

Double helix: two elites in politics and journalism in Ireland, 1870–1918

FELIX M. LARKIN¹

I

The concept of an elite is not one that readily springs to mind when we think about journalists and the press. Sir Walter Scott, writing in 1829, thought that ‘nothing but a thorough-going blackguard ought to attempt the daily press’ – and still today journalism is scarcely seen as a dignified or reputable profession.² Nevertheless, in the lively world of Irish political journalism at the end of the ‘long’ nineteenth century, there are two groups that, by virtue of their numerical strength and the prominence of many of their members, may validly be regarded as elite. These groups – discrete but interrelated, entwined together as in a double helix and linked by some notable persons who straddle both – were part of the fabric of nationalist Ireland from the 1870s until the 1918 general election.

During that period, the press reached the zenith of its influence in political and social life in Great Britain and Ireland. The words and actions of politicians and others clearly illustrate the power that the press had, and few attested more eloquently to it than the dominant Irish nationalist figure of the time, Charles Stewart Parnell. Speaking at a public meeting in Dublin in August 1891, just weeks before his death, he said:

¹ I am particularly grateful to Ian d’Alton for his valuable contribution to this essay, for reading and commenting upon successive drafts of it and for his constant encouragement while it was in preparation. Philip Hamell, John Horgan, Peter Lacy, Mark O’Brien and Robert P. Schmuhl (Notre Dame University, Indiana) also read the essay in draft and I thank them for their insightful criticism. Michael Foley gave me good advice at an early stage, and I am grateful to him for that. I am grateful also to Pauric Travers for alerting me to one journalist-MP whom I had overlooked. Various participants in the 2011 SSNCI conference, at which a shorter version of the essay was delivered, commented on it either in the open forum afterwards or privately to me later – my thanks to all who did so, but especially to Ciara Breathnach, Tom Garvin, Patrick Maume and Colin Reid. My thanks also to Honora Faul, of the National Library of Ireland, for facilitating my use of the image reproduced on p. 000. Finally, I am grateful to the editor of this volume, Ciaran O’Neill, for his assistance.

² *The journal of Sir Walter Scott* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1890), ii, p. 262 [3 Apr. 1829], quoted in A. Aspinall, ‘The social status of journalists at the beginning of the nineteenth century’, *Review of English Studies*, 21:83 (1945), 216–32 at 216.

The profession of journalism is a great and powerful one in these days. It is likely to become more influential as the years go by. The readers of newspapers increase from time to time, and the press is becoming even mightier than the politician ... In these days politics and journalism run very much together, and a tendency is more and more to combine the two.³

This reference to a tendency to combine politics and journalism reflects the fact that the power of the press was by no means confined to its capacity to sway public opinion. Journalists and others associated with newspapers were often actively involved in politics, or were aspirant politicians or politicians *manqué*. Nowhere was the tendency more evident than in the Irish parliamentary party. The journalists and other newspapermen who were Irish party MPs with Parnell and afterwards represented a particularly important segment of the nationalist political class in Ireland, the first of the two elites that are the subject of this essay. These journalists-cum-politicians included many of the leaders of the Irish party and some of its most radical and militant members.

My main purpose in this essay is to identify the individuals in question, briefly noting their principal journalistic endeavours – a tabulation that draws on a wide range of sources and is the first comprehensive list of such persons to be published.⁴ I will also suggest some reasons why so many combined careers in journalism and politics, and why the journalist-in-politics became a much rarer phenomenon in post-independence Ireland. The essay will accordingly provide historical context for further work on the inextricable links between politics, journalists and the press. Moreover, I will discuss the curious fact that many of the foremost Irish journalists in the period from the 1870s until 1918 – those who did not become MPs, as well as those who did – were natives of Co. Cork and had begun their working lives on Cork newspapers. The Cork contingent was a pivotal element in Irish political journalism in this period, the second of the two elites with which this essay is concerned.

II

The importance of journalists within the Irish parliamentary party was acknowledged by Roy Foster in his characterization of the party as ‘a curious blend of Trollopian fixers, political journalists, respectable ex-Fenians and closet imperialists’.⁵

³ *Freeman's Journal*, 29 Aug. 1891. Quoted by Frank Callanan in his introduction to Edward Byrne, *Parnell: a memoir*, ed. F. Callanan (Dublin, 1991), p. 4. ⁴ The sources in question include the following: A. O'Day, *The English face of Irish nationalism: Parnellite involvement in British politics, 1880–86* (Dublin, 1977); M. Stenton & S. Lees, *Who's who of British members of parliament: a biographical dictionary of the house of commons based on annual volumes of Dod's parliamentary companion and other sources* (4 vols, Hassocks, Sussex, 1978), ii (1886–1918); Patrick Maume, *The long gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891–1918* (Dublin, 1999); M.-L. Legg, *Newspapers and nationalism: the Irish provincial press, 1850–1892* (Dublin, 1999); *DIB*. ⁵ R.F.

This is a much too irreverent dismissal of men who fought the good fight for Home Rule in unpromising circumstances and came close to winning it, but Foster was right to highlight the ubiquity of political journalists in the ranks of the Irish nationalist parliamentarians. Thus, for example, nearly two-thirds of the party's most prominent MPs shown in a cartoon entitled 'Parnell Party Portraits' published with the *Weekly Irish Times* on 17 March 1883 (fig. 7.1) were journalists or otherwise associated with newspapers. They are: Justin McCarthy, deputy leader of the party; two of Parnell's principal lieutenants in the Land War, William O'Brien and Thomas Sexton; his nemesis, T.M. Healy, and Healy's uncle, T.D. Sullivan; Edmund Dwyer Gray, owner of the chief nationalist daily newspaper in Ireland, the *Freeman's Journal*, and of the *Belfast Morning News*; Timothy C. Harrington, founder of the *Kerry Sentinel* and later manager of the *United Ireland* newspaper in its final years; J.J. O'Kelly, who had been a war correspondent for the *New York Herald* and became London editor of the *Irish Daily Independent* after he lost his seat in parliament to fellow journalist Matthias McDonnell Bodkin in 1892; T.P. O'Connor and Frank Hugh O'Donnell, both prominent in London journalism, the latter – incongruously for an Irish nationalist – with the reactionary *Morning Post*; and Edmond Leamy, editor of *United Ireland* in the 1890s.

To these names should be added the following newspapermen who, though not in parliament in 1883, were at other times members of the Irish party at Westminster: William Martin Murphy, creator and owner of the modern *Irish Independent*; Michael Davitt, who derived his income for many years mainly from freelance journalism; T.P. Gill, editor in the 1880s of the *Catholic World* in New York and later of Dublin's *Daily Express* when the latter was owned by Sir Horace Plunkett; A.M. Sullivan and Donal Sullivan, brothers of T.D. Sullivan; Edward Harrington, brother of Timothy C. Harrington; Justin Huntley McCarthy, son of Justin McCarthy; William O'Malley, brother-in-law of T.P. O'Connor and associated with O'Connor's *Sun* newspaper in London and later with the *Connacht Tribune*; Daniel McAleese, prominent in Belfast journalism and then editor and proprietor of the Monaghan *People's Advocate*; eight other well-known provincial newspaper editor-proprietors – James L. Carew of the *Leinster Leader*, Jasper Tully of the *Roscommon Herald*, P.A. McHugh of the *Sligo Champion*, J.P. Farrell of the *Longford Leader*, John O'Donnell of the *Connaught Champion*, Daniel Sheehan of the *Southern Star*, John P. Hayden of the *Westmeath Examiner*, and his brother, Luke Hayden, of the *Roscommon Messenger*; the aforementioned Matthias McDonnell Bodkin, chief leader-writer of the *Freeman's Journal* from 1895 to 1907; John Hooper, editor of the *Cork Daily Herald* and later of the Dublin *Evening Telegraph*; J.P. Nannetti, a foreman printer with the *Freeman* who also wrote

Foster, 'Thinking from hand to mouth: Anglo-Irish literature, Gaelic nationalism and Irish politics in the 1890s' in Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: connections in Irish and English history* (London, 1993), p. 265. In an astringent review of *Paddy and Mr Punch* (*Irish Times*, 9 Oct. 1993), Frank Callanan wrote that this characterization 'will simply not do. Here, as too often elsewhere in these essays, the historian is submerged in the litterateur ... [and] there is an implicit disdain for the stuff of politics'.



Supplement to the
"Weekly Irish Times,"

PARNELL PARTY PORTRAITS.

Saturday, 17th March, 1883.



CHARLES S. PARNELL



JUSTIN MCCARTHY.



TIMOTHY HEALY.



JOSEPH G. BIGGAR.



THOMAS P. O'CONNOR.



THOMAS SEXTON.



JOHN E. REDMOND.



CHARLES DAWSON



EDMUND D. GRAY



FRANK H. O'CONNELL



WM. O'BRIEN



JAMES O'KELLY



TIMOTHY D. SULLIVAN



EDMOND LEAMY.



RICHARD LALOR



JOHN DILLON



W. H. O'SULLIVAN



T. HARRINGTON.

7.1 Parnell, without his customary full beard, with seventeen other leading members of the Irish Parliamentary Party – eleven of whom were journalists or otherwise associated with newspapers (supplement to the *Weekly Irish Times*, 17 March 1883).





on labour matters for the *Evening Telegraph*; Charles Diamond, who established the London *Catholic Herald* and a number of other Catholic newspapers in England and Scotland; Daniel Crilly, a journalist with the *Nation* before entering parliament in 1885; James O'Connor, who had been on the staff of Charles Kickham's *Irish People*; John T. Donovan, editor of the Belfast *Northern Star* and author of the 'Stargazer' column in that newspaper;⁶ Arthur Lynch, who worked for several British popular newspapers in the 1890s, including the *Daily Mail*; Stephen Gwynn, more litterateur than journalist, but he described himself as a journalist and was Irish correspondent of the *Observer* in the 1920s; and Henry Harrison, Parnell's trusted confidant who pursued a career in journalism after the First World War.⁷

That gives a total of thirty-eight MPs with journalistic connections, of which eleven – or 30 per cent – came from Co. Cork. They are: William O'Brien from Mallow; Justin McCarthy from Dunmanway; Daniel Sheehan from Kanturk and later of Skibbereen; John Hooper from near Millstreet and later of Cork city; and T.M. Healy, the Sullivan brothers, William Martin Murphy and the Harrington brothers – all from around the Bantry area. These MPs were, of course, members of both elites under consideration in this essay – the journalists-cum-politicians and the Cork-born journalists – but there are many additional figures who fall within the second category only. The most important include: James Tuohy, long-time London correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*; Patrick Hooper, son of John Hooper and the *Freeman's* last editor from 1916 to 1924; T.R. Harrington, editor of the *Irish Independent* from 1905 to 1931; and John Fergus O'Hea and Thomas Fitzpatrick, two political cartoonists whose work appeared as a supplement to the *Weekly Freeman* in the 1880s and 1890s.⁸ T.R. Harrington was not related to the Harrington brothers, Timothy and Edward – though, like them, he was born in Castletownbere, near Bantry.

How do we account for this ascendancy of Corkonians? They themselves, especially those who hailed from Bantry, tended to regard it as a phenomenon of nature. Serjeant Sullivan, son of A.M. Sullivan, wrote that 'there was something in the air and atmosphere of Bantry that stimulated the growth of Irish nationalism' and that it was 'the native genius of the place' that gave rise to so many notable careers in journalism and politics.⁹ A similar view was expressed by the eminent president of Queen's

⁶ A.C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin, 1871–1934* (Oxford, 2008), p. 63, n. 124. ⁷ Of the thirty-eight journalists-cum-politicians listed here, all but three – John O'Donnell, Luke Hayden and John T. Donovan – merit entries in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB*. ⁸ Tuohy, Hooper, Harrington and O'Hea have entries in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB*. ⁹ Serjeant [A.M.] Sullivan, *Old Ireland: reminiscences of an Irish K.C.* (London, 1927), pp 11–12. A recent essay by Ian d'Alton may be relevant in attempting to come to an understanding of what was 'in the air and atmosphere of Bantry that stimulated the growth of Irish nationalism'. He argues that the unusually high level of sectarian violence in Cork in the period 1920–3 may be explained by reference to 'a theory about the visibility of minorities – the "Goldilocks postulation" ... Too small a minority, and the majority is indifferent; too large a minority, and the majority is reluctant to take on



College Cork, Bertram Windle, in 1906 – and he was an Englishman, then only newly arrived in Cork. He said:

One would expect to find that a very large proportion of the Irish pressmen ... came from or about Cork. The nimble wit, the ready grasp of a subject, the quick intelligence, the rhetorical or poetical pen – the peculiar natural gifts of the Southerner – are exactly the kind of things which find a ready market in journalism.¹⁰

In reality, the explanation is probably more prosaic: many, though certainly not all, of the Cork pressmen owed their success in journalism and politics – either directly or indirectly – to the Sullivan brothers, proprietors of the *Nation* weekly newspaper in Dublin from the mid-1850s until 1890.¹¹ Though now largely forgotten, the Sullivans played a central role in shaping the politics and culture of nationalist Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were good at spotting and fostering talent, particularly in fellow countymen from Cork.

A.M. Sullivan ran the *Nation* until 1876, after which his elder brother T.D. Sullivan took over. T.M. Healy was their nephew and he married T.D.'s daughter (who was, in fact, his double first cousin), while William Martin Murphy was taken under A.M. Sullivan's wing when he came to Dublin at a young age to attend Belvedere College for his secondary education. Murphy, while still a schoolboy, often visited the *Nation's* offices in Middle Abbey Street and helped out with copy-editing, proof-reading and other tasks – and no doubt picked up there his lifelong love of the newspaper industry in which he was to play such an important part. Murphy looked on A.M. Sullivan as a father figure, and wrote this tribute in a letter to Sullivan's widow shortly after his death:

I often think my success in life was largely due to the happy inspiration of A.M. in getting my father to send me as a schoolboy to Dublin, and I have never forgotten A.M.'s night journey to Bantry the day after my father was buried, when, as a forlorn boy, he gave me counsel and encouragement at the most critical period of my life.¹²

its rivals. West Cork appears to have been “just right”, it seems’: see I. d’Alton, “‘A vestigial population’? Perspectives on southern Irish protestants in the twentieth century’, *Éire-Ireland*, 44:3 & 4 (fall/winter 2009), 9–42 at 28. **10** M. Taylor, *Sir Bertram Windle: a memoir* (London, 1932), p. 185. I am indebted to Ian d’Alton for bringing this book to my attention. **11** The sale of the *Nation* was announced in its issue of 19 Apr. 1890, and the following issue (26 Apr. 1890) carried a letter from T.D. Sullivan expressing his continued ‘feelings of affection for the *Nation*, of fraternity with its workers and of warm regard for its friends’. It was merged with the *Irish Catholic* in July 1891. **12** Quoted in an address by Dr Lombard Murphy to the staff of Independent Newspapers Ltd, 29 June 1941 (Murphy Papers; I am grateful to the late T.V. Murphy for access to these papers). For an insightful account of Murphy's early years, see T.J. Morrissey, *William Martin Murphy* (Dundalk, 1997), pp 4–7.



Thomas Sexton, though a Waterford man, was likewise a protégé of A.M. Sullivan and got his start in journalism on the *Nation* newspaper. Following a period as an occasional correspondent for the *Nation*, he joined its staff in 1869 and was subsequently editor of its sister papers, the *Weekly News* and *Young Ireland*, before entering parliament in 1880. He ran the prestigious *Freeman's Journal* newspaper from 1893 to 1912, replacing – albeit after an interval – Edmund Dwyer Gray, who had died at an early age in 1888.¹³ Murphy and Sexton were the most powerful newspapermen in Dublin in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth – and, through them, the strong Cork influence in Irish nationalist journalism, which had been established by the Sullivan brothers, lived on long after the *Nation* ceased publication in 1891.¹⁴

This Cork influence was also evident within the Irish parliamentary party. So many members of the party had roots in West Cork or were otherwise linked to the Sullivan–Healy dynasty that they were known collectively as the ‘Bantry band’.¹⁵ All of the ‘Bantry band’, with the exception of the Harrington brothers, took the anti-Parnell side in the split – and it has been suggested that their uncompromising opposition to Parnell may have been fuelled, at least in part, by a sense that the Sullivans and T.M. Healy had a claim on the leadership of nationalist Ireland which had been, as they saw it, usurped by Parnell.¹⁶ Their opposition to Parnell was not limited to the political sphere. They also mounted a press campaign against him, which caused a bitter newspaper war in Dublin – a sidelight on the nexus between politics and journalism in Ireland at this time. The vehicle for the anti-Parnell press campaign was a new daily newspaper, the *National Press*, launched – largely through Healy’s efforts – in the early months of the split to counter the influence of the *Freeman's Journal*, which initially supported Parnell. The *Freeman* responded to this unaccustomed competition by changing sides, and eventually it was merged with the *National Press* – with, however, the *Freeman's* more venerable title being retained. That did not settle the newspaper war. When the *Freeman* abandoned him, Parnell founded the *Irish Daily Independent*, which was later acquired by William Martin Murphy and transformed in 1905 into the modern *Irish Independent*. The *Freeman* and the *Independent* were rivals until the former went out of business in 1924.¹⁷ The more

13 See F.M. Larkin, ‘Two gentlemen of the *Freeman*: Thomas Sexton, W.H. Brayden and the *Freeman's Journal*, 1892–1916’, C. Breathnach and C. Lawless (eds), *Visual, material and print culture in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 210–22. **14** The *Nation* title was revived briefly in 1896 for a new Healyite organ, and it continued as the *Daily Nation* from June 1897. The *Daily Nation* was absorbed by the *Irish Daily Independent* in 1900. In the 1920s, a Fianna Fáil organ – the precursor of the *Irish Press* – was also called the *Nation*; it had no connection with the earlier newspaper of the same name. **15** The ‘Bantry band’ (also sometimes referred to as the ‘Bantry gang’) comprised the three Sullivan brothers, T.M. Healy and his brother Maurice, the two Harrington brothers, John Barry (a distant relation of the Healys), James Gilhooly and William Martin Murphy. **16** See, for example, Frank Callanan’s essay on Serjeant (Alexander Martin) Sullivan in *DIB*. **17** See F.M. Larkin, ‘Mrs Jellyby’s daughter: Caroline Agnes Gray (1848–1927) and the *Freeman's Journal*’, Larkin (ed.),



prominent of the Harrington brothers, Timothy C. Harrington, was briefly a director of the Parnellite *Independent* before becoming manager of the *United Ireland* newspaper.

The most significant of the Cork journalists-cum-politicians who were not part of the 'Bantry band' was William O'Brien. He had much in common with T.M. Healy and ended his political career in a loose alliance with him – though whether they ever agreed on anything other than their disaffection with the Irish party leaders post-1900 is doubtful. Both were mavericks, adamantly opposed to what O'Brien once called 'the modern juggernaut of so-called party discipline'.¹⁸ O'Brien had worked on the *Cork Daily Herald* and on the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin before becoming editor of *United Ireland*, the weekly newspaper that Parnell established in 1881 in order to have a personal organ independent of the *Freeman* and *Nation* newspapers.¹⁹ With this pedigree, O'Brien was not an obvious ally of the 'Bantry band' – and, in the words of F.S.L. Lyons, he 'drifted into close relations with Healy' only after he fell out with almost everyone else in the Irish party over the 1903 Land Act.²⁰ He ultimately retreated to his Cork hinterland, where his 'All-for-Ireland' League remained a force until 1918 and he ran a succession of newspapers – most notably the *Cork Free Press* – catering principally for his local supporters.

O'Brien's rise from obscurity without the benefit of wealth or connections shows why so many in this period in Ireland combined careers in politics and journalism. As Niamh O'Sullivan has noted in her biography of Aloysius O'Kelly, brother of J.J. O'Kelly, 'journalism, both print and illustrated, provided a high level of social mobility'.²¹ It was thus a means by which bright, able young men could establish themselves solely on merit in a world where the distinction between journalism and politics was ill-defined – and their lowly origins explain their often radical politics and militant ways. Moreover, if they succeeded in entering parliament, the fact that they would not be paid a salary as MPs meant that another source of income was necessary and journalism was a convenient job compatible with parliamentary work.²² Several politicians even found work as parliamentary correspondents: for instance, Justin McCarthy was parliamentary correspondent for the London *Daily News* for almost all of his time as an MP.

Such double-jobbing offends against modern notions of the independence of the press and the profession of journalism. These concepts were only beginning to gain currency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an important recent essay, Michael Foley identifies some green shoots of professionalism just then

Librarians, poets and scholars: a Festschrift for Dónall Ó Luanaigh (Dublin, 2007), pp 121–39. **18** *Cork Free Press*, 19 Mar. 1912; quoted in *Times* (London), 20 Mar. 1912. **19** The then owner of the *Freeman*, Edmund Dwyer Gray, had had ambitions to lead the Irish party himself and – like the Sullivans and Healy – tended to regard Parnell as a usurper; Parnell could not count on his support (see Larkin, 'Mrs Jellyby's daughter'). **20** F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890–1910* (London, 1951), p. 122, n. 2. **21** N. O'Sullivan, *Aloysius O'Kelly: art, nation, empire* (Dublin, 2010), p. 54. **22** MPs were not paid a salary until 1911: see 'House of Commons factsheet M5: members' pay, pension and allowances' (May 2010).



emerging in Irish journalism – such as ‘the use of shorthand to ensure accuracy’ and ‘a belief in objectivity or impartiality, and the professional skills to deliver it’.²³ Irish journalists also participated in the National Association of Journalists, later renamed the Institute of Journalists, a professional body founded in London in 1884; and a Corkman – Thomas Crosbie, editor and proprietor of the *Cork Examiner* – became the first Irish president of that body in 1894–5, further evidence of the ascendancy of Corkonians in Irish journalism. Moreover, in 1909 University College Cork – the former Queen’s College, now a constituent college of the new National University of Ireland – began offering ‘a special course for journalists who propose to proceed to the BA degree’, with a wide range of subjects ‘which have a special bearing on the daily work of writers for the press’ and with ‘opportunities to attend lectures on the professional aspects of journalism’.²⁴ This course – the first of its kind in Britain or Ireland – was introduced on the initiative of the president of the college, Bertram Windle, whose views on the peculiar aptitude of Corkonians for journalism have been quoted earlier. Nevertheless, there were at that time very few Irish journalists, especially among the journalists-cum-politicians, who would pass muster as genuinely professional by today’s standards – and this was particularly true of those who worked for Irish, as distinct from British, newspapers. Such journalists tended to be unashamedly partisan in their writing, and it was rare for any of them to work for a newspaper with whose editorial position he did not agree.²⁵ Nor did Irish newspapers easily tolerate journalists in their employment who openly disagreed with editorial policy: Andrew Dunlop, an acknowledged unionist, was thus dismissed from the reporting staff of the nationalist *Freeman’s Journal* in 1884 on political grounds.²⁶

One noteworthy exception to the norm of the partisan journalist was James Tuohy, born in Cork city in 1857 and London correspondent of the *Freeman’s Journal* from 1881 to 1912. He was – like the *Freeman*, his employer – loyal to Parnell at the beginning of the split, but he remained with the *Freeman* after it switched sides and later when it merged with the anti-Parnellite *National Press*. This is in marked contrast to the actions of others on the *Freeman* staff – for example, the editor Edward Byrne – who jumped ship to join the new pro-Parnell *Irish Daily Independent* when the *Freeman* abandoned Parnell. It is evidence of professionalism in a journalist unusual for this period, though another factor may have been Tuohy’s growing disillusionment with Parnell.²⁷ Tuohy’s reporting skills were so highly regarded that he was entrusted with covering the Irish party’s protracted debate in Committee Room

23 M. Foley, ‘Colonialism and journalism in Ireland’, *Journalism Studies*, 5:3 (2004), 373–85 at 379, 383. **24** Taylor, *Sir Bertram Windle*, p. 202. See also Ann Keogh and Dermot Keogh, *Bertram Windle: the Honan bequest and the modernisation of University College Cork, 1904–1919* (Cork, 2010), p. 68. **25** See F.M. Larkin, ‘Parnell, politics and the press in Ireland’, the Parnell Lecture at the 2010 Parnell Summer School (Avondale, Co. Wicklow), 11 Aug. 2010 (publication forthcoming). **26** A. Dunlop, *Fifty years of Irish journalism* (London, 1911), pp 250–1. **27** J.M. Tuohy, ‘Parnell at bay’, with an introduction by F. Callanan, *The Recorder: the Journal of the American Irish Historical Society*, 17:2 (fall 2004), 59–66.



15 on the question of Parnell's continued leadership in December 1890. No journalists other than Tuohy and five colleagues from the *Freeman* staff chosen by him and working strictly under his direction were allowed to attend, so his reports were the only first-hand contemporary record. Despite complaints by T.M. Healy, it is generally accepted that the reports are accurate and objective.²⁸ Tuohy also had a very distinguished international journalistic career – for he combined his post on the *Freeman* with that of London correspondent and European manager of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*. When he died in 1923, the *London Times* hailed him as the 'doyen of American correspondents in Europe' – a remarkable accolade for a Corkman, and from a most unlikely source.²⁹

The restructuring and modernization of the *Independent* by William Martin Murphy in 1905 involved a major advance in professional standards in journalism in Ireland. He appointed a new editor, T.R. Harrington, who was – like Murphy himself – a native of Castletownbere, Co. Cork, and whose prior experience had been on the reporting staff of the newspaper. The usual route into an editorial chair had been through the leader-writing staff – the commentators, not the reporters, got the job. Before coming to Dublin, Harrington had learned his trade on the *Cork Daily Herald* under the editorship of John Hooper – one of the journalists from Cork who became an Irish party MP. As editor of the *Independent*, Harrington prescribed a new style of reporting for his staff, instructing them 'to approach the work with a perfectly open mind ... and confine themselves as a rule to reporting facts or speeches in a fair and impartial way, following our usual practice of not giving things fully'.³⁰ Brevity, like objectivity, was unusual in Irish journalism at the time. Moreover, he fought for and secured an unprecedented degree of editorial independence, with Murphy agreeing to remain at a distance from day-to-day operations. These were huge innovations – and, with the phenomenal success of the *Independent* under Harrington's editorship, other newspapers in Ireland gradually followed suit. If they didn't, they went under – and such was the fate of the *Freeman's Journal*.³¹ The last editor of the *Freeman* was another Corkman, Patrick Hooper – son of Harrington's early mentor, John Hooper. After the *Freeman's* closure, he served as an independent member of the Senate of the Irish Free State and was vice-chairman of the Senate when he died in September 1931 – one more journalist of the Irish parliamentary party tradition who went on to have a career in politics.

III

With less political bias and greater professionalism in Irish journalism, it follows that the high representation of journalists in the Irish parliamentary party has not been

²⁸ F.S.L. Lyons, *The fall of Parnell, 1890–91* (London, 1960), pp 119–21. ²⁹ *Times*, 8 Sept. 1923. ³⁰ NAI, T.R. Harrington Papers, MS 1052/3/4. ³¹ For a full account of the *Freeman's* last years, see F.M. Larkin, "'A great daily organ': the *Freeman's Journal*, 1763–1924", *History Ireland*, 14:3 (May/June 2006), 44–9.



replicated in Dáil Éireann. Relatively few journalists have been elected to the Dáil: Arthur Griffith, of course;³² J.J. O’Kelly (‘Sceilg’), editor of the *Catholic Bulletin* – and no relation of his namesake, the Irish party MP; Piaras Béaslaí, whose journalistic endeavours included a daily Irish language column for the *Freeman’s Journal* in the early 1900s and the weekly ‘Moods and memories’ feature in the *Irish Independent* in the 1960s; Martin Roddy, editor and proprietor of the *Sligo Champion*; Frank McDermot, who worked for the *Sunday Times* after his Dáil career ended; Patrick J. Little, who edited various advanced nationalist newspapers between 1915 and 1926, and was Minister for Posts and Telegraphs from 1939 to 1948; Garret FitzGerald and Conor Cruise O’Brien, both of whom were lots of other things as well as being journalists; John Horgan and Geraldine Kennedy, both of the *Irish Times*; Ted Nealon, news editor of the *Sunday Review*, a ‘brash and breezy Sunday tabloid’ published by the *Irish Times* from 1957 to 1963;³³ Conor Lenihan, a reporter with the Dublin radio station 98FM before he was elected to the Dáil; George Lee, RTE’s economics correspondent before his brief sally into politics; and Shane Ross, long-time business columnist with the *Sunday Independent*. In addition, a handful of TDs had been television presenters.³⁴ The special position of the *Irish Press* as the organ of the Fianna Fáil party should also be noted in this context: Eamon de Valera and his son, Major Vivion de Valera, were successively editors-in-chief of the *Press* – and Seán Lemass was its managing director from 1948 to 1951, and in that capacity wrote a regular ‘Political commentary’ column from March 1948 onwards. Moreover, Seán T. O’Kelly was editor of the weekly *Nation* newspaper, the precursor of the *Irish Press*, in the late 1920s; O’Kelly’s *Nation* had no connection with the nineteenth-century newspaper of the same name.³⁵

Not one of the journalists-cum-politicians in Dáil Éireann was born in Co. Cork, and there is only one with Cork antecedents – John Horgan, currently Ireland’s first press ombudsman and a native of Tralee, Co. Kerry. His grandfather and namesake was the notable Cork city solicitor, J.J. Horgan, who was deeply involved at grass-roots level in the Irish party in its final years and later wrote regularly about Irish affairs for the influential British journal *The round table*. His book, *Parnell to Pearse* (first published in 1949; re-issued, with a biographical introduction by the younger

32 For assessments of Griffith *qua* journalist, see F.M. Larkin, ‘Arthur Griffith and the *Freeman’s Journal*’ and C. Meehan, ‘“The prose of logic and scorn”: Arthur Griffith and *Sinn Féin*, 1906–1914’, both chapters in K. Rafter (ed.), *Irish journalism before independence: more a disease than a profession* (Manchester, 2011), pp 174–85, 186–99. **33** The *Sunday Review* is so described in Dermot James, *From the margins to the centre: a history of the Irish Times* (Dublin, 2008), p. 158. See also M. O’Brien, *The Irish Times: a history* (Dublin, 2008), pp 159–61. **34** The TDs in question were David Thornley, Justin Keating and Pat Cox. Ted Nealon, after his stint with the *Sunday Review*, was also a television presenter before his election to Dáil Éireann in 1981. **35** Griffith, J.J. O’Kelly, Béaslaí, Roddy, McDermot, Little, de Valera *père et fils*, Lemass and Seán T. O’Kelly have entries in *DIB*. For information on Lemass’ ‘Political Column’, see M. O’Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press* (Dublin, 2001), pp 82–3 and B. Evans, *Seán Lemass: democratic dictator* (Cork, 2011), pp 161–7. Regarding the *Nation* newspaper, see n. 14 above.



John Horgan, in 2009), makes a strong case for the old Irish party, and his explanation of why it ultimately failed is persuasive: the party was betrayed by their allies, the British Liberals, in the face of armed Ulster unionist resistance to Home Rule. He concludes with these words:

We constitutionalists had been wisely prepared to make large concessions in order to avoid the division of our country which we believed to be the final and intolerable wrong. The price of our successors' triumph was Partition – an Ireland divided into a state which is not coterminous with the country, and a province which is itself dismembered. They sacrificed Irish unity for Irish sovereignty and attained neither.³⁶

This perceptive comment – a fairer and broader assessment than Foster's curt dismissal of the Irish party as 'Trollopian fixers, political journalists, respectable ex-Fenians and closet imperialists' – comes from a man who, had Sinn Féin not triumphed in the 1918 general election, might have sat in Westminster as an Irish party MP and so would now be counted among those who straddle the two elites that helped define the character of Irish politics and journalism between the 1870s and 1918.³⁷

³⁶ J.J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse: some recollections and reflections*, with a biographical introduction by J. Horgan (Dublin, 2009), p. 354. ³⁷ J.J. Horgan's first wife (d. 1920) was a daughter of Bertram Windle, the president of University College Cork who has been quoted above on the Corkonians' peculiar aptitude for journalism. Windle, however, strongly disapproved of their marriage – see Keogh and Keogh, *Bertram Windle*, pp 83–92.