) or Kirovakan (child psychology clinic)

We ask Press Officer if they can arrange for us to film children being fitted with prostheses for Tuesday afternoon Press officer wants us to attend the Press conference, we think it will be dull but politic to go They'll have a bus to transport us tomorrow morning

Walking back to the hotel we pass a very bare and old-fashioned looking pharmacy where an old woman is washing the floor We shoot some of this through the glass door of the pharmacy - it may never get used but it's great to have shot the first frame

Just past the pharmacy there are frames on the wall of a house containing photographs The photographs show patriots from the late 1800's up to the 1920's and beside them pictures of bodies from the 1988 earthquake Must get that shot in the daylight - it says a lot about the importance of the past and remembering tragedies in one shot

We pass through the main square in Yerevan - it's lit with incredibly strong floodlights - if we don't get time in daylight to shoot GV's (general views) of Armenians we can come here at night

Back at the hotel, the Producer draws up a structure and provisional schedule for the week

Roughly, this would be the story we would try to tell 'One year after the earthquake a lot of world effort has gone into getting Armenia back on its feet - Ireland has played its part what was most needed in the aftermath was medical aid -Ireland's effort was concentrated mainly on spinal injuries what did the medics do in the early days? what are they doing now? what further aid is needed?'

*Interviewees and scenes needed*

Local Doctor - aid needed immediately

Vivienne - the early days of Irish involvement

Patients - early days

Rehabilitation

Teaching Armenian medics

Other teaching, by US aid workers

People in Hospital - who cannot go home because of poor housing

Homeless in tents

Anahilde - director of the Child Psychology clinic in Kirovakan (SOS Armenia)

*A schedule*

*Tuesday AM* Spinal Injuries Clinic, Rehabilitation, Training  
I/v's (interviews) Bradfield, local nurses, Dr Karine  
(local doctor), patients

*PM* Out-patients at the Clinic, children fitted with  
prosthetic limbs

*Wednesday* Spitak, homeless, former patients, people who must  
return to hospital for the winter, walk through the ruins with someone who will tell what it was like on the day  
Visit the former location of schools - what's there now?  
Local hospital, interview Philomena (mentioned in the  
"Observer" article)  
Follow Vivienne on a re-created home visit

*Thursday* Leninakan, memorial bells, graveyard, church services,  
site of kindergarten to be built with Irish money in  
Shirakmout

*Friday* Psychology clinic in Kirovakan, Vivienne in clinic in  
Yerevan

While out for a meal on Monday night - meet American aid worker who suggests we do a story on the ulterior motives of some of the US aid agencies - he believes they are in Armenia to establish contacts with Armenian authorities as part of a marketing programme for their products or services. He gives me the names of two people in Spitak who will give more details

TUES DEC 5

At Clinic film Dr Vernon Hill, Director, doing rounds, teaching doctors

I speak with Jean (Texan occupational therapist) she is excellent on rehabilitation standards and on how foreign workers must lower their own standards and expectations of, for example, hygiene in Armenia. Worth an interview

While the crew are filming in one of the rooms, I see Guyaney leave - she is returning to Spitak with her family to be there for Thursday's commemorations. She's an important interviewee so we hurriedly call the crew out of the room they're filming in and do an interview with her and her husband and her mother in front of an Irish poster. I was very nervous doing the interview and she was very shy, nevertheless we got some good material especially about the kindness of the Irish nurses. Another comment from the Producer: we were interviewing through an interpreter and I should have addressed the questions directly to the interviewee rather than to the interpreter in the form, "Would you ask her?"

After continuing to film some more of the rounds, including shooting Mary Bradfield as she taught Armenian nurses how to apply dressing, we interviewed Mary herself

The questions decided on by the Producer and myself were

Why did you decide to come here? What does your work entail? Is the nursing very different? What are the biggest difficulties in teaching? In nursing? What is life like for you in Armenia?

The interview was not great the interviewee was quite stiff and self-conscious

Following Mary's interview we interviewed Dr Hill with Dr Karine Balyan - local doctor

We decide to ask them about the Unit, the Training, the different nationalities working there and the new specialist Spinal Unit to be built in Yerevan - 'the first of its kind in the USSR'

The interview was stilted - I am still extremely nervous and feeling a little intimidated by Dr Hill

(It's always 'the same starting a new story not having been out filming for some time - also I'm not used to working with this particular Producer and I don't know what she wants from a reporter. Some producers cut all the questions. In that case you ask cumbersome questions which will ensure the interviewee answers with a discreet phrase. So, for example, a subject would often be asked "Can you tell me about ")

Next we interviewed Arthur and his mother. Arthur is one of those who although he has had all the treatment cannot be sent home as the living conditions there are unsuitable for someone confined to a wheelchair. The interview takes place in the kitchen, while there we get a shot of two of the mothers preparing food.

Then we finish for lunch. A checklist of things to shoot in the afternoon reads as follows

In the clinic

- Postcards and posters from Ireland on the walls,
- people in wheelchairs,
- empty beds made ready for those who will be taken into the clinic for the winter,
- snapshots of patients with Irish medics,
- a family cooking,
- architect's plans for the new unit,
- out-patients waiting to be seen,
- Prosthetics,
- A map on the wall of the corridor showing the home countries of all the foreign workers,
- gymnasium
- GV's Mary working
- I/v's with Jean, Hanum, Vard

Elsewhere

- Shots of the railway to cover information on the blockade
- faces in the street
- press conference
- photos of patriots and earthquake victims on the street
- shot of Mount Ararat

2 35 pm

Back to Institute, grab shot of out-patients queuing in corridor

2 50 Shoot technician making prosthetic leg - a bit bare, no patient Producer arrives with interpreter who also has a driver with a minibus

3 05 Pan of city from hospital grounds We can see the monument to the genocide and Ararat but they are in line with the sun and too bright to shoot

3 15 Shoot in gym - have to open all the curtains, it's too dark I go upstairs to get Jean to do i/v Jean not around

3 40 Ask a patient (another Arthur) who cannot be discharged to do an interview, he refuses and sends us to Arameis Arameis agrees - gives good interview with a lot of anger, sadness and expressions of gratitude for the help provided by the Irish in Armenia's hour of need

4 05 Leave clinic to get GV's of the city and to get to the Press Conference The streets around the building where the Communist Party of Armenia is in session are blocked because of protests against the party's inability to deal with the blockade Outside the session building we take GV's of traffic being diverted by militia and of pedestrians - plenty of colour and commotion Decide against a shot of myself explaining the situation to camera (Piece to Camera or PTC) because the PTC at the railway station will cover the two

4 40 Must decide to go to the railway or Press conference (at 5 00)  
Decide to go to railway station - we can be 15 minutes late for the press conference

5 00 Arrive at station, do GV's of tracks, trains and PTC about inter republic strife and blockade that has resulted

5 30 Press conference Dull presentation by each of the aid agencies - some earnest, some suspect, some excellent at PR - one woman from a group providing prosthetic limbs suddenly produced an adult-sized leg to show the journalists - a photo opportunity

We were approached by a representative of Medecins Sans Frontieres who wanted us to interview one of their workers He tells us one of the projects is a psychology clinic for



children in Leninakan. This would mean we wouldn't have to go to Kirovakan on Friday. Also, the clinic in Kirovakan is being covered by the "40 Minutes" programme on the BBC on the 7th. according to a trailer we saw before leaving Ireland.

Then met the director of the MSF clinic in Leninakan. They have 35 children but will be closed on Thursday and even on Friday morning.

WED DEC 6

8.45 Set off from Yerevan for Spitak. Producer, Production Assistant and our interpreter in one van and crew, myself, Red Cross press officer his assistant and another native Armenian Red Cross worker in a Red Cross van.

Press officer pointed out the site of the new Red Cross Spinal Injuries Unit on the outskirts of Yerevan - made a note to film it on the way back. He also drew our attention to fuel queues. Crew got out and filmed some of them. Also got a shot of an Armenian national flag flying on the wall of a private house.

Unfortunately the queues were of private cars and further along the road we saw queues of trucks which would have been more relevant to the story - considering keeping the trucks rolling was more important to the reconstruction. We had already spent enough time shooting the queues of cars and had to press on.

Out in the countryside, the Armenian Red Cross worker pointed out a church in off the road. The press officer decided to turn off and take a closer look at it - as much for his benefit as ours.

The Producer decided to do a PTC about Armenian history and the importance of religion. There were several takes until the PTC was shortened - it's hard to tell the history of a nation in 25 seconds.

Some of the PTC's were interrupted by a woman ullulling at a herd of sheep she was bringing around the front of the church and down the steep side of the hill it was built on. The cameraman got a few shots of her.

Just below the church was a deep snow-covered gorge. The sun was low and strong and the air was clear and sharp on the back of the throat. A quiet stunning few moments in a hectic week.

As we continued the journey up through the mountains to Spitak the cameraman shoots the scenery from the window of the van as it drives along.

12.00 Arrive at Spitak. Search for Vivienne Moffitt at the Italian

Civil Defence-built village While I look for her, the crew get shots of children playing

1 30 Arrive at the Norwegian Red Cross hospital in Spitak -meet Vivienne Red Cross have arranged a ceremony giving gifts to the family of the first baby born in the Norwegian hospital Press officer hassling us to go - producer decides we should go Before we go, she makes appointment for 6 pm to interview main doctor at the hospital - Dr Sarkhazyan

1 45 Headed for Gogaron, the home village of the baby In the van we have Vivienne and a fellow physiotherapist, Olivier On the way out of Spitak see area with huge amounts of rubble - the clearances of the collapsed buildings Hopefully we'll get a shot on the way back

In talking, Vivienne and Olivier make the point that the Soviets are getting a bad press from the international media They say that only 10% of the aid has come from outside the USSR and 98% of the houses have been built by the Soviets

They also say that the kind of corruption that led to poor building standards is still going on - people still have to pay extra to get cement for their buildings

They also mentioned that they saw a 9 storey apartment building being constructed in Kirovakan, to the kind of design that proved to be so dangerous during the earthquake

We decide we must get a few shots of Soviet-built houses

We ask Vivienne and Olivier to think of patients who might let us film Vivienne making a home visit to them Olivier mentions a patient living in a container awaiting a house being built by the Siberians Vivienne has worked with him in Yerevan and it will give us an opportunity to show a Soviet-built house

They also talk of two patients at the Italian village We decide to do these two and the one in the siberian house

Arrived at Gogaron - got some shots of the tents, containers and more permanent housing at the village After filming the ceremony we had to attend a meal given by the villagers There were speeches which we were told it would be bad manners to walk out on Eventually to get us out, the producer had to make several speeches commiserating with the Armenians, thanking them for their hospitality, apologising for our rudeness

We are now three-quarters of an hour behind schedule - head straight for Sergey, the man in the container When we get there Sergey and his family are no longer in a container -they have built a new home for themselves

4 05 Reconstruct a home visit by Vivienne, works well Then go to new house being built for Sergey - it's beautiful, Swiss chalet-style

4 55 Shots of the new house and workmen building nearby - light is fading - temperature is -5C

5 10 Return to Spitak to get at least one patient in Italian village

On the journey back, Vivienne and Olivier are full of information

- Spitak in March was empty, now it's full of builders and people returning to live
- The survivors have spent a fortune on their graves, even though there is a shortage of building materials They spend more on the graves than on their houses
- According to Vivienne, she gives more calipers and braces to patients here than at home - they are really keen to get out of the wheelchairs, such is the stigma against them here
- They both believe there is too much aid money chasing the wrong needs Vivienne tells of an American aid agency taking a girl from their hospital ward during the night and bringing her to America They needed a patient to spend their dollars on - the girl was paralysed and they could do no more for her in America than in Armenia But the girl couldn't refuse a trip to America - especially, if she thought, as many Armenians do, that they could make anyone walk again with their sophisticated medical machinery in the US
- They said they thought the proposed new Spinal Injuries Unit was far too grandiose for the needs of Armenia, and that the Western agencies should have been putting their money into housing

6 10 Finish filming 'home visit' with Naira in the Italian village

Dr Sarkhazyan i/v next These are the questions

Were you here the night of the earthquake?

What were the immediate needs of the victims?

What are the longer-term needs?

Why has it been necessary to get help outside Armenia?

6 15 Arrive at Norwegian hospital Dr Sarkhazyan is gone A nurse goes to get a female doctor - she's not there either The only other doctor on is Dr Derereck Hoyetzyan

He lost a daughter in the earthquake Initially, he's reluctant to do the interview He's talked and talked to the media and now wants to prepare himself to commemorate his daughter's anniversary the next day Eventually he agrees to be interviewed but we must be quick

The interpreter does not understand the questions as phrased for the original choice of interviewee so they have to be rewritten

6 35 Interview Dr Hoyetzyan in a small hospital ward with three patients behind him He was asked

What work did you do on the day of the earthquake?  
What work are you doing here now?  
What do you think of the aid that is coming from  
outside Armenia?

6 55 Producer calls cut but I ask to ask a supplementary question about the rumour that it was a bomb that caused the earthquake

After some coyness, the doctor said that he believed the rumour

7 00 The interview over, the doctor is in better spirits - the question about the bomb got him into interesting form. He insisted we stay for coffee (served by a female doctor) and told us how the siege of Armenia is like the siege of Leningrad and of how 5 million Roubles of aid for Armenia was channelled through Moscow and stolen there

Because of the blockade, the Norwegian hospital took 7 months to build - it should have only taken 4

After coffee we interview Vivienne in an office in the hospital  
The questions are

Describe your work in the hospital? In the homes?

Difficulties with working here?

The greatest difficulties for people recovering from  
injuries received during the earthquake?

Impressions of Armenia?

Wheelchair stigma?

Psychological help for the victims?

Families living in the hospital?

7 50 Finish i/v with Vivienne

That night we had no proper meal and ended up sleeping in huts in the German Red Cross camp. They had no heating. The temperature fell to -14C. No-one slept properly. It was a very cold, tired and hungry crew that emerged the next day.

THURS DEC 7

9 30 Filmed Vivienne walking in the ruins of Spitak. Near one particularly spectacular collapsed house a group of children gathered around and she began to chat with them in Armenian.

Shot that I had noticed some photo portraits in frames hung on the shell of a building just down the street - obviously the pictures of those who had died in that building. We went and took a few shots of them.

10 00 Set off for Lenmakan

11.00 We arrived at Leninakan and drove towards the cemetery intending to get a few shots of people and then return to the city centre in time to record the bells tolling at 11.41.

Access to the cemetery was blocked to vehicles and we would have to walk a long way. There was no way we could go to the cemetery and get back to the city centre in time. I suggest there might be more emotion and people at the cemetery.

11.05 Producer decides to stay at the cemetery.

11.30 In the cemetery there are thousands of people all carrying carnations to place on the elaborate graves. At one grave a priest is speaking earnestly and at length. Our interpreter says he is talking about how he will not take money for the prayers he will say on this day.

At the gravesides, people burn incense and eat and drink. They offer the media food and drink.

12.30 Finish filming in cemetery.

1.40 Finish filming GV's in Leninakan. Still to do here...

Psychology clinic

New Leninakan (Vivienne has told us about a "forest of cranes" there)

Our Interpreter at the site of a school where he from Yerevan to help with the rescue effort

Promos (pieces to camera to be used to advertise the programme during ad breaks in the preceding days.)

Tried to find somewhere to eat - everywhere closed

Shot a promo in main square of Leninakan with clock in background that stopped at 11.41 on the day of the quake.

2.10 Went to Medecins sans Frontieres' child psychology clinic.

Doctor not there.

One of the camera's batteries did not recharge properly last night so we leave it with the French to charge. The crew think that the electricity at the German camp may have been switched off during the night which is when the batteries are put on to charge. Drove around again looking for somewhere to eat.

2.30 Interpreter brought us to site of school.

2.40 Started to interview Interpreter - battery flat. Return to psychology clinic.

3.55 We have met Anna. French Armenian psychologist. English poor, talks on and on in French. We are waiting for Catherine who has better English. Anna shows me some of the children's pictures - a way they use for the children to come to terms with the horrible things they have seen.

Catherine arrives but when we suggest doing an interview with her Anna rolls her eyes and sighs saying that her English is quite good. We agree to do her - no-one is in the mood for a discussion. We rehearse the answers teaching her the vocabulary as we go along with Catherine prompting from the wings.

4.30 We finish interviewing Anna. Still to do: the interview with the Interpreter at the school.

4.45 We leave MSF and head for the school. The Interpreter gets lost.

5.00 Arrive at the school. Ask the interpreter the following:

What did you see when you came here on the day of the earthquake?

What do you think of when you look at the empty site now?

When the crew were getting GV's of the site one man came over to me and became weepy talking of the daughter he had lost in the school. I tell the producer about him. His name is Sergey, we decide to interview him, and ask him:

What does this place mean to you?

Who have you lost here?

What were the children like who went to school here?

Producer not happy with the interview - wanted to hear more feeling from the man to tie in with theme of need for psychological counselling for adults that came out in the interview at psychology clinic.

5.15 Drove to New Leninakan.

5.35 There is a beautiful sunset but the sun is going down quickly and we will be too late to get a shot of the cranes against it.

Arriving at building site, practically dark. Cameraman says shots won't show anything. Producer says to go ahead and take shots of workers and cranes against the evening sky.

5.50 Leave Leninakan and set off back to Yerevan. The hotel and food we thought were derisively basic two days ago now seem like luxuries we are dearly looking forward to.

That evening arriving into Yerevan it looks so bright and busy whereas when we arrived we thought it was incredibly drab and dark for a city.

Every landing in the hotel has a TV set. When we arrived back I saw the evening news from the local TV station. They were showing pictures from the commemoration ceremonies in the various towns and cities in Northern Armenia. Spitak had plenty going on. Priests chanting, ringing of bells, church services, the unveiling of a memorial sculpture and according to Vivienne who had stayed there, incredible displays of emotion - all in the one place. It's a pity we went on to Leninakan, perhaps.

FRI DEC 8

9 45      Producer suggests we interview Soviet official - it might seem xenophobic to come all this way and mostly interview foreigners

I suggest we talk to the Head of Development at Gostroy, the Ministry for Agriculture whose colleague I had talked to on the bus from the airport on Sunday evening Producer is interested

(This idea is abandoned mid-morning when we realise how much is left to be done at the Spinal Injuries Clinic )

2 20      Arrive at Institute to do some final filming with Vivienne I suggest we interview Jean, the occupational therapist

Producer wants to know if Vivienne teaches as Mary was not very good She also says we must film the empty beds to be used by those unable to stay in their homes during the winter

It's a pity, according to the Producer, we didn't get anyone living in a container - all the people we filmed will have no difficulty making it through the winter remind her we had to make a choice on the way back to Spitak Because of the fading light, we had to decide between filming someone living in a container and the about to receive the Soviet-built house We decided to go for the latter because we felt and partly because of what Vivienne had told us, that the Soviets were a raw deal from the foreign media and their efforts were going unacknowledged compared to the glowing accounts of the relatively minor contributions of the non-Soviet countries

Producer decides not to shoot map of the world on the wall of the corridor that has labels showing the home cities or countries of the foreign staff - she says have enough posters already

Vivienne is filmed doing some work on the wards - she does not teach but will turn a patient for us Meanwhile I am in the common seating area watching television with some of the wheelchair-bound patients There's a keep fit programme on TV with the models doing all sorts of complicated and difficult moves I suggest a shot of patients watching this stuff - Producer says we've far too much already, we're up to tape 15 with only 26 minutes to fill Everyone is tired and eager to get - my suggestions are proving tiresome for the Producer at least

3 00      Producer wants to interview a local nurse - Vivienne searches for someone for us

Producer brings cameraman to a landing off the ward where a view of the city can be seen through the window - she wants to interview the nurses in front of the window with this scene in the background Cameraman says background through the window will be far too bright for the foreground and will be washed out and flaring

He tries with the camera and confirms this and then tries with the handheld light

Still no joy, the background is 8 times brighter than the foreground Then we try to find a room with two windows at an angle to each other so we can get a better balance between indoor and outdoor lighting

Finally, the producer decides to shoot interview outside

We only want to interview one nurse and we have found who has good English - but she says she is always being interviewed and wants her friend to have a chance To compromise we agree to interview the two together

The two come downstairs in coats but we ask them to remove them for the interview The questions are

How is the training here with the Red Cross different to normal nursing training?

Do you think this training has made you better nurses?

During the interview, the nurse who could speak English translated for the other nurse

After the interview, the two nurses mentioned how grateful they were to the Irish nurses and how much they enjoyed their company The producer asked if they would like to say that on camera They agreed The nurse with no Armenian made a short speech of thanks in Armenian and the nurse who spoke English translated it

3 25 We finish the interview with the nurses The producer says that I have asked the questions in broken English which makes them completely unusable and they will have to be cut She has mentioned this to me before during the week and unfortunately it's something I have slipped into a bit like unconsciously copying a person's accent

In the gymnasium where the physiotherapists work Vivienne suggests we film someone on bars - we got that the other day, she suggests showing someone throwing a ball into a basket, we also got that, eventually they decide to show someone practising their balance

3 45 Vivienne works with a patient seated on a raised platform - she helps him with his balance We shoot from two angles

From one angle, the producer asks her to ask him to raise his head so we can get a good shot in close-up

4 00 The producer wants to show Vivienne at tea with the other nationalities at work in the Unit We go to check out the light for the shots Vivienne works with a patient in the ward (We never shoot this scene, I haven't noted reason )

4 30 Film Vivienne manipulating a patient in a ward



I suggest a shot showing Mary and Vivienne together - a 'passing on the torch' shot. The producer disagrees as they hardly know each other and anyway one is a nurse and the other is a physiotherapist so they're not really passing on the torch.

4 35 All afternoon there's been excitement and sadness in the wards as people say their 'goodbyes' to Vivienne - we shoot some of these.

5 30 We return to the main square of Yerevan and shoot some shots of Mary walking across a street and past the camera. Three takes - one too fast and the second she looked into the camera.

6 00 Finish filming

## Section C.1: Armenia Diary - Discussion

The diary illustrates the cooperative work practices of the the Check Up office. Most programmes in radio and television are located in the one open-plan area and have regular production meetings. Because of this each member of the production team is aware of the stories the others are working on at any time - and knows how they're getting on.

In the Check Up office in November 1989, we were all aware that the Researcher was looking for a medic who was about to give up their Christmas holidays to work abroad for a charity. This meant that when we were researching our own stories, or reading the paper, listening to the radio, watching TV, or out socialising, we would be ready to pick up on any reference to such a person.

(It is a constant complaint among RTE production staff that you are always working. If someone in a pub is telling a story about something fascinating, you automatically make a mental note of the story and begin to think of how it could be presented.)

So the information about the Irish nurses working in Armenia came from a call to the Red Cross about another story altogether. How the story eventually came to be shot is an interesting illustration of the demands and requirements of the programme.

We were aiming for something special for the last programme before Christmas. The year before it had been a cheering report on home births. It tied in with the Nativity and gave very good ratings, so it seemed there was an audience for something out of the ordinary around Christmastime.

On November 15th, when I talked with the Red Cross PRO, the Christmas programme was still slated to be the story of the Irish medic giving up their Christmas. Nevertheless, the Red Cross PRO 'sold' the Armenia story very well. These were the elements that she said it offered:

- 1 3 Irish Red Cross medics were in Armenia
- 2 They were there to work with earthquake victims
- 3 Two of them were good talkers - one had been on Morning Ireland
- 4 They would be there until after Christmas
- 5 There was a nurse who had just returned to Ireland who would help with advance research

This was the information I passed onto the meeting of November 17th - the same meeting at which the story of the medic giving up the holidays was dropped. The response to the Armenia story was described in the diary as "lukewarm". If the actual facts about the story were available, it would have been downright negative. These are the actual facts about the story which we learnt on November 30th, the day before departure:

- 1 There is only one Irish Red Cross medic working in Armenia

2. She is not a specialist nurse and works in a hospital where there are only 7 earthquake victims - some are there because they are homeless.
3. She is not a good talker - she is quiet and shy
4. She will be there until well after Christmas because she has only just arrived and is not familiar at all with the situation.
5. There were two nurses who had just come back and were very helpful with the research.

The two nurses who came back actually sold us a different story on Armenia. A story that related more to Armenia and more to medicine than to Irish involvement there. Briefly, these were the elements:

#### Anniversary -

They said that if we went at the beginning of December we would be there for the first anniversary of the earthquake on the 7th. This would make good TV because there would be ceremonies of commemoration with much display of emotion and these would take place at graves with have incredibly ornate headstones complete with photorealistic engravings of the dead.

#### Soviet Medicine -

They also said, Soviet medicine was quite underdeveloped. There is no formal nursing as we know it; family members attend to the sick and sleep under the hospital beds. Also, many death were caused by infection from bedsores; no-one knew to turn the paralysed and bedridden regularly to stop them getting sores. Also, Armenian society does not accept the crippled and paralysed.

#### Soviet politics -

One of the results of glasnost at the time was more open conflict between Armenia and neighbouring Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani railworkers had blockaded the railway lines into Armenia. These are the main supply routes into the republic and the blockade was hampering reconstruction after the earthquake.

#### Aid Waste -

Finally, they were of the opinion that all the aid coming into Armenia from abroad was uncoordinated. There was duplication and misspending. Also, they told of aid agencies competing over patients.

Despite the free flow of information in the office, it is possible to keep some things quiet and the producer and myself didn't broadcast the fact that the original story had changed drastically the day before we left.

We were still very keen to feature Irish nurses, to have an 'Irish angle'. The thinking being that the audience would identify more with them than a newly arrived reporter and would accept more readily their interpretations of the situation. However, the other 'angles' (the anniversary, soviet medicine, etc.) also interested us greatly.

The decision to go was made quite late in the process. Even though we were told on November 17th that the week of December 4th was free for filming, on November 23rd, a week before departure, the Series Producer is described in the diary as "keen on the idea of the story but money could turn out to be the deciding factor". As it happened, the final decision to go wasn't actually made until Tuesday November 28th, when Aeroflot said they would "help us out".

At this point it's important to note that if we had decided not to go to Armenia we would still have been able to film a story during the week of the 4th and transmit it on the 19th. There are usually other ideas in research that can be brought forward and put into production quickly.

While things seem to have been rushed and put together at the last minute, this was mainly due to the delay in getting a response from Aeroflot about sponsorship and the difficulty in communicating with the Red Cross in Armenia. (As it happened, they telexed us on Friday evening the 31st to say everything was arranged. The telex arrived a half an hour after we had left for Shannon.)

Our big mistake all along was forming an image of the hospital and the work of the Irish nurses and not checking it. We assumed that if there had been 25,000 dead, there would have been hundreds, at least, left injured. We had been told that hospital conditions were poor and pictured rows of camp-beds in gloomily lit field hospitals with tired and hassled Irish nurses hurrying between the beds ministering to the sick. A bit like Florence Nightingale meets Hotlips Houlihan.

It's useful to picture a story in your mind beforehand but it's even more useful to confirm the picture and it's interesting to read our reaction to our meeting with Mary Walsh and my phone call with Mary Fitzgibbon on Thursday November 30th.

During the shoot, the diary describes several instances where, against her better judgement, the producer had to compromise purely in the interests of diplomacy and courtesy. (The press conference on Tuesday 5th, the meal at Gogaron on Wednesday 6th at 1.45, the interview with the French psychologist on Thursday 7th at 3.55 and the interview with the two nurses on Friday 8th at 3.00).

My own relationship with the producer was tense. She had little confidence in my interviewing ability (Tuesday 5th, Thursday 7th at 5.00 and Friday 8th at 3.25) and I was making too many suggestions for her liking (Friday 8th at 2.20). Unfortunately we didn't discuss this.

For the producer the shoot is a constant juggling of plans, trying to fit as much into the limited time, and, most of all, keeping some sort of structure in mind. There is the old jibe about the journalist writing the story before going to the scene and it's true. The producer must work out some story beforehand so that when everyone arrives and the crew are standing there waiting to be directed and the PRO is pushing a certain interviewee or shot, she must know what she needs and in what order or priority.

So, the story must be written beforehand, and then rewritten and rewritten. The structure must be loose enough to allow the producer change tack and cover new angles during the shoot. Examples of this were: Following and interviewing Dr Vernon Hill when we discovered what a good talker he was (Tuesday 5th). The interview with Guyaney as she was leaving to go home (Tuesday 5th). The piece to camera at the church on Wednesday 6th and the interview with Sergey on Thursday 7th at 5.00.

Because of the limits on time and resources, there's quite a high 'if only' factor in most television programmes - opportunities missed to get a shot or interview. In Armenia these included: The shot of Ararat, Tuesday 5th at 3.05. The trucks in the fuel queue on Wednesday 6th at 8.45 and the shot of rubble outside Spitak on Wednesday 6th at 1.45.

During the editing there was a further discarding of good material to produce a coherent, uncluttered 24 minutes. The pieces dropped included: The interview with Dr Karine Balyan on Tuesday 5th. The manufacture of prostheses on Tuesday 5th at 4.05. The shots of the church on Wednesday 6th at 8.45.

The programme was well received on transmission by colleagues, friends, family and especially the nurses who had returned from Armenia. It also helped raise several thousand pounds in aid for Armenia. But it only rated 11 in the TAM ratings - the lowest all season.

## Chapter 4

### Results of Interview-based research

This chapter has two main sections, A and B. Section A contains the results of interviews with 16 RTE television producers

- 1 Peter Feeney, Ending his third year as Editor of RTE TV's business programme "Marketplace"
- 2 Hilary Orpen, Series producer of RTE TV's new consumer programme, "Look Here"
- 3 John O'Brien, Producer, TV Sport  
Responsible for output of regular programmes like rugby internationals and the Saturday afternoon sports programme, "Sports Stadium", as well as special productions like the Olympic Games and the World Cup
- 4 Ed Mulhall, Formerly Head of Features and Current Affairs in Radio and now Editor of evening news on TV "6 One News"
- 5 Cathal Goan, Editor of Irish Language Programmes TV and Editor of "Cúrsaí", five nights a week TV Current Affairs programme in Irish
- 6 Margaret Gleeson, Former Executive Producer on so-called 'urban soap', "Fair City"  
Currently, a Producer on documentary series, "Wednesday Report"

- 7 Kevin Linehan, Series Producer of National Lottery programme, "Winning Streak" and of new variety show, presented by Gerry Ryan, "Secrets"
- 8 Niall Mathews, Executive producer of "Fair City"
- 9 Gerry Stembridge, Former staff producer with RTE, now a freelance producer whose latest major production was, "The Truth About Clare"
- 10 Dermot Horan, Series Producer, RTE TV's fashion and style programme, "Head to Toe"
- 11 Michael Garvey, currently working on various programmes, previously responsible for RTE TV's book programme, various programmes dealing with social and spiritual issues  
In the early years of RTE, Michael was a Controller of TV programmes
- 12 Michael Heney, Senior Current Affairs Producer with "Wednesday Report" Formerly Instructor on TV Producer/Director Training Courses
- 13 Adrian Moyne, Series Producer on the Young Peoples'daily magazine programme, "Jo-Maxi"  
Former producer on the TV environment programme, "Face of the Earth"  
Joined RTE as a producer

in Education Department  
of Radio

- 14 Frank Hand, Series Producer on the  
stations' short-running  
nature and environment  
programme, "The Nature of  
Things" Formerly a  
producer on the science  
programme, "Zero"
- 15 Anonymous, Senior Producer Variety  
TV
- 16 Gay Byrne, Producer, "Late Late  
Show"

The questions asked of the producers were grouped into a number of categories. Of course, while some answers to those questions fit neatly into the original categories, others do not. The section on Technique and Procedure is an attempt to cope with this, being a broad category with many small subsections.

While the responses and comments in Section A refer to programmes generally, Section B contains a specific review of a programme by the producer who made it.



## SECTION A

### SECTION A.1: INTERVIEWEES

The interview is one of the most commonly-used techniques in journalism. The procedure for setting up an interview is the same for most programmes: a researcher, reporter or producer contacts the potential interviewee, asks a number of questions related to the topic and listens. If the answers are delivered clearly, simply or at least easily understood and interestingly, even entertainingly, then the person is dubbed, 'a talker' and will be considered as a possible interviewee. The other description used in connection with interviewees is 'performer'.

In television, the process is more time-consuming - what can be done over the telephone for radio usually has to be done face-to-face for television. Somebody must meet the potential interviewee to ensure they have no serious tic or blemish that would distract from what they're saying. Such a research interview is also a good opportunity to check out possible locations for the interview, such as the person's home or workplace.

Making a decision about committing resources to an interview with someone is often an act of faith on the part of the producer. She or he doesn't usually have the chance to meet the interviewee beforehand and has to rely on a researcher's or reporter's judgement. Researchers and reporters know what is required and know that their reputation depends on them making the correct judgements about the value of potential interviewees, as the Variety Producer explains:

"Where we can the researcher meets the person (beforehand) and is then able to make a judgement, comes back and discusses it. 99% of the time the researcher is absolutely right. You can't be right all the time because you are interviewing a person in one environment and then they're appearing on television in another."

So they can let you down occasionally, but a good, experienced researcher can anticipate if an interviewee is going to work in a television environment and then make a judgement on that basis. But there's always one that slips through the net, who will dry up. But fortunately that hasn't happened, in fact I can't remember that happening this season. I'm sure there is somebody but I just can't recall them."

Even when the interview is good in reality it can often fail to impress on film. This is how Frank Hand describes an interview with an Office of Public Works Public Relations Officer. The subject was the damage to archaeological sites by people searching them with metal detectors and digging up metal objects of historical interest.

"Now here was a guy we interviewed. He came across very well there (during the interview). And yet when I looked on it on film, it just didn't work.

He seems to be saying things but he's not. He's a PRO. A very good PRO. He actually seems to be making statements that sound quite good but when you analyse them afterwards he really hasn't told us much.

What we had was two very polarised groups of people. He was representing the conservationist side and it needed to be presented in a very polarised fashion and he wasn't doing it. When I looked at it afterwards he wasn't strong enough. If we had no (other interviewee for the same side) and just him, the museum would have come out looking like a laughing-stock.

Most shows would be nothing without the use of interviews and this is especially true in the case of the "Late Late Show" and the Variety Show. For the producers of both these shows, interviews mean stories.

"(A good interviewee is) somebody who has a story to tell in the first place. And, secondly, that they're able to tell it. There's no point having somebody with a good story if they don't present it well.

And that is our function, because a television programme, unlike a newspaper interview where you can wheedle the information out and present it yourself, these people have to present their own story."

Variety Producer

Gay Byrne keeps in mind the fact that each interview should fill a certain amount of time. When asked what he thought made a good interviewee, he replied, "I suppose the quick answer to that is, 'someone who keeps talking'". But it's the first minute of that talk that is most significant.

"I keep on quoting the example of people who approach us and say, 'so-and-so, so-and-so is a wonderful person. And he's done this, and this, and this, and this. And really you should have him on the 'Late Late Show'.

And we go and see the person, and they've done all these wonderful things, but they're completely monosyllabic and uncommunicative. And there's absolutely no point in trying to interview them.

And you contrast that with Maeve Binchy, who you can bring down to Burgh Quay and put on the Bray bus and by the time she gets to Donnybrook, she'll give you entertainment for two hours about who she met, and what they were like and what they did, and who their parents were and what happened to them and why they're separated, and keep you vastly entertained and so on.

I suppose one of the greatest interviewees of all time would be Peter Ustinov who has this marvellous range of voices and anecdotes and stories and who can act them out and just make you laugh

I suppose David Niven would have been one of my favourite people. And he was a natural giggler of a man, he was such a good-humoured man. And he had told all his stories 9 million times before presumably, but he was an actor and he knew how to do it, and he could do it better than most

I think that the important thing is that someone has a story to tell and in the context of the Late Late Show and/or the Gay Byrne Show. I'm not talking about the context of documentaries, or whatever. If they have a story to tell and can tell it, the simpler and easier and more direct way they can tell it, the better it is

People tend to think like Wogan and other shows, that only 'personalities', 'celebrities' are worth listening to or talking to. And we have found that that's certainly not the way it is

Very often the unknown people, telling their own story in their own way are so often more entertaining

And the problem with the Late Show, you come on, and you either make an impression in one minute or you're dead. Now sometimes they give you a bit longer than that if they think the story is interesting. But you better make an impression fairly quickly or you're dead

I'm just saying it as a general point of view sitting down in front of the Late Late Show. Everybody now has 8 or 9 channels, everybody has the zapper. You introduce somebody. If they're well known, if they're Richard Harris, people tend to be automatically interested. They want to see what Richard Harris is like and how he's doing

But if you're Fred Snodgrass from Limerick and I have to explain who you are. Ok, if I can make it exciting. 'Now, here's Fred Snodgrass. Now, impress me. Entertain me. Get on with it. And if they once see that you're a dreary ditherer, and you don't have a gift of expressing yourself, they just get tired of you very quickly, they're just gone, that's the end of it

In so far as one of the biggest reactions we got in the last few years, we just had two ordinary guys on who were widowers. And they just told their story in a perfectly simple, straightforward way, and how they felt and what happened to them and so on. And that will always win through

If you get the right person with the right story, telling it in the right way a talk show is still king. And people are still interested in what people do and what they think and what their story is, and they're not all that interested in flashing lights and big bands and dancing girls and singers and all that razzamatazz, if you have the right person and the right storytelling in the right way, that's a winner "

The criteria for judging interviewees are different for other producers. Cathal Goan sometimes has to accept a lower standard of interviewee on his all-Irish programme, simply because they can speak Irish.

"That's a difficulty. But then there's also the business of, one of the criticisms that had been levelled at Irish language programming in the past is that it's the same old faces coming up again. Y'know you could list 5 people and they were on every week. And I've tried to change that.

And in doing that you bring people in and you know that they're not quite good but you know that they have potential. So the thing to do is to use them so they'll gain more confidence in themselves and their ability to express themselves and they won't be hung up about throwing in the odd English word when the Irish word escapes them."

John O'Brien in Sport believes that sports programmes, by their nature, must accept a wider variety of interviewees than other programmes. The interviewees select themselves, as it were, by their sporting achievements and are not always the kinds of people a producer would like to use. He also says that interviewing practices in sports programming are changing.

"Mostly in sport people are included for who they are. Everybody's different - some people are good talkers. I mean Jack Charlton's not a good talker, but you have to have him.

(Q Why is he not a good talker?)

Because he's a gruff individual and he doesn't like doing it. He does it because he has to do it and very often there's money involved anyway. But I think if he could get away with not ever doing an interview, he wouldn't mind that.

Then you get some people like Tony Ward who interviews a dream because you just switch him on, and just throw in the odd word to keep him going. But he's very used to it.

You have to remember in sport that, certainly, apart from the top echelon, a large number of the people that you interview, it's either their first or their second time being interviewed. And they've got a camera on them and there's a microphone in front of them. They're not relaxed, so very often the best bits of an interview are missed because of time constraints.

So if you're going for the 3 guys who played for Donegal in the semi-final immediately after the match, because of the constraints of time you have to do it immediately after the match. So you can only talk to each of them for 3 minutes. Whereas if you were able to talk to them for half an hour, by the time they were 10 minutes into the interview they probably would have relaxed and be terrific. But because of the

pressure that you put on them because of the pressure that's on you, then you're not really getting the best out of them

So that's why very often you will get very good interviews with people in those situations on Saturday (during the Saturday magazine show) when a film crew has been out and they have had time, and they got to know the guys, and the guys know what you're talking about, and they're nice and relaxed when you do the interview, as distinct from what happens immediately at the end of the match

(Q So why do you put them on then?)

We do that because we feel that people want to see how they have felt having won or lost People now want instantaneous reactions, that's an evolution

We've even got to the stage, we did a soccer match, I think it was from Spain about two years ago And half way through the first half, the Spaniards made a substitution, and they actually interviewed the guy who came off the pitch

The whole main coverage, although this is absolutely verboten in Eurovision terms, the Spaniards didn't care they just grabbed your man and just cut to the interview

And they did an interview in Spanish with him for about a minute and a half while play was going on, and we didn't see the play And that's just bad taste, but that's very nearly the level we're getting to You now have in some sports these 'flash' interviews as you call it, where you grab players as close as possible the final whistle and actually do a formal interview with them And I think you've got to be a special kind of person to be able to handle that, and pretty together at the end of a long soccer match or rugby match So that somebody's going to come up to you and say to you, 'do you remember that incident in the third minute, what happened?' That's the kind of pressure that's on people"

Easily John O'Brien's most celebrated and controversial choice of interviewee in Ireland was Eamonn Dunphy to feature on the panel during the 1990 World Cup O'Brien explains that picking Dunphy was a risk, but ultimately one worth taking "John Giles has been our analyst on every Saturday game since we've been doing live soccer And Eamonn Dunphy was a calculated risk which we had some angst about for a while, and then took that calculated risk We're happy that it worked out for us

(Q Why did you have angst about it?)

Because he had a row here with somebody after the last World Cup

(Q So there was the danger that you could have set up this panel and one of your panellists could have walked off early on in the show )

Yes That's right, so it was a risk and it meant a certain amount of soft-soaping But he wanted to come back as well In the event it worked out fine

None of the controversy was bad enough to reflect badly on us. And because things went fairly well from an early stage, the bits of controversy that did arise were beneficial to us in the end."

In Michael Heney's experience, it's the interviewee's motive that often determines their quality.

"(A good interviewee is) somebody who is prepared to open his life to you to take you into his confidence. They tend to do it because they feel that other people will benefit

(re Joe Byrne, former psychiatric hospital inmate on whom a whole Wednesday Report was based) "I didn't ask him but I'm sure he didn't particularly want to do it. But, he never hesitated because he said 'well look that's what I have'. He was very secure in his environment and he felt others might benefit from it. So he was prepared to open up.

That was the unusual nature of his story, the fact that he was prepared to be open and honest in a way which could have been greatly abused by us. We got access to doctors, social workers, psychiatrists and they all gave us material which exposed Joe Byrne to abuse, let's say. Because they said things, which, had they been broadcast, wouldn't have done Joe any good. You do take on quite a responsibility.

One type of good interviewee is someone who is prepared to open up and reveal recesses of their lives and experiences that are not normally available to the audience. That's what I value."

Frank Hand thinks the quality of a television interviewee is determined more by the impression they give than what they actually say.

"I think it's a lot to do with the way they sit, the way they present themselves the way, the way they look at the reporter or not look at the reporter.

It's all to do with how you look, if you look confident then people are more likely to believe what you're saying. It's different on radio, but when they can see you they have this extra means of checking you out."

## SECTION A.2: STRUCTURE & FORMAT

These questions were chosen to find out if the producers had a particular way of ordering their programme material and if so, why? Some of the producers began by downplaying or denying the idea of an habitual structure

"I don't have a formula It doesn't come easily to me, I don't know if it does to other producers " (Michael Heney)

"I don't have any rules " (Frank Hand)

"I kind of vaguely think of a beginning-middle-end to the programme" (Margaret Gleeson)

"I have a sort of a rule, to try to make it a three item programme " (Cathal Goan)

The most common structuring technique the producers have is to design a strong opening, "I would be open to criticism because I still have the old notion about sticking your hard story at the top " (Cathal Goan) Margaret Gleeson believes a show needs a 'hook' at the top to "get the viewer interested so they won't zap off "

Frank Hand also tries to lead with "something really punchy", but that can cause problems if they're shooting on film - if they use the best clip at the top, they may not have a copy of it to include later in the programme

For Hilary Orpen, the problems of opening strongly are different

"We started off by leading with what we thought was our strongest story Then we discovered, that they were putting us out before half past eight It was due to the loss of ads in the schedule This was a mistake from our point of view, because if you turn on the TV at half eight to see something and the film has already started, you don't know what it's about, you're likely to zap to another channel

So we've changed now, what we're trying to do is put something short, in case this happens again, though they guarantee it won't

The Variety producer usually opens with a menu written by the Presenter

"We don't go into detail We don't say precisely who (the interviewee) is Otherwise, the audience might get the wrong impression and say, 'I don't want to watch that' "

Michael Heney says "the opening is terribly important", but says he does not always have it worked out before going filming. He gives an example of a programme on Joe Byrne, a former psychiatric patient from Wexford.

"I was half way through and I didn't know how I was going to start and then I suddenly realised that I could possibly do something with Joe by bringing him back to the hospital. Which was likely to be a slightly traumatic experience for him. But producers have to do these things to get the programme - as long as you're not abusing your source it's not a problem - and as long as they consent.

So I asked Joe to come into the hospital and then I began to work out quite a strong sequence. We found the ward where he had actually slept. Then the question was, 'now, how am I going to use this?' So I thought, 'I'll use it at the beginning and I'll use it at the end, because it's quite evocative.

So that was a quite important thing in terms of structure. Because, it gave me a powerful opening and it gave me a powerful closing, at least as powerful as I would get."

With regard to overall structure, Heney thinks "in terms of graphs"

"The graph tends to go up fairly sharply at the beginning and stays up, and then comes down to something of a valley and then rises to the high point towards the end.

And that's the way I organise my material so that, in particular the beginning and the ending are powerful."

If Heney's graph is 'U'-shaped, other producers organise their material in a 'linear graph form'. Niall Mathews feels, "Fair City" should build to a strong ending.

"If you leave people with a very, very good ending, it means they want to come back to it. To an extent, irrespective of what has gone before. But if you leave them with a good cliffhanger or an ending, or something humorous, or with a good feeling at the end of a half an hour of soap. That makes them want to come back to it more than having enjoyed the half hour as a half hour."

Adrian Moynes tries to keep the "good feeling" at the top of the show.

"I like a running order that starts light and gets a bit maturer towards half 6. You know if there was an item about Sudan, I'd be inclined to keep it down the show. I might start off with a Jason Donovan interview. You want to hook people and hold them, you don't make them unhappy at five past six."



Scheduling can also affect the structure of a programme Hilary Orpen will often end with the strongest item because her half-hour show starts at 8 30 pm and the audience grows towards the end of the show as they turn on for the '9 o'clock News' Peter Feeney's structure for 'Marketplace' was also affected by their transmission slot being changed

"For the first two years our format was that we always opened with a section called, 'Market makers', which was things that we picked up that hadn't been carried or had been underemphasised And we finished with a section called 'Market monitors', which was the week's figures No-one else was carrying that 'Smurfit went down 20 in the week'

We had to drop that final section when we went midweek because of recording in the morning and we debated replacing it with something else We did devise a thing called 'Market Reports', but because we didn't actually have anybody to compile that we dropped that as well

So what we were left with was a 'Maker's' section at the top of the programme, which didn't work as well midweek as weekend But we needed it for packaging reasons because it gave a sensation of pace to the programme It moves it along "

Feeney and Cathal Goan can only afford to produce one tape item in each half hour show So in a show with two studio interviews and one taped report, each tries to separate the studio pieces by placing the tape item in the middle of the show

For most of the producers, especially those like Gay Byrne and the Variety producer, who are dealing with a wide range of item types, Hilary Orpen sums up a basic approach to organising programme material

"We would try to balance, serious, light, serious, light If there's a lot of talking, then something moving and visual "

As well as deciding to divide up studio and tape items and hard and soft items, the producer must decide on the time to be allocated to each item This can be the subject of a general policy decision, as Adrian Moynes describes (referring to the changes he made when he took over as series producer of 'Jo-Maxi')

"I took a bit of the ra-ra out of it, y'know It's a bit less hectic than it was Y'see if you're doing about 6 substantive items per show, it takes a lot of work to find each of them and get them up to par And I think if you put that investment into it, it'll take as much work to get 4 and a half minutes of value out of it as it will to get 3 So get the 4 and a half out of it if it has the legs to run to that extent "

For Margaret Gleeson the allocation of time or "the weighting" can be decided well after production has begun

"You're saying, 'oh that'll be worth ten minutes' You think something'll be worth five minutes and they're only worth 30 seconds And other people that you think are quiet that you don't think are going to talk at all, are wonderful on camera

And you're judging, sussing all the time I mean this particular woman that we're filming at the moment turned out to be very good, and is excellent We're following her around And we had to do a sequence in the Post Office two or three times for different camera angles and they remembered where they were and they did all sorts of chats and they were fantastic

I would say because that sequence works and because they joked a bit and because it showed her personality, I would give that a little bit more And when her voice-over is added it will really be a very strong sequence

I think structure is terribly important I think it's a fundamental tenet on which you are building the whole thing "

### SECTION A.3: RELATIONS WITH MANAGEMENT

The job of producer is unusual in terms of comparable middle management positions in other organisations. It is not normally a step on the promotion ladder into higher management, most people's career progression stops at producer level. If you want to be involved in the making of television programmes, it's the highest you can get and for many, it's high enough. There are several cases within RTE of producers who have become managers for a period and changed back to being producers voluntarily.

The job of producer is a relatively autonomous one, with overall responsibility for the programme, its budget, content and so on.

The producers gave the impression that management rarely interfered with the day-to-day running of a programme or, for that matter the programme's content. The Variety Producer described the form of involvement from management in his show:

"We had no department head as such as the programme was running this season, because of a resignation, so there was no direct contact with management in that sense. So the programme was loosely evolving and it's reached its current pattern with probably some communications from the controller. Like, 'more involvement from the audience', that sort of thing.

We tended in the beginning to go for the international personalities who tended not to be Irish, because there are so few international Irish personalities. So there was a gentle nudge in direction of using more of the home-based product, which we were going to do anyway."

Peter Feeney had a more specific example of management instruction on the content of his show:

"There are a few areas where I would be conscious of a conflict between RTE as journalists and RTE as a corporation with interest. A very simple area, and that is, for example, the sale of Cablelink. It is quite clear that there's a strong argument that the government has interfered in the sale of Cablelink to Pactel in favour of selling it to Telecom. We've been encouraged not to go near that. That's a conflict of journalism versus corporate interest.

Specifically in the case of Cablelink, we sought a briefing from RTE. So they knew that we were doing it. And then the advice came back that RTE felt that it would not be in RTE's interest because

And they had an argument. I'm not saying it was a reasonable argument and it was an argument I could have guessed. That we shouldn't do it at the moment because the Monopolies Commission was investigating it and it would appear that RTE was using its own broadcasting medium to present its side of the case. There is that

argument I think we've far less problems in that area than newspapers have because we're not dependant on advertising in the same way

I think the licence fee does give us a freedom, it gives us an obligation too, that we ought to maintain our independence and be as critical and as independent as we can be

I've never found the advertising people in here have applied any pressure in any way to do or not do items There is a kind of informal thing that if you're going to be knocking washing-machines you let the advertising people know so the next ad up won't be for a washing-machine But I think that's expedient, that's not unreasonable "

Management comes in a variety of forms and in Gay Byrne's case during the 1990 Presidential Election, management intervened in the shape of the Election Steering Committee

"Well the presidential (programme) was different insofar as the presidential one was an election process so a steering committee was appointed in here and you're into all that mess And they pretty well decided who did what and when

The Presidential candidates came to us first and said they wanted to do the Late Late Show And then they were slotted in for 'Questions and Answers' and we, RTE, wanted them to do 'Today Tonight', and they didn't want to do 'Today Tonight', they wanted to do the 'Late Late Show'

But the steering committee and the DG could not have it said that the candidates told us what show they were going to do, rather than we telling them It would have been inappropriate, to say the least, that they were allowed to do the Late Late Show and not do our flag-bearing current affairs programme So they were told 'no', they had to do 'Today Tonight' and by the end of it then we ended up coming the night after 'Today Tonight', which didn't suit us particularly, but we did it in a slightly different format anyway

We would have done it better and if they'd stayed off 'Today Tonight' and just did 'Questions and Answers', we would have done it much better and we would have done the whole show But given that they were on 'Today Tonight', we said, 'right we're only doing an hour then, hump it' "

However, overall it seemed that if a producer keeps filling the transmission slots and staying within budget, his or her contact with their own boss can be minimal For example, this is how Adrian Moynes described his relationship with management

"I would say that I have autonomy, and I would say that without reservation But, a lot of that, I think, depends on the kind of person you are as Series Producer There

are things I do mention That we are thinking, for instance, in doing something about child sexual abuse Y'know, I think that people sort of say that, 'we can leave this thing with you'

When I had chosen the presenters I showed tapes to the controllerate, and they said, 'that's grand' They don't interfere in any kind of meddling day-to-day way They love you to get on with it "

John O'Brien said that his department have regular review meetings and he also feels autonomous, but that wasn't the same as having complete freedom

"I'm autonomous only to an extent Most television programmes, particularly big ones, they evolve, rather than somebody saying, 'I'm going to do it, and going straight down middle', you can't You have to work within certain restrictions, budgeting, staffing, facilities, all of these things put limitations on what you can do "

Gay Byrne's contact with his superiors is also limited

"I'm the one who goes every year in June at the end of the season, and have done for 28 or 29 years and I say to the Controller of Programmes of the day, 'do you want the Late Show back again?' And usually they've reached into a drawer and out come the TAM figures and they look at them and say, 'Yeah we want the Late Show again' And I say, 'thanks very much, good luck, cheers ' And that's the end of that

Apart from that, the only contact I have with them, I have a moan on with them at the moment I was absolutely made angry this season when I came back to find that Joe Mulholland in the newsroom had put in a longer news on a Friday night, presumably on a haremscarum pretext that we're trying to outwit the 12 midnight news from Sky, which to me is bunkum

But he's put in a longer news on Friday night which restricts our running over for that extra bit of 10 minutes if we wanted it, which we had open end And I was very angry about that and they're having another look at that now coming up to Christmas It might be just as well that we get off the air at 11 30, so I'm in a cleft stick about it

But apart from that, if there's something political coming up I would let Bob Collins know If there's something thorny or legal coming up I would let him know But by and large and generally speaking we would send the list of prospective guests across to him on Thursday for his editorial meeting on Friday, and that's fine And if there's a change in that, we let him know

But by and large and generally speaking we rarely hear from each other "

The main gripe with management from producers centres on what's seen as lack of guidance when new series are being set up Frank Hand used the example of the launch of "The Nature of Things"

"Essentially what happened was this We had run 'Zero' (science show) in a given way for 3 years and we were told that that was not what was wanted (for 'Nature of Things') That they wanted something completely different

Now, again, they weren't really able to say precisely what they wanted So this is what we have served up as the opposite end of the spectrum, to see if this is what they want, because I don't know Because they haven't be able to give feedback

(Q Have you sought it?)

Yeah, but they haven't seen the series Well, it's fairly obvious they haven't They say it's going well But when you say, 'which particular programmes were you impressed with?' They say, 'well,I heard the Heritage one was very good', or something But I have the strong impression that it's not being watched "

Cathal Goan had a similar experience when he took over "Cúrsaí"

(Q What sort of a brief did you get from your superiors with regard to Cúrsaí when you came on to it ) "None 'Take it over and try and get it to work' 'Just keep the thing going' "

(Q What sort of day-to-day input do management have?)

"Very little really I mean (the current head) wasn't there when I took over and I reported directly to (the controller) The only time I saw (the controller) was when I was looking for something Which suited me I must say

The Head is very supportive in the sense that she fulfills that role We now have a weekly meeting, where we discuss forward plans It's a group meeting of all the series producers "

(Q And is there an exchange of views about each other's programmes?) "Yes They're not happening as much as they should happen because of a variety of things like crises and interview (panels) "

When Michael Heney talked about RTE management, he expressed anger,not only at the way a new show was set up but also, like Hand, at what he saw as management's inability to articulate their dissatisfaction with the old show

"The new Head of Features and Current Affairs was disappointed with 'Open Eye' (documentary series produced by Heney) and secondly she didn't have the resources to continue features documentaries and current affairs documentaries So, in her unique position as Head of Features and Current Affairs, she abolished the 'Open Eye Unit',and set up this current affairs unit which she believes is features as well

She asked me to take charge of it and I declined, because I was very dissatisfied at the cursory, inadequate way in which 'Open Eye's ' output was analysed or considered

Secondly I didn't believe that 'Wednesday Report' was being given the facilities to allow it to do the job that it was supposed to be doing. Thirdly, I didn't want to work in current affairs.

The term 'investigative' was and is applied to this particular programme. It's not capable of doing investigative programming, it doesn't have the resources, it doesn't have the time, it doesn't have anything that's needed to do proper investigative programming. And that's been taken out of 'Today Tonight' and landed in here, and that is all based on very flawed analysis. So I didn't want to be in charge of it, but as there wasn't any alternative for me, I said, 'fine, if you want me to work on it, I will work on it'.

(Q What was her disappointment with 'Open Eye'?)

I just really don't know. It never was communicated properly, I had one conversation which was extremely unsatisfactory and the decision was taken half way through the run as well which I thought was very odd. A series like that gathers a head of steam and you establish contacts and an audience reputation. The audiences were high and there was every sign that they would be much better again in a second run, having established a certain name or whatever, but that was never allowed. I've never been told and I thought in managerial terms that was very inadequate."

Niall Mathews thought that a constant flow of communication from management is unnecessary.

"I know we're doing a good job. They don't really have to come back and tell me that we're doing a good job, for me to know it but it's to hear it every so often. Because we hammered out a budget earlier on in the year, I know we're well within budget. Secondly, I know that the TAMs are steady. I know that we have an audience out there."

Management are satisfied with 'Marketplace', according to Peter Feeney, but, he thought, for the wrong reasons.

(Q What was the original brief for the programme like?)

"It was very very vague. Just, 'can you devise a business programme and go off and do it'. The controllers, the response from them was interesting.

I went to them saying, 'listen we need more resources'. And the impression I got back was that they had no interest in the content of the programme at all. They were satisfied that we had a business programme, and that the 'vibe' back from the business community was favourable. But they had no great interest in it. I got the impression some controllers were not regular viewers. And I can understand that. I mean you've got to watch enough TV already without watching a business programme if you've no interest in business.

What the programme did have going for it was that, at the top, management watched it and they were in favour of it. Now that actually, from a journalistic point of view,

may not pass much credit on us, because they would meet their business colleagues and peers who would say, 'good programme' So, that probably meant we weren't doing a particularly good job But it meant there was a kind of a 'favourable vibe' from the Directors-General which the controllers picked up So they were favourably disposed towards it, but that was never translated into more resources

I thought we could use that to kind of argue for more filming, more editing, more studios, etc But it never worked that way, they just were happy with it They didn't want to get involved with it or concerned about it, so there was no pressure at all Just, 'keep up the good work and don't bother us', basically

(Q Is that a welcome freedom for you?)

In one sense it is I mean no-one was telling me, no-one was nagging me to do this, not to do that Against that it's also quite uncritical It means that you can kind of just churn it out "

Gerry Stembridge believed that management don't work producers hard enough and don't understand them He explained why he left his staff position in RTE to become a freelance producer

"The mere fact that I had to leave just emphasises the point that I was not being utilised to my full capacity I was not being worked hard enough Not being worked hard enough in the kind of work, that I wanted to do

My argument is that because it's the nature of producers that they are paid a fixed salary, so how much or how little they work makes no difference in that sense So, the main way you will get good work out of producers is to give them the work they want to do and to make them interested which a very obvious sort of psychology

You will get more than 100% out of your producers if they're involved in whatever it was made them want to be producers in the first place But if you don't and if you continuously just shift them into programmes because of the needs of the station demand it - there has to be a certain amount of that too - but, there was no give on that

I mean I was quite prepared to say, for example, if I can do one of these projects a year, then I'm quite happy with whatever else I have to do for the rest of the year Because I'm well aware the station has to run

But I wanted that guaranteed, they couldn't guarantee it Well, fair enough if they can't guarantee it, I'll take the only option and I'll have to leave But the only reason they can't guarantee it is, they don't have their act together

Everything is prepared only weeks, if not days in advance As opposed to months in advance Nobody knows exactly what way the budget is going to be split Sometimes, like in previous drama, "Common Places", I agreed a budget of 45,000,



which is absolute minimum A few weeks later I was told there was an across the board cut of 10%, because they had to save money

Y'know, that just doesn't make sense This budget was agreed If it could be 10% less we would have made it 10% less And they shrug their shoulders and say, 'that's the way it has to be'

You know when for some reason or another you have allowed yourself, or something has happened that meant that suddenly you have taken on too much, and it's all catching up, and you can't get out of it And that's the kind of situation they're in, and they can't get out of it

One thing is piled on another, so all they do is keep passing the problem further down the line So the managers pass it down to producers, the producers pass it down to the crew, the crew live with it

(Producers) get the crew to do things which are not in their professional instinct to do To do it faster, to not worry so much about whether it's lit properly, to not worry so much that you're in the right location for this 'It's too windy, the sound isn't right ' 'Well, we'll have to shoot it anyway '

My basic belief is that, until programmes start not appearing on the air, start getting lost Then and only then will people say, 'something has to be done' We're all collaborating in the gradual reduction of professional standards "

## SECTION A.4: PRESENTERS

In RTE, it is the producer, along with management, who decides on presenters  
There is no standard intake for presenters and there is no standard training course

"Jo-Maxi", the young people's programme advertised for presenters

"The recruitment had to be done very quickly So what I did was put an announcement on television and put an ad in Hot Press, saying, 'if you're into Rock and Pop, Stage and Screen, Sports and Games If you think you can present Network 2's leading young people's programme 5 nights a week, send us a VHS of how you look and sound with a CV And the VHS is the big eliminator, because you put it in the machine and you know very quickly whether a candidate is going to be at the party or not

So I looked at 250 of them, and that was what sorted it out That got it down to 15 people approximately, who were auditioned You see it on the screen It jumps at you There is one I will never forget One Friday I looked at 80 tapes and I stopped at, I think it was 82, because there was a girl who just leapt off the screen "

Adrian Moynes, "Jo-Maxi"

In most cases the producers imagined the audience and their attitude to the content and chose the presenters accordingly

"We chose (Marian Finucane) for her punter appeal The fact that she's very much identified with by the public and gives them the feeling that they're close to her and good friends of her's And then balancing that was the more financial business-like presentation of Brian Dobson "

Hilary Orpen, "Look Here"

"Pat O'Mahony gets an awful lot of the young streetwise, the rebellious teenagers "

Dermot Horan, "Head to Toe"

"Why we picked Mike Murphy for the gig was partly because we knew we needed somebody who would ordinary Joe Soaps love him They have a very short amount of time to get used to all the technology and we needed somebody who would they would 'Ah Mike' Someone familiar, they've known him for a few years, and he's actually very good with people in getting chats

(Q And you reckon Ronan Collins wouldn't have that sort of rapport with them?)

I don't think that he has got the experience with ordinary punters Like Ronan is very good on 'Play the Game', but that's all professionals, and also there's a whole

different pace to Play the Game And we wanted this show to have a faster pace to it "

Kevin Linehan, "Winning Streak"

Like Kevin Linehan, some of the producers define their ideal presenter in terms of what they don't want as well as what they do This is how Dermot Horan rates the former presenters of "Head to Toe", before he took over the show

"X was too young, I felt to conduct interviews, she hadn't had enough experience She was very very Dublin 4 she was just too, not prissy, but very Dublin 4, very upper middle-class

Y was very much a DJ, he was known as Y the DJ He was never known as Y of 'Head to Toe', there was no association there, token male

Z was the driving force behind it An excellent researcher, nice lady I've no problems with her personally I feel that she's not a great presenter It's my own opinion It was also the opinion held by Joe Mulholland I felt that the programme needed somebody who was a little less 'munteoir' (teacherish) I felt that she was very mumsy Whereas that might be alright for a Late Late Show audience, who were attracting the widest audience possible If you're going to do a programme on fashion, you have to be stylish "

The audition of presenters is at the discretion of the producer This was how Adrian Moynes described the training of the six new presenters for "Jo-Maxi"

"(We) set up a number of broadcasting presenter situations for them We give them, I think a very difficult series of tests We put them into studio and they had to do things like interview two children about their interests They had to interview a role-playing young actor who was sent into them to say 'You know this interview's about bereavement because I lost my mother a few months ago Or I'm a teenage parent Or I'm illiterate ' And they had to do a range of things They had to do pieces to camera We put two of them together and said, 'o k , we're 30 seconds short in this programme, we want you to busk a rap for this show "

Dermot Horan described the training for the two new presenters on "Head to Toe" and went on to identify what he saw were problems with RTE's attitude to presenter training

"It was about two weeks before we were due to start filming So we spent 6 days working on interviews, looking into cameras We took them out and about and did some filming and things like that But it wasn't enough

RTE when they decided to expand their home production, they never thought about training people So we would be in a position, like a lot of other people of actually

putting people out fairly raw And it's very difficult for them because they might have a lot of raw talent, but they might be just booed by the audience because they're not trained

BBC would train people, they have the time and the money and the resources But it comes down to pre-planning again It's all very well to say, right we'll get a presenter, we'll get Derek Davis Fine, Derek'll be able to walk in and do it But then people will criticise you and say, 'we're fed up with Derek Davis, he's on everything We'd like to see a few new faces '

In the olden days, a new face would start as a continuity announcer And then they might do a bit of the sports results, they gradually Thelma Mansfield started that way, and you see her development right the way through to 'Live at 3', and now she's very respected But I'm sure if you found Thelma ten years ago and you put her in 'Live at 3' straight away, she wouldn't be able to do it "

Most of the producers made a distinction between 'presenter-led' and 'subject-led' programmes Michael Heney believed his documentary on the former mental hospital patient, Joe Byrne was subject-led

"The story was Joe's story and there's nobody better to tell Joe's story except Joe himself And there are also certain observations that the subject won't make

If you've a lot of time you can fashion it It's possible to make it without a reporter of course, and I'm particularly interested in that sort of work, and I've done a lot of stuff like that in recent times But a reporter and the script can also say things that the subject simply doesn't say for you With more time perhaps, they would

However, I think it's terribly important in a programme like that that the presenter/reporter does not intrude That they are there, but they are a facility They're in the background Carolyn understood that herself She's very sensitive to these things So that was the way we did that, and I think that was fair enough "

Frank Hand felt that the audience didn't develop a relationship with the presenters on his programme, "The Nature of Things"

"It depends On something like this programme No On something like Zero Yes Because, you had so much in the way of studio demos Anyway, that there was a much closer identity between the reporter and the audience "

"Look Here" was described by Hilary Orpen as 'a researcher's programme' and the two presenters did not become very involved in the production

"We had meetings with them, but in a way, it's not a presenter's programme. Unfortunately both of them are seriously engaged elsewhere in the organisation, and they don't have the time to be involved with us. We're actually lucky to talk to them before they even go into studio.

We obviously would talk through the ideas, the sort of concept behind the programme, and they were agreeable to that. Brian was very keen on all the visual stuff, Marian was keen on the human aspect that we wouldn't be having Professor So-and-so on market research. But we would be having Mrs Bloggs who bought the damaged toy. And that appealed to her. But I can't say they were terribly involved in putting together the programme."

However, the Secrets programme would never have got off the ground without the right presenter. Kevin Linehan described the decision to choose Gerry Ryan and told how that decision influenced the design of the programme.

"This needs some kind of edge. I can't be all soft and schmaltzy as all these kind of shows tend to be. I need somebody who's going to add something extra to it - to give it an additional little twist - and started going through the list of people. You can't introduce a new personality to do something like this, because it's too big. It's colossal and it'd be an enormous risk from RTE's point of view. I wouldn't have thought much of my chances of getting a new person past it.

So having thought of various people, nobody had the edge that I wanted except Gerry Ryan. And a lot of the things that he was doing on the radio programme was what I wanted to do.

Once I had decided on him then, the nature of a lot of the items and the way we would approach them began to change and get moulded around his personality and what his strengths were."

On "Head to Toe" and "Jo-Maxi" the presenters are the show.

"Our programme is very presenter-orientated. People like to talk about Pat and Barbara and what they're wearing, whether they like it or not. And Pat's ponytail, when it went I'm sure there was great round of applause around the country. People like to slag off what they're wearing. 'I don't think she's suited to that'. They're clothes horses in a way. And also the way we do the show. Reports are more presenter-orientated now. They're more sort of PTCs (pieces-to-camera), 'come with me, let's see'."

Dermot Horan ('Head to Toe')

"We had 6 presenters - the largest such team in RTE. Assembling a good presenter team is the key to a good programme like Jo-Maxi. Because what you need there is

the set of complementary talents and broadcasting abilities And if they're not there, you just don't have a show What you need is young people who actually can relate to the audience, without patronising them But who can, in curious ways, give a lead

For instance, if you have a presenter who happens to sing with one of the leading rock groups in the country and she also turns out to be the kind of person who's interested in MS, or literacy or the environment Well, then you know, youngsters, I think find there's a certain interest in those topics "

Adrian Moynes ('Jo-Max')

The Variety Producer describes the importance of the presenter to his show in terms of 'propriety'

"I believe that the presenter of the programme should 'own' the programme That he's seen on the air, to be in charge of it, in control of it That it's his idea, that these are the people he wants on the show That he likes the people who appear on the show He's not just handed a script on a Saturday afternoon on a bunch of people he's never heard of before and he goes in and does it, with that false kind of professionalism that has been typical of a lot of programmes, particularly on the far side

Gay always has given the impression that he owns the programme, in fact, he's producer of the programme He does own it In the same way, Pat is giving this impression, although he doesn't produce the programme But he's very very involved in the programme He has that air about him, and he has developed that air, particularly this season And it certainly reflects on air "

Peter Feeney was of the opinion that good presenters and reporters are not only good for the individual programmes but also for the station and the image it conveys

"I will watch the contrast between a newsroom reporter interviewing Charlie Haughey and Olivia O'Leary interviewing Charlie Haughey I witnessed that two weeks ago

And I'm not being unfair to the reporter, but where he sat down with Charlie and he appeared to be very grateful to get the interview and asked the Taoiseach only one question and that was 'How do you think the Summit is going?'

Then when Olivia O'Leary came to do the interview, they exchanged cold, icy looks Charlie said, 'Are you working for British television or Irish television today?' That was his opening remark Then Olivia proceeded to give him an absolutely vicious interview When that happens I am actually proud of RTE

I say, 'Here is what RTE is about. We're getting the money from the taxpayers, and we are representing the taxpayer. We are challenging and analysing people who have been given power.'

I think all of serious television, and I've nothing against non-serious television, should have that kind of claim. That you are in a privileged position and you are using that kind of privilege in the way in which...for the reason in which you were given that privilege. It is times like that that I think Irish television is quite good.

I did an interview with Olivia yesterday with the Austrian prime minister. And talking to his PR men afterwards, they were amazed at how, aggressive isn't the right word, but how thorough and persistent Olivia was in her line of interviewing.

He was fudging on neutrality in just the same way that Fianna Fail and Irish governments fudge on neutrality with EC membership. Olivia wouldn't leave him alone. She came at him six different ways on the same question and the PR guy for the Austrian government said that, in Austria, you've asked the question, you've taken the answer and then you move on to the next topic. That you would have accepted the first answer. When I hear that I think 'good'. 'Good old RTE'."

If the presenter is important enough, as the presenters of "Look Here" and Gerry Ryan are, the producer will change to suit them, to make them look or feel better:

"I wanted boxes and if there were three people, they'd all sort of lean on different levels and they'd be close and intimate. But one of the presenters were uncomfortable with that design, and I had to sacrifice them." (Hilary Orpen, "Look Here")

"The big problem I came up with after the first programme was that he...tended to play it to the studio audience all the time. And the feeling that I had was that we were shutting out the viewer at home. We weren't getting enough close-up shots of Gerry talking to the viewer. So that's improved.

We've changed the way we shot the show. We'd originally three cameras on the floor and we reduced that to two. Put another camera up the back where we could cover him on tighter shots. Again, without restricting his movement.

On the first programme we actually tried going with a handheld camera all the time in the studio. That would be his camera. He would talk to it as his camera. He would direct it as his camera. It didn't really work. Partly for technical difficulties. I mean it's a real hard gig to ask a cameraman to carry a camera around on his shoulder for the whole show and be following Gerry Ryan up and down stairs.

Nothing is spontaneous on television. Everything is created artificially on television. The trick is to give the impression of it being spontaneous.

You think by adding in the handheld camera, 'that'll go anywhere and it'll do all those things.' It doesn't really work like that. It's over there when it should be over here getting that shot. So it's hard to create that sense of it all being spontaneous, and yet we have a rough idea of all the times. Where he's going to be to do this, where he's going to be to do that. It's still not tying him down to having to deliver this line from that point.

Once we tuned him into that Camera 2 was always going to be his camera. It almost dances around him at this stage, it's getting so used to him."

(Kevin Lenihan, "Secrets")



## SECTION A.5: RESOURCES

During the research period, the buzzword around RTE was 'cutbacks'; management were asking for reductions in time spent completing all production tasks and budgets. There is an argument that new technology, such as video cameras allows this to be done without affecting quality. Michael Garvey doesn't agree.

"What's difficult about the cutbacks situation now is that broadcasting is close to becoming gossip. It's becoming close to the public knowledge of private persons. Now there's a need for that, but if you suggest that that is the horizon then you've got a very low sky."

Cathal Goan thought the climate of cutbacks is affecting producers' attitudes to their jobs and he argues management's response to cash shortages was all wrong:

"What's happening in this organisation, right across Radio and Television....I used the term 'sausage factory' and I didn't use the term lightly. But that's what we're in. And none of us, anywhere in this organisation are standing back anymore.

And the producer's function, as well as doing things, I see is to analyse, and we're not doing it enough. So I need people around me who will tell me that I'm doing it wrong and there's another way of doing it. And providing that sort of creative input into the programme.

That's not to say that the people who work on it as journalists and reporters don't have that, but I need a number of people who are going to argue the process with me rather than the nuts and bolts which is what I tend to get into arguments about, on a daily basis. And that's not around.

Most senior people in television, traditionally, in this organisation, haven't understood the actual programme-making process to the degree that I would like them to.

(This is most obvious with the) provision of facilities. It's an ongoing problem in any organisation like this that people who are not directly involved in the programme-making process make decisions about what that programme can do by way of telling them how much facilities they have to do it.

So that if you are doing a radio programme where you want to do live telephone calls and they tell you that the studio you've been assigned can't take telephone calls, they've already told you how to make your programme. And that happens in here to quite an extent. And it's going to happen more because of the cutbacks.

They are circumscribing the type of programme you can make So that the next question is If we are on this downward spiral in terms of income, what should we do about it? Should we be making less programmes and be doing the less better? And if TV3 comes along, a comparison with another organisation in the same business will force certain hard decisions on what we're doing on senior management

(We should go for) less with higher quality "

Adrian Moynes said that quality on "Jo-Maxi" definitely suffered

"It's no problem filling it let me say The stuff would fall out of the sky and hit you on the head The problem is actually getting resources to make it the way you would like it to happen

(Q So, you may end up putting something in studio instead of filming it?)

Yes Or bringing up kids from down the country when ideally you would like to have gone to them "

In Hilary Orpen's opinion the cutbacks lead to staff being exploited and she gave particular examples of where the cutbacks hampered her programme

"Obviously everything is stretched tight at the moment and people on this programme, I reckon, are working too hard, and there's been a lot of good will, which we've exploited Because it was a new programme people were willing to give I could see tempers getting frayed There have been times here when situations have to be defused

We've lost awful things because of lack of resources One of our best weeks of filming was lost because of a faulty sound machine Where we doorstepped our first rogue Where a plastic surgeon came over to do an operation that had never been done in Ireland before, that we were querying - sound faulty on the interview And a children's party that was set up to do Hallowe'en

All those things were lost because of damaged equipment That wouldn't have happened years ago There are things like that that are real pains in the ass as far as operating and trying to get a programme together is concerned You go and look for what ought to be there as a matter of course, yet you seem to have to fight for it all the time It's o k if you're feeling up to it, but if you're very tired and overworked and overstretched, it is a real pain "

Cathal Goan also remembers things being better 'years ago'

"I don't have enough staff. I'm a reasonably hard worker myself but it means I'm now really doing a seven day week, just in order to try and keep the thing going.

(Q: Where are you missing people most?) Production staff. I have a five nights-a-week programme and I have three full-time producers working on it, the rest of the time I'm relying on help from other producers loaned to me. I've a director and myself. For five nights a week television that's crazy - it's just crazy. A comparable programme a couple of years ago was 'Evening Extra' and there were seven or eight producers on that."

According to Gay Byrne, the "Late Late Show" wasn't suffering from the cutbacks:

"I can play around with my budget whatever way I like as long as I more or less end up alright at the end of the season. And it is, probably, minute per minute, hour per hour, the cheapest show on the air. And it has always been, compared, for example, with 'Glenroe', which is God knows how much more expensive. But within the budget constraints if I want to dollop out a couple of grand to bring somebody in this week, that's o.k. as long as I can make it up next week."

Niall Mathews said he took the cutbacks in his stride:

"I'm now always thinking in terms of where will I be able to spend less money and get away with it. It's because soaps cost so much. You've got to the stage now where Coronation Street record 3 a week, we record 2 a week, Glenroe record 1 a week, and I think that our recording schedule is actually going to influence Glenroe and possibly we, on the other hand are going to be influenced by Coronation Street.

Where, conceivably, what we will be doing next year, if we come back, is that we will be recording two a week but on a straight two a week. Not on a rehearse/record basis as is now, while we're recording episodes 9 and 10 we're rehearsing episodes 7 and 8 in the same week. Which causes problems partly because the actors have to deal with four episodes, and it also causes scheduling problems.

But I think that the mood will be towards recording two episodes in less time. And I'm not afraid of that, by the way, I think that's good, that's healthy. Because soap costs so much, that you need to look at all these areas. After all it is formula shooting.

These are formula programmes, this is not Shakespeare we're doing. The word "formula" applies all the way down the line. Because if you don't apply that sort of criteria, then you just overspend and overspend and you actually are doing the programme damage in the long run because it won't be included in the schedule. The

decision will be taken from you

There are all sorts of production decisions you can make without affecting the quality. At the moment we do one EFP day (outdoor shooting Electronic Film Production). Remember what we're doing is telling stories. So the decision now, the production decision now is that in order to tell the two stories per week, we require one EFP day on a Monday and three studio days, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

Now, if the axe were to fall in the morning and I was told that I had to cut back by, say, £20,000 per hour, which is considerable. Well one of the first days I would look at is EFP. And sort of say, 'well we will now have to do these only using locations at base. So we would have to devise stories that you can tell using RTE locations.'

Gerry Stembridge, like Mathews, said that the script and traditional work practices could be adapted to suit the cutbacks.

"There are a number of production problems that have arisen over the years with drama. At one end there is what I think is a right sense of the production values that are necessary to create a good drama. On the other side, there, I think, developed certain practices which assumed things were needed to do drama which were not always strictly true.

Crewing levels, for example, would be one thing. I would never suggest that it's not necessary to have a crew of 30 people working on a drama. But I would suggest that there are some dramas where you don't need a crew of 30 people. And it became a thing to say, 'Oh if it's a drama you must have this.'

And then, there's also a certain attitude within the production that a drama has lots of money, so this is a time for the various areas within RTE to recoup on capital items which really should be bought elsewhere, but they're bought off the drama budget. Because there's a lot more money with drama so you don't notice these items.

A small example, without pointing the finger at anyone particularly. You might find, we'll say, the camera section, buying themselves a few extra filters because the drama does actually need those filters, but they're bought in and they become part of the general usage.

When I began to think about the whole business, I looked at the factors that made for the cost of drama, and saw how I could construct a drama that would lessen those levels. On a very simple level, we'll take costumes into account, although it's not necessarily a huge portion of the budget. But there's a very fine wardrobe area here with a really good section head and it shows. All the gear is kept, it's meticulously ordered, you know where it is, and the people there are very enthusiastic and very inventive in the way they use it.

So I thought it would be very easy to write any kind of modern drama, there should be plenty of costumes there, without recourse to buying any. So that there straight

away is a cost gone out of my budget    A very large cost would be the cost of constructing sets, or indeed of altering locations    So again I decided to design the drama so that you mainly use locations which you already know to exist and don't cost very much to use    So in Ireland, for example, the public streets, the public parks, seafronts all these areas, perfectly free to use

Then you have a whole range of places, restaurants, pubs which largely are happy to have television crews come and work and for a relatively small sum

For example, a restaurant obviously doesn't want you there when they're packed but they're quite happy to open their doors during the afternoon    So again, you think in terms of the drama that can use all these locations, but it needs to be a sort of hit and run manner    So it needs to be just one scene that you can shoot in the course of three or four hours and get out again, so you can't do an extended sequence, probably can't do as many cutaways

So all those things are going to save money "

Peter Feeney gave examples of how the limits on resources affected his dealings with outside organisations    He told how they could make use of PR material but the dangers that lay in going down that road

"Even if we had the resources and the ability, which I'm not sure we would have to be very critical, I don't think we'd survive because we'd get no cooperation anywhere

What you can try to do is to be honest    We took a decision that we would take nothing free    Free trips we wouldn't take    Free gifts we wouldn't take    Because you just get sucked into it

You can see the argument    Simple example    To save us money when we are going to do something on a company, we will often say to them, 'have you got corporate video we could use shots out of?' So we don't have to go down and shoot the inside of your factory you'll have done it for some other purpose, can we use shots out of it?'

Frequently the company will say, 'No we haven't but we will pay for the cameraman to go and do it ' And we always said 'no, we won't take shots that you shoot for us ' We will take shots if they're already there    But you're not allowed shoot it for us ' Because it just sucks you into it    You find the company have spent 2,000 pounds and you really can't not use it, or use it in a very offhand way or in a critical way, when they have done that for you

(Re interview with German economic 'wise man' brought over by a Dublin accountancy firm )

We got him because a PR company came to us and said, 'He is available to you, we will give him to you exclusively '

(Q And you mentioned the firm in the intro - is that the payoff?)

Not as explicit as that I mean they didn't say, 'we'll give him to you if you give us a payoff' But I would feel that a mention of a company bringing somebody into town is a legitimate price to pay for access to that man

And, a lot of the time, any interesting foreign visitor coming to town, we would try and get him into the programme It does give you a slightly wider window and it costs us very little Just a borrowed crew for an hour or two So we have used that quite often

The limitation of that of course is that seminars are extremely dull television So what we did a lot was that we would go to a seminar, listen to see who was the best speaker and just do an interview with them afterwards And just use the interview and not bother with the seminar

And companies are satisfied with that because we'd say, 'In Dublin for ' or 'attending a conference at whatever it is ' And that has given us quite a lot of programme material, and that all comes through public relations companies

But what we won't do is we won't plug new products or new factory openings, by and large The odd occasion you might do it That is the slippery slope That happens all the time "

John O'Brien explained how production costs in television sport were steadily rising, mainly due to the increased popularity of sport on television

"Over the past 5 or 6 years, sports events which used to be directly a matter of negotiation between television companies and the owner of the event, have seen a middle-man come in Agencies, such as Mark McCormack's outfit, go directly to the people who own the event They buy the rights, and they sell them on to the television companies

And that has caused huge increase in production costs for everybody But we are feeling it more than most because we are a small company We obviously get preferential rights (having a small audience) but the preferential rights are much bigger than they used to be

Now at the other end of the scale we used not to pay very well We paid scurrilous amounts of money and sometimes didn't pay anything at all Still don't pay anything at all on some of the things we do But on the major events you just don't have a choice

So they come to us and say, 'You're small And we're getting 10 million from the BBC and we want 750,000 from you ' And we say, 'well we can't pay that All we can give you is 100,000 ' So they have to go away and say 'there's no other television station in Ireland, so we'll get nothing out of Ireland, so let's take the 100,000 ' And that's the way it usually works out "

To gain an impression of where they feel resources most lacking, the producers were asked what aspect of production they would like to spend more money on

Michael Heney and Adrian Moynes said 'more time'

"You need time basically One of the many weaknesses is that you have to hit a Wednesday night slot There's no studio involved, it's single camera stuff So, in investigative programming, there's a lot of to-ing and fro-ing with lawyers If the material is of any consequence it has to be scrutinised by Senior Counsel and there are delays

When (the investigative programming brief) was in 'Today Tonight' there was a big studio operation, so if the programme you were planning on Roscommon or money-lending ran into snags, for whatever reason, you were looking for the key interview, or shots of this, or the lawyers said, 'no, we can't go', then the studio could fill in

So it was possible in the big organisation that Today Tonight was to handle the delays, now there's no margin You hit Wednesday night and if you don't there's nothing else We're running against the clock here - there's nothing stockpiled Next Wednesday's programme is being edited at the moment, now that is crazy kind of stuff

If there's a legal problem with it, it won't go out It shouldn't happen It's a recipe for superficial programming And that programme didn't have enough research, either

Given that that is the inflexible context in which you are now placed, you need a lot of lee time Time in advance for research and time between the final editing and transmission, so that difficulties can be ironed out The consequences of that is that you don't want to get into difficult material because you won't make air We've already had problems with making air We lost a programme on Gallagher There was nothing else in the can, so nothing went out that night "

Michael Heney, ("Wednesday Report")

"I'd buy studio time We do that half-hour, which is a very very busy half hour There are often 20, 23 items in a running order And we do that, typically in two and a quarter, two and a half hours every afternoon And we do two of them on a Thursday (On Thursday we go in the morning and the afternoon ) It's a killer I would buy studio time to music and dance in studio "

Kevin Linehan also wanted more time in studio - time to paint the floor blue

"That was a massive battle that went on for two months I said, 'Look this is where it all happens See that big huge area there, and you want that to go out as a grubby look you've got beautiful colours all over the place and the real focus of the action when we get down to it is going to be here and we're going to be on this grotty area '

The floor was the single most difficult and debilitating element of the whole show Because they were saying it would take them three hours to put it down and it would take them two hours to take it up, and they won't work while the lighting guys were rigging See RTE tried to schedule them to do things on the floor while lighting was being rigged "

Margaret Gleeson also said she'd buy more time

"Time is the greatest pressure It is very tight You hear about the BBC with 3 months or 5 months to do something and you're down to days But we're down to a ridiculous stage There's only so many rabbits you can pull out of a hat

I'm interested in actually telling a story a lot of the time with pictures as well as people talking That takes time I haven't got enough time to film, I haven't got enough time to edit, I haven't got enough time to research And by research I mean building people's confidence I mean you can't sort of charge in with a crew into somebody's house, 'hello, tell me the story of your life, give the intimate details' and be gone in an hour That's farcical

I'm going out (filming) tomorrow and I haven't met the people That's wrong It makes me annoyed But you just get on with it Hide your irritation and do the best you can It doesn't happen all the time, but on this particular one the story is falling down around our ears, but there is no time to say 'stop' That is where the pressure comes in If everything is running smoothly, it's fine This one is collapsing around my ears and I'm still shooting I'm picking it up

Your job is to fill the slot and make air 'I don't want it good, I want it Tuesday' We try and not pull out unless you have to I've never not made a transmission deadline yet and maybe that's wrong "

Hilary Orpen also wanted better editing and more researchers

"What I need more than anything is research A consumer programme is a researcher's programme It's only good researchers who will come up with good



stories. When I say good researchers I mean researchers with imagination. I need more really good researchers that can identify, research it and put a really interesting structure on it.

Apart from that, in terms of pure production, I would say, proper editing. Decent editing facilities, you know with three machine edits, Abekas facility (visual effects machine) and Capgen (caption machine) and all that.

It just saves a whole lot of time in studio afterwards, if you can do the whole lot, put the graphics on, just make it look slick. Because, God when you think what we're competing with, it's really important we don't look like something out of the Sixties."

Peter Feeney also said he could do with an extra researcher with specialist experience:

"We are constrained because it ('Marketplace') only has one person working on it full-time and that's a researcher called Colm McGee who's a superb researcher. And he's the only person who actually came to the programme with real business expertise. He had been working for Phoenix magazine doing business stories there. His background was in law.

With the resources we have we can't do a really comprehensive report on a company in the way Business and Finance can do or the Irish Times can do. But the Irish Times Business page is pretty diluted stuff. It's very seldom you'd find anything hard in it."

Dermot Horan said he would opt for an extra producer:

"Too many times people go out and shoot stories which if they'd had the time to research them they'd be able to say, 'No, this isn't a story'. Having the extra producer would enable people to plan ahead.

The more recce-ing (visiting a location beforehand with all the crew and equipment) you do, the more pre-research you do, the more time you save on the road."

And Ed Mulhall said the newsroom lacked journalists:

"I would like to see the reporting staff beefed up. I would like to see the correspondence staff kept up to scratch. I've only really one person working ahead on stories and I'd like to have more than one person working ahead on stories. Well, one and a half. I've a features person who is doing on arts stuff, so you could argue that he's working ahead on stories. But the sort of special feature stories I've only Alistair Jackson and occasionally the correspondents.

A national broadcaster should be able to do the international stories properly and we're not currently resourced adequately to treat them. Like our East European correspondent is operating from here and wasn't there for the unification of Germany for financial reasons "

Having said he could work within the budget of the "Late Late Show", Gay Byrne would like to have enough money to employ a panel of 'ideas people'

"If I had more money I would probably appoint a team of what are vaguely known as writers or ideas people in other television networks. And you'd appoint a leader to them and you'd pay for them to sit for two days in the Montrose hotel from nine until six in the day

People who are listed on many television programmes as 'writers' are not writers at all they are people who come up with ideas. And you get a band of half a dozen people in a room and you pay them for their day, to come up with ideas. And at six o'clock when they knock off the skipper has to come to you with six formulated, or two or even one formulated idea and have it pretty well mapped out "

Niall Mathews ('Fair City') would also like to employ a similar group of people

"Or biggest problem at the moment is stories. And it's not scripts. This is another sort of misconception. People say, 'the scripts are bad'. The scripts aren't bad really, there's nothing stupid said. If you've got three solid stories, the script usually holds up. If you've got a bad story, then the script falls down, again it's perception

If there is an area I think we have to concentrate on now, it is stories and that means paying storyliners. People who just come up with stories, I mean, that's ultimately why we're in the business. They wouldn't write the dialogue, because it's a different art. You pay them to go out and think up stories that are going to happen to these characters "

Dermot Horan thinks the answer is for the producers to have more say in the allocation of resources

"I'd like to be able to control my whole budget. To the extent of being able to say 'Ok let's not do that inside. Let's subcontract that outside'. As you would in a commercial company

Then the producers would become more management-orientated. They'd become more disciplined about their budgets. They'd take more responsibility

But then the Administration Block would probably feel that producers aren't accountants and 'we have accountants here and it's safer for us to control as much of

their budget as possible and just let them control the little bits ' It's a big company thing

I think in the long term that's the way it'll go In ten or fifteen years time I don't think it's going to happen as quickly as I thought it would happen a few years ago, but I think more and more stuff will be farmed out "

## SECTION A.6: TAMs

TAMs are the television audience measuring system used in Ireland. The TAM company uses electronic monitors that record what channel the TV is tuned to at a particular time and who is in the room watching it.

Within RTE TAMs have a curious status. It's a public service TV station so they shouldn't matter, according to some. After all, they argue, the object is to serve all the members of the public, not just the majority, and so getting large audiences is not important. But RTE sells advertising, and it sets the rates according to audience size, so the TAMs are important.

Roughly speaking, the producers of mass audience programmes thought the TAMs were more important than did the producers of the specialist programmes. Although there were the exceptions, like John O'Brien, producer of mass audience sports programmes who thought audience size was irrelevant:

"Sometimes it's difficult for us to actually quantify our audience....and I don't think it should necessarily be an important consideration in public service broadcasting, which we basically are. I mean, there are certain things we should be doing and sport is a major part of what we should be doing, particularly Irish sport, which we have been trying to do more and more."

TAMs, for Margaret Gleeson were not the ultimate guage - but they did matter:

"The primary aim of the programmes that I do, and most of the people in here do, is not to get top of the TAMs - unless it's a soap. They (the TAMs) would be important. Well, I mean, you don't want to be broadcasting to nobody.....When the TAM ratings come in I would look at them, I've always looked at them. Because the more people that look at them (the programmes) the better, as far as you're concerned. If a programme is going out at 11 o'clock at night it's going to have less TAMs than a programme that's going out at prime viewing time, naturally enough. But, we're quite pleased now, on "Wednesday Report", that the TAM is now as high as "Today Tonight". It's now 16; and "Today Tonight" which goes out at 9.30 is 15 or 16. We thought the TAM would be lower for a 10 o'clock slot."

Kevin Linehan and Hilary Orpen also thought it depended on the show you were producing:

"I'm not a slave to the TAMs but there are some shows that the TAMs are a good indicator of their success rate, there are other shows that would not be slave to the TAMs. I think we are in the area where the TAMs are very important as an indicator of the success of the show. Y'know, it's not a book programme, it's not a 'Check Up' (health programme), it's not a consumer show that aren't pitched for a mass audience

and have other values the station needs to be able to say, 'and we provide this as part of the public service remit' So the TAMs are important for our show "

Kevin Linehan, ("Secrets")

"It's a business isn't it I mean if we lose our viewers y'know, we're going to be taken off So if you have a commitment to the programme, you want to see it there and you feel it should be there, it's important that you get an audience I know often the best programmes don't get a decent audience, I know that But a consumer programme ought to be a popular programme because it's there for the consumer It's not a specialist programme "

Hilary Orpen, ("Look Here")

Dermot Horan agreed with Orpen that TAMs are an important part of the business of broadcasting and he said they can also be psychologically important

"TAMs are important From a morale point of view they are important Although it depends on which programme you work 'Arts Express' did very badly in the TAMs last year, they came after us and they used to dip down, but I mean they were on at half eight on a Friday and it's peak time quiz shows/popular drama series (time) it's not the arts (time) From an advertising point of view, last year we had no problem Sales used to ring us up, they were delighted, they used to sell all their ads around us RTE, in fact all TV companies have trouble getting at an ABC 1 audience and our programme gets it "

Michael Heney thought that TAMs mattered in terms of internal PR

"They (TAMs) seem to be very important They help to sustain it's funny, it's hard to define the effect of TAMs they definitely are important in the psychology in here If you're in the TAMs, it makes life a lot easier, if you're not, it raises questions "

The allocation of resources in RTE are closely related to TAMs according to several producers One producer gave the example of trying to make his programme more topical

"The ideal solution, of course, would be to have a studio in the evening and transmission in the evening The controllers argue that, there's a limited amount of resources, and a programme with an audience as small as a TAM of 4 can't really compete for those resources with a programme with a TAM of 20 So really we only have what resources are available when other programmes are satisfied "

The Variety producer used a similar Darwinian reasoning

"If the programme wasn't succeeding in that slot, if we were getting a poor rating there would be something wrong with the programme, and if there's something wrong with the programme there's not much satisfaction in doing it. Now that's as against a purely specialised programme where you know you're doing something on 'The Higher Mathematics of Playing the Guitar by Segovia' and you know- you're going to get an audience of 3 in the ratings, and if you get 3 you're really very happy with that because you know you've hit exactly the people you're aiming at

But in this programme you're hitting a very wide audience, at least you're hoping to hit a very wide audience, and if you got a rating of 3 or 4, well then you can forget it because you haven't succeeded in what you set out to do "

And Adrian Moynes said the TAMs justify the investment in a programme like Jo-Maxi

"TAMs are important because our programme is a big investment of resources for RTE. And we would be in the top 20 of Network 2 and we're one of the top home-produced programmes and we know that a million and a half youngsters watch us in the course of a week so you know that from TAM "

Although Michael Heney remarked that this wasn't always the case

"Obviously they're not that important when you look at the audience Cúrsaí has and the amount of resources that it gets. So we're in this kind of twilight area between public service and commercial organisation. There are all kinds of 'funnies' in the system, y'know "

Gay Byrne's opinion was that the TAMs were the best source of audience information available

"Well the TAM ratings to me are the most important (of all audience feedback sources), in that, I have found the TAM ratings down through the 28 years to be remarkably accurate. And as far as we are concerned, nobody ever said that they are 100%, absolutely, totally, categorically foolproof. But they are the nearest guide you have to who is watching what when, and so on and if not why. And they are the same things to us as bums on seats in a theatre or in a concert. And so it's just as well to keep an eye on those "

Kevin Linehan and Niall Mathews also rely on the TAMs and for more than just the overall number of those watching

"The kind of people then, the breakdown that you can get from the TAMs of the age group that are watching is very important as well.....that you are getting the kind of target audience that you set out to get, because it can have an effect on the show. Because when I looked at the early figures for the show, we were getting an awful lot of young people, like 11/12 year olds....

(Q: So you were watching out for sensitive subjects?) Yeah, yeah. Y'know, eight to nine, if there are young kids watching you can't ignore reality so that shapes what you do on the programme."

Kevin Linehan, ("Secrets")

"There are two areas we're not successful in....from the analysis of the figure that comes from TAM...there are two areas that we're not reaching...that's a Dublin audience, funnily enough and a young audience, and we need to know why."

Niall Mathews, ("Fair City")

But neither Ed Mulhall or Cathal Goan are happy with the kind of information they are receiving from the TAMs:

"There aren't spot qualitative tests. I'd be in favour of that sort of thing, I'd like to see more of that. I think if we end up in more head-to-head competition, more direct competition, you would have more qualitative testing."

Ed Mulhall, ("Six-One News")

"(The TAM system) is something I'm not entirely happy with in the way that they sample...because...an interest in Irish is not part of the way they make up the sample.

For instance the TAM will tell you we don't do well in Connacht/Ulster. But in Donegal and Galway, I know a lot of people are watching and I know it on the ground because of the reaction I get when my people are out there filming.

The average audience on a nightly basis is around 120,000. So obviously there's a lot more people than are in the Gaeltacht, because, I'd say there are about 50,000 people who are in the Gaeltacht. The spread as far as I can see through the TAM system....might or might not reflect an Irish-speaking potential audience."

Cathal Goan ("Cúrsaí")

For years the TAM table of Top 10 shows watched on RTE was headed by the "Late Late Show", but during the research period, much to the surprise of many, it was coming in 2nd and 3rd. Gay Byrne explained why:

"The Late Show is still as strong as it ever was in the TAM ratings in the actual points. What's happening is that 'Glenroe' is having a phenomenal run this year. And it didn't have such a good run last year nor the year before and the Late Show was usually

No.1, 2 or 3, almost always No.1. Now the Late Show has stayed at that level of 32,33,34. That kind of level.

And when the new system of TAMs came in, which are more precise than the old system, we actually expected to drop a bit, but in fact we came up, which rather surprised me. So the Late Show has remained on the same level, but 'Glenroe' has leapfrogged above everything and it is superbly scheduled at half eight on a Sunday night.

But you must remember then that you're not comparing like with like in so far as it's easier to maintain a half hour average on TAM ratings than it is to maintain two hours. And if you took any half hour of the Late Show, except the last 15 minutes, you would find that it's as strong as, if not stronger than 'Glenroe' and 'Where in the World'.

The later you go after 11 o'clock, the more they start drifting away from the Late Show, because they've had an hour and forty minutes of it, they may not be interested in the last guest or the last item, they may have had enough, they may be going to bed, they may take their cocoa and go, they may be turning over to BBC 1 or BBC 2 where there's a full-length movie starting then and they'll have it until 1 o'clock in the morning, so in dribs and drabs they're leaving us.

You have a choice of either saying, 'should we get off the air at eleven', in which case nobody could touch us TAM rating-wise, or 'is it worthwhile staying on until half eleven'; and it is. So that's what 's happening at the moment. We're still as strong as ever, but nothing will go near 'Glenroe' at the moment. But they'll get their come uppance and they'll drift back again."



## SECTION A.7: AUDIENCE AND FEEDBACK

### A.7.a: INFORMATION FROM TAMS

Very often, transmitting programmes is like shooting in the dark. You send it out and hope it is seen and has an effect. Producers get some information about their audiences from the TAMS (size, gender, age, social class, location):

"Adults like us, children don't like us. We're quite good with the housekeepers, slightly more popular with women rather than men, not popular with the under 25's."  
Hilary Orpen, "Look Here"

"The audience profile would be much wider than 'Clothes Show' (BBC). The 'Clothes Show' in the UK can afford to get a smaller audience because they'll still get their 7 or 8 million on a Sunday. By our very nature, smaller country, smaller population, Irish programmes tend to attract a wider audience."  
Dermot Horan, "Head to Toe"

"We know that we have very wide audience with the exception of children. Our on-air time is an hour later than the Late Late Show, so therefore we miss a young audience. And we're pretty certain that 10, 12, 13, 14 year-olds are not with us.

Saturday night viewing has been traditionally family viewing but going on the air at 10.30, we get the impression in most homes that the kids have been bunged off to bed. A lot of kids are still there, as we all know, but it's not kids viewing time.

So we know we have an audience ranging from 16 upwards and we also know that Saturday night is a night for going out so we lose the middle group there, the 18-25. They're probably discoing and that sort of thing. But we get a good percentage of them."

Variety Producer

"The quantifying of our audience is difficult because a lot of our audiences are in pubs and clubs and hotels, which are not covered by TAM ratings normally.

We'd a very good illustration of that for the Ireland-Romania match in the World Cup. Where we were getting terrific viewing figures, and RTE specifically commissioned a survey to find out how many people had watched that match. As distinct from what TAM was saying. And it came out at 2.6 million watched it on RTE and another 200,000 watched it on UTV. But 2.6 million out of a total population of 3.4 which was absolutely phenomenal. Granted that was a peak. TAM was showing about 1.6, and we got 2.6."

John O'Brien, (TV Sport)

"I haven't done an analysis of what the main audience is. I know there's a bias towards women, I know there's a bias towards rural. I know there's a bias towards older, older as in over 20's. I know there's a split in the programme at about half past six, when the soaps come on. There's a distinct dip. Although in recent years the second half of the programme has held up better than it did initially."

Ed Mulhall, ("Six-One News")

"The average audience on a nightly basis, around 120,000. So obviously there's a lot more people than are in the Gaeltacht, because I'd say there are about 50,000 people who are in the Gaeltacht. The spread as far as I can see through the TAM system, which is somethin I'm entirely happy with in the way they sample, might or might not reflect an Irish-speaking potential audience, because it's not one of the questions that's in the way they make up the sample.

The best that I can make out is that we do quite well in Two Channel Land and that we do particularly well in Munster. The age profile in different places is different. Obviously we don't get that many young people, but then current affairs programmes don't tend to anyway. It's a difficult one and I think it requires an awful lot more audience research than has actually been done up to now.

The audience has varied to sometimes as low as 65,000 to a quarter of a million. Scheduling is another problem with it as well. For instance if we're up against home-produced programmes, as we are now against Fair City on Tuesday and Friday nights, then we suffer. We tend to do better if we're scheduled against imported programmes.

(Q: And you don't pre-inherit an audience from Coronation Street?)

We're sandwiched between Home and Away, there's no evidence of that in the breakdown. Our audience figures always increase around April. Coming up to the oral exams, the teachers always say, 'go home and watch Cúrsaí now.'"

Cathal Goan, "Cúrsaí"

Peter Feeney ('Marketplace') emphasised that the aim of a programme was not always to garner the largest audience:

"The target audience is very small, but absolutely consistent. That is, the programme hasn't attracted general viewers. It has a consistent TAM of 4, which represents 100,000 people, I suppose. But when you go out to business community, they are all aware of the programme and they are all regular or irregular watchers of it. So I suppose if you judge it not in the sense of the total audience size but in terms of the audience reached it has worked."

## A.7.b: SCHEDULING

Scheduling is important to producers in explaining or anticipating audience behaviour. "Look Here" lost audience after the first few programmes, and Hilary Orpen explained why:

"I know the reasons for that, I am personally disappointed with that. (The reasons are) other programmes coming on screen. When we started off in September, not that many people were watching television. The television audience has gone up and with it has come better and more competitive programmes on other channels.

Also, we follow a very very poor programme called 'Paradise', which, if you follow the TAMs loses a whole whack of the audience, and then we gradually win them back."

Dermot Horan said that "Head to Toe" also suffered from having to follow a weak American show and competing UK soaps:

"The programme was on at 7.30 on a Friday. I wanted to get that changed, but couldn't. It affected us badly last year because...actually it went out at 7.55 last year, 7.30 the first year.

Coronation Street started running three times a week, and they decided to go Friday as well, and they went out on Network 2 at 7.30, and it finished about 7.58, our programme would just be starting then. And Ken and Deirdre might be having the most amazing row on Network 2 and we were on RTE 1 - which was bad news.

The first series benefitted quite well because at 7.30 on a Friday it came directly after 'Play the Game', which was a strong home audience. Last year was bad because 'Play the Game' still happened but then they went to this awful 'Head of the Class' which was an American sitcom about bright kids in a New York school.

It's not a bad American sitcom but it doesn't pull the viewers. And so you'd see the TAM ratings high for 'Play the Game'. And they'd all swop to Coronation Street, which is the highest rated show on Network 2, so we'd no inheritance value.

So I'm much happier this year working against Eastenders, which is a pain in the ass at 7.30, but we're still getting about 50,000 viewers more than last year. Plus we're getting another 150,000 viewers on a Sunday afternoon. We've got a repeat slot which we devised, between (the scheduler's office) and myself at 1.30 on a Sunday. Going out after the 'Beat Box'.

And it's a good slot because a lot of people are reading the papers. The Beat Box is on like the radio, so it's a bit of background and Head to Toe comes on. So I know a lot of people now who won't watch it on Tuesday, or they watch Eastenders on a Tuesday and then they watch us."

Gerry Stembridge thought that the slot and channel chosen for "The Truth About Clare" would actually help boost the audience:

"One of the problems with the drama is that it's slightly experimental and I wouldn't have thought that the general Glenroe audience would stay with it. But everybody I told about it thinks it will and Bob Collins (Director of Television), thinks it will and he plans to put it out on (RTE) One and not Network 2, for example.

He's also agreed to put it out two nights in a row, which is nice. It's very necessary to keep everything in close proximity so that you remember all that takes place. A mini-series type thing, so hopefully we can generate enough hype for an audience to watch."

#### A.7.c: LETTERS, PHONE CALLS

TAMs were only one source of information about the audience used by the producers. The Variety Producer gave a typical range of sources which he relied upon to get a picture of the audience for his programme:

"We have this information from audience research and we also have a pattern of phone calls, letters and a pattern of general feedback through research and through other members of the team speaking to other people. And it all seems to point to the same direction. So we're not just relying on one particular figure. We get it from various areas and the patterns seem to coincide."

But these sources were not equally useful for all producers, on "The Nature of Things", Frank Hand said, letters were a poor indicator:

"(We don't have) so many now as for 'Zero' (science programme). Because on 'Zero' there were gismos which people were interested in finding out about.

So it's less of that now, and more just comments on the programme. 'We enjoyed the programme. We thought it was great.' But far fewer letters, but far higher audiences; it's a bit bizarre. The audience is about twice as high as it was (for Zero) but the number of letters coming in is about a fifth what we would have got for Zero. But then we would have had 5 items on Zero every week and only one story on this. You'd be talking about 5 letters every week."

And Gerry Stembridge paid little heed to telephone reaction:



"Phone calls I really don't count as reaction. Because very often the kind of people who bother to ring up are the kind of people who sit at the television in order to find something to complain about anyway.

Or else, it's often an organised reaction. Sometimes, political groupings, sometimes religious groupings or whatever. And one of the things that's interesting was that when 'Nothing To It' (young people's comedy) was on we got hardly any reaction on a week to week basis. Occasional phone call here and there.

And we were doing more radical stuff on that than, for example, Davis At Large was doing at the same time. And yet Davis At Large was getting heaps of phone calls every week, because Davis At Large was on Sunday night at half nine, and the kind of audience that was sitting in were sitting in ready and waiting to complain about anything that resembled an insult. Whereas half six on a Monday evening, those people just would not be watching the programme."

#### A.7.d: NEWSPAPER REVIEWS

Kevin Linehan or the Variety Producer don't rate newspaper reviews very highly:

"I always said from Day 1 that the critics would absolutely hate the show. It's the same in England. A friend of mine produces 'Blind Date'. They never got a good review, and yet there's a massive audience."

Kevin Lenihan, "Secrets"

"(Newspaper reviews) are another source of information. They're reflecting a public attitude to the programme. But they're only another source; they're not the be all and the end all. I would pay more attention to the phone calls list (sent around by the Information office, who take reaction, especially complaints, over the phone.) than I would to the critics in the newspapers. But the critics in the newspapers are important.

I think if you got a succession of very bad crits. then you would have to take some notice of it. And if you got a succession of very good notices, you take some notice of that too. But again you have to say, 'well that person writing that is one person and it's an individual'.

In most cases the individual writing is not a student of the business, probably. It's probably, as somebody said, 'the person who does the crits for the television column is the one standing nearest the editor when he was looking for somebody.' And that in fact is the case, mainly, the people are not generally qualified."

Variety Producer

Hilary Orpen ("Look Here") thought they were important, but really only in terms of publicity:

"More than a positive review is the idea that a bit of publicity spreads the word about a new programme. And new programmes take a while to get established, so we're glad of any publicity we can get - preferably positive."

In Michael Heney's case, newspaper reviews matter; but not to him:

"In general, they're really sickening, they're dreadful. I got a Jacobs Award this year, and that's given by the radio and television critics of the national newspapers. They're not good judges of programmes.

(Q: Does their judgement matter in here?)

Yes it does, because it's published comment. It's crazy but it does. And those awards are quite important, and I've deriding them for years, but when you get it well, it's very high visibility. But it's ridiculous, I don't rate them as judges of achievement and real ability. And the people who deserve to be awarded, are just not rated.

(Q: Did you snigger when you got the award this year?)

I was delighted. But I had to say to everybody who asked me, 'Look I've been deriding these awards for the last 18 years since I joined this organisation, I can't turn around now and say something different.'

Frank Hand felt the same way about newspaper reviews, but for reasons of internal publicity, he actually sought out reviewers:

"At the end of the day I don't worry too much about reviews, I'm much more interested what the audience are saying to me than what a newspaper reviewer would be saying. But at the same time, in here, I think a good review actually counts for something among the management.

And therefore we have been attempting to encourage the TV columnists to watch the programme and to review the programme. We call them up and say, 'There's a programme on X. We think you might be interested. It's one of our better efforts.' And then they say, 'well, Thursday is too late, we have to have our copy in by Wednesday.'

So we say, 'o.k. we'll send you in a preview copy of the programme'. Which we've done and it hasn't really worked.

We've got one review in the Times. But the reviews in the Times are not really reviews either, they're descriptions of what the programme was about and what the reviewer thinks of the topic that the programme has discussed. Not the way it was treated in the programme.

(Q: And who is the reviewer to be most sought after?)

Well, I suppose a review in the Times or the Tribune would be the ones that would carry most weight."

#### A.7.e: MEETING THE AUDIENCE

Another clue to audience reaction to a programme is when members of the production team encounter members of the audience. Dermot Horan ("Head to Toe") and Cathal Goan ("Cúrsaí") took note of the reception their presenters got when they met the public:

"Brid Og (Ni Bhuachalla) was down in Cork last weekend doing something and enormous personal feedback. She went into a school and everybody recognised her. That sort of thing is important. They knew who she was, autographs and all that sort of stuff. That's good for her as well."

Cathal Goan

"This year 'Scratch Saturday' (Saturday morning young peoples' show) eventually asked Pat to be their mystery guest. And they asked him because for three weeks on the trot people kept ringing up saying, 'Are you Pat O'Mahony? Are you on 'Head to Toe'?' And they eventually said, 'Ah well we'll have to bring you in Pat'. And he did an interview.

And somebody else said they were in on Saturday doing some editing and all these kids were asking for his autograph. And whenever kids are in RTE they make a bee-line for Pat. They don't ask for Barbara's autograph, and sometimes, the girls, who are perhaps better mannered say, 'Oh can I've yours too?'

During the summer we did quite a bit of filming to get ahead and we were walking around the streets and the kids were off school and they'd make a bee-line for Pat and ask for his autograph."

Dermot Horan

Adrian Moynes recounted similar experiences to explain why he thought "Jo-Maxi" was successful in reaching its audience:

"When you go out filming, when you're on the road. You're meeting the audience to a greater or lesser degree, and the feeling about it was good.

The recognition factor is important. The presenters tell you about being recognised when they go out, social occasions or whatever. You phone up a school, looking for contributors or following a line and you get an instant recognition of the programme.

It's just that. It seems to have a place in people's consciousness."

#### A.7.f: AUDIENCE AGE

The Variety Producer knew that his audience were older than the average TV audience. But he believed that they didn't turn on to see items for older people:

"I think that's a myth to think that old people want old items broadcast at them or young people want young items. I think people are interested generally and particularly while younger people may tend towards having younger-type items, older people like to see what the younger people are doing, more so than the younger people want to see what the older people are doing.

So, while we know we have a middle-age to older age group, by presenting some of the younger items we know they're interested in that too."

Adrian Moynes, working on a young people's programme, did have to take account of the age of the audience:

"Well, you've got to be careful about films you review or the videos that you might mention as being 'now on general release'. Y'see a lot of stuff that's 15-plus in this country, might be for 12 year-olds in Britain, and vice versa. According to how the censor rates them. And I think you just have to use your cop-on about that. I mean I'm not into promoting 'Driller Killers' or 'Porky's' or that kind of crap. I wouldn't go down that road.

But I think there are things for 15-plusses which are serious movies and I would talk about them and we would do something about them."

#### A.7.g: AUDIENCE USE OF TV

Other questions about an audience a producer wants answered include, "Why do they watch?" "What do they do with the information we give them?" "What do they think of it?" Michael Garvey summarised his own opinions:

"Audiences are like ourselves. Although RTE has got the reputation of being left-wing and advanced thinking and all that, it is essentially ruthlessly middle-class. I don't think I have ever met a radical in here. I have met a lot of people performing radicalism but I have never met a radical in my life in here.



The audience wants to see itself, it wants news of itself, it wants confirmations of itself, but it leads a rich full life and broadcasting is only a supplement to its existence. It requires confirmation the propriety of its existence.

It would also like us, at least I would, as an audience, to extend my horizon, provide me with not just gossip or information or even with, what might be described as my eccentric personality but some method of making the horizons inside which my life must exist, broader.

Broadcasting is a bit like water. The audience use it as well as the people who provide it. It can be used for washing, it can be used for cooking, it can be used for nourishment, and their use of it requires that those providing that material for use be as broad in ambition as is humanly possible.

The audiences have got huge responsibilities, and you can't substitute for them or take from them. Audiences should be their own judges, they should be the makers of the programmes. They should be as important in the thinking about the programmes and the seeing of the programmes as the people who generate them."

Adrian Moynes believed there were several reasons why the audience watched "Jo-Maxi":

"I think they watch because of its mix, its pace its variety. I mean I think there are things wrong with the show. I have editorial concerns about it which centre on the fact that I actually think it's serving two quite distinct audiences: a very young audience and an older audience. And if the organisation had more resources, and this were being done from London, there would be two shows covering the kind of waterfront that 'Jo-Maxi' covers.

That having been said, I think the kids watch it because it's got music, good features, a pace, a variety, a range of features. And because it doesn't get boring, it licks along there. And comes at them from different angles.

Even as I say this I feel that it sounds very smug, but I do say it with a consciousness that there are a lot of things in it that I would like to do differently, have more time to do. Elements that I would like to include in the programme. Days when I feel, 'oh God, this is very thin.' Days when I think 'that was a good show.'

I think when it's good, it's very good. And I think it gives the kids a fairly square deal all round."

Gay Byrne said he thought the audience watched the "Late Late Show" for similar reasons:

"I think part of the reason is because it's been there for 28 years. Part of the reason is they don't know what to expect from it, and sometimes it's trivial and light and banal and there's a few laughs. And sometimes it's serious and heavy and sometimes it's made up of well-known people, sometimes unknown people, who very often, down through the years have proved at least as popular, if not better than the very well-known people.

One person described it as 'the town hall of the air'. And another woman wrote to us and said that she looked at it because she has four small kids and having dealt with four small kids all the bloody week, day in day out.

She got them to bed at nine o'clock on a Friday night and she settled down with a drink and a fag and she realised that, at least for the next two hours I'm going to listen to adult conversation as distinct from kids conversation. And it doesn't matter to me much who's on or what it is.

There's usually somebody interesting on or somebody glamorous, or somebody different. At least they are adult people talking about adult things. Sometimes in a childish way, but nevertheless they are adults, and that's what she looked forward to. And I'd settle for that."

Michael Heney admitted he knew very little about the audience his programme was reaching but he was quite clear on what he hoped they would do with the information he was giving them:

"Something like last Wednesday's (Joe Byrne - former mental hospital patient telling his own story) that they'd take a little bit of heart from it, a little bit of courage from it.

The Dunnes story again. There was a family outrageously treated by a hospital and by their consultant and by the consultants in the hospital. A situation that an awful lot of people find themselves in. And terribly intimidated by it. Because when you turn your back on your doctor you have nobody else to turn to and other doctors tend not to be available.

So, by showing that somebody can stand up and say 'no' against the most ferocious of odds, to fight on and to win, is an example to others. So I hope that that kind of programme does provide an example to others.

Another good example, from my own work would have come in the programme I did on Sean Doherty in 1982. The Roscommon File: The central figure in that was a sergeant in the town of Boyle. The programme was about Sean Doherty's manipulation of the Guards. His interference with the force of law.

The hero of the piece was a sergeant who was virtually unknown, but who simply was not prepared to bow to the will of the Strong Man, the Minister living locally, 5

miles out the road. And he told them to 'fuck off', basically. And he would take the consequences, and of course the consequences were threats and indeed transfers through the Garda Commissioner, who the Minister organised to transfer this Guard.

And he beat it. He took them all on and beat them. So the job was done by the time we came in, so we didn't play an active part.

All that the programme did was that it said, 'Here is Tom Tully. He wasn't prepared to take improper influence and pressure from the top. In a very lonely situation, he stood up against it.'

Implicitly one is saying to the audience. You can do the same. And I think this country is greatly in need of people like that in lonely positions who stand out for proper standards. That the community at large see that these people exist and that they can win, and by that means, perhaps, our standard of morality in public life and affairs can be strengthened. So I do kind of have that agenda in my mind."

Margaret Gleeson said it wasn't really possible to think of an audience in terms of a mass of people and then try to cater for all of them, so she thought in terms of an audience of one.

"I would try to make a programme that I would watch. I think all producers are paid for their own individuality and they all make different types of programmes. You're paid for judgement really. I find it difficult to talk about a million people watching, because if you try to make it for a million, they're all different themselves."

#### A.7.h: QUALITATIVE TESTING

Whatever the impact a producer wants to achieve it is rarely possible to verify it. RTE had no qualitative audience testing as existed in the BBC, who had audience appreciation panels to give regular feedback about programmes. Because of this producers relied on, what Adrian Moynes called, 'feel' to assess aspects of production. For example, from Adrian Moyne's explanation of why he thought "Jo-Maxi" worked as a programme:

"I'd worked on it for a year as a producer and that gives you a certain perspective and feel for it I think.

Just as a result of experience, I think you know when a particular programme 'vehicle' has got four wheels and is able to ride the road. And it seemed to me, 'Jo-Maxi' was such a vehicle.

It sounds arrogant to say you have a 'feel' about it, but you do have a 'feel' about it. I'm not averse to analysing things but I wouldn't go too far down that road.

(I worked on) 'Face of the Earth' and there was a time it was working and there was a time it was not working. And how it got right was because of a number of hard-headed decisions. But also because of a number of pieces of learning that we all achieved.

We found out how to do an environment story on television, which was something we had to find out when we started and then we made mistakes until we got it rightish."

Ed Mulhall's programme, "Six-One News" had a complete change of image during the research period, and he had to use similarly unscientific methods to decide whether the changes worked or not:

"What was there before didn't have a visual logic to it. What we have now has more of a visual logic to before. So in that sense, working or not, is just a question of perception yourselves. You're not talking about something that's going to give you a higher audience or going to make it a better programme, per se. You're talking about something you're 'happier' with in one way.

You can judge anything on objective material. Now the only objective material you have is audience figures and stuff like that. There aren't spot qualitative tests. I'd be in favour of that sort of thing, I'd like to see more of that. I think if we end up in head-to-head competition you would have to have more qualitative tests.

The criteria that you then are applying (in the absence of qualitative tests) are sort of professional criteria. Whether it makes, what you consider to be, good television. And the perception is that the visual logic has improved. I would consider that an objective professional assessment."

The Variety producer was also considering changing the 'look' of his programme, but he would not consider audience testing the new image:

"I've found over the years that audiences aren't very articulate when it comes to assessments like that. They either say they like something or they don't like something. Or they like 'yer man' or they don't like 'yer man' or 'yer woman'. They don't actually get into the territory of analysis. Therefore their criticisms could be misleading.

If they say they don't like the set. It may be that the lighting wasn't right or it was too hard, or they couldn't see it because of some artistic decision. It mightn't be the set at all.

They're not quite sure what you mean by set. You can't really ask questions of an audience about something that's as artistic as a set. It's a general impression that they get."

Dermot Horan was also somewhat dismissive of audience testing:

"They did audience research after the first series. I read through it and I actually felt that it didn't serve a huge purpose. Now this may sound terribly patronising, but I don't actually think that the viewer out there understands the making of television."

Gay Byrne also went down the audience testing road. The "Late Late Show" assembled an audience appreciation panel and found that it didn't work:

"We brought them up to the Montrose and we put them in at two o'clock and we bought them booze and we bought them sandwiches and we sat them down. We tried to make sure they were people not in this business at all, just ordinary viewers, if you can ever find an ordinary viewer.

And we said 'tell us about the Late Late Show, tell us what you think we should be doing'. So they batted the breeze and so on. And when you finally loosened them up and settled them down and when you said, 'right, what do you think we should be doing next week on the Late Late Show?'

What you came up with were the ideas they had just seen on BBC or ITV or they'd heard from John Bowman or they'd heard on Morning Ireland or indeed they'd seen on the Late Late Show five weeks ago.

And outside of professional people there is very little originality. By which that television viewers don't know what they want until they see it. And it's our job to show it to them first and then they'll decide if they want it or not.

But going out to ordinary people saying, 'what do you want to see?' is a pointless exercise. Because they've no idea, apart from what they've just seen somewhere else, and they just sell you secondhand ideas."



## SECTION A.8: IDEAS AND DECISIONS

The raw material for TV is the idea, ideas for series, programmes, items, interviewees, presenters, the whole lot. The purpose of this section was to find out what route ideas took before they got on air and what sort of decisions are made about them along the way.

Decision-making is an interesting process in television. In theory producers are more important than researchers and Series Producers hold more sway than producers. In practice everyone's opinion in the office and among the crew is usually listened to; because they are viewers, and in a medium where your knowledge of the audience is limited, any clues about their taste and preference are welcome.

Dermot Horan described what used to happen in the "Head to Toe" office:

"We had a number of brainstorming meetings before the series began and we wrote down literally hundreds of ideas, some of which we develop further. Basically we discuss them on a Monday and plan ahead.

(Q: Do you have to exercise the final word.?)

Occasionally you have to. Because you're not dealing with hard fact here. A lot of the time you're dealing with something quite subjective. Is something esoteric more interesting than something from Penney's?"

"Look Here" operated in much the same fashion:

"Like every programme we've a weekly meeting on a Monday morning, and we look back and we look forward. And we look at how things are going. 'Have we had a lot of this or a lot of that? What do we really need?' If there's a good strong investigative story it gets precedence."

Hilary Orpen

Producer, Margaret Gleeson, described her relationship with her Series Producer, Mary Raftery:

"She would have overall decision-making. If she said, 'no, you're definitely not doing that. well....' I don't know if she would ever come out as strongly as that. We had a meeting in the beginning. I would be down to do one (documentary) a month.

For instance, she mentioned to me about doing one on transport. Now, I said, 'I can't do that one. It just doesn't appeal to me. I'm sure it's very necessary to a programme on transport. But transport? I can't do anything on buses. I just can't get into it. Maybe somebody else would.' (laughs) And she said, 'That's fine, somebody else would, or she would do it herself'.

I think because you spend so much of intensive work on it, it has to click with the producer as well. She's right, because you'll do a better job if you're interested in it."

In TV sport, the decisions about what sports to cover are based on each sport's popularity. Which is why, for example, according to John O'Brien, soccer receives less coverage than GAA:

"Because, while it's a major popular sport, it isn't in terms of the numbers of people who go to matches at weekends. It doesn't rate beside the GAA at all. Where you get crowds of thousands going to GAA matches, you only get hundreds on average at soccer matches.

The next most popular is probably rugby and up to a few years ago we only two or three rugby matches a year. But with the growing popularity of that sport, and with Ireland having won a couple of Triple Crowns in the 80's and a few Championships, the demand for the coverage of rugby has increased.

(Q: How do you gauge the demand? Do people come back from matches and say, 'there was a big crowd there.')

Yeah. A certain amount comes from that. There's no one thing. But there's that and there's increased coverage in the other media. Like the papers start expanding their coverage. A good example of that is soccer. Four or five years ago soccer was mickey mouse, now since the blossoming of the Irish team, the whole soccer hype has started and we have to reflect that."

The ideas for a new series come from both producers and Programme Controllers. With Kevin Linehan, Peter Feeney and Gerry Stemberge, it was a case of being offered resources and time and coming up with ways of using them:

#### **Kevin Linehan ('Secrets' & 'Winning Streak'):**

"The only brief I got for 'Secrets' was that they wanted a new entertainment show for Saturday night between 8 and 9.

(Q: Did they say they want Gerry on it?)

No. I went back to David Blake-Knox (Head of Variety) then and I said, 'I know the kind of things that you don't want straight away. 'You don't want another chat show, and you don't want another all-music show. And you don't want another quiz show. There's enough of all of that in the schedule already.'

Just looking around at what's happening on BBC and ITV at that time on a Saturday night. It's all your 'Beadle's About' and your 'Blind Date' and your 'Noel Edmonds' Roadshow'.

The TAMs certainly indicate that there's a strong audience in Ireland for that kind of show. I talked to people from 'Blind Date' and they get loads of stuff from here. And I talked to people from Sky's Secret Video Show and they get stuff from Ireland.

So I thought to do a mass entertainment show. Where the public would be the stars. And that was the big thing. I mean the Irish public have no great record wanting to take part in any of these things. You're running a big risk.

I put some ads in some of the provincial papers. Did some spots for community radios and local radios. This was way back in last April. I can't say the letters poured in. There was enough letters to say, there's the basis of something.

If they're watching this stuff, and there's indications from across the water that they're getting feedback from the people in Ireland, well there must be a strong indication that we would get them."

### **Peter Feeney ('Marketplace')**

"The background to 'Marketplace' is that I moved into Current Affairs from Features in 1986. It was a time that Eugene Murray took over as Head of Current Affairs, and Joe Mulholland took over as Controller of Programmes.

They decided they wanted some new Current Affairs programmes, so they designed 'Questions and Answers' for Olivia (O'Leary). Olivia was the starting-point in that. Olivia was first and then design a programme around her. Then they designed 'Hanly's People'. And again it was David Hanly first and then a programme around him.

Then there was a third slot available, which had been 'Sunday Review', which John O'Donoghue had done and briefly Justin Keating had done, which had been going for about 4 years. And I had been involved with that when it was in Features, and started that. And that slot was still there. And they asked me to devise a programme to put into that slot.

So for one year, 86/87, we did a programme with John Bowman called 'Public Record' which was basically looking at what was going on in the papers each week. And I also did a programme with John O'Donoghue, the title of which I've forgotten now (laughs), which was bring in semi-state Chief Executives and quizzing them with a small panel.

Both of those were terribly, absolutely minute, low-budget programmes. And after one year, I argued that what we should do was we should expand that slot and get some more resources.



RTE had been talking about doing a business programme. And I said, 'let's do a business programme'. And Eugene Murray and Joe Mulholland said 'yes'.

So we devised a business programme and our studio was on Saturday and we were able to transmit on Sunday, and we got a director appointed to it, designed a set and opening animation, etc.

And initially we were kind of tentative and wondering if there is actually an audience and enough material for a business programme and see could we have the people to handle it?

We did two years recording on Saturday transmission on Sunday. And then last year we moved midweek because I felt there was much more business stories midweek."

### **Gerry Stembridge ('The Truth About Clare'):**

"I left here because I got fed up and there didn't seem to be anything else. And Bob Collins (Head of TV) contacted me and asked me, 'Look we are interested, and if we can get the money, do you have any ideas?'

And I told him that I was interested in something that was more a socio-political drama and to push that a little further and that I wanted to make it more serious and may lessen the experimental aspect of it which had been a feature of the kind of stuff I was doing. Although it is experimental.

So he said, 'fine'. And I sent him, literally on one page, the idea for the series that I had in mind. And part of the idea was to get a group of actors together to work with them for a week. Improvising and developing characters, which is the way I always work. I cast my stuff first and then write it for that cast. But they develop characters.

But he agreed. He put up that initial money, just a couple of thousand quid to pay these actors for a week's work. So we did that. Based on that I wrote the first hour of what became a two and a half hour drama. Based on the first hour, he gave me the go-ahead. And then when I finished the other hour and a half I sent it into him, but in fact, I know he didn't receive it until a week before shooting began, so there was very little he could do to stop it.

In fact in the entire series and at the final editing stage, Bob asked for one change. I agreed with him, it was just something I hadn't thought about, possible libel implications in the shot, and it was very easy to change. Apart from that, fingers crossed, it hasn't gone out on the air yet, there's been no interference, nobody visited the set.

It might only be that they don't give a damn and they just say, 'let him off and do it.' And it is true to a certain degree that they are so glad to get drama done so

economically that they let it go. It may also be said, when it costs less, they care less."

### **"Six-One News"**

When the image of the "Six-One News" was changed, Ed Mulhall, editor of the programme didn't have the same sort of involvement. In fact, he had no involvement at all:

"The decisions in terms of the changes of presenters were made by the Director of News. As was the design changes. The 'Six-One' has been trying to get a series of two-shots and a better interrelationship between the presenters since it came on air.

In line with the changes, the set was designed to allow that. So they could hand over to the sport and biz people. Studio 3 has automatic cameras, so the desk had to be designed so the two presenters could be closer together. The old desk didn't allow that because the old desk was built for the old style 9 o'clock.

The design of the set for the Six more or less determined the set design (for all news programmes)"

### **1990 World Cup**

The 1990 World Cup was one of the most important events John O'Brien and the station ever covered. Deciding what matches were to be carried was relatively straightforward:

"The major decisions were easy to take. The schedule itself I submitted to the programme planners, well over a year ago. Saying, 'this is the number of matches we can do live.' And when we do a major thing like that we try to take as much value out of it as possible. There were 52 matches in the World Cup, we were able to take 46 live. They're coming anyway. Once you buy into the event, you get all the matches. Once you pay the full whack. So from RTE's point of view, for value for money, you show as many as you can.

There are other considerations like the availability of links from Italy and the availability of your own commentators. The machine time that's available here, studio time, airtime. So having submitted the maximum, that was accepted by the planners here. We got access to the airwaves for 46 matches, plus programme time on either side for previews and so on.

Longer previews were asked for by us for the days Ireland were playing and so on. And we got everything we wanted.

(Q: As the hype developed and the team progressed was it easier to get extra facilities?)

The facilities we set up before the thing, sufficed through the whole thing. That was budgetted for. We knew Ireland were playing three matches, with a possibility of four, with an outside chance of a fifth. "

## **"Late Late Show"**

Gay Byrne described where the ideas for the "Late Late Show" come from and how they decide on their value. As the programme is a talkshow, usually the ideas are for guests:

"A book. We are plied with books at the rate of a thousand a day it seems like. And obviously publishers and PR people are anxious to get their authors on a thing like the Late Late Show.

First of all we have a look at the book. But I'm not interested in the book, 'tell me about the guy who wrote it, or the woman who wrote it. Tell me what she's like.'

I keep on saying to my people in the Late Late Show, 'what do I end up with? don't tell me how wonderful this person is, or what awards they've won or what their achievements are. what do I end up with beside me at that desk on a Friday night. Tell me what I get.' And very often at that test the guest falls down.

Because very often you end up with, 'well right enough, he is very shy and retiring, he's done all those wonderful things, but he is very shy and retiring.' BANG. Don't want to know. 'Or he is deaf. Or he is very old.' BANG. Don't want to know.

I want to know what I end up with. I don't give a damn how worthwhile the person is, it is a talk show, and as far as I'm concerned if people can't talk they've no right to be on.

And the awful thing is people get a jaundiced idea of the sort of people we're talking about from newspaper articles. But what they forget is a newspaper journalist can sit for four or five hours over a cup of tea with you and winkle and winkle out information. Then the journalist goes back and types that all up. And what you're getting is you, distilled through the craft and artistry of the journalist. And a good journalist can make you a wonderfully interesting person, and can put in quotes things, that maybe you did say in three or four hours, but it's all telescoped into 2,000 words.

And reading that you think, 'this would be a wonderful guest for the Late Late Show.' And then we go and see you and we realise that you don't talk like that at all. That you're possibly incoherent, or you're possibly monosyllabic.

So the first route through which guests come is books. That's the simplest way. And you check out the book. By and large I find it pointless talking about fiction, because nobody's read it. But if you get a book by a guy about crossing the Sahara on a camel, there may be something in that. Now if he's good at storytelling, then you have a guest.

The second route is, I suppose, people ring us from hotels and say, 'do you know, there's a well-known person here, actor, actress.' And we check that out and we find out if we want them. Thirdly we just get tip-offs, 'so and so is in town.' Or fourthly people write to us about people or ring us and say, 'My uncle Fred is....'

So they're the different routes of ideas. I always prefer, however, when researchers, or myself or Maura (Connolly - Personal Assistant) come up with an idea and say, 'why don't we do an item about so-and-so. And I can only think of one person who would be good on that but maybe we could go out and find a few others.'

Again, the idea of the widowers. 'Why don't we talk to two widowers.' We started with three but the two we had were so good that we didn't need a third. And that was a sort of a home-manufactured notion. That comes all too seldom as far as I'm concerned. Because books tend to be easy, because people who have written books, non-fiction books, tend to be better to talk to. Because at least they've written a book and in writing the book they've formulated their opinions. If they can then articulate them it is an easier commodity to handle."

Programme ideas often begin life as completely different original ideas. Michael Heney gives an example:

"We were trying to do a programme about how people were being dumped out onto the streets from the psychiatric hospitals, which was the impression that we had. That was the story. And Brenda went around and met a load of doctors and patients and there was absolutely zilch, nothing.

The patients were incapable of appearing on screen, or else didn't want to appear on screen. Very unusual for somebody to do that, y'know to say, 'I was a psychiatric patient' and be able to talk about it. And we couldn't find the story, and we couldn't find the scandal that we thought was there.

And in the middle of all her research, and she spent several weeks on it, there was only just this one guy in Wexford, Joe Byrne. She said, 'he's good and he seems prepared to talk'. But she had no idea that it would be turned into a complete programme.

Ok when I met him I knew that he had that stuff about him. But if we hadn't had him we would have had nothing. We wouldn't have had a programme, just a complete mess. And I think it's fair to say some of our programmes haven't been great in this series."

Frank Hand described how ideas are chosen to fit a certain impression the programme is trying to create. He was referring to a programme about metal detector owners being in dispute with the National Museum:



"I was looking for a story that was a little bit controversial because most of our earlier stories had been, well, apart from the badger (and TB controversy) story, had been mostly descriptive.

So I thought it was time. Just to run the changes through the programme. And I thought it was time for another story of that sort, and John came up with this one. It sounded fascinating."

The Variety Producer described one of the commonest sources of ideas; ordinary social exchange:

"I was playing poker with a number of people one night and some of them happened to be doctors. I think I said, 'how are the doctors making their money these days?' One of them said, 'Listen, if I had a cure for impotence I'd make a fortune.'

So I immediately twigged onto that and I said, 'Why?' And he said, 'It's amazing how many people are coming into the surgery with this problem and there doesn't seem to be a cure.'

And the other doctor said, 'Well, there is an operation.' And the other fella said, 'It's not here.' And he said, 'Yes, I think it is here'.

We did discuss that here, and we said, 'we'll do an item on impotence'. We said we'll do it sometime in April, and this was around Christmastime. So we flagged immediately we were going to do it, and I sent a note onto David Blake-Knox (Head of Variety) and said, 'I think we're going to do this, and this is the date.'

Because I thought that it was an item worth doing and there would be a certain amount of benefit to people in it. Because the doctor said the amount going to his consulting rooms were so many. So I said, 'there must be a lot of people out there with this problem. Or the problem will affect them sometime in their lives.'

So then Channel 4 came along with their programme called, 'One in Ten', which I viewed. And then I thought, 'now, this is perfect because we can use sections of this programme to illustrate what we're talking about.'

We could have taken the camera unit down to Beaumont Hospital to film one of the operations, but here it was handed to us, if you like (on the Channel 4 programme). And access and availability were alright, so then we went along and did it. So that was how that programme arose.

We wouldn't have done the programme if we hadn't got the two people to interview (doctor and psychologist) as good as we reckoned they were. We also contacted a medical agency in London who provide information on the operation.

And they were coming to Dublin as it happened. I found out through an ad in the Guardian.

We contacted them, but we found in that case that it was much more a moneymaking operation, like cosmetic surgery and we didn't want to approach it from that angle. We approached it then from purely a medical situation. Then we brought the implements on. (Prostheses).

And we also knew that everything about that item was fraught with difficulty, because there was just general expressions that if you used in the course of the interview, they would be open to misunderstanding and cause laughter.

For instance, we had a meeting and I said, 'now lets get one thing straight'. And of course that's the whole object of having this operation. So any expression that you use could be misinterpreted, and the presenter had to be careful not to tread too softly on the eggs. Just that any expression that he might use might be open to misinterpretation that he might be getting cheap laughs out of it. And I thought that he handled it superbly. I would have been nervous about that item with a lesser person."

Gerry Stembridge ('The Truth About Clare') believed that you had to take ideas from wherever you could get them:

"I'm not a believer in the originality of ideas - in fact, I've stolen various bits and pieces. There was a drama on several years ago, in mock documentary style, some of the things in that sparked off ideas.

There's another little film called 'A Splice of Life', a 20-minute drama about an editor editing his own life. That gave me some ideas about being able to illustrate to an audience as part of this drama, how in fact documentaries get made. And what are in fact the governing factors.

I don't think anything I do in terms of production values is all that inventive or brilliant."

Kevin Linehan ('Secrets') had more or less the same idea when he thought about setting up 'Secrets':

"I didn't want to do a carbon copy of all these other shows (on British TV on Saturday evening.) So I said, 'there's nothing new in television, it's always just the way you do it.' And the punters don't care.

All they want to know is that at the end of the day, were they entertained, or not? They don't worry about, 'oh, that's something like they did on Blind Date. Or that's like something they do on the Noel Edmond's Roadshow.' Because they're all

copies of copies anyway and they all started in America in the 50's. So my view is that it either entertains them or it doesn't. If it does they don't care. If it doesn't they start saying, 'ah that's a cheap version.'

So deciding that we take various bits and pieces and that we would be a bit creative ourselves and we would add our own element, to make it very different."

## SECTION A.9: TV 3

During the research period, the Irish government awarded the franchise for a commercial television channel to a consortium which announced the channel would be called TV3. There was a certain amount of anxiety about the prospect of the new competition at the time in RTE, but Cathal Goan and Margaret Gleeson were positive about the prospect of competition:

Cathal Goan ('Cúrsaí'):

"I would hope that (the arrival of TV3) would lead to some sort of realistic appraisal of how we do things. Because I would say that at a number of levels, perhaps most senior people in television traditionally in this organisation, haven't understood the actual programme-making process to the degree that I would like them to.

If there's opposition to us it might make them look more closely at the way we do things. I would also imagine that it would improve the lot of the workers quite considerably. I think that perhaps they might get more respect for what they're doing than they do.

One thing that's going to happen is that they will head-hunt. And people will say, 'why did that person leave? Wasn't he been treated well enough here. Wasn't he getting his way in his programmes."

Margaret Gleeson ('Wednesday Report')

"I'm looking forward to TV3. I think it's very good to have competition. I wish they would just get started. I'm sure they'll make some good TV programmes and some awful ones. Making a really good television programme is a very difficult thing to do. Making a bad one is much easier."

Michael Heney, however, was not looking forward to the arrival of the new station:

"(TV3) would probably make things a bit worse. Because it increases the competition at the lower end of the market. I don't think the battle is going to be fought at the higher end of the market. It might do some good in news. I can see the news operation might be improved. But it really just weakens RTE and takes away resources.

They will not do the kind of expensive information programming which was done in this organisation in Today Tonight. I think that is very highly regarded by the public."

Michael Heney ('Wednesday Report')



And neither Michael Garvey nor Adrian Moynes think that TV3 is actually feasible. Garvey felt it was not necessary and Moynes didn't regard it as a threat:

Michael Garvey (Religious Programmes):

"I don't think it's going to arrive. It seems to me that shortly after we got the second network that the nation wasn't up to the amount of television that was being wished on it.

I've only got six channels and I find that I'm exhausted making the choice between them. The idea of having more, particularly as the more I've seen written down on paper are more of the same.

I remember once being in New York and having 38 channels for the first time in my life, and 9 of them had Tarzan pictures on. Not the same Tarzan picture but 9. And you could switch between 9 Tarzans and make your own one. Now that isn't actually an advantage."

Adrian Moynes ('Jo-Maxi'):

"First of all I have to say very honestly that the population base of this country cannot support three TV channels. I do not think that the demography and economy of this society is up to that act. And I think there have been societies around the world, New Zealand is an example, and other European cultures, where the economy and demography could not support that kind of act. I, frankly, am baffled.

I think if anybody who knows anything about the finances of broadcasting were to look at this they would say, 'this is for the birds'. And I say that without any political party pris.

I have never felt threatened by TV3. I'm sure (it's arrival) will impose changes. But if it weren't TV3, this business would be evolving in some lines or other. Nothing is static, least of all in a business like this.

I don't hang any concerns I have on TV3. Local radio has arrived and we'll go on making programmes. One of the things that astonishes me is that when people sit down to talk about a television channel. It's fine for a politician to get up and announce a TV channel. But the assessment you have to make of the talent, the experience, the dedication that's required to do that, and then the cost of the technology, which is horrendous. I doubt if they have (done the sums)."

## SECTION A.10: BROADCASTING LEGISLATION 1990

During the research period, the 1990 Broadcasting Bill became law. Among its provisions was the limiting of advertising time on RTE. It also instructed RTE not to earn in income from advertising and other sources more than was received in licence fee payments. The licence fee is set by the government and both measures allowed the government to curtail RTE's income.

This occurred when the commercial radio and TV sector were being established and the bill was aimed at, what Communications Minister, Ray Burke called, "levelling the playing pitch".

In their responses to a question on what they perceived as the effects of the 1990 broadcasting legislation on their work, many producers were unsure of what that impact would be. Niall Mathews was typical in his response:

"I don't honestly know. I think it's very early days for the broadcasting bill yet. I think that the interpretation of the nuts and bolts and the reading between the lines is at an early stage. It's a very crude stage.

I think that the first reaction is to say that we have to cut 12 million from the annual budget - I think that's underway.

Obviously I don't like the legislation. I don't think it makes any sense. I don't think any broadcaster in their right mind would like the Broadcasting Bill or what it's trying to do. I think it's totally counterproductive, and I'm sure that Ray Burke on 'mature reflection' will probably agree with that. But I think that the difficulties of a new station starting off, like TV3, I don't think they're going to be solved by the effect the Broadcasting Bill has had on RTE.

How it will affect my own job on a day-to-day basis, I don't know. I don't know that I will be doing anything differently because of the Broadcasting Bill, that I would be doing just taking the climate of economics today into account anyway. We will be cutting back anyway."

Dermot Horan was also uncertain but foresaw difficulties with sponsorship:

"It's a bit up in the air at the moment. But there's this whole area of sponsorship, where sponsorship is actually part of the income that RTE accrues in any one year. And last year, we got some free flights, in return for a shot of their plane and a credit.

But (the Head of Features) is now very undecided over whether we should let those things through or not. It certainly helped us get away, and I think it's important for our programme that we do get out of Ireland. You need to be able to show people

what's happening. You can also get great stories out of it, and crazy people, and people you really would be shocked at here.

I enjoy getting sponsorship. Because I was an independant producer before I came here, and I worked on quite a lot of quiz shows where there were prizes and sponsorship involved and I was picking up deals here there and everywhere.

RTE can only match what they get from the licence fee in their advertising. And if they get 46 million from the licence fee and they get 46 million in advertising, that's it. Now, October was a bit quieter than RTE thought it might have been, so it might be that there would be a shortfall in advertising. In which case there's more RTE can accrue in things like RTE Guide and sponsorship, that'll give us more flexibility. But if they're selling their ads, then we'll have trouble getting (sponsorship).

An awful lot of programmes, the only way they get abroad is with sponsorship, that's a bit worrying.

I suppose also, budgets are very tight here, I mean I worked in England and the sky's the limit. 'Busman's Holiday' set cost 250,000, just for a set. You travelled first class everywhere and ate at the best restaurants."

Adrian Moynes also thought that sponsorship could be made problematic by the Broadcasting Act:

"Well it has meant that I have to be very very conscious of the budget. Basically, many activities that happen in this country are sponsored. If kids are doing gymnastics it's sponsored by some company. Now that's grand and fine and dandy for the Amateur Gymnastics Association that this company's sponsorship makes it happen. But I've got to look at it and say that this is a commercial enterprise here and I'm going to give them airtime, which, if they were to buy in 30 second chunks from RTE is going to cost them money.

So how is this going to enhance my programme? That is no judgement that I'm making about the sponsor or anything else, but it's a set of commercial criteria that I have to weigh up. I've got to talk to the Director of Sales and Marketing, which is as it should be, I don't have any problem about that.

(Q: Because that could be calculated as income for RTE?)

It could be. We don't know under this Broadcasting Act, the Minister was to issue a set of guidelines, to my knowledge, they weren't issued. We don't know that at the end of this year, somebody in the department of Communications or Finance is going to come to us with some sort of audit that they have done of items that we have covered, and say, 'You had Sponsor X on. You had 45 seconds of that, which, if Sponsor X were buying advertising would have been worth that. Therefore we reduce your....I don't know."

Gay Byrne had already experienced some specific effects:

"It affects us in (the turnaround time during ads. Ad breaks are shorter now because of the capping on advertising brought in by the Broadcasting Act.) Purely from the sheer lugging and heaving and changing a set, it's easier to do it in three and a half minutes, and we've grown accustomed to three and a half minutes, as compared with two minutes.

The only other way is that under the new legislation, I am restricted to hitting commercial breaks at particular times, whereas all other years up to now, I had a floating feast. I could pretty well take the commercial breaks wherever I liked, during the two hours. I now can't put the first one in before ten, and I have to take the last one after eleven. And between ten and eleven I can take two.

And that has effected us in a couple of slight ways, insofar as you may notice on several occasions now, I've gone into a final item and I've taken a commercial break and come back to it. That normally is not what I would have done last year. I would have got rid of the commercial break and then gone straight through the item.

(Q: In general terms with regard to money?)

Certainly we are losing 30,000 per Late Late Show in advertising revenue. It's a terrific amount of money over the year. I think we're probably losing in commercial terms half a million pounds a year on the Late Late Show alone. Now that effects general finances, it doesn't affect us."

Many of the producers saw the effects in terms of limited resources:

Kevin Linehan, ("Secrets"):

"It has already changed (my job). The budget that I have for the show (Secrets) is negligible compared to the kinds of budgets that some of the shows operate on across the water, and yet, and I've always said that we're competing with those kind of shows and our show has to have as good production values.

I think where we have the edge on the others is, Irish people like watching Irish people, they like Gerry Ryan, and they like hearing Irish stories.

There would have been more money available (before the Bill came in).

(Q: What would be an example of that lack of money affecting the programme.)

Say for instance, the 'reuniting people' element. Now I had always planned that would be a regular element in the show. This would be huge with an Irish audience, for all the reasons of emigration, or whatever, and it would always be a very good item. But they're very time-consuming items to put together. Like you have to assign one

researcher to work solely on those items. I mean that's even asking a lot. None of them are simple.

We had one that's on next Saturday, where this man wrote to us. He hadn't seen his sister for 16 years. He knew she was in England, he didn't know where. He had tried everywhere, he had been to England, he had written to all the agencies, he had done everything and he never found her. Now Anne McBride (researcher) found her. It was just a remarkable bit of detective work.

But because of the tightness of the budget, we haven't been able to do as many of those items. I mean I had hoped to aim to one, once every week, then it became once every second week. Now they're happening once every third week. And that's a big loss to the show, because it's a big finale. It also means that you've got another 12 minutes to fill."

Margaret Gleeson, ("Wednesday Report"):

"Yes the Bill does affect us. We're expected to jump through smaller and smaller hoops and jump over higher and higher high jumps.

In the area where I am there's no leeway. You're supposed to be able to do a rough cut, a fine cut on the video editing of the documentary. The schedule is so tight that you're just lucky to get it finished at the end.

Quality is a very difficult thing. O.K. some people say producers are never happy. You're expected to turn around these programmes very very fast. And I just think (the Bill) does affect (my job), yes. On a personal level it does.

And all you hear all the time is, 'there's no money, no money, no money'; and I just think it's kind of a bit demoralised in here at the moment. Now, whether that changes again or not, I don't know. It has a direct affect, yes. It's ridiculous. I don't think it's helped the advertising, I don't think it's helped us, I don't think it's helped anybody.

Training has been cut, standards are dropping all the time. If you've got less time to do something, standards will drop, if you've got less time to judge your product. We're not in studio at the moment, we're on location and we come back and edit it. That's where the cutbacks come in - overtime is being cut.

So if you want to do a story after midnight, you can't do that now. You have to know ten days in advance for everything. So if something happens you can't get a crew for it. The crews are not available, so that's how the standards drop. And they're packing in programmes into the studios as well now and cutting the camera rehearsal time."

John O'Brien, (TV Sport)



"There's some concern in the department that (the Bill will affect us) because we have been a department that has been expanding, certainly in the last 10 years; and our coverage of major sports has been expanding. And we have expanded Sports Stadium.

But all of this obviously costs money, mostly money in people terms. Because that needs a couple of people to process the extra programming. Those kinds of things are going to be looked at more closely. But probably more seriously they will be looking at our ability to buy into the major events which we have traditionally done.

It certainly won't effect soccer and rugby initially because we have to stay with soccer and rugby is relatively cheap. But I would have worries about our ability to buy into major international events which Ireland would buy into like the American golf tournaments, four or five which we took this year, like Wimbledon. Which we have traditionally done but which are becoming more and more expensive."

In terms of programme quality and scheduling the effects had already been felt, in Michael Heney's opinion:

"Well, it already does and it already has. It's bad. It'll make it harder to do quality work, particularly in the expensive, difficult areas of investigative programming. The fact that there's no features documentaries, the fact that it's not possible to do them this year, that we don't have the resources, I think is bad.

The fact that 'Wednesday Report' is going out at 10.30 and 'Bibi' is going out at 9.30, I think is a further sign of the times. I don't know now, but I think that that's based upon the maximisation of advertising potential from 'Bibi' which is born of the pressure from the Broadcasting Act.

The fact that our programme, documentaries, serious programming go out at half ten and therefore with a lower audience, that is a downgrading, de facto of this kind of programming. They are the facts of things happening in this area. So I'd be quite depressed, really."

Hilary Orpen was more sanguine about the legislation:

"I think it's tough. But all we can deal with is the real world. And this is the real world. That's why TAMs are important. We've got to compete and I would see the future as an increasingly competitive situation. And therefore there's no use making programmes that delight us and that we think are wonderful. We actually have to make programmes that mean something to the people at home. So far they haven't run to the defence of RTE, the punters haven't."

Management's response to the legislation was crucial in determining its effects, according to Gerry Stembridge:

"I'm sure it'll affect me because as I'm now freelance, there's less likelihood of me being hired in, because I'm now always an extra cost, whereas previously I was part of the structure. So, it may be important in terms of just my own employment.

But in terms of the overall thing. It depends on RTE's response. The response can go a few different ways and they seem to have chosen one particular course.

They can chose to say, 'full steam ahead, we're going to make the programmes regardless, and we're going to spend the money, regardless, and if we start to lose money, then we're going to have to see what the government will do about it then.' Will they allow us to have more advertising in which to recoup that revenue? Which would be the simplest way of doing it.

Or will the government step in and say, 'no, you can't make that.' Will they then start to interfere editorially and tell RTE what programmes they can and cannot make. Or will they decide to cutback on their programming and fit in with their budget.

Instead, of course, they tried to both things at once. They tried to go full steam ahead and keep all the programming and keep within the budget. And there is only one inevitable result of that and that is declining standards. We're making the programmes with less resources. And it's a simple equation."

Ed Mulhall said that the legislation had already affected his work by souring relations between RTE and the government:

"One of the problems with the Broadcasting Act was that it put RTE and the government into a confrontational thing, which is something that has to be grown out of. The worst thing was the element of confrontation between the two and doing news and current affairs programmes, you have to get above that, and not allow any of that sort of thing to influence things and try to get things back on an even keel."

## SECTION A.11: CREWS

In this section, the term "crews" refers to technical staff working directly with the producers on the production. It includes editors but doesn't include other support staff like graphic artists.

On a programme made in studio the number of crew is normally 10-15 people. On a film crew shooting a feature report, there can be 4 people, while on a film drama shoot, that number can rise to between 10 and 20, or even higher depending on the scale of the project. On a feature shoot using a video camera, the crew can comprise of just 2 or 3.

During the period of research RTE was introducing more and more video cameras for feature programmes. Because they don't use film, there is no need for an assistant film cameraman on the crew. (His job is to load film; pack, carry and clean the extra equipment used with film.) Also, video cameras need less light to operate and so often there's no need for a lighting technician. At the same time, RTE was trying to get cameramen to carry the lights in their vehicles, thus doing away with the lighting technician's job altogether.

So, it was a time of deep dissatisfaction among crews and producers because jobs were being lost and because, as they saw it, programme quality was suffering.

In many cases crews in RTE like to become involved in the production, contributing comments and suggestions. A producer who can tap this, without making every shot a committee decision, can end up with well-made programme and more importantly, a reputation as a producer who regards crews as individuals with something valuable to offer any project.

However, this kind of involvement is not enjoyed by studio crews whose jobs can be very tedious. Because there is limited time in studio, there is little discussion and often little chance for them to be creative. The set may look different, the presenters may be different, but the shots, sound and lighting are all numbingly similar from show to show.

Dermot Horan described a day's work for a studio crew and the difficulties that poses for a producer:

"Studios these days are major turnaround. When I worked on 'Nighthawks' in Studio 4, they started in the morning at 10 o'clock. They rehearsed, 'Live at 3'.

Which, bar music numbers, is fairly boring (to work on). It's a cookery demonstration, or it's a gardening demonstration. And then it's a couple of pieces to camera and then it's Kenny Ball or somebody comes in and does a jazz number or something.



It's pretty boring. I used to see the cameramen there sitting. They'd pull up stools and they'd do the crossword. Then after that they hit Cúrsaí and Nuacht. Which were totally just locked-off cameras, just standing there.

Then they used to go off for an hour, a few of them would get in a couple of pints. Then they'd come back in and we'd ask them on 'Nighthawks' to put cameras on their shoulder and do something interesting.

Now, it was very important, I directed Nighthawks for a number of weeks, to motivate them, because they came in knackered. A bit belligerent. You were asking them to put a few very heavy kilos on their shoulder.

But what you did was you said, 'listen we're doing something different here. It'll be a bit of fun.' And you had to show you were planned. And at the same time you had to show you were open to their ideas, particularly the senior cameraman and the Floor

Manager. And if you could get them on your side, and say, 'right we're going to have a really good rehearsal. We're going to have a nice coffee break, relax. And then we're really going to go for it.'

And then you get a good buzz, and everybody came away feeling really happy. But, you still won't get the same performance that you will out on the road, single camera.

If you're out on the road doing PTCs (pieces to camera). People saying, 'ah Barbara and Pat they're very fluid.' They're not to know it's Take 17. But you wouldn't go Take 17 in a studio. Because, by God, the cameramen would start doing the crossword, the Floor Manager would start screaming. They'd say, 'when are we going to leave. We're not going to get out of here'."

Kevin Linehan and John O'Brien found that often people were motivated by the success of a show. Linehan said that because of the success of 'Secrets', support staff will pull out the stops:

"There's a lot of props used on the show. And there's a lot of times we're asking wardrobe to do very quick make-up jobs and pull out gear. And normally for stuff like that you should have it requisitioned 10 days in advance. And that's impossible and they pull out a lot of the stops.

And even on the day when you're rehearsing, you know we might be doing something with the audience and Gerry suddenly says, 'God, if only I had a plastic chicken at this stage.' The boys will go and get it. Which makes an awful difference."

"What tends to happen, in my experience, on major events, like Olympics and World Cups, is that there's a high level of goodwill in the organisation, particularly amongst the facilities areas.

They're aware that everybody is pulling out everything to make it successful. They row in with that.

Without wanting to be patronising, they get a buzz out of it as well, because they're doing something out of the norm and there's a little bit of excitement about it, that's different. So we tend not to have any problems in those areas. And if something does happen and you need an extra couple of machines, or something, they nearly always appear, or guys will work through a meal break. That's because of the particular circumstances. It mightn't work as well on a normal wet, winter's Saturday."

(John O'Brien TV Sport)

Michael Garvey and Gerry Stembridge thought that a producer could actually stifle that sort of goodwill in a crew:

Michael Garvey (Religious Programmes):

"Producers can work in two ways, they can work as dictators or they can work as persuaders. My system has been to always work as a persuader. There are some of us who are so clear, so defined that they are actually dogmatic in the extreme. This actually cuts off the capacity of those working with them to add to their achievement. One of the things about broadcasting is that it is not a thing that you can do on your own. It's no job for adults!"

Gerry Stembridge ('The Truth About Clare'):

"The director doesn't make the programme. He has an idea for the programme, he has a notion about he wants it to look, he has a feel for the programme. It's the crew who carry it out.

It's the cameraman, the soundman who physically relate to it. Particularly on a film shoot. I don't see the shot when it's being shot. I have to rely on my ability to communicate with the cameraman.

Obviously some are good and some are bad. Very well trained professional people, all who have an amazing interest in the job. I sometimes wonder. People slag RTE about tea breaks, blah, blah, blah. I tend to wonder at the amount of enthusiasm you can generate in a crew. And it takes a lot of very hard work on a producer's part to reduce that interest and kill it off. And an awful lot of producer's do.

Crews are left to put up with an awful lot of really bad producers, and they end up getting the programme together. And that's not a good thing, either.

(Q: And how do you generate enthusiasm in a crew?)

I talk to them about it. It try to find out what they think. Ask them for suggestions."

Margaret Gleeson is equally enthusiastic about working with crews:

"Generally the crews in RTE are very very good. It's only when I worked with some foreign crews that I realised how lucky we are with all our crews here. Even though you would have personal preferences.

You do meet them and you talk to them and you tell them what the broad thrust of the story is, and what you're trying get and you talk to them as much as you can. And they like a challenge. And you talk to them about a certain kind of lighting and a certain kind of mood you're trying to create."

The same soundmen and cameramen work together most of the time, and the same crew is usually appointed to a programme for the season.

Producers usually request a cameraman (there are no location camerawomen in RTE) to work with them. This is usually because they like his work, or more importantly, because they get on together.

One one occasion a programme requested a cameraman because of the soundman he worked with: the programme was dealing with sensitive issues and this soundman was very good at putting interviewees at their ease.

Producers don't always get the crew they request and aren't always as fortunate as Dermot Horan was on "Head to Toe":

"I've been very lucky because I've chosen my crew this year and I've got them for the whole year, Nick Dolan and Michael Cassidy. I did that by pre-planning.

Last year was my first as Series Producer, so over the year you become quite worldly-wise. So I was able to book them in back in the Summer and they came on stream in the Autumn. First couple of weeks, before the Autumn schedule was running I got a few different cameramen.

And having the one crew for the year, for starters is a major advantage. And secondly, having a crew who you like...because I worked with them in France and on Nighthawks and we have a good laugh.

Nick's sort of young, free and single. 'Butch' is a great joker in the pack. So if it's pouring rain, and you've only got one shot in the can, he cracks a few jokes and it's very important for morale.

My approach with Nick is to go out with a plan of what I want but also to let him compose a lot of the shots. And he gets a much better kick out of that. And he's always coming up with ideas for locations. We're trying things like long telephotos. It's very difficult with video cameras to have a short depth of field. Everything seems to be in focus. So, we're trying things. You only get that working with someone week in week out."

Margaret Gleeson felt that RTE is downgrading the work of the editor and that the station expected the producer to be the editor and gave an example of the importance of the job of editor as she saw it:

"As I'm not an expert cameraman, neither am I an editor. I could cut, and say, 'cut here and cut there'. But an editor is expertise. An editor doesn't have a memory - let me explain.

You can go off shooting something and you can go wandering up this beautiful driveway. And arrive up at this mansion. But all you bring back is a corner of a room. In your brain you can see the driveway and that memory is interfering with what you've got.

The editor only sees a boring two-shot in which this guy's going on and on forever. And you may say, 'but I spent three days to get this shot.' And he says, 'well, y'know.'

I'll give you an example. I remember doing a programme once on the mentally handicapped who were going to Baton Rouge. And I only had a crew for a couple of days here and I had a crew in Baton Rouge. And I didn't have a crew for when they were flying out.

But while we were shooting they sang, 'I'm Leaving On A Jet Plane'. So I went over to the library and I got a stockshot of a plane taking off. That was the transition to America.

The editor took three or four shots that I had. He took a shot of the boy putting on a schoolbag. He also took a shot of the girl jumping in a long jump where she raised her arms as if it was a plane. And he mixed through that shot of her raising her arms with the shot of the plane going off.

And it looked as if it had been shot especially for it. Now that to me was an editor's contribution to that. The schoolbag shot. Because I was so wrapped up 'now this is he going to school'. He was able to see this shot putting on the schoolbag and the Mammy and Daddy waving him off, and he used that as if he was going to America. And I was looking at it as a schoolbag and he was looking at it as a bag

that you would take going on a plane. And we crossfaded the music and it looked very very well.

Nowadays they don't have time to look at the footage and they work at such speed that they're not giving them (the editors) as much time as they should have. Or it's not valued as much.

Some people say that a story is made in the editing room. I wouldn't go as far as to say that."

A big problem for producers when working with crews is knowing when to take a suggestion and when to stick with your original plan.

Gerry Stembridge ("The Truth About Clare") explained how he handled it:

"I would like to think that I would stand my ground. I've had rows and arguments with people because of that. But funny enough, those kinds of arguments don't cause problems generally. And certainly not with good people.

I had a running battle with the lighting cameraman over the amount of shooting. I told you about my bias towards minimal shooting. And he was always making the point, and very validly making the point that, 'listen it's not going to cost us very much to get that extra close-up'.

My difficulty with that was knowing the amount of editing time I had, knowing possibly who the editor was going to be, I wanted to minimise the amount of choices the editor had even. Y'see? So, often in those cases I did give in to the Lighting Cameraman.

But on the issue of the way a thing would be shot, and if I really definitely wanted it to be shot a certain way. I would listen to what he says but if it doesn't have the same feel for me, then no, it has to be the way I wanted.

The nearest I came to a row on the drama was a scene with two of them feeling each other up on the couch. And the cameraman was immediately into doing a lot of tight shooting of 'business'.

But for me the scene isn't about the 'business', who was fondling who or what was happening. I actually wanted the audience to be rather cold and distant from it. So all I wanted was one wide shot, not wide, but loose two-shot. And loose enough to allow the actors to move about in the frame, and not move the frame, and to just let it happen. To sit there coldly watching. And that was my idea for it.

And nothing he said was making me feel that what he was suggesting, while it was more interesting, and more cinema, had nothing to do with the feeling of the scene. To him the other thing was boring. Then, having finished that, he then made



the shot too tight, because he said, the viewer wouldn't see enough detail. And I said I wasn't interested in the detail. And this went on and eventually I won that one.

But the point I'd like to make about that is, you have to know why it is you're doing that shot. And this goes back to the whole thing of preparation. If you start ignoring what the cameramen says simply to emphasise that you are the boss, then that's pointless. But I was able to say to him exactly why I wanted this wide shot. The feeling I wanted. And certainly if he thought he could express that feeling by shooting in a different way, I was willing to listen.

But equally then on another issue. I wanted matching close-ups, but I wanted to emphasise a kind of confusion in the mind of the other person, and a certainty in mind of the other person. So I had an idea that I wanted her close-up to be different and I had an idea of tracking back and forth on it.

He suggested an old Steven Spielberg idea of the track in and the zoom out, which I thought was a really good idea, 'if you can do it'. It's a really difficult shot to set up and do and it meant extra time to do it and I thought, 'yeah that's a much better idea than mine.' So it's just one close-up in the middle of a whole sequence of ordinary close-ups and I hope it works.

There's an idea that is a better visual idea and is in line with the thought behind the shot in the first place. But again when you don't prepare the stuff then you end up just taking whatever ideas, and the whole thing ends up just being a visual mish-mash of your style and his style, and somebody else's ideas.

You get the props man throwing in ideas. I don't mean to demean the props man, but what I'm saying is, suddenly everybody realises, and in a way it's a credit to them, they realise that we're swimming around with no rudder.

So if you don't get on with your crew, forget about it, the programme won't get made. And then at the other end, if you don't know exactly what you want you end up letting everybody walk all over you.

And I've often gone out that way. I've often gone out on little magazine items not having a clue. But I always found the best thing is just to say that. 'Listen lads, I was asked to do this yesterday, I really don't know what it's all about. So let's go out and see what's going on and we'll make our decisions.'

And I always try to find time to listen to the people involved in the magazine item. And then say, 'alright, let's take a coffee break.' I'll give myself ten minutes to sit down and think through. If you don't make that kind of time for yourself and then come back and say, 'right this is the way we're going to attack it.'"

## SECTION A.12: POLITICS

When asked about the broad political function of their work, or their programmes, most of the producers described it as contributing to a questioning of Irish society, or, what Michael Garvey describes as, providing "an ongoing suspicion":

"Democracy actually occurs in our country about once every 5 years, where in fact through the exercise of a franchise one has the impression of actually being consulted. You are to an extent but it's a very limited political action. You're never asked to more or less than contribute to the power of a group of people that you may not in any way respect.

That's better than having totalitarianism and having blood in the streets, I'll grant you. But all the institutions working under that institution should be aware that one of their biggest services to the community is an ongoing positive suspicion, one that is querying the basis on which the society is talking to itself.

Now the trouble with it is, that as soon as that suspicion begins to function, the people who have the power will suggest that it's directed against them. It's not, it shouldn't be directed against them, but they are in fact, the best examples of where in fact the difficulties will arise. But that kind of intellectual distancing seems to be a crucial element in any kind of developing society."

Peter Feeney ("Marketplace" & "Today Tonight") described how this need to question is the most necessary and worthwhile part of the job and how it causes journalists not only to lose favour with the establishment but with ordinary communities as well. He also went on to say that he believed in a basic truth and pursuit of that truth, no matter how uncomfortable, would ultimately win audiences for a television programme:

"There are occasions where injustice is happening and nothing is being done about it. And therefore it is the Fourth Estates function to get in there.

And classically would be the Patrick Gallagher, Today Tonight programme a couple of months ago, where the events were five or six years old. Nothing had happened, the guy was walking around totally free. It was quite clear to us that nobody was going to prosecute.

Yet they were using this threat, saying, 'Oh the Gardai are investigating - forthcoming investigation'. And clearly it was just a flam. They weren't investigating it. They decided years ago they weren't going to prosecute the guy. But that was a perfectly legitimate programme to do. And we were accused of trial by television.

There is a grey area, because, I've a legal problem at the moment, Today Tonight did a report about some guys who are due to be extradited to the North and when O'Brien (Brendan, reporter on the story of the extradition of Pius Clarke) showed that some of their alibis were simply totally fictitious, we were very heavily criticised over that. Now I think it's diluted because he wasn't extradited as it turned out.

In our view there was a legitimate case to be said that we have information which is relevant which won't appear in court, otherwise and we shall go with it. (It wouldn't appear in court) because I suppose there was a consensus or a conspiracy within Donegal to try and stop these guys being extradited so there was a turning a blind eye to what looked like pretty fictitious evidence on his behalf.

But I think journalistically speaking we had information which was relevant. It sounds pompous but there is a kind of bottom line of truth and where there is untruth, I don't think journalists need to worry too much. If you discover untruth, you have an obligation to publish it or to try and publish it. I think where there is deception, you should try and publish it.

I'm aware of trial by television. I'm aware of what the British tabloid press do and particularly you see what they do to Irish people who are being charged. And clearly no-one would defend that. But I just think that is a world away from proper investigative journalism.

In an ideal world a business programme would have the resources to engage in that to a certain extent. And I think that if you are exposing crooks, the business community will actually welcome it, to a certain extent, I think it would improve your credibility."

Cathal Goan, "Cúrsaí" took it a step further and saw the questioning of television as leading, ultimately to social change:

"I think if you make people aware, the follow on from that is an urge for change. I see it as part of my function to make people aware of themselves in a whole lot of different ways. And if we're comfortable about certain things when we shouldn't be, then I think it's our function to.....and I don't mean to sound sanctimonious about this, because I have as many preconceived notions about things that I need a kick in the arse about as anybody else. I think it's part of our function to look at ourselves, to hold a mirror up to ourselves as a society, on all different levels. And when we don't do that we're failing.

(Q: Then there's the argument that there are politicians to look after society's ills and you should just put on nice television programmes.)

I don't accept that. I don't accept it any more than I would expect that my daily paper would give me short stories instead of a breakdown of what's happening in society. I just think that in some sense we have taken over the function of the newspaper and before that, the ballad singer who wrote about society's ills. The



ballad-singer had his funny ones and his sad ones, he wrote about the local murder, as well. We have to do that as well. We do funny things, we do light-hearted things, but I still see it as part of our function to question. I think when people stop questioning themselves they are in serious bother."

Margaret Gleeson ("Wednesday Report") and Hilary Orpen ("Look Here") also believed that their programmes contributed to change:

Margaret Gleeson:

"The aim of the programme on the women in Mountjoy would be to get the conditions changed, because the conditions are very bad. But if you just said, 'The conditions are awful, change them'. They won't do it. And you also try to use emotion as well. Film is quite powerful and you're trying to get people emotionally involved in what you're doing.

I think I would try in some of the programmes I am doing to give a voice to the underdog who wouldn't normally get a voice on television. I try and do something like that on some of the programmes I do. To show that they have a dignity. That sounds like 'Holy Mary', but that's what I try to do. To give a voice to somebody who doesn't normally have it - a voice to the voiceless.

I wouldn't call it subversive. I think part of it's that journalists tend to go against the establishment as well - to find other things that aren't being shown. People can get very complacent just looking at what they're doing themselves, and it's just to show some other side of society that's out there, who aren't getting access.

I think television's terribly important. I don't think you can have every type of programme like that but from my point of view, that's what I would aim to do."

Hilary Orpen:

"(The programme's broad political function is) to give consumers a bit of muscle. To inform them of their rights. Basic things. I ran into myself over the weekend in Cork. I bought something in a shop where there was no trying-on facilities, and I brought it home, tried it on, and it didn't fit and I went back and asked for my money back. And they said, 'Oh, I'm sorry, it's not our policy to give refunds.' But, through the programme, I'd learned, that if they don't have the facility, you have the right to have your money back. So, I said, 'Actually, it's against the law not (to).'

And we've been able to highlight those sorts of things which, you know, gives people their own consumer power."

Michael Heney ("Wednesday Report") believed that despite the benefits of a programme like Hilary Orpen's being in the schedule, the overwhelming effect of the station is to undermine those benefits:

"Our single most persistent message to our audience is conspicuous consumption, materialist accumulation of money and the spending of money - all the values of the advertising culture. That is the message which dominates our output. Every single hour it's there, three times in the hour. And that's a powerful cultural message which I dislike personally.

We now have a consumer programme, supposedly. A) There should always have been a consumer programme and B) it should have far stronger teeth. And the history of consumer programming - the purpose of them is a mildly critical approach to advertising and the peddling of goods and services - has been very bad in RTE; so that's a great slur on our supposed public service broadcasting record, I think."

The Variety Producer saw his programmes as merely mirroring Irish society in a representative way:

"We're purely reflecting what's out there. We're not going for the celebrity, we're not giving an image that the only people around on a Saturday night are the Brigitte Bardots, etc. We're showing the Davoren Hannas (wheelchair-bound poet), we're showing the man who had AIDS, we're showing the victim of violence in the North, we're showing the survivor of the Zeebrugge disaster, we're showing the person who had to kill her mother. So we're reflecting everything in society. There's no emphasis on one particular aspect of it."

In the newsroom, Ed Mulhall, also thought their programmes reflected a norm, and the treatment of the Brian Lenihan 1990 Presidential Campaign Crisis was part of that norm:

"Basically News, as does all news media, operates around the edges of a basic consensus. Which is the basic political consensus. What I mean is, that in terms of determining what's news, there's a basic consensus about what is important. All media tend to follow that basic consensus.

Now, you could argue, whatever political perspective you come from, you could argue that (the consensus) is the wrong perspective or the right perspective, or whatever. But there is an undefined existing basic consensus that determines what's news. All you have to do is look at all the newspapers and look at RTE.

I think that exists, I don't think it's a thing that people define.

(Q: And do you have your job because you have an increased awareness of that or because you've got organisational abilities?)

I think it's a combination of all those things and your own judgement. People bring their own colour, obviously. If you have a view that it's important to do stories about employment, or it's important to do stories about the North or health. Those sorts of colours can come to the consensus as well.

There is such a thing (as a 'nose for news') in the sense that you're talking about the reflex that distils the daily diet. National news programmes particularly are operating on the broad canvas, whereas specific current affairs programmes are operating on the narrower canvas where you're seeking out the wrongdoer or the scandal.

What people tend to expect of news is just to distil the events. And that's what we try to do, but you could argue that we should be doing more.

(Q: Lately, this consensus has been questioned by Fianna Failers, for example. They're saying that the media are conspiring to down Brian Lenihan. Is that the consensus operating or is there an agenda that the media are operating to?)

Politics is politics and electoral politics are electoral politics. People are never happy from either side what the media does to them. The decision to broadcast the tape (of the interview with Jim Duffy) once it became available was an easy decision to make.

It wasn't a question of, 'is this fair to Brian Lenihan?' It's published, it's available, and you offer the other side the chance to rebut, or deny. And that's not a conspiracy against Lenihan or Fianna Fail, as doing the comments about the Hot Press interview as we did was not a comment on the Robinson campaign. Or how we treat Currie's pledge for the North."

## SECTION A.13: TECHNIQUE AND PROCEDURE

### A.13.a: MEETINGS/PLANNING/ANALYSIS

Every programme has a meeting. Their purpose is to discuss forthcoming programmes and plans for filming, editing and dubbing. One of the most unusual meetings is the production meeting for "Head to Toe", the fashion programme:

"We have a meeting, a yuppie meeting, at 8 o'clock every Monday morning. Originally unpopular. We get a trolley with scones and orange juice. Tea and coffee. It means means people don't have to have breakfast before they come out. They avoid the traffic, in in ten minutes."

Dermot Horan ('Head to Toe')

The "Jo-Maxi" meeting took place later in the day, but with the same aims:

"Whoever's in town, not down the country filming, we all get into one room on Friday morning, 11.30 to 1.00 and we sort out the following week, and that's how it gets done.

It's a completely open meeting, things get kicked around and people say, we didn't like that, that didn't work, shouldn't we do this, wouldn't it be better if. All of it gets flushed out. It's not a bruising experience - it's not a chance for people to attack each other.

Adrian Moynes ('Jo-Maxi')

Peter Feeney believed that the analysis of programmes transmitted was one of the most important functions of the production meeting:

"The deadline routine of programmes is such that you are actually quite un-retrospective and un-introspective. You do not have post-mortems. You do not spend enough time looking at last week's programme and the run of the last six. I think this is at its worst in news where the deadline comes up so rapidly. At it's second worst in programmes which are more than once a week and at its third worst in programmes which are once a week.

It is an area that RTE, I think, is very weak in. That is the post-mortem, the analysis of what we've been doing and the impact it's had and what we could do to improve on it. I think that is partially due to an inherent weakness in RTE which may be part of Irish life. And that is we are pretty unself-critical.

I find that area quite difficult to handle myself. I find it difficult to call a reporter in and say, 'I didn't like your report last night'. I would acknowledge that as my own weakness. I think it's probably a national weakness.

My limited experience of other nationalities is that they are more able to engage in self-criticism than we are. There's an adrenalin about broadcasting that is very counterproductive for the ability to self-analyse. The excitement at finishing, and delivering being the most important thing.

One exception to that, that I've experienced, and I admire it, is Gay Byrne. I spent a year on the Late Late about 10 years ago. It is the most exciting programme in RTE to work on because it is large, it's live, it has a huge audience, so it has a fantastic adrenalin in the live Friday night. And it ends at 11.15 and you feel happy but exhausted, a slight exaggeration, but you know what I mean.

But Gay Byrne then the next day or the day after that always held a cold critical post-mortem. And at first I was quite surprised but I ultimately came to see that he was absolutely right to do that. You need to distance yourself from the excitement of making the programme, and look at it coldly again.

(Q: Is that not ultimately frustrating if at every post mortem you are constantly coming up with lack of resources as a reason for a show's shortcomings?)

You would have to acknowledge that this is a problem, but I think there are always other reasons why things could be better as well. It's a cliché, but you can't just blame the tools all the time. 'Given the resources we have is there any way I can improve the programme.' I think in all cases, that is a useful exercise.

It's not a useful exercise if you say every week, 'God, we were dreadful'. But if that's the way it is then the programme shouldn't be there anyway. But if, on the other hand, you say, 'why didn't we do this differently?'

The "Late Late Show" production meetings have a reputation within RTE for being frank and thorough. Gay Byrne described their purpose:

"The purpose of the meeting on Monday is to go back over last Friday night. What went wrong, what went right. And to take the slugging for what went wrong.

See if there's anything in last Friday night that we can say, 'look that didn't bloody well work. We knew it wasn't going to work. Now, let's take a note and not do it again.'

I would say it didn't work. 'In spite of all our years, and all our experience and all the care that we take, Fred Snodgrass slipped past us. He got in under the wire and he shouldn't have been on or we shouldn't have done it that way. Or we shouldn't have that item or that music'



Or, 'why didn't we have more control of this song that she sang? We shouldn't have let her choose the song, it was the wrong song.' Good interviews and bad interviews. Ins and outs of the commercial breaks. How lively the audience were, all of that would be gone through.

Then we would say 'what do you recommend for our end of year roundup.' And then we start talking about next Friday and the Friday after and what was coming up and alert everybody to what was being lined up. That's the purpose of the Monday morning meeting.

If we're doing a special show like the Toy Show, we would set another meeting for during that week a number of weeks in advance. We go over the line up of musical items for the next six weeks or so. And generally speaking we would probably be talking six to eight weeks ahead, in so far as we would have possibilities and probabilities written down in the programme book with regard to guests and items, prizes and performers."

This kind of detailed planning was becoming more and more important in RTE, according to Gerry Stembridge. If Peter Feeney thought there was a tendency among producers to concentrate on finishing and delivering rather than on analysing what's being delivered; Stembridge thought that the 'analysis' among producers often amounted to no more than excuse-making, especially if the planning was poor:

"I would have to say, as a general thing, that there is an onus on the producer element in RTE to be far more able to prepare and think ahead, particularly now that there's such limited resources, and they're trying to expand programming.

In fairness they're often rushed off their feet and not given time to prepare things and so on. There's not enough preparation being done. And too many programmes are being made on the lam. When you make programmes on the lam, you cost money. You're constantly having to hire that taxi to send back for the film you forgot.

Or you're having to pay that person an extra 30 quid because you suddenly want to use that location you didn't know you were going to use. And there's also then a general sense in the crew and everybody that's involved that you don't really know what's going on and this is all being put together in a hurry.

You're then far less willing to be critical of the finished result. Because you keep telling yourself, 'Yeah that was, yeah, and we had that problem there, and considering....'"

### **A.13.b: ROUTINES/WORK PATTERNS**

Some producers had established a routine of work on their programmes. For example, Hilary Orpen on "Look Here":

"We've two producers and they can pick up two films in a week. Given that they have to come back and tidy up other stuff as well. So they can do one serious one and one lighter one in a week. And we have that available to us each week.

We do a four day week. Tuesday to Friday, ten hour days. And what they do is they give two days to the main story, and then one day to the shorter story. A day is left over for bits and bobs. Like we do this 'Gripes' thing where people who give service have a chance to answer back. Whether it's traffic wardens or shop assistants, or whatever.

Because the producers who are filming have to come back and do dubbing, someone else can pick up on that. A researcher or reporter can go out and do that alone. Also, every studio item we have we try and have a visual set-up, so the fourth day is used for that sort of thing."

Adrian Moynes on "Jo-Maxi" also operated a sort of roster:

"I run a system where I have a producer of the week and one of the producers takes that week. What he or she does is she starts on Wednesday and looks at what's coming out of editing for next week, what stories we have. There are a number of formal items. Like we do the charts on Tuesday, or whatever. And they then start building their running orders around that."

Niall Mathews believed that a strict routine was essential to the successful production of a soap, like 'Fair City':

"It's formula (shooting). Somebody else has to decide where the creative element comes through. I'm not saying that the creative aspect of it goes out the window, but there is an extremely large element of the professionalism of everybody just clicking together and working. Within that we are all creative. And that's where the creativity comes in.

For a soap to work you have to have a routine. You can't break it because you want to introduce a creative element. Schedule, formula and the creative element have to work hand in hand, and the creative element is sometimes helped by the restrictions of the routine.

For Peter Feeney a routine work pattern is part of the way a show sells itself within RTE. He considered the 'Marketplace's' demands on resources and on-screen image as well as its efficiency as a unit as being part of the internal PR process:

"In a way a programme like Marketplace is churned out. Because, with only one person working on it full-time, you've got to fall into some sort of pattern which delivers. And the pattern is a very predictable one and a pretty safe one.

We have a very well designed set, a good animation, good music, and two very strong presenters. So there was a very strong vibe that the programme was a clean, efficient-looking programme. And it was contrasted with Today Tonight which was kind of sluggish and tired-looking.

In terms of its packaging it was very highly regarded within the station, and in terms of its efficiency, that we didn't go demanding extra resources, we didn't miss transmission dates, we didn't overrun on budgets, etc., it was regarded as a very efficient programme. Therefore I think a lot of the favourable vibes in RTE had nothing to do with content, it was entirely to do with the packaging.

That actually says something about television too. In many ways, the packaging is so much more important than the content."

### **A.13.c: SETS**

Like Marketplace, Cathal Goan was also trying convey a similar, sleek image of Cúrsaí. In this the set was most important:

"The style of the programme is something we've worked on. The set is too small, and it's restricted because of certain shooting angles. Some of our shots are very profiley. It's bigger this year than it was last year. I like the set but I think next year we're going to have to change it to something bigger, more adaptable, because it's quite rigid. It has a nice clean cool look to it.

I want people to look at it and say, 'I don't know what they're talking about, but they look like they know what they're at. It's important for us to feel self-confident, to look as good as anybody else. To put our stuff together as anybody else. And to be judged by the same standards as everybody else, and not in some sort of vaguely patronising way.

'Oh jeez, the Irish boys did alright, all the same when you consider that they're a bunch of gormless twits from the bog.'



On the World Cup programmes, the set was designed to be in keeping with the event, according to John O'Brien:

"The design of the set and the graphics were really myself and Graphics and Design. 'What do we want?' We decided we wanted to go for an Italian look on the set and that came up very well, it was a super set. We incorporated a number of the perceived World Cup elements like the cup and the 'Ciao' figure and all of that. Sadly the set had to be broken up afterwards, because there was nowhere to keep it.

(Q: And why did you decide on the large area in front? There was a large grid.)

That was to give a feeling of space. And with the grid sort of narrowed to a point. We always try to give a feeling of space to big events and that's where the skill of the designer came in to maximise that which I think we succeeded in doing."

According to the Variety producer, the set of his show performs a number of functions:

"The set has a kind of clinical atmosphere about it. The green background and that. It makes the pictures rather good and clear. But in order to soften that a little, a few flowers on the table help it. Some people may feel that the set is too harsh, for a late night chat show that it should be more subdued. But in fact, I find it holds the attention very well.

The tables are low sized tables because the seats are very practical upright, they're not loungy type seats. Again, that's deliberate. It keeps the people, instead of them slouching back, it keeps them projected forward.

Now, there's an argument about that, as to whether it would be better to have them slouching back at that hour of the night and be more comfortable and more relaxed. It's six of one and half a dozen of the other. I don't have a strong opinion either way.

I'd like to have tried this formula we have tried. As we're going in to next season, we might try another formula. They're minor things in the presentation, but important enough.

(Q: When you say that set holds the attention, is that something intuitive or is it something you've talked to people about?)

No. We've talked to people about it. For instance there's nothing distracting in that shot. There's no dressing, there's nobody going to say, 'oh look at that picture in the background', or 'aren't those twinkling lights nice.' That's rather cold, there's nothing in the background. The attention is on the face.

Now that could be a good thing or a bad thing. For me, I would be more inclined to favour it than against it. But I think it might be worth trying a different approach next season."

The specifications for set design aren't just confined to their appearance. They also have to conform to the logistics of studio planning; it must be possible to construct them and take them down quickly. During the research period, management were looking for shorter rigging and derigging times. Kevin Linehan ("Secrets") explained the problems this poses for producers. He goes on to describe the difficulty he had in commissioning a new set in RTE:

"The studios are so jammed to get sets in and to get sets out. That the sets that they had last year, they're happy with. They know them, the men are familiar with them - and the more familiar the guys get putting in and out sets, the time comes down. So the schedulers set the rigging and derigging times tighter and it saves them money and they can let a few fellows go.

Introduce a new set, and especially a very different kind of set like Secrets' meant battles all the way along the line. They were saying, 'look physically, there is only a pint bottle, and only a pint will fit into it, and you're asking us to put a pint and a half into it.'

Those kind of pressures mean that unless you really kind of hang firm on what the set is and that it reflects the show and that it is a functional set to make the show work.

Could you imagine Secrets done with the bleachers (audience seats) that the Late Late Show use? So that was a really tough one to hang tough on that.

Because the audience are such a major feature of it, the actual design of the set...Instead of there being an audience and a presenter's chair. I just wanted a big area where people would play in the middle of the floor and the audience would be around it almost, circular in shape.

Every set of bleachers in RTE. It's the same set of bleachers that are used in all the shows. And they're all in a straight line. Now, I wanted to get them in a semi-circular shape.

That caused enormous problems. To me it was the key to the whole programme. First of all I priced how much it would cost to get a semi-circular set of bleachers for a 120 to be made and they laughed. Costs a fortune. 100,000 pounds or something.

Then I sat down with design and said, 'what can we do if we break up all the bleachers, can we build anything around them.' And she came up with the idea that if we broke them into four lots of 30 and built staircases up to them, tapered. It was a brilliant design thing.

It was not just that you designed, but it must be a functional design. It must be able to get into studio in the hour set aside to rig it and it must be able to get out of studio in the half hour set aside to derig it. Those are constraints from the designer's point of view. It's all right having the grandiose idea, she has to design how all these pieces get put together in that short space of time, and that they can get stored.

So she came around all of that, and I also said I wanted something up the back where he can go right around. Because I wanted him to be able to go anywhere in that audience. There's no safe seat in that set. No seat is more than two people away from Gerry.

I wanted him to have the freedom to move around that set. I didn't want to add the burden to him of saying, 'you must hit this mark when you're doing that.' That takes a load of studio presentation requirements away from him and lets him get on with the performance."

Cathal Goan, ("Cúrsaí"):

"We basically have two areas, and we have no downstage to get our presenters up and walk and do anything different from these seated positions, which in the current affairs-type programme which we do Monday to Thursday is fine. But on a Friday night for instance we have a bit of cookery and all sorts of things. It'd be nice to be in the position where we could walk one of the presenters over to somewhere where somebody is about to perform a piece of music.

The lighting rig in Studio 4 is fixed. Studio 4 has 'Live at 3', 'Cúrsaí', 'Nuacht' and 'Nighthawks', five nights a week and 'Kenny Live' at the weekend. That place has phenomenal output for a studio that isn't even commissioned."

#### **A.13.d: SHOTS/VISUAL VARIETY**

On the question of shots and visual variety, Michael Garvey was very much a maverick among producers when he argued for the 'talking head':

"There's a lot of talk in television that it's got to be 'visual'. You find all sorts of pictures being added to things which in fact are, not alone superfluous, they're distracting. And there is nothing quite so good as strong meat and matter.

(Q: So you don't shy away from the notion of 'talking heads'?)

Not at all.

(Q: So what is the difference between having talking heads on television and having a radio programme?)

Largely that people 'read' heads. A good deal of what we get out of a conversation is the way we 'interpret' ... 'interpret' is too active a word. We have notions about the layout of people's faces and what they're doing with their skin while they're saying something. And that skin in operation allows us an access and a kind of familiarisation, also a kind of personal experience of the person that we make judgements on.

There's an awful lot of people who get nervous about talking heads and they cut away to interviewers and to long shots and the devil knows what else. And that's actually an anxiety about themselves and it interferes with people at home who are in the process of examining peoples' faces.

Cutaway shots break the continuity. It's like the rhythm of speech - again and again you'll find conversations that fall into quite clean patterns in terms of tempo.

What's difficult about politicians at the moment is that in broadcasting they have been all taught devices to confound their natural rhythms. They have found methods that allow them to think while actually using their mouths. And this interferes with the truth of their persons and this is unfair to them as well as to the people who are trying to get information from them".

Cathal Goan, in commenting on shot sizes, also thought that there was little to be learnt in the study of politicians' faces:

"I'm very against the BCU (big Close-up) in television interviews, because I think that they are overused. There's a sort of technique of getting into these terribly tight shots of politicians' faces hoping to see the drops of sweat dripping off their nose as their third lie becomes apparent. It's one of those cliches, it's gone.

We vary the shots. It starts with a mid-shot and gets into an MCU (mid close-up), that's about as far as it goes. Sometimes we take long shots of people, but again, the set restricts us in that."

Peter Feeney actually designs his programme to give the viewer relief from the 'talking head' shot:

"The location report on Marketplace has a specific brief to be visually interesting. Because it is there partially as the meat in the sandwich, 'meat' isn't a good word. To lighten up to visually excite, whereas otherwise it's a rather studio-based programme.

We would at least be aware each week, of 'how successful was that report in getting away from the studio feel?' And that kind of minimum criterion we would have a



post-mortem on each week, saying, 'that didn't work, it was visually dull, or whatever.'

So, for example, picking football grounds yesterday (referring to previous night's programme report on the viability of stadia in Ireland) was a useful exercise. It allowed a level of noise and colour into the report, because otherwise it could have been pretty dull.

So it was part of the editorial reason for deciding to do that was because it was visually interesting. Now, you can't do that all the time. We did one three weeks ago on restaurants for exactly the same reason. 'This should have nice pictures in it and it's an interesting story, and it's a popular story.' We would ask that the location report be the most populist item in the programme each week."

Michael Heney, said that when it came to visuals, he was still learning:

"I'm still working out really the language of pictures and how it speaks. Strange thing to say, working in television, and have been since 1976. I'm not as visually literate as I should be and I regard myself as being educated all the time.

A picture speaks. It cries out to the audience. It tells the audience all kinds of things, which they are picking up in a way the words will never reach. They use their eyes, they like to use their eyes. They watch television screens, they don't always listen. Little details come through. You read the picture like you read a book. I haven't mastered the art of that yet. All the nuances. It's just an incredible business that, using the visual medium as a language. And this is what fascinates me as a journalist.

I seems to me like it's a craft that you could work at forever and hopefully just improve all the time. And that's what I hope about my own work, that I'm learning a bit more about how to use television and how to develop its potential."

For Hilary Orpen, adding visual variety to a programme was part of the simplification process of television:

"I'm just aware of trying to make it a television programme rather than a radio programme. You can have a super interview on data protection on radio but on television you don't really want that. You need to have the material displayed in some way. So we probably use library footage and have quite a big graphics input.

(Q: Does that make decisions about the choice of items? Does it mean you go for softer items or you end up trivialising items because of the need for visual material?)

We might simplify alright, but television does that anyway, by its nature. I don't think we generally trivialise. We have to simplify because you have to. You can't have 15 rows of bits of information about a product, you have to bring it down to

three lines if you're going to display it visually. But that often makes sense. That often makes it clearer."

### **A.13.e: CONTENT**

Producers face a variety of constraints when choosing or devising the content of a show, but a unique constraint was placed on Kevin Linehan when he was assigned to produce the National Lottery-sponsored show, "Winning Streak":

"The constraints that we had to operate under, under the National Lotteries Act made it (Winning Streak) unlike any other game show you could imagine. Because there can be no element of skill.

What are you going to do? You have this money on offer, how are you going to give it away in a way that has some kind of drama to it? Some kind of tension to it? That the punter at home is going to get some entertainment from it.

'Is he going to get the question right?' Like all the classic moments of tension in any kind of a quiz show were eliminated because of that. It has to be a random chance game of chance. And part of the buzz and mechanism of it is to try and disguise the fact that there is no skill, there is no real drama, other than, 'Is he going to make the right choice or the wrong choice?', in a random way.

And I looked at some the American equivalents of the show and they are incredibly boring. One of them was what the National Lotteries originally proposed. It was a display of 15 numbered squares. Each player would pick a number and it would turn and you would have, maybe, \$2,000 or \$3,000 in it. You just continued doing that until all the 15 had been turned, and 'good night'. Which is not very good television.

So it was a difficult thing to devise. It wouldn't be my idea of a format, but within the constraints that we had to work under, I think it's pretty effective."

Another producer less than happy with the content of his programme was Ed Mulhall, editor of the "Six-One News":

"I think it's too long. (51 mins.) Quite often you're stretched to fill it with the quality I would like, particularly at moment in the current climate.

There are occasions when something has been done purely for the One o'clock (news). That would be a press conference or a launch. Which is a story which is done on the hop, for the One o'clock, to fill, because filling the One o'clock means

the newsroom is continually under pressure to do it. And that determines things being done in a hurry.

When you get to the Six and you're using one of those stories for the One o'clock that haven't been added to or reworked, is where you're filling with material (of poor quality).

(Q: What's a 'weak story'?)

A weak story is a story which has no extra element put to it. If you wonder why something is in a news bulletin, that's a weak story.

(Q: Is that a press launch with no other angle on it?)

There's an awful lot of things that are just done for pure PR purposes and it's arguable that they live on as news. And there's a conundrum all the time about what place regional reports have in a news bulletin. And whether you should be broadcasting specifically to a regional audience. Or, whether you are using news criteria in the same way as regards every story.

I tend to be biased towards news criteria rather than covering things because they come from a specific, or because you don't have enough outside Dublin stories. My own personal belief is that you can't water down your criteria (because of the rural bias in the audience) unless you make a distinct decision that you're doing a thing aimed at a rural audience.

I live in Wicklow and I come from Kildare. I might be interested in something that's happening in Wicklow and Kildare but I might not be interested in something that's happening in Sligo or in Kerry, just because I live outside Dublin. But I would be interested in something if it's news even though it may be in India, or London or Dublin.

This is a view that would not be universally held, and it could be argued that RTE should be broadcasting specifically to an outside Dublin audience as well - to maintain an outside Dublin audience. I would argue that as long as you have a specific programme aimed at doing that, fine. But if you're doing a programme that is a national news programme, well then you should just judge things in national terms."

Frank Hand believed that the content of his show was not matched to the slot:

"I think the Nature of Things should be going out at 8.30 rather than at 7.30. Because at that hour of the evening people are more inclined to sit down and absorb information. Whereas 'Zero' was designed to be snappy. The information content was quite small, it was more a question of excitement and colour and movement and music."

The "Late Late Show's" content is often a mixture of the serious and trivial. Gay Byrne recalls criticisms of this format:

"From the time the Late Late Show started we started doing it. We warned by all the toffee-nosed critics that we couldn't do it. That it wasn't going to work that the Late Late Show, they said, 'must make up its mind whether it's a light entertainment programme or whether it's a serious current affairs programme. I never saw why. And I didn't believe them and we went ahead and did what we were doing. And 28 years later we're still doing it.

They were wrong and we were right. You can mix them. There's no necessity to separate them."

Gerry Stembridge wrote the script for his film drama, "The Truth About Clare". He chose the subject matter for one reason - to provoke the audience:

"It's really about prejudice. Abortion is the chosen subject because I wanted a subject which more than any other one in Ireland, I think, immediately divides people. Even makes people feel they ought to have a position. I mean there are some issues where people say, 'well I don't really care either way'. Nobody dares say that about abortion.

'I don't care, whatever you're having yourself'. Although a lot of people would feel that view. But they have to say they're either virulently for or virulently against. Through the 80's with things like the Anne Lovett, Kerry Babies and all those sorts of things, where suddenly private sexual matters became the property of whatever political grouping wanted to use it to emphasise whatever point they made. Be it right-wing or left-wing.

I wanted to examine how, if an issue like that came up, how we would react to it. It's more interesting because the way we react tells us about our initial prejudices, than about the issue itself.

So I constructed this fictional story of this happily married, middle-class woman, already got two children. You I deliberately didn't go for a kind of sympathetic abortion case. You know 'raped at fifteen, blah, blah'.

So apparently quite happily married woman, happily settled, who decides she wants to have an abortion. She has an abortion, subsequently commits suicide, within two days. Now that has already happened when the drama starts. Now what the drama is about is the documentary which is being made and which is trying to investigate what is the truth about Clare.

And it proceeds then through a series of interviews and flashback encounters with the people who were closest to her. Through them we see, they all have their view, and they all have their interpretation of what happened. To the point where



we constantly see scenes repeated but with different emphasis because they remember it differently or they remember a different bit of it.

And then the final section is we actually see the documentary as finished, with the prejudice of the director/editor.

What I would be interested in seeing does the programme provoke exactly the kind of prejudices that these people represent."

When Hilary Orpen was appointed to set up "Look Here" she knew the content was to be consumer affairs items. She studied British programmes and their research to see how they covered the topic and what reaction there was to their coverage:

"Programme-makers often think that they (audience) like a long, in-depth investigation; a half-hour documentary on a crook. Other programmes that have done that have found that people turned off their television sets.

What they like, what they seem to like, to judge from Britain, is fast-moving short items. A mixture of items. Snappy. With information. One of the things that turns programme-makers off, but is perhaps the most popular of all is product reports.

'Which washing-machine works best. Which is worst. What playpen is dangerous, which is best value'. All that sort of stuff that we might think is really boring, but apparently people love it. Even if they've no intention of buying a playpen or a camera; they like the information and they file it away.

(Q:What makes a good story?)

For a consumer programme, someone who's sympathetic who's been taken for a ride by a crook. (laughs) Now there's no point in being vice versa, a crook who's been ripped off by a nice person by accidents

All the usual ingredients have to be there. A simple story where the person is really persuasive, would work much better than people who've had serious things done to them.

We had this unfortunate woman. She got married last summer. They paid the money for their wedding photographs and the guy came, showed her photographs, she paid more money and he went off. Luckily he left her one or two, the proofs. Then he disappeared and he hasn't been seen since. So her record of her wedding has completely disappeared.

I talked to her on the phone and she was a delightful woman, went out and filmed her and she made total light of it. 'Ah well sure it doesn't matter, sure we're all well anyway. Maybe he's not well.' Useless."

Adrian Moynes has a certain content he would like to see on 'Jo-Maxi' as a rule, and it doesn't include large scale studio discussions which have been popular for young people's programmes in the past:

"We are concerned to be some kind of a showcase for what young people in this country are doing. And therefore I would be very concerned that people would, in the course of the programme, speak Irish as appropriate; that we would have kids in playing classical music. That we would have kids in doing dance of all kinds, that we would have items about skateboarding. I don't care what kids are doing. If they're writing poetry, if they're doing sport, if they'r playing music, if they're watching movies.

We should be reflecting the energy, the enthusiasm, the attainment that they exhibit in all those activities. I feel you must try to give as well-informed a treatment as you can. I have big, big problems about filling a studio with kids and, lets say, 'the football is the Leaving Cert.; let's kick this around.' It goes nowhere.

What I'm much more interested in finding out. is there a group, or an agency that has got some considered programme that involves, perhaps, role-playing drama. Some kind of considered mechanism for giving youngsters the language to deal with their own experiences in a reflective way. And can we do that? Can we put that on screen? And whether it's a Third World issue, or whatever, that's what we want."

### **A.13.f: STUDIO AUDIENCES**

Most of RTE's Variety and Music programmes have studio audiences. The audiences are seated on mobile rows of seats known as 'bleachers' which are wheeled from studio to studio. The station does not have a purpose-built television theatre for audience shows, but the variety show, "Play the Game" is recorded in a theatre in St. Vincent's hospital near the Montrose complex. Normally, RTE does not use canned applause or laughter to give the impression of greater reaction or a larger audience.

Gay Byrne described the audience for the "Late Late Show" as too small and very unpredictable:

"I do a warm-up every week. As soon as I walk in at nine or five past nine, I know that I have either 120 sacks of flour or 120 good people. A very good indication is if I get a round of applause. Last week I walked on to the sound of my own footsteps. But you work on them for half an hour. You work them up. But then the problem is there's only 120 of them. That's 60 couples. Now it's likely that a husband and wife share the same sort of humour or the same sort of attitude.

It doesn't leave much leeway. It's been the scourge of the Late Show in my opinion since we started. And I believe the minimum audience for the Late Show is 350 and I would rather work on about 500. Not many more than that. But there's only 120 people there, and that's why the applause on so many RTE shows sounds like three pigeons walking on a corrugated iron roof.

Whereas the applause on other shows, on the Wogan show, you really know there's a theatre full of people there. And when they applaud, they applaud and when they laugh, they laugh. We've tried every possible way to try and control that audience and there is no way of controlling it. But you have the consolation of hearing from theatre people, both legit and vaudeville, who tell you that exactly the same thing happens in theatre.

On one night a week they're doing exactly the same show and they die, because the audience is dead. Every four or five weeks on the Late Show I walk on and....nothing.

(During warm-up) I talk to them and do the few gags and do the run through. And tell them about the studio and do the cameras and what to expect and work them up and then we go on the air and they're either with you or they're not.

The other thing is, they come to us about eight. They're in the studio about twenty to nine. The heat tends to be appalling on occasion. And they're there until half eleven. And you can see them, no more than ourselves, from eleven o'clock onwards, they're beginning to wilt.

(Q: Why do you make them aware of the technology?)

Because that's what they're there to see. They want to be told that's a camera, that's a microphone and they're cables and this is what you look out for. They come to have a gawk..

They come first of all to see what they're going to get. That's now part of the Late Late Show, and we have only ourselves to blame for that. It's a bit of a scourge, but we're stuck with it now. They come to be seen, and they want to gawk around and see what happens to Gay and what happens to cameras during the commercial breaks and all that sort of thing. They're not really there to enjoy a show as they would in the theatre."

On "Secrets", the audience are an essential part of the show. Kevin Linehan described, how, after the first show was broadcast, the audience coming into studio knew they were part of the act and knew what was required of them:

"We need a lively youngish audience, in sort of 20's, 30's age bracket. When I used to work on the Late Late it was always the first thing, 'jeez that audience were dire', or 'that audience were great tonight'.

Like a dead audience on the Late Late..... And often it's not just that they don't talk, it's just that they sit there. I mean 120 stony silent people can really drag what's on. Even good performers can get dragged down. It's worse than in theatre because it's so intense. Such a short period of time for performers.

The audiences when they come in (to "Secrets") are keyed up. They're not just coming in to sit down on their hands. The people who want to come to the programme are interested in being a part of the programme. So they're a good lively audience and they're the age group that we're looking for."

#### **A.13.g: PIECES TO CAMERA**

Pieces to camera are shots of the presenter or reporter looking into the camera and addressing the viewer directly. Some of the producers used the technique as little as possible:

Frank Hand, "The Nature of Things":

"I would try and keep, say pieces to camera in particular to a minimum. My number one priority would be script and then pieces to camera would be less than that.. But pictures and the people themselves telling the story would come first of all, where possible."

Hilary Orpen, "Look Here":

"I don't like PTCs unless they're going to be an addition to a report. Unless you're in a snowdrift. Or unless the Red Army is marching behind you.

Our film reports are done in semi-documentary style and it's the interviewees you want to hear and see. Unless it's really grabbing. Just the face to camera stuff, even from interviewees can be boring. Unless they're wonderful, then it holds like anything.

But I would prefer not to see a reporter. The best film stories are about people and those are the people you want to be seeing.

Or if you're going out to buy a new sweeping-brush and you're comparing sweeping-brushes. Fine to see the reporter then. We tend not to it like that. Because we save film resources by doing most of our product reports on stills. So we get another film report cheaply out of it.

My favourite TV programmes are ones where you don't even hear the reporter even in voiceover. Where the people are telling the story. And it's very hard to do. It really is then their programme and you're totally into them."

Margaret Gleeson, "Wednesday Report":

"I would only use a piece to camera unless you couldn't show it some other way. That's the style on this series. And sometimes I would try and tell the story without voiceover. Get the people to tell the story. But it depends the type of programme. There are some programmes, where, if you've nobody else to give an authority to a story, well then a reporter is very important. Then the viewer can identify who this person is.

A reporter can be very important on a story like this (poverty) he's getting out all the information and helping the people tell their story."

#### **A.13.h: PROGRAMME TYPE**

Some producers specialise (e.g. TV sport) but most can move from one programme type to another. Adrian Moynes moved from Features to Young People's; a move he found offered greater freedom in programme-making:

"Most of it is about telling stories well and being clear and keeping the people interested. And the nice thing about Young People's (Dept.) is that you can do that in myriad ways. You can use drama, use competitive elements.

I got fascinated by this thing of doing interviews with people, but not doing them as interviews but as mini-dramas. For instance, we shot a thing yesterday about a skateboard convention in Dun Laoghaire. And rather than just interview the guy who was running it, we put him outside the front of it. He was the bouncer, right?

And the presenter arrives on the skateboard and tries to talk his way past the bouncer to get in to take part, and elicits the information in this... And it pushes you into narratives, which is what television is about.



Rather than the current affairs piece to camera and you cut into the head at his desk with the books behind him, and blah blah blah."

Michael Heney made the move from Features to Current Affairs and regretted the move:

"Current affairs programmes are made under enormous pressures of time and deadlines. In terms of television production you're trying to produce against the clock, and in straitened circumstances.

In Features and Drama, they're further along the spectrum in terms of the crafting. The material is given, it's not gathered quickly and put together quickly. There's more opportunity to craft the material, in terms of sound and music and structuring the programme.

And having done a year, year and a half, involved in training producers, I had decided my career needed to change direction and I was interested in learning new skills in terms of putting more crafting into my work."

### **A.13.i: FILM VS. STUDIO**

Programmes can be made completely in studio or completely on location or as a combination of the two. Usually producers don't have much of a choice - the amount of time and resources allocated to them pretty much determines how they will make their programme. (As seen in an earlier chapter, the Check Up programme only had enough filming and editing time to allow them produce 18 minutes of material on film per week. This meant that the rest of the 26 minute show had to originate in studio.)

If Hilary Orpen and Dermot Horan had the choice they wouldn't use studio at all:

Hilary Orpen, "Look Here":

"My preference would have been to do a completely filmed programme. It wasn't possible. We were given studio. We had to use studio. We didn't have enough resources to do the whole thing on film.

I just think it's fresher on film or video. Whereas studio, especially Studio 2 here, tends to look dead. It doesn't have any depth. It's two-dimensional. It always

looked the same. 'Today Tonight' looks the same as 'Marketplace' looks the same as whatever.

Given the fact that we'd studio. What I wanted to do was make studio more interesting. So that's why we came up with animated stings (film clips) to break between items and to keep the set very minimalist. But to use it in a way that was, perhaps new for Studio 2.

Ideally I would have liked, say Vidiwalls, and banks of monitors that we could have rearranged. And if a presenter is talking about something like cars, the Vidiwall would have shown it. We couldn't afford a Vidiwall.

So we went back to the old-fashioned concept of Chromakey. It's quite versatile but it has its drawbacks. The drawbacks are technical, and they take time to resolve. But we've used it and I think it does look fresh. I think it does look different from other magazine programmes and that was the idea; to give the programme an identity. And make it visually interesting. I think it's reasonably successful.

We thought of a set that would be the inside of a fridge or a freezer, all those sorts of ideas. But they were going to be too expensive. Then the sort of clean, Japanese lines of a barcode were suggested. So they had to be black and white or black and grey and then a dash of colour would have been the red. And we thought those would have been quite good colours. Bright, fresh, kind of supermarket if you like. Consumer rather than medical."

Dermot Horan, "Head to Toe":

"Last year every week we had a meeting on Monday morning. Pool in our ideas. Everybody had loads of ideas. And then I'd say, 'ok, studio ideas'. And then there'd be a pause and then, 'oh we could do that, but it'd be better on film.'

It became apparent that more and more things would be better out on the road. Last year in studio, every week, the same background. The models came out. And ok, the studio was like a boutique and we had a few shoppers in the background and clothes hanging up and they were always current. But, it was still the same background, so it wasn't much better than 'Live at 3', where they twirl and go off. And you want different background.

The thing of going to all Beta (i.e. Beta videotapes used in portable equipment: that is to say shooting completely on location.); I wanted to do it last year. I wouldn't say I made a few enemies, but was talked about belligerently at a few facilities meetings. That I was a troublemaker, because I was saying, 'ok, we don't do it here. Why don't we do it outside in a facilities house.'

I got all sorts of great value quotes offered. 26 weeks of work, the prestige of working for RTE and all the rest. I got some great deals. If we were shooting on Beta the tapes were costing us next to nothing. It'd be 800 pounds a week on film, ok

it was process free, but there was an awful lot of film being shot and we often had to shoot at high ratio at fashion shows or vox pops.

I worked out that it wouldn't cost us any more to go outside. But then of course the whole political thing. On reflection it was possibly a bit naive of me. Y'know, to go outside means you're actually using outside facilities. The whole idea at the moment is to try and use the resources here to their 99% capacity.

Anyway it got them thinking. I know Tony O'Connor (the Head of Post-production) was thinking about it anyway. And he and Eamonn Hayes (another post-production manager), started coming to me last Spring and saying to me, 'are you still interested in this Beta? Are you still interested in this idea of offlining?' (part of a two-stage video editing process).

'We want to do it as well.' So instead of fighting them, they love me now, because they're pushing for offline. And Tony O'Connor is saying to me, 'I have to fight your case up in the Admin. Block because they think, 'why are you editing something twice?' They don't understand that.

I have Bob Duffy (editor) working for me all day. I left him with stuff, like I would a film editor. And I'll go and see him in the evening. And if I don't like it I can cut things out and we can discuss it."

### **A.13.j: WORLD CUP HIGHLIGHTS**

One of the great challenges to RTE during the research period was the coverage of the World Cup. As well as broadcasting the matches, which were watched by millions, RTE also provided a highly popular analysis around each game. The panellists, Eamonn Dunphy and John Giles used highlights of the game to illustrate their comments. They also used a graphics pen (with a 'bitpad') to highlight players and movements.

John O'Brien, the producer of the World Cup coverage, explained how the highlights were organised:

"We had somebody watching all the matches and shotlisting them. There were two, and if we could spare them, three people sitting with the panel on the floor. And as the event happened; a near goal or a penalty or a miss, or a goal even, that was numbered and given a name.

And the three people or the two people took a quarter each. Person A took the first quarter of the match. At the end of his quarter, he had maybe three items or four down on his list. He then left the studio and went down to the VTR area.



Each time an item was mentioned by the panel, about 30 seconds later that tape was taken out of the machine, so when the guy from the floor got to VTR there were four tapes there for him. (VTR) would listen to the producer in studio and a name would be given to the thing like, "Gullitt Shot", and a number, so when the guy came up these four items were there ready for him.

So he either edited them off onto a separate tape or just cued them up individually on their own tapes. And then the second guy came up at half time. And when we were in the break, we made a decision of how many of the eight items would be in and what they're names were.

Now, it's a little bit more complicated than that because a number of them needed to be specially treated, like slow motion added where it hadn't been there originally. And we'd superb guys working in VTR who did that in double quick time. I don't think it could have worked better.

They settled down into (the bitpad) very quickly. There was an initial reluctance because it was new and untried, but at the end of the day it worked well. (laughs) The spit in particular was good." (Instead of highlighting outstanding football at one stage the panellists raised a laugh, by highlighting the spitting habits of various players.)

#### **A.13.k: QUALITY CONTROL**

Several of the producers commented that they didn't get to view everything broadcast on their show:

Ed Mulhall, "Six-One News":

"On the main stories you tend to have a very good knowledge of what's in them. You know what's coming back and you may see some stuff in editing as it's coming through. A lot of stuff for me in the Six would have had a genesis in the One o'clock (bulletin). On the key stories I would tend to talk to the reporters and I would determine the way some of the stories would be done.

But as regards seeing every report before it goes out on air, we don't. The main reason for it is the volume of material. And logistically as we're currently organised, a lot of the main stories come back too late, they're edited too late. It's not the most desirable. In an ideal situation, you should see every report.

There's a director who directs it. I'm in studio and I operate the computer in studio which drops or changes items. And there is a sifting system in all the scripts and details go through what used to be called the chief sub and is currently called the programme editor, who sees all the scripts.

(Q: Who checks pictures? Is there a picture editor?)

No there isn't, the content of the individual reports are left to the reporters themselves. Or the subs who would work on them. Some reports are compiled back here. Other people's work taken in from Belfast, or wherever. A lot of material goes through other people's hands, before it goes out on air. All lead-in scripts go through the chief sub."

Cathal Goan, "Cúrsaí":

"(Q: Would you check all the scripts and see all packages before they go out?)  
Most days yeah. I would see most packages, but not all of them."

Niall Mathews, "Fair City":

"I'm not (in the box during shooting), but I have a feed (sound and picture and production talkback) up to the office.

The director is downstairs, you can ring straight through to the box. And there are occasions when you ring. It's unfortunate, you have to look at it out of the corner of your eye and you miss huge wads of it as it's going through. I would prefer to be able to monitor it all the time. We do have checks and balances along all the steps of production. Everyone knows they're being monitored, and producers give notes during their run-throughs on the floor of the studio."

### **A.13.1: ENTERTAINMENT VS. INFORMATION**

Because programmes are made in various departments, there is the tendency to think of some as purely serious information programmes and others as light entertainment shows. Margaret Gleeson made current affairs programmes but insisted they had to be entertaining as well:

"I always try and identify with somebody. So that the person (viewer) knows who this person (subject of film) is. It sounds a kind of strange word, but it's entertainment in the broadest sense, because you can't just do, say a documentary on, 'women in mounjoy'. It's human experiences.

Sometimes a programme can move someone to tears. I'm doing this programme on poverty and I'm saying, 'it's quite good I'm shooting it in the winter rather than in the summer.' I'm not looking for pretty pictures and blue skies and that. I'm looking for people huddled up against the wind, bleakness. Those images would all be used to externalise poverty, as well as somebody talking about it.

In this particular sequence of filming we did; when the woman and her daughter came out their front door and the daughter had her little nylon anorak on her and her white summer boots on her and she was slipping and sliding in the snow. And they were huddled up. I mean that to me all contributed to the image of poverty.

I wouldn't show blazing fires (not that they had any). You are selecting all the time. Each time you point the camera."

Peter Feeney included entertainment as a part of the business programme's brief:

"We fill half an hour of television a week with something different. That's a cynical answer but it's also an important answer because RTE's first concern is getting programmes out and getting audiences in and using resources efficiently. I think the programme does all of that. But that's only answering on one level.

At a next level, I'd have to say entertainment, in truth. That is that you make a programme that people enjoy watching."

#### **A.13.m: SCRIPTING: Frank Hand ('Nature of Things')**

(Q: How much do you get involved in the script?)

"It depends on the programme. Sometimes I would draft out practically everything. I didn't do it for this one (metal detectors vs. archaeologists) because John (Murray - Reporter) knew the story and had the information in his head an awful lot more than I did. But for the one we did on tree rings - I had given John a very strong outline, so it varies.

It might be quite late before I get to see a script because we're Beta (video) editing on a Sunday. And it hadn't actually been packaged until 10 pm on Sunday night, and we're in dubbing at 10 am on Monday morning. So that makes life very difficult. And it's the area where more time would...

Filming and time for scripting would be the two areas. If I was told you can have extra time for this...I wouldn't take extra time for studio. I would take extra time for re-writing script. Take two or three days and we'll do a script over again. Because I think it's crucial, because the flow of the programme can be lost completely if the script doesn't lead you from A to B to C.

(Q: Is the script the engine of the programme?)

Very much so.

(Q: And is it dragging the pictures with it?)

It depends on the particular story. I think you can have very good pictures but the can go nowhere.

(Q: So you only bring in the script when you are trying to change the direction of the programme?) Yes

### **A.13.n: DIRECTORS**

Traditionally RTE producers have also directed the programme in the studio, although in RTE and in other television stations there is a grade of employee, known as Studio Director who has learned and developed specialist skills required for studio operations. Some larger, or more complex programmes are assigned a director to take over studio preparations and direction. For some producers like Hilary Orpen, "Look Here", it can be difficult to get used to handing over that responsibility:

"(Q: And do you have your own director committed to you?)

He does Today Tonight as well. And he (director) was inclined to shoot long, whereas I was wanting more intimate all the time. And I'm still at that battle.

(Q: And do you sit into studio with them.)

Yeah. And I don't say a word. (laughs) I try not to say a word".

Gay Byrne (Late Late Show), is in the unusual position of being Presenter and Producer making it impossible for him to direct the show also, even if he wanted to. He has no difficulty leaving the director's job to the director:

(Re. coverage of musical item)

"I wouldn't have had much input into that. He (director) probably felt he needed a fourth camera in studio to do something or other. That would be his bailiwick completely. I would comment on it. I would see it on monitor and say, 'yeah, that's a nice shot.' There were two or three shots on the little girls on the piano I liked last week, and I told him so. But by and large I wouldn't be telling him what shots to take.

I would look after the content. I tend to say, 'that's his problem'. And for years that's the way it worked with Adrian (Cronin - former director). All of that end of it, let him take care of it. His job is to get the pictures on the air. If there was one particularly awful or delightful shot, we would talk about it on Monday."

**A.13.o: EMBARRASSING AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Kevin Linehan ('Secrets')**

(Re. surprising audience members with a surprise date.)

"You have to be very careful when you do something like that. What we do is we send a researcher to the individual's workplace to have a look at them. Get chatting to somebody there. Find out who the person's friend is. Then contact the friend. Tell the friend exactly what we plan to do.

- 'I don't know if you know this guy. He comes in...'
- 'Oh yeah, I do.'
- 'Well he fancies her; what do you think her reaction would be if she was in studio and Gerry suddenly dragged her out?'
- 'Ah, she'd be good craic. She'd enjoy that.'

If they said, 'Oh God. Mmmm. I don't know. She'd be embarrassed.' Well, then we'd forget her. Because firstly we don't want to embarrass people. And secondly it's no good to us if they are embarrassed.

(Q: It's not an entertainment in itself to see someone embarrassed?)

No. It's very difficult to get the balance right. Because I think that there are times on the show when the viewer can perceive that somebody is being used by us. And that's absolutely the wrong kind of tone that I'm trying to achieve.

The tone should be that they are enjoying themselves, that they have made a bit of an eejit of themselves but that it's good clean harmless fun. They get well looked after and they get something for their troubles and they go away having enjoyed themselves."

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

*"Surprisingly perhaps, there was little mention of protest action on the part of the producers."*

This was a line in the final chapter of a draft of this thesis when it was first submitted in September 1991. Since then much has happened in RTE. In January and February, 1992, there was a four-week strike in the station.

It was about the numbers working on a film crew, but almost all non-management staff in the station joined the strike and left work. Although, the initial reason for the industrial action was the dispute with the film crews, many of those on the picket lines had their own reasons for feeling aggrieved and supporting such a long dispute. For the producers some of those reasons can be found in this study.

As for their apparent passivity, the producers emerged from the dispute as one of the most angry and energised sections; and as soon as it was over they formed their own group to campaign for better conditions and improved quality programming.

The effects of that strike on the company are worth further study and this work will be valuable as a record of practice and opinion there just prior to the dispute.

The following discussion refers to moods and attitudes now changed but is of historical interest nonetheless.....



"He noticed that a certain apathy had settled on the station. He also noticed the flowering of business terminology, the increased emphasis on systems-analytic descriptions of 'problems', the obsession everybody had with costings. The station had all the verbal trappings of a factory, as well as the alienation of the employees of such an enterprise."  
(Doolan et al, 1969:222)

That is a description of Bob Quinn's impressions on his return to RTE from travelling in America in Autumn 1968. If he were to return today (1991), his overriding impression might be of 'frustration', or 'anxiety' rather than 'apathy'.

The research period came at the end of a very exciting time for RTE television: there had been a surge in home-produced programming in an attempt to win audiences from British stations, and it had worked. Even though they had access to some of the most acclaimed television produced by some of the wealthiest production companies in the world, Irish audiences loved Irish television. And RTE TV was packing them in, ratings climbed steadily during the 80's. RTE, for its size and wealth and public service requirements, was able to give them what they wanted and did it well, and that was a source of great pride for many in the station.

Then came the cutbacks, the broadcasting legislation, TV3, new technology and the 'can do' feeling began to ebb. The push was still on to produce Irish shows but with what? The resources were being whittled away, the support of the government was dissipating, support of management for what production staff saw as 'quality' practices was being eroding and to cap it all, TV3 was coming to take away some of the audience.

Perhaps in a few years, a study such as this might find an overwhelming impression of apathy, but not in 1989-1990. Everything was too fluid, too much happening, RTE staff were still at the stage of the immediate reactions to the changes: nervousness and anger.

One said: "All you hear all the time is, 'there's no money, no money, no money'; and I just think it's kind of a bit demoralised in here at the moment. Now, whether that changes again or not, I don't know."

Many of them tailored their needs and reduced their standards. For example, just to keep up output in "the sausage factory", Cathal Goan said he worked seven days a week, and at that he still didn't have time to check all the packages being broadcast in his show. Nor did he have time, along with the other producers to "stand back" and analyse what they were doing on a day-to-day basis.

Gerry Stembridge said he wrote the script to suit the straitened circumstances and Margaret Gleeson sometimes went to interviews without being prepared, although both of them suggested that the way to get better resources and higher standards was not to finish the programme, to just leave the slot empty for once.

Although Michael Heney gave an example of that happening on "Wednesday Report": When a report was held from transmission for legal reasons and there was no other report in the cupboard, the station just transmitted another programme instead, a repeat of a "Today Tonight" report on South Africa shown several months previously.

And of course, the producers were still aware of the British stations beaming more lavish programmes into their territory. Kevin Linehan and Dermot Horan both quoted a figure of a quarter of a million pounds being spent on individual sets in the UK; Margaret Gleeson said the British have months to do what she has to do in days and Adrian Moynes thought that his show is doing what two separate programmes would do in Britain.

In both the diaries there are examples of the affects of money shortages: Even though there had been several weeks research, personnel assigned and a variety of arrangements made, the Armenia story only actually got the 'go-ahead' when Aeroflot said they would subsidise the airfares. And in the Infertility story, even though there were three interviewees lined up in Co. Galway, the team still felt they had to line up another story in order to justify the trip.

In the producer review, Frank Hand was too busy editing another report to attend the filming one of the programme's most important interview.

In fact most of the producers had a story to tell of the effects of cutbacks on their work. For example, Hilary Orpen told how they confronted a suspected fraudster, only to find the tape unusable because necessary maintenance hadn't been carried out on the equipment. And Kevin Linehan said he lost a whole weekly item from his show, because it became too expensive.

Speaking generally, Gerry Stembridge, explained how the belt-tightening was affecting quality: the managers push the producers to get more out of their resources, so the producers push the crews to compromise and produce a poorer quality which they would never have done years ago.

Although Stembridge, like Mathews found he could alter his scripts to accommodate the cutbacks. They work in Drama, but Michael Heney felt the same trimming was not possible in current affairs; instead, he said, high-cost activities, like investigative journalism, were going by the board.



Some shows were escaping the bite. The "Late Late Show" still had the same budget, but according to Gay Byrne they were suffering because of the 1990 Broadcasting Act: Because of cap on RTE in the Act, there were fewer ad breaks, they were shorter, and they had to be taken within their assigned hour. This meant the show lost valuable break time during which they could move props and instruments around, and it also meant that Byrne now had to interrupt interviews just to take a break on time.

Most of the other producers were unsure as to the effects of the Act. Horan and Moynes were concerned it would affect their ability to work with sponsors; most of the rest saw it resulting in further cutbacks. Stembridge said that RTE management could sabotage the law by challenging the government, but Orpen reckoned the Act was here to stay because the RTE case against it had no public support.

Most producers were also unsure of the effect of TV3's arrival or even whether it would arrive at all. Garvey and Moynes, thought it wouldn't. Goan and Gleeson thought that if it did it would be good for RTE, especially, according to Goan, by making the management appreciate their employees more.

The broadcasters disagreed with many of the views referred to in the literature review. Particularly the notion that in their position they are supporting the existing social order for the benefit of an elite group.

The Variety producer said their function was merely to mirror the society. Others said their role was to question Irish society and expose injustice. Margaret Gleeson thought her job was to fight complacency and to give access to those who didn't have a voice. Cathal Goan hoped the questioning would lead to a desire for change on the part of the viewer. And Hilary Orpen thought that the job of her consumer programme was to contribute to change.

Michael Heney thought that despite a programme like Orpen's, RTE was still bent on supporting the consumer society, as Bob Quinn was quoted as saying in the Literature Review.

(Interestingly, after the 1991/92 season, the consumer programme was discontinued, while the business programme "Marketplace" was expanded and given a prime time slot.)

There were many other instances where the references in the literature review found resonance in the research findings.

For example, Horan spoke of the same sort of problems with studio crews as mentioned by Hobson, Silverstone and Hood. Garvey and others referred to the

'talking head' shot in much the same way as it was described by Schlesinger and Silverstone.

Heney and others used the storytelling idiom as mentioned by Sheehan, Bland and Silverstone; and Gleeson talked about 'identifying' with a character in the same way as Kevin Rockett had. And Margaret Gleeson also referred to herself as the main audience member as Schlesinger and Gunter had described being done in the UK and US. The RTE producers also displayed a similar ignorance of the audience as had been identified by those authors.

But the producers interviewed did agree with the researchers quoted that the main reason the audience watched was to be entertained and Feeney and Gleeson both said they made their programmes to be entertaining, even though one was making a programme on poverty and the other one on business.

And Horan, Byrne and the Variety producer agreed with Roeh et al that audiences were not a good source of original ideas.

Silverstone, talks about the reliance of the "Horizon" series on the scientific community; as shown in Chapter 3, the health programme "Check Up" relies similarly on the medical community. And the importance of the right interviewee/character to carry a story is seen in the references to Megan Dunne and her husband in the Infertility diary.

There were some exceptions to the experiences related in the literature. For example, few of the producers shared Roger Bolton's respect for newspaper reviews. Most saw them as just another source of feedback, although Orpen thought they could provide good publicity. And Heney and Hand found they were good for promoting a programme within RTE. Frank Hand even went as far as sending the reviewers cassettes of his programme to bring it to the attention of his own management. He wryly described how you can tell from a manager whether they've been watching a programme or not.

And whether RTE management's light touch is because they are being "unobtrusive" and permitting "the orthodox ideology to flourish" as Silverstone says, or because they are just not on the job is arguable.

Several of the producers talk about a lack of management involvement, and bemoaned their lack of guidance. Moynes says he only sees the managers when he wants something. Goan, Hand, Byrne told the same story. Although Cathal Goan said his department now had review meetings which he appreciated. Feeney also said he's left to his own devices, which he finds "uncritical", allowing him to just churn it out.

He says he's left alone because the show fills a slot, doesn't make too many demands or too much of a fuss, and because it is a business show, which goes down well with the top management.

Although Mathews said he was happy with the level of feedback from management. Most unusual was Stembridge who said he left RTE because they weren't working producers hard enough.

Talking to the producers you get the impression of less tension between them and the crews than that indicated in the literature. Gleeson was enthusiastic about RTE crews, as was Stembridge who said that it is the crew who made the programme and not the producer, however, he stressed the producer has to know when to stop taking suggestions and make a decision. Likewise Garvey thinks the RTE crews have a great goodwill towards a production and it takes a really boorish producer to quosh it. Linehan and O'Brien found that this goodwill was at its most obvious when the programme itself was a succes.

Also, the demand for the visual and the dramatic mentioned by several authors, was resisted in the production meeting in Chapter 2 when the option of doing a story on Siamese twins was rejected.

Although, Schlesinger, Gunter and others said practitioners worked with other practitioners in mind, none of the RTE producers said that they made their programmes for other producers.

As well as general disgruntlement about cutbacks, other dissatisfactions expressed by the producers include: presenter training being inadequate according to Dermot Horan. RTE, he said, expect people to be professionals the first time they appear on television; Cathal Goan is unhappy with the TAMs information, he felt they don't survey enough Irish speakers, which affects the rating for his show.

A point of almost complete agreement among the producers was that Pieces-to-Camera (where a reporter speaks to a camera during a report) are undesirable. They say it's preferable to have the story told by the subjects in interview, and that if the report could be made even without the reporter narrating, all the better.

Lastly, some curious comments from people who make their living in the medium: Kevin Linehan and Gerry Stembridge both said that they are not original in their ideas and that there is nothing new in TV; and Peter Feeney and Frank Hand said that TV is about packaging, according to Frank Hand, it's more about the way they sit than what they say.

**"(Before cutbacks) There was more time. There was a longer growth and development. You had actual time to watch other people's work. There was a kind of a 'golden days' operation....People not alone talked but knew each other's work and knew what people were trying to do.**

**In my early days there was a kind of huge emotional and intellectual anxiety about what we were actually doing. It doesn't exist, it seems to me, now. The propriety of actually being in charge of a monopoly was the concern of some of the producers, not all of them. About six. But you only need six people to enthuse and fire the lot. And where you could raise queries about the kind of emotional discharge of a programme rather than the fact that it ran under by 35 seconds."**

**Michael Garvey (Religious programmes)**

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX FOR DIARY ON INFERTILITY REPORT

### Appendix 1A.1 Notes on a conversation with Megan Dunne, Secretary of the Infertility Support Group on 18/8/89.

(NB As with all these appendices, the notes are actually quotes or points made by the interviewees unless other wise stated.)

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You should get the message across that it's possible to talk about infertility.

We have 200 couples come to our meetings but a lot more ring the telephone numbers listed on our leaflet.

It's easier to participate in the group in Dublin. Groups around the country won't organise - they're afraid of bumping into a neighbour.

Infertility is taboo because society has this image of people getting married and then starting a family. A couple are given a year or so to have children and then the jokes start - "anthin' stirrin'?"

It's easier for people who've actually decided not to have children to talk about it.

In an infertile couple, each of the partners feels they're letting the other down.

Most people assume the problem is with the woman. Most women feel they're the problem. More can go wrong with a woman.

Often infertility is caused by a small problem with the female, the male or both.

It's not my problem if people feel they have to make jokes about infertility. I tell people about our problem, but I don't go into details.

The ISG provides counsellors, holds meetings with guest speakers, publishes a newsletter, sends out leaflets and has a secretary to answer correspondence.

You don't have to wait years before being tested for infertility.

Older doctors don't know what's going on.

Fertility is more noticeable nowadays because people are getting married later and trying to have a family later.

Adoption: the age limit in some cases is 35 for the woman and 40 for the man. To adopt you have to agree to

give up work. They insist you give up going for treatment and often you must be a practising Catholic.

Couples don't consider adoption until it's too late.

I would try for an AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor) baby rather than adoption. You're judged on your suitability to adopt by your money. Less than 500 babies come up for adoption, 200 of those are adopted by their own families and almost 2,000 apply for adoption every year.

The middle-class have a better chance to adopt.

Sitting in the waiting-room for the fertility clinic can be terrible - you're all there for the same reason - some people become really obsessed with having a child - they talk about giving up work in order to relax.

Difficult when all your friends are all having babies - don't resent them - sometimes they change the conversation or avoid certain topics to spare your feelings but it doesn't bother me.

In the past people put infertility down to God's will.

People think I am relaxed and that's why I'm not pregnant.

If I had an AID baby I wouldn't tell anyone - not even the child. Eventually you forget how you had the baby. My husband is adopted and I don't know the history of his natural family so it's just like having an anonymous donor.

It's a problem for people in the country because some of the hospitals don't do certain tests because they're run by the Catholic Church. Another more general problem is that some doctors take ages to carry out certain tests and it's important to locate the particular reason for the infertility as quickly as possible.

IVF can cost £2,000 a time.

## **Appendix 1A.2 First menu of items and issues - 22/8/89**

Do Catholic-controlled hospitals mean that only those who can pay privately for IVF get treatment?

Is infertility treatment only available in Dublin?

1st. birthday of Ireland's first GIFT child is October 28th.

UCG - New fertility test and new aid to male potency.

Mothers' Union want register of IVF clinics.

VHI don't cover IVF or GIFT.

"Yerma" by Lorca, seen as a good dramatisation of the trauma of infertility.

In some clinics, women are tested before men.

Infertility is "taboo" in Ireland.

Ovulation Predictor Kits

Glenroe extract with Dinny saying, "anthin' stirrin'?"

### **Appendix 1A.2b - Notes on an interview with Moira Nicholson, National Association for Childlessness (Northern Ireland)**

The attitude in Ireland is peculiar to the place - she has a sister in the UK and they are far more open about infertility. In Ireland everything is family-orientated - the infertile are isolated.

All their committee members suffered from infertility.

She has two children from ovulation induction. Married 15 years. First sought treatment 12 years ago. Was being treated for 8 years before her child was born. Now the child is 4 and about to start school. She didn't know about the association when she was being treated. They couldn't tell their own families until the first child was born.

Church organisations revolve around the family. Times like Christmas are very difficult. Hated Christmas with the shops full of toys. Feels really strongly about people who go out to work and leave their children.

Had to have a series of injections and give many blood samples. It became a way of life, getting up early and going to the hospital for treatment, they even had to do it on Saturdays and Sundays. They would even plan their holidays around visits to the hospital.

Friend of hers were devastated after trying IVF, they eventually adopted a Brazilian child.

People always say, "ah you can always have a test-tube baby" - this is not true. The average success rate of that treatment is only 8-10%

The association works on a contact system. They keep in touch with new members if they want ....often they don't know who to turn to after treatment has failed. One telephone caller told her that she would commit suicide just to let her husband have a child with someone else.

The best success for IVF is if the infertility in the woman is unexplained.

A common question from their friends is, "what about you two", or "how long have you been married". But their parents avoided the question. She'd rather people came straight out and asked.

A problem associated with IVF is a baby with a low birth weight.

New legislation is about to come before parliament in London allocating better resources for infertility treatment to each Health Authority. Also there will be an Interim Licencing Authority governing all embryo research....at the moment guidelines are adhered to voluntarily...these include couples signing legal forms which avoids the problems they have in the States with frozen embryos.

### **Appendix 1A.3 Notes on a conversation with Prof. Houghton, UCG on 23/8/89**

I have developed a technique for assessing the fertilizing ability of human sperm using hamster eggs.

Men have different sperm counts from day to day, week to week.

My research is funded by Euratom.

Also in the research we want to look at the chromosomes in the sperms. Because a sperm is so small the chromosomes change shape to fit in and it's not possible to study their true nature. When the sperm breaks into the egg a chemical trigger causes the head to swell allowing the chromosomes return to their natural shape and size.

Using the hamster eggs to trigger the swelling is ethically sound because there is no chance of an embryo being formed.

With regard to fertilizing ability, the hamster egg is treated so it is like a human egg and we can see how successful the patient's sperm is at fertilizing it.

Euratom want to see the affect of radiation on men - i.e. does it alter chromosomes? Radiation is used in treating gonadal cancer. Initially the patient who has been treated loses fertility but eventually it returns to normal. The research is trying to find out if there are any long term affects.

When ejaculated, sperm cannot fertilise the egg immediately; it undergoes a change known as 'capacitation' in the vagina - in IVF this change is mimicked in a test tube by the embryologist who 'washes' the sperm in a solution of a particular Ph. Some men are infertile purely because they can't capacitate.

We can expose the sperm of those men to a high electric voltage for a millionth of a second - this allows the sperm to capacitate.

Thus the process of using hamster eggs - known as 'hamster assay' - can be used to diagnose some forms of infertility and also cure some forms.

Being able to see the chromosomes before fertilisation can never replace amniocentesis.

5% of every male's sperm contains abnormal chromosomes.

I don't know if there are more infertile couples now than before.

**Appendix 1A.4 Notes from "Infertility - The Sympathetic Approach" by Prof. Robert Wilson. 23/8/89**

Infertility - the emotional aspects....

Disbelief: See friends with babies - deny they've a problem

Anger: towards spouse, doctor, treatment....

Frustration: especially if the tests prove normal...

Loss of control: over what should be a natural process....

Depression

Obsession

Sense of Failure

Problems with sex: too planned, too premeditated

Grief: not supported

Friends with children feel embarrassed.

**Appendix 1A.6 Notes on a conversation with Martin Madden**

Went for IVF twice. Second time was awful. Wife being monitored throughout cycle. Went into hospital on 14th. day. He at home waiting for call to go and give sperm sample. Got call from wife to go in and pick her up. It was too late, the egg had already travelled to the tube - the doctor had missed it.

Got a phone call from the doctor who apologised and said they could have treatment again for free but would have to pay for the drugs - £300

Thinks doctors play on infertile couples' hopes - feels very fed up with the whole thing - very bitter.

## **Appendix 1A.7 Notes on a conversation with Prof. Robert Harrison, Rotunda Fertility Clinic on 25.8.89**

"Today Tonight" took one facet of infertility and did it in depth properly. If you try to treat infertility in general you only skate over the surface.

The issues with infertility are 1. Ovulation 2. Male 3. Endometriosis (lining of the placenta grows outside the womb) 4. IVF

Other hospitals in Cork and Galway treat infertility.

It's easier to do IVF in Dublin because of the large population there are plenty of cases in a small area to justify a unit. We're associated with a teaching hospital. In a hospital with lots of gynaecologists - one can afford to specialise. A smaller hospital which might only get one or two cases a month may not be able to justify the expensive machinery.

Infertility is like cancer, it lends itself to specialist units. Peripheral investigations can be carried out in local hospitals. Infertility is not an emergency case, but it is time-consuming. Some hospitals only have gynae units and can't deal with men.

Major developments in infertility treatment:

- Egg collection is improving
- Cutting down on the use of laporoscopes
- Greater recognition of the psychological nature of treatment because infertility is so stressful
  - doctors like myself learning how to help the patient relax.

Psychological stress might not cause infertility but it makes matters worse.

Infertility must be recognised as a couple's problem and a stressful situation.

Infertile couples are potentially exploitable - they will go to any length to have a child.

Most IVF is done privately. Most hospitals don't tell their 'take-home-baby' rate but it's on average 8-10%, more precisely 8.3%

Some hospitals talk of a 30-40% pregnancy rate but they often end in miscarriages; or they could base their figures on one week's work - e.g. 27%

The Germans have cut down on the amount of eggs and sperm donations permissible because they think people are being exploited.



I used to carry out sperm donation.

I have lived in Ireland for 20 years - a Catholic. Most Catholic priests and people are not opposed to assisted-conception techniques but they have a public persona they must maintain.

Electro-ejaculation machine being brought in by Ted McDermott, Consultant Urologist at the Meath and St. James's - invented by an Irish vet in the U.S.

We operate under strict guidelines at Rotunda - can't freeze embryos.

#### **Appendix 1A.8 Notes on a conversation with Imelda Keogh, Chief Social Worker, Rotunda Hospital 25/8/89**

We help the couples to express their sadness - let them know that they're not the only ones in the situation.

Infertility puts a strain on the marriage.

Even having a child may not be the solution - they're finding in the UK that marriages break up even after they have an IVF child. If there's a crack in the relationship, infertility opens it up even more. It's like bereavement or a miscarriage.

Taboo for two reasons: 1. Cultural - married couples are expected to have children, "Aren't ye the cute ones", "Haven't ye the good life" 2. It's Embarrassing.

In the country there's also expectations of inheriting land.

Jokes are very upsetting. As a society we should help people with childlessness. They already have their own upset but we add to it.

Infertility treatment is so difficult - infertile couples need the opportunity to talk about it.

Like some men feeling they have to be potent to be macho, some women feel they have to have a child to be a woman. It's my job to show that there's more to life than producing children.



There are three extremes of response from infertile couples...

- a) Sometimes a couple will borrow a child and dote on it.
- b) Others don't want to go to christenings and are not happy around children.
- c) Others dwell on stories of child abuse or abortion and become extremely angry.

In the programme you show the different types of infertile couples - there's no stereotype. They appear in silhouette because they don't want to show their infertility. A common response is "why us?" - infertility is more evident today because there's no adoption.

#### **Appendix 1A.10 Notes on a conversation with Jane Tuohey, founder of Infertility Support Group on 30/8/89**

I am too old to adopt, my adopted child came about as a result of a private adoption. A friend approached up and offered us her baby. We're still in discussion with the Adoption Board. I wouldn't recommend a private adoption to anyone.

When I'm at home I get 3 or 4 calls a week. The average approach is "I heard about the group", actually they want to talk about their problem. Nearly everyone who calls is in the middle of treatment.

Sometimes it's people who've just got the final 'no' - usually because of male infertility. The most important thing for the caller is that there are others suffering - their attitude is "why me?"

They often want to know what to do about their treatment - they want me to explain what the doctor meant when he said something.

It's a terrible jolt to the relationship and both partners deal with it differently. No one sends condolence cards - there's no outside support. Doctors run away from the emotional aspects of the problem. People ring up and say that they're not having sex any more.

They go through a process of grief - they've lost the concept of themselves as a parent - they're mourning something invisible. The couple goes through this process of grieving, which involves denial and anger at a different pace and in a different order.

It's worse for young couples. They start to try to have a family immediately - they haven't been through any crises together before.

Problems with unemployment or alcoholism or the like become blown up. Unemployment especially, with the cutbacks, getting treatment is even more difficult.

I'm happy I'm still not undergoing treatment - it still upsets me a bit to think about it.

When offering advice to callers I try to find out what they really want to do.

When they're in the doctor's office they're in such a daze they don't absorb his explanation for the problem, so they ring up the ISG and ask, "what does this mean?"

Irish people don't question their doctors. I tell them to write down the questions they want to ask and not to leave without getting an answer. This is important because it makes the couple feel in control.

People are afraid of the drugs used - some of them have problematic side effects.

Sometimes get people on the phone for 45 minutes just sobbing. It provides relief for them. Some come on after trying for only two months.

Taboo because it refers to sex and because the family is so much an assumption within the Irish marriage. In other countries the "family" means the extended family including aunts and uncles.

#### **Appendix 1A.11 Notes on interview with ISG country counsellor.**

From Dublin has lived in the area for 10 years. The rural community is supposed to be close-knit. This is not in a chummy way but that they know your seed, breed and generation. They talk about human fertility the same way they talk about animals - they talk about culling cows, they don't keep anything that's barren.

They never consider that the problem may be because of the male. She is selective as regards who she'd tell about their infertility.

Another problem is that you trust your GP that they will send you to the right people. The first doctor they went to wouldn't see the couple together. He asked her husband if he shaved every day. Eventually after 3 years of tests including a laparoscopy, he said that they weren't "having intercourse properly". They had gone to this man in good faith. You are very vulnerable when you go to the doctor.

Got married at 28, went to the doctor at 30, had last tests at 32. Had a sense of the "clock ticking away". Met someone else who had the same experience with the doctor - felt a great sense of relief. Went to Harrison ® saw the couple together. Said the problem was with her husband. He said he could take all their money but their chances weren't great. Husband was on medicine for 4 months. Harrison showed them a sample under the slide - it was very upsetting. But now we know.

We are 6/7 years married and have 3 options: Adopt, Artificial Insemination by a Donor, or Give Up. We decided to give up. We are very close. Husband cried - normal reaction.

Coming up to the fertile part of the cycle, I think, maybe I shouldn't go to aerobics. Think, "this month definitely." My period is always a big letdown. You have to learn to cope with people announcing a new baby @ I was asked to stand for two children.

It's hard to tell people. I feel that I've failed. If you want to have a car, you buy it. If you want to have a baby, it takes a couple. The months drag from period to right time to period.

No pressure from the in-laws. Father was easier to approach than the mother. We're the only couple within 10 miles with no child - we don't meet other people dropping the children at school.

If a daughter-in-law is living with her husband's family she is under tremendous pressure. I have got calls from people where the husband won't tell his parents if the problem is his.

It takes all your strength not to hit people who say "anthin' stirrin'"

When you tell people you're infertile you're excluded - you're not told about births, because they're sensitive to your feelings.

#### **Appendix 1A.12 Notes on an interview with Susan McHugh**

Adopted myself. Thought that having adopted children would cause problems with the people who rang up for counselling. Nowadays people put off having children for a year or two after marriage. The adoption society won't touch you until you have finished testing. The Eastern Health Board age limit is 34

You get over infertility like you get over a death.

### **Appendix 1A.13 Notes on an interview with Dr.Fottrell, UCG**

The test he has devised measures the reproductive hormones in saliva. It's a simple cost-effective lab test. The saliva sample is given in the comfort of the woman's home every day. Women's hormones fluctuate more than men's.

The test is good for identifying problems in the second half of the cycle (Luteal Phase Defects). The woman may ovulate and produce an egg but may not produce enough progesterone to allow the egg to implant.

Infertility is a very stressful period and this test relieves the pressure on the couple.

Spontaneous abortions can also be as a result of a deficiency of progesterone. They give the women the test results back and they are very interested in their own profile of hormone levels throughout the month.

### **Appendix 1A.14 Notes on an interview with ISG counsellor**

People don't educate themselves before they go to the doctor, they don't ask the right questions - it's a part of Irish character. She is a telephone contact. Not many people ring when they visit the specialist first. The ISG want people to ring at the beginning of treatment so they know what's ahead of them.

People prefer to speak to strangers rather than their own families. Families and friends often say, "you're next". The problem takes over your whole life.

Became pregnant and miscarried. The treatment cost 400 pounds. Money for the drugs, pergonal, was refundable from the EHB.

## **Appendix 1A.15 Notes on Series Producer's proposed Programme Structure**

The gradual erosion of hope.

John Lennon and Yoko Ono - Lennon had a low sperm count. Pollutants?

Stages of finding out.

Emphasise the length of the process.

End on how to cope

New technology

What's the most common problem @ what blocks the Fallopian tubes

Gynaecologist Paddy-Anne X is good

Doctors in studio

What's it like in the UK

Introduce the problem

Begin with case histories.

Studio: what are the common causes?

Could the diagnosis be quicker: Galway

Megan: what stage they are at. What next? What hope? What options?

What is IVF?

Studio: Harrison - IVF/GIFT success rate.

Madden: grief, effects on marriage, grieving.

ISG counselling

## **Appendix 1A.16**

Notes on an interview with Dr. Subash Kohli, Clane Clinic

There seems to be more cases of infertility now because cases didn't come forward before. There's more awareness in the population.

There is something we can do now. Before you did the tests and went home. The chances of success are greater now. Ireland is becoming more liberated with people allowed to use birth control and artificial insemination. It is now acceptable in humans.

Beforehand, people went ahead and adopted, now women want their own children. Stress and pollution are factors. The commonest reason for infertility is male factors. Men wouldn't be tested before. Almost 50% of the reasons are related to the man.

Female infertility is due to an increase in infection due to greater promiscuity. Half of all infertility related to factors in the woman is unexplained.

Another problem is women working - the 'yuppie syndrome' if they relaxed and had normal relations. They often don't get time to go to bed together and they leave it too late to start a family.

A lot of problems, like the woman not ovulating or the man having a low sperm count are related to psychosexual factors. Few men will admit to not having an erection.

GIFT is twice as successful as IVF. The UK has taken the lead over North America in this area. This is because the UK has allowed private practice. IVF and GIFT are too costly for the NHS.

An embryologist puts the egg and the sperm together in a sterile environment. The embryologist is the key to success - they wash the sperm for a few hours.

50% of the people who have GIFT take home babies and 25% of IVF take home babies.

We are a small friendly place - we tell the patients not to give up hope, especially if the GP had given up. The GP should refer them again - there's always hope there. The chances of success are rising daily. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

Clane is the only clinic to have successful pregnancies in Ireland. Technology and money are not everything. Success at Clane depends on patients and good luck. I went out and learnt the technique and applied the technology properly.

I did not say that 25% is our IVF success rate. Ours is a 10% take-home-baby rate. It's now easier to retrieve the egg because you don't need a laparoscopy. Dr. Steptoe had a 25.5% pregnancy rate - out of 365 pregnancies there were 242 deliveries.

The desire of the woman to have a child keeps us going. We have had three babies since January. Only Clane can claim to have pregnancies. I had to work on them to keep them going. The hospital does not make money from GIFT/IVF.

## **Appendix 1A.17**

Notes on a conversation with ISG rural counsellor.

When people go for investigations they should make sure the sperm sample gets to the hospital on time.

There are about 22,000 infertile couples in Ireland. People are more aware of the problem now. In the past there were always lots of babies to be adopted - now there's a shortage.



In the US they treat infertility differently. Here you are put into the same area in the hospital as women who are pregnant. Giving a sperm sample for the man can be traumatic. They have to go and queue outside the toilet. There is no stimulus - in the US they have special rooms with videos and porn mags. Your wife can go in with you.

If you get to the obsessive stage it's awful - you hate to see pregnant women.

The church has a problem re. infertility - this affects people. If you watch the Today Tonight programme, the churchman hesitates when he rejects artificial insemination. People have a conflict within themselves because of religion.

Some men suffer due to the fact that they feel less of a man...they fail to get erections...they can't perform...they don't want their male friends to know....at least women get consolation.

Gynaecologists don't always work with urologists. One doctor said male infertility only accounted for 15 or 16% of all infertility. Male and female infertility account for an equal amount of all infertility @ you can do more for problems with the woman.

I've got lots of calls related to male infertility.

There are actually 3 categories of infertility:

1. People want to conceive but can't
2. People chose not to conceive for whatever reason. e.g. the risk of Cystic Fibrosis.
3. People don't want to have children at all.

People who have secondary infertility have the same pain as those who have had no children at all.

AID is only available in one place. You have to chart your cyclecarefully for AID. You must book your straws of frozen sperm 9 days beforehand. Your temperature should drop lower than normal the day before ovulation.

Stress can stop you from ovulating. The Well Woman don't always check the woman's mucous to see if it's compatible with the sperm.

The drawbacks of AID are that you want frozen sperm @ to reduce the risk of AIDS. Sperm die when they are frozen and defrosted...and fresh sperm increases the chance of pregnancy. The Well Woman now have a doctor who relaxes the patient and is more successful.

The problem with country callers: When Mary and Johnny getmarried, they tend to have gone to the same doctor since they were babies. So the GP tells them to go home and pray. Sometimes it's blurted out by the doctor to the girl's mother. It's respectable to have some illnesses, but not infertility.

If there's the tiniest crack in a marriage, infertility will blow it apart. Sometimes the male feels he has to prove himself outside the marriage.

It is often too late for adoption - the only way to have a child. You are too old at 33 or 34.

AID is preferable to adoption - at least one of us is a parent. And with adoption you know neither the mother or the father. In some cases the woman has gone and had AID without the knowledge of the partner.

It's easier for women to talk.

AID - you have to go for about 18 months before you become pregnant - you are not relaxed instantly. One woman has had 4 children by AID. It's 33.60 pounds per straw and you have two straws over 48 hours.