

To: Broadcasting Complaints Commission
From: Patrick Heaney

12/12/2007

RE:

My Complaint about Hidden History: the Killings at Coolacree, October 23 2007.

My complaint is that RTÉ misrepresented my views on the allocation of the land bought from the Pearsons by the Land Commission. RTÉ edited my words in a way which gave my statement the opposite meaning. In doing this, RTÉ (a) breached objectivity, fairness and impartiality, and (b) damaged my reputation.

The only reference to this that I could find in RTÉ's reply is the following:

"In fact, according to the Land Commission ex IRA men received parcels of land in the FIRST division of the Pearsons' land in 1923. Paddy Heaney's comment was a true representation of the evidence contained in these files, and therefore not a 'misrepresentation of the true situation'."

This states that RTÉ holds the opposite view to me on this question. It does not deny that RTÉ misrepresented my view. It merely says that it holds the opposite view to mine, and used a deliberate misrepresentation of my words to present its own view as if it were mine.

Therefore RTÉ is not denying (a) and (b) above. **I am not satisfied with this, and I request that the BCC adjudicate on my complaint.**

In August I sent a letter of withdrawal (Letter 1, below) to the programme director. My reason for sending it was that I had formed the opinion that the programme was not going to be fair, objective and impartial. One of my many reasons for coming to this conclusion was that I had seen the RTÉ slide dated May 30 2007, with the programme title "*Atonement: ethnic cleansing in the midlands 1922*".

The director came to my house soon after and said my contribution was essential to the balance, fairness and objectivity of the programme; and that, even if I withdrew, the programme would, regardless, be broadcast without my balancing contribution. So I was persuaded to continue, as the director gave me to understand that the onus was on me, not RTÉ, to make the programme fair, objective and impartial.

In the event, as my complaint states, and as RTÉ does not deny, the programme grotesquely misrepresented my view on the land allocation, turning it into the only piece of actual evidence in the programme in support of the land grab theory favoured by the director and by RTÉ.

The misrepresentation of my contribution was in fact essential, not for balance, but to serve the purposes of the director and RTÉ since they had no evidence in support of their land grab theory that they were prepared to broadcast. Because, if they had such evidence, why didn't they broadcast it instead of misrepresenting me?

This was a grossly unfair piece of trickery in the October 23 broadcast.

If in a court of law a witness reporting a conversation with a defendant omitted the defendant's admission of guilt, the witness would be in breach of the oath requiring them to tell "the whole truth". To put it another way, if a person said "I have not murdered X", and the second and third words are removed, the statement is turned into its opposite. What is suppressed, censored or omitted is vital to the meaning. In Letter no. 3 below, RTÉ is asserting licence to conduct itself in this manner. If this licence is allowed, nobody in their right mind will ever allow themselves to be interviewed by RTÉ, and no viewer can put any faith in what RTÉ broadcasts.

On December 10 I wrote to RTÉ (Letter 2, below) requesting a copy of my full interview, in order to verify precisely the words omitted by RTÉ. RTÉ refused this request (Letter 3, below) and stated that my Complaint is about irrelevant material which was not broadcast. This is not the case. I am stating that one problem with this programme was **distortion by omission**, as described above.

Proof of my view is in the material RTE did not broadcast, as can be demonstrated by listening to it – that is all. It seems an obvious and easily verifiable point. In the absence of RTÉ providing this material to the Commission, it must be presumed that RTÉ accepts my word that I am the best judge of my own opinions and that my opinion on the issue in question was distorted and turned into its opposite in the Hidden History programme. Otherwise, RTÉ's refusal of my request is an attempt to evade clarification on this point.

Yours sincerely

Paddy Heaney
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Birr
Co. Offaly

Phone 057 9137956

Correspondence with RTÉ:

1.

Dear Ms Niamh Sammon

It has come to my attention that your Hidden History “reconstruction” of the 1921 events at Coolacrease is a bogus one.

You conducted your interview with me under pretences of truth, balance and objectivity which are false pretences.

I do not wish to be associated in any way with any broadcast produced on such a basis.

No contribution of mine may be used by you in your documentary.

Please confirm by return post that you will comply with this instruction.

If I do not hear from you directly to that effect, I will take it that you refuse to comply with this instruction. I do not wish to receive any other form of communication from you other than your written note of compliance.

Yours sincerely

P. Heaney

2.

Mr Cathal Goan

Director General RTÉ

cc. Broadcasting Complaints Commission

December 10 2007

Dear Mr Goan

My complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, re Hidden History: the Killings at Coolacrease, says that the extract from my interview which was broadcast in the programme in October was used unfairly to contradict the argument I made in my unedited interview in May.

This letter is a request for a copy of the recording of my full interview, before it was edited for broadcast, so that I can confirm for the Broadcasting Complaints Commission the exact details of what I said in my interview, in order to demonstrate to the Commission the unfairness of the programme.

Yours sincerely

Paddy Heaney

RTÉ reply:

3.

Dear Mr Heaney

The Director General has asked me to reply to you on behalf of RTÉ. In common with other broadcasting organisations it has not been part of RTÉ practice to provide the unbroadcast part of interviews to interviewees. RTÉ's is responsible for what is broadcast, not the parts of interviews which are edited out during the making of the programme.

In this particular instance the remit of the BCC extends only as far as what was broadcast. The BCC board reads correspondence and views programmes. Their remit does not extend to looking at unedited material.

Yours sincerely

Peter Feeney
Head of Public Affairs Policy
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