

SURVEY ON ATTITUDES OF DUBLIN POPULATION TO  
SECTION 31 OF THE BROADCASTING ACT

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## FOREWORD

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On the other side of the Atlantic, the US Information Agency censors educational films bound for international distribution because they "carry an anti-nuclear message" or leave the impression that "the US has been the aggressor in Nicaragua." Across the Great Plains, fundamentalist Christians want to ban from schools The Wizard of Oz and The Diary of Anne Frank because they contain the vile views of "a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian, an advocate of one-world government." In Chernobyl, the Soviet government tries to stop the leak of information when it cannot control the leak of radiation. In South Africa, the censor's hand grows heavier by the week. Closer to home, we worry about condoms, nudity, abortion, life-skills and values clarification among our children - and prohibited organisations.

Linking all of these cases is a belief in the power of information (all too often missing in the majority of consumers) and a fear of its consequences. A recurrent theme in the on-going defence of Section 31 has been the notion of the right to speak as a privilege, which must be withdrawn from groups judged to be subversive. But the shadow thrown by that theme is fear of the information consumer, fear that the radio and television audience is unable to formulate its own rational judgements and must be protected from itself, lest it become, for instance, sympathetic to the political motivation of non-approved groups. In the process of keeping the stress on the right to speak, its inversion - the right to hear, to be fully informed - has been suppressed, along with that famous faith in the marketplace of ideas that informs most theories of self-government that drive western democracy.

For fifteen years Section 31 has been a major shaper of electronically-delivered news from the North, as the power to censor is, ultimately, the power to be a primary definer of a news story. Whether based on the liberal theory of linking democracy with free access to information, or on a questioning of the government's interpretation of the Northern conflict, or on a resentment to the continuing paternalism that dominates Irish life, challenges to Section 31 have persisted but not to the point of forcing a repeal. The debate has swung back and forth among the most articulate sectors of society, those in politics, journalism, academia, who know how to get their ideas into the media. The crucial factor missing from the debate has been "the public" itself, that great anonymous consumer of news that is argued over by the articulate ones, on way or another. The survey reported here turns the spotlight of attention on public knowledge of the existence of political censorship in Ireland and attitudes to it. What does the public know about Section 31? What does it feel about it? Who is the public that has these feelings?

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## 1. SHORT HISTORY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND USE OF SECTION 31 IN RTE

In October 1971 the then Fianna Fail Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Mr. Gerrard Collins, T.D., directed that Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE)

refrain from broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims or activities of any organisation which engaged in, promoted, encouraged or advocated the attainment of any political objective by violent means.

This 'directive' was the first use of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act (1960) by an Irish government. Under the then wording of Section 31 the Minister could

direct the [RTE] Authority in writing to refrain from broadcasting any particular matter or matter of any particular class and the Authority shall comply with that direction.

The Authority found themselves unable to implement this directive to the satisfaction of Mr. Collins. In the Authority's opinion, which was opposed to the use of political censorship per se, the directive issued by the minister was wholly unspecific and could be interpreted to ban from RTE any group, organisation, institution of state, or their representatives from justifying the use of force under any circumstance. The then Director General of RTE, Tom Hardiman, summed up RTE's position as follows:

One could not have a self-governing people without having a fully informed people, free to know, discuss, to draw their information from the media, which were themselves free to report. Circulation of accurate information... [is] the life blood of democracy.

(Irish Times, 13 September, 1972)

Mr. Hardiman believed that the Minister's direction had been implemented while maintaining RTE's "basic obligation to comprehensive and authentic reporting" (Ibid). In fact there was



a considerable difference of opinion between the government and the RTE Authority on the implementation of the Section 31 order. This difference of opinion directly resulted in the sacking of the Authority on November 24, 1972. It indirectly resulted in the jailing of RTE journalist Kevin O'Kelly for contempt of court. O'Kelly refused to confirm in court that the voice of a man claiming to be Chief of Staff of the Provisional IRA on an interview he taped was that of Sean MacStiofain. A resultant three day strike by RTE journalists secured O'Kelly's release from Mountjoy Jail.

The incident which sparked these dramatic events was the reporting on an RTE news bulletin of an interview O'Kelly had in the early hours of November 19, 1972 with MacStiofain and Mac Stiofain's subsequent arrest on O'Kelly's doorstep at 3.15am that morning by the Gardai. The Minister demanded that the RTE Authority take disciplinary action against the journalists responsible for setting up and broadcasting the report of the interview. When the Authority refused it was sacked by the government.

As these measures had been condemned by the then Fine Gael and Labour opposition it was assumed when they came into government as Coalition partners in March 1973 that they would relax Section 31. In the Dail in 1972 Conor Cruise O'Brien had stated that he was "not in favour of censorship" but equally "I am not in favour of the way most newspapers present these issues [the activities of illegal organisations like the IRA] or the way RTE present them". While not being in favour of censorship O'Brien did not refrain from using it. On taking up office as Minister for Posts and Telegraphs,

however, Dr. O'Brien promised that media restrictions imposed by Fianna Fail would be lifted by the Autumn of 1974.

The promise was not kept. By early 1974 O'Brien had become convinced of the need for - in the words of his toast to an invited assembly of political journalists at a private dinner in 1974 - "restrictions on the freedom of the press which may become necessary to preserve our democratic institutions".\*

Section 31 was eventually amended in 1976\*\* by O'Brien to read:

Where the Minister is of the opinion that the broadcasting of a particular matter or any matter of a particular class would be likely to promote, or incite to crime, or would tend to undermine the authority of the state, he may by order direct the Authority to refrain from broadcasting the matter or any matter of the particular class, and the Authority shall comply with the order.

The significant phrase here is "would tend to undermine the authority of the state" since Section 18 of the Broadcasting Act already precluded RTE from broadcasting anything which could be construed as an incitement to crime. Another innovation in the legislation was the requirement that the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs issue his orders annually. O'Brien's directives were specific in banning interviews with named organisations like Sinn Fein, the IRA, the INLA and various loyalist paramilitary organisations as well as those organisations proscribed by the British government's Emergency Provisions Act.

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\* Quoted in Conor Cruise O'Brien and the Media, Belfast Bulletin No.9, Spring 1981. This interesting article quotes O'Brien as addressing his journalist guests with "you are all Provo stooges" and Dick Walsh of the Irish Times with "you are a Provo mouthpiece".

\*\*The Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Act 1976 replaced Section 31 with section 16 of the amending legislation (not 'Section 17' as Dr.O'Brien wrote in the Independent on the 3/1/'87). Although Dr.O'Brien says his legislation narrowed the scope of the 1960 Act the 1976 Independent headline on the amending legislation (reproduced alongside his January 3 article) proclaimed "Wider power to stop subversive broadcasts".



One year later in 1977 RTE journalists expressed concern at the effect of Section 31. They stated

The ultra cautious atmosphere which Section 31 has fostered in the news room and programme sections has meant that enquiries into controversial issues have not been encouraged. Establishment views, on the other hand, are aired at length, often without analysis or counterpoint. There is now a general anxiety about tackling stories which might embarrass the government on the issue of security.

Within RTE a sophisticated system of management controls was gradually instituted which tightly circumscribed RTE reporting of events emanating from Northern Ireland and any story which might involve members of Sinn Fein.

The next significant extension of Section 31 occurred during a General Election in 1982 when the then Minister for Communications, Paddy Cooney, T.D., prevented Sinn Fein from having access to party political broadcasts. A Subsequent Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutional validity of the minister's decision.

#### 1.1 JOURNALISTIC ACTION AGAINST SECTION 31

RTE journalists went on strike in 1972 as a result of the jailing of Kevin O'Kelly. The Belfast office 'walked out' on one occasion during the early 1970's on an anniversary of the issuing of the ministerial directive. No subsequent action occurred until August 1985 when a 24 hour strike took place as a result of Section 31 'self censorship'. Journalists and producers took this action when RTE management denied a request to interview Martin Galvin of the U.S. Noraid Organisation which supports Sinn Fein and the IRA. This organisation is not banned under Section 31. When the ministerial order was due for renewal in January 1986 similar strike action took place.



The recent upsurge in interest in Section 31 among journalists and among civil libertarians generally could be said to be the result of the following factors:

1. The emergence into broad political discourse of Sinn Fein which began to successfully contest elections in 1982.
2. The imbalance between RTE and British broadcasting. The latter can interview members of Sinn Fein. British TV stations are widely available to most of the population of the south of Ireland.\*
3. Public concern about how Section 31 has led to the banning of interviews with members of Sinn Fein who are carrying out local constituency business as elected representatives. Similarly the effect of Section 31 in banning interviews with the General Secretary of the Local Government and Public Services Union, Philip Flynn, on issues pertaining to wage bargaining because of his membership of Sinn Fein was also reported widely.
4. The gradual realisation that what might have been assumed initially to be emergency legislation has now been on the statute books for over 15 years.
5. The exclusion of Sinn Fein spokespersons from discussion on RTE among nationalists about the Forum Report and the Anglo Irish Agreement.
6. The setting up with a broad base of support and the subsequent activities of the Repeal Section 31 Committee which has campaigned on this issue since August 1985.

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\* The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have been subject to self-censorship in relation to programmes about Ireland. Management rigidly regulate and control information to the extent of banning programmes, altering them or vetoing programme proposals outright. A comprehensive catalogue and critique of these decisions can be found in the excellent London based Information on Ireland group pamphlet, The British Media and Ireland, and in Liz Curtis's Ireland the Propoganda War. However, BBC journalists drew the line in 1985 when the British Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, publicly pressurised the BBC Board of Governors into preventing the broadcast of a programme in the Real Lives series which featured an interview with Derry Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. British broadcast journalists and producers went on a hitherto unprecedented one-day protest strike. The Galvin episode in RTE came hot on the heels of the British dispute. Distinguished journalistic commenatators such as Mary Holland suggested at the time that the main cause of the RTE action was this 'peer-group pressure' from British colleagues.

## 2. REASON FOR CARRYING OUT THE SURVEY

We decided to carry out the survey into attitudes to Section 31 because of the increased interest in this issue in the news media and because there had not previously been a comprehensive attempt to map-out the nuances of public attitudes to this form of political censorship. A question on Section 31 has in the past been added to a couple of newspaper commissioned surveys on voting intentions. As such, while having some usefulness, these are inadequate in measuring the different nuances of attitudes to various aspects of Section 31.

The issue is important enough to have an entire survey questionnaire devoted to it. In a democratic society any restriction on freedom of expression on political grounds, for whatever reason, should be continually monitored and discussed. It is our aim to provide scientifically based empirical evidence of public attitudes on which to base such a discussion.

### 3. THE SAMPLE

It was decided to select a representative sample from the population of Dublin which numbers just under a million people and is a little less than a third of the population of the state. The sample population size of 510 was equally divided into 30 District Electoral Divisions (DED's) selected at random - for more information on the survey methodology, see appendix 4.

### 4. DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEST ATTITUDES TO SECTION 31

Very broadly the aim of the survey was to frame a question schedule which elicited answers to the following type of questions:

- a) The extent of public knowledge of the existence of political censorship on RTE.
- b) Attitudes to the statutory power of censorship held by the government, irrespective of its actual application;
- c) Attitudes to specific applications of Section 31 as a result of the various effects, whether foreseen or unforeseen, of the ministerial directive;
- d) Attitudes about how the public wished to see Section 31 implemented by RTE, irrespective of whether they were in agreement of the law as it stood or not.

As well as the broad aims outlined above we sought to measure these attitudes against the usual demographic, sex and voting intention breakdowns present in surveys of this nature.

The questionnaire was to be kept as short and as simple as was considered feasible in line with the aims outlined above. See Appendix 1 for a list of the questions in the questionnaire and appendix 2 for an explanation of the rationale behind each question.



## 5. SHORT SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS OF SURVEY

- \* A minority (36%) of respondents approve of Section 31 while a majority (53%) disapprove and 11% didn't know or had no opinion.
- \* Opposition to Section 31 is concentrated in those under 50, in the lower-middle class (C1), skilled working class (C2), other working class (D) and social welfare-dependent (E) socio-economic groups. Those over 50 and in the upper middle class (A) and middle class (B) socio economic groups approved of Section 31.
- \* The figures for approval/disapproval of Section 31 among political party supporters were as follows: Fianna Fail (57% disapp., 35% app.), the Labour Party (65% disapp., 31% app.), the Workers Party (71% disapp, 24% app.) and Sinn Fein (100% disapp.). The PD figures were 40% approval and 47% disapproval. The Fine Gael figures were 46% approval and 42% disapproval.
- \* A large majority of respondents (73%) think that Sinn Fein should be allowed to express their opinion on RTE when a news story affects them. 22% did not agree and 5% didn't know or expressed no opinion.
- \* An almost similarly large majority (71%) think that an elected TD should never be subject to Section 31. 23% disagreed and 6% didn't know or had no opinion.
- \* A larger majority (83%) thought that local authority members speaking on local issues and trade union officials speaking on trade union issues who are otherwise subject to Section 31 should be allowed to speak on RTE.
- \* 73% of respondents thought that general election candidates and 76% thought that local election candidates should be allowed to speak on RTE during election time on election issues.
- \* Once given a short explanation of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act 75% of respondents correctly and without prompting identified at least one organisation or type of organisation as being banned from expressing their views on RTE.
- \* By a large majority (75% to 18%) respondents identified Republican rather than Loyalist organisations as being banned from RTE.
- \* By a large majority 78% of respondents said they wanted RTE to always inform them when Section 31 affects any programme - see the discussion on QUESTION 8 in appendix 2.



- \* 62% of the sample, when initially asked (without any mention of Section 31) whether they knew of a law preventing certain groups from being interviewed on RTE, said they were aware of such a law. However (and again without any mention or explanation of Section 31), 46% of respondents correctly identified the import of Section 31 while 1% gave an incorrect explanation and 53% didn't know.

## 6. SURVEY RESULTS - DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

QUESTION 3\* looks at basic awareness among respondents of any law preventing RTE from interviewing certain groups - unprompted by any mention of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. 62% of the sample said they knew of such a law and 38% said they were not aware of such a law. However, only 46% of the total sample could correctly identify the law by name or indicate some aspect of its operation. 1% gave an incorrect explanation of the law while the remaining 53% Didn't know or had no opinion - see TABLES 1a and 1b.

Allowing for the fact that no mention or explanation of the Section 31 law has been made at this stage we consider a 46% recognition factor to be very high. A more accurate overall recognition factor is given by the respondent's reply (after being given an explanation of Section 31) to the question which asks them if they know what groups are banned from RTE.

TABLE 1a

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WHAT IS THE LAW PREVENTING RTE FROM INTERVIEWING CERTAIN GROUPS ABOUT OR CALLED

Respondents stating it's called Section 31	23.7%
Respondents stating it's about banning SF	11.0%
Respondents stating it's about banning IRA	8.6%
Respondents stating it's about banning Loyalists	0.4%
Respondents using catch-all description ('subversive')	6.7%
Respondents stating Six Counties/Ni etc	0.2%
Incorrect response	1.2%
Don't know/no opinion (excludes 38% from Q3)	16.3%

NOTE: TABLE 1a excludes the 38% from QUESTION 3 who said they had no knowledge of a law preventing RTE from interviewing certain groups. Also, apart from 'don't know', Respondents could combine any of the above categories in their answer.

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\* Appendices 1, 2 and 3 contain a list of survey questions

TABLE 1b  
 BREAKDOWN OF CATEGORIES IN QUESTION 3

Those giving	CORRECT RESPONSE	45.6%
	INCORRECT RESPONSE	1.2%
	DON'T KNOW	53.4%

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QUESTION 4 examines the extent of approval/disapproval of Section 31 among respondents. 36% said they approved while 53% disapproved and 11% said they didn't know or had no opinion. When asked specifically about whether Sinn Fein should be allowed to be interviewed on RTE (QUESTION 9), however, 72% said they thought they should while 22% thought they should not and 6% said they 'didn't know'. This means that a larger number (36%) of people approve of the principle of the minister having the power of censorship under Section 31 than actually agree with its specific utilisation against Sinn Fein (22%).

There was a high recognition factor among the sample population in relation to mentioning a group or groups banned by Section 31 (QUESTION 5) - see TABLES 2a, 2b, and 2c. 75% of respondents correctly named at least one group as being banned while 8% were incorrect in identifying a group and 23% 'didn't know'. Respondents were far more aware of Republican rather than Loyalist groups being banned under Section 31. 75% of respondents indicated at least one banned Republican group while only 18% indicated a banned Loyalist group. No respondents were aware that organisations proscribed under the British government's Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act (such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Red Hand Commandoes) were also banned from being interviewed on RTE under Section 31.

TABLE 2a

COULD YOU NAME AN ORGANISATION OR INDIVIDUAL BANNED FROM BEING  
INTERVIEWED UNDER SECTION 31

Respondents mentioning	SINN FEIN	52.4%
	IRA	54.1%
	INLA	16.1%
	UVF	13.7%
	UFF	3.5%
	UDA	6.3%
	RHC	0.0%
NI EMERGENCY PROV. ACT, SECTION 22		0.0%
	SUBVERSIVES	4.7%
	TROUBLES/NI	1.6%
	ANTI-GOVT STATEMENTS	0.6%
Incorrect responses:	WORKERS PARTY	1.6%
	OTHER GROUPS	2.9%
	OTHER	2.5%

TABLE 2b

BREAKDOWN OF QUESTION 5 INTO SMALLER CATEGORIES

Respondents Mentioning	REPUBLICAN GROUPS	74.5%
	LOYALIST GROUPS	17.7%
	SUBVERSIVES etc	6.9%
	INCORRECT	7.7%
	DON'T KNOW	23.0%

NOTE: respondents can combine categories (eg 'IRA' and 'UDA') so the total figure is over 100%. 'Subversives etc' includes 'troubles/NI' and 'anti-govt. statements'.

TABLE 2c

FURTHER BREAKDOWN OF QUESTION 5

Respondents giving	CORRECT RESPONSE	75.4%
	INCORRECT RESPONSE	7.7%
	DON'T KNOW	23.0%

NOTE: respondents could combine a correct with an incorrect response (eg 'Sinn Fein' and 'Workers Party') - so again the total figure is above 100%.



QUESTION 6 asks respondents what they think of specific applications of the Section 31 law. As can be seen from TABLE 3 83% of respondents thought that Section 31 should not apply to elected local authority members or trade unionists who are members of organisations banned under Section 31 speaking on local or trade union issues. 73% thought Section 31 should not apply to a general election candidate speaking on election issues and 77% thought it should not apply to a local election candidate speaking on election issues.

QUESTION 7 asked whether respondents thought that the minister should have the power to use Section 31 to ban someone elected as a TD from speaking on RTE. 71% thought he should not while 23% thought he should and 6% didn't know.

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TABLE 3

DO YOU THINK SECTION 31 SHOULD BE USED TO BAN INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF BANNED ORGANISATIONS IF THEY ARE

	PERCENTAGE ANSWERING		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
a county council or corporation member speaking on local issues	13.2	83.1	3.7
a trade union official speaking on trade union issues	12.4	83.1	4.5
a general election candidate speaking on election issues	21.7	73.0	5.3
a local election candidate speaking on election issues	18.6	76.7	4.7

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QUESTION 8 asked respondents whether they thought that RTE should inform them every time Section 31 affects a programme, irrespective of their overall views on Section 31. 76% thought that they should be told 'always' while 14% said 'most of the time' or 'sometimes'. Only 3% said 'never' and 3% 'didn't know'. See TABLE 4. This is an important response since at present RTE does not always inform its audience when Section 31 is being invoked. In appendix 2 there is a discussion of QUESTION 8 which defines precisely when Section 31 affects a particular programme. Irrespective of whether the minister alters the order under Section 31 it is open to RTE to adopt a policy of always informing its audience when a programme is affected by Section 31. Our findings suggest that RTE viewers and listeners in the Dublin area at least are overwhelmingly in favour of such a policy.

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TABLE 4

SHOULD RTE INFORM ITS AUDIENCE WHEN SECTION 31 AFFECTS A PROGRAMME

ALWAYS	77.5%
MOST OF THE TIME	9.3%
SOMETIMES	7.3%
NEVER	3.2%
DON'T KNOW	2.8%

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## 7. DISCUSSION OF CROSSTABULATION RESULTS

Taking AGE first, there is less support for Section 31 in the younger compared to the older age groups. Those over 50 showed themselves marginally approving of Section 31 - see TABLE 5.

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TABLE 5  
BREAKDOWN OF AGE BY APPROVAL OF SECTION 31

AGE GROUP	APP	DISAPP	DON'T KNOW
18-24	20.4	67.7	11.8
25-34	33.1	54.2	12.7
35-49	33.6	53.8	12.6
50-64	47.3	45.1	7.7
65+	46.1	42.7	11.2

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Looking at TABLE 6 we see that all age groups thought that Sinn Fein should have access to the airwaves. Again, though, a more conservative support for the status quo was seen in the oldest respondent's attitudes.

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TABLE 6  
BREAKDOWN OF AGE BY SHOULD SINN FEIN BE ALLOWED TO EXPRESS THEIR  
OPINION ON RTE

AGE GROUP	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
18-24	84.6	12.1	3.3
25-34	73.3	22.4	4.3
35-49	73.1	21.0	5.9
50-64	71.4	19.8	8.8
65+	60.7	36.0	3.4

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Turning next to SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS, more opposition to Section 31 was shown by lower middle class (C1), Skilled working class (C2), working class (D) and social welfare dependent (E) respondents than by upper middle class and middle class respondents - see TABLE 7.

TABLE 7

BREAKDOWN OF SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS BY APPROVAL OF SECTION 31

	APP	DISAPP	DON'T KNOW
Socio-econ Group A	52.2	30.4	17.4
B	45.8	40.7	13.6
C1	34.2	57.0	8.7
C2	37.5	46.9	15.6
D	26.0	62.0	12.0
E	36.0	57.3	6.7

A crosstabulation of socio-economic status with attitudes to Sinn Fein being allowed on RTE shows all groups in favour. Again those most in favour are the less well off socio-economic groupings - see TABLE 8.

TABLE 8

BREAKDOWN OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS BY SHOULD SINN FEIN BE ALLOWED TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINION ON RTE

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Socio-econ Group A	60.9	30.4	8.7
B	56.9	37.9	3.4
C1	71.6	25.0	3.4
C2	77.9	16.8	5.3
D	77.8	14.1	8.1
E	76.0	20.0	4.0



Turning now to VOTING INTENTIONS, we see that only the supporters of Fine Gael are in favour of Section 31, though by a fairly small percentage gap. Supporters of the Progressive Democrats are not far behind Fine Gael, though a slightly larger majority of PD supporters disapprove of Section 31 than approve. Those most approaching the overall figures on this question are supporters of Fianna Fail. Those most opposed are Sinn Fein supporters, as we would expect - see TABLE 9.

TABLE 9

## BREAKDOWN OF VOTING INTENTIONS BY APPROVAL OF SECTION 31

	APP	DISAPP	DON'T KNOW
FF	35.2	56.6	8.3
FG	46.4	42.0	11.6
PD	40.0	46.7	13.3
LAB	30.8	65.4	3.8
WP	23.5	70.6	5.9
SF		100.0	
IND	41.7	58.3	
DK	41.1	41.1	17.8
NOP	20.8	66.7	12.3
REF	34.5	44.8	20.7

We turn next to party supporter's attitudes to allowing sinn fein to be interviewed on RTE. There is most support for this proposition from supporters of Sinn Fein, the Workers Party and Fianna Fail. Least support is shown by supporters fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats. All the party supporters, however, are in favour of allowing Sinn Fein to be interviewed on RTE - see TABLE 10.

TABLE 10

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BREAKDOWN OF VOTING INTENTIONS BY SHOULD SINN FEIN BE ALLOWED TO  
EXPRESS THEIR OPINION ON RTE

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
FF	80.6	16.0	3.5
FG	62.7	35.8	1.5
PD	66.7	33.3	
LAB	73.1	15.4	11.5
WP	88.2	11.8	
SF	100.0		
IND	58.3	41.7	
DK	70.1	21.5	8.4
NOP	79.2	14.6	6.3
REF	51.7	37.9	10.3

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## 8. APPENDIX 1: LIST OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE

- No. STREET: \_\_\_\_\_ WARD: \_\_\_\_\_ SEX M F
- 1 Firstly, what tv stations do you receive: RTE RTE+ No TV  
only BrTV
- 2 Can you tell me whether you watch or listen to the following programmes always very often sometimes never
- |                                |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Morning Ireland (R)            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Teatime 6.00 TV news           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| evening 9.00 TV news           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Today Tonight (TV)             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| News, current affairs in Irish | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
- 3 Do you know if there is a law stopping who RTE can interview on its news and current affairs programmes. yes no  
[- if 'yes'] could you say what the law is about or is called: DK
- 4 [SHOW CARD and READ the following to the respondent:]  
This card explains Section 31 of the Broadcasting act which affects RTE's news and current affairs programmes. Could you take a look at it while I read what it says?  
'Section 31 of the broadcasting act is a law which allows the Minister for Communications to stop RTE from interviewing, on any subject, members of groups he thinks could undermine the state's authority.'  
I want to ask you now if you approve of this law yes no DK
- 5 Could you possibly name organisations or individuals which are banned from being interviewed on RTE? [DO NOT PROMPT]  
SF IRA INLA UVF UFF UDA RHC NI-EmgProvAct DK  
[Other groups mentioned by respondent]
- 6 Section 31 forbids RTE from interviewing representatives of banned organisations on any subject. Do you think it should be so used to ban interviews with these organisation's members if they are:
- |   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| a) County Council or Corporation members speaking on local issues | yes | no | DK |
| b) Trade union officials speaking on trade union issues           | yes | no | DK |
| c) General election candidates speaking on election issues        | yes | no | DK |
| d) Local election candidates speaking on election issues          | yes | no | DK |
- 7 Do you think the minister should have the power to apply Section 31 to anyone elected as a TD? yes no DK
- 8 When a programme is affected by the Section 31 law - for example when an interview RTE would have shown is stopped - do you think you should be told.  
always most of the time sometimes [or] never DK
- 9 Sinn Fein is banned from RTE interviews. Should they be able to express their opinion on RTE when a news story concerns them? yes no DK

10 Could you tell me, which of these age ranges are you in:  
 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 65+

11 Can you tell me which of these shows your present occupation  
 employed unemployed housewife student retired other

[if 'retired'  
 ask: "can you tell me  
 what you did work at"]

[if 'housewife" ask:  
 "Can you tell me if  
 your husband works"]

what do you work at

occupation:

and what type of industry is that?  
 industry:

12 I wonder do you mind telling me what party or candidate you would  
 probably give your first preference vote to if an election were  
 held tomorrow FF FG PD Lab WP SF Oth Ind DK NOP REF



## 9. APPENDIX 2: EXPLANATION OF QUESTIONS

1. Firstly, what tv stations do you receive:	RTE only	RTE+ BrTV	No TV
2. Can you tell me whether you watch or listen to the following programmes	always	very often	sometimes never
Morning Ireland (R)	1	2	3 4
Teatime 6.00 TV news	1	2	3 4
evening 9.00 TV news	1	2	3 4
Today Tonight (TV)	1	2	3 4
News, current affairs in Irish	1	2	3 4

Questions 1 and 2 were designed primarily to put the respondents at their ease and 'in the mood' for the more substantial questions which were to come. For this reason the divisions between categories of news/current affairs exposure were not demarcated scientifically. While it might be interesting to see if there are significant differences between single and multi channel areas the percentage of the sample in Dublin with only RTE would be too small for such measurement. In any case they would be exposed through neighbours, pubs and friends to British stations. The only feasible relationship is that between the attitudes of watchers of programmes in Irish and those of the rest of the sample population.

3 Do you know if there is a law stopping RTE from interviewing certain groups on its news and current affairs programmes.

[- if 'yes'] could you say what the law is about or is called:

Question 3 measures the extent of unprompted public knowledge of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. It also measures any false perceptions about the law. Responses were categorised into 'mention of Section 31', and then in relation to a respondent

stating that specific groups were banned: 'mention of Sinn Fein', 'mention of the IRA', 'mention of a Loyalist group', etc, etc..

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Question 4

[SHOW CARD and READ the following to the respondent:]  
This card explains Section 31 of the Broadcasting act which affects RTE's news and current affairs programmes. Could you take a look at it while I read what it says?

'Section 31 of the broadcasting act is a law which allows the Minister for Communications to stop RTE from interviewing, on any subject, members of groups he thinks could undermine the state's authority.'

I want to ask you now if you approve of this law

---

Question 4 gives all respondents a short and easily understandable explanation of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act which is also read to all respondents so as to deal with any problems of illiteracy.

The explanation incorporates the phrase 'could tend to undermine the authority of the state' with 'could undermine the state's authority'. The purpose of the questionnaire is to elicit attitudes to the censorship of groups who the state believes could tend to undermine its existence and are therefore deemed to have forfeited their right to express their opinions on the national broadcasting service. The state does not believe that reporting on the activities and press statements of these groups could tend to undermine its existence since these are not banned. Only the self-expression of these views are banned. It is this aspect of political censorship which is at the heart of Section 31 and it is attitudes to this aspect of it we wish to measure.

---

5 Could you possibly name organisations or individuals which are banned from being interviewed on RTE? [DO NOT PROMPT]  
 SF IRA INLA UVF UFF UDA RHC NI-EmgProvAct DK  
 [Other groups mentioned by respondent]

---

Question 5 tests the level of knowlege of the main application of Section 31 in terms of who exactly is banned. The responses will be analysed in terms of whether and how much responses are skewed toward Republican, Loyalist or 'subversive' type responses. Since this question is prompted by an explanation of Section 31 it will be a more comprehensive measure of respondents knowledge of the application of the law.

---

6 Section 31 forbids RTE from interviewing representatives of banned organisations on any subject. Do you think it should be so used to ban interviews with these organisation's members if they are:

- a) a county council or corporation member speaking on local issues
- b) a trade union official speaking on trade union issues
- c) a general election candidate speaking on election issues
- d) a local election candidate speaking on election issues

---

Question 6 tests attitudes to one particular application of Section 31. Local authority members who are in Sinn Fein cannot express views on behalf of constituents on RTE even on local matters. Similarly the General Secretary of the Local Government and Public Services Union, Philip Flynn, cannot speak on behalf of his members on RTE on industrial disputes or wage negotiations because of his membership of Sinn Fein.

Another occasion when Section 31 has been invoked in recent years is in relation to Sinn Fein being denied party political broadcasts. Rather than ask specifically about party political (which when piloted tended to elicit 'anti-party-political-

broadcast' per se responses) the question is asked whether respondents believe Section 31 should ever apply to those standing before the people in an election.

---

7 Do you think the minister should have the power to apply Section 31 to anyone elected as a TD?

---

Question 7 tests respondents attitudes to whether anyone elected as a TD should ever be subject to Section 31 restrictions. While no member of the Oireachtas presently labours under such a restriction it could happen in future.

---

8 When a programme is affected by the Section 31 law - for example when an interview RTE would have shown is stopped - do you think you should be told.

always most of the time sometimes [or] never

---

Question 8 measures one aspect of how respondents wish to see Section 31 implemented irrespective of their overall views on it. At present RTE does not have a policy of informing its viewers every time that Section 31 is invoked. There are probably a number of interpretations on when exactly Section 31 is being implemented on RTE. For our purposes Section 31 can be said to be invoked on any programme whenever a member of a named organisation, who would have been interviewed on RTE had the Section 31 ministerial directive not existed, is denied an interview.

There is a misapprehension that Section 31 is only invoked when a story on a named organisation like Sinn Fein is being broadcast and are therefore not permitted to express their opinion. For example, using our definition, which we believe to be the only correct one, Section 31 is applied on the majority of



occasions a story about Northern Ireland is broadcast and some politicians are asked their opinions while Sinn Fein politicians are excluded.

When censorship is applied to newspapers the editorial policy sometimes consists of leaving blank spaces where items which are censored would have been. The readership can then discern how often her/his newspaper is affected. During the French Algerian war in the late 1950's early 1960's such a policy existed on the French Daily Le Mond in dealing with government censorship of reporting.

The broadcasting version of this policy would be putting up on screen a 'censored' sign during the period a banned interview would have lasted. While past evidence suggests that RTE management might balk at this suggestion the alternative is to state that Section 31 has been invoked on every occasion that it is invoked. In relation to news stories presently emanating from South Africa such a policy operates - reports are prefaced with the information that coverage is conditioned by reporting restrictions imposed by the South African government. The current practice on RTE is to mention the invoking of Section 31 on air on a very hap-hazard and infrequent basis.

This question measures, therefore, whether respondents think RTE should, always, most of the time, sometimes or never tell them when Section 31 is invoked. In other words should it be a matter of station policy or journalistic ethics to state unequivocally on all occasions that censorship is being applied when it is applied.

---

9 Sinn Fein is banned from RTE interviews. Should they be able to express their opinion on RTE when a news story concerns them?

---

Question 9 measures whether respondents think that the organisation which has featured most in public discussion on Section 31 should or should not be permitted to express their opinion on RTE when a news story which legitimately concerns them.

Again this applies not simply to stories about Sinn Fein but to all stories which broadcasters recognise they have a legitimate political interest in being interviewed on. The criteria should be the same as that used for any other political party.

---

10 Could you tell me, which of these age ranges are you in:  
   18-24  25-34  35-49  50-64  65+

11 Can you tell me which of these shows your present occupation  
     employed      unemployed      housewife      student      retired      other

                                  [if 'housewife' ask:          [if 'retired'  
                                   "Can you tell me if          ask: "can you tell me  
                                   your husband works"]          what you did work at"]

what do you work at

    occupation:

    and what type of industry is that?  
     industry:

---

Questions 10 and 11 measure demographic data.

---

12 I wonder do you mind telling me what party or candidate you would probably give your first preference vote to if an election were held tomorrow      FF    FG    PD   Lab   WP   SF   Oth   Ind   DK   NOP   REF

---

Question 12 measures voting intentions. Any correlation between party support and attitudes to Section 31 will be measured.

## 10. APPENDIX 3: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION BY QUESTION

## Taking demographic data first:

SEX	49.8% of the sample were female 50.2% of the sample were male
AGE	18.2% were aged 18-24 23.1% were aged 24-35 23.1% were aged 35-49 17.8% were aged 50-64 17.5% were aged 65+
OCCUPATION	40.4% were employed 12.2% were unemployed 26.7% were housewives 6.1% were students 13.3% were retired 1.4% other (mainly single parents)
SOCIO-ECON STATUS	4.6% were socio-economic group A 11.8% were socio-economgroup B 29.7% were socio-economic group C1 19.9% were socio-economic group C2 19.9% were socio-economic group D 14.9% were socio-economic group E
TV CHANNELS	5.3% had RTE only 90.9% had RTE plus British channels 3.7% had no TV

## QUESTION 3

Do you know if there is a law stopping RTE from interviewing certain groups on its news and current affairs programmes.

YES	62%
NO	38%

[- if 'yes'] could you say what the law is about or is called:

Respondents stating it's called Section 31	23.7%
Respondents stating it's about banning SF	11.0%
Respondents stating it's about banning IRA	8.6%
Respondents stating it's about banning Loyalists	0.4%
Respondents using 'catch-all' (subversive etc)	6.7%
Respondents stating Six Counties/Ni etc	0.2%
Incorrect response	1.2%
Don't know/no opinion (excludes 'no' above)	16.5%

NOTE: apart from 'don't know' Respondents could combine any of the above categories in their answer.



A further breakdown of Question 3 gives the following figures:

Those giving CORRECT RESPONSE	45.7%
INCORRECT RESPONSE	1.0%
DON'T KNOW	53.4%

#### Question 4

[SHOW CARD and READ the following to the respondent:]  
This card explains Section 31 of the Broadcasting act which affects RTE's news and current affairs programmes. Could you take a look at it while I read what it says?

'Section 31 of the broadcasting act is a law which allows the Minister for Communications to stop RTE from interviewing, on any subject, members of groups he thinks could undermine the state's authority.'

I want to ask you now if you approve of this law

APPROVE	35.7%
DISAPPROVE	52.9%
DON'T KNOW	11.4%

#### QUESTION 5

Could you possibly name organisations or individuals which are banned from being interviewed on RTE? [DO NOT PROMPT]  
SF IRA INLA UVF UFF UDA RHC NI-EmgProvAct DK  
[Other groups mentioned by respondent]

---

Respondents mentioning	SINN FEIN	52.4%
	IRA	54.1%
	INLA	16.1%
	UVF	13.7%
	UFF	3.5%
	UDA	6.3%
	RHC	0.0%
NI EMERGENCY PROV. ACT, SECTION 22		0.0%
	SUBVERSIVES	4.7%
	TROUBLES/NI	1.6%
	ANTI-GOVT STATEMENTS	0.6%
Incorrect responses:	WP	1.6%
	OTHER GROUPS	2.9%
	OTHER	2.5%

Breakdown of Question 5 into smaller categories:

Respondents Mentioning	REPUBLICAN GROUPS	74.5%
	LOYALIST GROUPS	17.7%
	SUBVERSIVES ETC	6.9%
	INCORRECT	7.7%
	DON'T KNOW	23.0%

NOTE: respondents can combine categories (eg 'IRA' and 'UDA') so the total percentage is over 100%.

Further breakdown of Question 5:

Respondents giving	CORRECT RESPONSE	75.4%
	INCORRECT RESPONSE	7.7%
	DON'T KNOW	23.0%

#### QUESTION 6

Section 31 forbids RTE from interviewing representatives of banned organisations on any subject. Do you think it should be so used to ban interviews with these organisation's members if they are:

PERCENTAGE ANSWERING	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
a county council or corporation member	13.2	83.1	3.7
a trade union official	12.4	83.1	4.5
a general election candidate	21.7	73.0	5.3
a local election candidate	18.6	76.7	4.7

#### QUESTION 7

Do you think the minister should have the power to apply Section 31 to anyone elected as a TD?

YES	23.0%
NO	70.7%
DON'T KNOW	6.3%

#### QUESTION 8

When a programme is affected by the Section 31 law - for example when an interview RTE would have shown is stopped - do you think you should be told.

always    most of the time    sometimes [or]    never

ALWAYS	77.5%
MOST OF TIME	9.3%
SOMETIMES	7.3%
NEVER	3.2%
DON'T KNOW	2.8%

## QUESTION 9

Sinn Fein is banned from RTE interviews. Should they be able to express their opinion on RTE when a news story concerns them?

YES	72.7%
NO	22.1%
DON'T KNOW	6.3%

## QUESTION 12

12 I wonder do you mind telling me what party or candidate you would probably give your first preference vote to if an election were held tomorrow

		EXCL.
		DON'T KNOW's etc.
FF	28.9	45.7
FG	13.8	21.8
PD	6.0	9.5
LAB	5.2	8.2
WP	3.4	5.4
SF	2.9	4.7
OTHER	.6	.9
IND	2.4	3.8
DON'T KNOW	21.0	
NO OPINION	9.6	
REFUSAL	5.8	

## 11. APPENDIX 4a: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Before the main study a pilot study was carried out on 40 households. The interviewers, drawn mainly from the School of Communications, were trained in the relevant interview techniques and the pilot study allowed the interviewers to gain the necessary field experience. As a result of the pilot study the questionnaire was refined. The interviewers worked in pairs, presented a letter of authorization to the interviewee and explained the purpose of the survey before beginning the interview. For ease of scoring most questions were precoded. Occupations were uncoded and were later classified into socio-economic groupings.

### SAMPLE DESIGN

The survey was designed to be representative of the adult population of Dublin. The sample was selected on a two stage stratified basis. The population was stratified into five regions as follows:

1. Dublin County Borough North
2. Dublin County Borough South
3. Dublin North County
4. Dublin South County
5. Dun Laoire Borough

The units at stage- one were defined to be the District Electoral Divisions (D.E.D.s) and the elements at stage-two were adults aged 18 years and over. Thirty D.E.D.s were selected at the first stage with probability proportional to size. At the second stage seventeen adults were chosen by means of quota sampling, from each of the selected D.E.D.s.

#### Stage One: Selection of Sampling Points

The Primary Sampling Units (P.S.U.s) are the (D.E.D.s). Within each of the five strata the D.E.D.s were selected with probability proportional to the size of population of each D.E.D. The population data was obtained from the 1981 census. The D.E.D.s are selected as follows; Within each stratum the D.E.D.s were arranged in ascending order of magnitude. A cumulative sum of the population within each stratum, was formed and a sample of D.E.D.s was chosen systematically after a random start. Systematic selection ensures a spread over size. The list of sampling points selected are shown in Appendix 4b

#### Stage Two: Selection of Individuals

The selection of respondents was demographically quota controlled. The interviewer was supplied with a list of streets corresponding to the sampling point and was instructed to select a sample from these streets subject to the demographic quota controls of sex, and age.

### SURVEY

The sample consisted of 510 adults. The data was collected in December 1986. A data-entry program written by Dr. Micheal Scott of the School of Computing and Quantitative Methods was used to enter and validate the data. The analysis was done using the SPSSX statistical package.



## 11.1 APPENDIX 4b: SAMPLING POINTS

## 1. Dublin County Borough North

Arran Quay C  
Arran Quay E  
Artane B  
Artane H  
Artane G  
Clontarf East B  
Clontarf West D  
Finglas West C  
Cabra East A

## 2. Dublin County Borough South

Ballyfermot F  
Crumlin A  
Crumlin B  
Kimmage D  
Merchants Quay A  
Rathmines East A  
St Kevins

## 4. Dublin County North

Donabate  
Drumcondra Rural 1  
Coolock  
Swords West

## 5. Dublin County South

Dundrum No.2  
Lucan No 1  
Milltown No 1  
Rathfarnham No 1  
Stillorgan No 3  
Tallaght No 1  
Tallaght No 3  
Terenure No 4

## 5. Dunlaoire

Blackrock No 2  
Dunlaoire No 8