To get a sense of the unbridled passion that the state’s language revival policy continued to generate in the 1960s one might consider an extraordinary incident that occurred at Dublin’s Mansion House in the autumn of 1966. This involved the recently founded Language Freedom Movement (LFM), an organisation established in 1965 to oppose the state-sponsored Gaelic revival. One of the key aims of the LFM was reforming the state’s school curriculum targeting compulsory Irish. The LFM believed that the state’s emphasis on the Irish language disadvantaged Irish children by denying them access to subjects they believed were more important and practical. The organisation argued it was especially unfair and counter-productive to require students to pass Irish as part of their Leaving Certificate exam. At the time, students who failed Irish in their Leaving Certificate exam failed the entire exam.

The various groups dedicated to the revival of Irish were disturbed that the organisation had dedicated itself to abolish what they considered a cornerstone of the language revival.¹ The LFM booked Dublin’s Mansion House, a venue steeped in symbolic importance for Irish nationalists, for a public debate to address the question, ‘Can it be shown that replacement of the English language by Irish is for the common good?’ Amid a large police presence of more than fifty uniformed officers and many plain-clothes detectives, more than two thousand people jammed into the hall. Many more were stranded outside, and it quickly became clear that most of the boisterous crowd were not members of the LFM but supporters of the Irish language. When the chairman
rose to open the meeting, heckling erupted followed by the derisive waving of Union Jacks and singing of *God Save the Queen* mocking the LFM as anti-nationalist British stooges. In the jostling that ensued, a tricolour was forcibly removed from the stage by protesters while objects were hurled at the podium and a stink bomb set off.

As fistfights broke out, the future Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich asked that representatives of the Irish language organisations be allowed to speak. The request was denied and, when playwright John B. Keane was introduced as the first speaker, cheering and heckling once again disrupted the meeting. Amidst the ensuing mayhem, Dónall Ó Móráin, founding Director of Gael-Linn and member of the Broadcasting Authority, took the stage and appealed for calm. "We must have discussions here with all points of view represented. I don't care how anti-Irish any speaker on this platform is, I will defend his right to speak as long as the other spokesmen for those who represent my viewpoint are allowed an opinion." Although Ó Móráin’s intervention may have avoided a full-scale riot, the fact that the opponents of the LFM had disrupted the meeting and demanded equal access to the podium at an event organised and paid for by the LFM suggests what Fergal Tobin describes in his iconic book, *The Best of Decades*, as ‘a queer notion of the right to freedom of speech’. The LFM repeated their demand that a national referendum be held on abolishing compulsory Irish in the schools, denying they were ‘anti-Irish, pro-British, West Britons or shoneens’. Press reports described the chaotic meeting coming to a farcical close. While the President of Sinn Féin appealed for unity to attain a “free and Gaelic Ireland,” a group of men climbed onto the platform and pulled the microphone from his grasp. Blows were exchanged and the stage curtain was drawn closed. At one side a man was seen trying to set fire to the curtain.

These dramatic events spilled out across the pages of the national press and were covered extensively by the state’s radio and television services; the current affairs programme *7-Days* devoted a broadcast to the meeting. The Mansion House mêlée suggests that the battle lines of these culture wars were simple, that they were contested by modernising reformers determined to liberate
Irish society from the tyranny of a narrow, dogmatic policy that was retarding the progress of the nation. A more accurate assessment would find that most supporters of the language were not wild-eyed zealots intent on ‘ramming Irish down the neck’ of the people but citizens motivated by a genuine love for a rich and complex language struggling for survival. Many were alarmed at what they regarded as the arrogance of the LFM and were determined to challenge its efforts to eliminate a critical component of revival policy.

Debates about the place of the language in society were not new to Ireland in the 1960s but they were now occurring while Ireland was experiencing significant economic change. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s economic development brought with it changing social trends and as Tony Crowley points out: ‘Though the Irish language remained a core symbol of Irish national identity, there is no doubt that its role as the constitutive factor of Irishness began to diminish in this period’. These cultural debates about the language were taking place while Fianna Fáil was pushing forward a reformist agenda which deftly tried to argue that the principles on which the state were founded would not be compromised by a more ‘pragmatic’ approach to the revival of Irish. These arguments were being made while the state was introducing and defending from intense criticism a hybrid television service that was charged with both entertaining and informing the public. This chapter will consider how television became a key battleground for a culture in transition.

Before considering the state’s effort to support the Irish language it makes sense to try and define what was meant by the term ‘Irish Language Revival’. Sociologist Pádraig Ó Riagáin addresses the confusion often associated with the term noting that the Irish case was never one of pure language revival, as the language was not extinct at the time of independence but was spoken by a minority in the western regions of the island. Although some assumed ‘revival’ meant displacing English with Irish, he points out, ‘[w]hatever may have been the views of individual politicians or spokespersons of the language movement, the constitutional and legislative provisions made for Irish in the 1920s and 1930s do
not suggest anything other than the establishment of a bilingual state'. In spite of this the term ‘revival’ remained problematic through much of the period considered in this study. Politicians, civil servants, supporters of the Irish language and those opposed to the state’s language policies interpreted the term differently. The advent of television as a commercial public service forced the state to address uncomfortable questions concerning the level of support it was willing to provide to the Irish language. When confronted with the prospect of taking substantial financial risks to promote the language and thereby jeopardising the viability of RTÉ, the state began to redefine the term ‘revival’ while at the same time hoping to find other institutional partners to accept the responsibility of supporting the Irish language.

What might broadly be defined as the Irish language lobby proved the most difficult and certainly the most persistent pressure group that challenged the Irish television service throughout the 1960s. The restoration of the Irish language was a key goal of political and cultural nationalists active in the revolutionary period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil governments defined this as a national priority and its special place in Irish life was embraced in the Constitution of the Irish Free State in 1922 and in the 1937 Constitution where it was recognised as the first language of the nation. The language policy developed by the state had four goals: maintaining the language in Irish-speaking regions, increasing the number of Irish speakers through the schools, encouraging the use of Irish in the public service, and standardising or modernising the language. Initial efforts to restore the language focused on the classroom, as the language was an essential part of the elementary and secondary curriculum. Irish was made compulsory for passing public examinations, including the Intermediate Certificate (1927/28) and the Leaving Certificate (1933/34). The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation soon came to regard teaching through the Irish language a mistake, noting in a study conducted in 1941 ‘that in all subjects except singing and needlework the result was the relative retardation of the child’. Despite the fact that the language was integrated into the state schools, beyond the classroom it struggled to find a place
in a country where the majority of people continued to speak English.\textsuperscript{14} Although the state defined the revival as a priority and surveys continually indicated a majority of citizens appreciated its cultural importance, government initiatives to support the revival were not broadly successful.

Historian Joseph Lee points out that government failed to develop imaginative, comprehensive planning that would support the language once students completed their education. Although Irish was required for some appointments in the civil service there was no concerted effort to bring Irish into the everyday life of politics or a determined effort to make it the language of the civil service. Lee argues that ‘the refusal of all governments since the foundation of the state to practise what they preached alerted an observant populace to the fact that the revival was a sham’.\textsuperscript{15} While governments continued to pay lip service to the revival, the number of native Irish speakers declined from approximately 200,000 in 1922 to 100,000 in 1939 and 50,000 in 1964.\textsuperscript{16} This decline was due to a number of complex factors including heavy emigration from economically depressed Irish-speaking areas, and was not simply the result of failed linguistic policy. In fact it would be a mistake to dismiss all of the linguistic efforts of the state since independence as going for naught. Historian Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh argues that despite the deficiencies of government policies, by the 1950s ‘a substantial cohort of secondary bilinguals, of varying levels of competence, had emerged from the schools, and Irish had achieved a degree of penetration and a presence in public domains in Ireland from which it had been excluded from centuries’.\textsuperscript{17}

While Irish-speaking districts in the west of Ireland seemed to be in terminal decline and debate developed concerning its place in schools, a remarkable renaissance in Irish literature unfolded. Irish writing in the post-war period flourished as authors and poets produced some of the most impressive Irish literature of the century. Brian Ó Nualláin, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Mártín Ó Direáin, Máire Mhac an tSaoi and Seán Ó Riordáin, for example, all published intriguing, innovative works in Irish. Moreover, young urban-based Irish language intellectuals who were committed to Irish began to question, even ridicule, simple Gaelic
Revival ideology that cherished a rural way of life that they found antiquated and even absurd. In this environment a number of new cultural organisations formed that had different ideas regarding the role the language should play in the cultural life of the country. In his groundbreaking social and cultural history of twentieth-century Ireland, Terence Brown maintains that ‘an awareness grew among concerned individuals and in the organisations they founded that the only hope for its future was to encourage interest in the language in the towns and cities’. In these circumstances, a proliferation of organisations adapted to changed conditions understanding that rhetoric employed by many advocates of the language about linguistic exchange was unrealistic. A number of these groups, including the National Gaelic Congress, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge were comprised of university graduates and professionals becoming inventive advocates of the Irish language.

At the start of the 1960s, Fianna Fáil continued to argue that it was fully committed to the revival, although many supporters of Irish regarded the party’s rhetoric as pure political posturing. Even so, advocates of the language understood the power of television and viewed the establishment of an indigenous TV service as a new and perhaps final opportunity to force the state to make good on its commitment to the revival, arguing that the medium should fully support their aims. Many in the language lobby considered television a critical tool in saving Irish from oblivion making this clear in countless submissions to governments, directors-general of Telefís Éireann, and broadcasting authorities. Throughout the decade language supporters were relentless in their criticism of Telefís Éireann, continually arguing that the system was guilty of gross negligence for failing to support what, at least on paper, was a national priority. These critics maintained that both the state and officials in television were ignoring cultural mandates spelled out in Section 17 of the 1960 Broadcasting Act. The section stipulated that in the course of performing its duties ‘the Authority shall bear in mind the national aims of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing the national culture and shall endeavour to promote the attainment of these aims’. Despite these complaints, the language struggled mightily to develop a meaningful presence on Telefís Éireann throughout the 1960s, creating
tremendous tension between the service and advocates of Irish.

The commercial structure of Irish television complicated the efforts of supporters of the language to promote its revival and protect what they believed was a frail national culture teetering on the brink of extinction. By 1965, the unrelenting pressure of the language lobby succeeded in forcing the government of Seán Lemass to make significant changes in the composition of the Broadcasting Authority. These changes provoked intense controversy within Telefís Éireann, leading to the resignation of Eamonn Andrews, Chairman of the Authority. Andrews was convinced that the government erred in trying to placate what he considered a noisy minority of zealous cultural nationalists.

The language had been a controversial part of programming on Radio Éireann from its origins in the 1920s, and its experience is worth considering as this strongly influenced decisions made about the place of Irish on television. Ireland’s first radio station opened in 1926 with an address by Douglas Hyde, who in 1892 had encouraged the de-Anglicisation of Ireland in the foundational polemic of the Gaelic Revival. In his remarks Hyde remarked that the new radio service ‘was a sign to the whole world that a great change has come about when we can take our place among the nations of the world and make this wire-less instrument work in our own language like every other country’. He once again cautioned against Anglicisation, telling listeners:

There were two tides in Ireland – one of them coming in on this side of Ireland and the other going out on the west coast. The tide of Gaelic was ebbing there and leaving behind a bare, cold ugly beach in its wake. The fine, Gaelic water had ebbed away and was replaced by the mud, slime and filth of English.

In the early decades, a concerted effort was made to develop programmes in Irish, and this proved controversial. The station failed to impress the leader of the Irish Free State, William Cosgrave, who considered it simply a vehicle for Irish-Ireland propaganda. Cosgrave complained about monotonous programming and of a general assumption that ‘2RN is an Irish-Ireland institution and that there is only abuse awaiting any criticism’. Irish language
programming on Radio Éireann was not popular according to the station’s own surveys which indicated that the numbers of listeners to Irish programmes had declined to as low as 1 per cent in the 1950s. In March 1953, a confidential report reviewed a recent listener survey conducted by Radio Éireann admitting that the low numbers were ‘disappointing’. A cabinet meeting later that year rejected demands made in the Dáil and national press to publish the report ‘in light, particularly, of the very poor showing of programmes in the Irish language’.23

When in 1963 the Gaelic League proposed that the state develop an Irish language television service, León Ó Broin dismissed the idea as simply replicating earlier demands for an all-Irish radio service. He recounted earlier efforts to develop an Irish language radio service and in doing so pointed to tension between Dublin-centred intellectuals interested in Irish broadcasting for ideological reasons and community activists advocating the creation of a station to serve the economically depressed Gaeltacht. Ó Broin referred to a proposal made to the government in 1934 by the Galway branch of the Gaelic League, a plan supported by the Galway Urban District Council. The proposal argued for an Irish language service that would originate in the Gaeltacht and serve its residents. The proposal was denied by the Director of Radio Éireann who argued that the best way to address the needs of the Gaeltacht was to increase the amount of Irish language material on Radio Éireann and provide opportunities for special programmes to be broadcast from Galway.

Almost a decade later, Éamon de Valera inquired about the establishment of something quite different, an Irish language radio station powerful enough to reach listeners across Ireland and in Scotland. The director of broadcasting did not consider the idea practical, noting that there would be technical difficulties in organising such a service including gaining access to the proper wavelength. Additionally ‘the Emergency’ complicated matters as obtaining a 100-kilowatt transmitter would be impossible while the Second World War distracted most of Europe. Although de Valera accepted there would be difficulties due to the war he instructed Radio Éireann and Posts and Telegraphs to begin planning and to ‘be prepared (staffing, programme schemes etc.) as
would make it possible to proceed with the scheme when circumstances permitted after the Emergency’.²⁴

Little was done to follow up on de Valera’s request, but in 1945 a small committee was set up, chaired by León Ó Broin, including civil servants from Posts and Telegraphs and staff from Radio Éireann. This group, described by Ó Broin as being made up of ‘Gaelic enthusiasts’, looked into developing a service for the Gaeltacht. It determined that ‘even where sets existed (10% of households in the rural Gaeltacht) programmes in Irish were listened to in comparatively few of these houses’.²⁵ The committee concluded, ‘The Gaeltacht dweller was very seldom an enthusiast for the Irish language and was impatient and suspicious of other dialects. The Committee was satisfied that programmes in Irish were more extensively listened to in areas outside the Gaeltacht. Even then these programmes were not as widely supported as the enthusiasts would have one believe.’²⁶ Irish speakers living in these economically deprived areas were more interested in jobs and economic development than a Dublin-based Gaelic revival.

Ó Broin’s committee placed a great deal of emphasis on how difficult it was to develop quality programming in Irish and was sceptical, complaining about a ‘paucity of talent … There was no flow of suitable material from the Gaeltacht. The restricted life of the Gaeltacht greatly limited the amount of broadcast material from the Gaeltacht’.²⁷ The committee concluded rather paternalistically that it made no sense to establish an Irish language station for the Gaeltacht believing more could be done by supporting Irish within the existing structure of Radio Éireann in Dublin. De Valera agreed but hoped Radio Éireann would encourage and recruit scriptwriters, producers and actors who could develop quality programmes for the national radio service.

In spite of government inaction there continued to be calls for an Irish language station that would serve Irish-speaking areas of the country. A decade later, Muintir na Gaeltachta (People of the Gaeltacht) demanded the establishment of a station that could both relay Irish language material from Radio Éireann and develop its own programming when Radio Éireann was broadcasting in English. Muintir na Gaeltachta was established in the 1930s to demand rights for residents of the Gaeltacht. It underscored
the tension that existed between supporters of the language and supporters of the Gaeltacht, claiming that the Gaeltacht was ‘thor-
oughly dissatisfied with 70% of the present programmes in Irish’. 28
This proposal for an Irish station – like those before it – came to
nothing.

However, another organisation formed in March 1969, Gluaiseacht Chearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta (the Gaeltacht Civil
Rights Movement), had more success. The movement, influenced
by civil rights campaigns in the United States and Northern
Ireland and the unrest roiling university campuses across Europe
and the America, challenged the state and its policies directly. The
organisation lobbied for ‘industrial development for the region,
for proper schools and villages, for autonomous local authority
and for a broadcasting service in the native language’. 29 Activists
in the movement insisted the government recognise that the Irish-
speaking community was a minority that should have full rights of
citizenship including the right to a broadcasting service in Irish. It
gained national attention by launching a picket outside the Teach
Furbo Hotel in the Connemara Gaeltacht, protesting the record-
ing of the popular television quiz show Quicksilver because it was
recorded mostly in English. Although the programme’s presenter,
Bunny Carr, was bilingual and questions to the audience were
asked in both languages, much of the programme was broadcast
in English to the dismay of supporters of the language. Pickets
also went up outside RTÉ studios in Donnybrook, and the director-
general expressed sympathy for the protest, believing that the
bilingual work on the programme had been ‘less than adequate’.
Thomas Hardiman, an accomplished Irish speaker, met a group
of a dozen young protesters led by the president of the Gaelic
League, Maolsheachlainn Ó Caollaí, and reported that after
a frank exchange of views protesters seemed ‘more appreciative
of RTÉ’s attitude, position and policies’. 30 However, as part of a
broader campaign, the group repeated demands that the govern-
ment set up a Gaeltacht-based Irish radio service to cater to their
needs. In 1970, civil rights campaigners set up a pirate station
in Ros Muc, Connemara, challenging the government to address
their demands. The government’s response was the establishment
of Raidió na Gaeltachta in Casla, the heart of the Connemara
Gaeltacht, which began broadcasting on a part-time basis on Easter Sunday 1972, before expanding to a full-time service with studios in Kerry, Mayo, and Donegal.  

The failure of Irish language radio programmes to attract a significant audience in the early 1960s strongly influenced official thinking on television. León Ó Broin advised his minister that given the experience of Radio Éireann, the Gaelic League’s 1963 proposal to establish an Irish language television service was ‘unrealistic and extravagant’. Assuming the service would be a commercial one, he argued advertisers ‘would not open their purses … The experience gained in sound radio shows that sponsors of commercial programmes, despite preferential rates, are most reluctant to use the language.’ In a service dependent on advertising revenue the Irish language was consistently sidelined and often ignored as senior officials focused on the service maintaining its financial viability.

In the late 1950s, supporters of Irish played a key role in undermining proposals from private firms interested in establishing commercial television. When the Television Commission was set up to consider how a service should be introduced a Joint Committee of Gaelic Bodies testified that television should be exploited to enable the restoration of Irish as the primary language of the Irish people. Members of the Television Commission who were well aware of the position of the language lobby later met with representatives of Gael-Linn, an organisation that had made a number of films and earned a reputation for innovation in promoting the language and supporting the Gaeltacht. Gael-Linn submitted a comprehensive proposal that was clearly focused on using the medium for didactic purposes. The Commission turned down the application, believing it was far too narrow and that its programmes would not find an audience substantial enough to be financially viable. When the Television Commission completed its report it addressed the language issue, arguing for what it defined as an ‘enlightened approach’ and stating that it was ‘preferable that little be done well rather than much be done badly and that there should be a gradual and natural increase in the use of the language in programmes’.

Undaunted by the failure of Gael-Linn to win the concession,
many supporters of the language remained hopeful that the 1960 Broadcasting Act which created Telefís Éireann would require the new station to make a concerted effort to feature a significant amount of material in Irish. Many considered television an important resource that should be fully exploited by the state, and tremendous tension developed over how best to use it to further the cause of the revival. Understanding that the most vocal in the language movement were focused on exploiting the new television service to restore the Irish language as vernacular throughout the state is a critical point, as this attitude not only contradicted government policy but alienated civil servants, politicians, ministers and senior administrators in television. Repeatedly, directors-general and management in Telefís Éireann told advocates of the language that the 1960 Broadcasting Act established a commercial public service that needed to pay its own way by featuring programmes that would generate advertising revenue. In these circumstances, they argued Telefís Éireann could not dedicate a significant portion of programming to support the revival of Irish. Officials in government and broadcasting were convinced that many of the more extreme demands of the language lobby were simply unreasonable and not acceptable. What government officials considered a simple commercial reality some advocates of the language defined as another example of the government supporting the crass materialism undermining a frail linguistic culture. Supporters of Irish were dismayed by this attitude and by the paltry amount of Irish language broadcasting that made its way onto Telefís Éireann.

While the Television Commission was deliberating the question of how TV should be structured, another government-appointed board was simultaneously in session, the Commission for the Restoration of the Irish Language (CRIL). This Commission issued its final report in 1963, but not before it published an interim report timed to coincide with the publication of the Television Commission’s final report in 1959. In March 1959, two months before the Television Commission issued its final report, the Interim Report of the Language Commission was submitted to the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera. This Interim Report emphasised that television should assist in the goal of restoring Irish as the vernacular of the
nation. The report denied that leaders of the revival movement wanted to exploit television ‘continuously or even frequently for the purpose of propaganda or indoctrination’ but instead wanted to encourage the development of a service that would ‘portray sympathetically the many facets of our native culture and our traditions’. The best means of realising this goal was for television to foster a deep appreciation of Irish culture by embracing the Irish language. The Language Commission’s Interim Report claimed that the government had failed in its efforts to encourage the restoration of Irish and believed that television would be an important test, indicating just how seriously it was committed to what politicians defined as a ‘national priority’. While at first glance the report might seem eminently reasonable it became less so as it continued. There was a tone of desperation that permeated the Language Commission’s Interim Report as it pleaded for a national television service that would help save Irish. According to the Interim Report, there would be dire consequences if the state failed to exploit the medium, as the Commission believed that the efforts to revive the language would be ‘doomed’. The report argued that only Irish speakers should be hired to work at the new television service, that advertisers should broadcast in Irish, and that a firm commitment be made to allow for a significant amount of Irish language broadcasting during peak viewing periods. It also demanded extensive Irish programming for children.

León Ó Broin, a critical voice in the deliberations that were taking place inside the government, reviewed the Commission’s Interim Report and regarded it as being ‘completely out of touch with reality’. Although he was sympathetic, he understood that the type of commercial service that would emerge would not be able to promote Irish to the degree that the Commission desired. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh commenting on the work of the Language Commission, which issued its final report in 1963, notes that few of its recommendations were accepted and the Interim Report certainly suffered the same fate. However, the anxiety of the language lobby articulated in the Interim Report was cleverly used by Ó Broin to help scuttle a number of proposals from foreign corporations looking to gain a licence to establish commercial television in the country.
As early as the autumn of 1959 when the government established an Advisory Committee to help purchase equipment and look into acquiring land for studios and transmitters, the National Gaelic Congress, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, protested to the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, that the members were not Irish language speakers. The Congress was a voluntary association that had been encouraged to come together by the government to coordinate the myriad efforts and voices of those working in support of the Irish language. The state saw an advantage in one group speaking for the language and encouraged the development of a consensus among the various cultural groups who supported Irish. The Congress understood that members of the Advisory Committee would be invited to sit on the formal Broadcasting Authority and was concerned about the absence of Irish speakers. The Taoiseach’s office responded to the complaint by assuring the Congress that ‘every aspect of the nation’s welfare will be borne in mind when the appointment of the members of the Authority is being considered’.

When American Edward Roth was named director-general, he quickly learned that the language lobby would be a strong and persistent critic of the new service. Roth understood that language supporters could create real and lasting headaches with demands he and his colleagues regarded as unrealistic. The Chief Secretary of the Gaelic League, Donncha Ó Súilleabháin, wrote to Roth in February 1961 asking for detailed information on the plans that were being made to develop Irish language broadcasting. Roth replied in firm but diplomatic terms, first apologising for replying in English, explaining, ‘I feel that it would be insincere of me to sign a translation of this letter to you in Irish which I myself would not understand.’ He assured Ó Súilleabháin that as director-general he was well aware of his responsibilities under the 1960 Broadcasting Act. In replying to complaints about the hiring of non-Irish speakers, he explained that the primary concern in appointing staff was hiring ‘experienced television people’ with the necessary technical expertise. He noted that he had every intention of encouraging the development of Irish language material but was evasive in providing the details that the Gaelic League requested. He cautioned that it would be premature to answer
specific questions about the extent or nature of Irish language programmes or timing of their broadcast. He tried to assure the Gaelic League that it was his intent to support the language: ‘Attractive Irish language programmes will, I hope, find their place in the originated programmes which we will undertake.’

Roth was explicit in stating that there were other considerations of which the Authority had to be conscious. He stressed that the service was under an obligation to be financially independent as quickly as possible and that developing a large viewing audience was paramount. In these circumstances he made it clear that a large proportion of programmes broadcast would be foreign-made. Roth was a realist and understood that although the language lobby might not like his response he saw no reason not to be straightforward, explaining ‘the Irish television service must attract and hold a large viewership and this consideration will have to be given substantial weight in determining programme content.’ Financial considerations were indeed critical and Roth made it clear that there were other challenges in this regard. He pointed out that the Authority was also, as of June 1960, responsible for sound broadcasting which was ‘operating at an annual deficit of £200,000 with also, as has been demonstrated by surveys, very low listenership interest in many of its programmes’. Although he did not come out and say it, the implication was quite clear: Irish language radio programmes were unpopular and this certainly weighed on Roth’s mind as demands from the language lobby were made. The Gaelic League was deeply disappointed by Roth’s response and at its annual meeting the director-general was denounced as an enemy of the language. Some made it clear they were offended that Roth’s reply was in English and there was an extended debate about whether or not his letter should even be read to the assembly. Suggestions from the floor that the director-general be instructed to study and learn Irish indicate the contempt his response generated from some of the more passionate delegates. These events were reported widely in the press indicating that there would be difficulties ahead for the American director-general.

In the spring of 1961 Roth held a pre-arranged press conference to provide a status report, explaining where the service was
some eight months before the first programme was scheduled for broadcast. When the question of Irish language broadcasting came up he pointed out that the recent Nielsen reports had indicated Radio Éireann’s Irish language broadcasts had ‘the lowest ratings received’.Anticipating questions concerning the language, he had shrewdly released his letter to the Gaelic League to the press beforehand. The director-general explained that many of the demands of the Gaelic League were simply unreasonable and told the press that he and the Broadcasting Authority were well aware of their obligations under the Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act. His remarks, which had the full backing of the government and Eamonn Andrews, illustrate that he was not afraid to challenge his harshest critics.

The Irish language movement was animated by other concerns in the early 1960s as debates about the state’s language policy provoked a lively and sometimes ugly cultural war that lasted through much of the decade. In February 1960 Noel Browne, who referred to the ‘disquiet and dissatisfaction among responsible authorities and among parents and pupils alike about compulsory methods’, put forward a motion in the Dáil calling for a referendum ‘to ascertain whether a majority of the people would favour the replacement of compulsory methods, where used, in the attempted revival of the language by voluntary schemes for its encouragement’. Although the motion provoked a lively debate, it was easily defeated. Fine Gael also raised questions about the subject and in 1961 a section of the party’s election platform promised to abolish compulsory Irish in public schools, maintaining ‘Fine Gael believes that the present methods of reviving Irish have not been successful, and that, in the interests of the Irish language, a change must be made.’ This provoked a firestorm of debate as the language and the state’s role in its revival became part of the political rhetoric of the election campaign.

Editorials in the Irish Times, the Longford Leader, and the Galway Observer praised the courage of Fine Gael, arguing that for over forty years the policy had been tried ‘without success’. However, Seán Lemass used the occasion to question the patriotism of his opponents, denouncing the notion of eliminating
compulsory Irish as ‘irresponsible’. ‘Fine Gael seems to be soliciting support for a policy of retreat. I want no misunderstanding of Fianna Fáil’s aim. It is to bring the language into common use in the daily life of the nation. We are not prepared to lower our target by even a fraction.’ Despite the Taoiseach’s hyperbole, the reality was that his attitude towards the language was at best ambivalent; his remarks were spoken in the heat of an election and illustrate that when it suited Fianna Fáil, traditional rhetoric could be deployed, maintaining the party was fully supporting the language. The ensuing debates about the revival of the Irish language and its place in a national television service need to be seen in the context of a society experiencing rapid change that challenged traditional cultural nationalist ideology. By the early 1960s questions concerning long-held commitments to seemingly sacrosanct cultural policy began to undermine the state’s language policy. Fine Gael’s decision to talk about ‘preserving’ the language instead of ‘restoring’ it unsettled many in the language movement who felt threatened by government inaction and the expressed policy of the state’s second largest political party. Fine Gael issues a policy statement in 1966 ‘calling for an end to the mandatory pass in Irish necessary to qualify for the award of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations’. 

Underscoring the complexities of these debates one of the most important Gaelic literary figures of the period, Séamus Ó Grianna, published a number of letters that actively supported the work of the Language Freedom Movement. Ó Grianna was a prolific novelist, short story writer and satirist who had also served as editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the Gaelic League’s official newspaper. *The Lights of Heaven*, a collection of his short stories, essays and letters, edited by Nollaig Mac Congáil, includes a series of letters he penned to *The Irish Times* in the spring and summer of 1966. In these letters he denounced the ‘Murder Machine of compulsory Irish’ arguing that the state’s educational policy was ‘killing what is left of the language’. He later argued: ‘Irish is an old language whose growth was arrested centuries ago. It was a beautiful language; even what remains of it is beautiful. For that reason, every assistance should be given to anyone who wants to study it. But there is a world of difference between fostering a love
of Irish and the attempt to make it, by brutal compulsion, the one and only language of the nation.’

Unhappy with what was perceived as Roth’s indifference to their concerns, the National Gaelic Congress wrote to the Chairman of the Radio Telefís Éireann Authority, requesting a formal meeting with the board in the autumn of 1961. Eamonn Andrews declined, explaining that their work was at a critical stage; instead he asked that concrete suggestions be submitted, promising that he would help facilitate a meeting at a later date. The Congress responded with a six-page, twelve-part submission that outlined what it defined as the ‘minimum principles’ that had to be accepted by the new service. These were core demands that the language lobby would return to time and again as it tried to force Telefís Éireann and the government to take the aim of restoring the Irish language seriously. The ensuing correspondence set the stage for a decade of tension and frustration for both broadcasters and advocates of the Irish language alike.

The confrontational document employed the type of heated rhetoric that characterised many subsequent communications from advocates of the language. It sharply reminded the Authority of its responsibility under Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act and asked that ‘urgent consideration’ be given to its submission ‘sufficient to reassure this representative body that the best use in the interests of the language is going to be made of the Service, in spite of the many signs, at present, to the contrary’. The Authority was told that a war had been fought to preserve the Irish nation, a war that was the culmination of centuries of struggle for independence and that the founders of the state and all subsequent governments understood the vital role of the language as an ‘essential part of Irish nationality’. In these circumstances, the state had done much to support the language, notably through requiring that it be part of the curriculum in schools throughout the nation. Although the Congress deplored the mistakes that had been made in the past – including a failure of governments to develop comprehensive planning to support the language – it still believed that huge strides had been made. The Congress argued that the state educational policy had given a degree of Irish to most citizens but
lamented that this was lost once schooling ceased, arguing this was ‘due principally to the absence of a progressive policy towards the language in the cinema, theatre, press and other mass media of entertainment and communication’. The submission singled out the media as being responsible for transmitting a foreign popular culture that it believed was antithetical to its efforts to support a frail indigenous culture.

After citing the support from the Catholic Hierarchy and the Protestant Churches, the Congress cleverly quoted the Taoiseach’s address at the November 1960 Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis. In that speech Lemass lashed out at opposition politicians who had campaigned to ‘disparage the language and belittle the efforts to restore it’, arguing that Fianna Fáil ‘stood firm on the issue of the language, refusing compromise with expediency or truck with despondency, which has held the national line of battle intact’. In extraordinary language, Lemass had exclaimed that it was vital for members of Fianna Fáil to understand the commitment his party had to Irish, maintaining that ‘if our section of the national front should break or sag, all hope for victory would begin to fade’.

Again, one could question the sincerity of the Taoiseach’s remarks spoken in the excitement of a political convention. Lemass had little interest in the Gaelic ideology that animated de Valera but this did not prevent him from returning to spirited nationalist rhetoric if he judged it politically expedient. In employing the Taoiseach’s language in its report, the Congress argued that the government fully backed their position.

The Congress also highlighted statements made by the minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Michael Hilliard, when the minister introduced the Broadcasting Act in the Dáil, assuring deputies that ‘the use of Irish in broadcasting has to be one of active assistance in the restoration of the language’. The Congress, which regarded itself as the most important national organisation charged with overseeing a coherent language policy, believed that it was the responsibility of the Radio Éireann Authority to play a major role in restoring the language as an essential feature of Irish life. Because it regarded the Authority as acting irresponsibly and in violation of Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act, it demanded action be taken to avoid what it believed was a national crisis.
The Irish language and Irish television

The submission by the Congress criticised the Authority for appointing people to positions in Telefís Éireann with little interest or knowledge of Irish, maintaining that the number of those appointed with no appreciation or understanding of the language was ‘very great’. 60 It expressed particular disappointment with comments made by the Chairman, Eamonn Andrews, who was quoted as stating it was not the intention of the Authority to ‘ram the language down the throats, eyes or ears of the viewers’. 61 These statements were regarded as counterproductive as they ‘tended to mislead the uninformed rather than enlighten public opinion’. 62 Complaints were also made about the decline in the amount of Irish programming on Radio Éireann since the Authority assumed responsibility for radio. The Congress believed that the solution to these problems lay in the Authority’s agreeing to only employ enthusiastic Irish speakers willing to use Irish in an imaginative and meaningful fashion.

Although the Authority regarded much of the document as unrealistic, there were a number of suggestions that Telefís Éireann understood it could work with. In some respects the document illustrates that within the Congress there was tension between those willing to accept compromise and hard-liners. For the majority of the Radio Éireann Authority being reminded of its responsibilities under the Broadcasting Act not once but on several occasions was seen as beyond the pale. Many demands were simply unrealistic, including one that stipulated that no person should appear on television on a regular basis unless they spoke Irish. The demand that Irish programmes be broadcast at peak hours illustrates that the Congress did not appreciate the financial pressure the service would be under nor understand the hostile reaction this would provoke from the majority of viewers. If these demands were strategic ones, designed to place a marker from where future negotiations might take place, this strategy failed. Television officials took them seriously and repeatedly argued that if Irish language programming were to enjoy parity with English language programming the service would not be economically viable.

The Congress looked to children as part of the solution, arguing that Irish language programming for children should be
A loss of innocence?

‘predominant’, believing that because advertisers ‘are not interested in advertising to children … the Authority should not lose financially by such a policy, even if it could be shown that the viewing ratings were lower because of this policy’. It also advocated the establishment of training courses for television which would be under the direction of Irish speakers and insisted that any publication of the Radio Éireann Authority, including programme guides, be published in Irish. The report concluded in a tone that was less hectoring than the Interim Report from the Language Commission: ‘Unless the Authority adopts an enthusiastic, positive policy towards the language, the television service will cause irreparable damage’, concluding that the demands set out were ‘the minimum necessary to carry through such a progressive policy’.

Shortly after submitting its report, the Congress wrote to Edward Roth, this time alarmed by notices appearing in the national press. These advertisements for female announcers did not stipulate applicants had to be fluent in Irish. The Congress again argued that it was imperative that only fluent Irish speakers be appointed and expressed the ‘fear’ that the Authority was ignoring its responsibilities under Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act. An anxious Congress also asked for an early reply to the detailed document that they had submitted to Eamonn Andrews. Roth responded to both the complaint and the submission in an extended letter, once again reminding the Congress that he had to consider the entire Broadcasting Act and not simply Section 17. Roth believed that the Congress did not appreciate that the Broadcasting Act required television to be financially self-sufficient, pointing out that Telefís Éireann was not established to restore the Irish language. He maintained that the Radio Éireann Authority knew that the service had to have a definite Irish character but emphasised it also had to be capable of ‘attracting the audience necessary for its financial well being’.

The director-general claimed that the authority would give ‘due recognition’ to the national aim of the Gaelic Revival but was uncompromising in maintaining that it ‘does not interpret this obligation with regard to the language as over-riding its general obligations’. He informed the Congress that interpreting the
Act was the responsibility of the Authority, although he allowed that suggestions would always be welcome. However, the director-general was not going to be dictated to and once again pointed to the fact that the state had made a national investment of £2,000,000, which the Authority had the statutory responsibility to repay. That meant that the television service would be ‘dependent for an essential part of its revenue on income from advertisements’ which required the cultivation of a large audience.67

Roth rejected as ‘unrealistic’ demands that appointments to the station require proficiency in Irish and dismissed as financially impossible the notion that he hire Irish-speaking assistants to work alongside new appointments. Responding to complaints about the hiring of foreigners, he maintained that every effort was being made to keep the non-Irish appointments within the service at a minimum but pointed out that it was difficult to find Irish people with the technical expertise necessary to fill critical positions. Roth concluded by promising that other suggestions outlined in the proposal would be studied but that the Authority had decided against meeting and discussing the report with representatives of the Congress. The Congress was furious with Roth’s response and vented its frustration in the press, which was intrigued with developments in the new service. Newspaper reports predicted a ‘showdown’, maintaining that the refusal of the director-general and the authority to meet the Congress meant ‘that they have no alternative but to go over Mr. Roth’s head to Mr. Lemass’.68 An unidentified representative for the Congress complained about the large number of foreigners working in Telefís Éireann and about the ‘indifference’ to the need for Irish language programming.69

At a contentious annual meeting of the Congress in November 1961, a month before Telefís Éireann began broadcasting, Liam Ó Luanaigh, its president, lambasted the Lemass Government, telling the delegates ‘it was obvious that the Government in nominating the Television Authority was not primarily concerned with the welfare of the Irish language’.70 Ó Luanaigh maintained that as far as the Congress was concerned it was better not to have a television service than to have one that did not support the language, arguing that the opening of the station should be postponed until a commitment was made to providing ‘suitable
programmes in Irish’. Although the Congress was a confederation of groups interested in supporting the language, there was considerable tension within the movement between moderate and more extreme elements. The president found himself defending his efforts and strategy from angry members, arguing that he was not aggressive enough in dealing with the government.

A resolution was passed criticising the Television Authority ‘for its failure to make a firm decision on the place of the Irish language in the new service’. A formal letter of protest was delivered to Roth denouncing the director-general and the authority for refusing to meet with the Congress. Roth was told the organisation was ‘disappointed and alarmed’ by the Authority’s position. The Congress lamented what it considered was a misguided policy adopted by Telefís Éireann ‘to give absolute priority to attracting advertising revenue, and considers that any use of Irish in the service would interfere with that aim’. Once again the director-general was reminded of his responsibility under the Broadcasting Act and the Irish Constitution to support a cultural policy that was critical to the nation. Roth was criticised for interviews where he talked about featuring ‘thriller and cowboy films’ as these programmes would inevitably harm the Irish language. The Congress was writing five weeks before the service was scheduled to go on the air and therefore maintained that it was, ‘a matter of the utmost national urgency’ that it be assured that the language would be secure.

The Congress was ‘extremely anxious’ that a number of promises be given as quickly as possible, demanding that it be assured that Irish feature in the opening broadcast. It asked for details concerning the amount of Irish language material scheduled to be used in the first month of broadcasting, and that it be told what steps had been taken to feature Irish in all aspects of broadcasts including news, sports, announcements, advertisements and children’s programmes. In a telling remark, the Congress expressed resentment at being treated like any other interest or cultural group, arguing that ‘we cannot accept that we, the state-sponsored representative body of all the language organisations, should be regarded by you as an “outside body” any more than the Churches could be regarded as outside bodies in regards to religious programmes’.
Reiterating its ‘extreme anxiety’ it once again demanded a meeting with a delegation from the Authority as quickly as possible. As tensions developed in the days before Telefís Éireann was to go on the air, Peter Black of the Daily Mail caught up with an exasperated Roth who remarked, ‘I’ve started up six television stations. This is the toughest, including the one in Peru where I got embroiled with Communist politics.’

Unfortunately for the Congress, and, for that matter, for the Catholic Church, Roth, Eamonn Andrews and Seán Lemass regarded the Congress as another, albeit relentless, interest group that somehow had to be mollified. When questions about the complaints of the Congress were raised in the Dáil, the Minister, Michael Hilliard, backed the position of Telefís Éireann. He maintained that the Radio Éireann Authority was concentrating its effort in getting the service on the air and would be always mindful of its duty to support the language. Later, when addressing Gaeltacht affairs, an agitated Lemass emphasised that the Congress, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, was not an official government body. He pointed out it was a voluntary organisation that had been encouraged by the government to establish itself to give some semblance of unity and cohesion to the variety of language organisations.

The Congress, meanwhile, continued its relentless criticism of evolving television policy, a short time later complaining that the publication of the RTV Guide was yet another example of the Authority’s failure to appreciate its concerns because of the English language programming that dominated and because it was not published in Irish. A few days later a much more comprehensive letter of protest was sent to Roth complaining that the schedule contained no arrangements for Irish or bilingual programming with the exception of a few minutes at the start and end of transmission. ‘We are therefore utterly dismayed at the programme plans, and we note that the press is equally dismayed, not alone in relation to the use of Irish but in regard to the low cultural level of programmes in general.’ Roth was also taken to task for an interview in the publication where he was said to have described ‘Irish as merely a minority interest and presumes to suggest that the language would best be served by having very little of it on
either the television or sound services’. The Congress was upset with the position taken by Roth and the Authority and demanded an ‘immediate conference’ stating that ‘in the meantime, as a matter of the utmost urgency, we would ask that you revise the opening week’s programme schedule so as to endeavour even at this late stage to give due prominence to the Irish language’. Roth tried to assuage the Congress by providing assurances that the Authority was conscious of its complaints and took them seriously. He claimed he wanted to try to work with the Congress and promised to meet a delegation from the Congress in the New Year, after the service was up and running. This willingness to meet a delegation from the Congress did not defuse the situation as it maintained it was ‘appalled’ with the Authority’s attitude and upset at the ‘complete disregard’ for the advice that they had provided.

A short time later Gael-Linn caused considerable alarm within the government by lambasting the Broadcasting Authority in an article titled: ‘We have held our piece [sic] …’ published in the weekly racing pools card that had a national circulation exceeding two hundred thousand. The article, written by Dónall Ó Móráin, founding director of Gael-Linn, maintained that the organisation had held back criticising Telefís Éireann because it wanted to give the service time to ‘find its feet’, especially in light of the fact that it had been an unsuccessful applicant for the television concession. But with the publication of the RTV Guide listing the programmes to be broadcast, it felt obligated to speak out. The article accused the Authority of scheduling programmes that were ‘deliberately going to debase the cultural and other values of our community’, pointing to the first week of programming as proof. Reporting that not one programme was entirely in Irish, the article argued the Authority ‘is proposing with your money, to subject the Nation to worthless programmes which seek the most uneducated and unenlightened section of the community as their audience’. The publication of such a hard-hitting critique two weeks before the service was to go on the air received extensive coverage in the national press. One particular line caught the attention of the Lemass Government. ‘Now is the time to act … tell the Authority,
Opposition, tell everyone that you will not stand for it. You are prepared to pay for something distinctively Irish and worthwhile: you are not prepared to help pay for a service which ITV can give you for nothing.\textsuperscript{88} The Department of Justice was alarmed with this language, interpreting it as inciting civil disobedience by advocating that citizens withhold the payment of licence fees. The matter was discussed by the Attorney General, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs; a decision was made to write formally to warn the organisation that the article could be construed as ‘an incitement to the public to refuse to make payment of the prescribed fee in respect to television receiving instruments’.\textsuperscript{89} Gael-Linn denied that the intent of the article was to incite the public to commit a criminal offence, arguing it was simply reminding people of the commitments the Authority were required to honour under Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act. In writing to Hilliard, Ó Móráin wryly maintained, ‘we thought that the Minister would be very pleased with this attitude rather than the opposite’.\textsuperscript{90} The fact that the Department of Justice made inquiries into the incident and that Seán Lemass took part in the discussions illustrates that the government did not want to see the financial footing of the new service undermined by a mischievous strategy developed by Gael-Linn. In an interview conducted years later, Ó Móráin explained that Gael-Linn was hoping to send a message but that ‘it didn’t strike us that they would take us seriously … it showed their jumpiness at the time’.\textsuperscript{91} Dónall Ó Móráin continued to agitate the Authority until he was drafted onto it in 1965, becoming chairman a short time later. He firmly believed that the Authority was negligent for not supporting the language holding that television more than any other instrument could decide whether Irish was going to ‘prosper or become extinct’.\textsuperscript{92}

Roth and a subcommittee of the Authority eventually met with a delegation from the Congress in March 1963 to try to find common ground. By the time the meeting took place many members of the Authority and senior staff at Telefís Éireann had become frustrated with the aggressive tactics and harsh critique used by members of the language lobby. Members of the Congress were tremendously
frustrated with the dearth of Irish programming and angry that Telefís Éireann had not addressed their concerns. The meeting was chaired by Professor T. W. Moody and included Edward Roth, John Irvine, head of management, and James Fanning, a member of the Authority who had serious reservations about the demands that the Congress had made. Liam Ó Luanaigh, the President of the Congress, Dónall Ó Móráin, Director of Gael-Linn, and David Greene, Professor of Irish at Trinity College and author of the government-sponsored publication, *The Irish Language*, represented the Congress. Records of the meeting underscore the substantial gap that existed between the expectations of the Congress and the realities of broadcasting as seen by Roth. Liam Ó Luanaigh argued strenuously that Telefís Éireann had failed to use Irish in a substantial manner and urged the Authority to do more, arguing that it ‘should be accepted as fact that most viewers are competent to understand Irish’.\(^93\) David Greene maintained that the declared policy of the state was to change the language of the Irish people from English to Irish and that Telefís Éireann had to assist in getting Irish ‘out of the school and into the street’.\(^94\) His statement illustrates the degree of confusion concerning the policy of the Lemass Government, highlighting the conflict between the rhetoric and reality of the state’s policy.

James Fanning was not impressed by these arguments, telling the delegation that ‘[f]undamental facts had emerged – the country, by and large, was not behind Irish and its use’.\(^95\) He claimed that initially sales of television sets in Ireland had been very slow and blamed this on his belief that many members of the public were concerned television would follow the example of Radio Éireann and broadcast unpopular Irish language programmes. This led to a debate about the popularity of Irish language broadcasting on radio with members of the Congress arguing that the programmes were unpopular not because they were broadcast in Irish but because they were of inferior quality. Ó Luanaigh told the sub-committee that the Irish people would ‘tolerate’ a good deal of Irish broadcasts, maintaining that ‘by and large the population as a whole does not resent Irish as much as many people think’.\(^96\)

Dónall Ó Móráin argued that Telefís Éireann was a state service and ‘was not a commercial enterprise’; moreover, the state had a
duty to use the service to support the language. He pointed to the public service remit of Telefís Éireann, arguing that although it relied on advertising it nevertheless had an obligation to serve the public and support stated government policy. John Irvine tried to explain to the delegation just how dependent Telefís Éireann was on commercial revenue, pointing out that in the next financial year it was committed to an expenditure of approximately £1,250,000. He patiently explained that the 65,000 licences issued as of March 1962 would cover only one-third of these costs, with the remainder coming from advertising revenue. This was before considering the obligation the Authority had to repayment of government-granted capital. Irvine argued that given the hybrid nature of the service it was imperative that it cultivate a large audience with popular programmes, pointing out that it was simply not economically feasible for the station to accept their demands. He told the delegation from the Congress that in setting up television the government never envisioned using it as a means of ‘Gaelicising’ the population.

Roth was blunt, arguing that unless advertising was forthcoming ‘Telefís Éireann would collapse’.97 Although he had only been in Ireland a short time, Roth informed the delegation that from his own experience the majority of people were not interested in the Irish language having a prominent place in television, noting ‘a great resistance to the Irish language’.98 He had never been impressed with Radio Éireann, informing the delegation that one of the reasons people were hostile to the language being deployed in television was due to the way it was used on radio. In a revealing remark he noted that one of the reasons Radio Éireann had been unpopular ‘was because R.E. was identified too much with intellectuals’.99 Roth saw television as primarily a means of entertainment and believed the service he was overseeing would not be economically viable if it were to accept the demands that the Congress was making. He remembered quite clearly the warnings about the finances that had been made by Lemass through Hilliard and remained determined that Telefís Éireann would not become a financial burden to the state.100 What becomes obvious in reading through the minutes of this meeting (and in subsequent correspondence) is a singular lack of trust between representatives...
of the Congress and Telefís Éireann. This was based on the perception that neither side could grasp the ‘realities’ that exercised the other.\footnote{101}

Although the members of the Congress may have come away from the meeting with a better appreciation of the financial challenges confronting the service, they remained angry and deeply frustrated. The meeting had ended with a long discussion about audience research, Ó Móráin complaining that the surveys conducted to measure audience response to programmes were not fair, as they were not developed to include Irish-speaking families who would be advocates of Irish language programming. Roth replied that staff at Telefís Éireann would consider his protests in its reports but argued ‘what the statistics people were trying to do was rate the television, not the language’.\footnote{102}

Ó Móráin developed this argument a short time later in an article published in An tUltach, the official journal of Comhaltas Uladh, the Ulster branch of the Gaelic League. He lamented the failure of Telefís Éireann to develop Irish language programming, maintaining that from the time the station went on the air until March 17, 1962 – a period of three-and-a-half months – only 1.25 per cent of output was in Irish.\footnote{103} He argued that the contract that the Broadcasting Authority had entered into with the firm hired to measure audiences, Television Audience Measuring (TAM), was flawed and worked to the detriment of the Irish language because the monitoring equipment was not placed in the homes of people interested in Irish. The claim by Ó Móráin that ‘24% of the population have Irish’ could be open to question but his critique of Telefís Éireann was closely monitored by the government.\footnote{104}

His article was translated and summarised by civil servants in Posts and Telegraphs who were dismissive:

Mr. Ó Móráin’s theory is that the majority of the Authority are not against Irish but that they have a mental illness or phobia about the size of the viewing audience; that this is a result of bad advice; that they have been persuaded that Radio Éireann was no good under the ancien régime [sic] and that this was due to an excess of Irish, of symphony music, of traditional music, and of cultural programmes. Accordingly he feels that the majority of the Authority consider that
it is more important to have 200,000 listening to a programme which
imitates Radio Luxembourg than have 50,000 listening to a lecture
on Irish history.  

As far as Ó Móráin was concerned, the Authority had to be con-
vinced that people were sympathetic to Irish and that the language
could be used without affecting advertising revenue. He called on
supporters of Irish to remind the Authority and ‘people above
them – of the will of the [Irish] Movement and of the will of Irish
nationality’.  

During that first summer of television broadcasting in 1962, Ó
Móráin remained on the offensive, frequently denouncing Telefís
Éireann and the Authority. Throughout that summer Controller
of Programmes Michael Barry attempted to take the pressure
off his staff, deciding to screen more foreign-made pre-recorded
programmes and concentrate on the production of indigenous pro-
gramming for the autumn. As more American Westerns and crime
dramas were screened, Ó Móráin’s criticisms and the language he
used became increasingly excited, gaining considerable coverage
in the press. The relentless attacks did not escape the attention of
the government, the Radio Éireann Authority, or senior staff at
Telefís Éireann. In the summer of 1962, Ó Móráin addressed the
Combined Universities Irish Society, An Comhchaidreamh, an
organisation of university graduates and professionals interested
in supporting the Irish language. His remarks were typical of the
rhetoric that continually chastised Telefís Éireann: ‘Irish television
has acquired a shape which, if left undisturbed will earn it the rep-
utation for the Authority of being the greatest depravers of public
taste and cultural values in the history of the country.’

Ó Móráin pointed to debates in the UK about American
Westerns and crime dramas and the generally poor quality of
commercial programming featured on the Independent Television
Network. He referenced the report of the Pilkington Committee
on broadcasting, which was set up to consider the future of broad-
casting in the UK and had issued its report to Parliament in June
1962. The report heavily criticised the Independent Television
Network’s emphasis on popular programming, arguing it was trivial
and did not properly reflect British social values. The director of
Gael-Linn hoped that Telefís Éireann would be influenced by its
recommendations and develop intelligent programming instead of transmitting ‘dim-witted American comedies’. According to Ó Móráin, in its first six months of broadcasting viewers were willing to be patient while Telefís Éireann was getting itself organised. However, after six months he believed opinion had changed. He pointed out that television had come to Ireland at ‘a time when, internationally, a reaction had set in against the cult of the cowboy and the mindless American kitchen comedy’.  

Professor Dáithí Ó hUaithne added his voice to the critique of Telefís Éireann but signalled that the Authority was the problem, maintaining that things would be different if ‘we had the right sort of the Authority. My only complaint about the members of the present Authority is that they don’t make a good board’.  

Others at the meeting argued that some members of staff of Telefís Éireann were anti-Irish and anti-national, although these were regarded as a minority. The problem centred on the people who ‘do not understand what is at stake or are indifferent’. Although Ó Móráin’s critique of programming may have found support among viewers tiring of the older American material in the summer of 1962, his recipe for remedying the problem did not. There is little evidence that viewers believed the answer lay in transmitting extensive Irish language programmes. Reporting on the growing critique of the language lobby, The Irish Times made the point that the most vocal and hostile critics were not necessarily speaking for all revival supporters. Two factions within the movement were described as those who wanted extensive Irish language programming and a more pragmatic group indicating that the more passionate advocates may be ‘more vocal, but it is doubtful if they are the stronger’ than the moderates.

Almost one year to the day from which the Congress had submitted a document listing what they had described as the minimum steps to take to ensure that the language would be treated appropriately, and after two meetings with representatives of the Congress, Eamonn Andrews provided an extensive reply outlining the Authority’s position on Irish language in television. The response of the Authority illustrates the frustration that Andrews, Roth and various Authority members were experiencing in regard
to the language issue. His reply was made as the station was being pilloried by supporters of Irish and other critics upset with programmes that had been broadcast in the initial eight months of 1962. Andrews methodically addressed the critique made by the Congress, setting the tone early by stating that although the Authority recognised the ‘special position’ of the Congress it did not see any contradiction in defining it as an ‘outside body’. Andrews wanted the organisation to clearly understand the Authority’s position in this regard. He and his colleagues regarded the Congress as one of a number of interests groups out to pressure the Authority.

Andrews also rejected the incessant criticism of the Congress, which repeatedly referred to the Authority’s statutory duty under Section 17 of the Broadcasting Act. He dismissed as fallacious its position that the state opted for a government-owned service to ensure that the language would be supported. The Comhdháil/Congress were told that the Authority understood its obligations under Section 17 but did not interpret this section of the Broadcasting Act in a narrow manner. Instead, he emphasised that this section had to be understood within a much wider context and read as a part of a general obligation to ‘maintain a national broadcasting system providing entertainment, information and education for a popular audience’. Andrews pointed out that Section 24 of the Act required the Authority to operate the service in a responsible financial manner and to ensure that it would be economically viable and self-sustaining. He also emphasised that television did not derive its income from the state, maintaining that the £2,000,000 in start-up costs would be repaid to the government: ‘No one is compelled to be a listener or a viewer or an advertiser, but it is from licence fees and advertising revenue that the service is financed.’ Andrews argued that to generate advertising revenue it was imperative that the service broadcast popular programmes at peak times. He dismissed demands that Irish language programmes be featured during these times as unrealistic, arguing they would not attract large audiences. In explaining the financial imperatives of Telefís Éireann, Andrews pointed out that the government was fully aware of these issues when setting up the service and understood that the television would ‘not be
conducted primarily as a means of promoting the restoration of Irish. In answering demands that the service use the language in an imaginative and positive manner and that it progressively increase the amount of Irish programming, he insisted that this was precisely the policy of Telefís Éireann.

Andrews dismissed demands made about staffing as simply impractical. The notion that all assistants to department heads, newscasters, announcers, interviewers and commentators be fluent in Irish was defined as unreasonable. He pointed out that the service required personnel with special technical and managerial skills that were not readily available in Ireland and that if this condition was accepted the professional standards of the service would suffer. Andrews explained that the Authority accepted the argument that it was important to recruit staff that were competent Irish speakers but rejected the demand that only Irish speakers be hired, refusing to exclude promising candidates due to a lack of Irish language skills. Moreover, Andrews rejected outright the notion that the RTV Guide should be published in Irish, again defining the request as ‘impracticable’.

The chairman reported that the Authority’s policies were pragmatic and reasonable, unlike the demands being made by the Congress:

The Authority considers that, in the interests both of Irish itself and of its revenue, it must carry out its duty to the language with tact and moderation. In determining the timing, duration and type of items to be televised in Irish, it must ensure that viewers are not wantonly driven away from Telefís Éireann and into hostility to Irish. Items in Irish transmitted during peak viewing period should, as a rule, be short and should not be close together. Larger items should generally be transmitted outside of the peak period.

This distilled the attitude of Roth, Andrews, and – for the moment – the Broadcasting Authority. The Authority’s report was not wholly negative or confrontational and tried to identify common ground between the demands of the Congress and its own policies. Although it agreed that there should be a substantial percentage of children’s programming produced in Irish, there was little in Andrews’s correspondence to appease the Congress.

The nine-page response was the most extensive statement
that had been issued by the Authority on the place of Irish in Telefís Éireann. Andrews made it clear that the Authority would not accept many of the demands that had been made via correspondence, in face-to-face meetings, or in the press. There was also a good deal of frustration that found its way into the report. Although Andrews hoped that dialogue could continue in a positive and friendly manner, the conclusion was a slap at the tactics of the Congress. It is clear that Andrews did not appreciate that earlier confidential discussions between representatives of the Authority and the Congress were leaked to the press. Andrews told the Congress that the Authority

… observes with regret that individual members of the Comhdháil have not respected the spirit of these negotiations; and it considers that the resulting publicity has damaged Radio Éireann’s own efforts on behalf of the Irish language by accentuating the divisions on the question that exist in the country, by inflaming extreme views on both sides, by causing unsettlement among the staff of the television service, and by creating apprehension among viewers that the service is being turned into an instrument of propaganda.118

Andrews understood that the document he was producing for the Congress would find a wide audience and was prudent in sending a copy to both the Taoiseach and his minister, Michael Hilliard. He told the Congress that the Authority ‘is convinced that the best hope of contributing to the restoration of the language through Telefís Éireann lies in using Irish attractively, persuasively and realistically, and in disassociating it from all rancour, dogmatism and make-believe’.119

Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge held its annual meeting at the Mansion House in Dublin shortly after the Authority’s report was forwarded to its president, Liam Ó Luanaigh. In addressing the annual meeting, Ó Luanaigh bitterly complained of the failure of Telefís Éireann to accept the organisation’s advice, ‘that a good deal of what we had described as essential and practicable now seemed to the Authority impossible or inadvisable’.120 He complained particularly about the fact that Telefís Éireann had begun a search for a Controller of Programmes to replace Michael Barry, and that the advertisements for the position did not stipulate the candidate should be an Irish speaker.
Throughout these negotiations, Andrews was sensitive to what he defined as the ‘one sided arguments presented in the press’ and was careful to keep both Seán Lemass and Michael Hilliard informed. When sending a copy to the Taoiseach and minister he explained how ‘serious and conscientious’ the Authority had been in addressing these issues. He maintained that he had not released the document to the press ‘in the belief that too much controversy can do more harm than good to the language’. At question time in the Dáil, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs was confronted with queries about the controversy. Interestingly these questions were from deputies who had different ideas about the role of the language on Irish television. Labour Deputy Sean Treacy was sympathetic to the complaints of the Comhdháil, while Deputy Eamonn Rooney complained that more Irish language programming would force licence-paying Irish viewers to switch stations. Rooney asked the minister if he would consider the ‘whole position of the use of Irish in Telefís Éireann programmes’, suggesting that there was too much Irish language material.

When preparing an answer for the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, a pragmatic León Ó Broin pointed out that the pressure from both sides would continue and that ‘it was obviously impossible to please everybody. The Authority cannot overlook its statutory obligation under Section 17 but neither can it overlook the fact that undue emphasis on Irish would adversely affect the size of the viewing audience and its income, not alone from advertisements but also from licence fees. It therefore considers that in the interests both of Irish itself and of its revenue it must carry out its duty to the language with tact and moderation.’

Civil servants in Posts and Telegraphs understood that the pressure from the Irish language lobby was not going to cease and looked abroad for advice. In September 1962, the department wrote to the BBC asking for advice specifically looking at the way in which the BBC was working with the issue of the Welsh language. The Pilkington Report, which had been published earlier that year, had not only been critical of the commercialisation of television in Britain but also recommended the establishment of a second BBC channel. This second public service channel was expected to devote resources to regional television broadcasting.
and make additional provisions for Welsh language broadcasting. BBC officials were sympathetic to the query from Dublin, providing documents they had submitted to the Pilkington Committee including information about the future of Welsh television programming. This indicated that in 1962 the BBC was broadcasting five hours per week for a Welsh audience, three and a half hours of which was in Welsh. The BBC hoped to build an additional transmitter in Wales that would enable more Welsh language programming to a large Welsh-speaking population. By October 1962 British officials were reporting to their Irish counterparts that plans were in place to develop a BBC Wales television service that would broadcast twelve hours per week, with about seven hours in Welsh. The BBC reported they hoped the Welsh service would go on the air in 1964. 125 As noted, politicians and civil servants in Dublin were not interested in establishing an Irish television station; in fact, it would be decades before Telefís na Gaeilge made its debut in the autumn of 1996.

Within the Authority there were at least two strong supporters of Irish, the most substantial being Ernest Blythe. A native of Lisburn, County Antrim, Blythe was a ‘rare example … of an Ulster Protestant embracing cultural and political nationalism’. 126 As a young man Blythe joined the Gaelic League where he became a passionate advocate of the Irish language. He was an active republican and imprisoned by the British in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising. He served as Minister for Finance from 1922 until 1931 in Cumann na nGaedheal governments, where he earned a reputation for frugality, going so far as to reduce Old Age Pensions in order to balance the budget of the Irish Free State. After 1940, Blythe left politics and became the managing director of the Abbey Theatre from 1941 until 1967, insisting that the theatre not hire actors or actresses unless they were Irish speakers. In naming Blythe to the Authority, the Lemass Government was able to satisfy two constituencies with one appointment as he was both a well-known political opponent of Fianna Fáil and a dedicated advocate of the Irish language. Philip O’Leary, who has written extensively about the Irish language, points out that Blythe had long been interested in using television to support the
revival of Irish. He was president of the Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge in 1950 when it submitted a memorandum to the govern-
ment that looked beyond film, targeting television as a means to
support the revival of Irish.\footnote{127}

Blythe became increasingly frustrated with the failure of Telefís Éireann to develop and broadcast Irish material. Though Dónall Ó Móráin considered Blythe an ally inside the Authority, he became increasingly upset with his friend’s failure to effect policy change. He described Blythe as a man who

bull-dozed ahead, but one of the interesting things in that behaviour
that you would find with that type of a goer and doer of things … he
could be quite aggressive then suddenly become very mild when up
against somebody like Eamonn Andrews. I remember well this kind
of behaviour at a meeting where he said “ah we’ll have to go ahead
with this … sure Eamonn knows everything we better let him go
ahead” a total u-turn as it were. He was the only help we could pos-
sibly expect on the Authority and he had that so called weakness.\footnote{128}

In fairness to Blythe, he was certainly in a minority although Áine Ní Cheanainn, one of the two women on the Authority, also
advocated for a greater emphasis on Irish language broadcasting.
Ní Cheanainn had considerable experience in broadcasting Irish
programmes with radio Éireann dating back to the late 1930s.\footnote{129}

In truth, Blythe was not as passive as Ó Móráin believed and did
his best to encourage more Irish broadcasting. In the summer of
1962 Blythe protested against what he saw as ‘obstruction within
the establishment’ of Telefís Éireann that was inhibiting efforts to
get Irish into broadcasts.\footnote{130} He complained openly to the Radio
Éireann Authority and was particularly upset that more had not
been done to get the language into the current affairs programme
Broadsheet. Blythe became a persistent critic from within the
Authority, believing that there was ‘stonewalling’ taking place in
an effort to block his efforts to get more Irish on the air. Controller
of Programmes Michael Barry disputed Blythe’s critique as unfair
and defended Broadsheet, insisting that he was constrained by the
realities of a service that had to rely on advertisement for suste-
nance, maintaining ‘to act without discrimination would quickly
lead to bankruptcy. Our aim has been to walk a tightrope between
needs of a national service and the exigencies as I have been given
to understand them of commercial service.’

As previously mentioned, Barry was actually trying to take the pressure off production staff by cutting back on the broadcast of indigenous programming that summer, filling the void with imported material while trying to stockpile home-made programmes for the autumn. Eamonn Andrews tried to reassure Blythe that his concerns would be taken seriously, telling him that he had already dealt with complaints from the Church, politicians, and the language lobby, all of whom were upset with programming, explaining that ‘in all cases, the programme has been dubbed as suspect’. Although he told Blythe he was concerned over Barry’s insistence that Telefís Éireann reduce its home-produced programmes, he counselled patience. ‘I feel we will get a better result if we can coax rather than compel. After all, it is the basis of our overall policy and perhaps we should use it internally as well.’ Nevertheless, Blythe remained convinced that Barry and producers in the service were ignoring his efforts to encourage Irish language programming.

Supporters of Irish became increasingly frustrated with the paltry amount of Irish language programming on Telefís Éireann and were relieved by a report that added pressure on the station to take their complaints seriously. The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language issued its final report in late 1963, acknowledging that there was much work to be done if Irish was to survive as a viable living language, never mind a restored vernacular. Among 288 recommendations made by the Commission were 16 designed specifically for broadcasting, with 9 of those targeted for Telefís Éireann. Not surprisingly the report recommended ‘there should be a progressive extension of the use of Irish in television programmes’, pointing out that as television reception had made its way into the West material should be developed that would engage the Gaelteacht. Many of the recommendations were reasonable and were accepted, albeit in modified form, by the Radio Éireann Authority. For instance, the service accepted suggestions that television news in Irish be separated from news bulletins in English as reasonable although trying to work additional Irish material into the nine o’clock evening news proved
more difficult. The request that sporting events and public ceremonies be broadcast in Irish and that more attention be given to bilingual programmes were suggestions that had been made earlier, and television service management maintained they would be supportive of these suggestions, provided that changes were made carefully and gradually.

The Commission advocated for an increase in Irish language broadcasts for children, the creation of a magazine programme in Irish, and the development of broadcasts that would interest viewers without a great knowledge of Irish, including ‘musical programmes, panel games, travelogues etc. rather than straight talks and debates’. Additionally the Commission asked for programmes for adult learners of Irish and wanted the RTV Guide used to support weekly lessons. While many of these recommendations were ones Telefís Éireann could (and eventually did) work with, the report returned to demands that had previously been dismissed as impractical. The Commission argued that ‘programmes in Irish and more bi-lingual programmes should be scheduled for peak viewing periods’ and concluded that the ‘Authority should henceforth ensure fluency in Irish on the part of members of its staff who prepare programmes or appear in them’. This was a clear reference to staff working in all programming at Telefís Éireann, not just Irish language programmes.

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh points out that from the late 1950s and into the 1960s ‘one can identify a decisive shift in the ideological basis of state policy, and rhetoric, in independent Ireland’. The government of Seán Lemass was committed to addressing the economic crisis challenging the country and keen to utilise experts to develop coherent planning that would support economic development, improve living standards and put a brake on emigration. As Ó Tuathaigh argues, the emphasis on ending protectionism and embracing a new openness influenced the government’s position on the Irish language. Shortly after the publication of the Commission’s report, Seán Lemass addressed a Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis, telling delegates that the report and recommendations would be studied carefully. He also promised that a formal White Paper would be published outlining an unambiguous policy which his government would put in place. Lemass introduced
a note of honesty into the speech indicating that a more pragmatic approach to the language had to be taken if any substantial progress would be made. He explained that he wanted to establish a set of clear goals that could be realised by taking careful, measured steps, drawing an analogy with the successful *Programme for Economic Expansion*. His statement that the government would do its part but that ‘this great national work cannot be discharged by the Government without widespread and whole-hearted public support’ created cause for concern among some Irish language advocates. Language in his speech, which was widely covered in the press, referring to the ‘redefinition of our aim’ and his acknowledgement that ‘we recognise that in practise English will remain the general vernacular’ alarmed the more outspoken supporters of the language who recognised a shift in government policy.¹³⁸

The speech was clearly a mild effort by Lemass to introduce a sense of realism into the debate about the place of Irish language in society. Accepting English as the vernacular of the majority of the Irish people and arguing for a commitment to bilingualism was a shift away from what Lemass and many others considered was the unobtainable goal of restoring Irish to everyday use throughout the state. The implied admission that a more realistic approach was needed was a departure from Fianna Fáil policy that sometimes gestured to the notion of restoring Irish as the vernacular of the Irish nation. It contrasts sharply with the rhetoric Lemass had employed to denounce political opponents who in the past had called for a re-evaluation of the state’s revival policies. In this respect, critics of the government’s language policy were correct in noticing a marked shift taking place.

The Gaelic League in Cork quickly issued a statement that illustrated the level of opposition from some quarters to the perceived change in government policy. It denounced Lemass, arguing that he

has clearly shown that he has abandoned the National ideal and that his policy is to give second-rate status to the Irish language, while giving pride of place to the language of the conqueror. It is now obvious that the Government’s promised White Paper will give birth to a weak leukemic underling, which will never reach maturity and will be incapable of encompassing the national ideal of re-establishing
Irish as the spoken tongue of the people … Any patriot worthy of the name who is prepared to accept anything less (than a Gaelic nation) is a traitor to his heritage and to those that made the supreme sacrifice to ensure that Ireland should truly be made “a nation once again.”

Lemass, of course, was a veteran of the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, and Civil War; his brother Noel had been kidnapped, tortured, and killed by Free State forces in the Civil War. The future Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, who chaired the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, wrote to Lemass expressing his concern with his comments at the Ard-Fheis. With a national meeting of the Gaelic League only a few days away, Ó Fiaich asked for a meeting with Lemass or a clarification of his position, explaining that there were efforts underway within the organisation to draft a statement denouncing the government, particularly the Taoiseach. Press reports indicated that many members of the Gaelic League were incensed with Lemass, especially his statement that English would ‘remain the general vernacular’ of the Irish people. Ó Fiaich was anxious to meet the Taoiseach, explaining that he was worried about the ‘wild elements’ at the meeting. Lemass tried to defuse the controversy by carefully responding to Ó Fiaich in a letter that was read out to the national meeting of the Gaelic League. The Taoiseach declared that too much had been read into one sentence in his speech and that it was not the aim of Fianna Fáil to ‘keep English as the general vernacular’. Lemass had tried to speak honestly and frankly about the language but was forced to backtrack and argue that he had been misunderstood. He now maintained that the White Paper, when published, would ‘leave no cause for complaint or apprehension to any rational language enthusiast’. The attempt by Lemass to call for careful measured steps to implement a rational language policy and his statement that English would remain the spoken language of the Irish people was incompatible with the thinking of the many cultural nationalists intent on a policy of restoration. Lemass had tested the waters and been scalded. The fact that such a firestorm would erupt when trying to revise what many understood was an unrealistic policy illustrates just how sensitive the issue remained. It also highlights the political difficulty in accepting the reality of a failed cultural
policy that had been a key component of Irish cultural nationalism and Fianna Fáil political rhetoric for decades.

Although there may have been scepticism over using television to promote the language, there was broad public support for and an attachment to the Irish language. In 1964, Irish Marketing Surveys Limited conducted an extensive study to gauge what it defined as the ‘climate of opinion among the Irish adult population to various aspects regarding the Irish language question’. The survey was carried out with a sample of 1,961 men and women in fifty different areas of the country where trained members of the polling company met respondents in face-to-face interviews. The results were tabulated to indicate the response of urban and rural dwellers in ‘upper and middle income’ groups and those in ‘lower middle and lower income groups’ and were classified by age and gender. When asked, ‘Do you think that the Irish language could ever replace English as the language most commonly used for ordinary conversation in Ireland?’, 83 per cent responded no. There was little discrepancy between urban and rural respondents.

When asked, ‘Would you yourself like to see the Irish language used by most people for ordinary conversation in Ireland?’, 33 per cent of those surveyed responded yes, and again there was little discrepancy between rural and urban respondents. When asked, ‘Do you think that the Irish language could ever become a commonly used second language to English in Ireland?’, 53 per cent answered yes, while 42 per cent replied in the negative, but 76 per cent responded that they would like to see Irish used as a second language. Again the difference between urban and rural respondents was minimal. Women were marginally more optimistic about Irish as a commonly used second language.

When asked if they approved or disapproved of Irish being taught in national schools, 76 per cent indicated that they approved but when the question was modified to, ‘Do you yourself think that the teaching of Irish should be compulsory or voluntary in Secondary schools?’, 72 per cent replied that it should be taught on a voluntary basis. When it came to questions of advantages in Irish society there was a broad consensus, with 72 per cent stating that those who knew Irish had a distinct advantage in society.
Those that answered, yes, saw benefits in obtaining jobs, especially in the civil service, while other advantages included getting into university, conversing with native speakers, and having a better understanding of Irish literature.

Although the survey illustrates that there was broad support for the language, it also indicates there was a good deal of scepticism about the aims of the more ardent members of the language lobby. The poll also underscores the fact that compulsory Irish in secondary education was broadly unpopular. Tomás Ó Fiaich forwarded a copy of the entire report to Lemass, arguing that it demonstrated that there was a wealth of support for the language that needed to be cultivated, imploring him to take the lead on the issue. ‘I state quite frankly that I believe you yourself as Taoiseach are the only one in Ireland today capable of getting things moving.’

Ó Fiaich discounted the results in the poll that demonstrated opposition towards compulsory Irish being taught in schools by defining the word ‘compulsory’ as problematic, labelling it a ‘dirty name’. He maintained that if the term was taken out and a question simply asked ‘Should Irish be taught in secondary schools?’, the results would have been considerably more favourable. This deliberately ignores the point that Irish was compulsory for public examinations and certification in secondary schools and that this form of ‘compulsion’ was unpopular with a large body of citizens.

Another major study commissioned in 1970 and published in 1975 regarding attitudes towards the language also reveals that there was considerable support for Irish. Many respondents believed it was important to ‘national or ethnic identity, or as a symbol of cultural distinctiveness’. This particular study indicated that the language was understood by a majority of the Irish people as an important part of Irish culture and argued that ‘when interpreted in this sense [Irish] has favourable support from about two-thirds of the national population’. The report indicated that the teaching of Irish in schools had considerable backing, but that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the methodology used in the schools because many believed it did not prepare students to speak the language after finishing their education.

When the Language Restoration Commission’s Report was
published in 1963, the Department of Finance was charged with drafting the definitive White Paper that Lemass had promised. The Broadcasting Authority was asked by Finance for a detailed response to each point that had been raised in the Language Commission’s report that related to broadcasting. The Authority responded by trying to identify recommendations that it could work with, pointing out that some had already been taken on board. Nonetheless, fundamental disagreements remained. In responding to the two chapters of the Commission’s Report that addressed broadcasting, the Authority made this abundantly clear. Once again the Authority argued that it had a statutory responsibility to make ends meet, maintaining this was a critical point that had been missed by all language advocates: ‘In general, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the obligation in regard to Irish set out in the Broadcasting Act has been interpreted by the Commission as requiring the Authority, without sufficient regard for its wider obligations, to operate broadcasting with the revival of Irish as a central feature of its general programme policy.’

It rejected the Commission’s demand that there be an increase in Irish language programming in peak viewing periods in both television and radio, arguing that this would risk the financial stability of the national broadcaster. Pointing to the growing public opposition to obligatory language teaching in the schools, it argued that forcing Irish into prime time would ‘generate resentment and the charge that the Language was being rendered compulsory for viewers and listeners’.

Although the Authority was not opposed to exploring how more could be done with the language in drama and in children’s programming, the general tone of its response was not positive. It was willing to make some concessions as long as these did not impede its ability to find and hold an audience, arguing ‘the use of Irish on a substantial scale in television programmes would result in a major loss of audience, would antagonise large sections of the public and would have a marked effect on its finances. Increase[d] use of Irish must … be gradual, be well judged and be matched by a corresponding rise in acceptability by the public’. This position represented the opinion of Eamonn Andrews and senior staff in both radio and television. As Secretary of the Department of Posts...
and Telegraphs, León Ó Broin evaluated the Authority’s response and was broadly sympathetic. Although he was an advocate of public service broadcasting, and an Irish-speaking intellectual with tremendous affection for the language, he informed the Department of Finance that the Authority’s position was valid. He argued that in drafting the White Paper the Department of Finance had to accept the fact that Irish programming was not popular and that the commercial remit of the service did not provide the Authority with much room to manoeuvre.

The Department of Finance realised that it had stepped into a political and cultural minefield and asked Ó Broin for help in defining exactly what the term ‘restoration’ meant in the context of the language. Ó Broin responded and in doing so helped the government reorient one of the most contentious cultural debates of the decade. His definition influenced the White Paper and subsequent government policy and provided a degree of ‘wiggle room’ for the government. It accepted the reality that there was not going to be a linguistic exchange any time soon, and instead addressed the need to patiently encourage the use of Irish. Although critics of the state’s language policies had made similar arguments, Ó Broin succeeded in providing a degree of legitimacy to a critique that forced a re-evaluation of government policy. “‘Restoration’ means, in the long term, the restoration of Irish as the language in main use in Ireland. In the short term, it means the maintenance of Irish as the language in main use in the present Gaeltacht areas and the systematic extension of the knowledge and the use of Irish in the rest of the country.”

Ó Broin then deftly shifted the emphasis to the need for the government to encourage economic development in the remote and economically deprived Irish-speaking areas of the state. Believing that support for the Gaeltacht was politically popular, he argued that if one accepted his definition of restoration, then the most important priority was the stability and prosperity of these Irish-speaking areas. He advised Finance it was critical that these areas be developed economically to stem the tide of emigration that plagued the Gaeltacht. If residents could be assured that they would enjoy a reasonable standard of living, only then would they be willing to remain and retain Irish as their primary
language. In addressing the challenges inherent in restoration outside the Gaeltacht, he argued that the greatest obstacle was not ideological but practical, maintaining that there was a significant lack of knowledge of the language that had to be systematically but patiently addressed. He believed that a concerted effort could be undertaken but that progress would take over a generation or more. Ó Broin cautioned that none of this would work unless the right atmosphere existed, an atmosphere of genuine support for Irish. ‘The arguments for the restoration of the language need to be studied and propagated persuasively and with the most modern techniques.’

He understood that unless society was genuinely interested in supporting the Irish language, the ‘effort would fail and the Gaeltacht will not survive since the people of these areas are unlikely to wish to remain different from the rest of the country indefinitely’.

The 1965 White Paper produced by the Department of Finance, *The Restoration of the Irish Language*, emphasised the critical need for public support in trying to restore the Irish language. Ó Riagáin notes that the government’s Irish language policy between 1948 and 1970 was ‘slowly detaching and distancing itself from leadership and prime responsibility for language policy’. This is certainly made clear from the White Paper, which shifted at least partial responsibility to the general public. Terence Brown has pointed out that the White Paper marked a ‘turning point’ because the government recognised and stated clearly that the English language was necessary even in Gaeltacht areas. A shift had taken place, as ‘bilingualism not linguistic exchange became the new aspiration’. Although the White Paper was sympathetic to many of the recommendations articulated by the Commission, it proved that the government was not willing to move quickly for fear of alienating public opinion. Brown notes in the publication a degree of ambivalence in this regard, as it vaguely sketched a set of goals that were to be reviewed on an annual basis: ‘Phrases and terms such as “will recommend,” “will encourage,” “desirable,” and “target” suggest a government caution and ambiguity almost amounting to equivocation.’

Tony Crowley who has written extensively on the politics of the Irish language in Ireland maintains that although the White Paper
reiterated the government commitment to the language, a close reading would lead advocates of the language to ‘despair’. He too identifies a shift defining the White Papers as a ‘classic example of political evasion and ambiguity … [concluding] In effect the state was withdrawing from its leadership role in the restoration project, despite its acknowledgment of the still integral role of the language in definitions of Irish identity’.160 The clear and decisive strategy Lemass had called for at the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis gave way to a lukewarm plan marked by caution and ambivalence.

The White Paper called for the establishment of an organisation that would monitor the implementation of its recommendations and advise the government about progress and policy. This led to the creation of yet another body, Comhlacht [Council] Comhairleach na Gaeilge, which was set up to be ‘representative of public and private interests, which will help to review policy and advise on its future development, with particular reference to the extension of the use of Irish in spheres other than that of public administration’.161 This group comprised a range of individuals representative of public life and was to be overseen initially by Minister for Finance Dr James Ryan. When the Minister for Finance first met the council in the spring of 1965, he suggested that ‘television as one topic with which the Council might profitably concern itself’.162 Ryan was keen to get the Council to aggressively investigate the role that television could play in reviving the language ‘and was particularly anxious that the Council should examine the question thoroughly’.163 After raising expectations, he and his department distanced themselves from the issue by referring all subsequent questions regarding television to a highly annoyed Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

When the required progress report addressing Irish in television was being drafted a year later a palpable degree of tension had developed between the two departments, as neither wanted anything to do with the contentious issue. The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs met with a group from Comhlacht Comhairleach na Gaeilge and told the delegation that ‘he would welcome its detailed ideas on programmes and assumed that it would furnish its recommendations thereon to the Minister for Finance who had appointed it’.164 He also informed the deputation that he
would do his best to ensure the Council’s views would be put into effect’. Posts and Telegraphs instructed the group to communicate directly with the Department of Finance and wanted to avoid getting involved in contentious negotiations. Upon being contacted by the group, Finance quickly made it clear that it was not interested in questions concerning Irish language broadcasting, insisting that Posts and Telegraphs address the matter. The language was the proverbial hot potato that neither department wanted to hold.

Responding to pressure for a more substantial presence of Irish language material in Telefís Éireann, Kevin McCourt informed the Authority that an editor of Irish programmes would be appointed. He assured the Authority that the editor would be a ‘key person in the organisation, would require to be possessed of high qualities of character and competence and would have the positive support of the Director-General in fulfilling his duties’. Liam Ó Murchú was appointed editor of Irish programmes in April 1964 in an effort to address the critique of many Irish language supporters. After spending a month at a BBC training course in London he returned to Dublin and was expected to become the station’s ‘point person’ on Irish language broadcasting. His responsibilities included developing programmes for Irish lessons, working with all departments to improve and increase the amount of Irish language broadcasts, recruiting bilingual personnel and assisting all departments in identifying appropriate Irish language material for broadcast. He was also expected to develop new programmes and find talented performers for productions that would be broadcast in Irish. He experienced mixed results and was often frustrated in his efforts to find support for projects but was able to oversee a number of programmes that proved successful in finding an audience.

Ó Murchú’s memoir, *A Time to Love?* recalls the struggles he encountered in trying to develop quality Irish language programming. An early success was *Labhair Gaeilge Linn*, developed as a short but innovative programme to provide language instruction to viewers. It was promoted by the station as an important development and described as a ‘refresher course … made in the form
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Of short playlets’. According to Ó Murchú its success was due to his desire to make it attractive to ‘the new urban-orientated mind’ and communicate a sense of style that the language ‘had a place in modern situations and which young people especially could identify with’. Minister for Education Donogh O’Malley provided critical support for another popular programme that was designed to run with a new set of Irish lessons that the department was publishing. The programme *Buntús Gaeilge* was popular, running for three seasons; the 250,000 books published to accompany the programme quickly sold out. Ó Murchú was interested in developing accessible bilingual programmes and later developed a popular variety programme that was broadcast both from the studio and on location around the country. *Trom agus Éadrom* won a Jacobs Award and realised Ó Murchú’s desire to develop a programme that would make the language accessible by carefully integrating it into a programme thereby making it appealing to an audience that was not fluent in Irish.

In an effort to bring the language into sports commentaries Kevin McCourt directed Ó Murchú and the Head of Sport, Michael O’Hehir, to develop a policy that would bring Irish into Gaelic games. An understanding was reached that this would be done ‘in such a way as not to diminish general communication or detract from the general appeal of the programme’. It was agreed that a concerted effort would be made to feature more Irish ‘by way of phrases, comment, etc., but this must not be done in such a way as to give the impression that information is being given in one language and not the other’. In spite of some success Ó Murchú was frustrated by more passionate supporters of the language who ‘seemed to feel that I was as much in their employ as in that of RTÉ – a kind of honorary, unpaid, Graham-Greene-like “Our Man in Havana” – who had nothing to do but put on their Irish language programmes’. As editor he was convinced that Irish language programmes broadcast in prime time would not be watched and that a concerted effort had to be made to provide innovative educational and bilingual programming. He believed broadcasts had to be geared to four programme categories: to native speakers in the Gaeltacht; to viewers that had lost touch with the language since leaving school; for enrichment, teaching
viewers about the role of the language in Irish culture; and, lastly, for teaching Irish at different ages and levels. Ó Murchú concluded that planning was not really difficult but the implementation of policy was always problematic. ‘The successes were few, and all of them hard won; the abortions, miscarriages and outright failures many, and too bitter to bear remembering.’

Within the Broadcasting Authority, tension concerning the absence of substantial Irish programming came to a head when Ernest Blythe penned a fifteen-page critique to the director-general in the autumn of 1964. The letter, which was circulated to members of the Radio Éireann Authority, focused on what he defined as the failure of the Authority to make a sincere effort to support Irish. Seemingly not impressed by the appointment of Ó Murchú, he once again expressed disappointment at both the amount of material featured and its quality, arguing that what was broadcast was nothing more than ‘scraps’ he defined as useless. He argued that when Irish was featured in decent viewing time the quality was abysmal, ‘indicative of varying types of indifference or contempt, being mostly what I have described as incestuous or ghetto-minded or non-adult’.

Blythe told the director-general that the Authority was duty bound to serve not simply an Irish-speaking minority but all viewers, and called for regular, if brief, Irish broadcasts in prime time and the use of the language in popular programmes such as The Late Late Show. He urged the station to make an effort at broadcasting short plays in Irish and in popular home-produced programmes such as Jamboree, Jackpot, World of Sport and Strictly Politics. Blythe argued that the most important viewers were young children and teenagers that needed the lessons they learned in school reinforced at home.

He was convinced that efforts to develop imaginative Irish language programmes were being thwarted by what he referred to as ‘the resistance of the Establishment which in some instances amounted almost, if not quite, to sabotage’. Again, he argued that even when the Radio Éireann Authority was working with the best of intentions to get staff within Telefís Éireann to do more for the language, its efforts were being subverted or undermined. ‘Only the strongest directives from the Authority or the Director-
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General will prevent the efforts of the minority of our officials who would like to do the right thing by the Irish language, from being thwarted or circumscribed by the steady pressure of the majority who personally have no use for it and when something is proposed to be done in Irish will almost invariably contend that it should be done in English.177

The director-general replied to Blythe, explaining that the Broadcasting Act did not stipulate that the television service go so far as to feature Irish at peak viewing times. He reiterated his belief that, while this might satisfy those who knew and understood Irish, the policy ‘would do injustice to far greater numbers who could not but be driven, most of them, to the seductive light-weight material normally being transmitted at peak viewing time on British channels’.178 Blythe’s letter was the focus of a regularly scheduled meeting of the Authority in January 1965, and the minutes of that meeting illustrate where the fault lines lay in relation to increased Irish language broadcasting. Blythe argued that he was trying to be reasonable but believed it imperative that television reach out to young adults, especially those who had recently completed school. Once again he pleaded for Irish language broadcasting during peak viewing times, arguing that every effort should be made to improve the quality of Irish programmes. He believed that the language could successfully be integrated into popular domestic programmes, arguing that Irish should not be used primarily in instructional programming but also in creative entertainment with what he defined as a ‘strong narrative element’.179 Although he accepted that prime-time Irish programmes might decrease the station’s revenue, he believed this should be accepted and ‘a case should be made to the Government if the Authority’s revenue earning capacity was thereby unduly impaired’.180 Although Áine Ní Cheannainn, who believed that Irish could be used in The Late Late Show and On the Road, endorsed his position, none of the other members of the Authority supported him.

Authority member Edward McManus, who was regarded as a strong Fianna Fáil supporter, rejected the proposal to extend Irish programmes into peak viewing periods because of the risks to revenue that would be at stake.181 James Fanning, who had already made it clear that he believed viewers were not interested in Irish
language broadcasts, also criticised Blythe’s interpretation of the Broadcasting Act and made it clear that it was not the responsibility of Telefís Éireann to restore the Irish language. He was sceptical of developing programmes for young people, maintaining ‘the Authority knew very little of the viewing habits of the young adults at whom Mr. Blythe sought to direct more Irish, and it would be exceptionally dangerous to risk loss of viewers by greater emphasis on the language at a time when the position of the pattern of television advertising was under consideration’.

Another member, Commander Crosbie, editor of the *Cork Examiner*, also disagreed with Blythe, stating he had spoken with ‘a large number of Irish speaking viewers, all of whom were satisfied with current Irish broadcasting’.

Blythe found little support for his proposals from other members of the Authority. Charles Brennan and Fintan Kennedy maintained that although they were sympathetic they were worried about the financial implications of a loss of viewers, believing the Authority should move slowly and carefully. Brennan accepted that more could be done to develop quality Irish programming while Kennedy claimed that he noticed a growing public sympathy for the language throughout the country, believing this was ‘mainly attributable to television which had helped to increase respect for the language’.

Eamonn Andrews assured members that they were fulfilling their obligations under the Broadcasting Act, and that the best way to address the critique put forward by Blythe was to increase the quality of Irish programming and carefully consider when and how additional material could be broadcast. Director-General Kevin McCourt also believed that Telefís Éireann was doing its part in helping efforts to revive Irish, but that this was not enough for what he referred to as ‘dedicated enthusiasts’. During these discussions, he took the opportunity to make it clear that the new Controller of Programmes, Gunnar Rugheimer, who had replaced Michael Barry, should not be targeted for criticism due to his non-Irish background. He asked the Authority not to see his status as a foreigner ‘as preventing him from sharing a feeling for the Authority’s objectives’. McCourt praised Rugheimer as being responsible for ‘building up the image which the station enjoyed today as a consequence of the switch of emphasis from
inexpensive U.S. material to more and better quality home origination’. He singled out Ó Murchú’s successful Irish language programme *Labhair Gaeilge Linn*, an instructional programme that had been praised by supporters of the language, as an initiative that Rugheimer had developed. Despite these arguments, Ernest Blythe remained frustrated at his inability to push the Authority to increase both the quality and quantity of Irish language broadcasts.

While these debates were taking place within the Authority and in the pages of the national press, attention began to focus on the fact that the term of the Broadcasting Authority was about to expire. In May 1965, speculation mounted about what the Lemass Government would do when the term of the first Authority ended. The *Irish Press* reported that there was growing speculation that Eamonn Andrews would not stay on as chair, given his commitments to the BBC in the UK. The paper also reported that the Broadcasting Authority had prepared a report for the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs on its five-year term. The paper claimed that although members believed there was always room for improvement the Authority was convinced it had succeeded in ‘achieving a fairly high standard, and that any dissatisfaction which has been expressed with the service has come from a minority of viewers’. The government met on June 1, 1965 and reappointed Eamonn Andrews to a one-year term as a member and Chairman of the Authority. Five years earlier, when the first Broadcasting Authority was established, he had been consulted closely about the make-up of the Authority but tellingly this was not done in the summer of 1965. The government decided not to reappoint Charles Brennan, Ernest Blythe, Commander George Crosbie, and one of only two women on the board, Áine Ní Cheannainn. The new board included existing members Eamonn Andrews as Chairman, Professor T. W. Moody, James Fanning, Edward McManus, Fintan Kennedy, and new members including Dónall Ó Móráin, Michael Noonan, Phyllis Bean Uí Cheallaigh and Ruairí Brugha. All the appointments were made for a period of one year, which provided the government a degree of flexibility as the last board had a fixed
term of five years.\textsuperscript{187}

The appointment of Dónall Ó Móráin was an extraordinary attempt to try to blunt the relentless criticism emanating from one of the most outspoken advocates of the language. By including Ó Móráin the government tried to appease or co-opt one of its harshest critics. Ó Móráin found allies in the widow of the late president Seán T. O’Kelly, Phyllis Úi Cheallaigh, and the son of Cathal Brugha, Ruairí Brugha, both of whom advocated for increased Irish language programming. The Broadcasting Authority subsequently fractured as it came under renewed pressure from within to increase Irish language programming, creating serious divisions that complicated national broadcasting policy. This change in the make-up of the Authority was addressed in the Irish language publication \textit{Inniu} (Today).\textsuperscript{188} An article written by an unidentified correspondent engaged in research to determine if the changes in the make-up of the Broadcasting Authority would have any real effect on the status of Irish on television. The reporter did not identify sources but concluded that ‘it is likely that the situation will improve somewhat’.\textsuperscript{189} After explaining the dynamics of the old Authority where there were two identified as supporting the language, four against and three somewhere in between it was reported that the balance of power within the Authority had shifted in favour of Irish.

The new Authority was reported as having three members identified as friends of the language, three defined as ‘anti-Irish’, and three neutrals. It was hoped that this new dynamic would work to the benefit of those that wanted an increased presence of Irish in television broadcasting. Special mention was made of the government’s appointment of ‘one member of the newly appointed authority who used to complain strongly about the neglect of Irish by the old Authority’.\textsuperscript{190} This was certainly a reference to the appointment of Dónall Ó Móráin, one of the most withering critics of Telefís Éireann. The article pointed out that his appointment should send a message to the neutrals on the new authority that ‘the Government wants greater and more effective concern with Irish on television in the future than was the case up to now’.\textsuperscript{191} There was some speculation that this was in fact a Machiavellian move to try to quiet the government’s critics,
but the reporter believed that the constitution of the new board signalled that change was imminent. The reporter warned that the government should not leave the fate of the language in the hands of ‘a group as foreign-minded as are the majority of the Authority, especially since most of the paid staff of Telefís Éireann are unenthusiastic about the language’. Although the writer did not see ill will or an anti-national sentiment behind the neglect of the language, it was argued that nothing would change unless the entire Authority underwent further transformation or until the government made it clear that more Irish language programming be provided immediately.

Under the terms of the 1965 White Paper, Posts and Telegraphs was required to produce a progress report to the Department of Finance detailing what steps had been taken to bring more Irish into television broadcasting. This information would be used for a larger, more comprehensive report that would be submitted to the Cabinet in a formal Memorandum for the Government. The department duly submitted a report, maintaining that two improvements had been made that would benefit the cause of the language. The first was the reconstitution of the Broadcasting Authority to include both Dónall Ó Móráin and Ruairí Brugha, a man described as an active member of the language movement.

The second accomplishment was the publication of an official policy statement on the place of Irish that had been widely circulated in the press. When he joined the Authority, Ó Móráin drafted this policy statement titled simply, Irish on television, and after some discussion it was accepted by the Authority and distributed throughout the radio and television service. The document signalled a new commitment to make a concerted effort to help with the revival, stipulating that staff had a ‘responsibility to nurture the Irish language by presenting it in a sympathetic and imaginative way.’ The document illustrates the influence of Ó Móráin, Uí Cheallaigh and Brugha and is remarkable for what it implied. In promising that the service would not be used to ‘present unbalanced discussion on the national aim of restoring Irish’, it suggested that there was a conspiracy afoot within Telefís Éireann to undermine and ridicule efforts of revivalists.
The policy statement outlined a renewed effort to bring Irish into sports, news, children’s and current affairs programming, announcing that new initiatives would be developed in Irish. Furthermore, bilingualism would be required for specific jobs, and it was strongly suggested that Irish speakers would find it easier to advance through the ranks within Telefís Éireann.

In addition to increasing the amount of Irish language broadcasts Telefís Éireann would ‘increasingly help to build a better public consciousness of national identity by means of programmes on history and culture in Ireland’.

One can sense here the influence of T. W. Moody who succeeded in getting a commitment to bring informative history projects onto Telefís Éireann.

The new Authority proved to be aggressive in inserting itself into programming decisions, challenging the director-general and controller of programmes on a number of occasions. One can sense that this new-found comfort in involving itself in the day-to-day operations of Telefís Éireann became a distraction for senior administrators, producers and writers. The director-general announced the new policy to a bewildered staff in an impromptu meeting held in a studio at the Donnybrook station. The new emphasis on quantity was made clear by the director-general as producers, writers and presenters were encouraged to use Irish as much as possible in all aspects of programming. During the meeting with McCourt questions and comments illustrated a wide range of emotions from ‘sheer bewilderment to polite rage’.

Within the service even senior producers committed to the Irish language had reservations, believing that it would be a mistake to do too much too fast. Aindrias Ó Gallchóir, a veteran producer who later became controller of the Irish language radio service, Radió na Gaeltachta maintains that this was understood within the television service; ‘you had to go to the degree that people would accept, you had to go with the audience, you can not go so far ahead that the dog cannot hear the whistle’.

The fact that the new policy did not produce a marked increase in Irish programming concerned Ó Móráin who expressed his frustration at the ‘decline of the quantity of Irish’ to the Authority that spring.

Looking ahead to the autumn season, Ó Móráin hoped more could be done for the language; he suggested that news broadcasts
could be made easier to understand, maintaining ‘there should be slowly read Nuacht headlines at 8 p.m.’

By April 1966, almost one full year into the tenure of the new Authority and with an understanding that the same group would be reappointed, Eamonn Andrews abruptly resigned as chair of the Broadcasting Authority. He was deeply unhappy with the make-up of the new Authority and the efforts to insert more Irish into programming. In his letter of resignation to Seán Lemass, Andrews explained that he believed broadcasting was headed in the wrong direction. He pointed out that seven years earlier when Lemass asked him to chair the Radio Éireann Authority his views on its composition were sought. He lamented the fact that this was not the case when the second Authority was appointed and was clearly upset with the appointments of Ó Móráin and his allies. One year earlier when Andrews learned of the make-up of the new board, he was so distraught he cut short a trip to the USA, returning to Ireland where he considered tendering his resignation. He explained to Lemass that he had accepted the invitation to continue with reservations. ‘I was concerned, among other things, to save any possible embarrassment to yourself or the Minister and to see through the important and difficult 1916 celebration year.’ Andrews had become profoundly uncomfortable with the new board, complaining that the new emphasis on Irish was a mistake and that concessions made to appease the language lobby were undermining the service. He informed the Taoiseach, ‘I have tried to compromise to the point beyond which honesty will not permit me to go. I fear very much that if the present RTÉ policies in this respect are pursued, the service will get so far ahead of public acceptance that it will lose the Irish viewer to cross channel services as happened in radio.

Andrews was convinced that it had been a serious mistake to try to placate the language lobby by bringing in members who wanted to promote the language with what he believed was no conception of the financial realities of broadcasting. He told Lemass that the new emphasis on the Irish language was causing discord and that he had ‘distressing evidence of repercussions within the service itself. For the most sincere reasons members are pressing an unrealistic policy which I believe may have both artistic and financial
repercussions of an unfortunate kind. Enough practical board room experience of Public Service budgets and balance sheets is not available to counterbalance the idealism that, no doubt, inspires the present course of action; and the wish to have what is desirable is not being related to what is either possible or acceptable."202 As noted earlier he was also upset with the Authority’s decision not to reappoint Gunnar Rugheimer Controller of Programmes.

Lemass was troubled by the resignation and tried to get Andrews to change his mind. Andrews responded that, ‘If my understanding that the Authority is to be re-appointed en bloc is correct, then, for the reasons I have given you, I could not change my mind.”203 Andrews met with Lemass and later wrote to him explaining that as ‘nothing has changed’ he would resign and advise the members of the Authority of his decision. He also told Lemass that when his resignation became public he would explain that he resigned as a matter of principle. ‘I will not do this to add to the controversies that already exist about such things as the Irish language, but to emphasise, if only to my former colleagues, the danger and short-sightedness I believe to be synonymous with the present policy.”204

Many years later Dónall Ó Móráin disputed this version of events, which were largely supported in an interview John Horgan conducted with Gunner Rugheimer for his authoritative biography of Seán Lemass. Rugheimer maintained that Authority members were unreasonable in pushing for more Irish language programming; he specifically mentioned Phyllis Bean Úi Cheallaigh and Ernest Blythe: ‘I got hell from these two. They wanted to operate on the basis of a belief that everybody spoke Irish, and that the appropriate thing to do would be to sprinkle Irish throughout the programming: this was complete rubbish.”205 Rugheimer maintains that Andrews resigned because he thought it was ‘unreasonable and unfair’ for the Authority to force RTÉ to assume responsibility for the revival of the Irish language.206

In a 1999 letter to the editor of The Irish Times Ó Móráin argued that Eamonn Andrews knew he was not going to be reappointed to the Authority when his term expired later in the year. According to Ó Móráin when the second Authority was established ‘there was virtually no Irish used on the television service’
and when he worked with Phyllis Bean Uí Cheallaigh and Ruairí Brugha to make modest proposals Andrews and other members were opposed. Eventually some members ‘turned against the chairman’s general broadcasting policy and were open to compromise. Eventually, by majority vote, the [A]uthority, in its generosity, decided to allow 30 minutes of programming in Irish per week.Ó Móráin was not impressed with the resignation of the Chairman, arguing that Andrews’ dramatic resignation a few months before his term was due to expire simply ‘made a virtue out of necessity’.

The government moved quickly in finding a replacement for Andrews; less than a month after receiving Andrew’s letter of resignation a decision had been made to offer the position to Christopher Stephen (Todd) Andrews. The position was not advertised, and there was no formal search. Lemass met Todd Andrews at the end of May and offered him the position.

At the start of the 1960s, the Sinn Féin ideology that had defined de Valera’s Ireland had run its course. Seán Lemass, Ireland’s great moderniser, opened up a closed economy and encouraged the development of what he described as a modern ‘vigorous nation seeking efficiency’. Inevitably modernisation undermined powerful institutions that had become entrenched in the fabric of life in independent Ireland. As television became more confident and assertive the Catholic Church and many political elites found themselves on the defensive, forced to answer difficult questions about their decisions and policies. Advocates of the Irish language were also challenged by television and chafed at being treated as yet another interest group. As television permeated Irish society, it provoked debates about the place of the language in contemporary Ireland. Increasingly questions about the state’s cultural priorities were complicated by television’s relentless presence. The medium exposed cultural policies that had been accepted, at least on paper, through much of the life of independent Ireland to a bright and discomforting light.

It would be inaccurate to argue that there was a simple bipolarity between traditionalists and modernisers that squared off in the cultural wars of the 1960s. In fact the term ‘language lobby’ is highly problematic as it suggests there was one cohesive
organisation driven by consensual politics. This was far from the case as supporters ranged from those committed to the actual restoration of the language as the vernacular of the Irish people to moderates who hoped to both support the Gaeltacht and cultivate an appreciation of a rich and varied literary and oral tradition. Many had little time for the traditional rural Gaelic ideology that de Valera embraced. Others were interested in social justice and focused on urban and class issues and hoped to use the language to open up Irish society making it more pluralist.

Within RTÉ there were certainly many progressive voices that were keen to use the language to challenge the status quo. Seán Mac Réamoinn, Aindrias Ó Gallchóir and Breandán Ó hÉithir all understood that many of the demands of the Gaelic League were unrealistic. Aindrias Ó Gallchóir argued that the producers and writers he worked with were interested in preserving and nurturing the language and that they considered the term ‘conservation’ more appropriate that ‘restoration’. However all were happy enough to exploit the constant pressure on RTÉ to develop successful programmes that often featured hard-hitting critiques of governments, politicians and the conservativism that characterised Irish society throughout the 1960s. Mention has already been made of a controversial edition of An Fear Agus A Sceal, which was cancelled in the autumn of 1963 provoking charges of censorship from members of the Labour Party and the national press. At the time Proinsias Mac Aonghusa who produced the programme rattled the political sensibilities of Kevin McCourt for conducting an interview with an outspoken former Clann na Poblachta Dáil Deputy, Con Lehane, who attacked the Catholic Church and Fianna Fáil.

When Eoghan Harris joined the staff of RTÉ in 1966 as a bright 22-year-old producer trainee he understood that Ireland was undergoing a period of remarkable change. He quickly emerged as a talented producer determined to use television to undermine the conservative nature of Irish society that he found suffocating. ‘I had an agenda … I wanted to punch holes in the three legs of Daniel Cokery’s Ireland, land, religion and nationalism.’ He knew the language could have a radical, progressive voice and developed programmes about the challenges of urban
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life for working-class viewers, programmes that often times were critical of Fianna Fáil economic and social policy. He also wanted to exert maximum pressure on the Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority, Eamonn Andrews, who opposed the extension of Irish language programming. Harris maintains that a confident ‘Gaelic Mafia’ emerged within the national radio and television service that included Mac Réamoinn, Ó Gallchóir and Ó hÉithir and that by 1966 there was a marked improvement in the quality and popularity of Irish language programming.

Harris worked with Breandán Ó hÉithir producing a re-energised Féach, a current affairs programme with a radical agenda that targeted the political and religious establishment of the time. Their guests included advocates for affordable housing, campaigners for economic development in the Gaeltacht, and leaders of a number of organisations including the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, People’s Democracy and the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement. Their programmes were meant to be provocative, for instance when President Nixon visited Ireland in the autumn of 1970, Féach telecast of a mock trial of the President from outside the American Embassy. This ‘highly improper’ broadcast
caught the attention of the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs who would not have been impressed. According to Harris, a network of Irish speakers within the government and civil service tolerated the iconoclasm of Féach and offered some degree of protection because it produced quality programming in Irish. "Their attitude was “ok that young guy Harris may be a communist but he’s doing great programmes in Irish, let’s put up with the anti-clericalism and anti-nationalism". John Horgan notes that although many of these producers in this ‘Gaelic Mafia’ did not share a clear set of political convictions they were all ‘united in their desire to push the envelope of the new medium, and protected that enterprise by the fact that they were doing it in the first official language’.

In his exhaustive study Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State 1922–1939, Philip O’Leary addresses the fractious debates that divided supporters of the Irish language. Disputes between native speakers and learners of the language and between what O’Leary defines as nativists and progressives created controversy among supporters of the language soon after independence and these tensions persisted well into the years covered in this study. Throughout the 1960s there was a high degree of tension between the more conservative leadership of the Gaelic League and the producers of Irish language programming within RTÉ. Many leaders of the Gaelic League ‘detested’ the Irish language producers within the television service, regarding them as a ‘gang of trendy Irish speaking lefty progressives’. While many supporters of Irish understood that trying to force the language on an uninterested population was counter-productive and doomed to failure, these voices were often drowned out by reactionaries in the language movement, by what one long-serving Irish speaking director-general referred to as ‘language fascists’.

Many ‘modernisers’ chose to dismiss the language lobby as one-dimensional, maintaining that although they were not hostile to the language they were firmly committed to seeing Ireland prosper and fully engage with the modern world. In the formative years of Telefís Éireann, Eamonn Andrews and Edward Roth argued that many of the demands made by the language lobby were impossible to accept for a television service dependent on advertising revenue to remain financially viable. Seán Lemass who was determined
to see RTÉ become a financially viable enterprise accepted this interpretation. Many supporters of the language considered their arguments a convenient ‘smoke screen’ meant to hide the fact that these men had little real sympathy or interest in the Irish language. It was understood that unlike his predecessor, Eamon de Valera, Seán Lemass had no command of the language and therefore no real appreciation for it.\(^{221}\) His commitment to the language was regarded as highly suspect in spite of the colourful rhetoric he employed during elections. Many supporters of the language considered the first chairman of the Radio Telefís Éireann Authority Eamonn Andrews as highly suspect because his reputation and experience were both established in the UK. Telefís Éireann’s first Director-General, Edward Roth, was a capable American technocrat dedicated to completing the difficult task of getting a commercial public service off the ground and on the air. He was bewildered by demands made by supporters of the language and never fully comprehended or appreciated the cultural context of the arguments being made. These men were focused on the establishment of a viable hybrid service and were unfamiliar and perhaps unconcerned with the complex arguments pertaining to mass media and language shift.

As the decade unfolded, more Irish language programming slowly made its way onto Telefís Éireann, and much of it was remarkably creative and successful. Labhair Gaeilge Linn, Féach and later Trom agus Éadrom, found impressive audiences and proved to be engaging programmes. However the issue of Irish language programming continued to cause controversy and towards the end of the decade tactics shifted once again as many advocates began to successfully argue for Irish language programming as a minority right.\(^{222}\) Instead of insisting the government feature more Irish material on the national service support grew once again for a separate television station that would serve Irish-speaking communities. This resulted in the establishment of Teilifíse na Gaeilge which went on the air in 1996. Although it experienced intense opposition as it was being organised, and serious growing pains once it was up and running, it has tried to use the medium to make Irish interesting, engaging, and relevant.
Notes


2 Gael-Linn was established in 1953 to promote Irish culture with an emphasis on the Irish language. It developed entrepreneurial projects in the Gaeltacht including fish farms and was committed to exploiting developing technologies for the language. It produced a remarkable number of innovative films that were screened in cinemas throughout the country in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It also helped popularise traditional music by producing records on the Gael-Linn label. The group was an unsuccessful applicant for a television broadcasting licence in 1958. Dónall Ó Mórain, the founding director, was a former army officer and supporter of Fine Gael. He was interviewed by the author in Dublin in December 1990.


4 Ibid.


6 Ibid.

7 NAI DT SI4996D, the language is from a memorandum written by Lemass to Moynihan, April 1960.


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16 Ibid., 134.
20 Opening address of 2RN, Douglas Hyde, January 1, 1926. The address began in English for ‘any strangers listening in’. He then completed his talk in Irish and these quotes are taken from that part of the address. Thanks to Nollaig Mac Congáil for the translation.
21 Ibid.
22 Ronan Fanning, Independent Ireland (Helicon, Dublin, 1983), 79.
23 NAI, Department of Taoiseach, SP15580, report and minute, September 25, 1953. Although the listener surveys may say something about the quality of Irish language programming there is little doubt that the low numbers created real concern when Telefís Éireann was finding its feet as a commercial enterprise.
24 NAI, Department of Communications, TV 11361.
25 Ibid., the statistic of 10 per cent seems very small and does not take into account unlicenced sets, but the Gaeltacht was one of the more chronically impoverished regions of the country. Although de Valera proposed that free radios be distributed to residents, nothing was done to follow through on his proposal.
26 Ibid
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid. Iarfhlaith Watson’s research into radio schedules gives an idea of the amount and type of Irish language programming being broadcast in the 1950s. For one particular week in October 1955, over eight hours of Irish programming included news, talks, songs and music, and children’s programmes. See his Broadcasting in Irish (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 34.
30 RTÉ Authority Archive, Notes on Programme Policy Meeting, March 22, 1969.
32 NAI, Department of Communications, TV 11361.
33 Ibid.
34 Robert Savage, Irish Television: The Political and Social Origins (Cork University Pres, Cork, 1996), 181–2. The efforts by the language lobby to influence the Television Commission and the government are addressed
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in detail in this book.
35 Ibid., 194.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 196.
39 NAI, Communications, TW 6086, Ó Muineacháin to Donnacha Ó Laoire, October 20, 1959.
40 RTÉ Written Archives, Irvine Papers, Roth to Ó Súilleabháin, March 28, 1961.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Depending on their equipment Irish listeners had a choice of stations available including the BBC, American Armed Forces Radio, and ‘pirate’ stations including Europe Number One, Radio Luxembourg, and later Radio Caroline.
45 RTÉ Written Archives, Irvine Papers, transcription of Roth’s press conference, April 7, 1961.
47 Quoted in the Irish Times, September 14, 1961.
50 Kelly, Compulsory Irish, 38. Fine Gael also advocated the elimination of required tests in Irish for appointment to the Civil Service and local authorities. When Fine Gael formed a government in 1973 changes were made and the requirement to pass Irish in order to pass the Leaving Certificate, Intermediate Certificate and Group Certificate was dropped.
51 Séamus Ó Grianna stepped down as editor in 1929.
53 Ibid. Ó Grianna to The Irish Times, June 6, 1966, 207.
54 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292, September 21, 1961. Submission to the Radio Éireann Authority on Telefís Éireann.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 2.
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58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 3.
60 Ibid., 4.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 5.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., Roth to Donncha Ó Laoire, Secretary, Comhdháil Náisiúnta Gaeilge, October 26, 1961.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
71 *The Irish Times*, November 11, 1961.
72 Ibid.
73 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292, Ó Laoire to Roth, November 28, 1961.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 2.
77 Ibid.
79 *Dáil Debates*, November 29, 1961. The organisation originally formed in 1943 as a student group interested in the revival of the language.
80 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292, Ó Laoire to Roth, December 5, 1961.
81 Ibid., Ó Laoire to Roth, December 12, 1961.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., Roth to Ó Laoire, December 8, 1961.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid. Articles appeared in the *Evening Press*, the *Irish Independent*, *The Irish Times*, the *Evening Mail*, and the *Limerick Leader*, among others.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., Scannell, Department of Posts and Telegraphs to Gael-Linn, December 19, 1961.
90 Ibid., Mac Gabhran to Posts and Telegraphs, December 21, 1961. The response was shared with the Taoiseach Seán Lemass.
91 Author’s interview with Dónall Ó Móráin, December 1990, Dublin.
93 Department of Communications, TW 11292. Meeting of Authority
with Comhdháil Náisiúnta Delegation, March 10, 1962.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 2.
97 Ibid., 3.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Thanks to Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh for his observations on the wrangling between the Congress and broadcasters.
102 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292, meeting of the RTÉ Authority with Comhdháil Náisiúnta Delegation, March 10, 1962, 3.
103 Ibid., summary of Dónall Ó Móráin’s article in Irish in the April 1962 issue of An tUltach – the official journal of Comhaltas Uladh, 2.
104 Ibid., 3. Television Audience Measurements (TAM) was the company contracted to measure viewership by the Authority.
105 Ibid. Radio Luxembourg was established as a commercial radio station in Luxembourg broadcasting across international boundaries. It quickly became a popular and influential source of contemporary music including blues and rock and roll.
106 Ibid., 4.
108 Ibid.
109 The Irish Times, August 8, 1962.
110 Ibid.
111 The Irish Times, 1962.
112 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292. The Place of Irish in the Television Service, September 19, 1962, with cover letter, Andrews to Ó Laoire.
113 Ibid. Andrews explained ‘The Authority does not admit to any right in the Comhdháil to dictate broadcasting policy or to prescribe how the broadcasting service should be conducted’.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., 2.
116 Ibid., 3.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., 10.
119 Ibid.
120 Evening Press, October 20, 1962.
121 NAI, Department of Communications, TW 11292 Andrews to Hilliard, October 21, 1962.
122 Ibid.
123 Dáil Debates vol. 197, October 31, 1962.
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124 Department of Communications, TW 11292. Supplementary Information for the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, October 30, 1962.
125 NAI, Department of Communications, Woolard to Ingoldsby, October 26, 1962.
127 Quoted from Philip O’Leary’s upcoming volume, *Writing beyond the Revival: Facing the Future in Gaelic Prose 1940–1951* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, forthcoming): ‘We do not, of course, suggest that the allocation of seven to ten minutes of every film programme to Irish would be satisfactory as a permanent arrangement. It would, however, be acceptable for, say, five years. Then, as the future in store for television became more clearly defined and the percentage of citizens able to understand Irish increased, the matter could be re-examined.’ Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, *Films in Irish*, 13.
128 Author’s interview with Dónall Ó Móráin, Dublin, December 14, 1990.
129 Thanks to my colleague at Boston College, Philip O’Leary for pointing this out.
130 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P/24/1182, Blythe to Irvine, August 27, 1962.
131 Ibid., P/24/1185, Barry to Roth, October 15, 1962.
132 Ibid., P/24/1186.
133 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
138 NAI, S13180 D/95.
140 Ibid., record of a call from Ó Fiaich to the Taoiseach’s Office, November 25, 1964.
141 Ibid., Ó Fiaich to Lemass that quotes the November 26 letter, December 1, 1964.
142 Ibid., Lemass to Ó Fiaich, November 1964.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid., Ó Fiaich to Lemass, March 4, 1964.
147 Ibid.
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149 Ibid.
150 NAI, 2001/78/78, Memorandum of observations as requested by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, May 7, 1964, 4.
151 Ibid., 5.
152 Ibid., 8.
153 Ibid., Ó Broin to Finance, August 17, 1964.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Pádraig Ó Riagáin, Language Policy, 22.
159 Ibid.
161 NAI, 2001/78/78, Department of Posts and Telegraphs memorandum, February 18, 1966.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 RTÉ Authority Archive, minutes of the Authority, October 31, 1963, 4. Liam Ó Murchú was appointed February 19, 1964, as Irish Language Editor.
167 RTÉ Authority Archive, memorandum from the director-general to the Authority, October 17, 1964.
170 The programme was first broadcast in April 1975.
171 RTÉ Authority Archives, Memorandum on Irish in Sports Commentaries, November 6, 1965.
172 Ibid.
174 Ibid., 109.
175 UCD Archives, Blythe papers, P24/1191 Blythe to McCourt, November 6, 1964.
176 Ibid., 11.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., P124/1142, McCourt to Blythe, November 7, 1964.
179 RTÉ Authority Archives, Minutes of the Radio Éireann Authority, January 14, 1965.
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180 Ibid.
181 John Horgan makes the point that McManus was understood to be a strong backer of Fianna Fáil, referring to Deputy Jack McQuillan’s retort, ‘When Eddie says no, it’s curtains for the show’ (Irish Press, September 25, 1962), quoted in John Horgan, Broadcasting and Public Life (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2004), 49.
182 RTÉ Authority Archives, Minutes of the Radio Éireann Authority, January 14, 1965.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
187 NAI, Department of the Taoiseach, S16837, Government Minutes, June 1, 1965.
188 Inniu was one of the longest running Irish language weeklies, running from 1943–84. See Delap, ‘Irish and the Media’, 153–6.
189 NAI 2001/78/78, Department of the Taoiseach. S16837 Inniu (probably August 1965) article translated and included in the file.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 RTÉ Authority Archive, Minutes of the Authority, January 5, 1966.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid. One year later the Authority reviewed the policy statement concluding that although it was still unhappy with the amount of Irish in television programming ‘a favourable attitude’ towards the language was developing within RTÉ. A report indicated that over 300 employees were enrolled in 25 Irish language classes. ‘The Use of the Irish Language in Broadcasting’, RTÉ Written Archives, Hardiman Papers February, 1967.
197 Author’s interview with Aindrias Ó Gallchóir, June, 2007, Dún Laoghaire.
198 RTÉ Authority Archives, Minutes of the RTÉ Authority, April 20, 1966.
199 Ibid.
200 NAI, Department of the Taoiseach. S16837, Andrews to Lemass, April 25, 1966.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., Lemass to Andrews, April 28, 1966, and Andrews to Lemass, May
1, 1966.

204 Ibid., Andrews to Lemass, May 12, 1966.

205 See John Horgan, *Seán Lemass, the Enigmatic Patriot* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1997), 320.

206 Ibid.


208 Ibid. No documentation has been found to support Ó Móráin’s contention that Andrews was not going to be reappointed. However, all members of the second Authority were given one-year appointments – the first Authority’s term was five years.

209 NAI, Department of the Taoiseach. S16837, Department of Taoiseach Memorandum, May 17, 1966.

210 National Archives of Ireland, Department of the Taoiseach, S14996D, Lemass to Moynihan, March 30, 1960.

211 Author’s interview with Aindrias Ó Gallchóir, Dublin, June 2007.

212 This was made clear in author interviews with Seán Mac Réamoinn (Dublin), Aindrias Ó Gallchóir (Dublin, June 2007) and Eoghan Harris (Dublin, March 2009).

213 Author interview with Eoghan Harris, Dublin, March, 2009.

214 Ibid.

215 National Archives of Ireland, 2001/78/38. The programme, chaired by Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, featured a ‘trial’ in English followed by a discussion in Irish with Ruairí Brugha.

216 Harris maintains that when he first came to Telefís Éireann he was protected by senior civil servants including León Ó Broin and later Dónall Ó Móráin. Author’s interview with Harris, Dublin, March 2009.


219 Author’s interview with Eoghan Harris, Dublin, March 2009.

220 Author’s interview with Thomas Hardiman, Dublin, December 5, 1990.

221 See Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2008), especially Chapter 13 for a consideration of de Valera’s relationship with the language as a cultural priority.

222 See Watson, *Broadcasting in Irish*. Watson traces the change in tactics pursued by supporters of Irish who adopted a minority rights aproach to the Irish language.