



## CONFLICTS AT DE PAPER(S)

CORK'S ATTACHMENT to 'de paper' may soon be realised literally as one of de two newspapers, the *Irish Examiner* and the *Echo*, could be facing extinction. That's what some analysts believe is the agenda behind moves by the *Irish Times*'s owner to combine the news desks at both papers.

This comes just a few months after managing director Deirdre Veldon had to contend with some bolshie commentary from the Cork journalists about unflattering comparisons with the salaries of local litter wardens and themselves.

A raft of similar complaints was also voiced when Dee wandered into the newsrooms of the two papers late last year, triggering further unflattering comparisons – this time between the MD and a certain Blueshirt politician who innocently wandered into a Kanturk shop at that time.

A more recent source of discontent has been the 5% pay raise offer under consideration by the hacks, which again has seen an unfavourable comparison – this time with the 22% rise in inflation in the last five years.

The meeting last month was to announce and explain 'Project Cork', which centres on the merging of the two newspapers' news desks – something that comes close to completing the ongoing merging of the newspapers.

A measure of the new aggression by *IT* management was its response to the request by the hacks' union – the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) – that the meeting be

postponed. This was because the NUJ's two senior representatives in Cork were both on assignment out of the office that day. 'Niet' was the response to this outrageous request. A similarly negative answer came back from Dee when the union asked if it would be possible for NUJ officers to access the meeting remotely, setting the scene for a sullen meeting between Veldon and the staff in Cork.

There was more unsettling info when the hacks were informed that the merging of the two news desks would result in that delightfully crafted management euphemism, namely "voluntary partings" of journalists. How many, Veldon and her accompanying finance officers, would not say. Nor would they say if compulsory 'partings' would follow, although they were "not on the table" at present.

When questions like these were raised, Dee called on her head of finance, Mikey Sheehan – formerly a member of management at the Cork newspapers – and he effectively told his former charges that the company's financial problems were in Cork, not at the *IT*. This, he explained, meant that the 'real capital's' newspapers would have to bear the brunt of cuts coming down the line.

Further evidence of the *IT*'s future intentions comes with the decision of the *Examiner*'s editor, Tom Fitzpatrick, to exit from the scene. This is despite Fitzpatrick being offered the job of editing the two newspapers (itself an indication of a future single entity).

Underlying the growing belief that the *Echo* will be sacrificed in the short to medium term is what the Cork journalists and NUJ members believe is the *IT*'s unwillingness to be open about its plans and how the scantiest information has to be prised from them with a crow bar.

## 'IRISH TIMES' CRIES HALT IN GAZA

AMONG THOSE scrambling to get onside with the increasing revulsion at the slaughter in Gaza is the *Irish Times*, which recently editorialised against Israel's now openly genocidal attacks on Palestinians.

Perhaps anxious to disassociate the newspaper from the slander that Irish people and Palestinian supporters are antisemitic, the leader writer graciously allowed that not "all protests are driven by hatred of Jews", as claimed by some.

The author, however, did argue that "antisemitism can be found among some elements of the anti-war movement" as "violent attacks in the US have shown". But, overall, the editorial was critical of the horror and suffering inflicted by Israel.

These remarks – spurred by critical gestures and even actions by some of Israel's western allies recently – are some distance from the Israeli depiction of Ireland as a country rampant with antisemitism. But that is a picture the *IT* has promoted with its opinion columns and reports of alleged antisemitism in Ireland in the last 12 months or so.

Just a week before the editorial was published, the *IT* gave space to Oliver Sears – the Dublin-based art gallery owner and founder of Holocaust Awareness Ireland – to pen the latest of 15 articles, usually defending Israeli policy, commissioned by a generous *IT* in recent years. Sears constantly refers to his family's Holocaust background as part of his polemic against critics of Israel.

But as a member of the Jews for Palestine group, Dr David

Landy, puts it, Sears is "not above using his own pedigree to criticise the arguments of those who disagree with Israeli policy in Gaza" (see *The Phoenix* 10/1/25).

Sears has also decried using even the term 'boycott', never mind an actual economic and cultural boycott of Israel. He argues: "For Jews, the very term 'cultural boycott' cannot be separated from the discrimination by the Nazi regime from 1933 that led to book burning, the Nuremberg Laws and the illegality of every aspect of Jewish life, including and especially life itself."

In his latest *IT* column, Sears condemns the recent "demonising [of] Israelis, Zionism and Jews" and tells the readers that "I have warned about the global rise of antisemitism".

While Sears also condemns Israel using starvation as "monstrous", he singles out the "regimes in Israel, Gaza, Iran and surrounding countries" (all Arabs, of course) as collective villains of the violence. But he reserves most of his condemnation and demands for Hamas in a lengthy article penned just eight days before the editorial revising the newspaper's line on Gaza and rejecting the antisemitic argument.

That Sears has been given the freedom of the *IT*'s opinion columns to spread his pro-Israeli line, with the newspaper invariably advising readers of his pedigree each time, is one thing. But the Jews for Palestine group has sent many letters to the newspaper, with only two – written by individual members, not the group – being published since the war in Gaza began in October 2023.

During the same period, the Jewish group has requested several times that the *IT* publish opinion pieces from it, some written by TCD academic Landy. Not one has been published.

Why has the newspaper favoured so blatantly one Jewish voice over another group of Jewish voices?



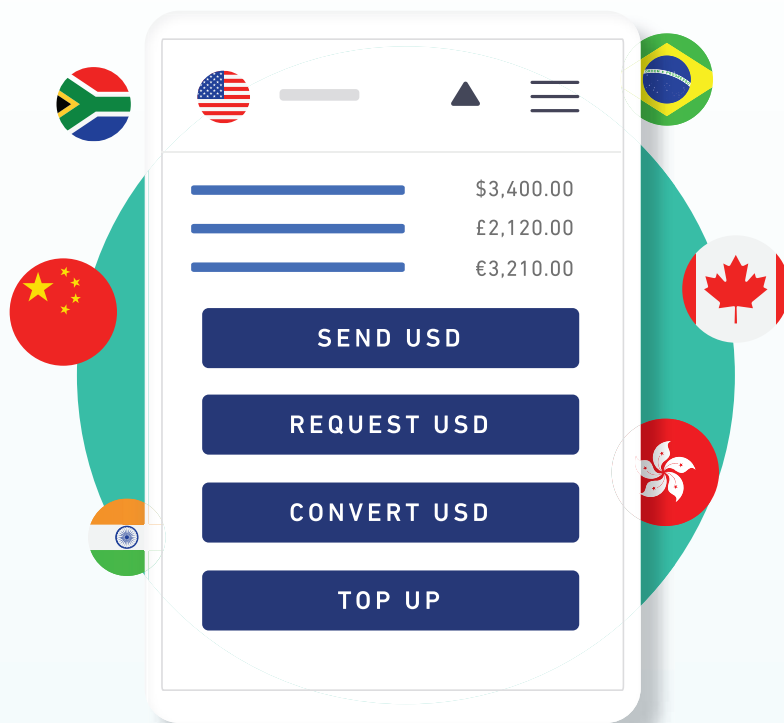
Deirdre Veldon



Oliver Sears



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