

COMMERCIAL RADIO IN BRITAIN BEFORE THE 1990s:  
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN PROGRAMMING AND REGULATION

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Bournemouth University for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

November 2009

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## **Acknowledgements**

My thesis is inspired by fifteen years working in the commercial radio industry. This is where I developed a passion to tell the story of its contribution to broadcasting history. My move to Bournemouth University in 2002 gave me the opportunity to pursue academic goals and during this time I have fortunate enough to work with and learn from world-leading authors in the field of Radio Studies. I would like to offer my warm thanks to Professor Seán Street who originally inspired me to make the big step into doctoral research and whose own work in the field of ILR opened my mind to a story that relatively little had been written or known about. Dr Hugh Chignell has been an ally, critic and confidant on my three-year journey. His advice and guidance has been invaluable. I hope that through future research I have the opportunity to work with such eminent academics again. A special mention must go to Tony Stoller, the former UK radio regulator who has been more than generous in helping me source key people for this project as well as sharing aspects of his own experience in regulation. I regard him as my mentor for this project. My thanks also to radio colleagues who agreed to take part in the research and share their recollections of the ups and downs of ILR. Their kind cooperation and detailed testimonies enrich the story of British commercial radio. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to Gordon and Isaac, whose patience, love and support during the past three years has never wavered, despite the many late night debates, decisions and deadlines.

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## **Abstract**

**Emma Rebecca Wray**

### **Commercial radio in Britain before the 1990s: An investigation of the relationship between programming and regulation.**

Today's British commercial radio environment consists of over three hundred local, regional and national radio stations. Many operate a concentrated music format, designed to meet the demands of a defined target audience. This is in contrast to the commercial radio model in existence between 1973 and 1990, where local stations were required, as part of their contract, to broadcast speech-based programming, in addition to music, to a wider audience profile.

One reason for speech programming on commercial stations was the strict regulation laid down by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Regulatory policy coupled with societal and political changes had a major influence on the creation of programme output from 1973, when commercial radio was established, until new broadcast legislation was passed which transformed the business model under the Broadcasting Act 1990. Programme content was constrained by the regulator's demands for what they referred to as 'meaningful speech' and the stations' desire to be more commercial in line with the demands of the audience.

The intention of this research project is to explore the impact of regulation upon the commercial radio programming model between 1983-85, and to uncover why this period was pivotal in bringing about change within the regulatory framework. This examination will be carried out by drawing on IBA policy papers, media reports and personal accounts from interviews with key radio station personnel, such as broadcasters, station producers, managers and regulation staff.

The project draws on original sources of both primary and secondary data, including information held in the archives of the current radio regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), who has granted unlimited access to previously unseen confidential archives. This provides an exclusive data source allowing the research to make an original contribution to broadcasting history, which is pertinent given the current debate on deregulation within UK commercial radio.

## 1.

### **Introduction and Background**

British Commercial Radio is a network of licensed local, regional and national radio stations which broadcast on FM, AM and DAB frequencies. Following the parliamentary approval of the Sound Broadcasting Act in 1972, it was introduced in October 1973, establishing its position as the only alternative service to the BBC. Today there are over three hundred commercial local, regional and national radio stations (not counting community and internet stations). A main focus of today's commercial model is to achieve profits, using sophisticated advertising, marketing and branding concepts linked to on-air (and online) content. The stations are managed strategically, mostly by large companies, focusing on sales and marketing objectives, with equal or more value being placed on the importance of revenue targets as well as listener ratings.

This is in contrast to the structure, sound and production of local commercial radio (there was no national station until after 1990) in the period 1973-90 which was heavily regulated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The IBA had clear policies dictating every aspect of radio station business. These included ownership and licensing rules that meant that each individual station was franchised to a stand-alone company. The IBA implemented limitations to advertising and sponsorship, engineering specifications, and programme content, notably limits on the amount of music that could be played due to copyright restrictions and a high stipulation for local news. The new service was referred to as Independent Local Radio (ILR). When new legislation, the Broadcasting Act 1990, was passed, it changed the nature of programme regulation to a less restrictive, free market model, referred to by Hendy as 'open market' regulation (2000: 41).

The actions and events of the regulator and the radio stations, leading up to the change in legislation, were most prominent during the mid-1980s, a period Street (2002) and Stoller (2006) regard as highly significant. These events not only changed the business model at the beginning of the 1990s, but their legacy continues to effect regulatory change.

## **Defining 1984 as the pivotal moment**

In personal interviews conducted during the initial phase of the research, both Stoller and Street strongly suggested that 1984 was the pivotal moment in the history of commercial radio<sup>1</sup>, which confirms anecdotal evidence from this author, based on their own experiences working within the industry. Research for this thesis confirms that 1984 appears to be a unique and important date because it was during this time that a significant event occurred. The event was a secret meeting of commercial radio station directors, without the involvement of the IBA, at which the traditional form of radio programme regulation that had been in existence for ten years was challenged. The actions of this meeting had major repercussions for the future of the radio industry and the thesis shall demonstrate the extent of the changes incurred. Moreover, when researching this period to test the validity of Street and Stoller's claim, it is clear that one cannot separate it from the turbulent events occurring within the UK economy. These appear to have exacerbated the strain on the model of regulation practiced by the IBA, given the influence of economic turmoil, social change and media fragmentation. In addition, the influence of the Conservative Government, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher from 1979-90, and the findings of the 1986 Peacock Report, instigated new legislation. The Broadcasting Act 1990, as the thesis shall demonstrate, revealed key characteristics of Thatcherism. This is because it focused on the removal of restrictions upon commercial operators (radio and television) thus supporting the ideology of the free market. As the thesis shall confirm from qualitative research, 1984 appears to have not only been a definitive point on the commercial radio continuum from the radio stations' perspective, but also to have changed the role of the regulator from interventionist to 'light-touch'. This can be analysed further by applying mass communication theory (McQuail, 2005). The IBA's regulatory approach moved from a hypodermic model, to a uses and gratifications model thus creating a shift in the balance within the public sphere, where listeners, in addition, became consumers.

## **Research aims and objectives**

The aim of the thesis is to examine commercial radio programming regulation, from its genesis in 1973, to the legislative changes which took place in 1990, focusing on the mid-1980s. The research project is designed, at a simplistic level, to document

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<sup>1</sup> In personal interviews conducted in 2006 prior to the commencement of the thesis, both Stoller and Street outlined 1984 as a critical stage in ILR's development.

commercial radio's contribution to the broadcasting sector, while affording the opportunity to provide detailed discussion and analysis of its manifestations during the first ten years. It will suggest why 1984 can be regarded as a key period thus far in commercial radio's history and development.

The thesis will reveal how the nature of regulation and its application to commercial radio programming, particularly at political, economic, cultural, social and technological milestones, had a major influence on its creation and evolution. During this period, the radio industry went from being referred to as 'Independent Radio' to 'Commercial Radio'. The significance of this step-change is discovered when previewing one of the many examples from the primary material within the IBA / Ofcom archive sourced for this project. Examination of a letter sent to radio station LBC on 4 February, 1979, from John Thompson, Director of Radio at the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the radio regulator at the time, reveals the perceived importance of the use of 'correct' terminology:

Could you please try and get your folk on air not to talk about 'commercial radio' – unless that out-dated phrase is needed for reason of clarity in a particular context – and instead to talk about Independent Radio or Independent Local Radio.

(LBC Programmes – General, 1979a)

For the purpose of the thesis, the words 'independent' and 'commercial' are used interchangeably when discussing the period under principle consideration.

To examine issues further, the research pieces together commercial radio regulation, analysing it in terms of programme content. One reason for focusing on content is that it enables the researcher to discover how policies and procedures affected production and output, as these are regarded as the main influences in ensuring ILR stations' viability, in terms of profit and audience market share. These are considered to be the two main benchmarks used to monitor effectiveness and success for stakeholders involved in commercial radio, and both later had repercussions on the development of the business model. The main research question therefore is 'to explore the impact of regulation upon the commercial radio programming model between 1983-85, and to uncover why this period was pivotal in bringing about change within the regulatory framework'.

There are a number of supporting themes within the main question which are important in order to consider the hypotheses. Objectives identified to support the research

question are: An investigation into how local commercial radio evolved within a wider context of political, economic, social, cultural and technological change; An exploration into the development of commercial radio regulation within a wider context of media regulation; An investigation as to how such regulation shaped programme policy within radio stations and the effect of policy constraints, during the period in question, using examples; An examination of key themes and events that emerged through the three-year period, with a discussion on why they are significant, using examples and case studies; The development of a theoretical framework in which to analyse relationships among IBA / Radio Stations / Listeners / Government and others, in the context of the public sphere.

Analysing commercial radio's development can enable academics to learn from the past, document the present and discuss its future. Debates are starting to emerge within the field of radio regulation as it now enters a new phase, as a multimedia product in a converging world. New distribution channels are leading to changes in radio consumption and the term 'radio' is becoming synonymous with 'audio'. This research provides a contribution to knowledge for scholars, especially in the growing relationship between media and communications studies and history, and explores the value of archives across the humanities curriculum. In addition, the research bears relevance to today's broadcasting industry, as the current commercial radio sector calls for further deregulation in order to create what they regard as 'quality' programming for today's listeners, in a homogeneous, competitive market. The research can inform this topic, given that the period under examination saw immense change in programming style, as the cause and effect of heavy regulation led to a light-touch model. Qualitative research will portray what impact regulation had on programmes and provide an insight as to whether regulation hampered or enhanced the industry, a topic which continues to be a matter of debate as evidenced in the recollections of the regulator and the industry. What is clear is that the commercial radio industry today, represented by the trade body, RadioCentre, is keen to ensure its contribution receives recognition: "These [commercial radio] programmes capture the mood of the time and ensure commercial radio has its rightful place in broadcasting history" (Andrew Harrison, Chief Executive of RadioCentre, 2007).

It is important to define terms in order to be precise about the strengths and limitations of the study. Programme content and regulation is the main focus, from two perspectives;

the regulator and the radio stations, and this does not include a detailed examination of audience perceptions. This is because research data from the period regarding audiences is sparse and different methodologies were applied throughout the research period. Generally, transcripts from sound archives have not been used to demonstrate the notion of regulation in action. Instead, qualitative interviews with producers, managing directors, broadcasters and regulators are more informative than a close reading of sound archives, which are limited by nature of being retrospective and could be at risk of being taken out of context. What serves as a more rigorous approach is interview material gathered from prominent people in the radio industry at the time, supported by regulatory documents and papers to help piece together how commercial radio sounded.

The project excludes detailed comparisons between the BBC and ILR and has not collated research data from BBC archives. However, it is important to register that during the period in which ILR was emerging, the BBC was also subject to fluctuation and therefore their relationship shall be discussed in this context. Crucially, IBA policy and process may have been affected by the BBC's development (both in terms of national and local radio) and reference to relevant key texts and archive documents from IBA sources, will reveal this. This will be useful in the attempt to define what made ILR distinctive from its rival. However it is important to recognise that ILR did not see itself as competing with BBC Local Radio, but rather with the national stations Radios One and Two (and to a lesser extent, for news output, Radio Four). This is why the IBA regularly compiled research and analysis of ILR's ratings, aggregated to show national listening figures. They used these in press statements and positioned the results against the national BBC stations.

An overview of media regulation will also be included to assess the relevance of the radio model at key stages in its development, in line with the expansion of media consumption, to support and inform the hypothesis: commercial radio regulation was outdated by the 1980s.

## **Research methodology and approach**

The investigation is based on empirical research and uses a variety of methods. Data has been collected for primary research using exclusive, previously unseen files in the IBA (Radio Division) archives, made available for the first time for doctoral research by the current radio regulator, Ofcom.<sup>2</sup> Quantitative methods using content analysis have been applied to compile an analysis of IBA and BBC press cuttings. Key to the project is qualitative primary research, using personal interviews with principal people from both the regulating body and the industry. It is fundamental to the research that their experiences be documented, given the passing of time. A notable source of regulatory communication exists in the form of a series of quarterly ‘in-house’ magazines which act as both a literary source and an opportunity for secondary research. A summary of the specific sources used and the appropriate data collection methods now follows. This also outlines the challenges and complexities of examining an archive of such volume and bureaucracy. In addition, given the exclusivity of much of the material, it is imperative that the reader is in no doubt that the research is thorough and systematic in its interrogation and credible in its selection.

## **Sources**

The primary source for the research is the wealth of archive information which has been made available at Ofcom in London. This data is collated in over 30,000 hard copy files and each file contains over 100 letters, reports, minutes, memoranda, policy documents, complaints and government papers, documented from 1970 until 1990. Full access to these files has been made possible under the supervision of a Bournemouth University visiting Fellow, Tony Stoller, who is former Head of Radio Programming at the IBA during the 1970s and became Chief Executive of the replacement regulator, The Radio Authority, during the 1990s. He also held various prominent positions in ILR across the research period during the 1980s. He was part of the senior team responsible for setting up the new regulator, Ofcom, in 2003. Part of this project has been combined with research assistance on Mr Stoller’s forthcoming book (John Libbey, May 2010) which is a detailed history of Independent Radio. This is the first time Ofcom (and the former Radio Authority), has allowed a PhD student unlimited access to its collection. Because of the lack of access to regulatory radio division archives for research in the past, there is now an exclusive opportunity to piece together a rich history using new data, never

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<sup>2</sup> The ITA/IBA archive was transferred from Ofcom’s Head Office in London, to the Centre for Broadcasting History Research, Bournemouth University, in January 2009.

seen before, by applying a systematic recording method. The IBA archive provides substantial information of high volume. This is navigated using an extensive spreadsheet provided by Ofcom, under broad subject headings which outline every file, its number classification and section, which is held within the archive from 1957-90 onwards. In addition, the files can be located in: IBA General; ITA; IBA Radio Division; and Radio Authority. There has been a huge amount of material available for search and access and it has been a difficult and painstaking job to ensure the correct selection of material to bring forward for further scrutiny and evidence to academic argument. For the research, key documents for further examination have been broken down into four main categories: IBA Radio Consultative Committee papers – where official policy decisions were passed; Board Papers and Minutes; Information Papers – a formal written communication between IBA and ILR Stations, outlining programming policy; Complaints and listener correspondence and subsequent IBA responses to them.

A process of selecting specific files has been carried out in part due to an assessment from the title that a relevant material is stored within the file (eg. subject areas such as: IBA's response to the White Paper; Complaints; Station Reports) and in other cases, files have been selected on the basis of specific knowledge and awareness of key dates and milestones that came to light following a preparatory document: '*History of Independent Radio Chronology*' (Appendix A). Such an example is the in-depth look at the LBC and Capital Radio files, given their prominence as the first commercial radio stations to launch on-air in Britain. When reading a file, the relevant paperwork is bookmarked and then photocopied. For each file and document copied, a cover sheet was created with its own classification index (IBA001 etc) which outlines the file name, number and date, a summary of main contents, a list of key documents attached and any questions emerging from the file that required further explorations at the analysis stage of the research project. An example of the author's data collection system is available in Appendix B. The individual numbered filing system allows ease of use. The file cover sheets as well as the Ofcom file number have been loaded onto a searchable Excel database. Files are also logged chronologically. There is the opportunity to recall files from the Ofcom store if required.

### **IBA Broadcasting Journals (in-house magazine)**

Quarterly in-house journals produced by the IBA and sent to radio stations have been sourced covering the period 1973-87. While it can be argued that the content is biased, they do provide an in-depth look at the beliefs and values of the IBA. For example, the tone and the portrayal of ILR development is subjective, using opinion leaders and opinion formers. The journals feature articles by ILR station managing directors discussing work in practice as well as key representatives from television and radio regulation. They contain examples of programmes written by producers and these have been incorporated into the spreadsheet using a separate workbook and are referenced according to date, subject matter and author (Appendix C).

### **Independent Television Commission Press Cuttings**

The Independent Television Commission (ITC) press cuttings stored at Bournemouth House library at Bournemouth University provide an insight into the representation of commercial radio by media commentators of the time. This information is documented in the same way as outlined above (Appendix D).

### **Interviews**

Qualitative research took place using interviews and transcripts with people active in the radio stations during the period. Some of this research is in conjunction with Tony Stoller's project and includes producers, editors and broadcasters from the relevant period. One aspect which emerged is the notion of the regulator as 'the enemy' – a comment made during interviews to date. This was important to explore via one-to-one interviews because there is an argument to suggest that because of the IBA's restrictions, radio personnel developed programme-making skills far superior to those of individuals working in the industry today. This can lead to an understanding of the problems that regulation caused, such as lack of training, cost, resources and morale. However, it is important to be aware of the difficulties in attempting to provide a balanced argument between the regulator and radio station employees. Sample interview questions are provided in Appendix E.

### **Selection of interviewees**

Key people from the research period, interviewed for the qualitative aspect of the study are:

**Ralph Bernard CBE**, Former Chief Executive of GCap Media plc, and Managing Director of GWR FM Bristol and Swindon during the research period.

**John Bradford**, member of the Local Radio Association, 1967, Managing Director of Radio Tees (Stockton-on-Tees) Radio West, and Director of the Radio Academy 1991-2001.

**Richard Findlay**, Chair of the Association of Independent Radio Contractors during the 1980s.

**Lord Gordon of Strathblane (formerly Jimmy Gordon)** former Managing Director of Radio Clyde, 1974-2003 (including Chairman of Scottish Radio Holdings).

**Tony Stoller**, former Head of Radio Programming, IBA, 1977-79; Director of the AIRC, 1979-81; Managing Director, Thames Valley Broadcasting plc. (210 Radio) 1981-84; Chief Executive of the Radio Authority, 1995-2003; and for a short period at Ofcom.

**Professor Seán Street**, former commercial broadcaster at 2CR in Bournemouth during the 1980s, and the UK's leading academic on the subject of commercial radio.

**John Thompson CBE**, Director of Radio, IBA, 1973-87.

**John Whitney CBE**, co-founder of the Local Radio Association 1964-70; Managing Director of Capital Radio, 1973-82; and Director General of the IBA, 1982-89.

### **Literature summary**

Little academic work has been published on the subject of British commercial radio and it is helpful to acknowledge this and provide the reader with an overview of the literature, which appears on page 15 of this introductory chapter. With this in mind, the subject clearly provides a strong basis for academic investigation.

This abridged literature review focuses upon published material regarding the history and development of ILR, and examines them in the context of macro / external factors prevalent at the time. These external factors include political, economic, sociological, cultural and technological trends. This may reveal patterns and linkage which run concurrently through commercial radio development and serves as a reminder of the inextricable link between broadcasting policy and the socio-political climate. The literature here is thus analysed within five themes: Commercial radio history and development; Radio (and media) regulation; Regulation in action: opportunities and constraints; Rationale for change; and Relationships and key influences. While the style

of the thesis is to interweave relevant literature throughout the following chapters, it is useful to provide a summary of the limited work on the subject of commercial radio history and development before proceeding and draws upon some themes as to why this might be so. The section which follows below acknowledges and takes account of available texts, stressing that these will be revisited and expanded upon under closer scrutiny within the course of each chapter, as indicated.

### **Commercial radio history and development**

The main works are by Baron (1975); two texts from Barnard (1989; 2000); and two texts from Crisell (1994; 2002) while the most prolific author is Street, who has carried out four studies into the period (2001; 2002; 2006a; 2006b). These shall be reflected upon, both in the history section of the literature review and the themes that follow. There are supporting texts from Starkey (2001) who focuses on production methods. Hendy (2000), while examining global broadcasting systems, provides useful examples of other countries' regulation, as well as supplying an examination into radio's role within popular culture theory.

The reason for this lack of reference material on the history and development of commercial radio is worthy of note. It is commercial radio's uniqueness, which creates the paradox that the lack of interest in its history is in contrast to its contribution to the broadcasting industry. Commercial radio in Britain is unusual in that its introduction came nearly twenty years after commercial television (ITV) which arrived in 1955. This is unlike other countries, where commercial radio came first, and consequently is a more popular area of study, as evidenced by the plethora of journal articles and case studies from other countries, such as the USA and Australia, which appear in *The Radio Journal*, *Culture, Media & Society* and *Institute of Media Studies* among others. A lack of heritage, along with appropriate publicly available research material to help trace its origins, may have been the contributing factor to ILR's lack of status as a worthy area for academic study. There is also evidence to suggest that the development of commercial radio, which had a 'start-stop' approach, due to the influence of the external factors outlined above may have also created apathy for the subject. The developments that took place in the post-1990 era and subsequent changes in 2003, following the creation of the 'converged' regulator Ofcom means that the significance of the early years of commercial radio (and the regulatory model to which it adhered) was not

warranted, until now. This can explain why the introduction and evolution of commercial radio is not well documented, compared to the history of the BBC (notably by Briggs 1979; 1995). Two of his volumes touch upon the introduction of commercial radio, as a source of competition. While this project does not include a detailed study of BBC Radio, an analysis of the relationship between ILR and the BBC (national and local) is important in order to clarify IBA policy decisions and processes surrounding the nature of ILR as a competing service. This is discussed by Briggs (1995: 628-629) in the early developmental period following the review of broadcasting by the Pilkington committee and the perceived threat of ILR by the BBC as early as 1961. Equally Curran and Seaton's work on the development of broadcasting in Britain is limited, containing only one explicit reference to commercial radio (2002: 287) and few implied messages regarding ILR's position as a major part of the broadcasting spectrum. This would confirm that the subject of ILR's contribution to broadcasting history has been overlooked.

Ofcom corporate publications discuss the evolving relationship between the BBC and ILR, ranging from a view of it as being 'alternative' to 'competitive'. According to Carter, the IBA's view was that 'ILR was designed to complement, not compete with BBC local radio' (2003: 5). Stations had to include programmes catering for, among others, children, religious groups and the elderly, as well as a strong commitment to social action and local communities, summed up as 'all things to all listeners' (2003: 20). Hendy (2007) follows up the 'competition and culture' debate by analysing the impact upon Radio Four's audience of the creation of Independent Radio News (IRN) in 1973. His research suggests that the arrival of IRN, based upon IBA requirements to provide a high level of news content, did not reduce BBC audiences as much as might have been expected. Instead, it was the use of the medium wave frequency for local radio that started to create competition between BBC Local Radio stations (a large proportion of which were broadcasting on the less popular frequency VHF) and ILR. Hendy notes that ILR appears to have been more popular outside London, notably Radio Clyde in Glasgow, Radio City and Swansea Sound, "playing as they did on strong local identities and popular suspicion that the Corporation was still too London orientated" (2000: 140).

This indicates the importance of 'localism' and it appears ILR stood up well against the introduction of BBC Local Radio in 1967, which continued to launch simultaneously

with the complementary and alternative commercial service in the 1970s. This may have created positive responses from geographical communities, but also had negative implications. Barnard puts this into context when he describes that “in effect, each of the ILR stations, outside London had to provide the full range of BBC services within a smaller, localised framework, and entirely from commercial resources” (1989: 75). Linfoot’s study of BBC Local Radio also highlights how localism was instrumental in developing relationships with the listener. He identifies that “the unique quality of local radio quickly became the resonance that existed between the audience and the ‘localness’ of the station” (2006: 127). The importance of the link between localness and listeners applies equally to local commercial radio (although as the research will show, Radios One and Two were ILR’s primary competitors). ILR’s development can be seen in the context of the BBC, given that the IBA appeared to follow this route for content regulation, especially in the early years. In the 1980s, Peacock’s suggestion to privatise BBC Radio One created uproar within ILR, who felt that commercialising the UK’s national pop station, with its existing heritage and reputation would reduce listenership and revenue opportunities. Their argument and concerns over the creation of Independent National Radio (INR) and its relationship with the BBC is demonstrated in the archives. Several texts reveal key moments in British broadcasting which demonstrate wider changes beyond their initial focus of the BBC. Former Director General Alasdair Milne, who held office from 1982-87 presents a useful account of the Conservative party’s debates over the Corporation, in his autobiography (1988). It contains a subjective and personal account of whether the BBC should be privatised, with particular reference to the outcomes of the Peacock Report. Leapman (1987) provides a critical and dramatic account of the same period as Milne which highlights the internal challenges to balance finance and quality with regards to programming. His account can provide an exploration of how the BBC internal culture was affected by regulation and accountability, some elements of which offer a comparison of the scenarios facing ILR. Born (2004) uses an ethnographic study to present a changing culture within the BBC, from the late 1990s to early 2000s. Born’s work provides an historical context to understand the rapid social and technological developments that took place during the 1980s and continued in the 1990s, and as such, is relevant to the thesis.

Another reason for a lack of material could be linked to the inauspicious start to commercial radio in Britain and the length of time it took to reach parliamentary

approval. According to the Independent Television Commission (ITC) press cuttings collated for research, lobby groups set up to justify the purpose of a commercial network began as early as 1957 and the intervention of government, at key stages during 1967, 1970, 1974 and 1979, meant its history and development was either thwarted or supported, depending upon the political party in office. Stoller has referred to this as the notion of commercial radio being used as a “political football” (2000 cited Street 2001: 93). This view will be explored in Chapter Two.

One idea implicit in the literature and supported by the archives is that there was an opportunity to develop local commercial radio much earlier than 1973. There is some early evidence that can be used to support context-setting in terms of the perceptions (by both listener and state) of the value and need for a commercial radio service. Street’s study into pre-war commercial radio (2006a) provides a comprehensive account of the offshore stations such as Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg, forerunners to the ILR network. Skues’ history of pirate radio suggests that a market was opening up for a commercial, pop-orientated service (1994: 126-7). His account details the rallying call for the legalisation of commercial radio by the offshore stations who asked audiences to ‘fight for free radio in Britain’. (This ‘market’ would later be fulfilled by BBC Radio One in 1967, after the Labour government rushed through legislation.) Skues (1994: 210) discusses the commercial prospects that the pirates attracted, a point that shall be discussed which asks whether there was a potential missed opportunity for ILR due to the influence of politicians and their views. While Radio One had been created after the pirates were taken off air to cater for young people, ILR did not appear to be heading in the direction of what is now a familiar contemporary, music radio format, heavily targeted at specific demographics. It was in fact, as Street observes, ‘curiously Reithian’ in its approach (2001: 94). Stoller (2009) outlines the IBA’s rationale for meaningful speech within ILR programming. This will be explored in Chapter Two.

Whilst not academic in nature, Baron’s study (1976) was the first work published on the subject. A commercial radio broadcaster at the time, Baron provides a chronological account of events leading up and the early years of legal commercial radio in the UK. His work describing the period 1960-76 presents a background to the topic, which also links to the idea discussed above regarding the notion of missed opportunities. He cites

the heritage of pirate radio and the acceptance of Manx Radio<sup>3</sup> as two reasons for the public need and support for ILR. The strength of his work lies in the fact that it was written as ILR was in the midst of its development. This suggests an accurate snapshot of events, but it takes a rather subjective and optimistic viewpoint. Baron suggests that during 1976, the Annan Committee is “expected to report very favourably about independent radio” (1976: 162). When received in 1977 however, Crisell (2002: 202) reflects that the “deliberations were better than its recommendations”, and its findings “lightly set aside” by the incumbent Conservative Government, following their victory at the 1979 election – another indicator of the political influence at work. This confirms that broadcasting and political trends are closely interlinked, at times, with significant consequences, as the project will demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four.

Barnard, Crisell and Street’s histories agree that ILR was heavily regulated to the detriment of the medium. Street’s chapter (2001: 79-105) on the ‘*Hidden History of Commercial Radio*’ takes the view that despite the long wait for a new radio service, it did not become the ‘new voice’ that was anticipated. As the title of Barnard’s chapter ‘*Road from Regulation*’ (1989: 69-90) suggests, it provides a highly relevant overview of the subject, from 1973-87, complementary to the research. The scale of the topic presented in the chapter is evident from the broad discussions surrounding the subjects of political intervention and legislation, lobbying, regulation and programme content and relationships. Barnard too recognises that change in the 1980s was imminent. Many of his points can now be discussed and substantiated using primary archive material. Crisell (1994: 34-38) covers the general history of ILR and outlines the restrictions imposed by the regulator as both “editorial and technological”. He makes a further important point regarding the IBA and government’s apparent inability to fully appreciate the changing consumption of radio among the audience (1994: 35). Crisell argues that applying the original regulatory model from 1973 within an ever-increasing technological and cultural world, for example with the arrival of breakfast television in 1983 and the Sony CD Walkman in 1984, was constraining the industry even further (2002: 197). The political influence can be seen again in Crisell’s review of government intervention to abandon the community radio experiment, which occurred in 1985. Although this topic shall not be discussed in detail within the thesis, the proposed

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<sup>3</sup> Manx Radio, a commercially-oriented service broadcasting to the Isle of Man went on air in June 1964. Due to its position as a self-governing Crown Dependency, it was not governed by legislation under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

introduction of smaller community radio stations did create the need for parity within the regulatory framework, and this became a key point for the commercial (not independent) radio lobby. The influence of the radio industry within the Thatcher Government confirmed by Stoller (2000) was instrumental to the legislative model that arrived as a result of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

There are texts from wider regulatory, socio-political and communication studies which discuss key themes emerging from Barnard, Crisell and Street. As highlighted, commercial radio development cannot be examined in isolation from external factors. The British political and economic climate continues to emerge in literature as an important influence in shaping the medium. Studies of societal change such as those offered by Skues and Baron present a picture of a post-pirate radio Britain where the tastes, interests and lifestyles of audience were developing rapidly. Street (2002) and Barnard (1989) both reveal that a cultural and political context emerged during this time when the voting age was lowered to eighteen during the 1970 election. The shadow Conservative party laid out plans for legal commercial radio in their manifesto in order to target younger voters, looking for a new radio service which would replace the pirates. Marr (2007) describes the zeitgeist for the pre-ILR period 1967-70. For example, the Labour Government at that time passed a number of key policy decisions such as the Abortion Act (1967); the Sexual Offences Act which decriminalised homosexuality (1967); the No-Fault Divorce Law (1969); and The Race Relations Act of 1970. Marr comments that “across Britain there is little doubt that traditional values were under attack and falling back in confusion”. He discusses this period of Labour policy-making as “social privatisations” (2007: 262) where people’s personal lives became part of a social and cultural climate and reinforced the importance of choice and change in the UK. Evidence of the link between government ethos and social change are discussed by Jarvis in contrast to Marr. Jarvis (2005) suggests it was policies introduced by the Conservative Macmillan Government in the earlier post-war era of 1957-64 which were pivotal in shaping morals. Hennessy’s two accounts of the post-war period (1994; 2006) are also useful background reading which set the tone of British society as it moved from austerity to a more liberal state. These texts indicate that there was a market for a commercial broadcasting service, but the ideology behind its existence was clearly governed by the contrasting views of the politicians, a theme which shall be discussed at several points within the thesis. It is given prominence in Chapters Two

and Three, where the research demonstrates the intervention of Harold Wilson's, Edward Heath's and Margaret Thatcher's governments in broadcasting strategy.

Seldon and Collings (2000: 26-28) present an overview of the impact of Thatcher's policies in which they discuss her radical ideology. Their discussion surrounding the period 1984-85 which they refer to as 'Vintage Thatcher' (a twelve-month period which included the first large-scale privatisation plan and the defeat of the National Union of Miners) is a useful literary account to underpin Street and Stoller's view of 1984 as the pivotal moment. Beckett's study of the 1970s (2009) provides a thorough portrayal of Britain during a turbulent decade; notably citing issues of industrial unrest and the impact and legacy of two political, historic events: the Three Day Week in 1974 and the Winter of Discontent in 1979. Both these events impacted upon British commercial broadcasting financially, while events of 1979 could have acted as a catalyst for change. These points are raised in Chapter Two. Vinen's recent study (2009) of Thatcher's Britain of the 1970s and 1980s is an excellent source, which documents the social and political upheaval of the 1980s. It identifies two distinct phases of Thatcherism; an early passive phase, referred to as 'Primitive Politics' and an active, revolutionary period, from the mid-late 1980s, which he refers to as 'Serious Money'. His explanation of the two phases is in synergy with changes to commercial radio policy and development, and in tandem with cultural change where the importance of personal choice and individualism emerged. Studies by Marwick (1991) on British culture and modernism provide a broad overview of cultural change, although this is limited with reference to the impact broadcasting (radio and television) technologies had upon society leading up to the 1960s. However, Marwick's description of the cultural aspects associated with the development of broadcasting technologies in its early years are of particular relevance when examining the inclusion of a public service ethos in ILR programme content (1991: 17). He identifies a cultural shift from the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, and presents this as "the end of the consensus", a point which is clearly relevant to this study (1991: 135). This will be explored in Chapters Three and Four.

### **Media and radio regulation**

This section of the literature review defines the nature and rationale of media and more specifically, radio regulation. Moreover, it is useful to revisit briefly the history of the broadcasting regulatory framework in Britain, in order to identify how decisions were

made in determining the choice of regulator, its role and function, including statutory powers and the impact of such choice.

Three key texts on media regulation have been selected for research. Feintuck (1999); Gibbons (1998); and Reville (1991). A definition provided by Gibbons appears relevant to the role and nature of the IBA: “the regulation of any practice that is socially beneficial consists of shaping and guiding it to achieve the ends that are thought desirable for it” (1998: 4). This is pertinent in that it recognises the link between regulation, media and societal change, a key theme within the research. These texts provide an overview for the *raison d’être*, assessment and acceptance of regulation in the media as a whole, and as applied to radio broadcasting. The general view from Feintuck (1999:36-56) on the relationship between regulation, public service and the market, supported by Gibbons and Reville’s work, is that regulation is required for freedom of expression; diversity; economic justifications; and public service interest. These components will provide a benchmark in which to assess radio regulation when using examples in the thesis and shall be discussed at length. In addition, each author comments upon the challenges of media regulation, which have been accelerated by themes of convergence, homogeneity and globalisation. They discuss the change in the public sphere and the transformation in the role of citizen to that of consumer. Given the status of the IBA at the beginning of the research and its successor, the Radio Authority, these texts can help understand to what extent regulatory powers were determined by the emerging citizen / consumer debate. Common to the three authors is an emphasis on two aspects of media regulation; structural (ownership and market) and content regulation, both of which are relevant.

Issues pertaining to content regulation discussed by Feintuck include more traditional forms of regulation such as Hoffmann –Riem’s imperative regulation (1992a: cited Feintuck 1999) which refers to the fundamental principle that regulation occurs as a necessity to control and limit availability of the medium (in radio’s case, this relates to the scarcity of frequency spectrum). Feintuck (1999: 51-52) provides a more relevant position for radio and addresses the struggle between market and public sector values. He presents a revised notion of a ‘tripartite classification system’ that can be applied to the media to help identify and assess overarching regulatory frameworks within each media discipline. As well as structural regulation, Feintuck introduces content

regulation, described as “limitations on what cannot or must not be broadcast” and behavioural regulation, which is concerned with regulatory powers in light of competitors and “abuse of a dominant position” (Feintuck 1999: 52). The three-tier classification of structural, content and behavioural regulation provides the theoretical framework in which to deconstruct commercial radio regulation in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Gibbons (1998: 146-148) presents a factual account of the development of commercial radio regulation, including issues regarding accountability and he discusses the methodology of IBA regulatory policy, in the context of wider media frameworks. His interpretation of IBA governance was that it should complement the BBC and “provide a structure for services within those constraints” which he suggests did not emerge. Gibbons makes it clear that ILR almost ceased, inferring regulation as the cause. In support of Street and Stoller, he makes a relevant point to the research that “around 1983-84, the sector was in crisis and the IBA was forced to respond” (1998: 147). This statement supports the research question and project design. Reville’s work (1991) provides a detailed analysis of the legislation passed under the Broadcasting Act 1990, and discusses the implications and practicalities of the new rules. This is of particular relevance to Chapters Four and Five of the thesis, to measure and assess the scale of the difference of regulatory powers from 1984 to 1990 and beyond. This presents an opportunity to test the hypothesis, and suggests that reform was required, not just because of fluctuations within the macro radio environment, but because of wider regulatory changes to broadcasting (for example, new approaches to advertising, ownership and content afforded by the expansion of television into terrestrial, cable and satellite markets). Reville discusses the removal of parliamentary approval for programming codes (1991: 5) which suggests the start of what has now come to be regarded as “deregulation” (Barnard 1989: 82).

The literature suggests that another factor for analysis when examining the IBA model is its role as dual regulatory power. The decision to appoint a dual regulator in 1973 for television and radio (and subsequently until 1990), can demonstrate cause and effect of the framework applied to the shaping of commercial radio programming regulation in its first ten years. Barnard, Crisell and Street have outlined that the decision to combine radio with the television regulator, the ITA which was set up in 1955, may have led to commercial radio governance being laid down using similar principles of its predecessor. Street acknowledges that this was due to the surprise election victory for the Conservatives at the 1970 election. Stoller (2000 cited Street 2001: 94) confirms the

new government decided “we’ll do it the same way” when deciding how to regulate ILR and converted the ITA into the IBA. The decision to appoint the existing television regulator for commercial radio is significant. A dual regulator based many of its policies and practices for ILR on ITV. This approach created major problems for ILR, notably financial regulation, where no sponsored programming was allowed; and content regulation, where programme proposals and schedules had to be submitted for approval before broadcast – thus restricting and removing radio’s unique characteristics of portability, flexibility, immediacy and accessibility (Crisell 1994). Ironically, it was the arrival of the fourth television channel in 1982 and advances in media technology that paved the way for regulatory change for ILR and resulted in a call for greater parity (Feintuck 1999). These issues are explored in histories of independent television and provide the opportunity to compare regulatory approaches between the two mediums (Johnson and Turnock 2005; Potter 1989; Sendall 1982).

A key debate emerging from the literature is that commercial radio development in the UK during was highly influenced by, and dependent upon, the regulator. Within this premise, there are two perspectives offered. One is that regulation hampered development, supported by Crisell (1994: 197) and Barnard (1989: 74), who refers to programme content requirements for ILR as “broadcasting paternalism”. On the other hand, interviews collated prior to the start of the project<sup>4</sup> suggest that regulation was directly responsible for the creation of what are regarded as quality programmes, such as drama, documentaries, phone-ins and social action response (Gordon 2007). To clarify, there is a discourse surrounding the question of ILR’s perceived success, which can be considered because of, or in spite of, the IBA. In both cases, it is likely that a good relationship with the IBA was of high importance in ensuring smooth working practices. What will be examined later in Chapters Three and Four is how influential these relationships were in the development of more flexible regulation. The difficulty in discussing these two perspectives of the ‘success’ and ‘value’ of regulation is that they are presented, on the whole, as viewed by the radio station staff, management and the regulator. Examining this from the end user - the listener - in order to balance the debate cannot be achieved due to the lack of qualitative research into their perceptions on this issue. However, there are some quantitative statistical studies carried out by the

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<sup>4</sup> Interviews during 2007, with Tony Stoller & James Gordon, former Managing Director of Radio Clyde, Glasgow, described programmes that were created under the IBA, as ‘quality’, in terms of their subject matter, production methods and educational appeal and community value. Quality and success were not necessarily defined by audience figures or profit margins.

Broadcasting Research Unit (Barnett and Morrison 1989) that demonstrate general listening trends, acceptance of ILR and future prospects and potential. As a result, the development and role of the audience will not be included in detail in the research. However, where pertinent, some chapters will contain examples of complaint letters written by listeners and subsequent IBA action taken, to support the main research objectives regarding rationale for change.

The latter period of ILR (1980-89) highlights a discourse and ideology in the evolution of a new model of radio regulation. Stoller (forthcoming 2010) describes this period as “doing well by doing good”, suggesting a paradox that while ILR stations were fulfilling their regulatory obligations, it was at the expense of severe financial difficulties and audience dissatisfaction.

### **Regulation in action: opportunities and constraints**

Current literature (Barnard; Crisell; Street) is limited in the provision of detailed case study examples of programme content, directly linked to IBA policy papers. Quarterly journals produced by the IBA, sourced for the project, provide detailed evidence of how individual local stations interpreted the programming guidelines, with clear examples. A breakdown of ‘programme regulation in action’ including speech-based features, commitment to local news and diverse programming for a range of audiences, reveals that there were opportunities as well as constraints faced by broadcasters. This is important to providing a balanced argument linked to academic work from scholars Barnard and Crisell who suggest that a concept of ILR, especially in its formative years, was developed to become public service broadcasting, but paid for by advertising. Street (2001) suggests that the regulator’s directive was driven from a cultural view in that they only had the BBC as a model to follow, and as such, ILR followed this route. This will be discussed in Chapter Two using examples. Barnard (1989) discusses the directives laid down by the IBA, to which the radio stations had to adhere when producing programmes. Examples include limits on the amount of music that could be played, a phenomenon referred to as ‘needle time’, and a strong emphasis on speech-based programming, ranging from drama, documentaries, phone-ins and diverse programming for a range of socio-demographic audiences, including children, the

elderly and ethnic minorities. The IBA developed a phrase ‘meaningful speech’ to demonstrate to ILR stations what they perceived as good programming.<sup>5</sup>

However, an opportunity for commercial radio, borne out of regulation, came in the development of a 24 hour national news service which acted as a hub for all stations on the ILR Network. Commercial radio provided UK listeners with the only alternative source of news to the BBC – a department known as Independent Radio News (IRN). Crook (1998) has discussed not only the contribution IRN made to the ILR network, but also raises points about its innovative production methods and new styles of reporting, for example, actuality, reportage and the use of listener-driven phone-in shows. Whilst this thesis is not a detailed study of news programming, it will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three to provide a compare and contrast approach to where and why IBA regulation did, and did not work. Crisell (1994: 35) argues that the IBA over-regulated the industry which stunted its growth, not least its profitability opportunities, by restricting advertising revenue (sponsorship of programmes was not permitted) while imposing high-cost editorial content requirements and technical standards. The full force of these restrictions would lead to the closure of Centre Radio in Leicester, in 1982. Barnard (1989: 70-75) refers to the problems encountered by this style of programming among some of the diverse audiences it tried to attract, suggesting that ILR may not have had the credibility the IBA believed it did.

### **Rationale for change**

Several texts allude to a common theme: the British socio-political and economic climate in the mid-1980s helped create a series of events and actions that led up to the start of change (Beckett 2009; Evans 1997; Marr 2007; Marwick 2003; Seldon and Collings 1999; Vinen 2009). In part this was pre-empted by employees within radio stations. Archives for the project support the view that a ‘seeking forgiveness not asking permission’ culture began to emerge by 1983. This was expressed in a number of ways which will be presented in Chapter Four. This focuses on analyses of correspondence, media coverage and notably, ‘secret’ meetings, resulting in a pivotal moment in influencing and changing ILR’s future. An event organised by radio station management, of which the IBA was unaware, took place in June 1984. According to

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<sup>5</sup> The phrase ‘meaningful speech’ was developed by the IBA’s Director of Radio, John Thompson, circa. 1974.

Street, it came to be known as the Heathrow Conference (2005: 125). Hendy (2000: 43) suggests that deregulation began to take place from the late 1980s, when the structural controls to which Feintuck refers, reflected a shift from listener-owned, to a shareholder-owned business model. The Peacock Committee Report, convened in 1985 to review BBC financing, notably its discussion around the privatisation of Radios One and Two also impacted upon national commercial radio development. These issues are reflected in O'Malley's debate over the future of UK broadcasting (1988). O'Malley's work (1988) and critique of the UK broadcasting duopoly is supported by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom argument that deregulation will reduce media standards and diversity. His opinion comes at a critical point in the ILR chronology (1988). His assertion that expansion plans for commercial broadcasting "further undermine the idea that mass communications should be properly regulated by a powerful body with the remit to provide a wide ranging high quality service" is pertinent to the central research question (O'Malley 1988: 40). Both Peacock and O'Malley's view of the BBC's future, added their voice to the commercial sector's argument for greater differentiation.

Hendy acknowledges that while financial regulation became 'light-touch' some aspects of regulation remained, such as the '*Promise of Performance*' contract, drawn up by the station and the regulator. These behavioural controls, such as those on the content and format of programmes on commercial radio remained tight. This continued up to 1990 and beyond, thus pre-empting further deregulation, which took place in 2003. This supports a hypothesis that the start of deregulation took place in the mid-1980s, yet its outcomes yielded further relaxation of controls in the future, thus confirming the claim that the research period, 1983-85, was one of the most important in commercial radio development thus far.

### **Relationships and key influences**

Current literature refers to the importance of relationships in policy making. Barnard, Crisell and Street highlight the role of the Association of Independent Radio Contractors (AIRC) the industry's trade body made up of radio station managers. This organisation represented the sector, with varying levels of success, in influencing policy. Chapters Three and Four will build upon the theme of lobbying and the power of the AIRC leading up to and beyond the Heathrow Conference in 1984.

An aspect that has not been discussed in current work is the relevance of a study of behaviours and attitudes portrayed by the IBA. As a civil service department reporting to the Home Office, internal corporate culture may have been important in the way the IBA saw their 'role' and interpreted what they regarded as 'quality' radio programming. Where possible, the thesis will hope to discuss this in the context of IBA policy decisions as evidenced by documentation from the period. Certain personalities and influential parties may have been responsible for decisions and judgements being reached. Politicians, civil servants and radio station personnel played major roles in effecting change. Street (2002: 108) reveals that even as early as 1966, a lobby group, the Local Radio Association, were given short shrift by the Labour Government, when attempting to communicate positive reasons for commercial radio. Listeners also provided an insight into changing times, increasingly through two way communications such as complaint letters and phone calls to the IBA. Press cuttings from the period also show use of the media by a number of stakeholders to get their point across and sway public opinion. These shall be drawn upon as evidence and examples of practice in the thesis.

The importance of relationships is also demonstrated explicitly within the IBA archive and one example is given here for clarification. Radio stations were required to submit tactical programming matters to the IBA for approval, such as their monthly schedules. By the 1980s, several letters were sent to radio stations each month, asking why changes had been made to the programme output without the approval of a new schedule. The response to these letters varies from apology to objection. The research questions the significance of a 'culture change' in ILR working processes, in the lead-up to events in the mid-1980s. These underpin the overarching argument that commercial radio regulation evolved from an autocratic phase, to a concept post-1990 known as 'light-touch' regulation. This is the focus of Chapters Four and Five.

## Chapter structure

The thesis provides a chronological account of the development of commercial radio, interwoven with relevant literature and supporting evidence from the variety of sources outlined.

This Chapter (Chapter One) contains an introduction to the thesis, methodology and research sources, context analysis and literature review.

The aim of Chapter Two, *The Birth of British Commercial Radio: The Early Years, 1967-79* is to discuss this period, documenting the creation of ILR from a historical perspective, while recognising and understanding the external factors that impacted upon its eventual acceptance. Such issues include the early lobbyists and the influence of pirate radio and the possible ‘gap’ in the market after its demise in 1967. Of major consequence in this chapter is the notion of commercial radio as a political ‘pawn’ and, as the chapter will reveal, the extent to which a study of commercial radio not only provides a contribution to broadcasting history but additionally can provide an insight into the political ideologies of the period. This is an area that existing literature appears to overlook in any detail. Equally, the chapter considers the relationship between ILR and the BBC and discusses whether they were a complementary or competing service.

A significant point will include a discussion surrounding the phrase ‘meaningful speech’ which as outlined earlier, was invented by the regulator to describe content and as such, a definition of the term shall be applied. It will then be assessed whether the programming model for ILR was influenced by the established reputation of the BBC, thus deemed a programming philosophy that a commercial (or independent) network such as ILR should aspire to. Unlike America, Canada and Australia, where a truly commercial model was implemented, with elements such as sponsored programming, ILR embodied public service principles with regards to programme content, juxtaposed with restrictive financial regulations that hampered its profitability opportunities. At this point an examination of radio station programme schedules and IBA policy papers, supported by testimonies, can help provide a definition and explanation as to what is meant by ‘meaningful speech’. The chapter concludes with the emergence of the Thatcher Government, thus continuing to support and confirm the theme that commercial radio is a lens through which to view British socio-political history.

Chapter Three concentrates on *Commercial radio midterm, 1979-83: Expansion and Innovation*. It investigates a period when commercial radio attempted to keep ahead of the changing socio-political climate. Its main focus is the emerging influence of the industry's trade body at the time, the AIRC. It focuses on new political events which led to expansion of the ILR network and strengthened the industry's trade body and ILR's 'voice; ultimately leading to a relaxation of regulation. It also continues the themes of regulation in action, ILR's relationship with the BBC and considers the shift in the IBA's internal culture and attitude to ILR.

Chapter Four recognises that the commercial radio sector was in crisis and examines ILR's passion to protect its future. *'Regulation Reform, 1984-89*, divides the Chapter into two sections: an account of the build-up to an emergency private meeting, organised by the industry (not the regulator) in 1984; and the consequences of the meeting. It explores the relationship between the Thatcher revolution as her Government entered its third political term in office and the broadcasting sector. It identifies a more ambitious and assertive commercial radio industry. Using testimony from key people involved and supported by archive research, this Chapter traces and documents events, activities and discussions among ILR, IBA and Government which preceded, and arguably influenced, a major piece of new broadcast legislation – The Broadcasting Act 1990. Two key points will be scrutinised: an assessment of whether 1984 was the start of deregulation for commercial radio and the extent to which the industry's actions in 1984 can be regarded as the pivotal moment in ILR's history. The conclusion in Chapter Five presents ten key research findings. It discusses the legacy of 1984 in light of today's commercial radio industry and identifies areas for further study.

## 2.

### **The Birth of British Commercial Radio and Regulation The Early Years 1967-79**

It is well known that the Labour party opposed the introduction of commercial broadcasting, but that, in no way, prevents me from offering my best wishes to the Independent Broadcasting News service.

(Harold Wilson, *The Morning Show*, LBC, 8 October, 1973)

This statement by the Leader of the Opposition, Harold Wilson, was to ‘welcome’ legal commercial radio to the British airwaves. It followed a message of support and congratulation by the Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath:

The opening today of the London Broadcasting Company station marks a new departure in British broadcasting. It’s the first station in the Independent Broadcasting Authority’s local radio service and the first all-new radio station in this country ... I’d like to wish the station, its staff and the IBA’s local radio service, every success.

(Edward Heath, *The Morning Show*, LBC, 8 October, 1973)

Legal commercial radio in the UK was launched against a backdrop of political and social change. The decision in Parliament to legalise commercial radio was controversial. While this Chapter concentrates on the beginning of legal land-based commercial radio, it is worthwhile to briefly revisit the pre-war origins of commercial radio. This is important to recognise the early pioneers of commercial radio and their challenge to the ethos of the BBC. This, in turn, provides a perspective on current debates regarding the relationship between BBC and commercial radio. Street (2006a) makes the point that most authors refer to the start of commercial radio as dating from 1973, with little exploration of pre-war commercial radio in the 1930s. His in-depth study of the offshore commercial stations such as Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg among others, reveals “evidence that the dynamic of pressure to establish the latter, was in place from the earliest days of broadcasting: indeed even before the creation of the BBC itself” (Street 2006: 9). The continental stations of the 1930s, operated by British and American companies, broadcast music and entertainment programmes, which went head-to-head with the austere ‘sacred cause’ Sunday

programme policies of the BBC under Reith. This is a significant point. The commercial stations and the BBC were radically different in their sound, style and structure. The offshore stations supplied popular, contemporary programming with minimal regulation and carried advertising. Yet when legal land-based commercial radio came into being in 1973, it would be conventional and non-confrontational in its approach. It was also heavily regulated with large elements of public service. It would stick closer to the origins of the BBC sound far more than the pre-war pioneers had imagined. The reasons for this will be discussed in this chapter. As we shall see, this scenario is not dissimilar to the relationship between pirate radio of the 1960s and the eventual introduction of ILR. Yet as Street's research identifies, the pre-war and post-war periods would be linked in another way. The International Broadcasting Company (IBC) established by Leonard Plugge as a rival to the BBC, would go on to have shares in the first legal land-based commercial radio station, London Broadcasting Company (LBC) thus demonstrating continuity. Having explained the pre-war context, the history and development of the modern commercial radio era (post-war) will now be explored.

The first legal-land based station, LBC launched in 1973, six years after the Marine Etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act forced pirate radio off the air. The transcripts above, broadcast during the first legal commercial radio programme, *The Morning Show* on LBC and presented by journalist David Jessel, reveal an antagonistic relationship between the two main political parties over its introduction. The influences of Labour and Conservative impacted upon commercial radio in two ways; the party in power played a major role in shaping the sound of the stations and contributed to a form of regulation that would hamper development. In order to explore these key points further, this chapter examines the history and development of commercial radio, mainly from 1970, when it appeared as a serious proposal after its inclusion in the Conservative Party's manifesto, to 1979, when the emergence of Margaret Thatcher's Government would lead to major implications for the business model.

Throughout this chapter, an examination of the early years of ILR demonstrates the influence of political, economic, social, cultural and technological factors and assesses these in the context of commercial radio's development. Themes discussed include: the use of commercial radio as a 'political football'; the consequences of appointing a dual radio and television regulator; problems associated with public service programming in

a private sector business model; and the general mood and societal shift that took place, leading up to the beginning of the 1980s. This chapter seeks to provide a context in order to address the research question: to assess whether commercial radio's development was hampered by regulation.

### **Commercial radio: A political football**

Stoller (cited Street 2001) refers to events leading up to the introduction of commercial radio, using the metaphor that it was used as a 'political football'. This phrase provides useful insight into the ideologies of the two main UK political parties (Labour and Conservative) and their approach to commercial broadcasting. Hendy (2000: 12) affirms that "the radio industry is shaped by the political and cultural values of governments". This is now explored further.

The introduction of Independent Television (ITV) in the UK in 1955 was the starting point for Parliamentary discussions surrounding commercial radio (Sendall 1983). As early as 1959, four years after the introduction of commercial television, a House of Commons exchange took place, when Sir Robert Grimston (Conservative, Westbury) asked the Postmaster-General Reginald Bevins "to refrain from giving any such undertaking that the State broadcasting system in sound should continue for ever". To which Ness Edwards (Labour MP for Caerphilly) replied that "if the Minister gave any credence or concessions to commercial sound radio, it would completely thwart the VHF development of the BBC" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 10 December, 1959).

Two clear issues began to emerge in this period; the opportunity for commercial radio to become an argument between the political parties; and the recognition that the BBC should not be compromised by a commercial operator. This latter point is a key area of debate later in the Chapter. While Heath and Wilson were vocal about commercial radio during the first ten years of the medium, it was Margaret Thatcher's Premiership in the 1980s which would transform the commercial radio business model, far beyond the imagination of the early commercial radio pioneers. However, Vinen's recent study (2009) recognises that the influence of Thatcher began as far back as 1968<sup>6</sup>. In addition to the fixed ideals of Government and Opposition, landmark changes taking place in British society also impacted upon broadcasting strategy and are worthy of reflection and analysis. Fielding identifies a paradigm shift in British culture with the Wilson

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<sup>6</sup> Vinen identifies Thatcher's 1968 speech, 'What's wrong with Politics' at the Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool, as the point at which her philosophies about the relationship between individuals and the state emerged.

Labour Government (1964-70) having to “engage with change” during the “cultural revolution” (2003: 1). He describes the emergence of four new cultural models central to this revolution: transformation of the working class, women, post-war immigration and youth culture. Youth culture played a key role in commercial radio’s development. The 1960s is often described as a decade of change in which progressive attitudes replaced the more traditional values of the Conservative Macmillan Government, from 1957-64 (Marwick 1982). Post-war Britain was a country transformed from austerity during the late 1940s and 1950s, which was “without doubt, an age of improvement as well” into a more liberal state during the 1960s (Briggs 1959 cited Hennessy 1992: 49). When the Labour Government replaced the Conservatives in 1964, events took place which evidence that the ‘Cultural Revolution’ was moving quickly. These events included the arrival of unregulated offshore pirate radio stations broadcasting popular music. For example, Radio Caroline introduced disc-jockeys to a radio audience which up until that point had relied mainly on the BBC.<sup>7</sup> Other examples include the passing of key policy decisions which would prompt social change: The Abortion Act (1967); the Sexual Offences Act which decriminalised homosexuality (1967); the No-Fault Divorce Law (1969); and The Race Relations Act (1970). Marr comments that “across Britain there is little doubt that traditional values were under attack and falling back in confusion” (2007: 227). He discusses this crucial period of Labour policy-making as “social privatisations” where “people’s private lives should be their own” (2007: 262). This was regarded at the time as a step-change, in contrast to the Victorian moral values portrayed by the previous Conservative Government. Jarvis’s study of the period 1957-64 provides an examination of Conservative attempts at “spring-cleaning of Victorian statues” to cater for the emerging pluralist values, most notably their role in the introduction of commercial television in 1955 (2005: 164). Jarvis argues this was one of the few examples of how “a party whose *raison d’être* was to conserve the status quo” had adapted to social change (2005: 123).

The Conservative Party’s attempts to respond to social change were not fast enough for the electorate and this is one reason for their defeat at the 1964 general election (Marr 2007; Vinen 2009). Conversely, would the new Labour Government lend support to the creation of new media opportunities (such as local commercial radio) as part of their

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<sup>7</sup>Radio Luxembourg built up an established radio audience since the 1930s on the long wave frequency and is regarded as a fore-runner to both pirate and commercial radio, transmitting a popular music format before and after this time.

next phase of socio-cultural development? From a strategic perspective this premise appeared possible, given the perceived success of the pirates and the additional consequences of major technological developments which led to the creation of the transistor radio in the 1960s: “No invention was more essential to radio’s survival in the age of television than the transistor (Douglas 1999: 225). Stoller explains its value in the context of an age where technology is taken for granted:

The impact of the legendary ‘tranny’ on youth listening habits was colossal equalling or exceeding that of the iPod in the next century. This was the first time that the impact of widely available new technology, specifically for young people, had hit a generation which had new buying power and freedom from traditional authority as well.

(Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 17)

As shall be discussed later, a paradox emerged in which the political party spearheading social change would not support the creation and promotion of popular music radio.

The connection between Independent Television and Independent Radio is a key point. Their formation and regulation are inextricably linked. Commercial radio emerged as a viable prospect under the Conservative Government (1957-64) because of the role the Party played in creating Independent Television. “Far from being the stalwart of traditionalism, Tory Governments between 1951 and 1964 were advocating freedom of choice over what was to be watched on the small screen” (Jarvis 2005: 148). Press cuttings reveal the Conservative’s early plans for commercial radio in 1959 but these took a setback when in 1962, a committee convened by Lord Pilkington to review British broadcasting, released its findings. The Pilkington Report, which essentially championed the continuation of the BBC as the “main organisation for broadcasting” rejected local commercial sound radio citing reasons that the content was unsuitable and programmes were of a low quality (HMSO 1962). However, Pilkington’s recommendation had the reverse effect; it helped drive forward an anti-monopoly stance, thus engaging with the political nature of broadcast policy.

Pirate radio is a good example of the medium being used as a political football. The appearance of pirate radio in the 1960s is significant to understanding the political dimension of a public versus private, regulated versus deregulated, sphere for broadcasting. Prior to losing the 1964 election, a pressure group, the National

Broadcasting Development Committee, led by two key Conservative politicians lobbied for commercial radio to be included in their forthcoming party manifesto “seizing on the back of the pirate radio ship *Caroline*” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 17 May, 1964). The pirates’ short, three-year tenure (1964-67) took place during the first term of the incoming Labour Government. The legacy of pirate radio continues to cause debate; one view is that they laid the foundations for commercial radio; another suggests that the illegal nature of the pirates angered Labour politicians and hampered development further. Skues suggests the end of the pirates became a missed opportunity, given the commercial advertising they attracted (1994: 210). Stoller offers thoughts of what may have happened if the Conservative party had won the 1964 election:

...in all probability, they would have legislated for commercial radio within a year or so, as a reaction to the offshore pirate radio stimulus, in accordance with the policy pressure from much the same people who had engendered ITV ten years before.

(Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 23)

The creation of new legislation in 1967, the Marine Etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act, led by the Postmaster General, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, took pirate radio off the air. However, in its place came greater awareness and support for a new, different style of broadcasting. Baron states “the most important thing about the pirate era was that it showed the people what commercial radio could sound like” (1975: 11) while Crisell confirms “their impact was permanent. British sound broadcasting would never be the same again” (1997: 144). Despite opposition towards legislation for local commercial radio, Benn appears to have recognised the popularity of the pirate music radio format and the relationship between politics and broadcasting became of strategic importance: To ignore public interest would “incur the wrath of that large portion of the electorate whom the pirates had won over” (Crisell 1994: 144). In 1967, the Government introduced a new programming structure for the BBC’s existing national radio stations: Light Programme, Third Programme and Home Service, utilizing their public service broadcasting remit and creating Radios One (a popular music station), Two, Three and Four, targeted at segmented audiences. Importantly for the nature of this research, this point in the chronology saw the additional proposition of a local radio service, which would be led, not by commercial operating companies, but under the mantle of BBC Local Radio. The first local BBC station, Radio Leicester went on air in 1967, followed by Sheffield, Merseyside and Nottingham. These stations differed from ILR in one

respect because they were allocated a VHF (FM) frequency, which most portable radios at the time could not receive (Hendy 2007). Initially the vision of BBC Local Radio was to provide a strong community-orientated radio service covering specific towns and cities. However, by the 1980s, the BBC Local Radio structure became more regional in nature, covering wider geographical areas, adopting a county-wide approach, whereas ILR expansion focused on cities and towns. The concept of both approaches to 'localism' is a theme that is detailed and analysed later in forthcoming chapters.

Skues (1994) Barnard (1989) and Street (2009) concur that this period 1964-67, was a defining moment for the introduction of commercial radio, while Stoller recognises it as the 'business bridgehead of commercial radio' (2009: 18). It suggests a dichotomy in which the political party which earned the reputation of reform with innovative social policy was reluctant to develop a commercial radio network. It chose instead to rely on the 'safer' state-owned option of the BBC to channel a local broadcasting service, aligning itself with the findings of the Pilkington Committee, where "the aims of a commercial and public service broadcaster cannot be reconciled" (Johnson and Turnock 2005: 196). Another reason for Labour's reluctance to license commercial radio was that the "feverish obsession with competition for private gain, threatened to submerge those 'deeper values', based on communal service and cooperation that Labour cherished" (Sorenson 1968 cited Fielding 2003: 69).

The socialist values of the Labour party engendered scepticism towards the creation of commercial radio for two reasons. They were against the use of advertising to make large profits and secondly, they were concerned about the style of programme content. These issues both emerged in the debate over commercial television and serve as a political footprint of the period. It is clear that pirate radio in the 1960s took on a powerful role; that of an opinion leader for the British public at that time, as Fielding surmises:

...any political party is unavoidably subject to society's prevailing cultural norms.

These notions of how people should think and behave are, in fact, often more insidious in shaping perceptions than formal ideology, and can structure understandings of how a particular belief system may be manifest at any one moment in time.

(Fielding 2003: 231)

A key concept to address is Labour's moral imperative within their resistance to the private domain for UK broadcasting. American scholar Loviglio discusses the discourse surrounding the US public / private debate in the creation of radio as a social space, suggesting that:

...a preoccupation with this dichotomy is itself a central feature of modernity. Endless talk about the collapse of the public world into the private one (and vice versa) functions, in a Foucauldian turn, as the discursive incantation that calls modern notions and public and private into being.

(Loviglio 2005: xvi)

The development of a more sophisticated, sociable public sphere became apparent at the end of 1967 (Brand and Scannell 1991). Just as the established post-war position of national BBC radio as a public service broadcaster had begun to create forms of audience interaction (such as phone-ins and request shows) pirate radio too was playing an influential role in developing expression and exchange of opinions and ideas between broadcaster and audience (Hendy 2000). As society moved from austerity to liberalism, a shift from a passive to an active voice emerged where radio operators "communicated within a populist, rather than a 'paternalist' public sphere" (Tolson cited Hendy 2000: 195-7). This resulted in the realisation that there could potentially be a different model of broadcasting; in sharp contrast to the BBC. Although this research is not primarily concerned with the role of audience perceptions, it is worthwhile to recognise the ideals immersed within the notion of a new commercial radio model were comparable to commercial television. New forms of programmes were available (such as soap operas and quiz shows) creating a perception that the introduction of a commercial radio equivalent would continue to be innovative, both for the audience and future broadcasters.

The thinking behind Conservative support for commercial radio warrants examination. The use of a phrase 'private enterprise' in the Conservative Party's 1970 election pledge to explain their interest, was significant in theory (although as page 43 conveys, unfulfilled in practice). Their support for commercial radio during 1970 built upon the momentum of pirate radio amid calls for legalised commercial radio from the young (*Daily Express*, November 1969). The use of the terminology 'private enterprise' was strategically important. It was included to heighten interest of the potential medium

among the younger electorate voting for the first time, in the build-up to the 1973 general election. The Conservatives saw an opportunity to nurture an audience, still inspired by the sound of pirate radio.

When civil society is ‘at rest’, influence tends to flow from administrative and social power at the core of the political system to the periphery. But when civil society is ‘energised’, the balance of power between society and the political system then shifts.

(Habermas 1996 cited Curran 2002: 234)

The idea of using the public sphere to contribute to the debate for commercial radio was challenging. Sparks’ view (1991) that the more traditional view of the public sphere, where “individuals exercise formal controls of the election of governments and informal through the pressure of public opinion” poses a particular problem in relation to commercial radio:

...it fails to take adequate account of the way in which power is exercised through capitalist and patriarchal structures, and consequently does not consider how the media relate to wider social cleavages in society.

(Sparks 1991: 29)

John Thompson, Director of Radio at the IBA, 1971-87, suggests the public sphere was a key advantage to the very people involved in passing legislation:

The politicians were supportive of local commercial radio. They needed it as it was another vehicle for them [both parties] to convey their political ideals. So there was not as much resistance to it once MPs saw its potential.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

However, ILR was able to provide far more than a platform for political views because the localness of its offering provided a “democratising function” where local communities were catered for by the provision of local information across a range of genres (Chignell 2008: 185). One indicator of the importance of engagement and interactivity with the commercial radio audience was the establishment of Local Advisory Committees (LACs) who monitored output.

The role of the public sphere in the development of commercial broadcasting policy is evident in qualitative and primary archive research material. Listeners’ letters and complaints and the subsequent responses from the IBA bear witness to a changing

dynamic, notably during the hegemonic state of the Thatcher government, 1979-90 (Vinen 2009). This suggests that within the research period there are two distinct phases of interaction; a public sphere, 1973-83, where the audience became 'listeners' and the private sphere, 1983-90, where listeners became 'consumers' (Hendy 2000). This distinction ultimately led to a merged concept, where listeners would be eventually be regarded as "consumer-citizens" (Ofcom 2003). This will be discussed in detail in Chapters Four and Five.

### **The commercial radio lobby**

While lobbying for legal commercial radio began in the late 1950s, it gathered momentum during the 1960s, following the success of pirate radio stations. It is also important to recognise the contribution pre-war offshore commercial radio made to the existence of a lobby (Street 2006a). A key organisation, known as the Local Radio Association (LRA) was set up in 1963 and produced a *Plan for Local Broadcasting* in 1966. This document outlined a need for further choice and challenged the Government and BBC over their joint stance that medium wave spectrum was too limited (Street 2002: 107). Two key players in the LRA, John Gorst and John Whitney, promoted the value of a commercial network. Whitney recognised that compared to other countries, notably Australia and the United States (US), the programme and content style within the British commercial radio scene might take on a different character (Whitney 2007). Stoller agrees that a comparison is irrelevant in the early stages of commercial radio:

They are fundamentally different. In the UK, ILR was an alternative to the BBC but one which like the BBC met social objectives but funded its operations through private enterprise. In the US and Australia, it was first and foremost a business.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

A key concern of those challenging commercial radio was that it was motivated by profit. This view is likely to have come from the precedent set by the US which had developed a commercial radio model in the 1920s (NBC). The fear of 'Americanisation' led to preconceptions over how Britain might follow suit (Johnson and Turnock 2005; Whitney 2007). While recognising the limitations in comparing US and British models of commercial radio, given their clear structural and historical differences, it is useful to examine the issue of balance. The US system was still regarded as public service

broadcasting, yet supported by advertising and received positively by the people.

MacDonald sheds light on how this balance was achieved:

The culture of the United States must reflect the commercial and democratic populace ... [Radio] was an instrument of electrical entertainment aimed at a commercial democracy – a world of independent, average people who preferred occasional advertising announcements to the implications of a broadcasting system fully regulated by governmental bureaucrats.

(MacDonald 1979 cited Hilmes 1997: 7)

Balance played a part in the approach taken by the lobbyists. The LRA, in their bid to convince politicians of the merits of a commercial service, sought to alleviate concerns that stations would rely heavily on popular music:

A misconception exists which springs from the word ‘commercial’ ... it is worth noting the horror that is often expressed that the public’s appetite for triviality is such that commercially run radio will be forced to provide audiences with an unrelieved diet of pop music.

(Whitney, *Commercial Radio Mail*, 1965)

Whitney’s attempts to influence the Government further in 1968 were given short shrift. In a meeting with the Minister responsible for broadcasting, the Postmaster General Edward Short, Whitney recalls:

He didn’t get up. I said ‘look, I want you to consider the introduction of commercial radio’. He said ‘what do you have to support this?’ I had a letter with me, which I produced and gave to him. He didn’t really even read it, but folded it three times and put it back into his pocket. He said ‘I can tell you we are not going to consider the introduction of commercial radio. It is not within our planning horizons. As far as I am concerned this issue is absolutely not a question of debate’.

(Whitney, personal communication, November, 2007)

Whitney was to become a key figure in broadcasting history. Managing Director of Capital Radio in 1973, rising to Director General of the IBA, with responsibilities for both television and radio, from 1983-89, he was an integral part of the changes to broadcast legislation under the Thatcher era, which is covered in Chapters Three and Four.

### **The Tories take it forward**

In 1969, the clear distinction between the political parties' views became even more overt. Broadcasting responsibility within the Labour Government moved to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, led by John Stonehouse MP, who announced twelve new BBC local radio stations. This was in contrast to the Conservative pledge to introduce commercial radio, which began to emerge in earnest as the general election approached. Several national newspapers reported the contents of a rousing speech given by Paul Bryan MP (in which a figure of up to one hundred commercial stations was outlined):

The pirates showed us that people want commercial radio in addition to the BBC programmes...the Government are determined to stop us having it. A Socialist government will always prefer the BBC monopoly, over which it has some measure of control.

*(The Financial Times, 4 March, 1969)*

*The Times, The Mirror, The Telegraph* and *The Sun* commented upon the speech by Bryan on the same day with similar editorial coverage, although *The Financial Times* offered a pertinent reminder:

The figure of 100 local stations is a projection of what such a policy would mean, but clearly it would not be set up immediately if the Tories won power at the next election. The organisation aspect of the speech [Bryan alluded to the creation of an Independent Broadcasting Authority] is an indication of the way Tory thinking is moving.

*(The Financial Times, 4 March, 1969)*

Bryan's comments sparked a reaction from Prime Minister Harold Wilson who described it as a "mad idea" (*The Financial Times* 12 March, 1969) and in a House of Commons debate with Leader of the Opposition, Edward Heath, suggested that Conservative support for commercial radio was "another case of finding what you think the position in the country is and half going along with it" (*The Sun*, 21 March, 1969).

The press archives illustrate how commercial radio was used as a political 'pawn'. In the period January-December 1969 there are twenty five national press articles outlining the argument between the two main parties. In contrast, the period 1967-68, has only

three.<sup>8</sup> The press continued to debate whether the introduction of commercial radio was a good thing for British society. Meanwhile, the parties recognised the potential of commercial radio, as “a child of political opportunism” (Barnard 1989: 69). This in turn provoked further reaction in the public sphere from listeners, including Harry Turner, from Camberley:

Either we continue into the next decade with pseudo competition between the monopolistic BBC and the severely restricted ITV companies, or we give the listening and viewing public a genuine and meaningful choice.

(Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 1969)

Briggs offers a further reminder of the political divisions that formed: “While one side talked of bias, the other side continued to talk of morality and in between there was ample talk also of trivialisation” (1985: 352).

As outlined previously, Labour’s argument against commercial radio was based on concerns over profit and programme content. They believed newspaper advertising revenue would be marginalised with the introduction of a competing media outlet and that content would corrupt audiences (Fielding 2003). In order to understand Labour’s reluctance to endorse a radio model regarded as free enterprise, Fielding suggests an additional concept:

... the party was uninterested in establishing a relationship with the voters that went beyond the electoral – that Labour saw no point in becoming a hegemonic cultural institution promoting a distinctly socialist vision of society.

(Fielding 2003: 53)

Labour remained committed to the BBC. In 1969, the Corporation outlined a new strategy document, *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, which reorganised the national BBC radio network. Radios One, Two, Three and Four developed more specialised targeted output, which bore more resemblance to a contemporary ‘format’ as opposed to the traditional ‘mixed programming’ (Crisell 2002: 148). This is an important point; the BBC’s changing position had major implications for the model of commercial radio that

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<sup>8</sup> The press cuttings examined are taken from the ITA / IBA press cuttings archive from a file entitled ‘ILR coverage’. As such, they do not necessarily include BBC-focused press stories. These are contained in separate files entitled ‘BBC Radio’.

was eventually adopted between 1973-79, as former Radio One presenter Tony Blackburn suggests:

In fact the whole point of the pirate ships wasn't to bring about Radio One, or change within the BBC at all. It was an attempt to bring the exciting sound of commercial radio, a given in America, to Britain.

(Blackburn 2007: 20)

Conservative support for commercial radio gathered momentum, resulting in its inclusion in Heath's manifesto '*A Better Tomorrow*' during the 1970 General Election campaign. The document stated:

We believe that people are as entitled to an alternative radio service as to an alternative television service. We will permit local private enterprise radio under the general supervision of an independent broadcasting authority. Local institutions, particularly local newspapers, will have the opportunity of a stake in local radio, which we want to see closely associated with the local community.

(HMSO: 1970)

Christopher Chataway MP, Conservative Minister for Posts and Communications was a pivotal figure in ensuring commercial radio's inclusion in the 1970 manifesto. He remained adamant the BBC should not continue to have a radio monopoly. He stated "this is, after all, an age of increasing concern about the concentration of power over the communication media" (*The Financial Times*, 10 September 1970). The Conservatives' eagerness for commercial radio appears to have been linked to the financial benefits experienced by ITV where "enthusiasm for launching commercial radio was partly based on the belief that history could repeat itself, that consumer spending would be boosted and new marketing opportunities created" (Barnard 1989: 73). Chataway's support for commercial radio went so far as to cause speculation that the introduction of the new service would be at the expense of BBC Local Radio. An article, *Chataway Plan To Kill BBC Local Radio* reported how BBC Executives were preparing for stations to be closed and their frequencies handed to ILR and had signed a statement which accused the government of "wanting to go beyond its manifesto to establish a commercial monopoly alien to British traditions" (*The Guardian*, 16 December, 1970a). Anthony Shrimley, Political Editor of *The Sun* added his voice, stating "the BBC is

now fighting-and losing- a desperate battle with the Conservative Party to stay on terms with commercial radio” (*The Sun*, 20 March, 1970a).

But was the Conservatives’ commitment to commercial radio based on the benefits of free enterprise, or was the driver political opportunism? (Barnard: 1989). Critical to the debate is the development of policy during the same year in which the voting age was lowered to eighteen. This positioned commercial radio as a possible ‘election winner’, marketing Tory politics to a new, young electorate (Street 2001). An independent market research poll by Louis Harris<sup>9</sup> argued that seventy-four percent of young people aged between 16-19 were in favour of local commercial radio which they hoped would be a reincarnation of the pirate ships’ sound (*The Daily Express*, 11 November, 1969). Barnard supports this point, suggesting that for a supposedly youth station “Radio One’s audience by 1970 was neither particularly young, nor was it offering a surfeit of what any listener to the pirate stations would have defined as ‘pop material’” (1989: 51). The reason for Radio One’s failure to be a continuous pop station would also hit ILR. It was due to a piece of legalisation known as ‘Needle Time’, which constituted a set of rules put in place by the Musicians Union, which limited the amount of hours radio stations could play records in order that live artists could be employed. Further discussion on this topic takes place on page 68.

While the battle for commercial radio had been prolonged, its journey through Parliament was a speedy affair, following the General Election in June 1970. This was a surprise win for the Conservative party (Marr 2007) and soon after, in March 1971, the Government released their White Paper ‘*An Alternative Service of Radio Broadcasting*’. This proposed limiting BBC local radio and creating up to sixty local commercial radio stations. The White Paper predicted a difficult challenge for ILR given the established position of the BBC:

The task before the IBA stations will present them with a formidable challenge. They must bring in new listeners. They must compete with Radio One and Radio Two to which the majority of the present radio audiences now listen. Their programmes will need, therefore, to maintain a wide appeal. They will not within the channel space available to them be able to provide for as broad a range of different audiences as can the BBC with its four national services and its local network. They will be expected

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<sup>9</sup> Louis Harris was a large, well known American owned market research company, which had offices in London.

however to combine popular programming with fostering a greater public awareness of local affairs and involvement in the community.

(HMSO March, 1971)

The White Paper's proposals provoked a strong reaction from the Labour Party and Wedgwood Benn (by then Minister of Technology) who commented:

The pirate men have won their battle. Having actively supported the Tory candidates during the election, they or others to whom they have shown the way will be allowed to operate illegally offshore. It is worth remembering that each such station will be the only radio station permitted to advertise in the area it serves. Another big sector of mass communications will have been safely entrusted to the businessmen and the profit motive, in line with the Heath philosophy.

*(The New Statesman, 1970)*

In the same article, Benn put forward the Labour Party line:

There are three possible lines that can be adopted. We can oppose the Chataway plan on principle exactly as we did in 1954. We can offer only ritual opposition to the Bill, seeking to improve the safeguards but otherwise accepting its popularity in advance. Or we can try and work out a real alternative that could be presented to in the form of amendments to the Chataway bill, and serve as a framework for adapting the Tory scheme when Labour is returned to power.

*(The New Statesman, 1970)*

The recognition that the Labour Party would have to deal with the ramifications of commercial radio is an important issue in the discussion surrounding its regulation. This will become apparent on page 70. Chataway's parliamentary counterpart, Ivor Richard MP, called the proposals outlined in the White Paper "a piece of Conservative theology which is designed to fulfil an ill-considered, half-baked pre-election pledge" (Baron 1975: 63). John Thompson recalls:

There were very long parliamentary debates about the introduction of radio on all sides of the House and it was a very long drawn out discussion particularly in Committee. There were three main debates on the floor of the House of Commons. The reason it went on so long was the Opposition Whips. They didn't want this thing going through quickly. That would be seen as a great political success for the Conservatives.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

One notable point in the House of Commons debate was the inference that commercial radio would “reduce broadcasting standards in Britain” (Stonehouse cited Hansard, 6 July, 1970). In the House of Lords, the Bill received equal disdain with Labour peers, Lord Shepherd and Lord Beaumont of Whitley describing it as “squalid and horrid”:

There is a real risk that a contractor selling his product – news and comment – will be forced to seek this over dramatisation to give it some ‘sex’ appeal ... some interest to the public. I think this is highly dangerous in the public interest.

*(The Guardian, 28 April, 1972)*

The Sound Broadcasting Act received royal assent in 1972 and four locations were outlined for the first five new commercial stations; London (two licences), Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. The Act outlined the scope of commercial radio and it became clear the remit proposed for the new Independent Local Radio Network would not follow on from the radical precedent set by pirate radio.

The key question is whether the new commercial station will be able to afford the amount of live broadcasting the union will demand. If the youth of the country is looking to the new commercial stations for non-stop record shows, it’s in for a shock.

*(The Observer, 10 January, 1971)*

Instead, it would be a heavily regulated service, with a heritage in public sector broadcasting. Committed to programming for a range of audiences such as religious and ethnic groups, children and the elderly, the emphasis was on local news and speech. Music was restricted due to copyright and Musician Unions agreements and revenue could only be generated using the traditional and fixed ‘spot rate’ advertising model. Stoller describes the eventual legislation of commercial radio as “a very long way from the free-market model of offshore pirate radio, and quite a distance from the notions of local commercial radio favoured by the Conservatives when in opposition” (forthcoming 2010: 30). Independent Local Radio at this stage did not appear to be heading in the direction of what is now a familiar, contemporary, music radio format, heavily targeted at a specific demographic. It was “curiously Reithian” in its approach (Street 2001: 94). This point is explored further on pages 55-60.

## **Regulating commercial radio**

Now commercial radio had the go-ahead, a regulatory body was required to meet the Government's on-air target of 1973 quickly. Speed was a major factor in the decision taken to create a dual regulator and convert the ITA into the IBA. This is significant in ILR's development for one main reason; the dual regulator applied the regulatory procedures of commercial television to commercial radio. This decision was flawed because it did not take into account radio's ubiquity and uniqueness, it burdened the industry with a set of programming rules that were resource intensive and costly, and it did not foresee internal IBA battles, where the attraction of its television responsibilities took precedence over radio (Stoller 2010). These points now require further examination.

The main commentators agree that the decision to combine radio with the television regulator had major implications for the sector (Barnard 1989; Crisell 1994; Stoller 2009; Street 2002). This is integral to understanding the complexity in developing commercial radio in the UK. When the Government announced the television authority would also take responsibility for radio it was regarded as a poor decision by the Local Radio Association (Bradford 2009; Stoller 2009). This was because television was becoming ever more popular in the way that radio had in the 1940s and 1950s. The challenge to develop and regulate national and regional TV was clearly a full-time job. The Government assessed that commercial television and radio were compatible and "simply applied to a radio context many of the features of Independent Television" (Barnard 1989: 70). Such features included: establishment of a franchise operation with the IBA as the 'broadcaster' and each individual station as a 'contractor' and plans for a national networked news service to mirror Independent Television News (ITN). The need to fulfil a manifesto obligation for commercial radio created a rushed response to regulation and as such, governance of the sector was laid down using similar principles to its predecessor. The surprise election victory for the Conservatives was another critical moment in defining the commercial radio business model:

The Heath Government came to power unexpectedly. It had commercial radio as part of its platform, but because it did not expect to get into power, it hadn't thought it through and had no idea what to do. The route they found was to take the ITV model. Remember Commercial Television came late to Britain – 1955 – and it was conceived as a public service. When Independent Radio came along: 'Well, we'll do it the same way'.

(Stoller cited Street, 2001: 94)

The structure of the civil service is key to an analysis of the role and nature of regulatory policy. The IBA was contained within the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications – the government department within the Home Office – and an inter-department function, Radio Services Division, was created. The IBA's role, in summary, according to John Thompson, IBA's Director of Radio, was to manage the transition from paper to airwaves and "to implement the legislation passed by Parliament effectively" (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). The IBA based policy decisions on its interpretation of the 1973 Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, which outlined four functions: to select and appoint the programme contractor; to supervise programme planning; to control advertising; and to transmit programmes (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1974a). This would suggest the IBA had a powerful and autocratic level of responsibility for ILR. Hilliard and Keith's study of the US system, offers a global insight into other complex relationships among government, regulator and radio stations, which can be applied in this context:

The very fact that the government established regulatory jurisdiction over radio and a commission to implement that jurisdiction with rules and regulations concomitantly established principles that became cornerstones of the argument between those who claim that the airwaves belong to the people and those who claim that any regulation vitiates radio operators.

(Hilliard and Keith 2005: 31)

The power of the Home Office over the IBA should not be underestimated and cannot be compared to the 'light touch' of future regulatory bodies, the Radio Authority and Ofcom. During the 1970s, it was the Home Office, not the IBA, who appeared to have had the final say over where new ILR stations could be licensed (Home Office – General). It is not surprising the Home Office and the IBA developed political tensions in their relationship, in addition to the wider issues at Westminster. This is evident in an internal memorandum regarding concerns of projected income of existing stations. Following pressure from John Eden MP, then Minister of State for Posts and Telecommunications upon Brian Young, Director General of the IBA, to push through the next phase of expansion, Young airs his concern over financial support. He comments to the IBA Director of Finance "It is I think unlikely we should be allowed to let them [stations] go broke. Who then will pay the piper? Clearly not the Minister" (Home Office

– General 1973a). An article entitled ‘*Where the IBA went wrong*’ describes how the tensions among government, regulator and radio companies existed:

...around the stations, they feel they are being unfairly handicapped by the IBA dragging them down with heavy financial and programming commitments that scarcely give a struggling new company a fighting chance to build itself up.

...they should be kicking the politicians who handed the Authority the brief to get independent local radio on to the airwaves. But as the IBA is carrying out the decisions as well as adding in a few extra ones for good measure, it tends to get blamed for the whole package. Most people in commercial radio would have been happier if radio had not dropped into the footsteps of ITV.

(*Adweek*, January, 1974)

The plan to convert the ITA into a broader regulatory body caused internal concern. Critical discussions took place over who should assume responsibility for radio. Lord Aylestone, Chair of the ITA, said this to Christopher Chataway:

We are, for obvious reasons, anxious neither to sacrifice television to radio (with understandable resulting distress from the ITV companies that have been our partners for so long) nor to sacrifice radio to television (with a resulting ‘I told you so’ from those who argued against the ITA looking after commercial radio, on the grounds that it would then always be a weaker sister).

(Home Office – General 1971a)

In addition, IBA staff called for assurances over consistency and fairness. In a confidential meeting at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in 1971, the impact of dual regulatory programme standards was discussed, following consultation between Chataway and Lord Aylestone:

...the Authority had expressed fears about Clause 2 (2) of the Bill: They thought it possible that it could be interpreted as meaning that the Authority would have to apply exactly the same standards to its sound broadcasting services as it did to television and that the Authority might be criticised if it did not.

...The provisions in question in the Television Act 1964 laid down the general principles by reference to which the Authority were to regulate programme standards.

The view he (Chataway) and colleagues had reached was that there must be no alteration, in respect of the local sound broadcasting service, to these provisions, such as might carry any presumption that different and laxer principles were envisaged for the new service.

(Home Office – General 1971b)

The directives which emerged following the creation of the IBA meant radio had to conform to several aspects of legislation, as laid down by the television statute. This included advertising airtime constraints, rental levies; even the wording of the franchisee contract was similar (Stoller 2009). For the purpose of this research, one clause is notable; the provisions relating to radio station programming schedules. The IBA insisted each station send a copy of their programme schedules to the Authority for approval. Any subsequent amendments also had to be checked and approved before broadcast. This was stipulated in the contractual documents drawn up (IBA contract agreement, 1972: 30). Imposing such clauses upon radio, was a cumbersome task, for regulator and radio station operator, not least because one key characteristic of radio, as opposed to television, is its flexibility and immediacy (Crisell 1994). The impact of what Thompson (2009) refers to as a “relatively minor piece of legislation” cultivated the start of an overtly interventionist relationship among stations and the IBA over their programme content, which continued, in some shape or form, until 1990, as will be explored in more detail later in the chapter.

### **The Early Years of ILR, 1972-1974**

The turbulent times during the Heath government appears to have had a knock-on effect to the success of commercial radio in its first year. This is due to three factors: the economic climate; the nature of the restrictions upon the business model; and the patriarchal role of the regulator. Each of these points shall now be explored further.

The early 1970s was not an ideal time to launch a new commercial venture. During the first two years of ILR, Britain veered between economic crises, union strikes, the oil crisis and the three day week (Beckett 2009; Marr 2007). In 1973, amid this political turmoil, two of the first batch of five licences were launched. On 8 October 1973, London Broadcasting Company (LBC), a news / talk genre and its associate service, Independent

Radio News (IRN) a national network news bureau which would feed other ILR stations, commenced, followed one week later on 16 October, 1973 by Capital Radio, who had won the London General and Entertainment franchise. Radio Clyde (Glasgow), BRMB (Birmingham) and Piccadilly Radio (Manchester) followed suit during 1974. Thompson is complimentary of the way the early stations coped with these turbulent times:

The immediate period after the stations came on air saw the three 3 day week and also there was a major distraction abroad, the Israeli Arab war. So in that sense it was not an easy time. I think the fact it actually got going was largely down to the radio companies.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

LBC's style of broadcasting received favourable reviews:

The whole point of commercial radio is that it can provide more variety and a different style of broadcasting from that already offered. Nothing would have been more disappointing than an imitation BBC with commercials thrown in.

(*Campaign*, 12 October, 1973)

The decision to only licence five stations in the first 'round' of planning was a cautious one, compared to the ambitious plans of the Government while in opposition. When it was announced by the IBA that only a further eleven stations would be planned over the following two years, The Local Radio Association expressed their frustration, commenting upon the slow progress in the development of ILR in a statement released to national press:

The Association, and indeed the whole independent radio industry, was expecting to see an acceleration of this programme rather than the reverse. The whole viability of commercial radio depends on a rapidly increasing system that can appeal to advertisers as a new local medium nationwide. Moreover, the Association fears that the whole momentum and enthusiasm for local commercial radio is endangered by the inexplicably slow progress.

(*The Daily Telegraph*, 1 August, 1974)

To reiterate, the nature of regulation and its application in commercial radio's formative years is critical to understanding subsequent historical developments that followed. The blueprint for the sound of commercial radio, laid down in the 1972 Act, stated that stations were required to produce a range of genre-specific programmes for diverse audiences:

In terms of a typical week's broadcasting on a local station, about 45-55 per cent of programming is music-based, with the rest being built on news and information of local interest, listener services such as financial or consumer advice, public service and other announcements, current affairs, humour, arts reviews, sport, occasional episodes of drama, religion, elements of education, consistent coverage of news about local music and entertainment, together with participation by the listeners either in the studio, through outside broadcasts or by telephone.

(IBA Annual Report and Accounts 1974-75)

The nature of the restrictions upon the business model impacted heavily on programme content for ILR. The requirement to deliver mixed programmes clearly had financial implications for stations. Staffing costs were high due to the volume of journalists required to fulfil news and reporting quotas, together with the range of presenters and producers needed to sustain the programming service level agreements. Budgets were tight due to transmission rental charges, licence fees and the IBA's high specification for studios and engineering equipment. The financial model adopted by the IBA for each franchise was complex, and consisted of a treasury levy, known as primary and secondary rental for transmitters and licences. This system generated profit from each individual radio station, once a ceiling had been reached, and would hit hard in an economic climate prone to recession. An industry lobby, the AIRC would plead for a reduction in these charges, but it would take many years, before any agreement was reached, leaving ILR in a perilous financial position and certainly not the successful free enterprise opportunity its pioneers had lobbied for.

Crisell supports the main argument, that the IBA over-regulated the industry, stunting its growth, not least its profitability opportunities, by restricting advertising minutage and revenue (sponsorship of programmes was not permitted), while imposing high-cost editorial content requirement and technical standards (1994: 35). The White Paper took some responsibility for creating the concept that "radio financed from advertisements must offer a truly public service. There would be no place for a system of broadcasting which did little more than offer a vehicle for carrying advertisements" (HMSO March, 1971). The rationale behind the restrictions merits reflection. While the Labour Party's opposition to a commercial operation was clear on the grounds of their socialist values, the Conservative Government's manifesto support for private enterprise appeared more positive about the opportunities that commercial radio could bring (HMSO 1970). Their

subsequent policy decisions and eventual choice of regulator created an ILR programming model that was more akin to public service broadcasting. Could one reason for the heavily restricted model that followed suggest the influence of the reputation of the BBC? It is likely that the regulator's directive was driven from a cultural view, "consistent with the traditional model for radio represented (and advocated) by the Corporation" (Jones 1989 cited Gibbons 1998: 147). Street (2001) confirms ILR followed this route, while Thompson (2009) reveals that no major research into other global commercial radio models in Europe or the US was carried out by the IBA. Instead it was asked to ensure that it maintained the Corporation's 'high standards', a point laid down in the White Paper (1971). Stoller offers a different view – sustainability. He echoes Benn's earlier advice (see page 46) to the Labour Party on what to do about commercial radio, should they be returned to power:

It was quite simply imperative that the commercial radio model implemented by the IBA in 1973 could withstand another change of Government. The regulator was only too aware of this fact and decided upon a robust model that could survive. That was the cautious nature of their policy decision. But you have to remember, these were times of economic turmoil with governments changing places every few years.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

Implementing ILR as a commercial medium in which public service values were also required to be prevalent, created a complex regulatory model, given the pluralistic values embodied within its ethos, as outlined by Gibbons:

For public service broadcasting, the objective of universality, catering for the needs of the whole audience, will normally be sufficient to provide a diversity of programming content within the service (internal pluralism). For private media enterprises, the grounds for regulating media content are less strong but there may still be a need to secure a diversity of media sources (external pluralism), whether through special media regulation or competition law.

(Gibbons 1998: 31)

Gibbons' reference to competition links the discussion to a two-system structure of radio regulation in the UK and reveals a discord in the relationship between ILR and the BBC. The IBA's view was that "ILR was designed to complement, not compete with BBC local radio" (Carter 2003: 5) and its programming philosophy summed up as "all

things to all listeners” (2003: 20). Other international broadcasting structures, such as the United States, had experienced the “tensions between radio’s public service mission and its commercialized mass audience’s” (Loviglio 2005: 50) but only within the context of a one-system structure. What is notable about the formation of ILR programming and the regulation that was required to instil it, are the characteristics it shared with the BBC. This challenges Carter’s argument, suggesting that the new commercial ILR network, while presenting its case as a complementary service, was in reality, a competing one (Carter 2003). James Gordon, Managing Director of Radio Clyde from 1973-2000 was a strong supporter of the case for ILR as a true competitor to the BBC:

...although public service without public expenditure is perhaps the most attractive argument for Independent Local Radio from a government point of view, the real case for ILR rests in its independent ownership. It has its roots in the community it aims to serve. We are of the people, and the advantages of local knowledge and contacts which independent ownership brings, far outweigh the theoretical dangers which are in any case adequately controlled by the IBA. There is a danger in the BBC system – one which those working in BBC local radio do their best to fight against – and that is the danger of being a branch office of London.

*(IBA Broadcasting Journal, 1974a)*

The research has therefore identified a new opportunity to explore the distinctiveness of ILR in relation to BBC local radio. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

### **Regulation in action: Defining the concept of ‘meaningful speech’**

Commercial radio stations were required to produce a wide genre of programmes for their audience, as previously discussed. The IBA wanted to ensure that speech content was a key part of the programme remit, responding to pressure from politicians about the value of ILR (Annan 1977). This led to the creation of a phrase by IBA staff known as ‘meaningful speech’. The implementation of meaningful speech was two-fold. It created both opportunities and constraints for programme content. The evaluation of meaningful speech meant that the IBA developed an interventionist approach to regulation. This in turn led to difficult relationships between the IBA and radio stations. These points will now be discussed in more detail.

The IBA regarded ILR's output as "programmes not programming" to explain its diverse mix, as opposed to a formulaic, repetitive sound (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). John Thompson and his deputy, Michael Starks (formerly BBC) devised the phrase 'meaningful speech' in the mid-1970s to further outline that commercial radio was more than a music-oriented service<sup>10</sup>. This was deemed necessary by the IBA to justify its position as a "worthy medium" to three stakeholders; government; radio stations; and audiences (Stoller 2009). This is a key point: ILR output was vulnerable to criticism, often described as "pop and prattle" (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). Meaningful speech could also have been linked with the notion of public service broadcasting, thus adding to the argument that the BBC continued to influence regulatory policy, decision making and programme output. An analysis of regulation in action will be presented shortly by looking at radio station schedules and testimonial evidence from programme-makers. First it is necessary to clarify and define what was regarded by meaningful speech in order to apply an effective conceptual framework. Stoller, Head of Radio Programming at the IBA, 1977-79 offers this perspective:

It was seen as two things. First of all, in a presentational sense, it was giving the lie to the phrase 'pop and prattle'. Pop and prattle was the phrase you threw against independent local radio when you wanted to dismiss it. And the regulator, who was also the promoter of the system very much at that time was concerned to say "no it's not pop and prattle, it's worthwhile". And meaningful speech and quantifying meaningful speech, was a way of saying look we don't prattle, we have all of this worthy input. We have news, features, travel information, weather, interviews, discussions and the like.

From that point of view, it was perhaps spin, but at a deeper level it revealed the intensity and intention of those creating the system that this should be something worthwhile. This was to be speech content of genuine value to the listener, even if the listener wasn't necessarily aware that it was of genuine value. That's what meaningful speech was about and as such it was entirely at one with and central to the project which was independent radio.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

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<sup>10</sup> When Tony Stoller took over from Michael Starks as Head of Radio Programming, IBA, in 1977, he tended to avoid using the phrase 'meaningful speech' to describe ILR, recognising that music was also an integral part of the station sound.

In practical terms, meaningful speech was used to describe non-music components of local programme output. Information for the audience, such as news, weather and travel fulfilled the remit. Findlay recalls that “this was a great incentive, for us to do other forms of programming” (Findlay, personal communication, 2009). At strategic level, it enabled the regulator to ensure that programme content would demonstrate the quality and range of the stations’ programme-making skills. From 1973-90, ILR stations produced the full range of speech content including hour-long documentaries, regular features, extended news programmes and phone-ins. This is likely to have enhanced the perception of ILR as a worthy competitor to BBC local radio. It is notable that the characteristics of ILR described by the IBA were not dissimilar to the BBC offering. Mary Warnock, a Member of the IBA, in her 1980 Lecture, described ILR’s values as comprising of: “Community; Friendship; Sense of identity; Inform to educate; Musical education; Duty to lead; and Respect for the listener” (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1980).

The ‘synergy’ between ITV and ILR programme planning was communicated widely to radio and television operators and communities they served. It used a promotional advert *The Independent Broadcasting System* to set out its contractual duties for both parties. One such heading *The IBA supervises programme planning* ensured the relationship between the IBA and the operators was clear:

Although the creative content of the programmes is the concern of the individual programme companies, the IBA ensures that the output is of high quality and provides a proper balance of information, education and entertainment. Each company plans and decides the contents of its programmes in consultation with the IBA, which may require alterations before they are approved for transmission. The IBA also requires specific periods of time to be allocated to special classes of programmes such as education, religion, news, documentaries, and programmes serving local tastes and interests.

(*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1976)

When examining programme schedules, meaningful speech can be seen via the range of documentaries, features and interviews. The phrase also appears in ILR policy papers in 1977. On an operational level, producers and programmers were not only aware of the term, but were mindful of adhering to what they regarded as ‘rules’ (Street 2009). John Thompson recalls: “We needed a phrase to explain ILR was contrary to the view of pirate radio and that’s the one we came up with. But I hope we didn’t labour it. I’m well

aware that this is a phrase that could become an effigy” (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). Professor Seán Street, recalling his career as an ILR Producer and Presenter at 2CR (Bournemouth) has a different view:

There was an IBA representative up the road listening to you. In our case, Southampton. This was a very hands-on thing. A presenter could say something and the phone would go off in the control room. That’s how hands-on the IBA was. It wasn’t just a directive, there were people policing it.

If you got a phone call from the IBA rep., the Programme Controller would respond with an explanation – usually with a “very sorry, I’ll get that sorted”. Because that’s the relationship it was. The next thing would be an official letter. That’s what we wanted to avoid – a letter on our file. It worked both ways as well. The IBA was paternalistic. If you did something that was good, the IBA would send you a letter. John Piper (2CR’s Programme Controller) got a letter. It said “the IBA would like to congratulate 2CR on its All Faiths programme” (my programme). John photocopied the letter and gave it to me and scribbled on it: “thought you would like a copy of this – the IBA like us”. This was how important it was.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

It is at this point that meaningful speech is responsible for a paradox. On one hand it constrained programme content because it did not let radio stations resort to a popular music format, which was cheaper to produce and more attractive to advertisers (Bernard 2009). On the other hand, meaningful speech was responsible for the creation and production of ‘quality’ programmes, because the stations had to fulfil the IBA’s remit. Some practitioners dismiss this view, including Ralph Bernard, journalist at Radio Hallam in Sheffield during the early period of ILR:

What was the point of meaningful speech? Some of these programmes were expensive to make and most of them went out late in the evening after 8pm with a tiny percentage of the potential audience listening. All to please the IBA and certainly not catering for the mass audience.

(Bernard, personal communication, May 2009)

Bernard went on to lead the first merger between two ILR stations (Radio West and Radio Wiltshire) in the 1980s, becoming Chief Executive of GWR plc. from 1987 – 2001.<sup>11</sup>

The IBA maintained it was *because* of regulation and the meaningful speech directive that ‘high quality’ material was produced (Stoller, personal communication, 2009). There are two key examples of regulation in action that appear to stand up to scrutiny; IRN, the central, national news service shared by the Network (established as part of the LBC licence) and the ILR Programme Sharing Scheme (circa. 1976-87), a collection of documentary features made and broadcast by individual stations - a forerunner for syndicated programming.

### **An interventionist approach to regulation**

The IBA’s approach to regulation is described by Bernard as “interventionist” (personal communication, 2009). This period is also referred to as heavy-touch regulation (Feintuck 1999; Gibbons 1998). Stations queried the level of control administered by the IBA. However, it is important to remember that this point, the IBA regarded itself as the ‘broadcaster’ and the radio company was a franchisee (as outlined on pages 6; 48). This is a key point in understanding the relationship between regulator and radio station. What complicated this relationship was what Stoller refers to as a “fusion of public service and private enterprise” (Stoller 2009). As outlined earlier, programming regulations meant stations had to send a copy of their intended programme schedule to the IBA for approval every quarter. This schedule would have to be cleared by the IBA before the desired programmes went on air. In practice this was extremely difficult to achieve, given the need for local radio to adapt and respond. The archives reveal a high volume of correspondence to / from stations that did not adhere to the approval procedures:

As you know, we have not received any schedules from LBC since February 1978 ... I want to put on record that your company is as bound as any ILR company to present

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<sup>11</sup> GWR owned 35 ILR stations until new legislation passed by Ofcom in 2003, led to a merger with Capital Radio, forming the biggest commercial radio company in the UK. Ralph Bernard became Executive Chairman of the new company, GCap Media plc. from 2001-07.

schedules for review as required. I hope I will now be able to expect these on the approximate 3-times-a-year basis agreed with the companies.

(LBC Programmes – General, 1978b)

The reason for needing to clear quarterly schedules was due to the appointment of a dual regulator. The IBA based its radio programming processes and procedures upon the seasonal schedules used by ITV. The clearance of programme schedules was a cumbersome task for both stations and regulation staff (Bernard 2009; Stoller 2009; Street 2009). As the 1980s approached and more stations came on air, there appears to be a shift in culture, with stations adopting a ‘seek forgiveness, rather than ask permission’ stance with regards to clearing schedules (Home Office - General). This cultural shift in the relationship will be discussed in Chapter Three as its impact would lead to major consequences in the regulatory model used for commercial radio.

It is useful to provide examples of programme schedules, when scrutinising the nature of meaningful speech within content. Most stations produced a quarterly magazine for their audience, as a promotional tool. There was an attempt in 1976 to create an independent version of the *Radio Times*. A monthly publication called *Radio Guide* ceased within a year due to poor sales (Radio Programmes Journals, 1976). In 1979, weekly programmes for Metro Radio, the ILR station for Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, included: *Metro Documentary*, produced by the News team (6.30-6.45pm); *Special Report* (6.45-7.00pm) and *Night Owls* – a phone-in show presented by James Whale (11.20-2.00am) (*Metro Radio Magazine*, 1979). Bournemouth-based 2CR’s winter schedule for 1980 publicised a range of special features. *Artsweek*, *The Computer Programme*, *Swingtime* and *Out and About*, were some of the programmes scheduled each weekday evening (*2CR Magazine*, 1980). The weekly political programme, *Decision Makers* (produced by LBC) was deemed by the IBA to be an excellent programme and one which each ILR station was required to broadcast – the first known syndicated / networked programme on commercial radio. This was not always a popular decision, despite the fact that it was ready-prepared content. Stations had to pay towards the cost of the programme and some managing directors were concerned about its London bias (LBC / IRN, 1978).

The idea of local commercial stations writing and producing dramas and documentaries may seem incongruous compared to today’s industry. Retrospectively, the irony of ILR

regulation was that it enabled broadcasters and producers to hone their production and programme research skills in a manner not dissimilar to the quality associated with the BBC today. Capital Radio had a full-time drama department, as did Radio Clyde. In 1978, Ralph Bernard, at Hallam FM, made a series of programmes about alcoholism. *'Dying for a Drink'*, an award-winning five part series, was also syndicated across the ILR network (Bernard 2009). While recognising the success of his programme, Bernard remains adamant that the regulator was far too heavy handed in its approach:

They sat in on a programme I was producing called 'Down to Earth' about the Grimethorpe Colliery Band and kept making comments and suggestions during the recording, even though they had no radio experience.

(Bernard, personal communication, 2009)

The IBA also insisted on a range of music styles and tastes. Metro broadcast a number of music genre-specific evening programmes including *Country Jamboree*; *Metro in Classical Mood*; *Bridges* (progressive and heavy rock); and *Folk and Jazz* (*Metro Radio Magazine*, 1979).

The radio stations had two key areas of concern with the regulator; the restrictive nature of the IBA's interpretation of the legislation and their response to policy-making to support the progression of new programming ideas. A clear example is the development of LBC's news / talk format. The station began broadcasting a number of phone-in programmes, where controversial subjects were discussed and listeners' opinions were aired and challenged. Stoller (1974) predicted the potential of the phone-in for ILR as a point of differentiation with the BBC during the early phase, while recognising the problems it would encounter:

However, there seems to be, in the minds of the public and many commentators, a link between phone-ins and ILR which goes beyond that for broadcasting as a whole. This has come about in part because the earliest ILR stations, especially the London News Station, LBC, made extensive use of this type of programme. It is now more so because the intention and the reality of particularly close contact between an independent radio station and its audience. Springing from the essentially local nature of the stations and

their participations in the matters of the High Street and the Council Chamber means that the attempted areas of contact, such as a phone-in, assume a much greater prominence.

The nature of this involvement is one of the contentious areas in the debate over phone-in programmes. It is certainly fashionable to argue for greater public access to broadcasting, either to the making of programmes or by contributions to them. For some, this trend represents a fundamental change in the nature of the relationship between the people of our society and its institutions.

(Stoller, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1974b)

Stoller (1974) categorises three different types of phone-in programmes on ILR: discussion phone-in; ask the expert phone-in; and personal problems phone-in. An analysis of the discussion-based phone-in and the personal problems phone-in provides an insight into the regulator's difficulty in adapting to change. Phone-ins offered more than an ear to a listener's opinion; the range of topics aired also assumed the role of social commentator (Chignell 2007). This will be discussed shortly.

General phone-in programmes, ranging from music requests, consumer advice and opinion forums were common place on the ILR Network. This is because they could be regarded as contributing to meaningful speech as "these programs help the station fulfil the congressional mandate" (Stein 2004 cited Hilliard and Keith 2005: 27). Stations often carried a mid-morning timeslot (10-12) for this style of programming, such as 2CR's *Talking Point*. LBC, the news / talk station for London was a pioneer for the radio phone-in, while challenging the very core of regulation. The discussion phone-in proved popular on LBC; the station broadcast a daily mid-morning and evening phone-in during the early years. The rise of the genre produced a new tone of voice that the IBA had not prepared itself for, in the form of a 'shock jock', a radio personality who uses controversy to express opinions with an inflection in the delivery of the content, to annoy, persuade, anger and amuse the audience. The emergence of the shock jock led the IBA to introduce a seven second delay mechanism to protect against profanity, as a condition of phone-in programmes. The shock jock formula had been used to great effect in the US as a mechanism for driving audience ratings up. Heritage (1985 cited Hutchby 1991) outlines a major shift in this style of broadcasting for commercial radio, identifying 'cooperative' and 'uncooperative' patterns in audience participation in the phone-in relationship between presenter and caller. The IBA regarded this approach to listeners as 'rudeness'.

Hutchby provides a valid response, highlighting the acceptance of roles within the two-way news / talk phone-in. He argues that the cooperative caller adopts a strategy of ‘acceptance’ or ‘rejection’ within an on-air debate, where “further talk pertinent to the declination may be judged relevant and requested”. He goes on to summarise that in either case “the formulation serves simultaneously as newsmark and further-news-elicitation, and so intrinsically operates as a mechanism facilitating the interactive management and collaborative production of news or ‘sense’ in talk radio talk” (1991:31). This is a sophisticated approach to understanding the genre, and not one that held sway in the 1970s. A letter sent to the station LBC in 1978, following station monitoring (a regular occurrence) subtitled ‘*Control of phone-in programmes*’ demonstrates a more simplistic approach; the regulator did not want broadcasters to break the ‘rules’. The letter reveals the nature of the problem in regulating this particular format for speech and conversation, notably the tone and style of broadcasters Brian Hayes and George Gale, who would come to be regarded by many as using the ‘shock-jock’ approach (Chignell 2007). The IBA’s strategy in dealing with editorial issues arising out of phone-in content was to reinforce the legislation, as this letter from the regulator to LBC’s Editorial Director outlines:

You will know that Brian Hayes would be considered as part of LBC’s staff, and would thus be considered in the words of the IBA Act to be one of ‘the persons providing the programmes’. His show must therefore show ‘due impartiality’ as the Act requires and cannot be ‘balanced’ by other parts of LBC’s output.

As things stand, the same requirements would apply to George Gale. His programme seems to flout the Act regularly and to contain wholly unacceptable elements of ‘editorialising’.

Could you please treat these points on the control of phone-in programmes as important and urgent. I would welcome a reply in detail about how you will deal with them by the end of the week.

(LBC Programmes – General, 1978c)

Another programme which received considerable attention from regulators and listeners was LBC’s *Nightline*. *Nightline* was a hybrid, merging two of Stoller’s categories; part discussion and part problems phone-in. A late night programme, it covered controversial topics with contributions from panel guests and listeners. It was different from the conventional BBC phone-in. Listeners were given more freedom to voice opinions and

the presenter was more direct in response. The choice of topic was often spontaneous and guided by listener's personalities, such as those defined by Crisell: expressive, exhibitionist and confessional (1994: 190-195). Other phone-ins on ILR and the BBC during the daytime covered lighter, less controversial topics which were agreed in advance and less flexible in nature, often relying on producers and broadcast assistants to screen and select callers. *Nightline* was therefore regarded as a pioneering form of phone-in. Many ILR stations carried a mid-morning phone-in show which was dynamic and innovative in nature, with direct access to the on-air studio team. The content reflected both local and national matters of concern and the "switchboard was jam-packed each time" (Mundy 2009). Scannell stresses the importance of this informal style of communication between presenter and listener, describing the exchange as one which requires the host to "acquiesce in the establishment of recognisably interpersonal relations" (1991: 121). The personal nature of the telephone interaction (before technological advances created email and text) was critical for ILR stations to create what stations referred to as 'a following'; an 'appointment to listen' (Bradford 2009; Findlay 2009; Stoller 2009). It was also an early form of user generated content. Listeners often praised the style of commercial programme presentation and noted how it differentiated from the BBC:

Nightline has been true 'access' broadcasting – the phone-ins have attracted a great variety of people who have talked unselfconsciously about a great number of topics. I find that Nightline compares well with BBC phone-ins – too often the BBC participants are nervous and formal and the presenter too condescending or opinionated to invite any real discussion.

(LBC Programmes – General, 1975)

The programme was a matter of great concern for the IBA as other listeners and even broadcast standards campaigner Mary Whitehouse, complained to the IBA Director General about the content discussed during *Nightline*:

I have not heard this programme myself but I am told she [1970s glamour model Fiona Richmond] answers questions and some of her answers are verging on the obscene, particularly when she talks about and advocates oral sex.

(LBC Nightline, 1974)

*Nightline* was taken off the air in 1975, after less than two years, due to budget cuts, according to the IBA. It would remerge again in 1977 but only as a produced programme (LBC Programmes – Schedules, 1977). The volume of correspondence, complaining and praising *Nightline* confirms that ILR was clearly much more than a local radio service; it was also a witness to a rich social commentary. Further discussion surrounding ILR as an oral history of the socio-political changes of the 1980s, such as the Miners’ Strike; AIDS and the Poll Tax, will be explored in Chapters Three and Four.

The need for a rapid response from the regulator serves as a further indicator of social change. Emerging developments in the public sphere, often triggered regulatory intervention. For example, the IBA would regularly issue policy updates and information papers to stations to ensure effective programming controls and provide guidance for broadcasters. The personal problem / advice phone-in was one such example. A key meeting of the Radio Consultative Committee (RCC) was convened to outline a policy for *Personal Advice Programming*, triggered by listeners’ complaints to Capital Radio’s *Open Line* show. The main areas of contention were selection of subject matter, scheduling (the key issue being children listening) and qualifications of presenter (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1978). The IBA prepared a four-page document to determine best practice for stations highlighting duty of care. In October 1979, a further IBA Information Paper was prepared to help stations tackle phone-in content. *Personal and Sex Counselling on ILR* reported that member of the London Local Advisory Council had monitored the station and declared that “the programmes were never short of callers and, therefore, must be of some use to some people” (Authority Papers, 1979). There is a brief mention of the issues surrounding ILR as a social commentary in a section entitled *Differing attitudes and differing cities* which says “editorial atmosphere and decisions also tend to differ in different parts of the United Kingdom (Authority Papers, 1979). This would account for the popularity of Radio Clyde’s phone-ins, which featured heavily in a city dealing with a challenging socio-economic landscape (Gordon 2007; Hendy 2007). Response to social change is evident within correspondence between the IBA and LBC. Responding to an IBA letter questioning output, LBC’s Editorial Director, Ron Onions replied “some of us have been wondering about the emphasis on due impartiality in relation to the presentation of the radio phone-in which is a relatively new departure in broadcasting in this country” (LBC Programmes – General, 1978a). An earlier letter in 1976 from Marshall Stewart, Chief

Editor, to Edwin Riddell, IBA Administrative Officer for Radio justified LBC's coverage of Gay Pride Week:

Clearly some listeners would be offended by the inclusion of material about homosexual groups, though I suspect, far fewer than, say, a decade ago. It is clearly important for us not to be unreasonably in advance of the social climate.

(Home Office – General, 1976)

Another area constrained by the IBA was the use of on-air promotions and competitions (Crisell 2002). This was a big issue. The regulator's view was that most forms of promotional material could be regarded as an incentive or 'bribes' to listen and also offered an unfair advantage to regular listeners: "the intention behind this provision is to prevent companies from buying themselves an audience" (Authority Papers, 1977a). This is in contrast to today's commercial radio industry which uses high-profile contests and prizes to drive ratings and increase revenue. It was a short-sighted decision, which BBC Radio One producer (later to become Controller) Johnny Beerling, recognised at the time:

The thinking at the time of ILR was that this brash new baby would come on the air and that they would be giving away Ford Cortinas every day and hundreds of dollars in cash prizes.

(Beerling 1986 cited Barnard 1989: 57)

The first IBA policy paper, *'Radio Programmes with Prizes'* was passed to stations in October 1973, and reinforced the IBA Act, section 4 (4):

Nothing shall be included in the programme broadcast by the Authority, whether in an advertisement of not, which offers any prize of significant value, whether competed for or not, or any gift of significant value being a prize or gift which is available only to persons receiving that programme, or in relation to which any advantage is given.

(Authority Papers, 1973a)

The paper laid out terms, defining 'significant value' as a prize of more than twenty pounds. Games of chance were not permitted and children under the age of thirteen could not enter. The policy was soon under attack from stations keen to include prizes as part of their marketing strategy. They resented the low prize limits, leading the IBA to introduce a two-tier prize system: Insignificant value – £20; Significant value – up to £1,000. Any

cash prizes or gifts could not be part of a contra deal<sup>12</sup> and had to be purchased. This was an issue for stations. The IBA insisted that they pay for items such as concert tickets and records, which they were regularly offered for free and intervened accordingly:

Last December, EMI supplied eleven stations with free copies of the Queen LP ‘Day at the Races’, plus supporting promotional material, in order to mount Queen competitions on a particular day, and it then advertised the proposed competitions in the press. A number of companies expressed surprise and concern when the IBA intervened to stop these competitions.

(Authority Papers, 1977a)

Stations also had to send their competition proposals for clearance. BRMB had to submit competition questions and a tie-breaker to meet approval for its *Holiday to Holland* promotion and Capital’s *Heavy Wheels* had to take out advertisements in the *Evening Standard* to outline competition rules clearly to the general public<sup>13</sup> (Authority Papers, 1973a). Further evidence supports the view that having a dual regulator was often at the heart of policy constraints: IBA Information Paper (186: 73) justifies the prizes policy, suggesting that the Authority should be “extending to radio, the same rules and guidelines that already apply to the television companies” (Authority Papers, 1973a). This policy was regularly challenged by stations via their trade body, the AIRC. Their concern is revealed in letters sent to the IBA during this period arguing that Radio One was using prizes of ‘significant value’ such as concert tickets and merchandise from record companies in its programmes to increase listener figures (Home Office – General). The IBA recognised that “the BBC allows its local radio stations to accept, exceptionally, unsolicited prizes of a modest local nature” and reviewed its policy in light of this, “concerned that the IBA’s policy might be too rigid in comparison” (Authority Papers, 1977b). In October 1977 it had shifted its position, issuing new guidelines for *ILR Competitions with Prizes*, agreeing that the stations “should be able to give away as prizes, without paying for them, two or three records a day and limited numbers of ‘bona fide’ review tickets and books” (Authority Papers, 1977b).

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<sup>12</sup> A contra deal is a barter arrangement which was often used by stations for the supply of goods or services from another party without any cash changing hands, in exchange for airtime.

<sup>13</sup> Since 2007, Ofcom has enforced tighter rules on competitions, following their investigation of broadcasters’ misuse of premium rate and text numbers. Terms and conditions for every competition or promotion must be made publicly available, as a minimum on the radio station’s website.

## **Music copyright and Needle time**

Earlier, it was discussed that ILR missed the opportunity to capitalise and adopt a sound similar to that of the pirates. This was an unlikely proposition for both ILR and the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s, due to contractual agreements among the IBA, Musicians Union (MU) and Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL). These contracts meant that the amount of music radio in the UK was limited by virtue of a restriction known as ‘needle time’. In ILR’s case, this was instrumental in the development of a meaningful speech policy and presenter conversation between records (Hendy 2000). An examination of the policy process for needle time will also highlight the effect of the BBC’s reputation upon ILR.

Needle time, the time spent playing records each day, hindered any chance of the ILR stations becoming perceived as popular stations. An obligation under the Musicians Unions contract meant stations had to spend a percentage of station profit on the employment of musicians and broadcast live recordings. This is in stark contrast to the view of ILR at the time as ‘pop and prattle’: “Each of the ILR companies, apart from LBC, is contractually required to devote at least three percent of its net income from advertising to the employment of musicians” (IBA Annual Report, 1975/6). By July 1975, this amounted to a total of over £109,000, spent on live sessions and recordings by the nine stations then on air (Employment of Musicians, 1975). The Musicians Union contract made a big impact on UK radio development. Blackburn describes the limitations of “this antiquated system” on his Radio One Breakfast Show and “blames the Musicians’ Union for holding back radio in this country” (2007: 24). Stoller outlines the reasons why it hampered ILR development, recognising that the cultural need for pop music to be “absolutely central to the success of popular radio” (forthcoming 2010: 83) and “it was wholly counter-intuitive for popular music to have been the denied virtue of ILR – to be excused away, or hidden behind the prestige projects of symphony orchestras (forthcoming 2010: 24).

The political climate at the time was the key factor in establishing the Musicians Union agreement. The trade union culture was prevalent in the UK up until the mid-1980s and therefore the power of the Musicians Union cannot be underestimated, especially as they had already developed a strong presence with the BBC since 1967. The Union was

opposed to commercial radio, believing that it has “eroded the employment opportunities for members” (Employment of Musicians, 1972).

Questions emerge as to the effectiveness of the IBA’s negotiation skills at the time. From the outset, ILR had to restrict the playing of records to nine hours per day. This contract would eventually face three tribunal judgements, from the 1970s to 1990s (again due to the lobbying of the AIRC). Frustration mounted due to the fact that the BBC had been given a longer needle time allocation, of twelve hours per day. The IBA paper *Use of Musicians and Copyright on ILR*, issued in July 1972 and circulated to IBA colleagues for comment, was mindful of the BBC:

All the parties involved in the IBA’s discussions about the use of music on independent local radio are [therefore] concerned not to disturb the existing arrangements with the BBC by coming to any agreements with the IBA, or the ILR contractors, that might seem unduly favourable, in the BBC’s eyes, to the new independent service.

(Employment of Musicians, 1972)

The IBA did recognise that “British copyright law should be changed for broadcasting: to bring it more into line with most of the Commonwealth, Ireland, North America and many European countries” (Employment of Musicians, 1972). However it was James Gordon, Managing Director of Radio Clyde, who was the instigator for the tribunals during the 1980s and 1990s. The advantage of needle time was that ILR and the BBC had to innovate to produce music. Ironically, the IBA’s secondary rental charge which stations would fight hard to remove in the 1980s, was used to fund live music. Bournemouth-based 2CR had its own Big Band (Street 2002) and even Radio One’s breakfast show was not immune from the system: “You might get the Northern Dance Orchestra playing live versions of The Rolling Stones’ Jumpin’ Jack Flash or The Jimi Hendrix Experience’s Purple Haze” (Blackburn 2007: 24). Needle time remained in place until 1987, when it was abolished along with other IBA restrictions such as secondary rental, in an overhaul of regulation – the key theme of Chapter Four.

### **The ‘Start-Stop’ era, 1974-79**

The period of commercial radio 1974-79 is dominated by two factors. Firstly, further political and economic turmoil which led to three General Elections within five years. Secondly, a review of UK broadcasting by the Annan Committee. These topics form the discussion in this section.

The early stations experienced mixed fortunes – the programming obligations imposed by the IBA were resource and budget intensive and the early stations, LBC and Capital in particular, had to make staff cutbacks in the first year and were often affected by union problems. Radio Clyde fared better, “because it was in tune with the cultural aspects of Scottish life and not run by London” (Gordon 2007).

The UK in 1974 was in a precarious position. There was a long-standing Miners strike, IRA terrorist attacks and an international oil crisis which led to speed restrictions on the roads to curb use of fuel (Beckett 2009). The impact of the Miners strike and a short supply of electricity led to an event referred to as the Three Day Week. From January to March 1974, businesses and schools were only open during certain times and limited to electricity consumption for only three days per week. Television stations went off the air at 10.30pm each evening to conserve energy. Culturally, Britain was undergoing change. Towns such as Leicester in the Midlands began a process of racial integration, following the arrival of Asian refugees, deported from Uganda by Idi Amin. (This particular event is notable for it would cultivate the start of Asian programming on BBC Radio Leicester, the forerunner to today’s Asian Network ([www.le.ac.uk](http://www.le.ac.uk), 2008). The faltering economy and sustained industrial action prompted Heath to call a snap election in March 1974 (Marr 2007; Vinen 2009). This resulted in a hung parliament and a further General Election in October. Labour returned to power with a small majority. The consequences of the election were huge for ILR. Plans to expand the network were halted. While the IBA’s Annual Report 1973/4 outlines plans for a total of twenty-six ILR licences (the network currently consisted of eleven) Labour’s Home Secretary Roy Jenkins announced that this would be limited to nineteen. The halt to ILR development suggested Labour wanted to revert to their BBC local radio expansion plan. Barnard notes that under the new Government, the IBA was “encouraged to toughen its stance with stations which put the commercial above the community motive” (Barnard 1989: 82). One reason for the Government’s decision was the financial difficulty posed by the broadcasting stations. The halt to development was seen as a blow to the fledgling radio industry. Lord

Aylestone, Chair of the IBA at this point “hoped the party would have learned that a commercial broadcasting system did not deserve Labour’s traditional opposition” (*The Guardian*, 5 June, 1974). In April 1974, Labour announced plans to commission a feasibility study of the broadcasting sector as a whole. *A Committee on the Future of Broadcasting* was set up, chaired by Lord Annan. The Annan Committee process meant there was very little movement in the ILR business plan between 1974-77. There was however, one development in 1975 – ILR’s involvement in the Sound Broadcasting of Parliament experiment. This was a great opportunity for IRN to show off its production and journalistic flair to the BBC. Historically this consolidated IRN / ILR’s position as an alternative source of news broadcasting to the BBC (Chignell 2007). It was also an example of radio’s advantages over television.

Awaiting the final Annan Report, the IBA went forward, licensing the remaining ten stations. It was hoped that the Annan Committee would take the opportunity to push the boundaries for broadcasting in the UK, especially in light of developments in Europe and the US: “This report was intended to herald the future for the social liberal approach, but in the event it was to be the last hurrah for the old dispensation” (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 105). Annan’s key findings, published in March 1977, garnered mixed fortunes for ILR. Focused mainly on television; notably the creation of a fourth channel, it supported further expansion of ILR and commended the approach to programme content, but referred back to the phrase that continued to plight the network – ‘pop and prattle’. Annan’s remarks resulted in further endorsement of content being classified as meaningful speech. (The definition and consequences of this upon the regulated stations are outlined on pages 55-65.) Lady Plowden, Chair of the IBA, described her response to Annan as ‘luke-warm’ (Report and Record of the 1977 IBA Consultation on ILR, 1977). It is notable that in June 1977, the IBA appeared to underpin Annan’s comments about content by holding their own in-house consultation with the radio stations. Entitled, *Speech Programming on ILR*, the consultation, which appears to have been part-workshop, part-feedback, included sessions on *The Need for Speech*; *Peak-time Speech*; and *Balancing the Schedules*. In the keynote speech, John Thompson outlined there was a need “to find a middle course between the formal spoken word which characterised radio in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s and the ‘prattle’ which is one of the great dangers of the modern sound” (Report and Record of the 1977 IBA Consultation on ILR, 1977). This clearly suggests that the IBA had no intention of allowing ILR to become pop-oriented. According to Stoller (2009) this is because they regarded music education as

part of the programming philosophy for ILR and expected stations to play a diverse, eclectic mix in their schedules.

There was a significant factor in the Report which was not popular with the regulator. While there was clearly a consensus for ILR to develop, there were concerns over structure and controls. Annan suggested a three-tier system: local, regional and national broadcasting. Deeming local broadcasting to be a “different animal from network broadcasting which needs a different sort of keeper” (HMSO 1977) it recommended the creation of a new Local Broadcasting Authority to take over the development and regulation of all local radio (ILR and BBC). It highlighted potential problems with a dual regulator. The IBA’s official response on Annan, sent to the Home Secretary in June 1977, clarified two key points:

#### Methods of Control

3.41: We have considered the Annan Committee’s point that our network television experience might exert too great an influence on local radio’s development (Annan 14.7). No evidence is given in the Report of such experience being other than beneficial to ILR.

#### No reason to split Television and Radio

3.42: We have also considered the Committee’s doubt whether local radio can be given enough priority over ITV. It does not seem consistent to us that a Committee which decided not to separate BBC Radio from BBC Television should have recommended splitting the IBA’s much smaller radio and television companies.

*(Independent Broadcasting Journal, August 1977b)*

Another breakthrough came in October that year. The Government’s Select Committee on Nationalised Industries recommended lifting an embargo on ILR expansion (see Chronology; Appendix A). This coupled with the 1978 White Paper kick-started the next phase of expansion with almost immediate effect. This is now explored further. The Government response to Annan (led by Prime Minister James Callaghan who replaced Wilson in 1976) appeared in a White Paper, *Broadcasting*, in July 1978. It rejected recommendations for a separate radio regulator and agreed that both ILR and BBC Local Radio should go forward. It set up a Local Radio Working Party (LRWP) to drive expansion both competitively and cooperatively (Stoller, forthcoming 2010). ILR was

promised a fifty per cent increase in the number of stations, giving it a potential geographical coverage of seventy-five per cent: “After four years’ vacillation on expanding the network, the working party reacted with unaccustomed speed to Merlyn Rees’s [Home Secretary] request in the White Paper that they should act as a matter of urgency” (*Campaign*, November 1978). The reason for speed was to be able to influence politicians in the build-up to the forthcoming general election, as the minutes of the first meeting of the LRWP reveal:

It was agreed that the IBA should submit a list of its early hopes, which could then be studied by the Home Office engineers. If these were supplied sufficiently detailed, it might be possible to get well ahead: there was political attraction in a Ministerial announcement before any General Election was announced.

(Home Office – General, 1978b)

The tide was turning. Press cuttings reveal a change in the media’s attitude to ILR: *Let Independent Radio go national, BBC needs the competition* (*The Sunday Times*, 16 April, 1978); *Commercial radio turns up the volume* (*The Observer*, 19 March, 1978); *ILR moves ahead* (*The Financial Times*, 29 June, 1978). 1978 also saw stations go into the black for the first time since launch, with a reported thirty per cent increase across the ILR network from the previous year (*The Financial Times*, 24 June, 1978). As Bernard (personal communication, 2009) has expressed, the radio stations began challenging the IBA’s approach to content regulation. “I suspect if there was no IBA, our programming would be no different” said Charles Braham, MD of Swansea Sound; Plymouth Sound’s Programme Controller said: “My job is to deliver an audience. I just don’t have time to explain to the IBA, which has never run a station, why I do the things the way I do” (*Management Today*, September, 1979). The haven of the “fragile optimism” of early 1978 did not last long (Stoller, forthcoming 2010). Widespread strikes by local authority trade unions, including refuse collectors, train drivers and gravediggers occurred in protest over the Government’s five per cent pay freeze, as part of inflation measures (Marr 2007; Stoller, forthcoming 2010). The sheer scale of strikes over six months became part of a period of British history regarded as the *Winter of Discontent* (Beckett 2009).

As the chapter has revealed, British commercial radio was launched against a backdrop of political and social change. It was a slow process, both thwarted and nurtured by politics; notably between 1967-79. While moderately successful in terms of audience perception, it had to do business in one of the most difficult financial periods post-war with a restrictive model that limited revenue opportunities and constrained content. The appointment of the existing television regulator to 'look after' commercial radio, confirmed its position as the Cinderella of the broadcasting spectrum (Walters, *Manchester Guardian*, 1987). Despite this, it survived. Furthermore it was a broadcasting training ground, nurturing talent such as journalist Jon Snow (LBC), presenter and comedian Kenny Everett (Capital Radio) and Richard Park (Radio Clyde). However, by the end of the 1970s, the sound of British commercial radio had changed little. There were two main turning points by 1979; the fall of the Labour Government and the re-emergence of the Conservatives, under Leader Margaret Thatcher. This, coupled with the power of an ever-growing ILR Network, which would within one year increase in membership from nineteen stations to twenty-eight, acted as a catalyst for change. A detailed examination of these factors and the consequences of their actions is the focus of Chapter Three.

### 3.

## **Commercial Radio Midterm – 1979-1983 Expansion and Innovation**

How 'local' ILR can actually become remains to be seen. The US has a system of 8,500 stations, which suggests that the UK should be able to support nearly 2,500. But this would be impossible without dismantling the IBA's regulatory apparatus, allowing stations to have their own transmitters, and giving them a virtually free hand with programming. Even Margaret Thatcher's free enterprise Tories refuse to consider this alternative, and there will be little change in the present system of control through the next decade.

(David Manasian, *Management Today*, September, 1979)

The previous chapter outlines the battle involved in getting, and keeping commercial radio on the air, amid political and economic turmoil. This chapter focuses on new political events which led to expansion of the ILR network, which strengthened the industry's trade body and ILR's 'voice'; ultimately leading to relaxation of regulation. It also continues the themes of regulation in action, ILR's relationship with the BBC and considers the shift in the IBA's internal culture and attitude to ILR.

In order to analyse these events in detail, the following two chapters are broken into two chronological phases: 1979-83 and 1984-89. This approach enables the research to consider the cause and effect of British politics upon commercial radio development through various critical stages. This fits with Vinen's (2009) study in which he defines two phases of the Thatcher government. He refers to 1979-83 as 'Primitive Politics' and 1983-88 as 'Serious Money'. Evans (2005) also positions Thatcher and Thatcherism into two eras; 'Election and depression, 1979-1981' and 'Thatcher triumphant, 1982-1988'. Beckett's comprehensive study of the Seventies suggests:

...this sense in 1979 of an omnipotent new government lasted no longer than it had for previous post-war administrations. Instead, between the autumn of that year and the spring of 1982, and arguably well into the mid-eighties, Britain endured a period of economic, social and political crisis that matched, and often eclipsed, anything in the seventies.

(Beckett 2009: 518)

Both authors agree the defining moment in the Thatcher government was victory over Argentina in the Falklands War of 1982. “The so-called ‘Falklands Factor’ played a huge part in the government’s recovery of popularity in 1982-3 (Evans 2005: 26). Maximising the IBA’s desire for meaningful speech meant the war also played a key role in helping elevate ILR’s status as a fundamental broadcasting service (Curran and Seaton 2003). The central news service IRN, enabled stations to produce news broadcasts. Radio Victory, the ILR station for Portsmouth, was integral to the coverage and support for naval communities. Stoller regards the public service ethos as an “immediate gain” for ILR during the war, where “each local station was able to offer credible news of the war – through a very credible IRN – heightened by local relevance. It was personal, local, authoritative and immediate” (forthcoming 2010: 124). The impact of the Falklands War was notable upon Radio Victory’s programme output. This will be examined later in the chapter.

### **A change in direction**

This chapter, 1979-83, commences with Margaret Thatcher’s win at the 1979 General Election. This is regarded within British history as the beginning of a new era of political ideology. Marr refers to this period as the “British Revolution” (2007: 382). Yet, as the extract from *Management Today* reveals, early policies of the new Conservative Government did not appear to set a radical precedent with regards to broadcasting. An article entitled *Broadcasting and the Tories* speculated that:

taking the Conservative Party’s overall attitude into account (and looking carefully at Margaret Thatcher’s oft-repeated point about our being over-governed) it is probably too much to hope that this new Government might be persuaded to create a Department of Broadcasting within the Home Office, so that uprooting exercises such as Annan are made unnecessary.

(*Radio Month*, June, 1979)

This was one prediction that came true. The Broadcasting Department of the Home Office was established shortly after Thatcher took office, in 1979. However, her “bold vision for national revival was not forthcoming in the first term” (Beckett 2009: 518). The new government’s main concern during the early years of government was focused on economic matters and the implementation of monetarist policy, rather than the free market model for which they would subsequently become famous. Vinen reflects that:

“If the election of 1979 was a triumph for Thatcher, it was conspicuously not a victory for Thatcherism, as it was to be defined in the following decade” (2009: 100). Seldon and Collings offer a different view, suggesting that it was during this first year that “Thatcher’s ideas regarding economic policy, established her personal hegemony” (2000: 11). Barnard makes a key point in understanding the new government’s ideology in relation to broadcasting:

After the Conservatives’ election victory of 1979, the political will to safeguard the ‘community’ aspects of ILR was no longer there, and the principles of priority to local programming, broad programme schedules, cross-subsidisation and a strict division between editorial and advertising content became progressively undermined.

(Barnard 1989: 82)

Marr outlines that from the outset, the Thatcher Government’s desire to mix political and social change had a potential for conflict:

Yet Thatcherism heralded an age of unparalleled consumption, credit, show-off wealth, quick bucks and sexual libertinism. That is the thing about freedom. When you free people, you can never be sure what you are freeing them for.

(Marr 2007: 383)

Commercial radio development picked up the pace soon after the election and began to challenge the BBC as a true competitor. Localness would be emphasised as a main point of differentiation. This is a key point which will be expanded upon. Home Secretary William Whitelaw announced fifteen potential new licences for ILR, to be on air by 1982. (This was in addition to the nine already approved in 1978, meaning the network would grow to over forty.) This is significant; it meant that the ILR network doubled in size from 1979 to 1984. In contrast, his proposals for the BBC “consisted more of a rationalisation than an expansion” (*Radio & Record News*, 1 August, 1979). These proposals were authorised in November 1979, following the Second Report of the Home Office Local Radio Working Party. In response to the news, Chair of the IBA, Lady Plowden, continued to stress the importance of localism, saying: “... the response to ILR now plays in the life of a locality” (Home Office – General, 1978c). The press statement also reveals subtle changes in the IBA’s communication style to a more assertive, confident approach: “The Authority’s objective for the 1980s is to bring Independent Local Radio to as much of the population of the United Kingdom as

possible, as quickly as possible” (Home Office – General, 1978c). This is in contrast to the more tentative activity in the 1970s. Furthermore, the IBA seems to have taken notice of the use of public relations by the BBC to enhance their reputation among key stakeholders. The IBA took note of the promotional opportunities used by BBC radio in conjunction with television. The Radio Consultative Committee (RCC) minutes (point e) state that “while recognising that the competitiveness of ITV and ILR was an obstacle, the IBA would like to encourage developments in cross-promotion”, citing Radio Victory and Southern Television as one example (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1979). In 1981, specific audience research was compiled, aggregating each ILR service to create a ‘national’ result, enabling a comparison of listening to national BBC stations. This showed that “at no time of day does any one of the competing BBC services gain a higher audience than ILR” (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1981a). The issue of PR was noted in a meeting in 1978 with Labour’s Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees: “He referred especially to the large PR exercise that there had been on behalf of the BBC” and asked the IBA to counter the argument that ILR was “pop and prattle”. Again, the IBA appears to have taken up a stronger position and defended ILR, as the minutes of the discussion show:

A number of points were made in response. E.g. the reaction from the BBC, and its supporters, was that of those whose service was threatened with extinction. The comparisons made with ILR ignored the many and varied ways in which ILR stations served their communities and ignored also the far larger audiences for ILR than for BBC local radio. It must also be remembered that BBC had Radios 1 and 2: ILR had to integrate into its service some of the undoubtedly popular material which the BBC could provide in separate national services. Apart from programming, local ownership and local involvement were also important: the local community identified with ILR in a way that it did not with BBC. As a matter of simple fact, ILR provided a community service for many more people than did the BBC.

(Home Office – General, 1978a)

For once, it was commercial radio, and not the BBC, who was attracting interest. ILR was coming to be regarded as a serious competitor:

In the 1980s, it seems now a truism, political and constitutional, that for both radio and television intrinsic advantages attach to having an alternative to the previous monopoly of the BBC as a central source of broadcasting.

(Thompson, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, November, 1981)

The pace of development was important to ensure momentum. Brian Young speculated to IBA colleagues “our feeling that the Home Office will not try to impose an equal rate of development on us and the BBC” (Home Office – General, 1979a). This suggests that the new government were in favour of developing commercial radio. An article by BBC Director of Radio, Aubrey Singer, in the BBC in-house magazine *Ariel* used the headline ‘*How we fight commercial radio*’ outlining the need for *local* programming (*Ariel*, 24 March, 1981). ILR’s constant battle for acceptance and recognition away from the BBC’s shadow, continued throughout the 1980s, but these early years show a significant step-change from poor-relation to peer:

Indeed in recent discussions, the principal doubts expressed have been over the prudence of the BBC continuing with its local radio stations when a more diverse and locally relevant service can often be provided by independent companies.

(Thompson, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, November, 1981)

It is important to note the impact that change of government had on the IBA. The arrival of William Whitelaw as Home Secretary, responsible for broadcasting, meant the IBA had to establish new relationships and effective lines of communication:

For the IBA in its relationship with Government, just as for the LR companies in their relationship with the IBA, a heavy regulatory touch was still the order of the day. That is not to suggest that Whitelaw was unsympathetic; quite the reverse. He took a personal interest in local radio, and understood it considerably better than many political grandees understood the intricacies of broadcasting generally.

(Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 118)

The working relationship with Whitelaw is an important factor in helping expansion of the network. It was a high priority for the regulator as Whitelaw was responsible for a new Broadcasting Bill. The IBA wanted to ensure radio was treated fairly within the new Bill, and that amendments could be made to improve some of the ILR contractual arrangements. However, the eventual passing of the Bill, to become the new Broadcasting Act 1980 (which was repealed by the Broadcasting Act 1981) contained three main points: amendment to the IBA Act of 1973 awarding powers for a second television station; introduction of a profit levy on ILR stations, payable to the Treasury; and the need for a recognised training programme for ILR staff (Authority Papers, 1981).

One issue during the passing of the Bill was the continued actions of Unions. ILR had been affected by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), which had caused severe problems with news services due to strikes and walk-outs over pay in 1976-77. Unions continued to make demands upon the IBA regarding broadcasting staff, notably jobs and working conditions. The General Secretary of the Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS) reacted strongly to Whitelaw's proposal to expand ILR and rationalise the BBC:

... my union cannot accept that it is in the broad public interest or for the general good of broadcasting in this country that the major expansion in local radio should be in the commercial and not in the public sector of the industry. It is not necessary slavish to insist that the BBC and the IBA should maintain precise parity in numbers of stations. It is imperative, however, that the two systems must develop broadly in parallel and at the same rate and that the resources made available to the two systems should be broadly similar.

(Home Office – General, 1979b)

The IBA however, was keen to avoid a recurrence of the Capital Radio experience, where over twenty journalists had been hired at launch, but difficult financial circumstances, had led to widespread redundancies in 1976-78. Radio Trent in Nottingham was another station affected by the NUJ. In 1976, staff organised a sit-in, protesting at the dismissal of the programme director and Trent's refusal to sign an NUJ national agreement on minimum wages and conditions (*Nottingham Evening Post*, 11 May, 1976). 'The Trent Saga' was *Broadcast's* headline that week, which made the following observations: "You can tell the independent radio industry has come of age ... just look at the number of industrial disputes mushrooming" (*Broadcast*, 17 May, 1976). The article went on to describe the station's contingency plans during the sit-in:

Meanwhile the station's normally smooth sound was somewhat interrupted by the transmission of pre-recorded music tapes, allegedly patched round master control via a studio and direct to the transmitter (contravening numerous IBA and needle time regulations, according to some) with a little help from members of management, non-union engineers, the chairman's step-daughter, direct IRN top-of-the-hour inserts and, initially, the one non-ABS jock.

(*Broadcast*, 17 May, 1976)

Director General of the IBA, Brian Young, outlining his disappointment to the Deputy Director General in a private and confidential memorandum, said, “Mrs L. [Shirley Littler, who was Head of the Broadcasting Department in the IBA, 1978-1981] confirmed our impression that there was no hope of broadcasting legislation making special employment provision to meet our particular problem” (Home Office – General, 1979a).

### **Contract renewals and splitting services**

Two further important matters of regulation emerged during this time; the discussion and eventual decisions regarding the renewal of ILR radio contracts; and opportunities for split frequency programming. These points provide further examples of a triangular relationship among politician, regulator and radio station, in both expanding and restricting ILR’s potential to grow. These will now be discussed in more detail.

The first ILR contracts were awarded for ten years and were up for renewal / re-advertisement in 1982. The IBA and radio stations became embroiled in the issue of ‘break points’ and ‘rolling contracts’. ‘Break points’ was an idea proposed by the IBA in 1977 which meant that each ILR contract would be opened up to competition after ten years (Stoller 2009). The industry, under its trade body, the AIRC, wanted to avoid this, ensuring that licences could be continued with the current franchisee and would not be opened up to new buyers. The main reason for this was in order to prevent further unrest among the ILR stations. Stations already had to undergo a procedure called ‘rolling contracts’, which meant they underwent a review by the IBA every year. This was very unsettling for the stations. For the IBA, the break points legislation meant a huge workload: from 1982 onwards, each contract would have to be re-advertised and stations would be required to reapply for the licence. This resulted in the IBA having to vet applications from potential new franchises in addition to the existing contractor. Detailed correspondence took place between the IBA and Whitelaw, in order to establish the length of time at which a contract break point should be introduced. In January 1980, in a confidential letter, Chair of the IBA Lady Plowden tried to persuade Whitelaw not to adhere to the ten year break point discussed with the previous government, in light of the workload this decision would create:

The Authority has an unparalleled load of work between now and the end of 1982, with the new television franchises, the planning for the Fourth Channel, and the appointment of some 24 new ILR companies. To continue our rolling contracts with existing companies, applying checks and deferments when a company is not doing well enough, and in the last resort, replacing it, is a feasible operation; but to put all the original ILR contractors into the melting-pot during the next three years or so would be bound to entail great strain on the Authority Members and less than adequate attention to our other tasks.

(Home Office – General, 1980a)

As the above extract suggests, the IBA seemed preoccupied with the effect of breakpoints on ‘Authority Members’. What assurances did they offer the stations? “Even the most admired and locally impressive of ILR companies now faces a fundamental challenge when the contract is readvertised” confirmed John Thompson (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1981). The letter from Lady Plowden is again revealing:

We have told them that this kind of difficulty is inherent in the system... Nevertheless, we have made it clear that the new rolling contracts will have ‘breakpoints’, with the full panoply of public consultation and the possibility of public competition, beginning probably in the mid-80s.

(Home Office – General, 1980a)

Whitelaw’s response reveals an insight into the first steps to move independent local radio to commercial radio and provides early indicators of the Conservative ideology of a free market ethos:

I agree with you that the existing contractors have done extremely well to establish independent local radio. I agree also that they (in company of course with other broadcasting organisations) have had to face the uncertainty caused by Annan and the time it has taken to bring forward substantive legislation for the long term future of broadcasting. I am not entirely sure however that this uncertainty has operated wholly to their disadvantage – it is at least arguable that the uncertainty has preserved their individual positions for longer than might otherwise have been the case.

(Home Office – General, 1980b)

It could be suggested therefore that the matter of break points sees the IBA being hoist with their own petard. The ten year break points contract was passed as law in the 1980 Broadcasting Act and as predicted, was a bureaucratic headache for the IBA. The

introduction of break points had formidable implications for two stations which the IBA regarded as underperforming: Beacon Radio in Wolverhampton and Radio Victory in Portsmouth (Stoller, forthcoming 2010). Radio Victory was regarded as a prestigious licence given its transmission area, and attracted big personalities. The handling of the readvertisement of the Radio Victory and the subsequent decision to hand it over to a new operator, Ocean Sound, was regarded as shocking to the ILR network at the time. The rationale behind the IBA's intervention and subsequent decision warrants further discussion in Chapter Four.

### **The split frequency debate**

The regulation surrounding the use of split frequencies is a key factor during this period. It highlights weaknesses in the IBA's decision-making process and recognises stations' desire to tailor programming to defined audiences at an early point in its development (Crisell 1994). When stations won a licence, they were given two frequencies for broadcast - the popular medium wave (MW) and the emerging VHF (FM). However, the IBA stipulated that each ILR station must simulcast programmes over each frequency. This research has uncovered a new aspect of this part of ILR's development. It is widely accepted that the splitting of frequencies began in 1988 (Crisell 1994; Stoller 2009). However, as early as 1980, correspondence began to emerge between Capital Radio and the IBA. John Whitney, Managing Director of Capital Radio, challenged the simulcast arrangement and suggested that split frequencies should be made possible on grounds of diversity. It would give the stations the chance to offer specialist programming for different audiences, such as classical concerts and current affairs. He reiterated the theme that had emerged in the Annan Report in 1977 about offering choice (Whitney 1980). This is important; it demonstrates and recognises that stations were keen to seize the initiative and challenge regulation. John Thompson (personal communication, 2009) states that "we expected the contractors to be much more forward thinking in coming up with ideas. We were rather surprised that they did not contact us that often".

Lobbying of the IBA by the stations over split frequencies could be regarded as an example of them grasping the opportunity to change the status quo – and break the simulcasting rule. This is an early example of ILR wanting to put the audience first when considering programming policy. A further examination of this point takes places

in Chapter Four. Their point of view was taken forward by the regulator. John Thompson, in an appeal to the Home Office, wrote a confidential plea to Shirley Littler:

The weekend VHF service would carry ‘predominately classical music, arts programmes, general information and criticism designed to meet the needs of Londoners’. The type of VHF-only service envisaged is an important and partly innovative development, on the one hand encouraging existing ILR listeners in their growing interest in the range of music and the arts in London, and on the other possibly attracting towards ILR some of those listeners who as yet rarely sample local radio.

We now seek a preliminary indication from you of the likely Home Office response to this approach.

(Home Office – General, 1980c)

Richard Findlay, Managing Director of Radio Forth (Edinburgh) also lobbied for split frequency programming in order to provide coverage of a global event, the Edinburgh Festival:

We weren’t allowed sponsorship and spot advertising had to be quite distinctive. It was one of the things we battled for – to have sponsorship. We broadcast an Edinburgh Festival programme and kept our other programming on the other frequency. In order to do that we had to persuade the IBA to allow us to sponsor the service, not the programme. British Airways wanted to do it, and Saatchi’s, who had their account, made no bones about it: “if we can persuade the IBA to do this, then the next step obviously is television”.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

This helps to clarify the difficulties in implementing new ideas and strategies. The IBA still centred their relationship as ‘master’ and ‘servant’; that is they appear to have continued to be bound by their overarching principle that their role was to interpret the legislation (Barnard 1989). Anything over and above this would need to be approved by the Home Office. Littler’s response to Thompson’s request was favourable although she expressed concerns over potentially increased profits, saying that split frequencies “could lead to a situation where one ILR company effectively enjoys two highly profitable franchises” (Home Office – General, 1980d). The exploitation of the commercial radio network in pursuit of profit was still against regulations, as outlined in

Chapter One. This supports the earlier point that Thatcherism had not yet arrived in full (Vinen 2009).

Littler's proposal was to put the matter of split frequencies to the joint ILR / BBC consortium, the Local Radio Working Party. However, by January 1981 the matter had still not been resolved. Lord Thomson of Monifieth, the new Chair of the IBA (1981-88) was a key figure in driving the initiative forward, lobbying William Whitelaw:

May I just follow up our word at lunch today by saying how important it is to us that in ILR some separate programming be allowed on VHF and MW? Just as in television our range of output was so severely limited by confinement to a single channel, so in ILR our opportunities to serve minorities and try something different are much handicapped if we have only a single stream of output by comparison with the BBC's five or six.

(Home Office – General, 1981a)

It would be five years before the split frequency experiment took place in 1986 and a further two before the IBA abolished simulcasting altogether in 1988. This is an important point in the history of commercial radio for two key reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the regulator's reluctance to allow ILR to create segmented audiences (continuing to support a public service ethos and restricting opportunities for what is regarded as an effective marketing strategy). Secondly, it confirms their ongoing concerns regarding profit; restricting the companies from what the IBA regarded as effectively running two radio services. The eventual acceptance of split frequencies and its impact upon the radio stations' futures is discussed in Chapter Four.

The economic climate in 1980-81 posed more problems for ILR. The unions continued with action and there were more large-scales strikes by steelworkers. A recession was underway, creating 2.7 million unemployed by 1981 (Marr 2007). Rioting, triggered by racial tension, broke out in Brixton, London and Toxteth, Liverpool. IRA prisoners went on hunger strike. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) gathered momentum when the Government announced that cruise missiles would be located at the Greenham Common airfield. The socio-political climate in the UK was tense. The government faced pressure to change tack on their counter-inflationary measures. At the Conservative Party conference in October 1980, Thatcher's resolve was declared in her speech, "You turn if you want to, the lady's not for turning" (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 2009). Her tone set a precedent for the 1980s.

So what did all of this mean for the twenty-eight ILR stations now on air? By 1980, there were thirty-five stations but only seven of them were in profit (Home Office – General, 1979c). The financial struggles continued. ‘*On the wavelength for recession – independent radio stations prepare to face economic downturn*’ reported *The Times* (8 July, 1980). Marr describes this period as one which “merged into a wider sense that confrontation was required in public life” (2007: 404). Marwick regards the 1980s as based on tolerance and confrontation (2003: 213). This sense of confrontation is relevant and becomes evident in ILR’s history at this point. It does indeed appear that ILR became more assertive and aggressive in its form of communication to the regulator. Chairman of the AIRC, Donald Brooks wrote to Brian Young to ask for reconsideration over the planned cost of living increases by the IBA for ILR rentals:

The advertising outlook continues to be extremely uncertain; the outcome from month to month is quite unpredictable and there seems little likelihood of an improvement as least as long as the recession lasts.

We believe therefore that this is the worst possible time to add to the financial burden of already hard-pressed companies and would be most grateful for whatever help the Authority can afford in this respect.

(AIRC, 1981b)

The IBA’s reply was as follows:

During this phase of rapid expansion of the system, however, we are faced with significant cost increases. All the IBA’s forward planning is subject to detailed and prudent analysis; and we work on as long a time-scale as the conditions imposed on us by Government and Whitehall have allowed.

In order to fund the next stage of ILR development, a total increase [estimated between 13 and 14 per cent] in primary rental yield will be required.

(Home Office – General, 1981b)

While it is difficult to link a more assertive ILR purely to the origins of Thatcherism, the behaviour of the radio companies does suggest a renewed sense of optimism. Marwick (2003) describes the 1980s as the flowering of an enterprise economy and alludes to a sense of well-being among the people. Crisell explains that the public’s tiredness with constant economic and political turbulence of the 1970s fuelled

Thatcher's resolve to "roll back state involvement and state provision" (2002: 222). The Conservatives' new Housing Act 1980 created a Right to Buy policy allowing tenants to buy their council houses and contributed to the sense of individualism that would become synonymous with the notion of Thatcherism. Evans' study (2004) forges the link between individualism and the view of Thatcherism as a political ideology:

Sheila [sic] Letwin, another Thatcher sympathiser, sees individualism as the key attribute. Her view is that, since people naturally follow what they perceive as their own interests, Thatcher was merely drawing upon basic human motivation, rendering it a political programme relevant to the circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s.

(Letwin cited Evans, 2004: 2)

This optimism led to production of a report by the AIRC in 1981. *'The Expansion of ILR'* (AIRC, 1981a) was a fifteen-page document distributed to the ILR network, IBA and Home Office, which put forward a positive case for ILR, highlighting its achievements and proposals for further expansion of the service. It recognises the role of the BBC as a competitor, a theme discussed previously in Chapter Two, citing two issues: scarcity of spectrum and availability of trained staff as important points to be taken into consideration with regards to planning both ILR and BBC Local Radio. This reflects upon weaknesses in both the role of, and the relationship with, the regulator. The document therefore ILR's profile and acknowledges the stations' broadcasting expertise and business acumen. It also challenges the composition of the Local Radio Working Party (LRWP), the Home Office-led group set up in 1978 following the Annan Report, to drive radio broadcasting forward:

The Independent Radio companies, despite frequent representations, have not been accorded membership although they have on one occasion met with the Working Party. We would not want to be thought to be merely churlish in complaining about this exclusion. We feel strongly that it has resulted in an imbalance. The 1978 Broadcasting White Paper (paragraph 45) recognises that the BBC has administrative and managerial / programming functions. The IBA is exclusively regulatory (in this sense) and, as a result, the programming, managerial and financial considerations on the Independent side have, at best, only been represented second-hand. It seems to use both unwise and inappropriate that the only direct expression of these considerations available to the Working Party has been that of the BBC.

(AIRC, 1981a)

ILR's financial woes were also top of the Report's agenda, especially the charges imposed on the programme contractors by the IBA. These charges had not changed or been adapted since 1973 to reflect economic trends. A profit ceiling of 25 per cent remained for the few ILR stations, such as Radio Clyde, who were in the black. For example, Clyde's profit in 1979 was £615,000, but after recharges back to the IBA and a further Government levy of £58,000, their trading profit was reduced to £368,000 (Home Office – General, 1979c). The regulator's experience of television would influence ILR finance. The levy is a case in point. This was a tax by the Government for use of the public airwaves. It had been part of the ITV model whereby "the levy was fixed at a rate of 66.7 per cent on each company's profits in excess of £250,000" (Potter 1989: 30). In 1979, the new Conservative Government brought up the matter of a levy for ILR. John Thompson started negotiations, basing his figures on the same 66.7 per cent used for calculating television levy, although the final figure applied would be 40 per cent (Authority Papers, 1981). The knock-on effect of the disharmony from the ITV companies would be echoed ten years later, by their commercial radio counterparts. Potter identifies the key issues which appear pertinent to TV and radio: "Many important decisions affecting programmes have been taken by the companies for 'levy reasons' though not the best on other grounds (1989: 33). When the Conservative Government attempted to review the levy arrangement, the IBA "defended the status quo stoutly", arguing that any such change would once again identify the levy as a device which allowed revenue-raising to take priority over good programme-making (Potter 1989: 33). While smaller in scale, the concerns raised by the ITV companies regarding the levy charge would be voiced vehemently by the radio companies by 1984. This will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

The AIRC Report stressed that "commercial viability must be one of the prime considerations in planning expansion" noting "with corporate tax, secondary rental and levy, ILR companies above a modest profit threshold face a marginal rate of taxation to the order of 87%" (AIRC, 1981a: point 22). Hendy clarifies vulnerability in an ILR model which can be used in the context of the early 1980s: "Whereas public-service radio's reliance on licence fees exposes it to political vicissitudes, commercial radio's reliance on advertising inevitably exposes it to more purely economic ones." (2000: 19). However, ILR was subjected to political *and* economic turbulence during this period; a consequence of the public / private system it tried to adopt.

One financial overhead that the AIRC was determined to negotiate down was music copyright fees. The first copyright tribunal in July 1980 vindicated Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) from charging ILR too much for music royalties, arguing that a reduction in payment was possible as “each ILR company is at liberty to use less than the maximum permitted needle time and if it should do so in any year there shall be a rateable reduction” (*Music Week*, July, 1980). It must be noted that some of the profit was ploughed back into ILR programming via the Programme Sharing Scheme, which helped fund the recording and production of large-scale concerts, events and documentaries. However, radio critic Gillian Reynolds identified a further regulatory constraint: “The flaw in this way of financing programmes has always been that it gives the Authority direct sanction over certain editorial areas (*Broadcast*, 15 December, 1980). In addition, in 1980, a National Broadcasting School was set up to train and develop radio practitioners, including journalists, producers and editors. However, a large percentage of the ‘taxes’ was paid directly to the Treasury. The publication of the Report demonstrates the use of the public sphere by the AIRC in order to make its case heard. The AIRC clearly presents ILR as a separate entity to the IBA. This creates a more powerful voice for ILR and it allowed them to express an opinion, both on behalf of the industry, and crucially, in representing the ‘listener’ and the ‘locality’. Point Six in the Report makes a defining point about ILR knowing its audience:

... it provides the fundamental rationale for broadcasting that people should be listening as well as speaking; it points to the close relationship and trust which has developed between broadcaster and listener; it enables Independent Radio genuinely to serve the whole community largely irrespective of age, class or other apparent social division ...

(AIRC, 1981a)

Point thirteen in The Report declared, “individual ILR companies have particular knowledge of local areas ... this is more properly expressed by individual companies” (AIRC, 1981a: point 13). Drawing upon the perception of ILR’s (that is, not the IBA’s) audience marked a different approach in lobbying for change. Another confidential document was compiled by the AIRC and submitted to the IBA in November 1982. *‘Independent Radio – current viability and future development’* outlined the financial state of ILR with a sense of urgency, stating “The present Radio Division financial practices will further drive companies into loss-making situations” (AIRC, 1982b). It highlights the disparity between ILR and ITV rental calculations and makes

recommendations for restructuring and refinancing. During the next five years, continual use of the media by the AIRC becomes a clear strategy for provoking change. This forms a key part of the discussion in the forthcoming chapter.

In summary, the issue of the split frequency debate outlined earlier provides early examples of challenges to regulation. Another was the AIRC's first (failed) attempt to win a tribunal judgement over PPL. However, there are two other highly important issues, during the period 1981-83. Both are linked to the economic recession and the stations' battle for survival. The first involves the launch and subsequent closure of Centre Radio, the ILR station for Leicester, and further examines the use of the public sphere, by both the broadcasters and the general public. The second surrounds ILR's diversification into print. Both of these examples are now discussed in more detail.

### **Centre Radio - a failure of regulation?**

The build up to the closure of Centre Radio, the first and only station during the research period to go out of business, and the aftermath, is well documented by the IBA and the media at the time. (Centre Radio – Programmes). The IBA was criticised widely for the handling of Centre Radio's problems. One criticism included not intervening to offer Centre Radio financial assistance from its Secondary Rental charges that were levied on ILR stations each month. Its status as Broadcaster (the IBA was regarded as the broadcaster of ILR stations as it owned the transmitters) fuelled further anger and debate. The case of Centre Radio and its aftermath will now be examined in detail.

The ILR contract for Leicester was awarded to Centre Radio in May 1980 and the station was launched on 7 September, 1981. It was the twenty-ninth ILR station, with a transmission area of over half a million. Initial indications for the station's success were promising. Leicester had been the location for the first BBC Local Radio station in 1967 and it could be suggested that an existing audience *au fait* with the elements of localism, might be even more favourable to a dedicated local service for the Leicester area. Stoller refers to this as "historic irony" (forthcoming 2010: 125). The programme schedules for the new service recognised the social and cultural concerns of the area and the need to cater for diverse audiences: "By emphasising the advantages of cultural diversity, Centre Radio will make its contribution to racial harmony" was the intention expressed in the programme plans submitted to the IBA in September 1981 (Centre

Radio – Programmes, 1980). These intentions were ambitious and convincing, outlining a diverse music policy, specialist shows for the Asian community, and dedicated content for children and the elderly. The plans hold up well, compared to the example of Capital Radio, another station launched amid turbulent times (Home Office – General, 1972). *Broadcast* announced the nine-strong journalists’ team, recalling Centre’s newsroom was “ship shape and ready to go for its September launch” (*Broadcast*, 24 August, 1981).

The first signs of trouble for Centre Radio appeared within the first year of its licence when it made a loss of over £100,000 in its first year. There were two clear causes for concern. Firstly, there had been a number of serious management issues, resulting in several walkouts. Secondly, the financial costs of running the station had escalated and were exacerbated by failure to attract sufficient advertising revenue. The financial problems led to the first stage of intervention by the IBA when Centre Radio’s Board could not put any more money into the business. Confidential memoranda on 27 and 30 September, 1982 revealed measures to help the station, notably a ‘holiday’ on primary rental charges for twelve month (Centre Radio – Programmes, 1981-2a / 1981-2b). In programming terms, The IBA made some recommendations to cut costs. Centre Radio discussed its plans to reduce the news team to four journalists and one editor, to use more IRN and local information and “persuade ‘journalists’” to develop into ‘broadcasters’ (Centre Radio – Programmes, 1981-2b). The cuts had little effect. Centre Radio’s costs continued to escalate. The local newspaper ran eight articles outlining Centre’s troubles. (Local newspapers traditionally had a difficult relationship with ILR, with whom they saw themselves in competition for advertising.) In October 1982, a local paper, the *Leicester Mercury*, which had been following Centre Radio’s ups and downs, ran the headline ‘City radio station to tell owners of losses’. In August 1983, the paper published news of Centre’s cost-cutting measures but more worryingly the station reported a loss of £255,000 for the year ended September 1982. With the shareholders unwilling to pump any more money into the station, Centre Radio went into voluntary liquidation on 7 October 1983, after only two years on air.

The fallout over Centre Radio’s demise is worthy of reflection. There are suggestions that the IBA should have offered more financial assistance to save Centre Radio, using capital raised from the secondary rental scheme (Centre Radio – Programmes 1981-2). For the year end 1979, the secondary rental paid to the IBA, from the seven stations in

profit, came to nearly £3 million (Home Office – General, 1979d). Given that the IBA had always been defined as the ‘broadcaster’, there were suggestions that it was their responsibility to bail Centre Radio out of trouble. At the very least, there were suggestions that even when Centre Radio was closed down, the IBA had a moral obligation to continue running the radio service. In addition the IBA faced criticism that they had known more about the radio station’s plight than it had been willing to divulge, although it is clear that the IBA sympathised with the station in a series of confidential telephone calls (Centre Radio – Programmes, 1981-2b). However, their (lack of) intervention was the subject of intense debate in the press and among listeners, once Centre Radio folded. The *Financial Times* reported, ‘IBA detected crisis at Centre Radio’ suggesting a lack of pre-launch publicity by the IBA as one of the causes of failure (8 November, 1983b); ‘IBA had power to save Centre Radio’ reported the *Leicester Mercury*, on 13 April, 1984. The issue of power and responsibility by the IBA continued as a theme. There is a large volume of listener complaint letters sent to the regulator, extracts of which are provided below:

What more can I say, except that I’m very bitter with you – the IBA for ‘pulling the plug out’ on Centre Radio, - in doing this you have upset – angered and saddened a great majority of people.

(Centre Radio – Programmes, 1982-3a)

I am sure many others have written to their MPs about the disgraceful decision – you – the IBA have made against this station. Would you have done it to Central T.V.?

(Centre Radio – Programmes, 1982-3d)

Listeners also contributed their suggestions to alternative ways the IBA could have resolved problems, thus provoking debate in the public sphere:

I would, however, suggest to you, in the strongest possible terms that since the I.B.A. were responsible in the first place for giving the franchise to the present franchisee, who have proved to be totally inept, you are, therefore, responsible to the Leicestershire people for providing us with our radio station and the only sensible thing to do is for you, the I.B.A. to take over the management of the station, let the present staff run it, and then advertise in the normal way for another franchise.

(Centre Radio – Programmes, 1982-3c)

Centre Radio staff vented their anger, upset and frustration, suggesting that under the 1973 IBA Act, “the authority have the power to take over the running of Centre Radio” (Centre Radio – Programmes, 1982-3b). The IBA’s response to these letters came from Peter Baldwin, Deputy Director of Radio, and stated:

The IBA very much regrets that the directors of Centre Radio of Leicester felt obliged to cease trading because of the accumulation of a substantial volume of debt. This is the first time in ten years, with over 40 stations now on air that one of the ILR companies has gone out of business. Every effort has been made by the IBA to avert this.

The IBA has strict limits on its powers to help but has given every possible assistance to Centre Radio to prevent its closure.

(Centre Radio – Programmes, 1982-3e)

It is important to reflect on the issue of fairness when criticising the IBA and assessing whether they should have saved Centre Radio, as the letters above indicate. Evidence of several telephone calls suggests that the IBA did make a fair attempt to put in measures to help the station survive (Centre Radio – Programmes, 1981-2b). Centre Radio was the unfortunate victim of bad management and corporate investment. Where the IBA may have gone wrong was in their examination of the initial applications for the franchise. It is also worthy of note that Centre Radio’s replacement, Leicester Sound, launched in 1984, was a financial and programming success. However, what the Centre Radio case highlighted was that the IBA model of regulation, interventionist in its nature, could not protect stations from market forces and corporate agendas. This safe and secure environment afforded to stations during the first ten years of ILR was compromised by Centre Radio’s situation. Gibbons extensive study of commercial media regulation suggests “if a programme contractor failed to comply with the IBA’s directions, it could directly intervene to maintain the service” (1998: 257). This is the key point; the IBA did not step in to keep the Centre Radio frequency on the air, and as such, it was regarded as a failure of regulation at the time as it was the only commercial radio station to go out of business, despite the IBA’s apparent rigorous regulatory processes and procedures.

### **Freesheets – the radio station newspaper**

The UK recession of the early 1980s affected ILR heavily because of the nature of its advertising model. As outlined in Chapter One, sponsored programming and presenter

endorsements were never a part of the advertising culture of ILR. While the case of Centre Radio remains as the only ILR station to go out of business (during the research timeframe) many others struggled to keep their heads above water. This was difficult not only because of the recession but also because the choice of advertising options was limited for stations. By 1983 stations began to initiate new opportunities and diversify in order to raise revenue. The manner in which they did this is important to the research as it demonstrates a move from the culture of seeking permission to asking forgiveness. Some ILR stations had established a regular radio station magazine to help raise profile and publicise their programme schedule. Stations regarded this as a key part of their marketing strategy, which supported the IBA's view of the importance of localisation, both for advertisers and listeners, not dissimilar to regionalisation within ITV (Johnson and Turnock 2005). These magazines also carried advertising. By 1983, in the midst of the recession, Radio Victory had introduced a 'freesheet' – a free property newspaper, 'Property Guide' branded with the station name which also carried programming information. Victory sold advertising within the Guide, as part of an on-air, off-air deal, using the newspaper as an additional outlet and using the same rate card. Within months several freesheets cropped up in ILR areas. *'Radio County Sound News'* appeared in Guildford, Surrey, "an eight-page paper with about three pages of advertising" (Publicity – Freesheets, 1983a). Signal Radio launched a similar venture in Stoke-on-Trent (Publicity – Freesheets, 1983a). In December 1983, the *UK Press Gazette* reported that CBC, the ILR station for Cardiff, had made its first trading profit since launching four years ago, with the headline 'ILR station branches out into the free newspaper business'. The article went on to describe the newspaper, called 'What's Going On?' as:

...a guide to events and radio programmes. Two thirds of the paper is advertising of all kinds which is sold by CBC, often in a joint package of freesheet space plus airtime.

(*UK Press Gazette*, 16 December, 1983)

The stations claimed they were doing nothing wrong, as the freesheet was a further extension of the regular promotional radio station magazine that was established. Furthermore the IBA had encouraged stations to find new income streams; they regularly sold column advertising in their quarterly promotional community magazine. Now, with a poor financial climate, stations needed to maximise any advertising opportunity, ever more important given the restrictions on sponsored programming and

fixed, inflexible commercial sales time. The main problem according to the IBA was the distribution method used to pitch the freesheets to the target audience. This was far more aggressive and involved the freesheet being delivered door-to-door via a free-drop in order to enable the advertising carried in the paper to have the widest possible coverage. The Newspaper Society complained bitterly to the IBA “arguing that newspaper proprietors were forbidden by statute from running a radio station so why should an IBA contractor publish a newspaper?” (Publicity – Freesheets, 1983b). The IBA in return sought legal advice from their Solicitors, Allen & Overy:

The local Portsmouth press brought in the Newspaper Society who now see evil in almost every form of ILR free-drop. Most of these are irregularly produced, nearly all contain advertising and the majority have an editorial content that is predominately about the radio station and its personalities. Nevertheless the Newspaper Society see any siphoning off by ILR of any advertising revenue which could be construed as normally going to the local press as unfair competition on our companies’ part.

(Publicity – Freesheets, 1983c)

Upon consultation with lawyers and the Newspaper Society, the IBA confirmed that while no contractual obligations had been broken, they would however issue Notes of Guidance for ILR, dissuading stations from diversifying in this manner:

The IBA believes it is not in the best interests of Independent Radio to move significantly into the realm of newspaper publishing, particularly those which attract local commercial advertising in direct competition with local newspapers.

(Publicity – Freesheets, 1984a)

In return, the Notes of Guidance caused further consternation. The Managing Director of Aberdeen-based Northsound Radio, (an ex-newspaper man) explained the pressure stations were facing:

You will not need me to remind you that many companies, particularly the small ones, are experiencing serious financial difficulties.

We, at Northsound Radio, are currently investigating the merits of publishing a weekly freesheet to fill a gap in the market caused by a recent take-over. I am sure that the Authority is sympathetic to the problems of small companies such as ours and will

recognise that continued restrictions on diversification place a question mark against our very survival.

(Publicity – Freesheets, 1984b)

Six months later, the IBA's position had shifted due to pressure from the stations. The Director General of the IBA, John Whitney, wrote to the Newspaper Society:

ILR companies have urged the IBA to reconsider its various forms of regulation. The IBA is obviously concerned about the health of its contractors in an increasingly competitive market. Some companies exist in small or depressed areas and find it increasingly difficult to sustain an acceptable level of revenue. Boards of directors are urging their executives to maximise their revenue wherever possible.

We do not have a statutory requirement to restrict our contractors over the production of free sheets and other publications. In the light of the above, we propose to withdraw our 'Notes of Guidance' with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1985.

(Publicity – Freesheets, 1984c)

ILR's use of freesheets lasted until the late 1980s, gradually phasing out as the economic climate improved. However, by this point, the stations had challenged the regulatory system. This experience would form part of the continual lobby for lighter regulation (both financial and content) that began in earnest. This is detailed in Chapter Four.

### **Regulation in action**

A decade later, ILR has established for itself an important niche in the British broadcasting scene. It has suffered from delays through the 1970s in developing the network and from a draconian levy arrangement. The system as a whole has yet to achieve real financial security and to prove its worth as an investment. In ten years however, it has built up a large and faithful audience and has consistently provided just the sort of local service which was its original justification.

(Right Hon, Christopher Chataway MP, speaking on ILR's tenth anniversary, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, November, 1983b)

In 1983, ILR celebrated its tenth birthday. "Your success is a splendid example of private initiative and private finance combining to meet a public need" commented Mrs

Thatcher (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1983b). There were now forty seven stations on air. The break points contract arrangements went smoothly with the first five stations having their licences renewed, although LBC had to fight off competition from a number of challengers. The media reacted to its successful licence renewal, claiming “The Falklands Factor: LBC’s key to its victory in the radio war” (*Campaign*, 8 October, 1982). While the Network had expanded and was achieving good audience figures, the sound of the commercial radio station had not changed radically in the ten year period, although profitable stations had increased their broadcasting hours. Commercial radio pioneered local twenty-four hour broadcasting. Radio Clyde had moved to round-the-clock broadcasting as early as 1975, while Radio One only increased its hours from 6am – midnight in 1982. The remaining overnight airtime was filled on both Radio One and BBC local radio stations by Radio Two. While Stoller recalls that use of the phrase meaningful speech was dropped by this point, ILR’s obligation to mixed public service programming was still the order of the day (personal communication, 2009). It was not yet a full service pop station (Crisell 2002). The programming issues surrounding trying to be ‘all things to all people’ were still evident and the IBA continued to advocate that it was speech content that drove audiences, not music.

One general lesson from the experience of ILR so far is that news and information, both local and also national and international, if presented in an interesting and reliable way, are the bait attracting listeners in the first place. They will then stay tuned to the station provided the general programming and the music policy can appeal continuously to local tastes.

(Thompson, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1981)

Andy Park, Head of Entertainment at Radio Clyde, explained the problems associated with music programming back in 1976:

Do we programme for a twenty-six year old housewife or for the factory worker who can hear only the beat? Do we structure our output to catch the bulk of listening at various times? Or do we voluntarily limit the possibility of catching everyone by varying the content as little as possible? What price the idea that the whole spectrum of society might be the audience? Is it an impossible dream?

(*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1976a)

Music programming was still a problem for ILR in the early 1980s. There was no consistent pattern. Stations were still subject to needle time, speech requirements and

diversity of musical genre. Although Crisell (2002) suggests that ILR featured more chart material and a stronger reliance on pop music, Stoller argues:

That misunderstands the role of music in independent radio in its first fifteen years. Popular music - very varied in nature - was the vehicle which carried news, (meaningful) speech, and an intense suffusion of localness. It was not until the late eighties, with the standardisation of music playlists, the spread of music research/auditorium testing and the success of Richard Park's concept of modern CHR at Capital that ILR began to adopt the overtly commercial approach to its music programming which characterised the arrival of commercial radio in the nineties.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

Furthermore, the IBA Radio Programming Officers regularly monitored stations' output and drafted memoranda and reports on progress and suggestions for improvement:

An LBC producer recently complained to me that 'this place always thinks tapes, not programmes'. So it's good to see them moving out to venues such as the Ideal Home Exhibitions and bringing more live material into the output. Which brings me to the coverage of the Budget and the Chancellor's speech provided last week. The team of 'pros' – Brian Hayes, Peter Allen and Douglas Moffatt – excelled themselves on this occasion. What a pity, therefore, that so few ILR stations saw fit to take the Chancellor's speech live.

(LBC Programmes – General, 1981)

An RCC paper entitled: '*ILR Breakfast Programming*', prepared by the IBA staff and circulated to all stations in September 1981, contained an analysis of listening across the ILR network. It gave feedback on national and local news bulletins, sport, current affairs, features and interviews, travel, weather and time checks "in the hour ranged from 23 to only 3" and music choice "the amount of music played is inverse to the level of speech content. The number of records played ranged from 5 to 12". Under Presentation, it said: "A number of presenters attempted a loose, self-centred and jokey style, sometimes with an individual local flavour" (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1981b). The IBA regularly produced and circulated papers outlining their ideas for content. Referred to as 'Programming Priorities', these reports did not always go down well with stations. Tony Stoller, who had at this point, moved from his position as Head of Radio Programming at the IBA to Managing Director of Radio 210 (Reading), replied to one such paper in 1982:

1. We are concerned that the paper seems to imply the positioning of ILR as a radio service against BBC Radio Four rather than the whole spectrum of competitive radio services.
2. We firmly oppose any suggestion that it is correct to pre-suppose that all companies should take the IRN bulletins live, unless reasons exist to overturn this presumption. We strongly urge the IBA to reconsider and reverse this policy. We also do not receive with any enthusiasm the suggestion of a 'World at One' network programme and our view is shared by LBC/IRN.

(AIRC, 1982a)

A more formal process for reporting progress came into effect by 1985, with the introduction of annual Authority Reports on Companies (19816a/b/c/d). These were confidential reports regarding each contractor, compiled by IBA staff, which were not distributed to radio stations. The material within these reports includes sections on programming and presenters, finance, social action and speech content. They will be examined further in Chapter Four. While stations may have wished to have been more pop-oriented, the IBA's over-regulation and over-zealous reporting continued to create tension between stations and regulator. Regulatory restrictions also led to an influx of pirate radio stations which opened up ideas about musically diverse content for small communities (Crisell 2002). The IBA's lack of flexibility coupled with constant demands for information for inclusion in reports, created tension in the relationship between the IBA and ILR. A 'note for the record' following a lunch between Shirley Littler and Managing Director of AIRC, Brian West was circulated to key people in the IBA. It reveals that the discussion centred on improving relations between the stations and the Authority (AIRC, 1983a).

The issue of gender emerged during the period. In August 1982, a pressure group, Women's Media Action, complained to the IBA over the lack of women presenters on the air and female-orientated content (LBC Programmes – General, 1982). Women had been influential in the early years of ILR. Radio critic, Gillian Reynolds was the first female ILR Programme Controller, responsible for Radio City, Liverpool, in 1974. In February 1982, former editor of *Woman* magazine, Jo Sandilands, became Programme Controller of Capital Radio. This is relevant as it impacted upon programme style and content (ILR would maximise its appeal to a female audience post-1990 when it became able to segment the market):

Capital Programme Controller, Jo Sandilands, has stamped her new schedule with indelible ink, true to her background in women's magazines. Bingo on the air, astrology, quizzes, detective work, children's programming, a change of emphasis from music to speech for the breakfast show and Dame Edna Everage are among her new features.

(*Broadcast*, 1 March, 1982)

A new lobby for the radio industry emerged in July 1983 with the creation of a new pressure group, The Voice of the Listener, under the leadership of Jocelyn Hay. She would later become a key figure for lobbying both ILR and the BBC. Complaints to the IBA regarding programme content continued on a regular basis. One such complaint is akin to the famous 'War of the Worlds' broadcast in 1938, which panicked Americans into thinking a Martian invasion was imminent. On a smaller scale, Radio Hallam in Sheffield created a similar level of distress in October 1982 by broadcasting a simulated four-minute warning of a nuclear attack. The piece of production was to introduce a programme debate over nuclear war and disarmament and the station received a formal warning for breaching IBA rules (*The Sunday Times*, 12 October, 1982).

The differences between the BBC and commercial operators became more apparent during the early 1980s. The national BBC stations were by this point, more clearly defined (Barnard 1989) yet a competitive relationship remained, stirred up by the press. *The Sun* argued that "Radios One and Two are a stream of pop that is in any case done better by the commercial companies" (18 October, 1982), while *The Sunday Times* reported that "Once again, the BBC is planning a pre-emptive strike to thwart an initiative from the independent broadcasting sector. The object of its muscle-flexing is community radio" (*Sunday Times*, 9 December, 1984). The repositioning of the BBC in the late 1970s was useful for ILR as it enabled commercial radio to be treated in its own right, as opposed to the constant comparisons which took place during the previous decade. In contrast, perceptions shifted and BBC Radios One and Two were regularly compared to ILR. One aspect of ILR that attracted both interest and respect from the BBC was the use of off-air marketing tactics to raise local profiles and drive audiences:

ILR taught us how to sell radio stations, basically, ILR marketed itself, certainly in its early years, very well indeed, with its car stickers and its promotional activities, its buses, its T-shirts, its mugs. Up to then, most of the promotion of the BBC local stations

was low key ... I think it's only since ILR that the BBC has seriously marketed its radio stations.

(Tony Fish, BBC Radio York, cited Barnard, 1989: 66)

Barnard also points out that BBC programming “began to follow the ILR formula of records interspersed with information and dedications” (1989: 66). The increase in radio broadcasting hours (from 6.00am to midnight) prompted the *Birmingham Evening Mail* to comment that “Radio One is launching a dawn raid on commercial stations like BRMB (17 November, 1982). The new broadcasting hours also brought about a change in the needle time legislation for the BBC, with a further 30 hours of recorded music being granted, in addition to the existing 84 hours per week. This came at a cost of £15.1 million pounds, payable to PPL over three years (*Music and Video Week*, 27 November, 1982). This enabled Radio One to be more adventurous in its programming (Barnard 1989: 61). Significantly, there was no adjustment for ILR’s needle time, which remained the same at nine hours per day. ILR again continued to be governed by copyright charges and the Musicians Union contract.

The publication of a paper in 1982 entitled *BBC Radio Policy for the Nineties* outlines the objectives for the four national stations, and included a new service, Radio Five: “A system of about 40 BBC local radio stations and national regional radio, broadcasting locally-orientated programmes, news and information” (*UK Press Gazette*, 12 December, 1982). The document outlines ways to modernise and popularise the national network and received over 2000 letters of protest (Hendy 2007). The proposal for Radio Five (although unfounded) is significant, given the similarities in structure and style of the ILR network at the time. It highlights the lack of strategy by the IBA for local radio, who now focused on discussing the value in Independent National Radio (INR). The reason for the IBA to be reactive, as opposed to proactive in its planning, could be linked to the lack of radio practitioners working within the Authority. In addition, the complex reporting lines (to the Home Office) may have added to their lack of confidence. However, they were also keen to develop a national strand of ILR that local stations could feed into and vice versa in order to compete with the BBC.

The profile of ILR generally appears to have grown stronger, according to press coverage during 1982-83. During this time, ILR continued to tailor local content to fit diverse communities. Mercia Sound, the ILR station for Coventry and Warwickshire,

produced a schedule for 1982 which included *Mercia Bookshelf*, a book review programme, *Aakash Deep*, an Asian music programme, and *Maximum Volume*, a programme targeting the under 25s by offering job vacancies and training, designed specifically to respond to Coventry's high unemployment among the young (*Mercia Sound Magazine*, 1983). Technological advances enabled ILR to engage further with its audience in two new ways. Both serve as early forms of interactivity, building on its role within the public sphere and were due, in part, to the influence of regulation. Working in partnership with the (then state-owned) British Telecom, Mercia Sound was the first ILR station in the UK to create a telephone voting line, called VOTELINE, to enable callers to 'enter' into on air live phone-in debates, via a series of three telephone numbers, for YES, NO and DON'T KNOW. This statistical approach to the 'voice of the people' was then used by the radio presenter during the topic under debate. The listeners' experience of using Voteline was described as "exciting and exhilarating" (*Mercia Sound Magazine*, 1982). This easy to access service was introduced in addition to the phone ins and went further to create a form of participatory media from the 'man on the street' and blue collar workers. These forms of interaction among the lower social classes than traditionally represented in phone-ins / debates were important in establishing the radio phone-in as representing a new view of the country – crucial in the changing times of the early 1980s and as competition to the social classes often represented by the BBC radio audience: "their emphasis on the inclusion of the untutored, often crude voices of ordinary people, were, by virtue of their popularity and seeming populism, inherently democratic" (Loviglio 2005: 127). Hendy (2007) while recognising that the level of interaction afforded by voteline might only be momentary, regards this as an important step in creating a two-way democratic medium. He highlights the dangers this style of programming approach can bring for an audience because of "... the rhetoric of radio's powers of mass manipulation through propaganda, or of its tendency to trivialise important political and social issues through its simplistic and fleeting attentions" (Hendy 2000: 196)

The second idea was RADIOLINE, which enabled people to listen to ILR over the phone:

The introduction of Mercia Sound Radioline saw an extension of British Telecom's 'guideline' services, which include the popular disc line and time line (the speaking

clock) and brought Mercia Sound into the company of other go-ahead radio stations such as those serving Manchester and Liverpool.

The number of calls to Radioline averages around 3,000 a week but events of particular importance and interest are reflected in an increase in the number of calls made to the service. For example, in the week in which HMS Coventry was sunk [during the Falklands conflict] the number of calls rose to over 10,000 while the occasion of the birth of Prince William brought nearly 5,500.

*(Mercia Sound Magazine, 1982)*

The development of communications technology during this period was important because it began a process of modernisation for ILR. Improving accessibility for listeners meant that content had to be fresh, original and relevant. The Voteline for example, contributed to a shift from a passive to active listener. Its role as representing the voice of the people, came at a time when the public were forming and challenging views. ILR's unique status (commercial radio with public service values) as an important step change in its perception. Hilmes' research into early American radio is relevant:

The creation of the institution of radio broadcasting as a government-regulated extension of the public sphere gave the experience of 'listening in' more weight and influence than going to the movies or reading a popular magazine; its status as a semipublic institution charged with tasks of education and cultural uplift, put it on a par with other official institutions, such as schools, churches and the government itself.

*(Hilmes 1997: 7)*

Marwick agrees that technological developments and the rise of IT (information technology) was a key characteristic of this period and integral to social reform: "It was certainly a most important growth area with respect to employment and profit-making opportunities, and it permeated many aspects of work and leisure" (2003: 238). Crisell recognises the power of both technology and economics in moving power away from individual states and into a global domain, "affecting not just the broadcasting media, but general trade and the movement of capital, physical activity, scientific activity, the traffic in information and even aspects of private life" (Crisell 2002: 222). The impact of the beginning of a globalised, homogenised media world is discussed on page 110.

As discussed, ILR began to hold its own against the BBC, but importantly, its lack of vision and future planning still held back the Independent Network. The IBA continued in a reactive, rather than proactive manner. Meanwhile, the BBC forged ahead with plans for the 1990s. ILR, while considerably faster in responding to audience demand by way of new licences, was still limited by regulation in both the programme content it could offer and the amount of revenue it could generate. Some progress was made following the appointment of John Whitney, former Managing Director of Capital Radio, to Director General of the IBA. He wanted to ease the emphasis from regulation and concentrate more on partnership (Whitney 2007). Within one year, these factors would become critical to both ILR and the IBA's survival, largely due to the power of the AIRC lobby, and importantly, Thatcherism. The political ideology of privatisation and the creation of a free market ethos, would be a pivotal moment for the next stage of ILR development as would Thatcher's view of broadcasting. These points are examined in Chapter Four.

### **ILR and innovation– the Programme Sharing Scheme**

While this period of ILR saw development and expansion of the network, there was little change in the sound of the stations. Mixed programming, needle time and speech programming were still key components of station output. However, it was during this period that ILR showed creativity by the introduction of an initiative: The Programme Sharing Scheme. The Scheme was both an important and influential tool in ILR programming and of historical importance, given the breadth and range of production skills it reveals.

There were some excellent programmes made, some of which, even now, would stand the test of listening to. For me it is a matter of abiding regret that all that got lost. The days when radio stations made prestigious programmes and hoped to syndicate them are long gone.

(Stoller cited Street, 2001: 101)

Content produced before the 1990 Broadcasting Act illustrates the different approach that commercial radio took to its own role. Much of the work created by individual ILR stations during the 1980s is held in the Programme Sharing Scheme. The change since the period covered by material in this collection is remarkable, not least because the

truly local stations of the 1970s and 1980s have since been absorbed by larger radio groups (Street 2007). The Programme Sharing Scheme is an important example of commercial radio innovation for three reasons: it demonstrates a unique breadth and range of independent programme and production skills; it can be regarded as an early form of syndicated programming; it serves as an historical document. Central to the research question, it appears paradoxical. The Programme Sharing Scheme, was on the one hand, borne out of regulation and the regulator's demand for meaningful speech; conversely, some producers regarded it as an opportunity to develop their skills and ideas, *in spite of* regulation (Bernard, personal communication, 2009). These points are now discussed in more detail.

The Programme Sharing Scheme was a system developed by the stations and the IBA, as a way of exchanging programmes across the network, based on the ITV arrangement from regional stations (Gibbons 1998). The IBA saw it in “stark contrast” to the ITV model because it was not built into their contractual obligations and was a more limited informal arrangement (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1984). It is notable historically because it was borne out of regulation and the IBA's demands for meaningful speech as outlined in the previous chapter. The uniqueness of the programmes was its local origination by individual ILR stations and ranged from music and entertainment, interviews and reviews, dramas and documentaries, with national appeal:

When local radio journalists and producers are working in their own back yard they may be expected to tackle a problem with more understanding and perception than, say, reporters brought in from the capital city. If, moreover, the local station is covering a local issue with national implications – such as the Merseyside riots, unemployment on Teesside, industrial unrest in the Midlands or North East – the case for making its well-informed coverage is particularly strong.

(Felicity Wells, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, September, 1984)

The master copies of these programmes were fed into a central exchange unit and the Programme Sharing Coordinator would log and dispatch information on available programmes to all stations. The stations could then purchase a programme from the monthly list supplied at a cost of eight pounds. While it began as an informal exchange system among individual stations in the late 1970s, the Programme Sharing Scheme became established as a formal, costed approach to programme production in the early

1980s. By 1983, the scheme no longer came under the IBA's jurisdiction and the AIRC managed the Programme Sharing Unit (Street 2001). It remained as a service for the network until 1989. It is an important point in its history for two reasons. Firstly, it is a 'lost' era in both physical and virtual terms; this style of programming is beyond recognition in today's industry. In addition, many stations have discarded their archives. Secondly, the Scheme demonstrates an early form of networked programming. These points will now be expanded upon.

Many of the programmes compiled within the Sharing Scheme were not kept (although some individual collections have been archived by the Centre for Broadcasting History Research, Bournemouth University). In addition to a physical loss, the Scheme included dramas and documentaries and presents evidence of a whole new sound for commercial radio, in contrast to the formulaic, predominately music-based programming that exists today. New generations of radio producers and managers are often unaware of the quality of ILR production, both technically and conceptually and the Programme Sharing Scheme is therefore a major part of its history. Secondly, the Scheme was arguably the fore-runner for syndicated and networked programming in the UK. "It's pre-packaged network ILR" reported media commentator Nick Higham in *Broadcast* (August 1983b). At this point no programmes were shared across commercial radio: "While the Authority had long encouraged a modest degree of programme-sharing, it had never favoured national syndication of programmes because of the paramountcy of local output" (Barnard 1989: 85). However, the experience of the Scheme would change some perceptions among the radio stations of the value of syndication. The AIRC's influence in taking over management of the Scheme had a key role to play:

The AIRC Programming Committee is currently sifting through many proposals, which have either originated from within the ILR system or from an independent source, with a view to possible networking or syndication. There are those who believe that financial benefit will accrue from an advertiser's ability to buy time around or during a programme which is networked or syndicated on ILR. Others hold that this contradicts the essentially local nature of the stations, that it will not in any case bring increased revenue and will rob stations of their editorial sovereignty.

(Felicity Wells, September 1984)

Pressure and lobbying from the AIRC would eventually lead to the IBA's acceptance of the first networked and sponsored programme. *The Network Chart Show*, a top forty

rundown sponsored by Nescafé, launched in 1984 in a deal worth over half a million pounds.<sup>14</sup>

The Programme Sharing Scheme was influential because it created a platform, both for the IBA and the stations, to consider the view that material produced by one station could still be deemed suitable for another station's local audience. In the 1970s and early 1980s ILR stations were very territorial about their programmes and often saw themselves in competition with each other. Likewise, the IBA's regulatory constraints, which saw huge financial demands upon a station's programming budget, could be recouped by the stations to some degree through the budget of the Programme Sharing Scheme.

The Programme Sharing Scheme was different to what is regarded as syndicated programming today because it was independently produced by each radio company, and not just shared among stations from the same group. It did however, enable the IBA to recognise and accept the benefits of stations working together as an industry, rather than as disparate companies. Thompson (2009) argues the stations were rather slow on the uptake of shared programming. However, it was Stoller, in his role as Head of Radio Programming that seized the initiative on the side of the IBA. He identified that a funding mechanism which could be used to support production and distribution costs for programmes in the Scheme. Writing to Terry Smith, Managing Director of Radio City, Liverpool in 1979, Stoller said, "The sooner we can get some specific proposals together the more likely it is that we will be able to tap into secondary rental for at least some of the costs" (AIRC, 1979). Stoller's draft paper tabled at the RCC Programming Sub-Committee put forward thorough administrative, operational and financial plans to ensure effective running of the service. In addition to the general aim of a shared programme facility, the Scheme also outlined the possibility for greater collaboration on programmes with both other UK radio stations and in Europe (ILR became part of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU)). This feature of the system was known as the Ideas Loop:

As the system developed, it is assumed that it will help companies get together on programming projects. The exchange system can therefore be preceded when appropriate by an ideas exchange. A company seeking co-operation informs the co-

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<sup>14</sup> All ILR stations were contracted to take *The Network Chart Show* between 5-7pm each Sunday. It is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

ordinator ... If any company feels it can contribute it then informs the co-ordinator. As his / her knowledge develops, it will be possible to bring together companies (and perhaps potential outside sources of funding). Into this ideas category will also come the growing number of potential outside contributors to ILR.

(Radio Consultative Committee (RCC) – General, 1983b)

Smith, in his role as Chair of the AIRC programming committee, was the key driver on behalf of the stations and the AIRC was responsible for coordinating programmes.

The Programme Sharing Scheme now preserved within the archives of Bournemouth University's Centre for Broadcasting History Research, is called the 'Independent Local Radio Sharing Archive – the Felicity Wells Memorial Collection', named after the organiser of the Scheme. It gives historians access to broadcast material from a range of local commercial radio stations across the UK and provides a unique insight into how society, through the medium of commercial radio, responded to challenging issues during what is considered a pivotal decade in social and political change – the 1980s. It is relevant to the thesis for two reasons. It presents evidence of the regulator's requirement for meaningful speech programming and it shows the talent and skills prevalent in ILR at the time. It is in contrast to the material produced by commercial radio stations today and as such is worthy of review. Programmes in the exchange scheme featured material from radio stations across the UK including Capital Radio and LBC (London); Piccadilly Radio (Manchester); Radio Clyde (Glasgow); Red Rose Radio (Lancashire); and 2CR (Bournemouth). Two ILR stations, Clyde and Capital, had their own drama departments and the quality of conceptual and technical programme making appears similar to that of the BBC, despite a lack of resources and budgets: "these [documentaries] are an hour long and there is time for depth and a documentary approach" (*Glasgow Herald*, 6 October, 1981). Media journalist Nick Higham, in March 1982, surmised that "The scarcity of drama producers in commercial radio is of course a direct result of the genre's costliness" (*Radio Month*, March, 1982) and acknowledges that ILR was more technically advanced in its production methods and equipment, compared to the BBC.

Much of the material places the issues and themes surrounding British society in context and demonstrates attitudes and behaviours prevalent at the time. One such programme is a one hour documentary called *AIDS – The Facts* (bufvc.ac.uk, 2008). This was

produced by LBC and broadcast in 1987, across a range of ILR stations, when the UK death toll from this newly recognised disease was just three hundred people. The programme was made alongside a huge Government leaflet campaign entitled ‘Don’t Die Of Ignorance’ which was sent to every household in the UK and which aimed to put the record straight on issues such as prevention and infection. Other supporting archive material features medical experts on phone-in shows, answering listeners’ questions and dispelling myths about the AIDS virus. *Heroin – The Killing of Christopher* (bufvc.ac.uk, 2007) was a documentary produced by Mercia Sound, Coventry, broadcast in 1985. The programme tells the story of a young heroin addict and discussed the efforts made by police, customs and Government to combat the UK’s growing heroin problem. *Babies Don’t Die for No Reason* was produced by Radio Clyde about cot death in 1981 covered matters ranging from the medical causes to bereavement and suspicion. Plays and interviews also feature in the archive and retrospectively reveal a commentary on contemporary popular culture. Capital Radio’s interview with Joe Strummer from The Clash, broadcast in 1985, captures thought provoking comments on the punk music scene and a posthumous insight into Sid Vicious.

The legacy of programme sharing was that it demonstrated the breadth and range of the talent within ILR both technically and editorially, it helped create diversity, it helped develop an early form of syndication and importantly, its content provided a voice and perspective on many key cultural and social issues. It was held in high regard by the IBA and deemed to be ‘quality’ programming. Most notable was that these programmes were produced despite financial and resource constraints. Stations were encouraged to enter programmes, via the IBA, to radio awards, such as the Prix Italia. As Johnson and Turnock point out however, “Industry awards such as BAFTAs and the Prix Italia, were seen as particular identifiers of quality: ratings were not so highly considered” (2005:110).

However, there was, as Hendy describes in the context of BBC, an issue of programming for ‘pleasure’, which provides a useful context to the perceived success of the Programming Sharing Scheme:

There was also an inherent tension between what producers wanted and what listeners wanted. Those who wanted programmes valued creativity, by which they meant the

opportunity to offer something unfamiliar, or something up to date in subject matter and style, perhaps something even a little challenging or unsettling. Listeners on the other hand, were strongly attached to familiarity.

(Hendy 2007: 369)

### **Changes to the media landscape**

The period 1982-83 marked a significant step in the change in the media landscape, notably technological and cultural factors. These changes were important to the future of ILR regulation because new, additional services in broadcasting led to the need for parity in the regulatory system. These changes will now be discussed in more detail.

There were four notable developments. The arrival of a new fourth television channel; new audience consumption habits with the introduction of increased television viewing opportunities at breakfast time; the emergence of cable television, leading to a new Cable Authority by 1984; and the return of pirate music radio stations. The threat of cable in particular, would further increase pressure from the AIRC on issues of regulatory parity and fairness, while acknowledging the impact of media fragmentation upon commercial radio and television revenue (Barnard 1989). “Initially it was envisaged that the cable industry would lay the foundation for a revolution in information technology” (Gibbons 1998: 142). In 1983, the IBA was involved in the development of a new distribution method for television. They provided input into the Government’s new White Paper: ‘The Development of Cable Systems and Services’ (HMSO 1983). This was commented upon by the Radio Consultative Committee (RCC) who registered concerns over double standards, “If standards for cable differed too widely for ITV and ILR, the case for maintaining existing standards would be weakened” (Radio Consultative Committee – General, 1983a). The document covers some detail on Programme standards and requirements for cable and calls for reassurances over its public service remit:

The Home Secretary stated in the debate on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1982 that cable was not to be another form of public service broadcasting. We hope that the precise meaning and implications of this will be spelled out in the White Paper: clearly it is not proposed that cable should be subjected to none of the requirements that apply now to public service broadcasting.

It appears to be intended that the requirements relating to range and balance should be relaxed: but will there be some legislative requirements on cable to provide services other than entertainment?

(Radio Consultative Committee – General, 1983b)

The development and launch of a new fourth television channel during 1981 indirectly affected ILR, given the debates and decisions over its regulation:

The IBA was not to be its parent. Its functions were envisaged as acquiring and scheduling rather than producing programmes, but it was to be autonomous, with a direct responsibility for complying with the statutory requirements in respect of all the programmes which it supplied to the IBA for transmission.

(Potter 1989: 302)

This appears to have been an unpopular decision for the IBA, who initially lobbied for an ITV 2 service for the fourth channel, which would differentiate its programming from ITV1. Presumably this was based on the BBC1 and BBC 2 arrangement. However, it is worth noting that in a radio context, the IBA was still reluctant to split frequencies in order to provide additional content at this time, despite the comments within the Annan Report which declared “to turn away from complementary scheduling is to narrow choice” (HMSO 1977).

The eventual compromise in the arrangement over regulation for Channel Four, is revealing. It identifies a major change in the role of the IBA, albeit for television. The perceived value of the IBA’s role in the development and diversification of media, during a critical age of technological revolution was questioned as were matters of regulation and accountability (Crisell 2002). It also challenged current IBA rules and regulations for radio. “An impetus for some additional guidance has come primarily from the new situation by the Channel Four television company” recorded the RCC Paper, entitled ‘Programmes funded by non-broadcasters’ (Radio Consultative Committee – General, 1982a). The IBA would be assigned responsibility for Channel Four regulation, but it would be a different relationship. In December 1981, the IBA sent Channel Four, led by Chief Executive Jeremy Isaacs and their terms of reference for the new arrangement. This included a Programme Policy Statement, charging Channel Four to serve “special interests and concerns for which television has, until

now lacked adequate time” (Potter 1989: 305). The issue of how the two services would complement each other was still up in the air:

‘The Fourth Channel’ it declared, ‘is intended to complement and to be complemented by the present Independent Television Service. Complementarity means two things: the provision of reasonable choice between two schedules, with a number of common junctions; and the co-ordinated use of the schedules in the best interest of the viewer.’ Isaacs interpreted this as permitting Channel Four to draw up its own schedule independently. It would know the basic shape of the ITV schedule and its object would be to offer alternatives, but it would not act slavishly in order to be distinctive. Any serious clashes could be eliminated by the IBA when the final schedules came to be compared.

(Potter 1989: 304)

The evidence surrounding Channel Four would prove interesting to ILR for four reasons: a) it provides an example of the claim that the IBA’s workload centred heavily on television, and as such, gave less attention to radio; b) it created a new precedent which saw the emergence of managerial independence and control slowly start to move away from a dual regulator c) it created awareness and a voice within ILR, to see themselves as part of a much wider, rapidly developing media landscape which would ultimately feed into their quest for split frequencies d) it led to parity between the two mediums for sponsored programme arrangements.

IBA staff indicated that they were willing to consider a limited number of proposals falling within the scope of the present Act of Parliament. Agreement has been reached, for example, with Radio Victory on coverage of an outside broadcast quiz sponsored by Whitbreads brewery.

(Radio Consultative Committee – General, 1982b)

For radio, there were further key milestones during 1982-83; the first two ILR franchises, LBC and Capital, were readvertised, paving the way for potential new operators. Talent was also a key role in the shift of focus. As the commercial sector developed, there was a greater exchange between the talent pools of the newspaper, BBC, ILR and ITV industries. The National Broadcasting School set up using secondary rental funding in 1980 offered training in production, journalism and

engineering. It was deemed critical due to the number of people joining ILR to get trained, and then leaving to join ITV and the BBC, most notably in journalism. It was also regarded as essential to grow new talent and skills in the commercial sector: “While it may from time to time be possible to attract these people away from other broadcasting organisations, ILR also needs the capacity to turn some promising generalists into accomplished specialists” (Radio Consultative Committee – General, 1980).

ILR’s model of mixed programming, notably music, was challenged by the emergence of pirate radio stations, desperate to serve their communities with a specific genre of music and local, relevant content. The impact of pirate radio, and the arrival of American offshore station, Laser 558, is discussed in the next chapter. Significantly, first discussions took place at the IBA regarding the possible introduction of Independent National Radio (INR). INR would become a key focus of the IBA for the following seven years and is discussed on page 114. Financially, the stations appeared to be in better health by 1983, reporting profits collectively of 18 per cent, although their 2.2 per cent of national advertising revenue fell short of the IBA’s forecast for 1983 of 6 per cent. However, it was the challenge posed by the launch of both ITV’s *Good Morning Britain* (produced by TV-am) and the BBC offering, *Breakfast Time*, which caused concern for ILR. This will now be discussed in more detail.

While the launch of breakfast time came in 1983, the ‘threat’ it posed commercial radio, was pointed out by Capital Radio’s Chairman, Richard Attenborough, as early as 1973. He voiced his concerns to John Thompson:

We feel that the launching of a new medium such as independent radio – with all its inherent risks – that for the I.B.A. to sanction a competitor going out at our peak selling time would be little short of madness.

(Home Office – General, 1973b)

Attenborough’s remarks refer to tensions in the early 1970s; the eventual launch of breakfast time television still worried the stations for two obvious reasons; competition for advertising revenue and competition for audiences (Crisell 2002). The AIRC reinforced their concerns over rumours that the IBA was planning to launch TV-am earlier than the expected Autumn date. Chairman of the AIRC, Donald Brooks wrote to

Lord Thomson, outlining “Our very real concern now is whether all the present stations could survive such a loss if it followed so soon on the economic recession” (AIRC, 1981b).

As it transpired, in the long term breakfast time television did not create the impact upon either of these factors for ILR (Stoller, personal communication, 2009). While there was a small drop initially in listening figures (JICRAR, 1983), partly due to novelty value, breakfast time television ultimately created two positive outcomes for ILR. Firstly, it highlighted and strengthened the traditional characteristics of radio, such as portability, flexibility, immediacy (Crisell 1994). Secondly, it reinforced the cultural importance of radio broadcasting, helping to shake off its poor relation image. Breakfast time television and, later, a concept known within the IBA as ‘coffee-time’ television<sup>15</sup>, were influential structurally for ILR. They created awareness of a broadcasting model where increasing listener choice and catering for mass consumption were important. Given that ILR continued to be managed by a dual regulator, this is a significant moment. It enabled the stations to lobby harder and justify their right to differentiate themselves, in most cases, as a popular music service, rather than continuing with mixed programming. It also introduced a new approach to understanding a ‘target audience’. Coffee-time television in the UK was likely to follow the American model of daytime television and radio programming, targeted towards the “feminine mass” and reflecting an understanding of gender and social class as key decision makers for advertisers (Hilmes 1997: 152). The IBA’s handling of breakfast time television was a key factor in communication between the stations and the AIRC and is discussed further in Chapter Four.

### **Independent National Radio**

ILR cannot fairly compete with BBC radio as a whole. The Corporation’s present monopoly in national radio lingers as an anomaly in UK broadcasting. INR, by offering an additional and independent network, would free listeners from being dependent on one supplier for national radio programming.

(Thompson, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1983a)

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<sup>15</sup> Coffee-time television was a new format of daytime programming, which marked a departure from educational programmes to lifestyle-oriented programmes and was regarded as a major shift in popular culture.

While the IBA appeared slow to respond to the future of local commercial radio, planning began in earnest for national commercial radio in 1982. INR is a significant milestone in ILR's history. It was regarded as essential to the competition of commercial radio with the BBC in programming terms. It was also perceived to be troublesome in terms of its relationship and competition with the existing ILR. Discussions for INR began as early as 1976, although a more formal working party was formed in 1982 (Stoller 2009). The IBA and Home Office met on 2 December, 1982 to discuss future prospects for ILR. The minutes of the meeting reveal they recognised the difficulties in planning such a service which would require a new legislature framework, "when so much is changing over the next decade" (Independent National Radio, 1982). One matter of urgency to resolve was the frequency battle; whether INR could be provided on FM or continue on the AM band width. Members of the IBA put forward the rather unworkable suggestion that if INR started on MW, "it could be run on an interim basis as a sustaining service for ILR without having some national frequencies; without frequencies the networked programmes would have to be distributed as pre-recorded material to each ILR station" (Independent National Radio, 1982). The IBA also put forward a view that INR should take priority for FM over the BBC because it proposed a new service, whereas the BBC was planning to provide the same service with better coverage: "this was an extravagant use of frequencies" (Thompson 1982). INR caused problems among ILR stations, some of whom regarded it as a threat, taking away listeners and income. The IBA reassured the stations:

The IBA sees the role of INR, interlinked with that of ILR, as being able to provide for the public as alternative to the BBC across a full range of output ... Research indicates that ILR has the major share of the available audience. A style of modern radio has been created. But ILR by itself cannot match BBC radio at each tier.

(Thompson, *Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1983a)

INR development was a big news story and of interest to the media. Forty articles appeared in the press during the development phase from 1982-87. These articles reflect the influence of key Conservative politicians in reaching decisions regarding INR. While Home Secretary William Whitelaw said he found the IBA proposals attractive, it would be his successors, Leon Brittan and Douglas Hurd, who would be instrumental in taking commercial radio to a new level within five years. This is detailed further in Chapter Four.

Channel Four's arrival signalled a change in the relationship between broadcaster and regulator. While a duopoly still reigned, the development of Channel Four had posed major challenges to regulation; notably matters of funding, a commitment to public-service ethos, programme content quality, production methods and level of intervention. The arrival of the new television channel had created a new identity for independent programme-making and as such, an assessment of the regulator's view of quality (Gibbons 1998: 68). Barnard suggests it opened the door finally for sponsored programming on commercial radio:

... another factor in the IBA's change of heart was the setting up of Channel 4 in 1982 and the freedom given to independent production companies serving the channel to seek 'co-funding' from commercial sources.

(Barnard 1989: 86)

These challenges continued throughout the 1980s, as firstly cable, and then satellite broadcasters, called for greater parity in broadcast regulation (Feintuck 1999). Furthermore, it identified a shift in the classification of media systems, from a social responsibility model of the early 1980s to a libertarian model by the end of the decade (Siebert et al, cited Feintuck 1999). The social responsibility model focuses on the importance of the media as a public resource and essential to democratic debate, and a public sphere and is regulated accordingly with this in mind. In contrast, a libertarian media system represents on a "free marketplace of ideas and the ability to make profit from it essentially as a property right" (Feintuck 1999: 37). This shift experienced in the UK media landscape and the impact of technological change, made demands on the framework of regulation used. This is important because the social responsibility model is regarded as one reason why broadcast media has been regulated more heavily than the press. Feintuck cites three reasons for this which are worth revisiting in the build up to changes in the media landscape. Broadcast regulation differed to print for three reasons: the continuation of the "frequency scarcity" rationale; the role of ILR using public airwaves and therefore, a public resource; and historically, its relative newness which gave governments a new opportunity to create regulation. During 1983, this form of regulation would not appear to be able to withstand technological, cultural and social developments. Feintuck argues that "any system of media regulation will quickly become anachronistic in a period of rapid change", highlighting apparent weaknesses in British regulation due to "incremental change as a result of ad hoc systems of media

regulation” (Feintuck 1999: 42). The manifestation of the shift in regulation for ILR is central to the debate in Chapter Four.

Despite a rapidly-expanding media landscape, content regulation was still a key part of the IBA’s approach to ILR programming, ensuring local content was the first priority under what Hendy describes as “behavioural controls” (Hendy 2000: 44). Feintuck uses a more sophisticated tripartite model of regulation, based on the systems: structural, behavioural and content (1999: 51). Each can be applied to the role of the IBA with regards to its control over ILR. However, for the research, the emphasis is clearly on behavioural and content regulation. Each of the three modes requires a different set of objectives. The IBA’s dilemma in the 1980s was that their tendency towards behavioural regulation focused their attention on the purpose of ILR as a public service broadcaster, to create diversity and broaden choice. Conversely, they also implemented content regulation and by stipulating what could and could not be broadcast, led them into an “application of essentially paternalistic censorship” without clearly defined rules and rationales (Feintuck 1999: 52). The critical point here is that, ten years after the establishment of ILR, while programme content was still regarded as quality and listening figures were maintained, two major factors crucial for development were overlooked. Firstly: audience tastes and interests were changing; secondly the creation of the free market, which was the political undercurrent by 1983. These factors reopened the debate initiated by the Pilkington Report (1962) as to whether broadcasting was the responsibility of the broadcaster, the regulator or the government. Referring back to Feintuck’s tripartite model, it would be structural regulation that would undergo the biggest overhaul.

### **Breaking point**

By the end of 1983, political, economic, social, technological and cultural reform was underway. Despite high unemployment and a decrease in manufacturing output, economic policies meant low inflation and mortgage rates for the first time since the early 1970s. The Conservative Party’s decisive win at the May General Election (which according to Marr (2007) was helped in part by the breakaway Labour / Liberal pact, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which weakened Opposition support) helped them secure a one hundred and forty-four seat margin. It was at this stage that the party began to pursue their goals of social reform and privatisation (Evans 2004; Marwick 2003;

Vinen 2009). For their second term, the Government pledged to remove the power of the trade unions and continue to sell off state assets such as council housing and utility companies (Beckett 2009). Significant on the health agenda was the rise of AIDS, which created shifts in attitude towards sexuality and a “new frankness” (Marr 2007: 409). The role and purpose of public service broadcasting values was also under the spotlight:

The new Thatcherite project was highly individualistic: it argued that public interest could only be secured by maximising the capacity of individuals to choose; and that government should seek to abandon controls, not exercise them.

(Curran and Seaton, 2003: 207)

ILR also saw its fortunes improve. By the end of 1983, advertising was up fifty per cent and revenue up eighteen per cent compared to 1982 (*The Financial Times*, 5 November, 1983). Due to changes in regulation regarding share ownership, larger ILR stations, Radio City, Capital and Clyde joined the Unlisted Securities Market (USM); a significant point, because it started the shift in the focus of stakeholder – where listeners would become as important as shareholders in terms of defining ‘quality’ in ILR. This becomes apparent in the 1990s where revenue and ratings were both heavily targeted.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter has identified, 1979-83 was a period of expansion for ILR. A larger network created a greater presence and recognition of the service. Those working for ILR began to voice their concerns and became more aggressive and assertive in their demands for compromise with the IBA. This change of attitude appears to have been acknowledged by the media, the BBC and the IBA. But the sound of the station continued much as it had begun; constrained by regulation, which affected its ability to market itself effectively to a target audience. While there were highlights, such as the quality of the material in the programme sharing scheme, IRN news coverage during the Falklands War and the National Broadcasting School, ILR was still regarded as “all things to all listeners” (Carter 2003: 20). This was a contrast to the changes in society following the emergence of the Thatcher Government. The stations regarded the model as no longer fit for purpose. The final tipping point came as a result of three factors that could have serious consequences for future viability of the network: Independent

National Radio, the return of pirate radio via a new, flashy music format American station known as Laser 558, and an announcement from the Government on a new approach to local broadcasting, community radio (Crisell 1994). 1984 would prove to be a defining moment in the UK's political, socio-economic landscape – and commercial radio stations would play their part in the revolution, as the next Chapter demonstrates.

## 4.

### Regulation reform

#### 1984-89

Around 1983-1984, the sector was in crisis and the IBA was forced to respond by reducing rentals, in many cases to zero, relaxing rules on sponsorship and allowing radio stations to be bought and sold more easily. An important turning point was the subsequent acceptance by the government that spectrum scarcity was not as significant a constraint in radio as it was in television, and that opened up the possibility that a realistic market could be developed.

(Gibbons 1998: 147)

The previous chapter set the context for change and demonstrated socio-political forces at work in the 1980s. The introduction of the Thatcher government and the growth of media technology created a more ambitious and assertive commercial radio industry. By the end of 1983 this led to constant challenges and frustrations over heavy economic and content regulation. As Gibbons (1998) affirms, by 1984 the commercial radio industry would be in crisis; this in turn would lead to a major change in regulation from heavy to light touch. For this reason 1984 is regarded as the pivotal moment in ILR's history.

Research has identified a number of key events that acted as a catalyst for change for the relaxation of regulation. The aim of this Chapter is to trace and document events, activities and discussions among ILR, IBA and Government which preceded, and arguably influenced, a major piece of new broadcast legislation: The Broadcasting Act 1990. It reveals new information regarding what has been described as a private emergency meeting called by the industry at a location near Heathrow Airport. Commentators have referred to this as the Heathrow Conference (Barnard 1989; Crisell 2002; Stoller, forthcoming 2010; Street, 2002). The Chapter presents primary research, using previously unseen documents and testimonies from key radio people involved. An exploration of their tactics and strategies will reveal how their actions were critical in driving change. In turn, their behaviour demonstrates how the influence of the Thatcher ideology and belief in a free market business approach, gave rise to a stronger, more passionate ILR voice.

The first section of this Chapter focuses on 1984, supporting Stoller's (2009) and Street's (2002) argument that Heathrow was the pivotal moment in commercial radio history. It continues to explore political, social, economic and cultural reform as important trigger points in the actions and behaviour of ILR. The remaining section of the Chapter analyses the impact of the Conference between 1985-89. It evaluates its effectiveness and influence upon Government thinking and future broadcasting strategy. In particular it considers major changes upon programme regulation, financial structures and increased choice of listening. Above all, the Chapter aims to present the notion that that 1984 was the start of deregulation for British commercial radio.

The new [broadcasting] policies began to emerge in the mid 1980s. There were three central planks, each notably absent from the earlier paradigm represented by Annan. First, the virtues of liberalised market competition, linked to a concern with economic efficiency; second, a commitment to fostering the industries stemming from the new technologies of cable and satellite, and media convergence; and third, the aim to encourage national broadcasters to think globally and to compete on the national stage.

(Born 2004: 47)

### **1984 – Brave New World**

Accounts of British history reveal that 1984 is regarded as a prominent, poignant and prophetic era (Hennessy 1997; Marr 2007; Seldon and Collings 2000). Vinen senses a marked step-change in the Conservative party's approach to policy making in 1984, following its convincing 1983 election win:

Early Thatcherism had often seemed ascetic. There was a sense that economic virtues – thrift, independence, responsibility – were to be encouraged as much because they were economic. After 1983 the economic benefits of Thatcherism seemed more dramatic and more widely experienced. Privatisation, the sale of council houses, rising property prices and deregulation in the City of London sometimes seemed to offer people the very thing that the first Thatcher government had defined as being impossible – money for nothing.

(Vinen 2009: 180)

In his examination of the press, O'Malley contextualises the period as one with sharper divides, which can equally be applied here:

The period 1983-1987 was a particularly turbulent one, during which debates about media policy were forced onto the national political agenda. Unions were laying claim to a right to exercise some influence over the content of the papers they produced, a claim that struck at the very heart of proprietorial power, which, in turn, underpinned the ethos of the Press Council.

(O'Malley and Soley 2000: 84)

Critical political economic, social and cultural events that took place in 1984, confirm its prominence in history. The Miners' Strike, the emergence of AIDS, the Ethiopian Famine, that culminated in rock concert, Live Aid and US President Reagan's endorsement of the 'Star Wars' nuclear defence system, are global examples. A selection of these are to be discussed in order to present the backdrop of change in which commercial radio operators and their audiences, found themselves.

### **The Miners' Strike**

During 1984 the UK experienced one of the largest periods of industrial unrest in modern British history. This would ultimately change the balance of power between unions, government and the state: "From the government's point of view, the strike was about circumventing the power of management as much as crushing that of the union" (Vinen 2009: 170). The Miners Strike, which began as a protest to the Government's plans to close coal pits and create over 20,000 job losses, lasted over one year and involved over 90,000 workers. The Strike is significant because it is regarded as a landmark in British politics, notably for the way the Thatcher Government handled it. The impact is relevant to this document because the scale of the strikes created greater polarisation in the minds of the British electorate and divisions in British society (Marwick 2003) and affected attitudes and opinions. Marr asserts: "For Conservatives, indeed for the majority of people, Scargill and his lieutenants were fighting parliamentary democracy and were an enemy which had to be defeated" (2007: 416). Yet he recognises the miners were hard working, traditional people, and certainly 'nobody's enemy' (2007: 416). Vinen argues: "The truth, perhaps, was that the British people wanted the miners to be beaten, but they did not want to be associated with the means by which this victory was achieved" (2009: 177). Marwick suggests: "The strike, which in Scargill's fantasies was to demonstrate the power of Labour, demonstrated only the weakness of Labour and enhanced the position of Mrs Thatcher" (2003: 289). Commercial radio programming, along with ITV and the BBC, portrayed the effect of the strike upon communities in specially commissioned features and documentaries.

*Kent Miners*, (bufvc.ac.uk, 2009), a programme made by Capital Radio in 1984 featured coal miners and their wives discussing the social and financial problems of their daily life, during the mass strikes. The programme was made available to all stations across the ILR Network, thanks to the Programme Sharing Scheme (outlined in Chapter Three). This further endorses the point made in Chapter Two – the importance of recognising and documenting ILR’s role as a social commentator. The Miners’ defeat by the Thatcher Government brought down the power of the trade unions within the UK economy. In addition it signified a new direction in the UK’s industrial landscape and workforce where “the culture of industry changed” (Vinen 2009: 200). A free market economy, without state intervention and government regulation, could prevail.

### **The AIDS crisis**

Commercial radio played a key role in education and information regarding health issues. One notable example is the discovery of a new illness, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in the early 1980s. LBC was one of the first ILR stations to discuss the disease and preventative measures, during its *Nightline* discussion programmes in the 1980s (bufvc.ac.uk, 2009). Other ILR stations ran documentaries and features regarding public concern. This is an interesting point. One paradox of the continuation of the meaningful speech philosophy within ILR was that while stations were fighting for less programme regulation, they were also able to play an important part in educating the public in a practical manner, because of the speech obligation. ILR was part of the multi-million pound government awareness campaign, ‘Don’t Die of Ignorance’. LBC and Capital made programmes distributed via the Programme Sharing Scheme to accompany the government’s multimedia campaign. This was launched in 1986 and included stark television advertisements and a leaflet drop to every home in the UK (Marr 2007). Marr suggests that “coping with AIDS was one of the most effective public information and healthcare stories of modern times”. Its approach was to avoid traditional conservative messages regarding moral values, focusing on a more factual and pragmatic approach which would “shock the country into changing sexual habits” (Marr 2007: 410).

### **Social and cultural change**

During the period 1984-85, major events took place, confirming the UK was at a critical point of social change. Marwick refers to this period as “Workers, Yuppies and Hooligans” (2003: 275-297). Continual industrial unrest and the subsequent move to de-

industrialisation (as outlined above), terrorism (for example, the IRA bombing of the Grand Hotel, Brighton in October 1984, during the Conservative Party conference) and football riots (such as the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985) all formed part of a country in turbulence. There was also the arrival of a new social class:

The critical developments in the years of privatisation were acceleration in the breaking up of the rigid frontiers of the working class and more abrupt openings to positions of power and influence for people who had not taken the trouble to absorb the traditional upper-class lifestyle. The much talked-of ‘yuppie’<sup>16</sup>, though over publicised, did have corporeal existence.

(Marwick 2003: 275)

The emergence of the ‘Yuppie’ was a new term developed by the advertising industry to reflect the arrival of a new white collar worker – a young professional with disposable income. Yuppies were born out of Thatcher’s free enterprise ideology, as the City of London expanded during an intense period of shareholder growth. This created new, unprecedented employment opportunities in the financial sector. Positive changes were taking place in society due to a more diverse employment culture as Marwick reveals: “Impressionistic evidence indicates that working class and lower-middle-class forms of speech, and provincial accents were being heard as never before in the world of finance and commercially oriented professions” (2002: 276). The music industry also played its part in driving social and cultural change, notably through an early form of what has now come to be regarded as corporate social responsibility. It instilled a greater sense of the power of the individual and the awareness of the social conscience. Given the socio-political climate at the time, it is important to recognise the events of a global fundraising project also sowed the seed of change in audience interaction. BBC news journalist Michael Buerk compiled a report on a large-scale famine which had killed millions in Ethiopia, a country recovering from civil war. Buerk’s first broadcast in October 1984 was seen by Bob Geldof, lead singer with band, *The Boomtown Rats*. Shocked by what he saw, Geldof instigated the release of a charity single followed by a transatlantic concert, Live Aid, in July 1985. The lasting image of Live Aid was Geldof’s personal plea to the viewer to donate. This is significant because it was the first time a public appeal on such a large scale had taken place (the BBC broadcast the

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<sup>16</sup> *Yuppies* was advertising-speak for *young, upwardly mobile professional* while *Dinkies* was an acronym for *double income, no kids*.

Live Aid event over 16 hours in the UK and transmitted it globally). In return the public raised over £150 million (Hillmore 1985).

The political issues surrounding the Miners Strike, the AIDS crisis and Live Aid's campaign for famine relief contributed to a new cultural perspective in the UK. They were key topics of debate on ILR phone-ins, engaging the public in a new social conscience. Hendy identifies radio's potential for a democratic and dystopian discourse thus:

We can say, then, that all radio adopts the language of democracy. It also employs the rhetoric of two apparently different democratic functions: one in which it claims to 'mediate' the views of the listeners on their behalf, thus carving out some form of institutionalized 'public sphere' of opinion and debate, and a second in which it claims to be an 'alternative' medium representing, not just the voice, but also the active participation of those incapable of expression through other media or public forums. In reality, of course, these functions are often conflated, and sometimes subverted altogether. Far alongside the rhetoric of radio's democratic value lies an equally lively, but more dystopian discourse: the rhetoric of radio's powers of mass manipulation through propaganda, or of its tendency to trivialize important political and social issues through its simplistic and fleeting attention.

(Hendy 2000: 196)

While the UK was undergoing substantial political, social and cultural change, commercial radio was also going through a quiet revolution. Frustration and concern over the business model was mounting; the desire to create radio for segmented audiences to increase revenue and ratings was becoming ever more urgent, given the imminent arrival of new communication technologies. While the inability of stations to make profit was a mitigating factor in their demands for regulatory change, there were, in addition, three clear points which emerged during this period as catalysts for change. These proved to be the tipping point for ILR. Firstly, the IBA's reluctance to share its plans for Independent National Radio (INR). Secondly, the emergence of pirate radio stations, most notably an offshore American service, known as Laser 558. Thirdly, the Government's plans to directly license a community radio 'experiment'. All these points are now discussed further.

## **Independent National Radio**

As Chapter Two demonstrated, the IBA had floated the idea of Independent National Radio (INR) as early as 1976. Part of the rationale for INR appears to have been based on the desire to compete head to head with the BBC. The BBC's monopoly in national radio "lingers as an anomaly in UK broadcasting" said Director of Radio, John Thompson speaking at University College Cardiff (*Independent Broadcasting Journal*, 1983a). Thompson's comments made during this address further stirred up the debate. Media correspondent Nick Higham described the remarks as an "air of unpreparedness" (*Broadcast*, 6 June, 1983). "There's an obsession at the IBA about competing with the BBC" suggested a special *Campaign* media report which ran the headline 'INR: Let Battle Commence' (14 October, 1983). The idea of INR worried ILR stations because they believed this would lead to competition for advertising revenue. They also felt that the IBA was secretive in its plans (Bradford 2009). Press coverage in 1983 appears to support this view. Referring to the sudden announcement from Home Secretary William Whitelaw on the new allocation of FM frequency spectrum by 1990 onwards, Nick Higham commented: "Indeed the fact that independent national radio or (INR) was even being talked of earlier came as news to at least one group with a significant interest in the subject – the advertising agencies" (*Broadcast*, 1983a). Stations were divided on whether INR would help or hinder ILR's development. Some felt it would enable ILR to truly compete on a national scale and gain greater exposure and profile for the network. Others campaigned against the idea of INR, fearing it would take away listeners and reduce revenues:

Those in favour include David Pinnell, MD of BRMB, described as the "only fervent proponent of INR to be found in local radio" who feels it would enable commercial radio to reach the whole of the population, making it more credible in the eyes of advertisers. Those against [include] Jimmy Gordon, Radio Clyde because it would lead to further fragmentation of the audience "I'm against it, and we'll fight it for both audiences and revenues".

(*Broadcast*, 1983a)

It is perhaps understandable that the IBA saw INR as an opportunity to compete on a more level playing field with the BBC. They pushed forward with proposals, issuing a press release which went so far as to speculate the format of the new station. "Speech-based format possible for new independent national radio service" said IBA Director General, John Whitney, suggesting that "a news, information and speech-based station

would have considerable appeal” (Independent National Radio, 1985). This would lead to more rumours that the IBA was planning to create a competing service to Radio Four.

The IBA continued to stress that INR would work with, not against the ILR system but stations were not happy. There was a split in the views of the members of the AIRC. This was a problem, because the trade body had started to become a powerful voice in the lobby for change. The last thing it wanted was a divide within its own camp. As a compromise the AIRC took the view that it would appear ‘agnostic’ to the introduction of INR. *Campaign* described the fierce debate taking place within the industry. “The political football at the centre of this scrum is the prospect of a national commercial radio channel which has divided the industry as deeply as any issue” (*Campaign*, 7 February, 1986). Stations went so far as to send their views to the national press – a tactic that was becoming increasingly common by the mid-1980s. Norman Bilton, Managing Director of Radio Wyvern, expressed his anger over the matter of INR in a letter to the *Observer*:

If John Thompson, the IBA’s Director of Radio since 1973, were a junior brand manager in charge of a new product development, he would be fired immediately. His supposed demand for Independent National Radio is not reflected among listeners, or indeed the majority of existing local stations. It has not been researched in the market place and is unwanted except by IBA executives and major stations such as LBC and Capital, who see themselves extending their empire by obtaining a controlling interest.

The project is typical of the IBA’s desolate broadcasting policies. Since day one they have been bedevilled by engineering and not marketing thinking. Just because a frequency is available they lay claim to it in order to mirror the profligate BBC.

Their guardianship is so awry that some 20 stations lost money last year – not through bad management, but because of the IBA’s iniquitous charges. They extort over £7 million from radio annually, which is proportionately four times more than they take from ITV companies.

One of my colleagues eloquently expressed the prospect of INR as a choice between a firing squad and crucifixion. What is not in doubt is that a national commercial network would send a number of good small and medium-sized stations to the wall.

(*The Observer*, 13 April, 1986)

Bilton's views on national commercial radio formed part of the build-up to the Heathrow Conference. However, the issue of INR would continue to create divides post-Heathrow within the industry as will be discussed later in the Chapter.

### **Return of the pirates**

This continuing concern for maximising audience patronage was given added edge by the acknowledged popularity at this time of Laser 558, an offshore pirate station with American disc jockeys that had a policy of minimum chat and maximum music – 'where music is never more than a minute away', as its slogan promised.

(Barnard 1989: 62)

Illegal pirate stations re-emerged due to audience frustration at the lack of diversity and listener choice. By 1984 it was rumoured there were fifty on the air (Crisell 2002). The Radio Consultative Committee (RCC) discussed the matter agreeing that "the general situation was being of major concern" (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1984a). By May 1984 this culminated in a letter from the IBA Director General to the Home Secretary urging them to take action. The re-emergence of pirate radio appears to have occurred for two reasons: out of the frustration of the sound of ILR; and a desire to create tailored programmes for the growing number of diverse communities and musical tastes. Both issues played their part in challenging the traditional radio model. London entertainment magazine, *Time Out* explained that London's problem was with the ILR format:

But ask the kids on the street what station they listen to and a good percentage will say JFM, Horizon, Laser or Caroline or some other of a host of pirates.

The fault lies not with any of the established, legal stations but rather with a structure of radio which demands that Capital, Radio London and the others have to fill an impossibly wide brief. If you like soul music, you like soul music. That's it. So you're not going to tune in to a station that gives you just a sample of the right stuff and mixes it with lots of chatter, ads and other sounds. And even if your thing isn't soul, you may be gay, or a woman, or black or Greek Cypriot and want a station that talks to you about the things you care for.

(*Time Out*, August, 1984)

The minutes of the RCC meeting in May 1984 expose further issues of pirate radio and community radio for ILR. Eddie Blackwell, Managing Director of Essex Radio, one of those affected by the resurgence of Radio Caroline, noted:

ILR would place itself in a difficult position if it appeared to oppose the next phase of local radio development. The idea of introducing something new and more accessible might be attractive to Government. ILR would seem to be protecting its own interests.

The IBA and other members of the RCC debated this point:

The Chairman [Director General John Whitney] suggested a way of avoiding this situation, by making it clear that ILR was not opposed to a genuinely local form of community radio, covering small areas not in direct competition with ILR. The pressure on pirate radio could and should be maintained. But it was important for ILR not to appear protectionist.

Mr Walmsley [Managing Director, Capital Radio] agreed that ILR should not be opposed to more choice in local radio. However, there was a danger of the Government setting up new stations which did not have the same obligations as ILR. The Chairman agreed that Government needed to be reminded that ILR operates in a carefully regulated environment.

(Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1984b)

As Barnard (1989) identifies, the most influential pirate station in 1984 was offshore. American-owned Laser 558. Their programming philosophy was summed up by their on-air jingles (an early form of station imaging) which promoted Laser as ‘where music is never more than a minute away’. This was the start of a trend towards music formats and tightly defined programming strategies, as opposed to the IBA’s desire for mixed programming for a range of audiences. This is important because while the arrival of Laser clearly annoyed some ILR stations, others recognised that the IBA should take note of the model it offered. The *Times* headline ‘Laser radio pirates claim 5m audience’ suggested their concentrated music radio format with a minimum of talk, rather than a range of programming for all tastes was what the audience demanded (5 December, 1984). Laser’s format did not just affect ILR:

Laser’s powerful signal and its slick, professional, all-American presentation ate into ILR figures far more than those of Radio One, but its appeal and professionalism were

noted by Johnny Beerling, who became Derek Chinnery's successor as Radio One Controller. Beerling was much more enthusiastic, and the string of changes he made in 1985-6 reflected the Laser influence...of much more significance was his decision to reintroduce the playlist – paradoxically to ensure that a mandatory amount of *non*-Top-Forty music was featured, Laser-style, in daytime shows.

(Barnard 1989: 62)

Laser 558 was able to broadcast due to a loophole in the legal system. The Marine Etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 only extended to British companies. IBA documentation reveals the extent to which they tried to take Laser 558 off the air. John Whitney wrote to the United States Ambassador to ask “if you could ascertain if there is any pressure the American authorities could exert on either the advertisers or others involved in this internationally unauthorised operation”(Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1984c). Peter Baldwin also wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions for support, noting that “our hard-pressed companies paid the copyright bodies nearly £7 million; while the ‘pirates’ pay nothing” (Pirate Radio, 1986). Laser broadcast until 1988 when a mix of signal blocking problems and structural failure to the ship led to its demise. A note on the IBA file records a telephone conversation between the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the IBA on 3 February 1988: “DTI rang to let you know that the MV Communicator where Radio Laser is housed has come into Harwich under distress and the owners have ordered it to be stripped and broken up” (Pirate Radio, 1988).

Laser's legacy is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it provided the British audience with a new style and genre of radio, arguably influencing popular cultures and determining future tastes and interests. Secondly, it demonstrated to the ILR Network and the IBA that there was a different way to approach successful commercial broadcasting. As such it served as a new model of programming and one which would largely be adopted after the Broadcasting Act 1990. This will be discussed further in this Chapter.

### **Community Radio experiment (and failure of)**

During the early 1980s the community radio lobby had intensified under the guide of the Community Media Association. By 1984 the Government appeared keen to introduce what would be a new third tier of radio licensing in the UK “which would have established a new tier of deregulated commercial stations, operated for an

experimental period by the Home Office, not the IBA” (O’Malley 1988: 39). The proposal to introduce smaller, community-oriented radio stations in 1985 under Home Secretary Leon Brittan proved an unpopular decision with IBA and ILR. “As he showed dramatically, in pressing for the directly-licensed community radio experiment of the same period, Leon Brittan was unconvinced by the IBA’s stewardship of independent broadcasting” (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 149). Barnard confirms “Commencement of smaller, community-oriented stations would be licensed and overseen in ‘non-interventionist’ fashion” (1989: 180). The reasons for its unpopularity were three-fold: Competition for revenue and listeners. Evidence of demand for new local services (the ILR stations felt strongly that all aspects of local programming were being catered for. The form of regulation the new stations would take. While the IBA were likely to endorse the concept of community radio (the Local Radio Working Party papers as far back as 1980 had carried a broad endorsement of such a plan) it appeared nervous in its response to the idea in practice for two reasons. This could have been due to the perceived impact these stations would have on ILR market listening share and revenue. Discussions regarding the regulation of community radio were outlined by the IBA in great detail.

In July, 1982, a senior representative of the Home Office said “If the Home Office did nothing (about community radio) it could lose the initiative to pirates ...” This standpoint – much shared by the IBA’s representatives at the time, though we had to concentrate on pressing ILR’s needs – has been realised to the point where the level of pirate activity has generated a conscience-searching exercise to see whether ‘community radio’ can be accommodated and, in ILR terms, tolerated.

(Community Radio, 1982b)

Central to the debate was the definition of community radio:

For the purposes of the paper community radio is seen as a smaller operation than either ILR or BBC local radio, serving small towns or districts within large cities. Some of today’s pirate operations cover areas so large as those served by ILR stations. Others serve areas so small that, if legalised, could be claimed to equate to ‘community radio’. Many ILR companies would claim they provide ‘community radio’.

(Community Radio, 1982b)

In a strictly confidential letter to all ILR Managing Directors on 7 January, 1985, John Thompson asked for examples of community oriented output: “The motive for this

request to you is a wish to compile a dossier or case showing that ILR provides – on a wholly self-financing basis – a useful ‘community’ service to its listeners” (Community Radio, 1985a). He stressed that examples should showcase “the localness of your ‘community’” and confirmed that the compilations would be given “careful distribution among opinion formers... a technique that has been beneficial to ILR on previous occasions” (Community Radio, 1985a). This request resulted in a large volume of tapes and covering reports from the stations anxious to state their case. Richard Findlay set out the concerns of the industry to Thompson on behalf of the AIRC. They were against a different regulatory structure for Community Radio. This gives further weight to the argument regarding parity. “If Community Radio is to operate under a lighter touch and less expensive controls and if ILR should be similarly treated then the Authority must demonstrate its ability to adapt to this” (Community Radio, 1985b) The IBA’s confidential minutes on 15 February, 1985 revealed their concerns that community radio would be licensed and regulated directly by Government (and not the IBA) (Community Radio, 1985c). The result of these discussions was a fifteen page report sent to the Home Secretary in March 1985 entitled, ‘Independent Local Radio – a well-proven “Community” service’. (Community Radio, 1985d). IBA Chairman Lord Thomson also added his voice to the debate regarding differentiation between ILR and Community Radio to which Leon Brittan replied: “what we envisage, however, is that community radio will be different from and additional to existing radio services, that it will be quite distinct in character and that it ought not to be regarded as public service broadcasting” (Community Radio, 1985e). The Home Secretary’s proposals were confirmed in an official press release on 11 July, 1985 where he announced his decision to “establish an experiment to test the viability and scope for community radio and to publish a Green Paper in the Summer of 1986” (Community Radio, 1985f). In addition to the news of the Green Paper, there was confirmation of progress in another programming matter, which has been discussed in Chapter Three: split frequencies. The press release outlined Brittan’s approval for a one-year experiment for split AM – FM broadcasting. This will be discussed later in the Chapter.

The Community Radio blueprint outlined the role of Government as responsible for directly legislating these new stations outside the usual IBA application procedures. This caused unrest, but more importantly called upon Government to challenge the model of UK radio regulation. The logistics proved too much, and as such, the experiment was cancelled. Government decided to wait for the Peacock Committee

findings and concentrate on preparation of the Green Paper. Stoller (forthcoming 2010) refers to this phase as the “failed community radio experiment”. The *UK Press Gazette* summed up feelings of hopeful would-be new radio operators at the time: “the community radio experiment was shelved in July, to the fury of the 266 applicant groups, at least until the long-awaited green paper on radio has been digested, debated and acted upon. And the BBC seems safe from dismemberment or commercialisation” (*UK Press Gazette*, 5 January, 1987). Above all, the ‘failed community radio experiment left the relationship between the IBA and the government in a very difficult, tense and distrusting position. The discussion on Community Radio will return again later in the Chapter.

### **The tipping point**

In addition to the IBA’s lack of dialogue over the proposed introduction of INR and the IBA’s perceived lack of control over the influx of pirate radio, financial concerns also remained top priority. As Stoller recalls: “By the mid-eighties, independent radio was showing few real signs of emerging from recession ... the following year, the IBA was receiving frequent requests to defer rentals” (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 142). One such example is a letter sent recorded delivery to stations on 22 December 1983 stating new primary and secondary rental arrangements. The new primary rentals caused concern. The IBA calculated the figures by measuring population coverage, including overlap with other radio stations and they included a new category, ‘station prosperity’. This meant the larger stations were asked to pay more with the smaller stations having their primary rental reduced. This was not a popular decision. Essex Radio saw their primary rental charge increase by twenty per cent, from £96,000 to £115,000 a year. *Broadcast* reported the protests of the sector. Managing Director of Radio Clyde, Jimmy Gordon claimed that the IBA’s rationale used in their calculation “embarked on a form of social engineering” (*Broadcast*, 1984a). The IBA attempted to calm the storm by offering to tackle the Government over the levy arrangements – a form of corporation tax payable to the Treasury:

Finally, now that these rental rearrangements are in place and agreed, the Authority is willing to re-examine the case for asking the Government to mitigate, if not abolish, the Exchequer Levy on ILR company profits. The Authority in no way over estimates

the chances of success in achieving such a goal, and would wish to make a joint approach with companies.

(AIRC, 1983b)

AIRC expressed concerns about the new realignment of rental calculations to which the IBA responded: “You may be interested to know that a greater number of companies have privately expressed their support for the IBA’s new rental policy” (R4, 29 February, 1984). In his role as Chairman of the AIRC Richard Findlay stressed to John Thompson the seriousness of the stations’ financial situation:

I heard today that Radio Wyvern has given notice of its intention to withdraw from membership of AIRC, due to financial problems.

This brings the total number of intimated resignations so far to three (Plymouth, Severn and now Wyvern). It is possible others are teetering on the brink. In addition there is the question of the Association’s relationship with the IBA and the coming situation whereby AIRC will not be able to speak with the Authority on an ‘industry’ basis in quite the same way as it has in the past and seek views from all stations and relay back views and thoughts.

(Findlay private file, 28 March, 1984)

### **An ally in the advertising industry**

An important contribution to the lobby to provide a competitor to BBC broadcasting is the advertising industry. Historically advertising agencies played a key role in establishing ITV in 1954, supporting radio piracy in the 1960s and in establishing commercial radio in the 1970s.

In September 1984, an American-based advertising agency, D’Arcy McManus Masius published a report from its London offices, entitled, ‘Funding the BBC from Advertising’. O’Malley (1988) argues that the report was influential in two ways. Firstly it put forward a vision of a profit-making BBC and secondly it motivated an advertising industry lobby who supported a new business model of BBC and / or ILR. This was because they were keen to benefit from the financial opportunities increasingly presenting themselves in this period of Conservative policy making. D’Arcy McManus Masius also published an in-house article criticising the way the IBA ran commercial

radio. It argued that "... commercial radio is a suppressed industry. Its suppressor is the IBA and its interpretation of its mandate to cater for all people. The agencies were no longer just interested in attacking the BBC" (O'Malley 1988: 12).

Saatchi and Saatchi played a key role in the lobby for change for the BBC. In October 1984 they published *Funding the BBC – The Case for Allowing Advertising*. They claimed that programme standards would not drop if advertising was introduced to the BBC.

(O'Malley 1988: 11)

Stoller discusses the role of the advertising trade body, the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) confirming that this turned into a mutual beneficial relationship: "The advertising industry wanted more radio services, and although that was not a view shared by the ever-protectionist AIRC, it was an alliance of convenience to seek general change" (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 150). Professor Seán Street was a freelance producer working in commercial radio during the 1980s. During his time at 2CR he recalls:

There was this feeling among management that things had to change. I do remember trying to parry that, trying to find a compromise. I was doing the afternoon show. There was a big advertiser's conference down at the Royal Bath Hotel. We decided to send an OB [outside broadcast] unit down there and at a certain point they would play this show and I knew I would be playing into this conference. It was going to be a complete surprise to the delegates. We carefully stage managed the whole thing. Radio Two type music, some chart stuff but nothing radical. And I said "this is a special dedication for everyone at the advertising conference and a special record for you from all of us at 2CR [the song was: *We can make it together*, by Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme]. Apparently they erupted! They loved the idea that a radio station could interact in this way. It showed a real understanding that we had to demonstrate to these advertisers and we showed that radio was a force to do business with.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

### **Authority Annual Staff Reports**

The archive demonstrates a high level of bureaucracy was still evident at this point in ILR's development. Whereas before there had been a 'grin and bear it' philosophy, key people in the industry were now prepared to challenge the IBA's actions and their rationale for regulation. One such example is the collection of files relating to Authority

Annual Reports on Companies (outlined earlier on page 99). These files will now be discussed in detail as they indicate an ever-increasing challenge by the AIRC to the IBA to improve two-way communication. In addition they also demonstrate the commercial radio industry's increasing awareness of the regulatory regime. Annual Reports on Companies were written by IBA staff and were not dissimilar to the role of a typical Annual Report. They were used as part of IBA's annual progress assessment for each station. This review was part of the 'rolling' contract procedure (as outlined in Chapter Three). They included a summary of key performance indicators, including: Contractual Position; Management and Staff; Programming; and Finance. Every aspect of programming was reviewed with sections entitled current affairs, education, music, social action and religion. The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) for each station also had to submit a report to accompany the IBA document. The reports were not allowed to be seen by the stations. Ron Coles, (replacing Findlay as Chairman of the AIRC in January 1986) was disconcerted by this apparent level of secrecy. He wrote to the Director General urging that they should be made available to the boards of individual companies, suggesting that "this would be valuable to the Authority and the companies in building mutual confidence and candour and lead to the most accurate picture of a company's progress being presented" (Authority Reports on Companies, 1986c). In response, John Whitney replied "Frankly I recommend it would be an unproductive use of your energies and ours to pursue this" (Authority Reports on Companies, 1986d). There were clearly issues in the written contents of the Authority Reports. An example is the GWR Report in October 1985, written by IBA staff member. "No overt acrimony over Bradford's departure, but his muted and self-effacing style bound to make him less likely to survive than self-confident and assertive Bernard," commented the report, referring to the recent merger between Radio West and Radio Wiltshire and a change of management (Authority Reports on Companies, 1986a). Ironically, the report ends with a poignant note, given GWR's future plans for expansion into commercial radio:

GWR has habitually made no secret of its future plans for expansion into Salisbury, Oxford and Taunton. Company may be actively engaged in investigating one or more of these possibilities. IBA regional view is that the Taunton move would not only make great deal of sense, but be very welcome to local broadcasting patterns in West of England.

(Authority Reports on Companies, 1986a)

The LAC contribution within the document questions the value and purpose of such Committees during this period of ILR. The Chairman's report for Swindon offered less

than useful feedback: “Several members felt that the device of the phone-in was overdone and had become boring” while another item on its report stated “ There were complaints about inappropriate language used from time –for example in a reference to a person’s ‘plonker’” (Authority Reports on Companies, 1986b). A similar report gathered on Radio Wyvern (Worcester) reveals that “[Norman] Bilton’s attitude regarded as potentially damaging to the industry” and describes presenter Neil Fox as “popular, if Radio One clonish, style for young people.”<sup>17</sup> The subjective and personal comments outlined above are another indication that the reports were not circulated beyond the IBA. The stations continued to ask the regulator to release the information but this did not happen. This issue of private reporting would emerge again as part of the post-‘Heathrow’ period, as will be explored shortly.

### **The ‘Heathrow Conference’**

By 1984, the industry was at breaking point (Crisell 2002). Frustrated by the slow speed of progress for ILR, the lack of consultation on INR and the aggressive nature of the pirates, the commercial radio sector was in a perilous position (Gibbons 1989; Street 2002). What happened next is crucial to understanding not only policy making which led up to the Broadcasting Act 1990, but provides context to the changing shape of the industry from 1990-2003. While this thesis is only concerned with the period ending 1990, the conclusion in Chapter Five will outline areas for further academic study, post-period.

In June 1984 an event took place which is responsible for changing the nature of commercial radio regulation and brought a new confidence to the people within it. Many of ILR’s prominent people (Ralph Bernard, Richard Findlay, Richard Park et al) harnessed the opportunity brought about by events in 1984 to carve out new powerful roles. Their programming approach following a new Act of Parliament in 1990 would create a much more successful model of commercial radio. (In 1995, commercial radio listening would overtake BBC listening for the first time) (RAJAR 1995). Yet ten years on, in the new Millennium, the industry would enter another precarious point in its history. The period 1984-89, is therefore a landmark in applying both a historical and

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<sup>17</sup> Neil (Dr) Fox would go on to become one of the star performers of Capital Radio and subsequently presented the Network Chart Show for eleven years.

contemporary context to Radio Studies. This section offers a chronological account of this ILR-initiated event, which as referred to previously, is known as the ‘Heathrow Conference’. It focuses on why the Conference took place, the agenda discussed and resolutions passed, the IBA’s response to ILR’s actions and the outcomes. For example, the IBA’s response to Heathrow suggests the Conference challenged their position as the regulator, resorting to desperate measures to keep control. Material sourced from the private files of Richard Findlay (AIRC Chairman) is compelling because it contains a timeline of activities leading up to and beyond Heathrow. It reveals how effective lobbying, not just within ILR, but other professional bodies such as those representing the advertising, newspaper and the television industries, was paramount to the plans for the meeting. It also shows the strengthening of new political relationships between ILR and Government. The resolutions passed by the radio stations during the Heathrow Conference are included in detail. Access to Findlay’s private file entitled ‘Future of ILR’ shows a detailed chronology and indicates key meetings and activities, including a series of AIRC meetings with the IBA, following the Conference (Findlay, private file, 1984). The list commences in May 1984 and concludes November 1985. Findlay’s private file and the testimonies of key people involved in the Conference are now examined and an opinion formed as to whether the event can be considered as a key catalyst for change in commercial radio development.

As the two previous Chapters demonstrated, the ILR network was becoming increasingly frustrated by the impact of regulation upon the financial health of the stations. By May 1984 matters reached crisis point and an emergency general meeting was called by the AIRC Council. ILR Chairmen and radio station Managing Directors had previously formed two distinct groups and attended separate IBA Radio Consultative Committee meetings. Findlay however, came up with a solution which could yield more power within the commercial radio sector:

We as MDs of radio stations had been hammering away for some time with the IBA to loosen regulation. One or two Chairmen who had come from industry began to get frustrated about the pace of progress. They had decided to form a Chairmen’s group and they gave themselves the responsibility of dealing with this nut that had to be cracked – the IBA. Some of the MDs said this is not a good idea, we are splitting the industry nothing would suit the regulator better. I met the Chairman who was leading this and I persuaded them to hold off doing anything and we would hold a congress of MDs and

Chairmen together and we would thrash out a strategy of what we wanted to do and how we would do it. And if that didn't work the Chairmen could carry on.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

The 'congress' Findlay refers to was a 'secret' meeting, planned by the AIRC in late June 1984 to discuss urgent changes to the business model. *'Inside Radio'*, the AIRC's trade body magazine sent to all forty seven stations, reported:

AIRC is to hold a special one-day conference of all member companies on 23 June to review industry policy towards new media developments, Government plans for broadcasting and telecommunications and the IBA. The conference, to be held near London, will be private. Director Brian West said: "We have come to the view that, in a rapidly changing media scene, we cannot rely on Government or the IBA to look after our members' interests; we have got to fight our own corner more vigorously".

(AIRC, 1984a)

The congress, from this moment on, became known as the 'Heathrow Conference' – the name derived from its location – the Sheraton Skyline Hotel, Bath Road, Heathrow Airport. Brian West, Managing Director of AIRC sent a memorandum to all AIRC members on 20 June 1984, entitled 'The Future of ILR – Heathrow Conference, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1984' (Findlay, private file, 1984). The draft agenda shows forty stations agreed to attend the full day event which ran from 09.30-16.30 (see Appendix F). Six ILR Managing Directors and Chairmen took responsibility for each agenda item, referred to as resolutions, on which all colleagues voted. West and Findlay's correspondence refers to the meeting as private or secret. It is worth noting whether the meeting was in fact secret. Street, who was working as Features Producer at 2CR in Bournemouth recalls: "The first I knew about Heathrow was when I started my own [academic] research. It certainly wasn't communicated to radio staff. I didn't know it had happened and it was right in my period" (Street 2009). Stoller suggests that while the IBA were not informed nor invited to Heathrow, this does not mean that it was 'secret'. The extract from trade journal *'Inside Radio'* outlined above was located within the IBA files. Thompson (2009) says: "I don't recall it so I don't know whether it was a secret meeting" while Findlay (2009) concludes "It was not secret in that no one knew about it. The companies knew about it, the IBA knew about it. But we didn't want the press involved right at the beginning, so it was kept secret from the public". What is clear is that the idea to hold a Conference on this scale was a turning point for both ILR and the IBA.

Was the IBA surprised or shocked by the actions of the AIRC? John Thompson surmises that the growth of the ILR network played a major factor in the development of a more active, assertive trade body:

There were lots of factors at play. By the summer of '84, there must have been quite a lot of people by then. I think it's unsurprising, if you get more MDs and Shareholders meeting together, there comes a certain amount of unrealistic optimism. The companies had themselves got used to having their Association, in the way the television companies had. There was unity and they were a bit more ambitious about what they could do which coincided with more people being involved. I don't think the start of change was down to Heathrow itself. There was a general mood growing. It coincided with the Tories beginning to ride high after the Falklands. In the mid 80s the [ILR] companies wanted to make a fuss, and wanted to get themselves known in the world.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

Another member of the AIRC was John Bradford, the then Managing Director of Radio West (Bristol). He undertook the role of Chairman at the meeting. He offers a more specific account of the trigger point for Heathrow, blaming the IBA's lack of communication about its proposals to introduce Independent National Radio:

Thompson refused to talk about it. Wouldn't say anything at all. His refusal to talk about it allowed the industry to come together. It was the first time, and something we'd never dreamed of, that the MDs and the Chairmen of the companies would sit down in a room together. Thompson lit the fuse with INR because the implication of what was being said to us, other than nothing, that this was going to be a separate company in which the local stations would not have any involvement at all. It would be like having a Radio One introduced into the environment, with the ability to talk to national advertisers. So why would they then bother with Piccadilly, Radio City and BRMB?

Remember, when Heathrow occurred we're at the stage where we'd been allowed to get going. We'd got rid of the shackles that we thought we had. We're going to have new stations. So we actually thought things were starting to make a bit more sense. But it was the idea that the Authority regarded itself as being able to change the shape of the industry without properly consulting the people that made it [Heathrow] happen.

(Bradford, personal communication, 2009)

Thompson, who was responsible for leading the plans for national commercial developments, recognises that INR played a part in stirring up unrest in ILR, although believes their argument to be unfounded at the time:

They got a bit frightened about INR. Another opposition we'll have to deal with, they thought. But that was false thinking. By the 1980s, a number of the companies were becoming more prosperous. I don't think the radio companies could understand, but they were pretty slow-witted frankly. If they wanted national advertising they had to offer an outlet. And for the West End [London] agencies, it was too much trouble dealing with all these little radio stations. The agency would make less money out of them. We took the view that the introduction of INR, if we handled it, would benefit the local stations and it would help attract more national advertising into the system.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

Findlay recalls that while the legacy of Heathrow became more influential over time, the impact of the actual day of the Conference seemed less clear:

I look back on some of those resolutions and they were really quite pathetic. Please Sir may I have my sweetie back. But none the less it shows you the degree of oppressive regulation that was prevalent at that time.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

The Conference passed six resolutions with an overall aim of providing a stable business model whereby ILR could compete in a fair way for audience and revenue. In summary, these resolutions were to: lower rental charges; reduce IBA interference in station programming; relax advertising controls; remove pirate operators; and create parity for commercial radio trading in line with other private sector companies. The full list below entitled 'The Future of ILR' shows their firm and dominant stance and is an important and significant document:

### **The Future of ILR**

#### **Resolutions passed at Heathrow**

Approved unanimously by a special conference of AIRC member companies at Heathrow on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1984

1. AIRC is concerned that UK radio developments now being contemplated are examined in the context of all independent radio, and requires the Government, and the

Independent Broadcasting Authority, to take full account of the possible effects of any changes or additions to independent radio on the existing ILR system.

2. AIRC requires that any funds drawn from Independent Local Radio by the Independent Broadcasting Authority must not be used for the provision of transmitters, or to meet any other costs, associated with the development of Independent National Radio.
3. AIRC resolves to commission E.I.U (Economist Intelligence Unit) Informatics, as a matter of urgency, to carry out in-depth research into the various levels and consequences of de-regulation.
4. AIRC totally supports the most recent letter from the Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to the Home Secretary on pirate radio. AIRC resolves that, in the event Government does not take such actions, the members of AIRC will re-consider their own various statutory and royalty payments, currently costing the industry in excess of £13 million a year.
5. Recognising the nature of the market place, independent radio companies in the UK should be able to trade with the same degree of freedom as other commercial enterprises, limited only by the explicit requirements of the Broadcasting Act, the Companies Acts and the laws of the land applicable to all businesses and private individuals.
6. AIRC calls upon the Independent Broadcasting Authority to acknowledge the essential differences between radio and television marketing opportunities, and relax the advertising control system which at present prevents ILR companies from seizing specific advertising and sponsorship opportunities.

The AIRC public relations operation went into overdrive. A press release sent nationally on 26 June 1984 ran with the headline 'ILR Throws Down The Gauntlet' and stated that AIRC would commission an Economist report into the viability of deregulation for UK commercial radio (AIRC, 1984c). The full list of AIRC resolutions were sent to the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. A covering letter explained the context to Heathrow and outlined the uniqueness of the conference in bringing Chairmen and Chief Executives of ILR stations together to take action. The letter confirms the more assertive tone taken by the AIRC and demonstrates their desire to also be regarded as

the experts in the field of commercial radio; two points previously outlined in Chapter Three:

... They came together in this way for the very first time to consider the problems ILR currently faces and to which, with respect, they feel that your Ministers and the Independent Broadcasting Authority are not addressing themselves with the degree of concern and constructive action the situation requires.

ILR is rapidly approaching a crisis state. If the media and technology worlds stood still it would have problems enough, arising in the main from the rigid vice of regulation in which it is held and the decisions of the IBA with regard to franchise areas, signal strengths, shareholdings etc. which have not always made business or broadcasting sense. But, as you Madam, perhaps more than anyone, are aware, the media and communications worlds are changing at a very rapid pace. These changes are bringing new, exciting opportunities – cable, DBS, privatisation of BT – for those involved and challenges for those who will face new competition from these developments. ILR is an industry in this position, and it is not afraid of competition, either audiences or revenue, providing it can compete fairly.

(Findlay's letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, private file, 1984)

Copies were sent to Home Secretary Leon Brittan, Industry Secretary Norman Tebbit and IBA Chairman Lord Thomson of Monifeith. The copy of the letter to Lord Thomson on 25 June, 1984 uses a powerful tactic. While outlining the six resolutions, the AIRC reinforced its own understanding of the nature of regulation, highlighting the weaknesses in the IBA's argument that their resistance to change was due to the legislation:

These requirements are set down in six resolutions, copies of which are attached. None requires major expenditure and industry or public funds; none requires any fundamental shift in Government policy; only one (relating to deregulation) envisages possible repeal of statute. All are necessary if ILR is to survive, compete fairly and build on the achievements of its first decade.

(AIRC, 1984b)

### **Responses to Heathrow**

The debate stirred up by the Heathrow Conference captured the attention of both the media and the IBA. *Broadcast* ran the story, outlining former IBA regulator Tony

Stoller's argument "for a change in the way ILR is structured and regulated" (*Broadcast*, 1984b). The same edition also carried detailed coverage of the resolutions passed at Heathrow. The IBA's response to the Conference appeared in a confidential radio paper, entitled 'Public statements by the Radio Companies Association' and circulated the AIRC's press release and the six resolutions (R4, 1984). Further correspondence on 13 July, 1984, from Director General, John Whitney to IBA radio management, following his meeting on 4 July, 1984 with the AIRC post-Heathrow is revealing in tone and content, and demonstrates a paternalistic approach:

I made plain that the IBA had not liked the manner and style of AIRC's press release, issued immediately after their Heathrow conference on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. There had been no advance consultation on this, formal or informal, with the IBA. We also questioned whether, in their own interests, the ILR companies were airing their views/grievances in a way that was most likely to achieve practical results.

(AIRC, 1984e)

Whitney's correspondence highlights the IBA's unease at the potential effect of Heathrow. It also demonstrates two approaches to managing the communication between both parties: Firstly, it takes a conciliatory approach in its response; secondly, it appears to confirm its status as the patriarch within the relationship:

We pressed them to elucidate what objectives they had in mind in making public their complaints on a (too?) wide range of issues. We also urged them to distinguish:

- a) matters where the companies should properly have discussions with the IBA
- b) any issues where scope existed for joint pressure by the IBA and the companies
- c) points where the companies would be best advised to make their case – to Government or elsewhere – on their own. NOTE: On some issues, the companies and the IBA (provided there had been normal and courteous discussion first) might have to agree to disagree.

(AIRC, 1984e)

## **Outcomes of Heathrow**

The dominance of the public-service ethic went hand-in-hand with the idea of programme regulation. As the commercial motive takes precedence, so all justification for ILR intervention in programme quality is quickly fading.

(Stoller, *Broadcast*, 1984b)

As outlined earlier in the Chapter, one resolution passed at Heathrow was that AIRC would commission a feasibility study into the effect of a lighter-touch regulatory system. At a cost of around £20,000 the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Report would prove to be useful in changing attitudes to ILR, especially programme content. The aim of the Report was to influence opinion formers about a possible path of radio deregulation. The fifty-three page Report was published on 22 November 1984. Entitled '*Radio Broadcasting in the UK: Its Value, Future and Regulation*' the document is comprehensive in undergoing an examination of the UK regulatory structure (AIRC, 1984g). Stoller identifies the potential power in the document: "The companies hoped it would be a powerful totem" (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 147). The Report nonetheless serves as an important outcome of Heathrow for three reasons. It confirmed the AIRC's commitment to its position as taking the lead in the battle for change. It challenged the more traditional role of the IBA as the official 'broadcaster' (as outlined in Chapter Two). It demonstrated ILR as knowledgeable about both UK and international regulation. The conclusions of the Report will now be reflected upon in more detail.

The report has four key sections: What Regulation Achieves, UK Industry Structure, Four UK Industry Scenarios and Likely Impact of Scenarios. Within these sections, five key areas of regulation are analysed: content, economic / financial, frequency allocation, ownership and management, and technical standards. The report puts together a persuasive case, and opens up the debate over the concept of deregulation with the use of international scenarios to test the UK model. The EIU compared and contrasted the UK with the USA, Canada and Italy:

These countries were chosen "not for any similarity to the UK but for the contrasting types of regulation which characterise their broadcasting systems. Such models for alternative regulatory authorities represent radically different systems and are appropriate and successful for the countries in which they exist...they provide valuable lessons for regulation which can be applied with discretion.

(AIRC, 1984g)

O'Malley offers a different comparison between international markets. He states that while the government supported expansion and competition, "this is in spite of the fact that where radio operates on free market principles, in Italy and the USA, both the choice and the range of opinions on offer to the public are extremely limited" (1988:38). In this case however, the compare and contrast approach to other countries' regulation

allows the document to put forward two alternative approaches to be considered for the UK: regulation with a medium touch and regulation with a light touch. This is significant; As the research has already identified, the IBA had not undergone an examination of other potential workable regulatory frameworks when shaping commercial radio in its formative years. The regulation had stood still for over ten years since ILR's creation in 1973, despite radical change to social, cultural, political and technological reform. The EIU Report therefore served as a catalyst for change because for the first time it presented alternative ways to regulate content, finances and ownership. "We needed to get an independent body to get a different view and certainly the report that they came up with was useful" (Findlay personal communication, 2009). Hendy suggests the American model provides a strong historical context in which to examine UK regulation:

In the USA, FCC spent much of the 1980s and 1990s relinquishing many of its behavioural controls, including the requirement for stations to offer 'community service' items. In the USA, this degree of deregulation has largely been accepted as government policy.

(Hendy, 2000: 43)

As Chapter Two highlighted, comparison between the US and the UK commercial radio systems is limited, given their structural, historical and cultural differences. ILR however was able to glean sources of potential useful information in the debate concerning deregulation. This will be revisited presently. The Report makes a key observation about the effect of the re-emergence of pirate radio. Throughout the 1980s, illegal stations continued to spring up, in addition to the arrival of a new sound of radio station - Laser 558, as outlined earlier. The EIU report draws a historical perspective upon the impact of the pirates at this point:

Their ability to draw attention to radio broadcasting has not been so much in evidence since 1967, when mounting competition from offshore pirate 'Caroline' forced the BBC to reconsider its audience. The result was Radio One. Could today's pirates have an equally catalytic effect?

(AIRC, 1984g: 40)

The report contains new thinking on five key themes: it debates the scarcity of spectrum issue; disputes the link between heavy regulation and quality standards; disagrees that

the aims of profit-making and public service are not compatible; discusses the impact of INR; and defines the start of deregulation. Each of these matters will now be discussed in more detail.

The Report debates the widely held view of the IBA at the time that the scarcity of public airwaves is one such rationale for limiting frequency allocation. It accepts that some regulation is required to ensure some level of control to frequency allocation, in order to avoid the American model where “the FCC has nullified the idea of ‘scarcity’ by awarding as many licences as possible” (1984g: 49). It identifies a clear opportunity for a number of new radio licences which would enable commercial radio to expand further: the removal of the simulcasting rule (where each individual radio station uses both its FM and AM frequency to transmit the same service). As outlined in Chapter Three, the practice of simulcasting was already being challenged by the industry by the early 1980s. The Report clarified the potential opportunities that could emerge from releasing spectrum: “If the majority of ILR or BBC stations could be transmitted on only FM or AM frequencies, there would be a massive expansion of available transmission frequencies. Such an acceptance could double the number of radio stations transmitting in the UK” (1984g: 37). Disputing the link between heavy touch regulation and quality, the Report concluded regulation was not “a prerequisite to create quality programming” and argued that their evidence showed commercial stations were just as likely to respond to market pressure to maintain and enhance performance (1984g: ii). The IBA’s original vision of ILR as a “fusion of public service and private radio” was challenged by the Report (Stoller 2009). Referring to this remit as a “dilemma”, the Report asked the question “should independent radio’s first priority be to make a profit or to behave in the style of a public service?” (1984g: ii). Again, the evidence collected from international broadcasting systems presented an alternative view of a definition of fulfilling public interest: one where there was a rich diversity of radio station listening and choice. This diversity could only be achieved by allowing stations to segment and target a particular audience and adopt a more specific genre or format to cater for individual wants and needs. Reviewing the ILR sound in 1984, the Report suggested that the IBA’s pursuit of serving the public was having the opposite effect:

This means that today’s stations have all (apart from LBC) inherited broadly similar formats. They all broadcast pop music, news, phone-ins and interviews in an attempt to cater, at some point, during the day, for most types of listener.

IBA regulated programme content is not likely to be the answer for increasing audience figures, in the face of new competition from the present pirates or any potential deregulation newcomers. The freedom to experiment with different formats could do much to boost listenership.

(AIRC, 1984g: 24)

The research into the American market revealed they too had undergone key changes which resulted in looser programme regulation. This would serve as another useful bargaining tool for the AIRC. Hilliard and Keith's study in local radio in the USA is useful in this context: "Nearly all of those that ever existed, such as the fairness doctrine, the ascertainment primer, commercial guidelines, and news and public affairs guidelines, disappeared by the mid-1980s" (Hilliard and Keith, 2005: 65). The Report supported the Heathrow resolutions concerning ILR's concern over the IBA's plans for INR (see page 126). As explained earlier, stations felt they had not been privy to the IBA's planning of the new national commercial stations. The Report reiterated the lack of communication which had led to rumours regarding the proposed format of an INR station. These rumours veered from a competitor to Radio Four to a new pop service to challenge Radio One. (Ultimately, the first INR station would be neither. It would be a classical music format, but only after the first winning applicant, Showtime Radio, failed to produce the financial backing required and was withdrawn.) The EIU was largely supportive of INR. However, it recognised that its impact on ILR could potentially affect advertising revenue, and as such, asserted that the "the introduction of INR, with no other alteration to independent radio operation, will place those operators under even more extreme financial pressure" (1984g: 37). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is another example of the problem of parity (for ILR, INR and Community Radio (CR)). The issue of parity would continue to develop a powerful argument in the case for deregulation.

The overarching theme of the document is rationale for deregulation. The Report explains how deregulation might work to the benefit of the commercial radio industry. By exploring scenario planning, it offers two main considerations for the future: medium touch regulation and light touch regulation. The Report also investigated other key factors impacting on the development of ILR. These included restrictions on advertising revenue, ownership rules and IBA rentals and transmission costs. Viking Radio (Hull) for example, had to spend £200,000 on engineering equipment due to the

IBA's stringent technical standards. The Report outlines that the average cost of setting up an ILR station was £500,000 compared to £300,000 in the USA and £28,000 in Italy, due to the IBA's demands for top of the range studio equipment. Other factors discussed include primary and secondary rental schemes and clawback on profits, government tax (levy) staff numbers and wages and power of trade unions (another impact of regulation). The analyses of revenues, station and IBA costs and listening figures contained in the Report demonstrate that the commercial industry was stagnant and lacking opportunities to grow in its current business model. The analysis appears convincing and presents ILR as overburdened with a complex business model. The Report leans towards a light touch regulatory framework as the most workable model. This model suggests two key benefits for the audience: increased diversity in programming and listener choice; greater concentration on localism, targeting smaller geographical communities.

An expanded radio industry could not succeed unless permitted to operate in a freer market environment, for which a lighter style of regulation would be required. It would then be expected that the trend towards local radio, evident in success of ILR and the emergence of pirates in response to market demand, would continue with new entrants in the pirate style. That is they would be aimed at a geographically definable community, but on a scale smaller than ILR or at a group linked by taste, race or interest.

(AIRC, 1984g: 40)

A continuing theme within this thesis is the relationship between ILR and the BBC. While a study of the BBC is outside of its terms of reference, the Report does draw parallels between ILR output and that of Radios One and Two. In summarising the various scenarios available in any future regulatory framework, it notes the impact of such decisions upon the BBC, suggesting there would need to be a "reworking of Government policy on the overall role of the BBC, in all its manifestations, within that policy" (1984g: 38). This is an important point. The EIU clarifies that the programming policies within Radios One and Two could be affected by changes to ILR structures. This links to events in 1985 when the Peacock Committee convened to discuss the financing of the BBC, during which the issue of privatising Radio One would emerge as a recommendation. This will be explored later in the Chapter.

Music copyright and needle time was also top of the AIRC's agenda. One failed court tribunal had taken place in 1980 and a result remained pending following the 1984 tribunal which had taken place with Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL). This was initiated by the radio companies in order to reduce the copyright financial burden. Reiterating its point that catering for public service should mean diversity and choice, the Report concludes that needle time was directly driving listeners into the hands of the illegal pirate stations: "Needle time has the effect of restricting non-stop or continuous periods of recorded music, yet one factor of audience interest in 'pirate' stations is that they are able to provide this" (1984g: 24). The Report criticises the music copyright arrangements with PRS and PPL, pointing out what they regarded as a paradox: that "radio stations should pay fees to record companies, whose product they freely advertise" (1984g: 23). The thesis has also referred to relationships among IBA, governments, radio stations and the audience. Chapter Two outlined ILR's passive relationship with the IBA in the early 1970s, which developed into an active and more aggressive phase by the early 1980s, as evidenced in Chapter Three. The EIU document confirms the start of a changing position of power between IBA and ILR:

The very step of the AIRC commissioning this report marks a major change in the climate of discussion between all the parties involved in radio broadcasting. It is perhaps inevitable that as the Association adopts a posture which is active, the Authority under the constraints of its remit is necessarily made more passive by comparison.

(AIRC, 1984g: 36)

There was one drawback with the Report, which highlights further the perceived success of Heathrow. While the document presented a useful case for a form of deregulation, the time taken to draft it meant that its eventual power as a negotiating tool, severely diminished as actions overtook it. The IBA, reeling from the AIRC's public relations exercise post-Heathrow, superseded the EIU Report with news of its own. This is outlined in the next section.

The momentum of Heathrow continued during 1984, both within ILR and the IBA. Stoller's (forthcoming 2010) dedicated chapter, 'London Heathrow calling' outlines the events of the Conference and makes a key statement: "This was the occasion when *independent* radio started to shift into *commercial* radio" (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 144). This supports the point made in Chapter One regarding the IBA's use of

terminology, requesting that stations avoid the “commercial” word (LBC Programmes – General, 1979a). After Heathrow and prior to the publication of the EIU Report, AIRC secured two key meetings to discuss the future of the industry. The first was with the IBA Director General (which would take place ten days post-Heathrow). The second was with Home Secretary Leon Brittan, who would come to be regarded as the “enthusiastic deregulator” (O’Malley, 1988: 38). The structure of both meetings would turn out to be critical in shaping future radio broadcasting policy and would lead to new measures to loosen some elements of rental regulation, all within six months of the Conference. Brian West wrote to Norman Bilton, Managing Director of Radio Wyvern stating “we should remember that (despite what the IBA may claim) nothing would have happened if we had not taken the initiative at Heathrow in June” (Findlay private file, 13 November, 1984). Reporting on the same story, *Broadcast* headlined “ILR applauds IBA deregulations: Unions fear thin end of wedge” (*Broadcast*, 1984c). These meetings will now be explored in more detail.

The first IBA meeting on 4 July, 1984 was one of eight special meetings between June 1984 and November 1985 to discuss and take forward matters within the six Heathrow resolutions. It is significant because it endorses ILR’s position as active in driving change and the regulator as passive in reacting to change. The minutes of that first meeting suggest a strained atmosphere: “Mr Whitney... reiterated the IBA’s disappointment at the manner in which the AIRC statements had been made, and doubted their validity”; “Mr Thompson queries EIU’s record as a research organisation” (Findlay, private file, 4 July, 1984). Stoller surmises the pre- and post-Heathrow shift in relationship: “From that point onwards, the radio industry began to deal with its regulators in a spirit of confrontation, and in the language of confrontation (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 153).

Following this meeting, the IBA asked AIRC to put forward their list of proposals for change for consideration. These proposals sent to the IBA in 25 October 1984, became known as the AIRC’s Shopping List (Findlay, private file, 1984). The Shopping List was based on three key areas of regulation within the commercial radio business model: The Administrative; The Commercial; and Programming. Examples of specific points within each of the three areas were brought together on a long list for the IBA’s attention. The AIRC asked the IBA for confirmation of plans for change including: number of commercial minutes, sponsorship, diversification into publications, mergers

and takeovers between willing ILR companies, reduction of rental and levy hours of broadcasting, balance within programmes and reduction in volume of in-depth educational programming, competition prize values and related publicity, prior approval of ongoing programme schedules and split frequencies. The IBA went through each point on the list and identified what their desired response should be and whether the requested change would require new legislation. For example, under Hours of Broadcasting, the IBA agreed to “relinquish control of hours of broadcasting” (Findlay, private file, 25 October 1984). Further changes were imminent. To that end, the IBA issued a press release on 12 November, 1984 announcing a series of measures to improve the financial health of ILR. This piece of communication identifies a clear shift in the relationship as highlighted earlier. In the release IBA Director General John Whitney outlined they were taking a more realistic change to regulation: “Our new relationship with the companies will enable them to have a greater degree of responsibility in the conduct of their own affairs, which will reduce the bureaucratic burden on their resources” (Findlay, private file, 1984). In response Brian West pointed to the Heathrow Conference as the reason for the IBA’s actions, suggesting it “can now be seen as a turning point” (Bernard, private file, 1984). However the IBA’s press release was also regarded as a pre-emptive strike against the AIRC, possibly based on the Association’s previous press activity following Heathrow:

When, in November, the IBA decided to go public with a package of measures, we were about half-way through discussing the Shopping List. No reason has ever been given by the IBA for not waiting for completion of the debate on AIRC’s demands, before announcing what it was prepared to do, but the clear inference has been that the pressure we succeeded in generating, both directly, from below as it were, and indirectly, from above (i.e. Home Office) worked too well and panicked the IBA into action and a public declaration that it was doing something for ILR.

(AIRC, 1985a)

The actions of the IBA at this point suggest, support and confirm that 1984 represents two key points in commercial history: that it was the pivotal moment in the endorsement of change and that Heathrow was the key catalyst behind the start of a new ideology in UK commercial radio. This will be demonstrated by an examination of sudden change of rules that the IBA agreed to, following its press release on 12 November. A further significant point was the AIRC request regarding share ownership. Up until this point the IBA stood firm on two issues: that they would vet and approve all

shareholders and that the shares would be held locally within the transmission area of the radio station. This was a matter of great annoyance to the stations. The IBA considered the Shopping List and made requests to their solicitors, Allen & Overy to review the IBA contracts. Upon reading the requested changes and reviewing the need to amend contracts, Guy Wilson, from Allen & Overy suggested that a more informal approach to accepting any new terms might prove to be beneficial in a period of uncertainty for the IBA:

The mode of implementation of these changes is, of course, a question of form rather than substance in that any such “letter of authorisation” will in effect constitute an ad hoc variation of the contract but it seems to me that this approach has certain attractions. In the first place, it avoids the rather heavy handed approach of drawing up and exchanging formal supplemental agreements ... This approach also would more readily lend itself to enabling you to reserve the right to withdraw or vary at a later date all or any of the qualifications which you had made to the contract. I think it would also make it easier to “fudge” those points where your position may not be entirely clear as yet and / or where there may be differing views within the industry as to what individual companies actually want.

(AIRC, 1984i)

A letter was sent out to ILR companies outlining a number of changes to previous obligations, in line with the AIRC’s request. These included ‘Changes in shareholdings’ (which clarified that “the IBA is not opposed in principle to mergers and takeovers between willing ILR companies”), ‘Diversification’ (a U-turn on previous IBA correspondence regarding ILR involvement in publications such as freesheets, as outlined in the previous Chapter), ‘Rentals’ (setting out a 10% reduction in primary rental – by 1988 secondary rental would be abolished) ‘Contract Rolls’ (which removed the year-on-year review process which had caused a huge paperwork burden and allowed stations to fulfil their full contract term of ten years without interference from the IBA) and ‘Changes in broadcasting hours’ (which allowed station Managing Directors to take “personal responsibility” to dictate ad hoc or temporary changes, such as Christmas or New Year) (Findlay private file, December, 1984). The letter outlined that several aspects of the AIRC Shopping List were still being considered and worked out. It is clear that this communication was the beginning of a change both in the regulatory framework and the structure of ILR. These quick changes introduced by the regulator demonstrates further that the rigidity of the IBA was due to its insistence to

‘interpret’ the legislation effectively; yet it appears to have been able to have made several key changes without any amendments to the IBA Act. The small to medium changes outlined in the letter to stations in December 1984 began a process in which the structure of ILR also changed. For example the IBA’s acceptance of the role of shareholders and their view of mergers and takeovers, while necessary in light of increasing economic pressure, would be exploited to much greater effect. They would serve as key components of a new business model of ILR, post-1990. Therefore the research again reinforces that the events of 1984 serve as a legacy to the period of commercial radio that followed.

The second major outcome of Heathrow was ILR’s new relationship with Government. The meeting with the Home Secretary on 25 July, 1984 is important because it provided the AIRC with direct access to government, without involving the IBA:

Some members of the IBA were quite entrenched in their views. They were pretty worried about the rollercoaster effect, because things were beginning to happen. Because it was unthinkable in the early days of commercial radio that we, the radio companies would talk direct to Government. We were not the broadcasters, but the franchisees. We were committing quite a sin going direct to Government.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

The result of this first meeting enabled the AIRC, via its Chairman, Richard Findlay, to establish a regular line of communication with Brittan. One such letter sent on 11 September, 1984 followed up the face-to-face meeting on 25 July. Findlay reiterated the unfairness of the rental schemes, tax levies and Musicians Union contracts. He also used the opportunity to discuss candidly that the IBA was over-interpreting their power and responsibility within the individual stations:

Turning to regulation as it restricts the commercial freedom and independence of the privately owned ILR companies, I have already stated that the IBA should restrict its regulatory activities to those areas provided for in the 1981 Act and not extend and embrace the whole range of a company’s activities, which it currently does, almost down to the colour of paper in a station’s toilets.

(Richard Findlay to Leon Brittan, private file, 11 September, 1984)

The flippancy of the remarks makes a more serious point. As the research has previously outlined the IBA's style of regulation was based on their "interpretation" of the IBA Act (Thompson, 2009). But it was this interpretation that upon reflection seems unbalanced and inconsistent. This is further evidenced by the introduction of ILR's first networked and sponsored radio programme, *The Network Chart Show*, which occurred shortly after 'Heathrow' in October 1984. Bringing a programme of this kind to air (one which was of local and national significance to both ILR stations, and their combined audience of over twelve million) appears to have required no change to regulation. Yet individual stations' requests to alter their daily programming schedule still had to be agreed weeks in advance, irrespective of the size of the audience, the local knowledge within the station. This outdated and cumbersome schedule clearance procedure, now over ten years old, continued to overlook a key characteristic of radio: immediacy. "But where radio scheduling differs from television scheduling is in the sheer rapidity of its scheduling strategies" (Hendy 2000: 108). An examination of the regulation surrounding *The Network Chart Show* is now offered.

### **The Nescafé Chart Show – two 'firsts'**

One major milestone in the development of ILR programming took place in October 1984: the transmission of the first official networked and sponsored programme. *The Network Chart Show*, sponsored by coffee company Nescafé in a commercial deal worth £500,000, combined two firsts: it was the first fully networked programme broadcast on all ILR stations consisting of a chart rundown between 5-7pm every Sunday: "In its first six months on air it virtually doubled ILR's Sunday afternoon audience" (*IBA Television and Radio Yearbook 1986*). It was sold as a sponsorship opportunity. During previous periods of regulation, both these factors were outlawed. The arrival of *The Network Chart Show* (which would run for over twenty years) is a significant point because of the two conventions it broke. Its introduction was also linked to a more strategic reason, as Barnard identifies:

The programme was deliberately designed to attract *national* advertisers, as one of the commonest reasons cited by advertisers and agencies for their resistance to using ILR (and consequently for ILR's chronically low share of national advertising revenue) was its lack of national coverage, and to increase general awareness of ILR as an advertising medium.

(Barnard 1989: 86)

An anomaly in the introduction of *The Network Chart Show* was that LBC, London's news / talk station, was also required to broadcast the top forty music show to its audience. This was probably due to the sponsorship agreement with the advertiser (although it shows a lack of experience in managing the contract). Listeners wrote to the IBA perplexed by the rationale for the inclusion of *The Network Chart Show* on a news / talk radio station:

Any listener in London who wants to hear it would tune into Capital – the station which you are supposed to complement and not compete. I wonder how long it will be before Radio Four transmits the Top 40 show on Sunday afternoons with Radio One?

(LBC Programmes – General, 1984)

The press also reported on this unusual broadcasting policy outlining that must be “for no other reason than commercial pragmatism” (*The Guardian*, October 1984 cited Barnard 1989: 86). *Marketing Week* commented that “Capital is angry that LBC is gradually being allowed to play more and more music. However LBC argues that an all-speech policy would bring the station to bankruptcy” (*Marketing Week*, 17 August, 1984). John Thompson, when asked what regulatory procedures were needed to approve the first networked commercial radio programme, recalls:

Nothing. What we could do, and I hope we did, was ensure the technicalities were in place. We had first class engineers, so we had to make it work. There was a lot of discussion, but it didn't really require any formal clearance. In fact I'm sure it didn't. Frankly we'd always been a bit puzzled that there hadn't been more of this but it wasn't our job to say 'just get together and do this thing'. We were really puzzled that there hadn't been more of it sooner. It was unsurprising that the sharing and networking of music, all came a bit late in the day but didn't feel it was down to us to say.

(John Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

The importance of the relationship with Brittan meant that ILR now had the ear of Government. This would become more important when Douglas Hurd, who succeeded Brittan in September 1985, assumed responsibility for production of a Green Paper on the future of radio broadcasting. This Paper and the subsequent White Paper, were the key government policy papers which led to the creation of the Broadcasting Act 1990 and will be discussed in more detail later. However before this policy process began, the Conservative Government announced another key review of British broadcasting. Just

as the Annan Report in 1977 had led to the introduction of Channel Four which had challenged aspects of the IBA's rationale for regulation (see Chapter Three), the announcement of the Peacock Committee in 1985 and its subsequent recommendations would mean that commercial radio could no longer be seen as a separate entity to BBC radio. This is now discussed in more detail.

### **Peacock plays his part**

This populist cheerleading on editorial matters – what has been called Thatcherism in its Maoist phase – was only one wing of the Conservative attack. The other was more strategic and less immediately visible to the public in its effects to steadily weaken the BBC's competitive position in the broadcasting marketplace.

(Hendy 2007: 282)

In addition to the Heathrow Conference, the EIU Report and the continual support of the advertising industry, another key event which impacted on ILR development was the presentation of the findings of the Peacock Report. Chaired by Professor Alan Peacock, the aim of the Committee was to review the financing of the BBC and to question whether the role of the licence fee was still relevant for both television and radio programme-making. Several commentators (Hendy 2007; Leapman 1987 et al) suggest Thatcher's dislike of the BBC was behind the commissioning of the Committee which convened in March 1985. Key people in ILR seized the opportunity to ensure commercial radio was not forgotten in a review that was essentially about the BBC. Nigel Walmsley, Managing Director of Capital Radio declared:

The question for Professor Peacock is not the role of advertising in the BBC, but the role in the future structure of radio as a whole. For it is a question of structure. Individual developments in radio cannot be looked at in isolation. It would be all too easy to take a wrong turning on community radio, split frequencies, independent national radio, or advertising on the BBC. Radio in Britain could be on the brink of an exciting and new period of development and expansion. Piecemeal decision-making could stunt its growth.

(*The Guardian*, 15 April, 1985)

The *Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC* (HMSO 1986) was released in May 1986. While the Report did not cover the commercial broadcasting sector in detail, there

are two key themes that the highly relevant and useful to ILR at this stage in its development. The first theme is Peacock's attribution to the role and values of a 'listener' [or 'viewer'] as a consumer; a major shift in ideological thinking. The second was the ambiguity it placed upon the definition of public service broadcasting. Both are now expanded upon.

Together they championed the notion of consumer sovereignty, and they did so with an eye to the multichannel future. Consumers were the best judges of their own interests, they proposed. Consumers, and not producers elites, should decide on the character of broadcasting.

(Born, 2004: 50)

Peacock's use of the term 'consumer sovereignty' identified a shift in the relationship between the broadcaster and its audience and their previously assumed roles. It identified this was a two-way process and one in which the audience should have the right to choice and diversity via the availability of broadcasting channels in the UK. This was important to enable the audience to determine listening patterns tailored to their wants and needs (Johnson and Turnock 2005). He set the foundation for a new system of broadcasting: "a system which recognises that viewers and listeners are the best ultimate judges of their own interests, which they can best satisfy if they have the option of purchasing the broadcasting services they require from as many sources as possible" (Peacock 1986). (The shift in thinking from 'listener' and 'viewer' to 'consumer' would be reflected in Ofcom's choice of terminology when they assumed the role of UK regulator in 2003.) In addition, Peacock raised questions about the definition of public service broadcasting and this supported his argument that the market should be identified in the development of broadcasting, as both Born (2004) and Johnson and Turnock (2005) explain:

The report took a sceptical view of the meaning of public service broadcasting, claiming that even the broadcasters were unable to give a clear definition. Such scepticism remains a favoured rhetorical device of the commercial lobby in broadcasting.

(Born 2004: 50)

[Sir Alan] Peacock himself was a free-market economist and as Goodwin (1998: 78) argues, the Committee's report was the first report in the history of broadcasting to see the market rather than public service broadcasting as the underlying principle of broadcasting.

(Johnson and Turnock 2005: 27)

Another important point raised in the Report which added impetus to the commercial broadcasting lobby was Peacock's criticism of the BBC. While acknowledging the contribution it had made to the UK's reputation for quality programming (Gibbons 1998) it criticised the lack of consumer focus as a way of assessing its performance: "it provides no impetus to maximise the volume of the audiences on each side because financial stability is not seriously affected by reductions in audience rating (Peacock 1986). This argument can also be seen in the context of commercial broadcasting at the time. As explained earlier in Chapter Three, the IBA's definition of quality was also not based on ratings. Rod Allen (cited in Johnson and Turnock 2005) writing with reference to London Weekend Television programming, makes a pertinent point in criticising the IBA's interpretation of mixing public service programming within a commercial entity:

The goal of the programme departments of ITV [in the 1970s and early 1980s] was to produce excellent programming, measured on the whole by peer approval rather than ratings. The fact that this objective aligned with the commercial objectives of the companies as well was the reason why producers were allowed to pursue excellence rather than ratings; and it also enabled companies to claim that they were fulfilling their public service obligations.

(Allen cited Johnson and Turnock 2005: 109)

Gibbons clarifies this further in the context of a two-tier structure of broadcasting given the current model of the BBC and IBA: "It criticised the way that successive government policies established and maintained a "comfortable duopoly" which restricted entry to the market and segmented the sources of finance available to the BBC and the independent sector" (Gibbons 1998: 129). One new recommendation from the Peacock Report created a huge backlash from the ILR stations. Since its inception ILR had regarded itself as competing with Radios One and Two (not BBC Local Radio), but Peacock took this one step further. Confirming the speculation that had been mounting in the media (Milne 1988), Peacock suggested the privatisation of Radio One. *The Sun* reported "why Radio One is on its deathbed" commenting that "David Jenson's Chart Show on the commercial network is slicker and more up to date, than the BBC equivalent" (*The Sun*, 1986). Peacock's proposal was considered to be a solution to the BBC's financing problems. In addition, it supported Peacock's thinking of consumer sovereignty by "cultivating a separateness and making audience maximisation the major tenet of policy" (Barnard 1989: 61). In the past, the IBA argued for a more level playing field, but the realisation that Radio One might eventually compete for advertising

revenue created havoc within ILR. Several stations wrote to the IBA for support, saying the heritage of the BBC brand and the resources within the organisation would lead to further financial difficulties (R4, 1985). The BBC was also unhappy about the proposal. Richard Francis, Managing Director of BBC Radio suggested: “the perception that the BBC’s licence fee is becoming an increasingly intolerable burden is very much down to the politicians” (*Television Today*, 31 October, 1985). Francis also counter-attacked Peacock’s argument regarding audience choice: “To introduce advertising to the BBC would inevitably affect not only the range and quality of services that we offer, but also those provided by ITV and ILR. It would be competition for advertising rather than advertising itself that would do the damage” (*Television Today*, 31 October, 1985). Ultimately the Report concluded the BBC “should have the option to privatise Radios 1 and 2”: a suggestion the Corporation did not take up (Peacock 1986).

In summary, the findings of the Peacock Committee and its recommendations to the BBC served as an important lobbying tool for a radical change in the ILR business model. Its Report enabled the BBC to be compared and contrasted to both the independent television and radio sector. This, in turn, enabled the Report to serve as another catalyst for change in the rationale for regulation, in a similar way the Annan Report opened up the arrival of Channel Four (as discussed in Chapter Three). Most compelling for the ILR lobby was Peacock’s recommendation that the “IBA regulation of radio should be replaced by a looser regime” (O’Malley, 1988: 38). This was one of five key points which emerged from Peacock which can be applied to the context of ILR development. These go forward as important evidence for the subsequent Green Paper on the Future of Broadcasting which began its journey through Parliament in 1987. The five key points are: Extended choice; No advertising on BBC but instead ILR would have national commercial stations (and smaller scale commercial stations to reach more specific communities); Franchises to go out to competitive tender and awarded to the highest bidder; Commissioning from independent producers (to which O’Malley observes: “Independents then are being promoted by the government as a device to break up the duopoly of the BBC and ITV” (1988: 41); and Control over commercial radio to be handed to a new ‘light-touch’ radio authority. The Peacock Report would in part serve as a basis for the contents of the Green Paper, which would in turn lead to the Broadcasting Act 1990. “If the Peacock report restrained the Thatcherite desire to commercialise the BBC, through other recommendations it constructed a framework that would eventually bring similar results, but less directly”

(Born 2004: 50-51). The Report's suggestion of a new radio regulator returned to a debate which had emerged over the Pilkington Committee Report, some twenty-five years previously. Who should be responsible for media regulation, broadcaster or regulator? Gibbons explains the link between societal change and the role of regulation:

If Annan's report signalled a shift in emphasis in the regulation of broadcasting's quality, it was to remind broadcasters of many pluralistic features of British society. At the same time, it continued the tradition of acknowledging the broadcaster as being responsible for deciding how those features are to exert an influence.

It was the debate in the mid-1980s, at the time when the Peacock Committee was reviewing the status of the BBC that signalled a shift in thinking about that responsibility. The development of technology which enabled audiences to behave like consumers and purchase the programming product which they were able to afford, raised questions about the common standards to be imposed on all media.

(Gibbons 1998: 69)

### **A pivotal moment – the start of deregulation**

Heathrow is a key revealing moment in commercial radio history. It acted as the catalyst for change - a point endorsed by key people from the period in question. Tony Stoller, who had recently departed Radio 210 (Reading) when Heathrow took place, recalls that the event was:

Absolutely pivotal. Would the change have happened anyway? Yes, but in that time and form, I don't think so. The companies came together in an unprecedented way. They shared goals to a degree that had been absent for the previous ten years. They found themselves in a direct antagonistic relationship with the IBA. This was a set battle. This was El Alamein. This was the pivotal moment. It meant that from that point onwards, the radio companies pursued their own political aims, wholly separate from the IBA. And so when there was a change in broadcast regulation at the end of the decade, their voices were heard, and the IBA, on the point of being abolished, was not heard at all.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

Stoller also identifies how the role of the IBA as dual regulator continued to impact upon ILR's future, just as it had affected commercial radio's attempt to emerge from

television's shadow. It also formed the start of a change in IBA thinking and an acceptance of things to come:

The IBA was fed up with ILR. It was running out of money to run stations. Its heart was no longer in radio. Only the work of Paul Brown and David Vick [two key Radio Officers at the IBA], that got the incremental stations going, gave any real locus to the IBA. There was a series of antagonistic meetings between IBA and stations, and then the IBA's outflanking manoeuvre ahead of the Economist Report, which I think really marked the end of the relationship.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

John Thompson considers whether the Conference was the start of a change of regulation:

I think that's broadly true. However, we were essentially arguing about the same ends as the companies. One of the main changes was the provision of national radio and the 1990 Act also removed the requirement for schedules to be cleared. These were things we had been arguing for years. Had there been a separate regulator for radio from the outset, these things could have been more open to argument.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

Professor Seán Street's recollection of the period further confirms 1984 as a pivotal moment in taking commercial radio forward. His testimony concurs that Heathrow instigated the start of a process called deregulation. Street acknowledges the downside of the repercussions of Heathrow: ILR's resolutions passed at the Conference would have a knock-on effect at local radio station level:

You've got this period between 1984-90; we were pushing on an open door from that point. The momentum for change was building from 1984 for the rest of the decade. It enabled stations to have a go and take things on. *The Chart Show* had its origins in those days, to the IBA's dislike. And once you get to the point where the 1990 Act was a Green Paper before a White Paper, it's clear to everyone that things are going to change anyway. So those last years of the '80s, we were just waiting for the rubber stamp. I certainly do remember people saying to me at the time when I was Features Editor, 'your job isn't going to be here in two days time'.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

Richard Findlay agrees that Heathrow was the pivotal moment with two major outcomes: Firstly, it gave ILR direct access to Government policy makers. Secondly, it started the break-up of the dual (television and radio) regulator:

It was incredibly important. We were now talking directly to Government and the Home Secretary, and Government was listening and wanted to hear what we had to say. And we discovered we were quite powerful,. Local MPs were very interested to hear our views. They wanted their local stations to work and work sensibly for quite altruistic reasons as they are now. When we woke up we were a lot more important than we thought we were. And our voice was listened to. And the IBA themselves started listening seriously and involving us, but it was an incredibly bureaucratic organisation. People like John Whitney found it hard to shift people's position with the old guard. We came to the conclusion that lumping us in with television was not sensible, we just got lost in the whole plethora of what was happening. We needed our own separate regulator for radio and that's what we pushed for.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

The evidence offered thus far suggests the impact of Thatcherism also made its mark. Thatcher's belief in the free market and the rise of the importance of the individual collective rather than societal collective (as discussed in Chapter Three) supported the AIRC's argument and Peacock's recommendations. Street (2002) outlines a continuation of the political football: "As far as the deregulation word and Thatcherism, there's no question that capitalism could be seen to be working through the development of commercial radio during this period" (Street, personal communication, 2009). In addition to the ideology of Thatcherism which supported the transformation of independent to commercial radio, the IBA would suffer a further blow at the hands of the Prime Minister. A Thames Television documentary which showed members of the IRA being shot by the SAS aired in April 1988. *Death on the Rock*, part of the *This Week* series angered Thatcher and is cited as one reason for changes in the franchising operations of regional television companies as part of the Broadcasting Act 1990. The response to *Death on the Rock* does not form part of the discussion in the thesis. However Street's observation of the role of Thatcher in creating the demise of the IBA and their regulation ethos is useful in this context:

Yes the two are inextricably linked but I think if you look for a single event it is actually a television event, *Death on the Rock*. Thatcher's outraged response was to go after the

IBA. The impact of this was that she was going to get Thames TV (and did). The whole commercial broadcasting world changed as a result.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

It is useful to assess the case for deregulation in the UK at this point in time by an examination of American radio. Several key policies were amended or removed for US broadcasters in the 1980s and the UK was able to capitalise on the precedent being set by their American counterparts: “Radio seeks a cure for broadcasting ills. Local radio stations in Britain believe they suffer too much regulation, high overheads and too little revenue” reported Nick Gilbert in the *Sunday Times* (30 June, 1985). His article offered an alternative view from the US, where he featured Scott Shannon, the Morning Show presenter on Z Morning Zoo in New York.<sup>18</sup> “Start with a profanity, add a stream of insults aimed at your rivals, follow that with music, music, and you have the formula for a top American radio station” (*Sunday Times*, 30 June, 1985). An article in American trade journal ‘*Broadcasting*’ was used in correspondence by the AIRC to highlight recent regulatory changes made by the US regulator, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Entitled ‘*Deregulation comes to television – FCC in unanimous vote follows pattern of radio dereg [sic] for commercial and public TV*’. The article states that the FCC “deregulated commercial television along the lines of its earlier deregulation of commercial radio – eliminating nonentertainment programming and commercial loading processing guidelines, and abolishing ascertainment and program logging requirements” (*Broadcasting*, 2 July, 1984). Hilliard and Keith’s (2005) assessment of the demise of American local programming requirements provides a comparison to the context of ILR; what they refer to as the deregulation of the public interest:

That salutary impact of public license renewal hearings on localism also disappeared in the 1980s during the Reagan administration’s period of deregulation. The requirements of proof of service in the public interest, convenience, or necessity, usually by submission of lengthy documents including sample program logs, were scrapped, and stations, as they do today, merely had to submit basic information on the equivalent of a large-sized postcard.

(Hilliard and Keith 2005: 63)

The increased awareness of deregulation in the American radio market was important to ILR. It enabled them to formulate an argument for their case. It demonstrated

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<sup>18</sup> A Morning Zoo is a morning radio show format, which usually encompasses music, talk and comedy with several players participating in the studio to create entertainment.

commercial radio could be successful if regulatory restraint was removed (thus supporting the view of the EIU Report). This, coupled with the Peacock Report's legacy that the audience could have greater range of broadcasting choice to enable greater decision-making over their listening habits, challenged the theoretical nature of regulation. As Gibbons reveals, the level of heavy regulation would now not be relevant:

When audiences are allowed to choose which segments of programming they wish to receive, the arguments for imposing a second level of basic restrictions are much weakened. Members of a potential audience can control effectively the material which reaches them, it becomes their responsibility to decide, rather than the broadcaster's or the regulator's. The logic of this view is that the amount of regulation for basic standards (the second level restrictions) should diminish in proportion to the segmentation of programming.

(Gibbons 1998: 71)

### **Towards consolidation – the new station sound**

The announcement that a Green Paper was imminent appears to have halted development of ILR. No new licences were granted following the Radio Mercury (Crawley) award in October 1984. Instead the IBA allowed stations to extend their transmission areas. Radio 210 extended from Reading into Basingstoke and Andover. Chiltern Radio (Bedford) became The Chiltern Radio Network and it used its booster transmitters to reach Dunstable, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Northampton. In 1985 Red Rose Radio (Preston) formed the Red Rose Group in the North West of England. Barnard acknowledges the importance of these early radio Groups:

The net effect of all this was to radically reshape the ILR map, to change ILR, in the space of little more than three years, from a locally based, locally dictated service to a more commercially viable regional system, and all without either consultation in the areas concerned or comment in Parliament.

(Barnard 1989: 84)

There was also controversy when the IBA readvertised the licence for Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, held by Radio Victory, and extended it to cover the cities of Southampton and Winchester – a transmission area of one million. As expiry of the original term approached, Radio Victory which had been on the air since 1975, was

expected to renew the new extended licence, just as all other ILR stations had. Instead the IBA awarded the licence to a new radio company, Ocean Sound. This was because they felt its licence application offered a more tailored programming service to both Portsmouth and Southampton in the larger transmission area. The local press reacted strongly. Radio Victory was the station that had supported IRN with news coverage during the Falklands War in 1982 (as outlined in Chapter Three). It was regarded as a strength of ILR, notably for the talent within the station, such as the then Programme Controller Chris Carnegie. “Victory now tastes defeat: fury over franchise loss” reported the *Portsmouth News* (2 June, 1986a). Two weeks later the same paper reported: “Radio Victory reveals axing was predicted – “We were sacrificial lamb” (*Portsmouth News*, 18 June, 1986b). The report outlined that Victory’s chairman had been told by a senior member of the IBA that “the IBA would sacrifice Victory to show it has some teeth left”. Radio Victory’s last broadcast was on 28 June, 1986 and the IBA decision to not renew its licence sent shockwaves throughout the industry.

By 1987 Gillian Reynolds, former Programme Controller and radio critic for the Daily Telegraph identified how regulation appeared to be easing:

There are new amalgamations of stations, particularly across the north. Rules on prizes and sponsorship are broken (“Now lets play Scruples” said my local DJ the other day, thus driving a coach and pair through the regulation on divisions of advertising and editorial as well). There are changes of share ownership, like the acquisition of 15 per cent of Piccadilly Radio in Manchester by a record company, Virgin, which would not have been sanctioned ten years ago.

*(Daily Telegraph, 6 June, 1987)*

*Campaign* summarised the changes: “The Australians are moving in, the Government is proposing radical changes, takeovers and mergers are the order of the day” (*Campaign*, 3 April 1987). The IBA was having to adapt and interpret the legislation to keep up with progress. Stations began flouting schedules clearance policy, preferring to ‘seek forgiveness rather than ask permission’ (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers). A transcript of an interview with Home Secretary Douglas Hurd on the *Brian Hayes* programme on LBC on 3 September, 1988 was noted by the Authority. An IBA memorandum to Director of Radio (Peter Baldwin, who had replaced John Thompson after his retirement) reveals their unease at the conversation:

1. Please find cassette, with this note, of relevant part of this am's discussion.
2. On community radio, Douglas Hurd acknowledged that 'We got into a lot of difficulty over this experiment' acknowledging the main worry as 'lack of control'.
3. In another breath, however, he said of CR, "if we'd put it under the IBA, I think a lot of people would have lost interest...you'd have lost the point of it".

(LBC Programmes – General, 1988)

### **Winning the copyright battle**

As the previous Chapters have shown, the music copyright fees paid to Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) by ILR, were a constant source of frustration for the industry. This was due in part to the financial obligations it imposed on the station and the lack of parity with the contribution paid by the BBC. AIRC had lodged and lost a tribunal in 1980. Unhappy with that decision, AIRC took the case to the High Court for a ruling on certain matters of law. Mr Justice Harman heard the case in July 1984, but sixteen months later there was still no response. This was set to change, thanks to the most prominent member of the IBA – the Chairman Lord Thomson. Jimmy Gordon, Managing Director of Radio Clyde recalls: "Lord Thomson of Monifieth became instrumental in helping resolve the PPL case. We asked if he could use his personal connection with Lord Hailsham to tactfully push for a verdict from Mr Justice Harman" (Gordon, personal communication, 2007). Monifieth lobbied Lord Hailsham on 28 November, 1985, asking him if a "tactful way might be found to encourage him [Justice Harman] to reach his decision". He stressed the financial imperative for stations (AIRC, 1986a). Mr Justice Harman returned his verdict on 21 January 1986. An internal memo to John Thompson revealed the outcome:

I have just returned from hearing Justice Harman give his judgement on AIRC's appeal against the Performing Right Tribunal. Harman quashed the Tribunal's decision (as announced in 1980 and confirmed in subsequent cases stated) and awarded AIRC costs.

Main point on which Harman found in AIRC's favour was over the question of comparison with copyright fees paid by the BBC. Harman said that the Tribunal had not taken this sufficiently into account.

(AIRC, 1986a)

This was a huge step forward for ILR. The implications of the tribunal judgement would eventually lead to lower copyright returns and paved the way for a fairer system of measurement for ILR and the BBC. The commercial radio industry was enthused and

excited by the rapid pace of change. Their press release after the Heathrow Conference had pleaded: “free us from the IBA shackles” (AIRC, 1984c). Plans for the Conservative’s Green Paper on the future of radio would utilize ILR’s new found voice within Government. Barnard suggests that the Green Paper “marked the elevation of radio to the political agenda” (Barnard, 1989: 186). However, as has been demonstrated, the relationship between radio and politics goes back far beyond this point. The research identifies a clear historic link between commercial broadcasting strategy and the political agenda from the outset in 1973. Attention will now turn to an examination of the Green Paper and the subsequent White Paper that led to the Broadcasting Act 1990.

### **Green Paper: The Future of Radio: Choices and Opportunities**

As early as 1986 ILR was able to contribute to thinking on the forthcoming Green Paper on Radio. This is likely to have been a result of a more open and direct relationship that the industry had achieved in the immediate aftermath to Heathrow. This will now be discussed further to indicate the AIRC’s new found status. No longer was it just concerned with representing the views of the commercial radio industry, it was now part of the consultation process in which Government circumvented the IBA. Douglas Hurd asked AIRC members to “put forward some preliminary views on changes to the Broadcasting Act of 1981 with a view to beginning a dialogue on change” (AIRC, 1986d). The AIRC’s response to his request mainly consisted of the issues outlined earlier in the Shopping List (see page 151). Turning its attention to a “new scenario” for the commercial radio business model, the document outlined three possible options for a new regulator: continuation of the IBA; a new radio quango; or transfer of radio to the Cable Authority, to which AIRC suggested was “born into an environment of minimal regulation ... appears tailor-made to provide the lighter regulatory regime favoured by the Government” (AIRC, 1986b). The AIRC document suggested major changes to the role of the new regulator. While the IBA would still have responsibility for granting licences, many other aspects of the new regulatory role would change. One notable example was that stations and the IBA would agree to a more generic ‘promise of performance’ for programming output rather than strict guidelines. The document also made other recommendations. The IBA would: continue to manage the process of frequency allocations but would have no engineering resources of its own; lay down programming guidelines and deal the Broadcasting Complaints Commission; and remove specialist staff in education, religion or any other area of special interest.

Notably it requested that the IBA remove their regional staff (who monitored individual stations) and disband Local Advisory Committees. Concern over the IBA's Annual Staff Reports on Companies (see page 135) was still evident and the AIRC requested that a new regulator "Make no demands upon radio companies for information / statistics other than: A simple quarterly return of all revenues received and costs met; An annual report on the station's activities" (R4, 27 January 1986). The document stressed: "The 1981 Act betrays its TV origins in many places and radio, as we have argued, is different from television and requires a fundamentally different approach to its regulation". The proposals sent to Douglas Hurd also outlined exceptions to the statutes within a new radio broadcasting Act:

There would be no reference in a new Radio Act to:

Quality of output: This would be a matter for each operator.

Information, education, entertainment: Each station would agree its broad programming specification at the point of licensing.

Proper balance

Wide hearing of programmes.

(AIRC, 1986c)

The scale of the AIRC's response suggests they were committed to ensuring the legislation could be as flexible as possible to accommodate their needs. In the meantime, the IBA continued to demonstrate that it was relaxing previous regulatory conditions. In June 1987 it issued a Paper over the split frequency (AM / FM) experiment, deeming it a great success (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1987). The IBA concluded that split frequencies were a cost effective way of reaching more differentiated audiences and suggested that "in light of the experiment and the Green Paper's presumption against simulcasting, the IBA recommends that the freedom to offer alternative ILR programme services should be allowed at the broadcasters' discretion (Radio Consultative Committee Minutes and Papers, 1986c). As page 147 outlined earlier, this was a recommendation of the EIU Report in October 1984.

The Government's Green Paper: 'The Future of Radio: Choices and Opportunities' was released for consultation in March 1987. Two issues which emerged from the Paper are identified for further discussion: 'The future of radio regulation in the UK' and 'Independent National Radio'. Both are pertinent to the research, and also serve as

postscripts to the main period under investigation. The IBA archive details the regulator's approach to planning and development of the first national commercial stations (which launched in 1990). What emerges from this Paper is the requirement for regulatory change in order for the INR stations to be introduced, such as the rationale for choosing the successful licence application. (After 1990 the model of application assessment would change to financial performance indicators and up-front investment rather than the previous model of 'quality and sustainability' of the programming service.) This serves as further evidence to support the discussion in the literature review regarding parity of regulation, for the community radio and national radio model.

Central to proposals put forward in the Green Paper consultation was the development of three national frequencies for national commercial radio and suggestion of a new light-touch regulator'. The AIRC's official response to the Green Paper identified six areas of special concern to its members. These were: Timing and order of the proposed changes; National commercial radio; Copyright; Transmission arrangements; Transitional arrangements for existing contractors; and The regulatory authority. Their general view was broad acceptance of Hurd's proposals. However, AIRC first wanted a phased approach with initial testing of the new regulation upon existing stations. Their response to the Paper again stresses the need for a substantial reduction in both the degree and cost of regulation (Green Paper on Radio, 1987f). One clear point was the AIRC's opposition to national commercial radio: "while this decision was not unanimous, they resolved by a substantial majority to oppose national commercial radio in any form and adopted this as the association's official stance" said the IBA summary document (Green Paper on Radio, 1987h). Those that were in favour of INR sent their own response to the Green Paper. This included the Red Rose Group (which included Red Rose Radio (Preston) Radio Aire (Leeds) and Red Dragon Radio (Cardiff) who not only supported the development of INR but "welcomed the Government's view that the new National channels should be allowed to establish programming based more on audience needs and expectations" (Green Paper on Radio, 1987i).

The IBA also had internal factions arising from the Green Paper proposals. A confidential memorandum highlighted senior radio officers' views: "the lineage of the Green Paper came down from Peacock (that sainted Fowl)" retorted one Authority member. Lady Shirley Littler told the meeting, "we have reached the end of the road

with conventional ILR”... we have to recognise that we are not starting from a happy situation for ILR” (Green Paper on Radio, 1987c). A further development was the likely impact of the Green Paper proposals in light of the forthcoming general election in June. The IBA prepared a document outlining the main points of each party manifesto with regards to broadcasting. This is an important point. As the thesis has previously demonstrated, political parties had supported and thwarted the development of ILR since the 1970s. While the document does not suggest any radical U-turns from any of the three main parties at the time (perhaps in itself an indication of how the political ideology had changed to reflect the times) it suggests an insightful attitude by the IBA.

A critical stage emerged at this point in both the nature of regulation and the choice of regulator. The IBA began to realise that it may not be given jurisdiction for commercial radio following a new Broadcasting Bill. It then embarked on its own campaign lobby. This appears to have started internally by a memorandum from a colleague concerned that ILR be removed from the IBA (possibly leading to concerns about jobs and redundancy). This confidential document from John Butcher (HRF) to the Director General, is revealing in sensing the IBA’s realisation that they could have done more to develop commercial radio. He makes twelve points as to how the IBA could respond quickly to turn their fortunes around. Three highly relevant and insightful points, which reflect previous discussion within the thesis, are noted here:

3. Firstly, we need a frank appraisal of the reasons why the Government might not want to entrust ILR (and other radio?) to the IBA. Inevitably any truly frank appraisal must involve what might seem to be criticism of what the IBA has done (and has not done).

4. I suspect that one principle factor is the level of rentals charged to ILR. In retrospect the delay in getting Home Office approval for the change in branch accounting was probably a mistake. I well recall the meeting with AIRC on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1985 when Richard Findlay pleaded for a major reduction in rentals, got no joy, and said that AIRC would seek redress where possible.

5. I suspect another important factor is the level of the IBA’s supervision of radio. Although we can plead the duties imposed upon us by the Act, it has to be said that we have been slow in suggesting changes to the Act and that many of the statutory requirements were inserted originally on IBA advice. The paper which was sent to the Home Secretary in September 1986 mentioned our willingness to contribute our own

appraisal of changes to the Act. I think we should have gone further and included a list of changes to the Act which we consider sensible. It is not too late to send our proposed changes to the Home Office so that when the Green Paper is published we can announce that we have already suggested many changes to ease the regulatory burden on ILR.

(Green Paper on Radio, 1986b)

This memorandum is significant as it clearly identifies that it was the IBA's interpretation of the Act, not the Act itself which restricted ILR growth. Coming from colleagues within the IBA gives this argument more credence. As John Thompson has maintained, the IBA's role was to "interpret the legislation effectively" yet it seems that when faced with the prospect of losing office, some people within the IBA recognised the Authority's weaknesses. As one colleague said in response to Butcher's memorandum, "if we are to retain responsibility for radio we shall have to convince Ministers and the public at large that we are not committed to the status quo" (Green Paper on Radio, 1987a). Stoller offers a view of why the regulator was so reluctant to endorse change:

Partly it was the conservatism of the IBA which had created something which was working against the odds, and it was reluctant to see it undone. There was still a strong belief in most of the people in the IBA in the social economic philosophy that had prevailed pre-Thatcher. They were not comfortable having those assumptions of the '70s overturned. They also had to a degree begun to run out of puff. By this point the fact was that radio was part of an institution which was the IBA, which now had its new television toys to play with. This began to seriously disadvantage it. Had the Radio Authority been approved in 1979 instead of 1990, it might have managed the process without the companies falling out and without the tensions between regulator and companies.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

It is worth investigating whether the continual shift in the role of the audience and the use of the public sphere also acted as a catalyst for change. There appears to have been a shift in the traditional regulatory philosophy. Initially programming was based on IBA perceptions regarding what was deemed 'good' content. Stoller (forthcoming 2010) refers to this in his chapter "Doing well by doing good". The Peacock Report's notion of 'consumer sovereignty' may have also influenced opinion in the public sphere and

led to increased awareness of the types and styles of broadcasting. The Home Office carried out market research to outline this shift further. They commissioned the Broadcasting Research Unit who delivered a report, *The Listener Speaks: The Radio Audience and the Future of Radio* in June 1988. Does Stoller accept that the opinions of the audience were valuable and did Peacock's notion of 'consumer sovereignty' hold sway with ILR?

I don't think so. You might assume that would happen, and the IBA assumed that as well. It developed its Advisory Committees and ran regulatory public meetings. Actually then and possibly now, the public sphere does not impact all that much upon free to air broadcasting because it's just there. Whilst you may exercise your right as a consumer or indeed a citizen to switch between channels or to switch off, it's rare you want to exercise your right to influence what is broadcast to you. You are a consumer by the nature of your choice than by the nature of your involvement. It is immensely difficult to get people to comment sensibly, constructively or accurately on what they want from a broadcast medium.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

The IBA's pleas to be retained as the regulator gathered momentum during 1987. On 19 March, John Whitney (who as Chapter One highlighted had been one of the key pioneers and instigators of ILR in the 1960s) sent a restricted document outlining some alternative responses to the Green Paper. The document started with a poignant quote from former Conservative politician, Rab Butler: "It is all too often true that those who do not seek to change with the times, find the times leave them changed for the worse" (Green Paper on Radio, 1987b). The eventual outcome of the Government's decision upon the regulation of ILR will be discussed towards the end of this Chapter.

The stations' reactions to the Green Paper appeared to fall into two camps: the destruction of local radio or the opening up of a wonderful new era (Green Paper on Radio, 1987g). The future role of the IBA also created factions within ILR. Traditionally the AIRC had presented an anti-IBA case. This was not a view expressed by all stations. Those keen to maintain the continued involvement of the IBA were keen to express their written support to the AIRC, IBA and Government (Radio Clyde, County Sound, Hereward Radio – Green Paper on Radio). The AIRC, who had spent five years calling for the removal of the IBA and the introduction of a new regulator, found themselves caught in the crossfire, with some stations requesting withdrawal

from the industry trade body if their views were not represented. Mike Powell, Managing Director of County Sound (Guildford) asked to leave the AIRC stating: “we will only consider withdrawing this notice if the final AIRC response to the Green Paper takes a very different direction to the positions previously adopted on certain key issues” (Green Paper on Radio, 1987b). County Sound also generated their own press release, calling on the Government to “retain the IBA...and a public service obligation” (Green Paper on Radio, 1987b). It appears that when it came to the crunch, many ILR stations preferred to be under the guidance of the tried and tested IBA rather than create relationships with a new regulator. The AIRC’s eventual choice of terminology in their formal statement on the matter of a future regulatory authority suggests a non-committal approach rather than a more vehement argument to remove the IBA. This was noted by the regulator:

AIRC says it reserve its position on whether to advocate “a re-vamped IBA radio Division” or a new body. A decision would depend on further consultation, and consideration of the IBA’s response. The submission observes that there is “no support among members for the Cable Authority” and that “the form of regulation is more important than the antecedents of the new regulators”.

(Green Paper on Radio, 1987i)

The Green Paper on Radio and the options for commercial radio were also given unprecedented access to the BBC airwaves. Radio Four programme ‘*Analysis*’ broadcast on 20 May, 1987 debated the proposals within the Paper. The IBA’s eventual official response to the Green Paper was presented in a detailed document, *The Future of UK Independent Radio*. Within this document, a section entitled ‘Who should develop and regulate radio?’ gave the IBA the opportunity to present themselves as the best placed in terms of experience, resources and relationships, to continue to regulate independent radio (Green Paper on Radio, 1987g). One particular area used by the IBA to persuade the Government was their extensive Engineering operation. The Director of Engineering, assuming that the IBA could retain control for licensing matters, concluded that “in recognising the importance of a continuing role for the IBA in radio, a strategy which mirrors the clear intentions of Government contained within the Green Paper does seem to offer the most likely route to securing this end” (Green Paper on Radio, 1987e).

The Green Paper outlined four major changes to commercial radio. These were: 1) The introduction of Independent National Radio. Three commercial networks were agreed. This was strategically important. It created direct competition, in terms of audience potential, to the BBC for the first time. In addition, one new BBC national frequency was also granted. 2) The removal of the IBA and its status as broadcaster. In its place, a 'lighter-touch' Radio Authority was suggested who would award licences to the highest bidder (not on the basis of programme proposals as the IBA had done). 3) The ILR stations would become the broadcasters and own their licences – the end of franchised arrangements. 4) Programme regulation would be lightened and stations would have the opportunity to produce a new 'sound' in line with the demands of their audience. This would be agreed and logged with the regulator by way of 'Promise of Performance' documents. The Green Paper was subsumed by the 1988 White Paper: *Broadcasting in the 1990s - Competition, Choice and Quality* (HMSO 1988). The White Paper put forward three additional proposals that would increase the range of stations (both for smaller and larger markets) and lead to the industry's transformation as a corporate investment business. These new initiatives were the introduction of the incremental stations (a replacement for community radio stations offering diverse programming opportunities for smaller geographical areas, thus supporting pluralism); the release of the 105-108 FM spectrum, which would be considered as an opportunity to create new, larger regional commercial stations by the late 1990s; and further relaxation of ownership rules allowing stations to form radio groups, by way of a points-based system. This final point would lead to major consolidation of the industry post-1990, although initially regulation would continue to curb the opportunity for large groups to own multiple stations. "It is structural controls that are key. These controls limit both the number of stations a particular company can own and the degree of cross-media ownership within the industry – a clear recognition that plurality of ownership is still regarded as some guarantor of diversity" (Hendy 2000: 44).

### **The demise of the IBA**

1988 would prove to be a defining point in the end of IBA regulation. Ironically, the demise of the IBA – the safeguard in ensuring traditional programming standards, came as Thatcherism also peaked. Marr (2007) uses a term to refer to British politics in 1988 which appears relevant to commercial radio: "The Year of Hubris":

In the late eighties the Thatcher revolution overreached itself. The inflationary boom happened because of the expansion of credit and a belief among ministers that, somehow, the old laws of economics had been abolished. Britain was now in a virtuous, endless upward spiral.

(Marr 2007: 464)

On Tuesday 19 January, 1988, the news came through from the Home Secretary. It was not the outcome the IBA had hoped for:

After careful thought we have concluded that it would be right to establish a new Radio Authority, with radio at the centre of its attention. The IBA has earned our respect and gratitude for its development of local radio services under the duties laid upon it 15 years ago. But it has major challenges ahead of it in the field of television. We have judged that it would not be sensible to ask the IBA at the same time to take on the task of developing a new and greatly expanded radio system, operating under a new and much lighter set of rules.

(Green Paper on Radio, 1988b)

To say the IBA was disappointed was an understatement. “We regret the Government’s announcement of its intention to remove regulatory responsibility for radio from the IBA” commented John Whitney in the IBA press release issued the same day (Green Paper on Radio, 1988a). Chairman Lord Thomson went further and suggested the Government’s decision was a mistake: “The political irony is that the IBA, historically, is one of the ingenious creations of British Conservative governments” he said, outlining the IBA’s role in 1955 with ITV and in 1972 with ILR, in a personal letter to Douglas Hurd in *The Guardian*, on 25 January, 1988. Of course Thomson may have missed the point. It was the fact that the Government wanted to break free from the traditional stalwart of Conservatism, which had by now been replaced by Thatcherism and the rise of the free market ethos that influenced Hurd’s decision (Marr 2007). During this interim phase the IBA’s workload continued as transitional arrangements for the new Authority intensified. This included scoping documents for the new Radio Authority or “Commission”, including staff costs and facilities and extensive handover notes (Green Paper on Radio, 1988e). Peter Baldwin took up the mantle of lobbyist, in a last-ditch attempt to convince opinion formers that the IBA could still play a vital role in radio regulation. Writing to Mark Fisher, Opposition Minister for the Arts and Media, he suggested a possible solution:

To this end could I offer the following draft, fully recognising that your

Advisors may think of a better way of putting it. I felt it imprudent to go too far for fear of the Home Secretary feeling he might be committed:-

“To ask the Home Secretary if, to avoid a period of inaction until legislation is in place, he will consider using the existing radio expertise in the IBA as a planning nucleus?”

(Green Paper on Radio, 1988c)

By January 1988 the Government announced it would appoint a new regulator for commercial radio broadcasting. Back in May 1986 the IBA had been more than hopeful that they would retain control. At a confidential meeting with Douglas Hurd, the IBA lobbied for his support to which he replied:

I accept the IBA bid as being on the table. We don't want any more quangoes [sic] than are needed. But we must see how we go, look at Peacock, take stock. Radio may merit an agency of its own. I am grateful to you. The IBA route could be the simplest.

(Green Paper on Radio, 1986a)

On hearing the news that the IBA was to be replaced, ILR stations continued to show their support. Martin George, Chairman of Hereward Radio (Peterborough) wrote to Lord Thomson, expressing his disappointment:

It is clear to use that the job of overseeing this expansion should have been given to the IBA who with their experience could have ensured the necessary growth while at the same time safeguarding the existing Independent Stations who make such a valuable contribution to the daily lives of many people. We are sorry that AIRC has not been more supportive of your own submission to the Home Office despite the strong arguments made by our Managing Director. We are extremely concerned at the possibility of a helter skelter dash towards de-regulation that in the end will not be in the best interests of the listener.

At a time, when, no doubt, you will be disappointed that the IBA will not be taking our young industry into the next phase, I would like to put on record that Hereward Radio rather than being burdened by heavy regulation as some would have it, have always found your staff in radio division to be particularly flexible and understanding to the problems of running small radio stations and their advice has always been worthy of consideration.

(Green Paper on Radio, 1988c)

The ILR revolution continued during the final years under the IBA's control. Further reduction of regulatory restrictions enabled stations to begin changing the sound of their output. Most notable was the removal of most contentious piece of legislation – the secondary rental 'tax' which allowed the IBA to cap stations' profit over a certain threshold (the excess profit was paid back to the IBA's funds to develop programming). A letter sent recorded delivery to the AIRC from the IBA on 26 September, 1988 confirmed the news:

You will recall that we wrote to you on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1987, amending condition 4 of Part I of the Fifth Schedule to the programme contract, and introducing a single rate of secondary assessment of 20%. I am now writing to notify you that the Authority have now agreed to reduce this rate to zero on the profits of the financial year ending 30 September 1988.

I should emphasise that this decision relates solely to the year ending 30 September 1988. Decisions in relations to subsequent years cannot be taken until we are clearer about the financial implications of the Government's plans for the future of independent radio.

(AIRC, 1988)

This was the start of a new era for commercial radio. "Nothing more clearly differentiates *independent* from *commercial* radio than what Gillian Reynolds has called 'John Thompson's masterly invention', the device of secondary rental" (Stoller forthcoming 2010: 131). The abolition of secondary rental (as outlined above) marked the most powerful indication that there was a break with past tradition. In its place came further changes in quick succession. New programming philosophies such as 'formats' began to emerge with the arrival of "the Australians" and their experience in adult contemporary (AC) programming (*Campaign*, April 1987). Richard Park, a well-known figure on Radio Clyde in the 1970s, reinvented Capital Radio's sound with his Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) format. A new national station hit the airwaves in September 1988 when Irish-owned Atlantic 252 broadcast on Long Wave. Simulcasting stopped and stations began to segment and target their market. "Glasgow's Radio Clyde is expected to be the UK's first commercial radio station to launch a full and separate youth-oriented service on its FM frequency. Clyde FM will be aimed at 15-24" reported *Campaign* (15 January, 1988). This was the point at which commercial radio broadcasting strategy was based on programming not programmes, thus turning its back

on John Thompson's notion of ILR as a "mixed flow programming" (Thompson 2009). Gibbons (1998) identifies a link between increased programming choice and diversity and the rationale for regulation:

For universal programming, then, there will always be a need for sensitivity to audience membership, regardless of the public service or commercial quality of the content. To the extent that programming is made available in progressively segmented forms, either by 'narrowcasting' or subscription, the case for content regulation becomes correspondingly weaker.

(Gibbons 1998: 302)

The previously restricted advertising model which shunned income opportunities also became freer. Guidelines for local sponsored programming were drawn up and extra minutage was granted by way of the IRN Newslink – a two minute advertising slot played out as part of the news bulletins. There were new ownership rules which led to consolidation. Key mergers took place by the end of the decade including the creation of the first two big radio groups: GWR in the west and Red Rose in the north of England. Capital's flotation on the Stock Exchange saw their share price jump from 105p in 1987 to 803p in 1989. "ILR's coming of age" reported *Campaign* on 30 January, 1989. Technology too played its part with the first Radio Data System (RDS) installed in cars. The first phase of twenty-three incremental stations were approved during 1989, with Sunset Radio, Manchester, London Jazz Radio and former pirate radio dance station Kiss, being among the first. The Government's plans to create more diverse programming and niche markets were being realised. The Home Secretary addressed the AIRC Congress on 4 July, 1989:

As Minister of State of the Home Office five or six years ago, I remember the talk of stations going to the wall and the sense of gloom in parts of the industry. ... this change in fortunes stems partly from the buoyancy of advertising demand over the last few years, reflecting the underlying health of the economy. But there is more to it than that. There is also the determination and vision of those of you who have been in independent radio in the early days, who have lived through the hard times, and who are now seeing your efforts bear fruit.

(AIRC, 1989)

Requests and applications for the new national commercial stations were abundant even before the licences were advertised (former ILR station GWR would eventually win the licence to run the first national commercial frequency and launched Classic FM). Street confirms the importance of INR in establishing commercial radio's reputation: "The great glory to come out of the 1990s clearly was not pop and prattle but classical music. It's one of the great oxymorons isn't it, from a continual point of view, that Classic FM has been the demonstrable success of commercial radio" (Street, personal communication, 2009). The Broadcasting Act 1990 received royal assent in November 1990 and the Shadow Radio Authority, in existence since the beginning of that year, became the formal Radio Authority on 1 January, 1991. Peter Baldwin would take on the role of Chief Executive of the Authority for four years. He was replaced in 1995 by Tony Stoller, former IBA regulator and ILR Managing Director, who would assume the role until 2003, when a new regulatory phase was born with the arrival of the Office of Communications. However, as Stoller recalls, the lessons of the past would continue to affect the future. "The scarring of the relationship between regulator and the industry was not to be healed, and was a tainted legacy for the new regulator, the Radio Authority, and for its licensees" (Stoller, forthcoming 2010: 153).

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this Chapter is to investigate events leading up to and after 1984 to test the hypothesis that this was the pivotal moment in commercial radio history and development, as Street (2002) and Stoller (2009) suggest. As discussed in Chapter Three, there was increasing unease and frustration within the ILR companies during the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter Four focuses on how and why the industry came together to drive through change. While the motive for this was a battle for survival, ILR, via its trade body the AIRC, took advantage of opportunities afforded to them by a radical shift in the political climate. This created a new confidence within the commercial sector and there is no doubt from the evidence presented that 1984 was the key moment in instigating change. The period 1984-89 was significant in terms of political, social, technological and cultural change. The Miners were defeated by the Thatcher Government, non-stop twenty-four hour music television launched with MTV Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall brought an end to the Cold War. Global changes in the broadcasting sector may have also contributed to greater awareness and acceptance of

ILR's plight. Changes to the American model of regulation are likely to have been noted by ILR (Hilliard and Keith 2005).

It is important to reaffirm the reasons for 1984 being regarded with such prominence. The research reveals economic difficulty, lack of communication with the IBA, the emergence of illegal pirate radio, coupled with a period of political, social and cultural transformation collided and precipitated an event that can be regarded as a major turning point in commercial broadcasting policy – The Heathrow Conference. Yet this Conference represents far more than just a crucial period of lobbying. The era surrounding the Conference between 1984-89 identifies four key paradigms: Fundamental shifts in the relationship between ILR stations and the IBA; Change in behaviour by both IBA and ILR, in part driven by the rise of the individualism philosophy pioneered by Thatcherism; Recognition of the rationale for change by both IBA and Government and acceptance that a dual regulator had hindered development; and Transition of the traditional role of a listener into that of a consumer. The research confirms that 1984 can also be regarded as the start of the deregulation debate in UK broadcasting. While Peacock, the pirates and political intervention all played their part, 'Heathrow' unquestionably stands up under scrutiny as the primary catalyst for change.

## 5.

### Conclusion

The mid-to late 1980s is certain to be looked back upon as a crucial period in British radio history, one in which many of the issues considered in this book – the lobby for deregulation within ILR, the growing commercialism of the BBC itself, the community radio campaign, the copyright question – came to dominate debate within the radio industry to the point of calling the very organisation and structure of radio in Britain into question.

(Barnard, 1989: 179)

The aim of this final chapter is to conclude the research by summarising the key findings and identifying areas for further study. To begin, it is relevant to recap the research objectives, before progressing to an examination of the project outcomes. The project aimed to: investigate how local commercial radio evolved within a wider context of political, economic, social, cultural and technological change; explore the development of commercial radio regulation within a wider context of media regulation; investigate how such regulation shaped programme policy within radio stations and the effect of policy constraints, during the period in question, using examples; examine key themes and events that emerged through the three-year period, discussing why they are significant, using examples and case studies; and develop a theoretical framework in order to understand and analyse relationships among IBA / Radio Stations / Listeners / Government and others, in the context of the public sphere. From the objectives, a main research question has been applied: to explore the impact of regulation upon the commercial radio programming model between 1983-85 and to uncover why this period was pivotal in bringing about change within the regulatory framework. The methodology chosen for the hypothesis involved drawing on IBA policy papers, media reports and personal accounts from interviews with key radio station personnel, such as broadcasters, station producers, managers and regulation staff. The project accessed primary material from the archives of the Office of Communications (Ofcom) containing three regulatory regimes from 1955-90: Independent Television Authority (ITA), Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the Radio Authority. The project is unique because most of the archives have been viewed for the first time. Ofcom granted the project exclusive and unlimited access for doctoral research. As a result the work is able to make a new contribution to knowledge in the field of Radio Studies and

to the wider academic domain of media regulation. The result of the three-year investigation has revealed ten key research findings. A discussion surrounding these findings forms the basis of the conclusion.

### **Research objectives**

A key objective of the research was to document the birth and development of British commercial radio. Barnard's (1989) work confirms the lack of literature available during what he describes as an 'extraordinarily volatile period'. Publication of his own comprehensive and accurate account in 1989, just prior to the many changes which occurred as result of the Heathrow Conference, "precludes discussion of the likely shape of radio in anything other than speculative terms" (1989: 179). Barnard's work is remarkably perceptive. He highlights that the response to Hurd's Green Paper on Radio (which ultimately led to the introduction of the Broadcasting Act 1990) provides a valuable research opportunity. This is because the changes to legislation and the commercial radio business model can be identified to confirm or disagree with Barnard's prediction. As the introduction in Chapter One outlined, there is limited work on the history and development of UK commercial radio. This research therefore extends Barnard's (1989) chapter 'The Road to Regulation' in which he provides a short history of ILR from 1973 until 1989. In addition, the work documents ILR's contribution to broadcasting history, in what is a largely untold story. This is likely to be of interest within academia both in the UK and globally.

### **Key research findings**

This section of the conclusion details the main research findings. Ten themes within the thesis can now be confirmed as fundamental to an understanding of British commercial radio, from 1973 to 1990. Each of these will now be discussed in turn, and linked to the project aims and objectives where relevant.

### **Independent Local Radio began eventually in Britain in 1973 and was heavily regulated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (a dual regulator).**

A key objective was to explore how regulation hampered commercial radio development. Archive research confirms this was a result of a cause and effect approach. Other commentators have identified how the IBA adopted a heavy-handed

approach to regulation. However, this research has revealed reasons why. To summarise, unlike many other countries, commercial radio arrived late in the UK, nearly twenty years after commercial television and six years after Pirate Radio of the 1960s was taken off air by the Labour Government. It arrived amid a backdrop of political and social change. In 1970 eighteen year olds got the vote for the first time and youth culture emerged. The Conservative party supported the idea of “private enterprise” (HMSO 1970) while the Labour party were opposed to its introduction. John Thompson, as IBA Director of Radio senses that even at the beginning, radio was living in television’s shadow:

An alternative television service had been in Britain since Autumn 1955. Unlike any other country in the world, our funding for commercial radio came in after television. So some of the thinking surrounding the introduction of this form of radio was bound to be influenced in the minds of the Whitehall people and politicians involved.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

When it was approved under the Sound Broadcasting Act 1972, commercial radio bore little resemblance to the maverick pirate ships and as Street (2006) observes, was “curiously Reithian in its approach”. The IBA saw its role as interpreting the legislation passed by Parliament. It did not regard itself as a policymaker. As a result, it appeared inflexible and unable to work strategically, due in part to the lack of radio expertise within the Authority. It also appears to have used the BBC model as a benchmark in which to shape programme content. As the research suggests, the IBA, operating under the 1973 IBA Act, insists that the Government’s plans for ILR was a “fusion of private enterprise and public service” (Stoller, 2009; Thompson, 2009). Key to understanding the IBA’s rationale for regulation was that UK commercial radio at this point was never intended to be based on a pop music format. It was flow programming with a mixture of genres, styles and audiences (Thompson 2009). Another issue which requires clarity is the official function of the IBA. Their actual role was that of broadcaster, not only regulator. They believed they had the responsibility for output and thus adopted an interventionist approach. The main reason for heavy-touch regulation with public service programming remits was due to the IBA’s involvement in and responsibility for Independent Television (ITV), as will now be discussed.

**The IBA implemented a public service approach to commercial radio broadcasting, using similar principles to television.**

In addition to the politics surrounding its genesis, the research provides key evidence to further support the view that the IBA's role as a dual regulator was a weakness in the ILR model. ITV became more adventurous and demanding during the 1970s and 1980s and the IBA struggled to cope with workload and policy demands. As a result it adopted similar principles across both media. This was perceived by members of the industry as a mistake (Bernard 2009; Bradford 2009; Findlay 2009). Stoller suggests one reason the regulatory role was given to the IBA was due to Edward Heath's unexpected win at the 1970 general election. Qualitative research confirms this theory. Keen to fulfil this aspect of the manifesto quickly, the Government appointed the IBA as dual regulator:

Well in the sense that there was a blueprint that existed from the experience of independent television and that did influence the thinking about the forthcoming radio legislation. It would have been surprising if it hadn't.

(Thompson, personal communication, 2009)

One example of the problems regulating television in a similar way to radio was the IBA's inflexible policy surrounding programme schedules. These had to be supplied well in advance by the radio companies, at least every quarter. This was even laid down in the station's contract. As evidence indicates, subsequent changes had to be approved before programmes were broadcast, thus going against the very nature of radio's uniqueness. Another example of television programme policy being implemented across both media will now be discussed.

**'Meaningful speech' was part of the IBA's requirement for every station.**

'Meaningful speech' was a phrase devised by the IBA to explain the sound of Independent Local Radio. There appears to be two reasons for this. Firstly to raise the profile and reputation of ILR as an alternative credible service to the BBC. Secondly, the phrase was used to counteract suggestions that ILR was 'pop and prattle'.

'Meaningful speech' had its roots in the public service remit of ITV. It was also instilled in order to compensate for recorded music restrictions, known as needle time. News, current affairs, education, religion, social action, phone-ins and advice programmes all featured on the daily schedule. In addition, individual stations researched, recorded and resourced their own hour-long documentaries, often under dire financial and economic

circumstances. The research presents an examination of a paradox: that the regulator's requirement for meaningful speech led to a remarkable collection of speech programmes, not dissimilar to those heard on Radio Four, all broadcast on commercial radio. These programmes are vitally important to ensure recognition for commercial radio. They showcase the talent and skill present within ILR from 1973-90. (This appears to be a lost period in the current philosophy of commercial radio.) The research suggests that on a local level, there were frustrations over the use of meaningful speech. It came to be regarded as a measurement tool and indicator of quality in a way that audience ratings and revenue are today. Recollections from former IBA staff suggest that they did not intend to pursue the point. Stoller suggests it was the arrival of a former BBC programmer (Michael Starks) that led to the introduction of the phrase in the first place, thus confirming that ILR initially used the BBC as a benchmark. However, critical to a rigorous examination of meaningful speech is an understanding and an appreciation that such regulation offered opportunities and constraints to broadcasters:

We had to demonstrate that what we were talking about was meaningful. We had to involve ourselves in educational programming which had to be informative. I think in fairness, the old IBA, much as we hated all the other commercial restrictions, in programming terms I never had a difficulty because the diverse output we were able to do was much more exciting for the listeners and captured way more than the BBC. We grew huge audiences.

(Findlay, personal communication, 2009)

The constraints are that these speech programmes were very expensive to make. It's not cost effective. That's BBC output. Clearly it was not a good business model to do that. We were working in a structure that was flawed from outset.

What it did do was make programming of necessity. When Ocean Sound split (their frequencies for Southampton and Portsmouth) they ran a series of days on air to promote the local area, such as a Romsey week in which the stations would revolve around one town. The next week it might be Ringwood. And this was a solution to making us local and attractive to local advertisers. It's that relationship that has never gone away. If you're making local programmes and they're good local programmes you'll get an audience and then you'll get advertisers.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

Findlay's and Street's accounts demonstrate the paradox: that as a result of regulation and the meaningful speech philosophy, stations were able to be creative and progressive, yet this was out of necessity and a fear of the regulator. While the material in the Programme Sharing Scheme demonstrates quality in terms of production and research methods, it also confirms that ILR up until the mid-1980s was not just focused on broadcasting contemporary music programming. What is clear is that up until the beginning of the 1980s, the sound of commercial radio attracted large audiences and this was partly due to the local nature of its programming. The arrival of Thatcherism and rapid change in the socio-political landscape meant new tastes and interests in popular culture emerged. The new consensus showed clearly that both the programming model and business model were out of date. Audiences began to decline and revenue dropped because of the Thatcher's government's early economic policies which led to a UK recession. Despite attempts to diversify into other areas such as print, stations were further hampered by heavy restrictions on advertising income. Initially only six, increased to nine minutes of adverts were allowed per hour and sponsored programming was not allowed. By the mid-1980s the economic climate began to improve and the impact of privatisation created a new financial wealth among the British public. Yet there had been no revolution in commercial radio. ILR remained restricted, unable to take advantage of the plethora of opportunities for reaching new audiences and attracting new revenues. These emerged through the growth in Sales and PR agencies whose clients began looking to use radio for advertising and promotional use. This further confirms the hypothesis that commercial radio was outdated by the 1980s.

**ILR was a competing (not just complementary) service to the BBC and also the only alternative source of news.**

Debate has arisen within the research as to whether ILR was a competing or complementary service to the BBC. This is an important point. The White Paper, 'An Alternative Service of Broadcasting', published in 1971 pointed out that commercial radio would be a complementary broadcasting model to the BBC. This was key to the drafting of appropriate legislation at the time. John Thompson recalls: "Dwell on for a moment, a very clear distinction between alternative and additional: that requires a different approach in terms of the legal framework" (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). Yet it is clear from evidence in the IBA archive and from testimonies that once ILR launched, it would regard itself as a serious competitor to

Radios One, Two and Four (Bradford 2009; Findlay 2009; Stoller 2009). Press releases, market research and board reports validate that ILR was listened to more in its locality than the national stations. Aggregated listening figures from across the ILR Network were often used to demonstrate its success nationally. ILR was not the poor relation to the BBC. “No, I think you will find it hard to find anyone who thought that – ever. We were doing something different” (Bradford, personal communication, 2009). Thompson recognises that the use of the word ‘alternative’ was valid only in theoretical, not practical terms. He confirms that the use of the word competitive was “not in any legislation. But quite clearly it was going to be competitive. And part of the thinking about ILR’s introduction obviously implied an element of competition” (Thompson, personal communication, 2009). This is an important point. Despite its origins as a local programming service, ILR did not compete with BBC Local Radio, which had fewer stations which were based on larger geographical regions (Linfoot 2006). ILR’s aim was to compete for listeners from both the music-oriented and speech-oriented formats of national BBC stations. The arrival of *The Network Chart Show* helped fulfil this ambition in 1984. One aspect of ILR programming that delivered a standard of programming comparable to the BBC was the production of local and national news. Independent Radio News (IRN), part of the ILR franchise is clearly a demonstrable success of British commercial radio. Commencing as part of the LBC franchise in 1973 it offers a view of key moments in British and world history. Its value is recognised as the only alternative source of radio news to the BBC. Its involvement in commercial radio remains constant to the present day.

**Archives reveal relationships and the political line were critical in policy-making; notably the emergence of Thatcherism.**

The research has explored the development of commercial radio within the political climate and examined the period 1983-85 to identify whether this was a pivotal point in bringing about regulatory change. The research has revealed two key points which demonstrate the influence of Thatcherism in influencing commercial broadcasting policy. Firstly, as previously discussed the Conservative party had been instrumental in introducing commercial radio in 1973, while Labour continued its resistance to what it regarded as the use of public utilities purely for profit. This became apparent by its non-committal stance on ILR development when the party returned to power in 1974. Margaret Thatcher’s election win in 1979 saw an entirely new approach with radical

change in the traditional policies of economics, state intervention and social standing. This was the most turbulent political period of post-war Britain. The pace of change was unprecedented. British society began to regard itself as an individual rather than a societal collective. The business and finance sector opened up due to privatisation. Broadcasting also came into the spotlight. Two reports initiated by the Conservative Government impacted upon ILR's future: a draft document on the introduction of Community Radio (1984) and a review of the BBC – the Peacock Report (1985). As the research demonstrates, both proposals called the ILR business model into question. By suggesting that the BBC might be privatised, Thatcher implied that commercially funded broadcasting, often perceived as a poor relation to the BBC in the past was in fact credible and a concept they would support as a future platform for development. The arrival of new technologies such as satellite and cable extended commercial opportunities. Thatcher supported the free market and had a strong desire to expand commercial broadcasting to extend choice. These developments stirred up debate over issues of parity across regulation frameworks. These factors would eventually collide and precipitate a major event in commercial radio history, which would change the industry beyond recognition - the Heathrow Conference. This is a key point emerging from the research which highlights the influence of Thatcherism in ILR development and is now discussed further.

Events at 'Heathrow' reveal a shift in the relationship between radio station, government and regulator. The change in relationship between ILR via its trade body, the AIRC, and Government was fundamental in provoking change to regulation. Up until 1984 ILR only communicated problems and policy issues via the IBA. The Government's interest in the resolutions passed at the Conference meant that AIRC attracted the attention of Government for the first time. As a result ILR became more powerful, as explored through Findlay's and Bernard's private files which contain detailed correspondence between Home Secretaries Leon Brittan and Douglas Hurd. This demonstrates an important point. The industry's voice changed from a passive to an active phase. This was due in part to their new relationship with the Conservative Government and also to the ideology sweeping the country at this point. Barnard confirms the Thatcher style of politics made a clear difference in broadcasting policy:

It is, of course, a quintessentially Thatcherite vision, but one close to Conservative thinking for many years. The creation of a similar operative dichotomy, with the BBC

providing public service and the commercial system specialising in entertainment alone, was discussed seriously at Cabinet level soon after the Heath government came to power in 1970 but rejected as too radical. The difference, as the experience of three parliamentary terms has shown, is that the Thatcher government has both the political will and the political strength to put right-wing radicalism into practice.

(Barnard 1989: 181)

**Key events led by the industry confirm 1984 was the pivotal moment in effecting change.**

1984 is a prominent and poignant moment in British history. The research has outlined several events that took place both in Britain and globally which confirm this. The Miners' strike, the impact of AIDS and the privatisation of British Telecom (BT) exemplify a period of great change. The research has revealed how independent radio also underwent a revolution in 1984. Piecing together IBA documents, private files from former radio station Managing Directors and testimonies from broadcasters at the time confirms a major event took place. This event is recognised as the primary catalyst for change in the British commercial radio model. Organised for the industry by the industry, the event would shake up the old guard for good. It became known as the 'Heathrow Conference' and it was held as a private (industry only) meeting on 23 June, 1984. For the first time, the story of the Heathrow Conference has been revealed in much greater depth. The evidence shows is that the meeting was successful for two reasons. Firstly it established camaraderie among the industry which up until that point was missing. Stations tended to see themselves either in isolation from the rest of the ILR Network (especially those not regarded as one of the larger stations) or they took a rather protective stance. The coming together of over forty stations in the build up to the Conference, without IBA involvement or participation was a first for the industry. Secondly, the PR activity following Heathrow, including letters, press releases and media interviews, were sent to key opinion formers. This demonstrated that the industry was more business aware than they had been given recognition for. This is explained further by the actions outlined in the private files of Findlay and Bernard. In Brian West's letter on 25 July, 1984 to Lord Thomson he outlined how he was aware that more flexible regulation could be implemented without any change to the legal statute. This demonstrated for the first time that the industry understood the regulatory process. This is a critical point. Richard Findlay, as the research identifies, was a key figure in ensuring the momentum of Heathrow continued. His meetings with both Leon Brittan and Douglas Hurd saw an almost immediate shift in IBA policy. They lightened

regulation on several matters, which were outlined in the AIRC's 'Shopping List' of changes, just four months after Heathrow in November 1984. These included relaxation of changes to programme schedules, more flexible broadcasting hours, a ten per cent reduction in primary rental and removal of local restrictions on share ownership. A further U-turn came in the approval of the first networked and sponsored programme, *The Chart Show*. These new regulatory requirements were implemented without any change to formal legislation. Therein began a reversal of the 'master' and 'servant' relationship that had existed previously. The actions and behaviour of ILR at the Heathrow Conference are significant. In the build-up to the Broadcasting Act 1990, ILR would act as a consultant to the Government's proposals alongside the IBA. The new Act created a commercial radio industry that would "never be the same again" (Street, 2001). Therefore, the research confirms that 1984 and notably the Heathrow Conference, was the pivotal moment in effecting change in ILR's history.

#### **In 1990, *Independent Radio* became *Commercial Radio*.**

Barnard's work (1989) published before the Broadcasting Act 1990 took effect is perceptive on the potential positive impact the Green Paper would have in creating a clearer spilt and definition between ILR and the BBC. It was at this point that independent radio would become truly commercial (and for the first few years at least, post-1990, would reach major heights of success, both in revenue and ratings). Born's comments regarding television regulation are relevant in assessing the impact the Broadcasting Act had in setting ILR free, putting them in a more dominant position:

By the mid-1990s, the cart was leading the horse: the commercial companies made an increasingly populist running, while the ITC panted along behind. Britain's erstwhile public service ambitions were subordinated to the vaunted ideal of market competition.

(Born 2004: 52)

The research has revealed a key point: in order to truly understand and examine the concept of ILR pre-1990, one must regard its approach as independent model of broadcasting, not commercial. Stoller's view of ILR is that it was a "fusion of private enterprise and public service" (personal communication, 2009). However, the research shows that by the 1980s, this style of broadcasting, both in terms of funding model and content model, was outdated. The financial model in particular was hampered by regulation. Commercial opportunities which opened up during the Thatcher

government, notably in the field of advertising and consumerism, could not be fulfilled by ILR due to sales restrictions on income generation. The history of pre-war offshore commercial radio of the 1930s shows an adventurous spirit in its approach to offering the listener an alternative to the BBC; a period that would take sixty years to come full circle. “The paradox that land-based British Commercial Radio could not initially define itself as the early pre-war pioneers would have understood, was resolved by the relative freedom created by the 1990 Broadcasting Act” (Street, 2009: 210). The Broadcasting Act 1990 is regarded as confirming deregulation for two key reasons: the end of the IBA era with a new Radio Authority appointed with light-touch powers, notably in regard to content regulation; and the awarding of licence contracts to the highest bidder. Gibbons (1998) provides a useful explanation which confirms these changes to the regulatory framework, highlighting that it was the removal of programming public service obligations that would transform Independent Local Radio to Commercial Radio:

The Broadcasting Act 1990, does, however, distinguish basic standards from more positive obligations, thereby significantly changing the regulation of commercial programming. Under section 2 of the repealed 1981 Act, the IBA had a duty to provide a public service and to ensure the maintenance of a high general standard in programmes in each area in all respects, particularly in respect of content and quality.

Under the current legislation there are no such obligations that public service should be provided or that all programmes should meet those high standards. Instead, the ITC and the Radio Authority have duties to secure that “taken as a whole”, that is, across the whole range; the programmes are of “high quality and offer a wide range of programmes calculated to appeal to a variety of interests”

(Broadcasting Act 1990, ss. 2(2) (b) and 85 (3) (a) cited Gibbons, 1998: 72)

This marked a clear shift in the status of ILR; in many cases it saw the cessation of a large volume of meaningful speech based programming. By the new Millennium, the phrase ‘ILR’ disappeared as a new breed of radio station talent and management helped create a new era of commercial radio.

### **The legacy of 1984 and lessons learnt: the start of deregulation.**

The research confirms that 1984 can be considered as the start of deregulation in British commercial radio. All forms of regulation: structural, financial and content were overhauled as a result of the actions in the period 1984-89. The Heathrow Conference acts as a starting point for the ‘Road to Deregulation’. This journey confirms key points that can be reflected upon as a series of lessons the radio sector today. These lessons will now be applied briefly to demonstrate how the scenarios faced by ILR in the 1980s, can now be considered in a contemporary context and help understand current issues. There are three ideologies that emerged during 1984 that bear relevance. Firstly the acceptance that radio should be regulated by a separate body to television, due to the difference in characteristics in the mediums. Secondly, a new approach to planning and programming commercial radio was presented; notably that heavy-touch regulation, while admirable in its desire to create quality, did not lead to ‘successful’ commercial radio. Success could therefore be measured by audience ratings and station revenue. This fundamental change in the philosophy behind commercial radio would reap rewards for the new commercial radio model, post 1990. Thirdly, belief that a new non-government department with a light-touch model of regulation would resolve the issues experienced during the previous regime. Lessons learnt from ILR history 1973-90 reveal an interesting point about commercial radio in the present. The new regulator that the industry lobbied for so vehemently (the Radio Authority) would arguably be responsible for allowing the journey to deregulation to go too far. Stoller argues:

The negatives of the Heathrow Conference can be viewed by the subsequent changes which formed the Broadcasting Act 1990. The Heathrow Conference and the way it was reacted to meant that ILR as a PSB model funded by advertising fell much sooner than it needed to. It meant that far less was carried across from the old dispensation to the new. It meant that the radio companies were free to engineer their own downfall to a degree which need not have been so acute. And it placed the potential relationship between the radio operators and the regulator as always an antagonistic one, to the considerable disadvantage of both.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

Ralph Bernard is firm in his opinion that “the Radio Authority was even worse than the IBA” (personal communication, 2009) when assessing its performance between 1990-2003. The research also has credence in issues relating to regulation in 2009. It identifies that while deregulation opened up the market and gave stations opportunities

to pursue programming goals directly linked to audience and revenue outcomes, this has had two negative effects: Firstly, as Stoller confirms, it continued the difficult relationship and lack of trust and integrity between regulator and radio industry. Secondly, opportunities for radio stations created by changes to share ownership rules meant they all too soon became consumed by the power of shareholders and a heavy responsibility to the Board and the City. This has seen a clear change in the programming style: well defined branded formats for highly segmented audiences replaced “all things to all listeners” (Carter 2003: 20). This shift in the financial imperative led to the creation of two large groups: GWR Group plc and Capital Radio Group plc (who merged after further deregulation following the appointment of Ofcom). Market research confirms both groups achieved excellent listener and (as a result) revenue targets during the 1990s (RAJAR, 1995). However, changes to the tone and style of programming took place in a very short space of time. This led to a shift in the importance of a local identity to the corporate identity, where sales, marketing and branding were fundamental to business strategy. This is not to say the new look, sound and feel to commercial radio was bad. In contrast, as has been previously outlined, the first five years post-1990 showed the new model was working well. (The author was a key part of GWR’s production and programming teams between 1992-2002.) However, the issue became one of balance. Critical thinking changed regarding the production of compelling local content. Historically, it was content which allowed ILR to be successful despite the enormity of heavy regulation. Paradoxically the new phase of commercial radio appears to place less emphasis on presenter contribution to live content. This has been exacerbated further by the BBC’s further change in strategic market positioning. In the mid-1990s, Radios One and Two, under the leadership of Matthew Bannister and Jim Moir respectively, re-profiled their station sound to attract younger audiences. This strategy has hit the commercial networks hard. While audience figures for commercial radio listening in the UK overtook the BBC share in 1995, this has never been repeated. Radio Two now has the dominant position and is the primary competition for the traditional commercial radio audience (as opposed to Radio One, during the 1980s). Returning to the issue of the damage done in the relationship between regulator and radio industry, and referring to the BBC’s repositioning, Bernard asserts that the “Radio Authority was useless because it let the BBC move their tanks onto our lawn while they did nothing about it” (personal communication, 2009). Barnard argues the Radio Authority did not do enough to enable commercial radio to compete with the BBC. He cites one reason as “their refusal to let us put Capital Gold

on FM which would have created a far fairer playing field for Radio Two” (personal communication, 2009). This statement demonstrates a clear link between historical evidence and contemporary context: that commercial radio needs to develop strategies to compete with the BBC. It has never been regarded as a complementary model, as the IBA ideology suggested. Some commentators are now arguing that British commercial radio is not sustainable in the long term, given the status of a publicly-funded, advertisement-free BBC (Enders Analysis, Guardian.co.uk, 2009).

One reason for the growth in Radio Two is likely to be its emphasis on content: credible speech, delivered by talented, engaging presenters, coupled with a major shift in music policy. The commercial sector also recognises that the relationship between the audience and content are critical for survival (Clive Dickins, Absolute Radio, Guardian.co.uk, 2009). Content, whether in the form of speech or music is undergoing a revolution as multimedia and convergence expand radio’s potential. The birth of the first MP3 player in 2001 has allowed audiences to take responsibility for their own music choice. There was an initial perception that this would drive listeners away from music radio. This was a major concern for the radio industry at the time. In the 1970s and 1980s listeners accessed radio for music education. Shows such as the BBC’s *Top Forty* and ILR’s *The Chart Show*, fulfilled this need, embracing the culture of the ‘record-buying public’. The argument that the development of new technologies has played a part in turning audiences away from radio has not been realised. Radio has adapted and responded to change, just as it has throughout history (for example, the transistor, pirate radio, compact disc, breakfast television, internet). The current challenge to meet the wants and needs of the audience has been overcome by the development of digital technology and the creation of compatible audio formats such as podcasts. Traditional radio also remains popular. Radio Two’s output consists largely of a contemporary hit radio (CHR) format for the majority of its daypart. This is the format Richard Park introduced at Capital Radio in the 1980s. One can identify that content, both in the form of presenter conversation and relevant programme features including music, remains important. Radio Two’s upward trend has been due in part, to personality-led presentation teams and a return to the warm, familiar style of broadcasting, where presenters engage with the audience between each song, rather than a reliance on four-in-a-row music sweeps and thirty second speech links. To clarify, this thesis is not focused on the current radio industry. However, as is demonstrated, the scenarios faced by commercial radio in its past, can bear relevance to issues faced by

the industry presently. For example, during 2009 Ofcom entered into consultation with the industry to consider more flexible regulation regarding sponsorship and advertising rules and locally originated programming to ease financial concerns during the recession (Ofcom Consultation on Localness Regulation, 2009). The Consultation also considers the impact of the Digital Britain report released in April 2009 by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which alludes to a full digital switchover in 2015. Flexibility, adaptation and innovation, both in regulatory and programming terms remain critical in order to respond to future challenges and maintain listening share and revenues.

The effect of the restrictive form of regulation may also shed some light on the current situation. British commercial radio progress was hampered by the IBA's approach to their role. Holding back ILR to a point of frustration, created the effect of stronger independence from the regulator, post-1990. This period sees a reversal of two themes outlined in the thesis – with drastic consequences. The relationship between the IBA and ILR was one of 'Master and servant' in the 1970s. In the 1980s the stations took the route of 'seeking forgiveness, not asking permission' for programming clearance. This explains the nature of the new relationship. As the thesis concludes, by the end of the 1980s, a new dominant commercial radio industry emerged, who continued to lobby for further deregulation. Stoller offers another option as to how else the situation between the IBA and ILR might have resolved. He suggests this may have led to a more successful model of British commercial radio from 1990 onwards:

The way in which it should have been done was what the Annan Committee actually proposed but didn't have the courage to pursue, which was that there should have been a local broadcasting authority. A local broadcasting authority set up in the early 1980s would have harnessed the energy of the companies, harnessed the resource of the BBC, used the opportunity of community radio, and provided a proper counter balance to the institutions that ran television. It would have given the UK a chance to develop broadcasting as a whole for the '80s and '90s - what it had done for local independent television and radio for the '50s, '60s and '70s.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

It may be seen as an irony that stations wanted freedom to pursue the potential in their local markets and audiences. The issue of programming choice and diversity formed part of ILR's lobby for development and growth. This included the use of split

frequencies and new licensing for incremental stations in the early 1990s. However, today's industry appears to offer a more homogenous approach, with many stations broadcasting to like-minded people. By the end of the 1990s there was further consolidation with more stations forming large groups and corporate brands (for example, Guardian Media Group, Scottish Radio Holdings, The Local Radio Company, UKRD). Gibbons assesses that "Under the 1990 Act, there was a further shift in policy as optimism about the pace of change diminished (Gibbons 1998: 143). Successive governments would also play their part in influencing broadcasting policy, thus confirming that both are inextricably linked. However, the ideologies of the main political parties are far less confrontational and as a result there has been less turbulence in radio regulation among the political parties. 1994 even saw a major step forward with the combined radio industry working together to innovate. In a landmark step, the BBC and commercial radio joined forces for the first time - to create and develop a Digital Radio strategy. The birth of a new communications regulator (Ofcom) in 2003 demonstrates a further shift in regulatory thinking as radio becomes compatible and compliant with information and communication technologies (ICT). One important outcome of Ofcom was the eventual arrival of fully licensed (and regulated) Community Radio in 2003.

The BBC can also learn from the lessons outlined in this history. Recent issues over quality and standards in programme content is leading to the creation of new programme guidelines where compliance is top of the agenda. This could suggest that the relationship between programming and regulation is key to ensuring quality, thus challenging the ethos of the Broadcasting Act 1990. The overarching theme of the research has been to document and investigate commercial radio's journey from regulation to deregulation. In today's radio industry within a broader global and converged world, is there is now a focus on *re-regulation*. Gibbons (1998) alludes to this:

The development and adoption of new, especially digital technology may raise the possibility that media regulation will no longer be necessary in the middle to long term, but that depends on characterising media products as purely commercial and without political and social significance.

That is not to say that new forms of media will have no implications for media regulation, but the issue is one of re-regulation, rather than de-regulation (Hoffman-

Reim, 1996) and the need to tailor regulation to fit the values which are sought to be promoted.

(Gibbons 1998: 302)

### **ILR's distinctiveness compared to the BBC.**

The final point to assess is an appreciation of ILR's distinctiveness during the period 1973-90. While hampered by regulation, Independent Local Radio made an enormous contribution to British broadcasting. This contribution is now documented and can provide a more balanced view to further study in the field of Radio. Despite regulatory constraint, political interference and economic turmoil, Independent Local Radio attracted large audiences, maintained a strong community presence and produced quality programmes and talented broadcasters. It achieved all this in a period of major competition as the BBC underwent change and expansion, notably the repositioning of the four main networks to differentiate and segment audiences. Key to ILR's success was local content and a strong community ethos. This was a successful formula in the early years of ILR and the requirement for speech makes it comparable with the BBC. Furthermore, the collection of digital commercial radio archives made available by Bournemouth University's Centre for Broadcasting History Research provides witness to the quality of programming. ILR was not just public service broadcasting with advertisements. It pioneered a new concept of 'localness'. Local news was an integral feature of every station. Presenters were regularly seen at events and were regarded as celebrities. ILR developed strong on- and off-air marketing techniques to raise its profile, such as car sticker campaigns, community outside broadcasts and direct access to presenters via phone-ins and listener-driven request shows. Street recalls:

The Programme Controller decided to do a Thursday rock night in addition to the Monday rock night, which had proved very successful. So I had this idea that the audience should supply the music. I said on air, "Thursday night you choose the music, put three albums in a carrier bag with a note. I'll play those tracks and I'll dedicate them to you. Come in the next morning and you'll get your three albums back with a free album". It was just a pure experiment, I had no idea it would work. That show ran for four years and I never had to choose a record.

(Street, personal communication, 2009)

The research has considered the hypothesis that the model of British commercial radio in operation by the 1980s was outdated. Stoller confirms the link between radio and

societal change and offers this final assessment that Independent Local Radio was very much of its time:

ILR was unique because it reinvented radio in a way that was not done anywhere else in the world. The stations gained huge mass audiences very quickly, despite the enormous difficulties, they won the political argument, they even made a bit of money. They made good radio. It was unique because it was an implausible success and it brought together some of the things that were best out of the 1970s settlement: the belief that you could harness commercial activity for public gain. And it was in some ways the last flowering of the 1960s and 1970s liberal consensus.

(Stoller, personal communication, 2009)

## **Key areas for further investigation**

As a result of the research, the author has identified five emerging themes which appear limited in academic material. These themes are potential subjects for further research. A brief explanation of the rationale for each theme is now offered:

### **An assessment of the concept of localism and its value among radio audiences.**

An investigation into the creation and implementation of ‘localism’ in radio, using BBC Local Radio and ILR / Commercial Radio as models to assess. This can then be compared and contrasted to the current approach towards localness, identifying the factors that programmers and producers consider in delivering local content. It can also identify if there is a change in perception by target audiences in their understanding in the definition and value of local content.

### **Independent National Radio (INR) and Classic FM as an example of successful commercial radio in the UK.**

An exception to the difficult period currently facing commercial radio is the continued success of the first independent national commercial radio station, Classic FM. An opportunity exists to deconstruct the sound, style and structure of Classic FM and present a case study on the elements that define its success. This investigation may reveal characteristics that can be applied to assess other commercial radio models both in the UK and globally. It will outline the importance of a local versus a national presence. The research can inform the current debate on the ‘nationalising’ of local commercial stations, such as the recent Heart rebranding exercise.

### **News / talk production methods – comparison between BBC and ILR /IRN.**

The LBC / IRN archive, now available at [www.bufovc.co.uk](http://www.bufovc.co.uk) is an important and valuable resource. News and current affairs broadcasting from 1973-90 is available to access and provides an opportunity to examine the processes of independent radio news: the only alternative news provider to the BBC. For example it will investigate newsgathering processes and production methods such as use of interview clips, voxpops, voicers and actuality, including the issue of political impartiality via live reporting (including the first Parliamentary Broadcasting experiment in 1975). It can look at how IRN influenced the regional stations news content by interviewing previous

journalists and examining additional archives (such as Capital Radio and Metro Radio, Newcastle).

**An investigation into radio phone-ins and an examination of their role as a social commentator.**

This thesis has identified a link between broadcasting and societal change. In conjunction with other universities a collaborative project is possible with University of Sunderland, UK, and Madison-Wisconsin University, USA, who also hold radio broadcast collections. This provides an opportunity to examine commercial radio phone-in content and identify its role as a social commentator. This can be achieved by using programmes featuring discussions on key socio-political topics (for example, the Miners' Strike, AIDS). Some examples of this exist in the LBC archive, which broadcast *Nightline*, a popular late night phone-in and discussion programme.

**Commercial radio 1990-2003 (the next chapter in the 'story').**

Following the creation of a new regulator in 2003, there is an opportunity to examine the period of commercial radio from 1990-2003. A unique source for study is available in the archives of Capital Radio, the first general entertainment station for London. This will enable the research to examine the transition in the model from the end of the 1980s to the emergence of the converged regulator, Ofcom in 2003. The research can examine the development of new technologies which influenced both programming and production methods in a rapid period of expansion and innovation. This includes engineering progress such as the creation of programme play out systems, networking opportunities and 'as live' voice tracking. It can assess how technological change impacts upon production methods, such as digital editing, data storage and the birth of cross-platform content. Furthermore it will allow for an investigation in the perceived shift from the listener as the primary stakeholder to the emergence of the shareholder and the impact this has had on the creation of programme content. It can investigate the arrival of Australian and American programmers and their influence in shaping the 'Zoo' format of breakfast radio. It can investigate the reasons why commercial radio in the mid-1990s was successful. Other key topics within the period include policy development for Digital Radio. The impact of further UK radio deregulation can be examined; notably by an assessment of the merger of the UK's two largest commercial radio groups, GWR and Capital, which became GCap Media, plc. This merger was approved following new regulatory policy implemented by Ofcom.

Examination of the period 1990-2003 can also highlight radical changes in BBC Radio, including Matthew's Bannister's repositioning of Radio One and Jim Moir's repositioning of Radio Two. It will continue discussions surrounding macro factors impacting upon commercial radio development; notably legal, ownership and technological (such as the emergence of the BBC's 'Listen Again' functionality and the rise of the MP3 player). In summary, a research project of this kind could examine, discuss and define the impact of further deregulation, which can be applied equally to all media, as convergence continues to blur lines among traditional broadcast platforms. There is the prospect of adding the Capital Radio broadcast collection into the current ILR archive (developed by Professor Seán Street and hosted at [www.bufvc.ac.uk](http://www.bufvc.ac.uk)). This project could form part of a collaborative bid to the appropriate research funding council.

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*The Morning Show*. LBC, 8 October 1973.

## Appendices

This section contains:

Independent Radio Chronology:	A
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## Appendix A

DATES	GENERAL CHRONOLOGY	ARTS, MUSIC, TV etc	RADIO CHRONOLOGY
<b>ITV dates before 1960</b>	<p>January 1950 Beveridge Committee report published</p> <p>1951 (when?) General Election sees Conservatives under Churchill replace Attlee's Labour Government</p> <p>July 1951 Selwyn Lloyd speaks in Commons debate on Beveridge Report</p> <p>1954 Television Act</p>	<p>22 Sept. 1955 <i>Associated Rediffusion</i> starts ITV broadcasting to London</p>	
<b>Other dates before 1960</b>	<p>1957; first stereo LPs</p> <p>1958; Notting Hill riots</p> <p>Advent of Mods and Rockers</p> <p>1959; launch of the Mini car</p>	<p>1956; First Eurovision song contest</p> <p>Release of <i>Hearbreak Hotel</i> makes Elvis Presley a teen idol</p> <p><i>Room at the Top</i></p>	
<b>1960</b>	Mini skirts start	Trial of <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i>	31 Dec: BBC FM transmissions now covered 97% of the UK population
<b>1961</b>		<i>Beyond the Fringe</i>	
		Beatles (check date?)	
<b>1962</b>		<i>Private Eye</i>	1 July: Fourth Royal Charter extended to July 64
		<i>That Was The Week That Was</i>	
<b>1963</b>	Profumo affair		
	Robbans Report on the expansion of higher education		
<b>1964</b>	Labour General Election victory; first Wilson Government		28 March: Radio Caroline commences broadcasting; 30 Aug: Music Programme introduced within the Third Network
<b>1965</b>	Government circular 10/65 calls for comprehensive schools	The Beatles awarded MBEs	General Overseas Service renamed BBC World Service
	Woffenden Report		
<b>1966</b>	Labour General Election victory; second Wilson Government		

	England win World Cup			
<b>1967</b>	Economic crisis and devaluation of sterling; Abortion Act; Sexual Offences Act; Race Relations Act (check ?1968)	<i>Sergeant Pepper</i> released Aug: Brian Epstein dies	28 Sept: Radio 1 opens; other existing services renamed as Radios 2, 3 and 4 8 Nov: BBC Radio Leicester on air 14 Aug: Marine Offences Broadcasting Act introduced	
<b>1968</b>	04 Feb More Kenyan Asians flee to Britain 19 Feb Damages for thalidomide children 04 Apr Martin Luther King shot dead 06 Apr United States erupts in race violence 14 Apr Berlin student unrest worsens 20 Apr Powell slates immigration policy Barbara Castle introduces "In Place of Strife"; fierce divisions within the Government, led by Callaghan	Man Utd. Win European Cup Sept: Musical 'Hair' opens amid censorship row First mass sales of colour TVs		
<b>1969</b>	02 Jan Murdoch wins Fleet Street foothold 27 Jan Rebel students take over LSE 02 Mar Concorde flies for the first time 04 Mar Kray twins guilty of McVitie murder 17 Apr Devlin is youngest-ever woman MP 21 Jul Man takes first steps on the Moon 14 Aug British troops sent into Northern Ireland 15 Oct Millions march in US Vietnam Moratorium 19 Nov Second Apollo mission lands on Moon Withdrawal of "In Place of Strife"; abandonment of trade union reform Abolition of Capital Punishment Divorce Law reform	<i>Monty Python's Flying Circus</i> 14 Jan: Matt Busby retires from Man Utd. 18 Feb: Lulu ties knot with Bee Gee 12 Mar: Paul McCartney marries Linda Eastman 7 Jul: Brain Jones dead of drinks and drugs	3 Mar: Tories pledge 100 or more local radio stations 11 Mar: Harold Wilson attacks Tory proposal 27 Nov: John Stonehouse announces 12 new BBC local radio stations Broadcasting responsibility goes to Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications (John Stonehouse – Minister of Posts & Telecommunications) Lobbying organizations BBC publishes <i>Broadcasting in the Seventies</i>	
<b>1970</b>	16 Jan Gaddafi takes over as Libya's premier 22 Jan Heathrow welcomes first 'jumbo jet'	18 Sept: Rock legend Hendrix dies after party	18 June: Tories win Election (Heath): A Better Tomorrow (Conservative Manifesto) {	

	<p>02 Mar Ian Smith declares Rhodesia a republic  14 Apr Critical explosion cripples Apollo 13  22 May South Africa cricket tour called off  01 Jun British Prime Minister hit by flying egg  19 Jun Shock election win for Heath  25 Jun New peace plan for Middle East  16 Jul State of emergency called over dock strike  19 Oct Large oil field found in North Sea  Equal Pay Act? (check, see '75)</p>		<p><a href="http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1970/1970-conservative-manifesto.shtml">http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1970/1970-conservative-manifesto.shtml</a>  10 July: ITA debates whether it wants to take on responsibility for commercial radio  Oct: Sir Robert Frazer retires as DG of ITA and Brian Young takes over</p>
<p><b>1971</b></p>	<p>25 Jan Idi Amin ousts Uganda president  15 Feb D-Day delivers new UK currency  24 Feb UK restricts Commonwealth migrants  15 Jun Councils defy Thatcher milk ban  08 Jul British troops shoot Londonderry rioters  09 Aug NI activates internment law  13 Oct Army blasts N Ireland border roads  23 Oct Two women shot at Belfast checkpoint  16 June: Lord Reith dies</p>	<p>Kubrick's <i>A Clockwork Orange</i>  Jul: Doors' singer Jim Morrison found dead</p>	<p>1 Feb: Radio only licence abolished  29 Mar: Government White Paper, <i>An alternative service of radio broadcasting</i> (Cmnd 4636), proposes local commercial radio  28 Sept: John Thompson announced as Senior Adviser on radio Broadcasting  12 Nov: Ivor Richard, Shadow Minister, Posts &amp; Telecommunications – 'A new Labour Govt. won't necessarily kill off commercial radio/ILR'  12 Nov: Chataway announces first 4 cities for ILR (Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and London)  May-Dec: Critical ITA discussions about future regulation of ILR</p>
<p><b>1972</b></p>	<p>09 Jan Miners strike against government  20 Jan UK unemployment tops one million  30 Jan Army kills 13 in civil rights protest  16 Feb Miners' strike turns off the lights  22 Feb IRA bomb kills six at Aldershot barracks  25 Feb Miners call off crippling coal strike  31 Mar CND begins march to Aldermaston  19 Apr 'Bloody Sunday' report excuses Army</p>	<p><i>Cosmopolitan</i> and <i>Spare Rib</i> launched  June: Duke of Windsor dies</p>	<p>12 June: Sound Broadcasting Act 1972 Royal Assent (established Independent Local Radio, and required the ITA to be renamed Independent Broadcasting Authority) to set it up and regulate it)  12 July: ITA officially became the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and responsible for the development of Independent Local Radio  Summer: ITA negotiates music and copyright</p>

	<p>29 May Japanese kill 26 at Tel Aviv airport 30 May Official IRA declares ceasefire 14 Jun Plots threaten worldwide strike 18 Jun UK's worst air crash kills 118 23 Jun Chancellor orders pound flotation 10 Jul Whitelaw's secret meeting with IRA 28 Jul National dock strike begins 07 Aug Asians given 90 days to leave Uganda 06 Sep Olympic hostages killed in gun battle 18 Sep Expelled Ugandans arrive in UK 06 Nov Pay and price freeze aims to curb inflation 07 Nov Nixon takes second term by landslide 26 Nov Police foil IRA hospital rescue attempt 13 Dec New offer for Thalidomide victims 19 Dec Amin ultimatum to Uganda Britons 22 Dec Survivors found 10 weeks after plane crash</p>		<p>1 August: House of Commons Second Report: Select Committee on Industries: Session 1971-72: Independent Broadcasting Authority (1971-72: HC 465) called for greater accountability by the IBA and further strengthening of control and supervision of programmes</p> <p>4 October: October IBA issued first Particulars of Independent Local Radio Contracts: London General&amp; Entertainment; London News; Birmingham and Glasgow.</p> <p>8 Dec: Closing date for all first five franchises</p>
<p><b>1973</b></p> <p>01 Jan Britain joins the EEC 11 Jan First Open University degrees awarded 15 Jan Nixon orders ceasefire in Vietnam 19 Jan Super tug to defend fishing fleet 23 Jan Nixon announces Vietnam peace deal 09 Mar Northern Ireland votes for union 10 Mar British officials shot dead in Bermuda 26 Mar Stock Exchange admits women 30 Apr Nixon takes rap for Watergate scandal 01 May Thousands strike over pay and prices 20 May Royal Navy moves to protect trawlers 31 May US Senate stops Cambodia bombing 09 Jul Bahamas' sun sets on British Empire 30 Jul Final deal for thalidomide victims 31 Jul Chaotic meeting of Belfast Assembly 21 Aug 'Bloody Sunday' inquest accuses Army 10 Sep Bomb blasts rock central London 11 Sep President overthrown in Chile coup 26 Sep Concorde slashes Atlantic flight time 06 Oct Arab states attack Israeli forces 08 Oct Commercial radio joins UK airwaves 20 Oct Dalai Lama makes first UK visit 14 Nov IRA gang convicted of London bombings 25 Nov Army deposes 'hated' Greek president 01 Dec Israel's founding father dies 09 Dec Sunningdale Agreement signed</p>	<p>8 Apr: Picasso dies 1<sup>st</sup> commercial – Bird's Eye fish fingers Princess Anne marriage</p>	<p>8 February: IBA awarded the London ILR contracts to LBC (News) and Capital Radio (General &amp; Entertainment)</p> <p>8 March: IBA awarded the ILR contracts to Radio Clyde (Glasgow), BRMB (Birmingham), and GMIR (later Piccadilly Radio) (Manchester)</p> <p>23 May: Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 1973 received the Royal Assent: it consolidated the <i>Television Act 1964</i> and the <i>Sound Broadcasting Act 1972</i> to give the IBA one constitutional document</p> <p>8 Oct: First ILR station opened in London (LBC) 8 Oct: IRN on-air 15 Oct: IBA's engineering staff move to Crawley Court, near Winchester, in Hampshire. 16 Oct: Capital Radio (London General &amp; Entertainment) 31 Dec: Radio Clyde (Glasgow)</p> <p>Cecilia Garnett, Secretary of the AIRC</p>	

	<p>20 Dec Spanish prime minister assassinated OPEC oil price rises mark the end of the long post-war boom 13 Dec: 3 day week starts (until March 74) Miners strike continues</p>		
<p><b>1974</b></p>	<p>04 Feb Soldiers and children killed in coach bombing 07 Feb Heath calls snap election over miners 06 Mar Miners' strike comes to an end 17 May Dublin and Monaghan bomb kills 23 28 May Strikes topple NI power-sharing body 15 Jun Man dies in race rally clashes 17 Jun IRA bombs parliament 24 Jun Labour rift over nuclear test 17 Jul Bomb blast at the Tower of London 21 Jul Cyprus conflict spills into London 23 Jul Greek military rule gives in to democracy 24 Jul Nixon 'must hand over Watergate tapes' 30 Jul Peace deal for Cyprus 08 Aug President Nixon to resign from office 09 Aug Ford takes over as Nixon quits 05 Oct Four dead in Guildford bomb blasts 11 Oct Labour scrapes working majority 16 Oct Maze prison goes up in flames 22 Oct Bomb blast in London club 28 Oct Minister's wife survives bomb attack 04 Nov M62 bomber jailed for life 08 Nov Police hunt Lord Lucan after murder 21 Nov Birmingham pub blasts kill 19 24 Nov Six charged over Birmingham pub bombs 15 Dec New speed limit to curb fuel use 18 Dec Compensation for Bloody Sunday victims 22 Dec Heath's home is bombed 24 Dec Drowned' Stonehouse found alive</p>	<p>12 Jul: Shankly quits Liverpool</p>	<p>12 March: IBA extended the ITV contracts from 1974 to 1976. 2 April IBA's Manchester ILR service, Piccadilly Radio, on air. 10 April: Home Secretary announced setting up a Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, with Lord Amman as Chairman June: Lord Aylestone demands end to uncertainty of ILR development 15 July: IBA's Tyne and Wear ILR service, Metro Radio, on air 31 July: Jenkins limits number of ILR stations to 19 (all must be on air by end of 1975) August: First issue of IBA's quarterly magazine, <i>Independent Broadcasting</i> 9 Sept: IBA Annual Report 1973/74 (pg.37 – sets out first 26 ILR stations) 30 Sept: IBA's Swansea ILR service, Swansea Sound, on air 1 Oct: IBA's Sheffield/ Rotherham ILR service, Radio Hallam, on air 21 Oct: IBA's Liverpool ILR service, Radio City, on air  Tony Stoller joins IBA JICRAR established</p>
<p><b>1975</b></p>	<p>14 Jan Heiress Lesley Whittle kidnapped 11 Feb Tories choose first woman leader 13 Feb Miners set for 35 per cent pay rises 27 Feb PC murder linked to IRA bomb factory 28 Feb Dozens killed in Moorgate Tube crash 04 Mar Comic genius Chaplin is knighted 07 Mar Kidnapped heiress found strangled 25 Mar Saudi's King Faisal assassinated</p>	<p>Jul: Arthur Ashe wins Wimbledon Oct: Muhammad Ali wins 'Thrilla in Manila' Oct: Liz Taylor and Richard Burton remarried</p>	<p>22 Jan: IBA's Edinburgh ILR service, Radio Forth, on air LBC taken off air 5 times (Jan-Mar) due to union disputes  April: National sales representation – Beacon chooses AIR services. AIR services has 10 stations; BMS has 8. Radio Kennet goes it alone 8 April: IBA rolls first 3 licences (Clyde, BRMB and Piccadilly)</p>

	<p>25 Mar National Front rallies against Europe 26 Apr Labour votes to leave the EEC 30 Apr Saigon surrenders 09 Jun First live broadcast of Parliament 06 Jun UK embraces Europe in referendum 12 Jun Gandhi found guilty of corruption 19 Jun Missing earl guilty of murder 26 Aug Rhodesia peace talks fail 05 Sep London Hilton bombed 22 Sep Bomb blasts rock Northern Ireland 24 Sep First Britons conquer Everest 03 Oct London's Spaghetti House siege ends 09 Oct Man killed in Piccadilly bomb blast 03 Nov North Sea oil begins to flow 07 Nov IRA kidnappers release industrialist 27 Nov TV presenter Ross McWhirter shot dead 29 Nov Graham Hill killed in air crash 11 Dec Attack on British vessels heightens Cod War 12 Dec Balcombe Street siege ends 29 Dec New laws to end battle of the sexes Yes campaign wins EEC referendum decisively</p>		<p>9 June: First live radio broadcasting of Parliament 19 May: IBA's Plymouth ILR service, Plymouth Sound, on air 24 June: IBA's Teesside ILR service, Radio Tees, on air 3 July: IBA's Nottingham ILR service, Radio Trent, on air 16 Sept: IBA's Bradford ILR service, Pennine Radio on air 14 Oct: IBA's Portsmouth ILR service, Radio Victory, on air 28 Oct: IBA's Ipswich ILR service, Radio Orwell, on air  Lady Plowden., becomes Chair of the IBA  Capital and LBC moved to their permanent frequencies (on temporary frequencies from launch)</p>
<p><b>1976</b></p>	<p>07 Jan Iceland and Britain clash at sea 05 Jan Ten dead in Northern Ireland ambush 29 Jan Explosions rock London's West End 04 Mar Guilty verdict for 'Maguire Seven' 16 Mar Prime Minister Harold Wilson resigns 05 Apr Callaghan is new prime minister 05 Apr Billionaire Howard Hughes dies 07 Apr Government crisis as Stonehouse quits 16 Jun Soweto protest turns violent 20 Jun Westemers evacuated from Beirut 19 Jul Fight for fishing rights in Europe 30 Aug Notting Hill Carnival ends in riot 01 Sep Water crisis deepens 09 Sep Chairman Mao Zedong dies 24 Sep White rule in Rhodesia to end 04 Oct New train speeds into service 11 Oct China's 'Gang of Four' arrested 03 Nov Carter wins with 'Trust me' slogan Financial crisis and application for large IMF loan</p>	<p>12 Jan: Crime writer Agatha Christie dies Feb: John Curry wins skating gold 19 Mar: Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon to split 2 June: Piggott celebrates 7th Derby victory 25 Oct: Queen opens National Theatre in London 4 Dec: Genius' composer Benjamin Britten dies</p>	<p>March: Parliament votes to make broadcasting of Parliament permanent 8 March: IBA's Reading ILR service, Radio 210, on air 16 March: IBA's Belfast ILR service, Downtown Radio, on air 12 April: IBA's Wolverhampton ILR service, Beacon Radio (completion of 18 stations on air)  LBC journalists strike</p>

<p><b>1977</b></p>	<p>03 Jan Jenkins quits Commons for Brussels 23 Mar Government wins no confidence vote 07 Jun Queen celebrates Silver Jubilee 11 Jul Gay paper guilty of blasphemy 31 Aug Smith keeps power in Rhodesia 12 Sep Steve Biko dies in custody 27 Oct Liberal MP denies murder plot 14 Nov Firefighters strike over pay claim 19 Nov Egyptian leader's Israel trip historic 02 Dec South African police cleared of Biko death 05 Dec Egypt severs ties with Arab hardliners 16 Dec Queen opens 'tube' link to Heathrow 21 Dec Firemen jeer TUC's pay snub Callaghan reliant on Lib-Lab pact, losing overall Commons majority</p>	<p>6 Jan: EMI fires Sex Pistols 11 Mar: Roman Polanski charged with rape 2 Apr: Hat trick for Red Rum 16 Aug: Rock and roll 'king' Presley dies 15 Nov: Princess Anne gives birth to Master Phillips 25 Dec: Silent film legend Chaplin dies 27 Dec: Star Wars fever hits Britain</p>	<p>24 March: <i>Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting</i> (Cmnd 6753), under Lord Annan as Chairman, recommended a new Local Broadcasting Authority (to take over local radio from the IBA and BBC) and an Open Broadcasting Authority (to run the fourth television channel) – neither of which were eventually implemented  24 Mar: Report of the Committee on the future of Broadcasting 26 May: First Union consultation Spring: First JICRAR results</p>
<p><b>1978</b></p>	<p>01 Jan Newspaper editor flees South Africa 03 Feb Sadat in US for Mid East talks 17 Mar Civilians flee southern Lebanon 24 Mar Tanker Amoco Cadiz splits in two 30 Mar Tories recruit advertisers to win votes 07 Apr Carter delays N-bomb production 18 Apr Carter wins Panama Canal battle 19 Jun Botham bowls into cricket history 06 Jul Eleven die in sleeper train inferno 25 Jul Motability gets moving in the UK 25 Jul First 'test tube baby' born 20 Sep Police hunt Bridgewater killers 29 Sep Catholics mourn Pope's death 16 Oct Polish bishop is new Pope 20 Nov Liberal MP accused of murder plot 23 Nov Nightclub ordered to lift race ban 06 Dec Spain set to vote for democracy 14 Dec Labour faces vote of confidence Callaghan decides against calling a General Election 1978/9 Winter of Discontent</p>	<p>13 Feb: Anna Ford makes her ITN debut  17 May: Charlie Chaplin's stolen body found 12 Oct: Sex Pistol Vicious on murder charge</p>	<p>3 April: First regular sound broadcasting of Parliamentary proceedings began on Independent Radio News and BBC Radio  26 July: Proposed legislation in the Government White Paper, <i>Broadcasting</i> (Cmnd 7294), following up on the Annan Committee recommendations (not implemented as the Labour Government lost the 1979 General Election)  6 Oct: AIRC refers PPL to Copyright Tribunal  24 Oct: Home Secretary names nine new areas for next phase of ILR (1st report of LRWP) 26 Oct: <i>Tenth Report from the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries</i> recommended lifting the embargo on ILR expansion Government White Paper rejects Annan conclusions about local radio  Dec: Cardiff and Coventry advertised ILR 'profitable' (IBA Annual Report 78/79)</p>
<p><b>1979</b></p>	<p>08 Jan Vietnam forces Khmer Rouge retreat 10 Jan 'No chaos here' declares Callaghan 16 Jan Shah of Iran flees into exile 22 Jan Public sector strike paralyses country 01 Feb Exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran</p>	<p>2 Feb: Sid Vicious dies from drugs overdose 9 Feb: Forest break football transfer record</p>	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> report of the Local Radio Working Party recommends a further 15 ILR stations  May: IBA selects two community groups to run Cardiff and Coventry Tony Stoller becomes Chair of AIRC</p>

	<p>28 Mar Nuclear leak causes alarm in America  28 Mar Early election as Callaghan defeated  30 Mar Car bomb kills Airey Neave  14 Apr New president for war-torn Uganda  23 Apr Teacher dies in Southall race riots  04 May Election victory for Margaret Thatcher  25 May Price of milk shoots up  02 Jun Millions cheer as the Pope comes home  18 Jun Leaders agree arms reduction treaty  22 Jun Thorpe cleared of murder charges  23 Aug Kurdish revolt grows in Iran  27 Aug IRA bomb kills Lord Mountbatten  27 Aug Soldiers die in Warrenpoint massacre  02 Sep Ripper suspected of 12th murder  04 Nov Militants storm US embassy in Tehran  13 Nov Times returns after year-long dispute  16 Nov Blunt revealed as 'fourth man'  07 Dec Lord Soames to govern Rhodesia  10 Dec Daredevil Kidd's 80ft river jump  20 Dec Council tenants will have 'right to buy'  26 Dec Joy as guerrillas fly in to Rhodesia</p>	<p>10 Aug: Longest strike in ITV's history lasted 11 weeks until 19 October</p>	
<p><b>1980</b></p>	<p>02 Jan Steel workers strike over pay  07 Jan Gandhi returned by landslide vote  27 Jan Exiled Mugabe returns to Rhodesia  04 Mar Mugabe to lead independent Zimbabwe  25 Mar Britain will go to Moscow Olympics  27 Mar North Sea platform collapses  25 Apr Tehran hostage rescue mission fails  05 May SAS rescue ends Iran embassy siege  17 Jun Government announces missile sites  19 Jun Gunbattle at British embassy in Iraq  22 Sep War breaks out between Iran and Iraq  10 Oct Thatcher 'not for turning'  10 Oct Thousands feared dead in Algerian quake  17 Oct Pope welcomes Queen to the Vatican  04 Nov Reagan beats Carter in landslide  10 Nov Michael Foot is new Labour leader  12 Nov Saum's rings caught on film  28 Dec Green light for breakfast television  Bitter disputes at Labour Conference at Blackpool</p>	<p>8 Dec: John Lennon shot dead</p>	<p>29 Jan: Home Secretary (Whitelaw) extends all ILR contracts to 11 years  April: Philip Whitehead 'BBC should get out of local radio'  15 July: First Copyright Tribunal decision  26 Aug: AIRC decides to appeal Tribunal  17 Oct: IBA's Dundee/ Perth ILR service, Radio Tay, on air  27 Oct: IBA's Gloucester/ Cheltenham ILR service, Severn Sound on air  7 Nov: IBA's Exeter/ Torbay ILR service, DevonAir Radio, on air  13 Nov: <i>Broadcasting Act 1980</i> received the Royal Assent; it extended the life of the IBA until 1996  3rd report of the Local Radio Working Party recommends a further 25 ILR stations</p>
<p><b>1981</b></p>	<p>21 Jan Tehran frees US hostages after 444 days</p>	<p>29 Mar: First London Marathon</p>	<p>10 March: High Court refers a range of issues back to the Copyright</p>

	<p>22 Jan Murdoch bids to take over Times 25 Jan Dissident Labour MPs plan new party 18 Feb Thatcher gives in to miners 24 Mar Biggs rescued after kidnapping 26 Mar 'Gang of four' launches new party 30 Mar President Reagan is shot 10 Apr Hunger striker elected MP 11 Apr Brixton ablaze after riot 05 May Bobby Sands dies in prison 13 May Thousands see Pope shot in Rome 13 Jun Queen shot at by youth 22 Jun Chapman pleads guilty to Lennon murder 05 Jul Police attacked in Liverpool riots 18 Jul Violence erupts at Irish hunger strike protest 03 Oct IRA Maze hunger strikes at an end 06 Oct Egypt's President Sadat assassinated 24 Oct CND rally attracts thousands 30 Oct Euthanasia chief jailed over suicides 25 Nov Brixton riots report blames racial tension 10 Dec Mystery disease kills homosexuals</p>	<p>July: Charles and Diana marry</p>	<p>Tribunal 1 June: Broadcasting Complaints Commission came into operation, handling complaints of unfair or unjust treatment, or unwarranted infringement of privacy by broadcasters July: IBA readvertises ILR – News and Information, a year ahead of schedule 14 July: Home Secretary announces a further 25 ILR areas (bringing the total to 69) 27 July: IBA's Aberdeen ILR service, NorthSound, on air 1 September: IBA's Leeds ILR service, Radio Aire, on air 7 September: IBA's Leicester ILR service, Centre Radio, on air 12 September: IBA's Southend/Chelmsford ILR, Essex Radio, on air 15 October: IBA's Luton/Bedford ILR service, Chiltern Radio, on air 16 October: IBA's Ayr ILR service, West Sound, on air 27 October: IBA's Bristol ILR service, Radio West, on air 30 October: <i>Broadcasting Act 1981</i> consolidated the <i>Broadcasting Act 1980</i> and previous legislation. 31 Dec: All existing ILR contracts end Lord Thomson of Monofieith, Chair of IBA Bill Coppen-Gardner becomes Chair of AIRC (replaced by Brian West)</p>
<p><b>1982</b></p>	<p>12 Jan Mark Thatcher missing in Sahara 05 Feb Laker Airways goes bust 03 Mar Queen opens Barbican Centre 19 Mar Argentine flag hoisted on S Georgia 02 Apr Argentina invades Falklands 25 Apr Marines land in South Georgia 01 May RAF bombs Port Stanley 02 May British sub sinks Argentine cruiser 04 May Argentines destroy HMS Sheffield 25 May Dozens killed as Argentines hit British ships 14 Jun Ceasefire agreed in Falklands 09 Jul Queen fends off bedroom intruder 20 Jul IRA bombs cause carnage in London 17 Sep Refugees massacred in Beirut camps 11 Oct Mary Rose rises after 437 years 21 Oct Sinn Fein triumph in elections 27 Oct RUC officers killed by IRA bomb 29 Oct Mother jailed in dingy baby murder 10 Nov Brezhnev rumours sweep Moscow 12 Nov Solidarity leader Walesa released</p>	<p>June: Princess Diana gives birth Sept: Princess Grace of Monaco dies in car crash (check?) 2 Nov: Channel 4 on air, initially reaching 87% of population</p>	<p>01 Jan: All ILRs enter new contracts with IBA Discussions over future of LBC/IRN John Whitney, IBA Director General 29 Sept: Re-award licence to London Broadcasting Company Nov: New needletime agreement between BBC and PPL Dec: Financial crisis for ILR during 1982 Dec: BBC publishes 'Radio Policy for the 90s' seeking 5 VHF channels</p>

	30 Nov 15 Dec	Animal activists bomb Downing Street Spain opens border with the Rock		
<b>1983</b>	06 Jan 31 Jan 08 Feb 09 Feb 23 Mar 28 Mar 25 Apr 09 Jun 23 Jun 26 Jul 25 Sep 02 Oct 14 Oct 22 Oct 23 Oct 24 Oct 26 Nov 04 Dec 06 Dec 08 Dec	Danes raid British fishing grounds British drivers ordered to belt up Sharon quits after massacre inquiry Police hunt Shergar's kidnappers Reagan launches Cold War into space Macgregor named as coal boss Hitler diaries' published Thatcher wins landslide victory Pope meets banned union leader Walesa Mother loses contraception test case Dozens escape in Maze breakout 'Dream ticket' wins Labour leadership Parkinson quits over lovechild scandal CND march attracts biggest ever crowd Beirut blasts kill US and French troops Nilsen 'strangled and mutilated' victims £25m gold heist at Heathrow IRA gunmen shot dead in SAS ambush Transplant makes British medical history Television cameras allowed into Lords Neil Kinnock elected Labour leader	17 Jan: Launch of BBC Breakfast TV TV-am	Jan: Radio Academy launched (?) Jan: Re-advertisement timetable is announced 1 April: First Sony Awards 10 April: CRCA launched (?) June: IBA starts on new contracts with Gwent Broadcasting on 13/06/83 July: Launch of motorway road signs for ILR July: Voice of the Listener formed July: Second Copyright Tribunal reference, Tribunal starts 6 Oct: Centre Radio closes (check)
<b>1984</b>	26 Feb 17 Mar 21 Mar 04 Apr 09 Apr 12 Apr 17 Apr 27 Apr 23 Apr 8 May 20 Jun 09 Jul 23 Jul 11 Aug 16 Aug 26 Sep 28 Sep 12 Oct	US troops withdraw from Beirut Boat race halted before starting EEC summit collapses over rebate row Greenham Common women evicted Dozens arrested in picket line violence Scargill vetoes national ballot on strike Libyan embassy shots kill policewoman Libyan embassy siege ends Scientist finds Aids virus Moscow pulls out of US Olympics O-Levels to be replaced by GCSEs Historic York Minster engulfed by flames Sellafield 'not linked' to cancer cluster Zola Budd in race trip controversy DeLorean cleared of drugs charges UK and China agree Hong Kong handover Pit dispute 'illegal' says judge Tory Cabinet in Brighton bomb blast	14 Feb: Torvill and Dean win gold	Jan: IBA introduces subsidy for small stations through rentals Mar (?): AIRC set up Programme Sharing Unit 24 May: Launch of Laser 558 23 June: AIRC Heathrow Conference June: JICRAR radio audience listening falls (92% reach to 86% reach- commercial radio from 52 to 42% reach) 25 July: AIRC met Leon Brittan 4 Sept: AIRC meets IBA to press for deregulation 30 Sept: Launch of Network Chart Show Oct: Gwent and CBC announce plans to merge Nov: IBA cuts primary rentals and deregulates Nov/Dec: TS columns in Broadcast

	<p>25 Oct Europe grants emergency aid for Ethiopia 01 Nov Violence follows Gandhi killing 07 Nov Four more years for Reagan 12 Nov Quid notes out - pound coins in 23 Nov London tube fire traps hundreds 14 Dec Court fines Scargill for obstruction 16 Dec Gorbachev visit to Britain a 'success' 19 Dec Britain signs over Hong Kong to China 29 Dec Rajiv Gandhi wins landslide election victory Miners strike (1984/5)</p>		
<p><b>1985</b></p>	<p>03 Mar Miners call off year-long strike 08 Mar Beirut car bomb kills dozens 11 Mar Gorbachev becomes Soviet leader 11 May Fans killed in Bradford stadium fire 31 May English teams banned after Heysel 02 Jun Uefa bans English clubs from Europe 30 Jun Beirut ordeal ends for US hostages 10 Jul Rainbow Warrior sinks after explosion 13 Aug Heart-lung transplant makes history 26 Aug Budd smashes 5,000m record 04 Sep Titanic wreck captured on film 14 Sep USSR expels 25 in tit-for-tat spy row 15 Sep Europe wins Ryder Cup 28 Sep Riots in Brixton after police shooting 01 Oct Riots erupt in Toxteth and Peckham 06 Oct Policeman killed in Tottenham riots 15 Nov Anglo-Irish agreement signed 19 Nov Superpower summit 'off to good start' 27 Nov Kinnoek moves against Militant</p>	<p>Jul: Boris Becker wins Wimbledon at 17 13 Jul: Live Aid</p>	<p>Jan: Radio West and Wiltshire Radio merge (check?) 12 Feb: ILR MDs hold 'secret' meeting at Leeds Castle (attended by a senior civil servant and Chataway) 27 March: The Home Secretary announced a new Committee on Financing the BBC, with Professor Sir Alan Peacock as Chairman 11 July: Home Secretary announced proposals for local radio, to include investigation into the viability of community radio and the go-ahead to the IBA (and BBC) to experiment in split-frequency Broadcasting 17 Oct: Radio Victory loses franchise</p>
<p><b>1986</b></p>	<p>09 Jan Hestelme quits over Westland 28 Jan Seven dead in space shuttle disaster 24 Jan Leon Brittan quits over Westland 03 Feb Pope and Mother Teresa feed the sick 15 Feb Printers and police clash in Wapping 20 Feb Soviets launch space station Mir 22 Feb Filipino coup leaders tell Marcos to go 31 Mar Greater London Council abolished 07 Apr Sinclair sells computer business 15 Apr US launches air strikes on Libya 28 Apr Soviets admit nuclear accident 29 Apr Simple funeral rites for Duchess 10 Jun Magee convicted of Brighton bombing</p>	<p>4 Jan: Thin Lizzy star, Phil Lynott dies Jul: Andrew and Fergie marry</p>	<p>Jan: Local Radio Association closes Mar: Home Office announces abolition of Treasury levy June: Cabinet blocks Community Radio experiment 3 July: <i>The Report of Committee on the Financing of the BBC</i> (Cmnd 9824), under the Chairmanship of Professor Alan Peacock, recommended a radical reorganization and deregulation of British television; including putting the ITV and DBS franchises out to competitive tender, with the IBA having to justify any acceptance of lower bids Peacock recommends privatising R1 and R2 Home Office licences low power special event licences, initially for 2</p>

	<p>12 Jun Labour expels Militant Hatton 24 Jun Ian Paisley's battle cry condemned 29 Jun Branson beats Atlantic speed record 12 Jul Orange Parade sparks riots 08 Sep Pinochet survives rebel ambush 26 Oct Archer quits over prostitute allegations 28 Oct 'Evil' Bamber jailed for family murders 02 Nov US hostage freed in Beirut 20 Nov Police renew hunt for Moors victims 01 Dec Surprise inquiry into Guinness affairs 11 Dec BBC Aids slogan angers church 29 Dec Harold Macmillan dies Single European Act</p>		<p>years Oct: Second PPL/AIRC tribunal decision Oct: Home Office green light for sponsored programmes, more advertising minutage and smaller community radio 6 Nov: Further big reductions in ILR primary rentals  1986 onwards: Australians arrive</p>
<p><b>1987</b></p>	<p>02 Feb Peace envoy imprisoned in Beirut 11 Feb Mrs Payne is no brothel Madam 17 Feb Tamils strip off at Heathrow 26 Feb Synod says 'yes' to women priests 06 Mar Hundreds trapped as car ferry capsizes 23 Mar 30 hurt as car bomb hits Army base 16 Apr MP on gay sex charges 21 Apr Tamil Tigers blamed for bus garage blast 11 Jun Thatcher wins record third term 01 Jul Stock-broker guilty of corruption 02 Jul Brady to help search for Moors victims 03 Jul Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie gets life 16 Jul Great British airline ready for take off 17 Jul Ex-Guinness boss owes millions 24 Jul Archer wins record damages 31 Jul Newspaper caught in Spycatcher row 04 Aug Moors murderer claims more killings 17 Aug Hitler's deputy found dead 19 Aug Gunman kills 14 in Hungerford rampage 27 Aug MacLennan replaces Owen in SDP 09 Sep Liverpool fans to stand trial in Belgium 18 Sep Superpower treaty to scrap warheads 16 Oct Hurricane winds batter southern England 19 Oct Shares plunge after Wall Street crash 23 Oct Lester Piggott jailed for three years 08 Nov Bomb kills 11 at Enniskillen 11 Nov Van Gogh fetches record price 18 Nov King's Cross station fire 'kills 27' 08 Dec Superpowers to reverse arms race</p>	<p>1 June: Broadcasting hours further extended and Thames TV the first to have a regular '24-hour' service</p>	<p>25 Feb: Government Green Paper, <i>Radio: choices and opportunities: a consultative document</i> (Cm 92), set out options for future of sound broadcasting in the light of additional spectrum and technological developments Mar: IBA investigates Piccadilly and Radio City for schedule breaches April: 8 stations leave AIRC (Red Rose / Chiltern) April: Merger with Red Rose and Viking  20 May: Radio 4 <i>Analysis</i> discusses GP July: IBA allows 2 extra minutes of advertising per morning Oct: Record revenue growth for ILR Dec: Music &amp; Media article on Programme Sharing  Peter Baldwin becomes Director of Radio (Chief Exec in 1989?)</p>

	09 Dec Big Bang of financial de-regulation	Getting row halts play in Pakistan	
<p><b>1988</b></p> <p>19 Jan Disabled author wins Whitbread 03 Feb Nurses protest for better pay 04 Feb Defiant seamen strike on 21 Feb TV evangelist quits over sex scandal 07 Mar IRA gang shot dead in Gibraltar 10 Mar Avalanche hits royal ski party 16 Mar Thousands die in Halabja gas attack 16 Mar Three shot dead at Milltown Cemetery 05 Apr Hijackers free 25 hostages 14 Apr USSR pledges to leave Afghanistan 18 Apr 'Ivan the Terrible' guilty of war crimes 06 May Hick makes cricketing history 03 Jul US warship shoots down Iranian airplane 06 Jul Piper Alpha oil rig ablaze 28 Jul Ashdown to lead Britain's third party 10 Aug Mysterious seal disease spreads 09 Sep Indian cricket tour 'cancelled' 10 Sep BBC presenters in helicopter crash 24 Sep Gold for Johnson in 100m sprint 27 Sep Johnson stripped of Olympic gold 30 Sep 'SAS killed lawfully' - Gibraltar jury 29 Sep Shuttle blasts US back into space 09 Oct Latvia cries freedom from Moscow 13 Oct Government loses Spycatcher battle 20 Oct New law could erode right to silence 02 Nov Dead heat in Israel elections 03 Dec Egg industry fury over salmonella claim 10 Dec Death toll rises in Armenian earthquake 12 Dec 35 dead in Clapham rail collision 21 Dec Jumbo jet crashes onto Lockerbie 24 Dec Oilfields crippled after storage ship drifts 26 Dec First clue to Lockerbie crash found</p>	<p><b>28 April</b> <i>Death on the Rock</i> (a <i>This Week</i> documentary about the shooting of three suspected IRA terrorists on Gibraltar), one of the most controversial programmes of the 1980s, was shown on ITV, bringing the IBA and Thames Television into conflict with the Government</p> <p><b>19 October</b> Home Secretary issued a direction to the IBA and BBC, under Section 29(3) of the <i>Broadcasting Act 1981</i> and the BBC Licence and Agreement, restricting broadcasters reporting on terrorism in Northern Ireland</p>	<p><b>12/19 January</b> Home Secretary announced his approval of IBA (and BBC) proposals for split-frequency broadcasting, and expansion of commercial radio, including three national channels and several hundred 'community' stations, and a Radio Authority, to take over from the IBA</p> <p>1 Feb: First national <i>Newslink</i></p> <p>30 March: DTI Secretary (Young) announces MMC reference for music copyright</p> <p>April: First RDS radio installed by Volvo</p> <p>1 June: County Sound first ILR station to split frequencies permanently ( 7 days a week)</p> <p><b>7 November</b> Government White Paper, <i>Broadcasting in the 90s: competition, choice and quality</i> (Cm 517), outlined forthcoming legislation to replace the IBA by an Independent Television Commission to regulate all commercial television – terrestrial, cable and satellite, and a Radio Authority for all commercial radio services</p> <p>Sept: Secondary rental waived</p> <p>13 Sept: IBA proposes to Home Office Incremental Stations</p> <p>Sept: AIRC announces legal challenge to incremental stations</p> <p>14 Oct: Crown Communications to challenge Radio 4</p> <p>Nov: Douglas Hurd announces approval of 20+ incrementals</p> <p>7 Dec: MMC reports, recommending first fixation enquiry</p> <p>20 Dec: IBA announces outline plans for incrementals</p>	
<p><b>1989</b></p> <p>08 Jan Dozens die as plane crashes on motorway 15 Feb Soviet troops pull out of Afghanistan 20 Feb IRA bombs Tern Hill barracks 04 Mar Six die in Purley rail crash 20 Mar Senior RUC men die in gun attack 24 Mar Exxon Valdez creates oil slick disaster 27 Mar Millions of Russians go to the polls</p>	<p><b>11 September</b> First sponsored national peak-time television programme, the weather forecast sponsored by PowerGen, was transmitted following IBA relaxation of rules on sponsorship</p>	<p>Jan: Piccadilly and BRMB announce merger (Red Rose merger story begins; Miss World Group hostile takeover of Red Rose Group</p> <p>10 January: The IBA advertises the first 23 new 'incremental' ILR contracts, a new and alternative type of local radio in areas already served by an ILR station – stations for 'communities of interest'</p>	

	<p>Dockers' 'jobs for life' scrapped Football fans crushed at Hillsborough Yorkshire Ripper's wife wins damages Massacre in Tiananmen Square Election boost for Solidarity Diana opens Landmark Aids Centre Man U sold in record takeover deal Marchioness river crash 'kills 30' Anglican anger over united church Earthquake hits San Francisco East Germany leader ousted Guildford Four released after 15 years Protests force out East German rulers Berliners celebrate the fall of the Wall Police crush Prague protest rally Protesters demand reform in Bulgaria New era for Czechoslovakia Malta summit ends Cold War Thatcher beats off leadership rival Labour's union U-turn US forces oust General Noriega Brandenburg Gate re-opens Romania's 'first couple' executed</p>		<p>18 April: A joint Home Office/ Department of Trade &amp; Industry commissioned report from Price Waterhouse, <i>Options for privatizing the terrestrial television and radio transmission networks</i>, recommends a single company to own, operate and maintain transmitter sites 21 April: AIRC and RMB merge (Geoff Moffat resigns) 24 April: IBA awards first 4 incrementals (FTP; West London Radio; Sunset; Stirling Community Radio) May: Midland Radio merger June: IBA sets new ownership limits July: NERA report suggests auctioning local radio frequencies Aug: Ocean and Southern Sound merge Aug: AIRC and BBC row over radio audiences for split stations 1 Sept: Atlantic 252 launches Oct: LBC splits AM and FM 22 October: First incremental ILR station, Sunset Radio (Manchester) 16 Dec: Melody Radio wins London FM licence</p> <p>30 Dec: Nicholas Ridley announces MMC outcome in Commons Dec: Crown Communications sells out of Chiltern Radio George Russell, Chair of IBA Shirley Littler, IBA Director General Lord Chalfont, Chair of Shadow Radio Authority and re-states PSB commitments</p>
<b>1991</b>	<p>08 Jan One dead as train crashes into buffers 10 Jan Last ditch efforts to avoid Gulf War 12 Jan US Congress votes for war in Iraq 18 Jan Iraqi Scud missiles hit Israel 30 Jan US Marines killed at Al Khafji 22 Feb Bush threatens Iraq with land war 13 Feb US bombers strike civilians in Baghdad 26 Feb Iraqi troops flee Kuwait City 28 Feb Jubilation follows Gulf War ceasefire 14 Mar Birmingham Six freed after 16 years 23 Mar Tories launch 'citizen charter' 28 Mar Family anger at Hillsborough verdict 04 Apr Orkney 'abuse' children go home</p>		<p>RAu publishes ownership, programming, advertising, technical and engineering codes and Promise of Performance system starts 1 Jan: RAu goes live Feb: ITN and IRN merger talks May: SIBC only applicant for Shetland Islands licence June: 56 applications for first RSLs June: EMAP / Transworld issues begin Aug: East End Radio licence revoked July: INRI awarded to Showtime 11 Oct: INRI awarded to Classic FM Oct: RAu defines pop music and advertises INR2 PPL tribunal</p>

	<p>14 May Mandela's wife jailed for kidnaps</p> <p>18 May Sharman becomes first Briton in space</p> <p>04 Jun UK army spending to be cut</p> <p>13 Jun Yeltsin wins first Russian elections</p> <p>27 Jun Yugoslav troops move against Slovenia</p> <p>28 Jun Thatcher to retire from Commons</p> <p>09 Jul Bank collapse costs taxpayers millions</p> <p>14 Jul UK forces withdraw from Kurdish haven</p> <p>31 Jul Superpowers to cut nuclear warheads</p> <p>08 Aug Beirut hostage John McCarthy freed</p> <p>13 Aug Prince quits in museum design row</p> <p>19 Aug Hardliners stage coup against Gorbachev</p> <p>30 Oct Bush opens historic Mid East peace conference</p> <p>05 Nov Publisher Robert Maxwell dies at sea</p> <p>18 Nov Church envoy Waite freed in Beirut</p> <p>24 Nov Giant of rock dies</p> <p>05 Dec Maxwell business empire faces bankruptcy</p> <p>25 Dec Gorbachev resigns as Soviet Union breaks up</p>		<p>RAU awards 22 student / hospitals LRSLs and 178 RSLs</p> <p>Dec: Radio Cracker</p>
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**APPENDIX B**  
**IBA Radio Division**  
**Index**

<b>File Name</b>	<b>Ofcom Ref</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Comments</b>
IBA0001	R3002/2/1	Employment of Musicians	1972-75	Background to IBA negotiations and arrangements for implementing MU arrangement; List of station events
IBA0002	R3002/2/1	Employment of Musicians	1976	Nothing copied
IBA0003	R3002/2/1	Employment of Musicians	1977	Nothing copied
IBA0004	R3023	Song Plugging	1972-79	Payola and Shirtola,Jonathan King; Selling records and freebies; IBA letters to MDs
IBA0005	R103/2	RCC General - Vol. 1	1974-82	Internal memos on promotion of VHF and Sound Broadcasting of Parliament
IBA0006	R103/2	RCC General - Vol. 2	1979-82	Paper on Election Coverage (George Ffitch)
IBA0007	R103/2	RCC General - Vol. 3	1983-90	IBA comments on Cable White Paper; Programme exchange system; Implications of Morning TV
IBA0008	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1981	Audience research report re. Parliamentary Broadcasting; Confirmation of go-ahead for split frequency experiments
IBA0009	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1982	IBA Position Paper on LRWP; ILR Current Financial Performance; Issues relating to political/economic climate (Cold War)
IBA0010	R1003/3	Prix Italia	1977-90	Nothing copied
IBA0011	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1980-81	Dialogue regarding extension of ILR contracts to 12 years; Stations lobbying for split frequency trials
IBA0012	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1979	Notes on 'London 3'; ILR Expansion meeting with LRWP and 'equal' rate of development with BBC (press release)
IBA0013	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1979	Nothing copied
IBA0014	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1978	ToR between HO and IBA; JT Paper on development of car radios; Comment on BBC vs. ILR 'publicity' machine & RT
IBA0015	R203/1	Authority Reports on Companies	1986	Regulation in action - detailed IBA station monitoring of programming and financial matters (example Wyvern attached)
IBA0016	R203/1	Authority Reports on Companies	1986-87	Regulation in action - detailed station monitoring of programming and financial matters (GWR/Clyde/Moray Firth/LBC-IRN)
IBA0017	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1972-77	Detailed info on build up to launch of ILR and discussion over Sound Broadcasting Bill
IBA0018	R3001	Home Office (Ministry of P & T)	1971	Contains 'off the record' info at IBA/ITA; Discussion over finances of ILR (Pragnell ITA); Full copy of White Paper
IBA0019	R3045	Green Paper on Radio	1987-88	Responses from stations about Govt's plans inc. AIRC and IBA
IBA0020	R3045	Green Paper on Radio	1987	The IBA's view - Future of UK Independent Radio (publication); More responses to GP and validity of BRU
IBA0021	R3045	Green Paper on Radio	1987	Bundle of US papers on FCC problems with deregulation; Confidential IBA memo on Engineering; Break-up of AIRC
IBA0022	R3045	Green Paper on Radio	1985-87	Big file - builds picture of change; Confidential papers from IBA on what it could have done better in ILR development
IBA0023	R3045	Green Paper on Radio	1987-89	Post GP issues and transition arrangements for new Authority / ILR stations; Hurd vs. Thompson in the Media
IBA0024	R3045	Radio Authority	1988-90	Legislative changes from IBA to RAU - IBA concerns over 'losing their status'; Paper on ownership rules
IBA0025	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1989	105-108 frequency planning; Paper - Towards a Radio Authority with draft plans/costs/staffing etc.
IBA0026	R3043	Data Programs on ILR	1983-86	Charts development of RDS/SCR and competition with BBC to innovate
IBA0027	R3041/1	Independent National Radio		Memo re. moving towards a 'leaner' ILR; IBA/LAC Minutes discussing value of audience research / JICRAR
IBA0028	R3040	Pirate Radio	1988	Nothing copied - letters from listeners and IBA letters to Dti lobbying for Investigative Officer
IBA0029	R3040	Pirate Radio	1989-90	Nothing copied (note that pirates appeared to have become a big problem for IBA and Stations...sign of the times?)
IBA0030	R3040	Pirate Radio	1989	Nothing copied (includes Paper on Hurd's announcement on Pirate Radio)
IBA0031	R3040	Pirate Radio	1985-88	Emergence of Laser 558 - Times suggesting 5M listeners; Letters from stations/IBA re. legal process to get rid of Laser
IBA0032	R3041/1	Independent National Radio	1984-87	IBA Information Paper following Heathrow Conference; INR Business Plan draft

IBA0033	R3041/1	Independent National Radio	1981-83	IBA Info Paper on Radio Development; Internal memo recapping INR issues; Ad spend projections
IBA0034	R5003/1	Traffic Reports	1979-90	IBA paper on Road Signs Experiment
IBA0035	R5003/2	Traffic Reports	1975-85	IBA Paper on Air Traffic Control monitoring following Heathrow Hijack
IBA0036	R5003/1	Traffic Reports	1978	Examples of discussion on ARI/Carfax innovation
IBA0037	R5003/1	Traffic Reports		Nothing copied
IBA0038	R4013	Local Radio Workshop	1982-83	Examples of correspondence between LRW and IBA
IBA0039	R4051	Radio Programme Journals	1973-76	Build up of correspondence re. radio listings in TV Times/ launch of Radio Guide (TS heavily involved)
IBA0040	R4051	Radio Programme Journals	1976-80	Failure of Radio Guide; Other promotional vehicles; IBA Paper to PCs suggesting how to improve programme publicity
IBA0041	R4007	Radio Parties / Anniversaries	1975	Nothing copied
IBA0042	R4007	Radio Parties / Anniversaries	1973-78	Guest list for 5 year celebration of ILR (see ITC cuttings which has a supplement on this)
IBA0043	R011	Public Relations - IBA Yearbooks	1982-83	IBA 10th Anniversary Dinner - see ITC Cuttings for more info and summary of speeches
IBA0044	4010/1	Public Relations - IBA Yearbooks	1978-1983	Nothing Copied - draft text for yearbooks (get copies and check photo copyright rules)
IBA0045	R4010/1	Public Relations - IBA Yearbooks	1983-87	Nothing copied
IBA0046	R4013	Local Radio Workshop	1975-81	Correspondence between LRW and IBA (examples of lobbying)
IBA0047	R4007	Radio Stations - opening dates	1973-80	Evidence of engineering problems; official start dates prior to launch; Socio-economic climate; IBA Code of Practice 'test'
IBA0048	R4007	Radio Stations - opening dates	1980-1990	Copy of test transmission scripts for clearance; IBA's on-air requirements appear strict
IBA0049	R4007	General Reports (misfiled...)		ILR advertising rules; Parliament Experiment debrief, 1977 Speech Programming Consultation; Sport/disabled on ILR
IBA0050	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1990	RAU Paper (David Vick) Licensing procedures and priorities
IBA0051	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1990	Letter referring to 'Internal Diversity'?
IBA0052	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1990	Internal memo discussing issues ILR vs. INR; 3 words to describe RAU and their values
IBA0053	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1990	IBA Press Release 'Priorities and possible locations for licences'; Minutes of Shadow Authority; RSL Licensing Paper
IBA0054	R3045/2	Radio Authority	1990	Discusses 'Robin Hood' system of financing; ILR Bloopers!
IBA0055	R4003	Articles, Interviews, Photographs	1973-1979	Efforts made by ILR to get into programming listings
IBA0056	R4002/3	Articles, Interviews, Photographs	1980-83	ILR's tenth anniversary
IBA0057	R4002/3	Freesheets	1983-87	ILR's involvement in free newspapers during economic difficulty - view of IBA and Newspaper Society
IBA0058	R3043	Data Programs on ILR	1986-89	Nothing copied (see IBA0026)
IBA0059	R3043/1	Teletext	1984-90	Nothing copied
IBA0060	R3044	Community Radio	1982-85	Discussions on plans / pressure to legalise Community Radio; Backlash from ILR stations; IBA Paper on CR strategy
IBA0061	R3044	Community Radio	1982-85	IBA Paper on CR; Report 'ILR: A Well-Proven Community Service'
IBA0062	R3044	Community Radio	1985-86	Viability of CR and impact on ILR; Memo & timetable; IBA Paper 'CR and Split Frequency Experiments'; Leon Brittain letter
IBA0063	R3044	Community Radio	1986-88	SIBC correspondence; Discussions over fair regulation of CR; Technical implications (IBA transmission costs...)
IBA0064	R3044	Community Radio	1988-89	Nothing copied (applications from the public)
IBA0065	R3044	Community Radio	1989-90	Nothing copied (applications from the public)
IBA0066	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1978-79	Letters of praise/complaint; Examples of challenges for presenter (and listener) in talk(back) format
IBA0067	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1980-81	Complaints and 'sign of the times'
IBA0068	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1982-83	Format changes; Falklands War coverage; Gallup Research; IBA 'Round Up of London' Paper
IBA0069	R5101	LBC - Programmes General		

IBA0070	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1974-77	Letter from Mary Whitehouse complaining about content; listener letters of praise and complaint
IBA0071	R5101/2	LBC - Nightline		LBC programme schedules
IBA0072	R5101/2	LBC - Nightline		Nothing copied
IBA0073	R5101/2	LBC - Schedules	1973-80	Confidential IBA memos on how to save Centre; Complaints about its demise
IBA0074	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1989	Script of Harold Wilson's 'Welcome' on first day of LBC
IBA0075	R5127	Centre Radio - Programmes	1981	New phenomenon of the Phone-in - communication between IBA and Ron Onions
IBA0076	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1973-75	Discussion between IBA and LBC on association with Gay Pride Week
IBA0077	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1977-78	IBA Paper on Personal and Sex Counselling on ILR (triggered as a result)
IBA0078	R5101	LBC - Programmes General	1976-77	Nothing copied
IBA0079	R5100/3	Capital Radio - Open Line	1973	Updated IBA / RCC Paper on prizes; Letters to MD regarding offers of gifts; internal memo on audit of comps.
IBA0080	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1973-75	IBA Paper discussing competitions
IBA0081	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1976	IBA Paper-Prize Limits in Competitions (why was IBA strict?)
IBA0082	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1976-77	Nothing copied
IBA0083	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1977	Nothing copied
IBA0084	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1981-85	Letter to MDs regarding use of British material
IBA0085	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1985	IBA letter to MDs re. prize limits
IBA0086	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1978-80	Nothing copied
IBA0087	R5002	Foreign Quota	1973	Nothing copied
IBA0088	R5001	Programmes with Prizes		Network Committee Meeting - minutes
IBA0089	R5001	Programmes with Prizes	1977-79	Correspondence relating to IRN covering sports events (to compete with BBC)
IBA0090	R7100/3/2	LBC / IRN	1980-81	Nothing copied
IBA0091	R7100/3/2	LBC / IRN	1981	First applications for London licences
IBA0092	R7101/2	LBC / IRN	1972	Lists of questions from the IBA for applicants
IBA0093	R7101/2	London - General - Applications	1972-73	First contract for Capital Radio
IBA0094	R7101/2	London - General - Applications	1973	Notes from the IBA on crisis in Capital newsroom due to economic recession
IBA0095	R7101/3	Capital Radio contract	1974	Nothing copied
IBA0096	R7101/3	Capital Radio contract	1975	Nothing copied
IBA0097	R7101/3	Capital Radio contract	1976	Nothing copied
IBA0098	R7101/3	Capital Radio contract		Nothing copied
IBA0099	R7003/3	Incremental Contracts		Nothing copied
IBA0100	R7003/3	ILR Contract Advertisement		Nothing copied
IBA0101	R7003/3	ILR Contract Advertisement		Nothing copied
IBA0102	R7003/3	ILR Contract Advertisement		Nothing copied
IBA0103	R7003/3	Contract procedure and draft contract		Nothing copied
IBA0104	R7003/3	Contract procedure and draft contract		Nothing copied
IBA0105	R7003/3	Contract procedure and draft contract		Nothing copied
IBA0106	R4	AIRC	1979-81	Expansion report; Terry Smith to TS suggesting Prog Sharing; EBU subscriptions and benefits; dissatisfaction with AIRC

IBA0107	R4	AIRC	1981	Letter to Lord Thomson re. breakfast TV concerns; Donald Brooks letter re. primary rental increase;
IBA0108	R4	AIRC	1982	AIRC report 'ILR - Current Viability and Future Development'; Terry Smith's letter asking to waive cost of living increases
IBA0109	R4	AIRC	1983	AIRC newsletter; increased rental charges; IBA 'note for the record' on how to improve IBA/ILR relationship
IBA0110	R4	AIRC	1973-74	Issues .re closedown on ITV and X-promotion; TV Times listings; IBA Paper 'reduction in rentals' ; MU negotiations
IBA0111	R4	AIRC	1985-87	Rental deferrals; IBA cutting expenditure; Lord Thomson letter lobbying Hailsham for PPL decision; Music TV
IBA0112	R2/5	People Met	1972-75	Nothing copied
IBA0113	R4	AIRC	1985	Very important file - post-Heathrow correspondence with the IBA (see also Richard Findlay's personal file)
IBA0114	R4	Marketing - General	1974-5	Nothing copied
IBA0115	R4	ITV Programme Companies	1964	Tony has copy
IBA0116	R4	AIRC	1984	The build up to the Heathrow Conference
IBA0117	R4	John Thompson	1973-78	variety of JT correspondence. Most useful for the Musicians' Union draft contract
IBA0118	R4	AIRC	1987-88	Notes of meetings between AIRC and Douglas Hurd. Confirmation of secondary rental reduction to zero in 1988

APPENDIX C				
Independent Broadcasting Journals 1974-1984				
Index				
Issue Number/Date	Article	Author	Subject/Theme	Notes
1: August 1974, pg.8	ILR – The Pattern for the Future	James Gordon	Address to the LRA	
2: November 1974, pg. 2	Accountability or responsibility – or both?	Mary Warnock	IBA's relationship with parliament	
pg.7	Phone-in programmes on Independent Radio	Tony Stoller	Speech programming	
pg. 21	Between Two Ears-ILR's solid sound	Pat Hawker	Engineering	
3: February 1975, pg.6	News Across the Mersey	Terry Smith, Radio City	Importance of local news/info	
pg. 11	Ascertainment	Neville Clarke	IBA and gauging public opinion (and role of regional officers)	
pg. 25	Radio that doesn't sound like radio	Pat Hawker	VHF/FM developments	
4: May 1975	IBA Lectures (Television only)			
5: August 1975, pg. 10	The Parliamentary Broadcasting Experiment	Ed Boyle/Mike Barton	Review of the month long experiment (from technical and journalistic angle)	Link to innovation
pg. 18	Who is Listening?	Tony Stoller	ILR Audience survey reports	
6: November 1975, pg. 15	Who owns Independent Local Radio?	John Thompson	Local control and diversity of ownership	Ownership - also mentions ILR based on ITV model
pg. 22	Getting it together in Swansea	Charles Braham, MD Swansea Sound	Challenges of ILR	
7: March 1976, pg. 14	Small mention of ILR winning awards			
pg. 15	The Shape of Independent Local Radio (presented at IBA lectures)	John Thompson	Outlines issues such as parliamentary debate; importance of localness and diversity; entertainment within the programming model	Useful in explaining the IBA's view of a PSB model for commercial radio
pg. 22	ILR at Work	Ian Chapman, Chairman of Radio Clyde	Competition and programme balance, Value of non-stop programming	Argues that ILR is more public service than R1; Useful to contrast to Barmard's view that ILR missed the pop market gap left by the <sup>public</sup> service
8: June 1976, pg. 19	Consultation on Popular Programming in ILR	Discussion notes based on consultation conference	News; Music; Information in programming	Useful articles from Broadcasters

Back page	<b>Colour map of the 19 stations</b>				Can be scanned for pictorial use
9: September 1976	<b>Sound Advice</b>	Frank Pardoe (Chair of Birmingham Local Advisory Committee)	Relationship between LAC, broadcaster and listener		
10: December 1976, pg. 4	<b>Public responsibility and private initiative</b>	Lady Plowden	Mostly a TV-related article but 2 useful paragraphs: A Revolution in Social Habits; Effect on the Young	Society at the time	
pg. 9	<b>Here is the (Motoring) News</b>	Tony Stoller	Reflects on importance of radio travel news including ARI	Innovation	
11: April 1977, pg. 12	<b>Opinion-TV Programmes: The IBA's role</b>	Jeremy Isaacs-Thames TV's Director of Programmes	Half way down pg. 13 outlines the case for a more relaxed IBA and challenges their constant scrutiny of programme detail	V. useful – one of the few articles giving a more critical approach to the IBA's role	
pg. 24	<b>As Millions Hear</b>	Tony Stoller	Audience research and ILR demographics (nationwide)		
12: July 1977	<b>The Annan Report-The Authority's comments</b>			Useful to support Lobbying theme?	
13: September 1977, pg. 7	<b>The Best News We've Got (IBA Lecture)</b>	Marshall Stewart, former Chief Editor LBC/IRN	See: Pg 8, para: The Changing Face of Radio News		
14: December 1977, pg. 9	<b>The Sound of Parliament</b>	Michael Starks	Review of broadcasting of parliament	ILR Innovation	
15: March 1978, pg. 19	<b>The Active Involvement of the Audience</b>	Thompson/Stoller	Audiences	Good examples of ILR linking with community, examples of the ways ILR used programming for differentiation	
16: May 1978, pg. 9	<b>Responding to Local Crisis</b>	David Vick	Community programming + political climate and importance of the radio	Great examples of	
pg. 12	<b>Tomorrow's Broadcasting: Radio</b>	John Whitney		radio's relationship during strikes – sign of the times	
17: August 1978, pg. 2	<b>White Paper on Broadcasting-IBA's response</b>		Short paragraph broadly supporting Paper	Useful para: 'The 1980s' which speculates on the future of the industry; Also challenges the state of educational programming	
pg. 15	<b>Different Ways To Help</b>	Charles Mayo	Education Programming (examples of radio during Adult Literacy Project)	Political/Legislation	
18: November 1978, pg. 6	<b>Independent Local Radio: Five Years Old and Still Growing</b>		General summary	Good publicity story	
19: March 1979, pg. 10	<b>Broadcasting and Public Opinion in Race Relations</b>	Peter Thornton (Editor of IRN)	Phone-in programmes/LBC type format: Diversity	Mentions Brian Hayes and useful to compare with the Ofcom file on his show	
pg. 12	<b>Progress with ILR expansion</b>		Announcement of 9 new licences	Publicity article	
20: June 1979, pg. 10	<b>ILR Public Meetings</b>	Mike Johnson	PSB model of programming	Great detail into the scale of the public meetings and what they stood for	
21: August 1979, pg. 10	<b>Moving Ahead with ILR</b>		Licence Awards	Publicity article	

22: January 1980	<b>TV ONLY (New ITV Contracts Edition)</b>					
23: April 1980, pg. 12	<b>Independent Local Radio: Looking Ahead</b>	John Thompson (lecture)		Changing listener habits; technology		Discusses radio as 'art' or 'utility'
24: June 1980, pg. 2	<b>Local Radio and the Listener</b>	Mary Warnock		PSB model – outlines 'Inform to Educate', community spirit and friendship as the most important factors in success of local radio		She is very much in favour of differentiated programmes and dismisses formatting
25: August 1980, pg. 7	<b>Establishing a Radio Station</b>	John Bradford (talk given to LRA)		Challenges of ILR in practice		Useful case study
26: November 1980, pg. 3	<b>The Structure of ILR in a Television Age</b>	James Gordon		Competition		Useful for supporting networking/programme syndication
				Development		
				Networking / Associate station concept		
27: January 1981, pg. 8	<b>Broadcasting Act 1980</b>			Summary of Act and changes made - legislation		
28: March 1981, pg. 2	<b>Broadcasting Circles: The Community and ILR</b>	John Bradford		Community		Cultural aspects of radio listening
pg. 10	<b>The Public Impression of ILR</b>	David Vick		Audience Research findings		
pg. 15	<b>Public Service Broadcasting</b>	John Thompson		PSB and ILR –definition		
pg. 23	<b>The Independent Broadcasting System</b>			IBA promotional advert		
29: June 1981, pg. 14	<b>Health Education and the Media</b>	Lord Thomson of Monifieth		Health campaigns on ILR		
30: November 1981, pg. 11	<b>Today's radio scene in Europe</b>	Antony Dean (EBU Director of Radio)		European Radio Model		
31: March 1982, pg. 2	<b>Local People, Local Media</b>	John Thompson		Local programming		Community, Newspapers and ILR / freesheets
32: June 1982, pg. 13	<b>Broadcasting in Australia</b>	Susan Elliott		Australian Model		
pg. 16	<b>The Sound Broadcasting of Parliament</b>	James M. Cross		Audience Research		
pg. 18	<b>Public Consultation: What's the Point?</b>	Mike Johnson (SRO)		LACs / Public Meetings		
33: October 1982, pg. 8	<b>The Use of Radio-- a Research Perspective</b>	David Vick		Use of audience research by IBA to understand views		
34: February 1983	<b>Religious Broadcasting Now – Supplement</b>					
pg. 9	<b>LBC &amp; London's Health</b>	Keith Belcher				
35: May 1983 pg. 7	<b>Radio: A Medium for the Future</b>	John Thompson				
	<b>IBA Lectures 1983 (supplement)</b>			Includes article from EBU President, Dr. A Scharf (ii)		

36: Sept 1983 pg. 2	IBA Annual Report (82/3)					
pg. 6	Radio Rules OK!	John Thompson	Extracts from 1983 Radio Festival			Discusses other media competition
37: Dec 1983	ILR 10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary – special supplement					
38: Feb 1984 pg. 13	'Helping Hands' ILR Christmas Charity appeal	Steve Perkins	Extracts from speeches Community policy			
39: June 1984 pg. 3	Sounds Educational	Angie Mason	Educational potential of ILR			
	IBA Lectures 1984 – Serving the Public		Mention of Diversity (iii); Local Radio (xii)			
40: Sept 1984 pg. 3	Recent Developments in ILR Programme Sharing	Felicity Wells	Programming			

## APPENDIX D

### ITC Press Cuttings Index

Box Ref	Contents	Date	Content
PC/ITC/301	BBC Radio	1954-69	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/302	BBC Radio	1970-71	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/303	BBC Radio	1972-73	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/304	BBC Radio	1974-75	Includes analyses of launch of ILR and public support for competition
PC/ITC/305	Radio (General)	1984-85	Criticisms of regulator; benefits of choice; solutions and US models
PC/ITC/306	Radio (General)	1986-88	AIRC plan for Authority; difficult financial period; Hurd and the new Bill
PC/ITC/307	Radio (General)	1989-95	Futuristic articles (10 years time - Nick Higham); positive changes
PC/ITC/401	BBC Radio	1976	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/402	BBC Radio	1977	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/403	BBC Radio	1978-79	Broadcasting and the Tories article in Radio Month
PC/ITC/404	BBC Radio	1980-81	BBC on how to fight commercial radio; Needletime issues for BBC - compared to ILR
PC/ITC/405	BBC Radio	1982-1984	Media view on birth of pop and societal changes; Unfair needletime for BBC; R1 increases hours
PC/ITC/406	BBC Radio	1985-86	Media comment on Peacock Committee and Green Paper; Playlisting returns at BBC
PC/ITC/501	BBC Radio	1987-88	Death' of Radio 1; Women in Radio (Janice Long); Music policy/formats
PC/ITC/502	BBC Radio	1988-89	Local BBC v ILR; Best local DJs; Poaching talent; Future analysis leading up to BA
PC/ITC/503	BBC Radio	1990-91	Hope for competition for BBC R4 from INR
PC/ITC/504	BBC Radio	1991-92	Music radio; success of AM split; complaints over BBC cross-promotion
PC/ITC/505	BBC Radio	1992-93	Effect of Classic FM on R3
PC/ITC/506	BBC Radio	1993	Crisis at R1; Branson and trading wavelengths; Teletext and RDS
PC/ITC/507	BBC Radio	1993	DLT's resignation; Start of Bannister era
PC/ITC/508	BBC Radio	1993-94	5 Live launch; Rau withdraw support for privatised R1
PC/ITC/601	BBC Local Radio	1964-75	Tony has copy

PC/ITC/602	BBC Local Radio	1976-78	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/603	BBC Local Radio	1978-79	BBC Scotland's failure vs. Radio Clyde; Programming issues
PC/ITC/604	BBC Local Radio	1980-81	BBC should get out of local radio - Philip Whitehead MP
PC/ITC/605	BBC Local Radio	1982-85	Comparison between BBCLR and ILR - media starting to take ILR seriously
PC/ITC/606	BBC Local Radio	1986-88	AIRC outburst (and Radio Now newsletter - a lobbying mechanism)
PC/ITC/607	BBC Local Radio	1988-90	ILR training for journalists; Allocation of frequencies for INR
PC/ITC/608	BBC Local Radio	1990-94	BBC on-air promotions; battle of music vs. speech; Economic feasibility of private R1 by Rau
PC/ITC/701	ILR	1957-68	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/702	ILR	1969	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/703	ILR	1970	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/704	ILR	1970	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/705	ILR	1971	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/706	ILR	1972	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/707	ILR	1971	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/708	ILR	1971	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/801	ILR	1972	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/802	ILR	1972	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/803	ILR	1973	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/804	ILR	1973	Tony has copy
PC/ITC/805	ILR		Various ILR community / promotional magazines
PC/ITC/901	ILR	1974	General theme of problems with ILR and slow progress (change in Govt.); Phone-ins and Politicians
PC/ITC/902	ILR	1974	State of commercial radio in relation to the economy
PC/ITC/903	ILR	1975	Needle time issues; why Independent not Commercial radio?
PC/ITC/904	ILR	1976	News / Journalists' issues / unrest; Gillian on why ILR has failed to reach a new audience
PC/ITC/905	ILR	1977	Impact of public sector strikes; Upturn in audience figures (and perception); record promotions
PC/ITC/906	ILR	1978	ILR 'in the black'; Media calling for national IR; Case study on IRN
PC/ITC/907	ILR	1978-79	5 years of IRN; 5 years of ILR with James Gordon; Timeline; GR querying Secondary Rental
PC/ITC/908	ILR	1979	Unions and pay increases; Whitelaw-15 new stations; Lobbying to end Needletime; finances improve
PC/ITC/1001	ILR	1980	PPL trial, NBS

PC/ITC/1002	ILR	1980	Secondary Rental
PC/ITC/1003	ILR	1981	Audiences; TS column
PC/ITC/1004	ILR	1982	Breakfast TV; IRN & Falklands; Prog Sharing
PC/ITC/1005	ILR	1983	Revenue dips; Prog Sharing; Readvertisement of Capital licence and challengers
PC/ITC/1006	ILR	1984	Audience figures; lower rentals plea; benefits of networking
PC/ITC/1101	ILR	1984	Criticisms of IBA; AIRC&Media argue for open market; Freesheets issue; Merger-Cardiff/Gwent
PC/ITC/1102	ILR	1985	Lobbying for a 'lighter touch'; 'Secret' meeting at Kent; economic struggles
PC/ITC/1103	ILR	1986	ILR changes name to IR; Rental reductions; need for new regulator; Media Week review of the year
PC/ITC/1104	ILR	1987	News of Australians 'moving in'; Virgin empire; News of buoyant advertising market; Defection of AIRC
PC/ITC/1105	ILR	1987-88	Increase in daytime audiences; Best year for ILR revenue; Syndication; AM vs. FM; light regulation
PC/ITC/1106	ILR	1988	Changing times - mergers/new investors/share increase; BRU findings; Rental waived; Incrementals
PC/ITC/1107	ILR	1989	Mergers/new investors etc. Launch of Atlantic 252; RMB/AIRC integration
PC/ITC/1201	ILR	1989	General theme of ILR revitalised and succeeding
PC/ITC/1202	ILR	1989-90	ITN moves into Radio News; Community vs. Commercial; Rau and changes to Tory policy
PC/ITC/1203	ILR	1990	Interest grows in network opportunity; Radio and the recession; Rau-the 'format police'
PC/ITC/1204	ILR	1990	Transworld/YRN merger; IRN redundancies; new S & P regulations increase prizes
PC/ITC/1205	ILR	1991-92	FEM FM; ILR turns 18; New rates set by Music Industry
PC/ITC/1206	ILR	1992-94	FM/AM problems over separate permits; Rights and wrongs of PPL and tribunal result
PC/ITC/1501	Capital & LBC	1982	Jo Sandilands profile/appointment; Phone-ins and PSB; LBC victory during coverage of Falklands
PC/ITC/1502	Capital & LBC	1983	Several articles on phone-ins and LBC programming to help UK unemployment situation
PC/ITC/1503	Capital & LBC	1984	Capital repositioning to attract younger demographic; LBC Board problems
PC/ITC/1504	Capital & LBC	1985	Suspension of Capital drama; GR profile of Brian Hayes; LBC strike and redundancies at Capital
PC/ITC/1505	Capital & LBC	1986	GR column outlining 'quality' programming
PC/ITC/1506	Capital & LBC	1987	Capital flotation / share price - range of media coverage and 'ILR's coming of age'
PC/ITC/1507	Capital & LBC	1988	Move to split frequencies; Rise in share prices
PC/ITC/1508	Capital & LBC	1989	Charting continued fast rise in Capital share price; Launch of LBC two-station format
PC/ITC/1601	Capital & LBC	1989	Success of Gold stations; LBC poll on nation's lifestyle; critics review of programming
PC/ITC/1602	Capital & LBC	1991	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/1603	Capital & LBC	1991-94	Shareholder stakes; LBC's financial troubles/receivership and Rau lifeline; Merger of Devon stations

PC/ITC/1701	ILR Contracts	1980	Tribunal in favour of ILR over needletime; IBA applications go public; issues with breakpoint clause
PC/ITC/1702	ILR Contracts	1981	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/1703	ILR Contracts	1981	Rolling contracts - the disadvantages of readvertising
PC/ITC/1704	ILR Contracts	1982	IBA Press Releases for readvertisement of LBC
PC/ITC/1705	ILR Contracts	1983	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/1706	ILR Contracts	1984-85	Media coverage of Centre collapse and Victory's licence expiry - strong headlines
PC/ITC/1901	2CR	1979-90	General story charting history of station
PC/ITC/1902	Beacon	1984-91	
PC/ITC/1903	Bradford/Pennine	1974-75	
PC/ITC/1904	Buzz Radio	1989-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/1905	BCR	1989-91	Incremental targeting ethnic communities and fine for breach of POP
PC/ITC/1906	BRMB	1973-74	General launch editorial. Includes Birmingham bombings coverage and article on phone-in bias
PC/ITC/1907	BRMB Contract	1975-81	Development of studio quality 2-way link between IRN and BRMB; Economic revival (ref. Andrew Marr)
PC/ITC/1908	BRMB	1982-85	New investors; Reviews of 'quality' programming
PC/ITC/1909	BRMB	1986-90	Split frequencies; Flotation
PC/ITC/2001	Centre Radio	1980-84	ILR station which went bust - lots of coverage of Lady Barnett; Criticism of IBA
PC/ITC/2002	FTP Bristol	1989-91	Useful case study of former pirate being legalised (and ethnic diversity programming) - became Galaxy
PC/ITC/2003	Chiltern Radio	1980-91	Info on investments and mergers (became HOT FM network)
PC/ITC/2004	CBC	1979-81	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2005	CBC	1982-85	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2006	GWR	1985-92	General story of GWR's rise from local station to multi-national empire and shareholdings
PC/ITC/2007	Downtown	1975-90	Media reviews of programming - some articles on difficulties with political / news broadcasting in NI
PC/ITC/2008	Centre Sound	1989	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2009	Choice	1989-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2010	CNFM	1988-90	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2011	County Sound	1982-90	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2012	Crawl	1989	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2013	East End Radio	1990	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2014	Essex Radio	1980	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2015	Fox	1988-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2016	Gwent	1982-85	Nothing Copied

PC/ITC/2017	Hereward	1979	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2018	Invicta	1984-88	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2101	Kiss FM	1989-90	Kiss becomes legalised - good example of high investment in branding, leading to increased S & P
PC/ITC/2102	Leicester Sound	1984-87	Tells the story of what happened after closure of Centre. Read in conjunction with 2001
PC/ITC/2103	Jazz Radio	1989-93	First incremental station - reviews (and complaints) of its music policy
PC/ITC/2104	KFM	1989-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2105	KCBC	1990-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2106	Isle of Wight	1989-90	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2107	Invicta Sound	1989-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2108	Mercia Sound	1979-90	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2109	Metro Radio	1977-92	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2110	Metro Radio	1974-76	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2111	Mellow	1990-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2112	Marcher Sound	1981	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2113	Greek Radio	1989-91	Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2305	Radio Clyde	1972-74	Coverage of launch of Clyde (appears to be a genuine positive slant by the press)
PC/ITC/2306	Radio Clyde	1975-78	Mixed file highlighting reason behind Clyde's early successes - profiles of Jimmy Gordon
PC/ITC/2307	Radio Clyde	1979-83	Includes drama accolades and stock market flotation - lots of positive editorial
PC/ITC/2308	Radio Clyde	1984-92	Includes editorial on why Clyde has been successful, despite economy and other ILR gloom
PC/ITC/2401	Red Rose	1987	Creation of Red Rose Group of Companies
PC/ITC/2402			
PC/ITC/2403	Orwell		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2404	Mercury		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2405	Kennet		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2406	Harmony		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2407	Hallam		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2408	Hallam		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2409	Hallam		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2410	Devonair		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2411	Forth		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2412	Forth		Nothing Copied
PC/ITC/2413	Forth		Nothing Copied

PC/ITC/2501	Red Rose	1988-89	Miss World takeover;
PC/ITC/2502	Radio Trent	1974-81	Hostile bids; Owen Oyston; Takeover of Radio Radio
PC/ITC/2503	Radio Victory	1975-1986	General story from launch to dismissal of Denis Maitland (including Journals sit-in)
PC/ITC/2504	Radio West	1980-85	Full story of Victory's rise and fall, including 'sacrificial lamb' remark about IBA
PC/ITC/2906	INR	1983-1991	General story of the station, including build-up to link between Bristol and Swindon
PC/ITC/2907	INR	1991	Detailed file, including speech-based and 'non pop' format proposals, bidders and high price contract
			Extensive Showtime coverage- failure to meet finance deadlines; re-emergence of Classic FM; INR2

## Appendix E

Draft interview questionnaire

### **History and development**

Tell me about your role within the IBA, especially the Head of Radio Programming 1977–1979? What were your key responsibilities, targets and objectives?

How appropriate to you feel the early model of commercial radio was, given the socio-political climate at the time? How did the Conservative manifesto ideal live up to expectations?

What was different about the introduction of UK commercial radio, compared to other countries, eg. US, America.

How influential was the creation of a dual regulator (radio and television) upon policy making?

How would you describe the mood during the early period of ILR (73-77)? What are the significant points within that timeline?

### **Regulation in action**

A colleague of yours developed the phrase ‘Meaningful Speech’ which seems to suggest a need to define / justify the balance of programming that ILR had to offer. What do you think was meant by ‘meaningful speech’?

From the regulator’s standpoint, how restrictive / flexible was the desire for diverse programming? What were the opportunities and constraints for radio stations?

ILR appears to have been launched amid a turbulent backdrop of political, economic and social change. To what extent did these factors impact upon the IBA’s regulation team, in terms of policy planning, reacting to change, morale etc.

How did the reputation and ‘value’ associated with the heritage of the BBC affect the direction of ILR?

### **Relationships**

Tell me about your role as Director of AIRC - how would you describe the state of the commercial industry at this point (79-81) from the industry’s point of view? What steps did you / the AIRC take to drive the industry forward?

There appears to be a tense relationship between stations and the regulator at times. Given your unique position as a regulator, turned station director, what were the main areas of concern for a) the regulator; b) the sector

During your time at 210, compared to your earlier career, how far had commercial radio evolved? What was the industry like for those working in it at that time?

**Catalysts for change** (*I am aware that you were not involved directly in the industry during the mid/late 1980s so I have asked these partly based on anecdotal research as*

*well as tapping into your own research findings, if that is appropriate [I will of course need to quote you from your book too] )*

From your own research into the period, how critical do you regard the Heathrow Conference in bringing about change?

What might have been a more 'successful' regulatory model to take commercial radio into the 1990s?

**General**

What would you regard as your greatest achievements within the period, both in your role within regulation and radio station?

In what way was the commercial radio model significantly different from the BBC offering (during the period 1973-1990). What made it unique? (Was it, as some authors have suggested, PSB but with adverts?)

Were there missed opportunities?

What do you think makes *good* commercial radio? Then and now...

**AOB** (anything that you would like to add that is relevant)

## APPENDIX F

### AIRC CONFERENCE – 23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 1984 PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

#### **LBC**

George Ffitch, Managing Director  
Bill Coppen-Gardner, General Manager

#### **Capital Radio**

Nigel Walmsley, Managing Director  
Jan Reid, Press Officer

#### **BRMB Radio**

John Parkinson, Chairman  
David Pinnell, Managing Director

#### **Piccadilly Radio**

Norman Quick, Chairman  
Neil Robinson, Managing Director

#### **Swansea Sound**

#### **Radio Hallam**

Michael Mallett, Chairman  
Bill MacDonald, Managing Director

#### **Radio Forth**

L.M. Harper-Gow, Chairman  
Richard Findlay, Managing Director

#### **Plymouth Sound**

Bob Hussell, Managing Director  
Stanley Edgcumbe, Director

#### **Radio Tees**

Jeff Blood, Managing Director  
David Bowles, Sales Director

### **Radio Trent**

Frank Doherty, Chairman  
Ron Coles, Managing Director

### **Pennine Radio**

Sir Richard Denby, Chairman  
Mike Boothroyd, Managing Director  
K. Marsden, Vice-Chairman

### **Radio Victory**

Michael Poland, Chairman  
Bruce Jenkins, Managing Director

### **Suffolk Group Radio**

David Cocks, Managing Director

### **Radio 210**

Tony Stoller, Managing Director  
Max Lawson, Company Secretary and Financial Controller

### **Downtown Radio**

### **Beacon Radio**

T.A. Henn, Chairman  
Bob Pierson, Deputy Managing Director

### **CBC**

Jeff Winston, Chief Executive

### **Mercia Sound**

Ian Rufus, Managing Director  
Nick Rushbrooke, Sales Controller

### **Hereward Radio**

Patrick Sharman, Chairman  
Stewart Francis, Managing Director

### **Two Counties Radio**

David Porter, Managing Director

### **Radio Tay**

Allen R. Mackenzie, Managing Director

### **Severn Sound**

Eddie Vickers, Managing Director

Mark Davison, Vice-Chairman

### **DevonAir Radio**

Jim Gibbons, News Editor

### **Moray Firth Radio**

Thomas Prag, Managing Director

Tony Mollett, Director

### **NorthSound Radio**

Quentin Macfarlane, Managing Director

### **Radio Aire**

Dennis Maitland, Managing Director

### **Essex Radio**

David Keddie, Chairman

Eddie Blackwell, Managing Director

### **Radio West**

John Bradford, Managing Director

### **Chiltern Radio**

Colin Mason, Managing Director

### **West Sound**

John McCauley, Programme Controller

### **Wiltshire Radio**

Nicholas Tresilian, Chairman

Ralph Bernard, Managing Director

### **Radio Wyvern**

Sir John Cotterell, Chairman

Norman Bilton, Managing Director

### **Red Rose Radio**

David Maker, Managing Director  
Peter Salt, Sales & Marketing Director

### **County Sound**

Norman Cunningham, Chairman  
David Lucas, Managing Director

### **Gwent Area Broadcasting**

Joe Miller, Acting Managing Director  
Adrian Babbidge, Director

### **Marcher Sound**

### **Signal Radio**

Donald Brooks, Managing Director

### **Southern Sound**

Quintin Barry, Chairman  
Keith Belcher, Managing Director

### **Viking Radio**

Roger Brooks, Managing Director  
Dudley Ramsden, Director

Plus:

Brian West Director, AIRC  
Gillian Bond, P/A to Director