

July 29, 1993

Mr Brian Lamb
Chairman and CEO
C-SPAN
400 North Capitol St., Suite 650
Washington DC 20001

Dear Mr Lamb:

I was watching C-SPAN's regular Sunday night coverage of the British House of Commons last Sunday night when SDLP leader John Hume MP rose to put a question to Prime Minister John Major.

I see the program on BQ cable at my home in Bayside, Queens, New York. I respect C-SPAN's quality and admire your personal skill, thoroughness, and fairness as a journalist and interviewer on **Book Notes**, for example.

But, last Sunday night, inexplicably, Mr Hume became inaudible. I learned subsequently from press reports that Mr Hume had condemned Tory leader Norman Tebbit's remarks in an interview to the effect that "the only way Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution would be changed is when bombs went off in Dublin."

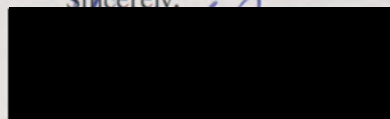
I would like to believe that the sudden lowering of the volume on C-SPAN was purely a technical matter. Was it? Or did it have something to do with the various British censorship laws having to do with political coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland? Is British censorship policy now affecting US broadcasts?

If the latter, it would be extremely disturbing that US viewers are deprived of coverage by reason of British repressive practices. I read an article about this in a recent issue of the **Irish Democrat**, a London publication.

I hope you can reassure me in this matter.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



[Redacted]
New York, N.Y. 10010
[Redacted]

[Redacted]
Albany, N.Y. 12210-1939
[Redacted]

Tuning the British static out of the Irish signal

*Americans
campaigning for
British withdrawal
from Ireland are
waking up to the
dominance of the
British take on the
crisis in the US
media, reports
JAMES MULLIN*

THE greatest obstacle facing Americans who want to see peace with justice in the north of Ireland and a withdrawal of British forces has been the dominance of the British viewpoint in our media. In particular, we are frustrated by BBC World Service broadcasts over our publicly-owned radio stations, a "service" which defies the intent of Congress.

In 1967, when the Public Broadcasting Act became law, Congress established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The federal government wanted to provide funds to develop public broadcasting without interfering with their First Amendment-protected activity: "CPS is to facilitate the development of public

telecommunications and to afford maximum protection from extraneous interference and control." (47 USC 396 [a] [8]) In 1970, CPS mobilised public radio stations to create National Public Radio.

NPR maintains an office within BBC World Service and allows the BBC to use NPR satellites to improve their signal worldwide. All this with the full knowledge that BBC World Service is *totally* funded by the British Foreign Office.

But the overwhelming majority of BBC news broadcast over the public airways comes from a private programme distributor, American Public Radio, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

APR is the "single largest distributor of public radio programming in the United States", boasting 457 affiliates nationwide. It offers these stations a full range of BBC World Service programming 24 hours a day, and APR boosted the signal strength for BBC World Service programming, according to their annual report. John Tusa, a managing director of BBC World Service in London sits on the board of directors of American Public Radio.

In 1992, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting gave American Public Radio a \$100,000 grant. That tax money was given in violation of the Public Broadcasting Act, which states that CPB must "carry out its purposes and functions and engage in activities in ways which will ef-

fectively assure the maximum freedom of the telecommunications entities and systems from interference with, or control of, program content or other activities." (47 USC 396 [g] [1] [d]).

While working to prevent US government interference with domestic broadcasting, CPB is facilitating the dissemination of Britain's controlled news. That control is airtight.

The board of directors of the BBC are public figures appointed by the Queen on recommendations from the government. Broadcasting is a state monopoly under the Wireless and Telegraphy Acts, and the BBC's Licence and Agreement states: "The minister may direct the authority in writing to refrain from broadcasting any particular matter or matter of any particular class, and the authority shall comply with the direction."

That is the kind of law that enables the broadcasting ban against Sinn Féin and other proscribed groups in Britain, but it is the opposite of what Congress intended when it created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

In response to my own protests about their grant of \$100,000 in tax money to American Public Radio, CPB director Victor Gold commented: "I am in complete sympathy with your position that CPB should not be funding, directly or indirectly, any programme which partakes of political propaganda, especial-

ly regarding a situation as complex as that in Northern Ireland."

In contrast, CPB president and chief executive Richard W Carlson had this to say: "When you argue that CPB must act in response to the Congressional Directive that CPB 'afford maximum protection from ... interference and control', you are asking CPB to move towards 'censorship and control', the very notions that prompted your letter."

Carlson's claim that CPB must continue to underwrite APR's distribution of state-funded, state-controlled and state-censored foreign news in the name of preventing "censorship" stands logic on its head. At the very least, state news should be labelled as such, whether it comes from Iraq or from Britain.

Americans are waking up to the hazards of our "special relationship" with Britain. The so-called "Mother of Parliaments" has no written constitution, no Bill of Rights, and no Freedom of Information Act. It is a Monarchy with a state church and one hereditary House of Parliament. Its state-financed, state-controlled and state-censored news deprives people in Ireland, in Britain and in America of a massive amount of information on the conflict in the north of Ireland.

□ James Mullin is president of the South Jersey chapter of the Irish-American Unity Conference.

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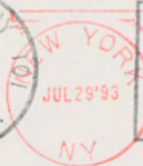
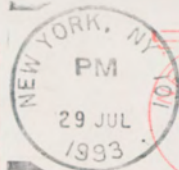
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IRISH DEMOCRAT July 1993

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10010



UNION
YES ✓



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