



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### **"Impartial Reporter", Enniskillen runs story with outrageous headline.**

The "Impartial Reporter", based in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh and dating back to 1825, is deemed a family newspaper. It breached that status in its 5th June 2013 edition when it used the words of a foul-mouthed drunken lout as its headline for an article on the incident in which the lout was being questioned by the police regarding drunken driving.

Anyone who has read the newspaper will know the article in question.

Rev Ivan Foster emailed Mr Denzil McDaniels, the Editor to complain about the offensive headline and has also lodged a complaint with the Press Complaints Commission.

Here is the email he sent with the link to the article removed for the sake of decency.

Denzil,

Given your background and upbringing, I am shocked and deeply disappointed that you should print a court report in last week's edition headlining the story - "Link to article . . . . ."

It does not in the least surprise me that it came from the pen of Chris Donegan. However, yours is the ultimate responsibility for the headline.

Though the court may have deemed necessary the admission of the defendant's statement in evidence I see no reason for the foul utterance to be flaunted in your supposedly family-orientated newspaper and the offensiveness of the report exacerbated by making the outburst a gratuitously shameful headline.

I utterly fail to understand how you, a parent, could publish such a headline knowing that it would be such an offence to other parents whose children have access to your newspaper, parents who undoubtedly would wish to shelter their children from such lewdness.

When I think of the many letters, articles and church adverts which were unfairly refused by you and your predecessors on the grounds that fully documented allegations about the ecumenism of denominations in the area or the support for terrorism manifested by local politicians would "offend" such and compare your behaviour on this occasion, only one word comes to mind - hypocrisy!

On my part, I will never let another copy of "The Impartial Reporter" darken my home, where the newspaper has been a weekly essential going back literally 3-4 generations or more.

I only hope that many others will do likewise.

I will be making a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission for I believe your headline was unnecessary and designed only to offend, titillate and shock. It was not in the public interest to have such a statement foisted upon the minds of your readers. It surely is the practice of editors, conscious of their readers' sensitivities, to remove or refrain from publicising in full such outrageous statements.

Yours faithfully,

Ivan Foster. 6th June 2013.



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**Response of the Editor of "The Impartial Reporter", 10th June 2013.**

Ivan.

I received your email and thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

I was not aware of it; but of course that is not an excuse as allowing something to happen under my watch is as much an error as if I had seen and allowed it.

I immediately checked the newspaper and found that, in fact, the headline you refer to was not in the Impartial newspaper.

It was, however, used on our website and I had it removed immediately.

You were right to state your shock at this.

However, I was disappointed at the way you further proceeded to vent your anger on me personally, bringing my upbringing into it and calling me a hypocrite. I would have thought that correction of a brother in a spirit of love who made a mistake would be better, and I have to say that your spiteful tongue towards me was personally hurtful.

Perhaps that is of no concern to you, but I feel I should say it to you anyway.

Regards,

Denzil

### **Rev. Foster's reply, 10th June 2013.**

Denzil,

I am glad to hear that the headline did not appear in the printed edition though that it appeared in the internet edition means that it was likely seen by more readers than was the printed edition.

I was in England when I observed the article and was in no position to check the actual printed edition and, to be honest, I found the headline so offensive and embarrassing, I felt that I could not ask anyone to check it out.

I appreciate how you have taken responsibility for the error.

Regarding what you call my "spiteful" comments I reject your criticism entirely. I was not deliberately seeking to offend or hurt you, which is the meaning that spiteful carries. I have never employed words to be deliberately "hateful or malign."

My reference to your upbringing was merely an indication of why I expected more from you by way of guarding the moral content of your newspaper. With regards hypocrisy, are there no grounds for me seeing justification for that charge?

You and your predecessors refused numerous letters and adverts from me over the years since 1967 when I returned to my home county, and the basis of your rejection was because the content of my adverts and letters would cause, in the view of the editorship, offence to those against whom I was writing and preaching. I was always most careful in what I wrote and preached and my carefulness is borne out in that I have never once been challenged, despite being very public in my controversies.



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There was never any real basis for the refusals I suffered at the hands of the editorship of the "Impartial Reporter".

Had a fraction of the determination to stop my warnings appearing in your newspaper been exercised with reference to this headline then it would never have appeared.

I accept that since you were unaware of the headline, something that was not to be expected by me, you are not guilty of hypocrisy.

However, Denzil, surely it must be clear that given the care taken in the past to avoid offending readers with my adverts etc., it was hypocritical of the "Impartial Reporter" to run such an offensive headline irrespective of who took the decision.

Sincerely,

IF.