

# FREE Press

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## Better than the courts or the PCC

A LIBEL TRIBUNAL to provide faster and cheaper redress for people who consider they have been maligned in the media is being called for by the CPBF.

The tribunals would be an alternative to bringing long-drawn-out and costly High Court trials on the one hand, and fruitlessly complaining to the Press Complaints Commission on the other.

They would be modelled on Employment Tribunals, which deal expeditiously and cheaply with cases brought by employees who have been sacked or victimised.

The proposal was initially floated by the Parliamentary Committee considering the groundbreaking Defamation Bill, which is conducting a public consultation on the best ways to deal with complaints against the media. Respondents were asked to consider "types of formal court-based powers, informal resolution procedures or the creation of a libel tribunal."

In its submission to the committee, the CPBF said:

"People are generally less interested in money awarded by the courts than in the righting of a wrong and the restitution of their good names. The High Court is not the ideal place to settle such disputes. The alternative currently offered, as far as the press is concerned at least, is the Press Complaints Commission, but the PCC

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## New Communications Bill on the way

# HERE WE GO AGAIN

THE CPBF and others campaigning for more independent and better regulated media are gearing up for a crucial battle over the Tory-led government's plan to wipe out responsible regulation and hand more control of the media to big corporations.

The Government has opened consultation on a new Communications Bill that will have a major impact on the future of news (in print, online and on TV), self regulation of the press and on the BBC.

Launching the consultation, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt said: "Our ambition is to establish UK communications and media markets as amongst the most dynamic and successful in the world, with the review process culminating in a new communications framework by 2015."

He said the three key themes were growth, innovation and deregulation. The aim was "to reduce regulatory burdens and future-proof for the digital age."

"We want a communications framework that will drive growth and innovation, remove unnecessary burdens and

continue to protect consumers and the public." There will be a green paper late this year and a bill in 2013.

The CPBF is preparing its initial response for the June 30 deadline. The campaign's approach will also be the main topic of debate at the CPBF annual meeting on July 16.

● The CPBF annual meeting will also be debating whether to change the campaign's name to reflect the dramatic changes in the media landscape and the wider range of work it undertakes. Three new names are under consideration:

Campaign for Media Democracy  
Action for Media Democracy  
Open Up: Campaign for Media Democracy

The meeting is on Saturday July 16 from 10 am at the NUJ head office, 308 Gray's Inn Road, King's Cross, London WC1X 8DP. It is open to all CPBF members and supporters. Contact the office on [freepress@cpbf.org.uk](mailto:freepress@cpbf.org.uk) for details.

● The CPBF has a new mobile phone number that supporters can call at any time. The number is 07729 846146.

## KEEP NEWS LOCAL

JOURNALISTS on a group of weekly papers in north London have won back jobs in a series of strikes against the Tindle newspaper group. Industrial action is one of the tactics used by workers and campaigners against the devastation of the local press by companies whose response to the crisis in the industry is to cut jobs and editorial spending.

LOCAL MEDIA: THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT  
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ANDREW WILKINSON

## Libel reform

### From page 1

cannot offer any effective remedy. It is a creature of the owners of the national press whose fundamental remit is to minimise the damage caused by their excesses; its refusal to take action over the News of the World phone-hacking scandal is timely evidence of that.

"A new approach is badly needed and the Libel Tribunal could provide the solution. Deadlines would be tighter, costs would be limited and, most importantly, the Tribunal should have the power to order publications to print corrections or apologies."

This would fit with the CPBF's historic support for a statutory Right of Reply, under which publications would be

required to correct factual inaccuracies. Successive attempts to introduce this in Parliament have failed in the face of the difficulty of defining a fact, which can be more contentious than it seems. A Libel Tribunal, the CPBF said, could enforce the Right of Reply by ordering the publication of a correction or apology.

In addition, the Tribunal would cover all media, not just the press and its websites, which is the PCC's remit. And by cutting costs it would reduce the need for a further reform the CPBF would otherwise advocate: the provision of legal aid for individuals in libel cases.

The CPBF said the cost of libel trials was as big a problem as the state of the law. The processes favoured not so much the rich as the lawyers.

"Those with the advantage in defamation trials are not only corporations or the super-rich but those on contingency

fee arrangements. They have the financial muscle to force publishers to settle cases that may not otherwise succeed.

"We cannot see how any reform of defamation law and practice can be meaningful until restrictions are placed on the fees that lawyers can command."

The CPBF did call for legal aid for individual defendants, citing recent libel cases in which powerful companies or vested interests had brought "vindictive" actions against private individuals who had legitimately criticised them.

In addition, the CPBF said that the medium in which the offending material had been published should be automatically joined in the action, to end the victimisation involved.

In all, the Campaign welcomed the Defamation Bill as a positive step to reform the law, and put forward its suggestions in that spirit.

# Giggsgate could put media at risk

**T**HE MEDIA could lose their right to report statements made by MPs as a result of the confusion caused by the breach of High Court injunctions on Twitter.

The absolute privilege enjoyed by MPs, making them immune to legal action over remarks made in Parliament, might not extend to reports of their remarks, according to England's senior civil judge.

Master of the Rolls Lord Neuberger conducted a review of the issue of superinjunctions. Public comment on the issue has focused on the futility of injunctions that can be breached with apparent impunity on the internet, as with the ones taken out by footballer Ryan Giggs, but the implications for the media could be serious.

The Giggs superinjunction was breached by LibDem MP John Hemming,

and Lord Neuberger's report said that, while the MP enjoyed legal immunity, reporters who quoted him might not, if judges decided that the MP had breached an injunction deliberately to frustrate the courts.

Lord Neuberger said there was "no judicial decision" on whether a report of material "which intentionally had the effect of frustrating a court order would be in good faith and without malice". Such reports could still breach the injunction and so be in contempt of court.

The warning is paradoxical, coming at a time when the Defamation Bill looks set to extend journalists' protection from legal action.

It was notable during the flurry of tweets naming alleged injunction holders in May that the commercial press in England refrained from naming anybody.

**THE CPBF is the co-publisher of a booklet by the lively photographers' action group PHNAT – I'm a Photographer Not a Terrorist – that has waged a successful fight against the use of "anti-terror" laws to restrict photography on the streets.**

The booklet, *A Brief History*, tells how the photogs got together to resist the increasing interference by police and private security guards with both professional and amateur photographers taking pictures in public places.

They have organised "flashmobs", when dozens or even hundreds of them turn up at a sensitive location, such as the Metropolitan Police HQ at New Scotland Yard in London, and start snapping en

masse.

They have helped the NUJ and photographers' associations negotiate better treatment from police at public order events, but their greatest success has been to stop the use of Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to stop and search photographers in the course of their work.

● *A Brief History is available from PHNAT at 46 Granary Road London E1 5DF. Send two first class stamps on an A5 envelope. Or go to [www.photographernotaterrorist.org](http://www.photographernotaterrorist.org)*



## One small step for the world

**CAMPAIGNERS** against BBC cuts had a rare success in June when the government agreed to top up its grant to the World Service until the licence fee takes over funding the service in 2014.

It is only £2.2 million, but it is another government U-turn in response to campaigning pressure.

In May, a motion was passed in the House of Commons calling on the Foreign Secretary to review his plans for 16 per cent budget cuts. The "review" process took place behind the closed doors of the FCO; there was no opportunity for interested parties to give their views and no involvement of those who actually make the programmes.

The additional funding should be used to undo some of the damage already inflicted on the service. The BBC should stop the 100-plus redundancies now in train. The money should be used to ameliorate the cuts announced in January, not ploughed into new projects while current staff lose their jobs.

Laura Davison

# One year on and he still hasn't got it

**T**HE YEAR-LONG saga of Rupert Murdoch's attempt to buy up BSkyB was due to reach its formal conclusion at the end of June, with Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt giving the bid the go-ahead.

It was on June 16 last year that Murdoch's News Corporation said it would offer 700p a share for the 61 per cent of BSkyB it does not already own.

It was at the beginning of March that Jeremy Hunt announced that he was "minded" to nod the bid through, on condition that the Murdoch stake in Sky News be restricted to the present 39 per cent. There would be negotiations with Murdoch managers to iron out the details and a decision in late April.

There was criticism of the decision, taken in spite of a strong recommendation from Ofcom that the bid should be subjected to a Competition Commission enquiry because of concerns over the effect on media plurality. There were doubts over how the hive-off could work, partly because of the ease with which Rupert Murdoch had worked his way round such arrangements in the past, and partly because of doubts as to why any other party should want to invest in the loss-making news channel.

The talks got bogged down in technical snags and it was not until June 22 that Ofcom came back to Jeremy Hunt with the terms of the deal. He was expected to make the all-clear announcement the next week, and even then to hold another brief period of



consultation.

The process has also been delayed by the strength of public opposition to the relentless expansion of the Murdoch empire. Jeremy Hunt said he had received 40,000 letters of protest, though many were identical, such as those solicited by the campaign of the CPBF with the online groups 38 Degrees and the US-based Avaaz.

As the final announcement was awaited, Avaaz was running an online petition to persuade LibDem Business Secretary Vince Cable to resign. Vince Cable was stripped of his power to consider media takeovers last year after being caught out by undercover *Daily Telegraph* reporters bragging about his opposition to Rupert Murdoch.

The CPBF was planning a demonstration outside the Culture Ministry in London on the day of Jeremy Hunt's announcement, together with Avaaz, 38 Degrees and the NUJ.

According to reports, the minister's decision is unlikely to be the end of the matter, as legal challenges are anticipated. The longer the case goes on, the more it is likely to cost News Corporation, since BSkyB's share price has risen steadily in the wake of the company's fantastic profits.

The shares were trading at 830p in June, meaning that the Murdochs will have to pay around 150p a share more than their original bid – a likely total of some £9 billion, a serious draw on News Corp finances.

## Look out Rupert – the yankees are coming to town

**RUPERT MURDOCH'S Fox News US cable TV channel is to drop talk show host Glenn Beck, whose much criticised smears and lies have been turning away viewers even from the right-wing channel. His show had lost nearly a million viewers in the last year, and more than 300 advertisers.**

The news came the same day that the American campaigning group Media Matters for America (MMFA) declared "guerrilla warfare and sabotage" on Fox TV, and announced it was to set up an

**anti-Murdoch operation in London.**

Founder David Brock, a former journalist, said MMFA was to drop its monitoring of newspapers and other TV networks to focus on Fox and a number of websites that were the "nerve center" of the conservative movement in the US. They have launched a "Drop Fox" campaign, to persuade major companies not to advertise on Fox News.

MMFA, financed by George Soros's Open Society Institute, has a budget of \$10 million and a staff of 90, who work from a

**giant "war room" in New York.**

They will be distributing embarrassing clips, preparing rebuttals to Fox's output and assembling research files on channel executives.

David Brock said Media Matters plans to extend its campaign against Fox's parent company, News Corporation to the UK with an operation in London to attack the company's interests here.

"We will be focusing on Murdoch and trying to disrupt his commercial interests – whether that be here or in London," David Brock said.

# KEEP IT LOCAL ...

The crisis in the UK's local press is acknowledged by everybody. Titles are closing in the wake of the collapse of advertising, the growth of the internet and the profiteering greed of the newspaper owners. But nobody can agree on the best solution. The current owners are discredited and the government's plan for local commercial TV stations won't work. Meanwhile journalists themselves are fighting to save their jobs and their papers, or setting up local co-operatives to replace them

**NATALIE FENTON** looks at the depth of the crisis and finds that the government's proposed solution won't work

**M**ORE THAN 100 UK local newspapers have closed in the current recession. The industry is shrinking into the hands of a small number of regionally based companies that dominate the market by continually cutting costs, shedding staff and reducing the quality of their papers.

Everybody knows this. The question is: what can be done to resurrect the vibrant local media that communities need? In the communities themselves there are people setting up news websites all the time, but they can't make money. Meanwhile governments have announced programmes to finance new local media. But nothing seems to be working.

Despite the economies of scale introduced by the consolidation of ownership, local news services have still faced cuts in investment – often made irrespective of market conditions. In 2006 Trinity Mirror, one of the largest owners of local news titles, axed 300 jobs in spite of a “buoyant” market. Between January 2008 and August 2009 101 local papers closed down and this trend has continued.

Success in local and regional news now appears increasingly to depend on scale. This means more mergers and more takeovers with larger companies serving bigger regions with reduced resources for newsgathering and a service that has less and less relevance for local people.

Yet government is abolishing all cross-ownership rules in local and regional media, which will just lead to more mergers and takeovers, larger companies serving bigger areas with fewer journalists, further diminishing the reasons people turn to local news – for local accountability, the scrutiny of power and a sense of local identity and voice.

In many places newsdesks, sub-editors and journalists are moved to centralised locations often many miles from the communities they are supposed to be speak-

ing to and reporting on. With the increased pressures in the newsroom, journalists now have a limited knowledge of the areas they cover and rarely get out to do local journalism. The clear conclusion is that the democratic potential of news media and the structural practice of local news production and journalism are at odds.

The UK government says it recognises the problem. Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt says “the Government believes in localism and the enormous benefits of fostering local cultural, economic and political identities ... the challenge and scrutiny of local journalists is vital to that

**People want local newspapers that could challenge the powerful and probe wrongdoings**

... I want a modern regulatory environment which will help nurture a new generation of hungry, ambitious and profitable local media companies”.

But few have confidence in his solutions. Having rejected the previous government's proposals for local Independently Funded News Consortia, the coalition has opted for a commercial model of local television services. The relaxation of local cross-media ownership rules is part of this approach – prioritising deregulation over democracy, emphasising market value over social value.

The government plans to legislate later this year for 10-20 local TV services to be in operation by 2015. The original proposal for these stations to be plugged into a national spine to attract advertising is being reconsidered on the basis that a series of individual stations would be

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# ... KEEP IT NEWS

Local media

# CITY OF THE DAMNED MIRROR GROUP

IT IS small towns that have suffered from the recent closure of newspapers but the big cities have been affected too by the increasing consolidation of the industry.

The papers of the Birmingham Post and Mail group, for instance, had 16 offices ten years ago but are now down to four. Five years ago they had 230 journalists, now that has shrunk to around 160. They have lost specialist reporters in transport, home affairs, industry and community affairs.

The courts/crime specialists have more than halved and business specialists have gone from nine to six.

The West Midlands area is also an example of the effects of consolidation of the industry.

The Birmingham and Coventry papers are owned by Trinity Mirror, one of the big four regional groups, which has slashed spending and staffing on all its 300-plus titles.

Two years ago a local newspaper entrepreneur, Chris Bullivant, launched two new weekly papers in competition.

They didn't last long, as TM used its market domination to tie up deals on property advertising with estate agents which drove them out of business.



## We've nine titles – and just three reporters

AS PUBLISHERS hack away at jobs and editorial investment, journalists are still fighting to save their local papers, and those at a north London group have won back jobs after weeks of strike action.

The North London & Herts Newspapers group publishes nine titles on the north west fringes of London. More than a third of editorial staff had left without being replaced and there



ENFIELD JOURNALISTS stage a mock funeral for their papers

were just three senior reporters to fill the news pages with the help of interns and trainees.

In April the NUJ chapel began a series of strikes to win back jobs, and on June 23 were able

to call them off after the owners, the Tindle group, agreed to fill vacant posts and appoint a new reporter.

Managers also dropped a threat of further redundancies

delivered in letters to staff the night before they began their action. NUJ Father of Chapel Jonathan Lovett said they were "certainly satisfied with the result".

During the strike the journalists paraded through the streets in a mock funeral procession to warn citizens of the threat to the survival of their local papers.

Meanwhile colleagues on papers in south-west London dressed up as cowboys when they began their own strike against their bosses in the American-owned Newsquest group. They staged their Wild West protest outside offices in Sutton and Richmond papers because of a decision to close the sports and leisure department at the cost of nine jobs.

The actions were part of a rising tide of actions by NUJ members trying to stop job cuts around the country.

ANDREW WARD

## There's always the BBC ... or there used to be

WITH THE decline of commercial media, the most reliable source of news is the BBC's 40 station-strong local radio network.

But now as it swings the axe in the wake of last year's licence fee settlement the BBC is looking to cut back on its local output.

Earlier this year managers announced they were considering cutting all programmes apart from the

breakfast and drive-time shows, replacing them with content from the national news and sport station, 5 Live.

The NUJ said the proposals could lead to the loss of more than 700 jobs and the closure of some stations.

It said: "Local radio plays a crucial role in keeping local communities informed. These proposals would rip the heart out of local programming

and effectively sound the death knell for local radio."

The BBC has already begun syndicating content between neighbouring stations.

The plan was put forward as part of the BBC's absurdly named Delivering Quality First consultation – a euphemism for massive cuts in spending – in which staff are invited to volunteer suggestions for savings.

## Local media

# Can co-ops come to the rescue?

Journalists are looking at new models of ownership to replace discredited profiteering corporate groups, as **TOM DAVIES** reports

**WITH LOCAL** media engaged in the latest episode of a never ending round of cuts and disputes, questions are again being raised about the very future of local news, and whether its traditional business models are sustainable. **Can not-for-profit locally**

rooted co-operative or trust models serve communities and journalists better? Can public policy or subsidy play a role? Such topics were chewed over by journalists, academic experts and activists at a conference at Goldsmith's College, London in May organised by the NUJ, in conjunction with the journalism department at Goldsmith's and Co-operatives UK.

Entitled *Can the Media be Co-operative?*, the conference heard that local media could be ripe for the co-operative model. Dave Boyle of Co-operatives UK, the national umbrella body for co-ops, said a "second wave" of co-operatives was developing, incorporating "community assets" such as pubs and football clubs. As the big local media companies increasingly retreat from the areas they purport to serve, co-operative ventures could fill the void.

Some NUJ members have already taken up the challenge. *The Port Talbot Magnet* in



JOURNALISTS on the *Southern Daily Echo*, Southampton, produced their own strike paper when they took action against job losses

South Wales was set up after the closure of the *Port Talbot Guardian* left the town with no local media outlet, and is run co-operatively by a collective of seven journalists. Elsewhere in the UK, the long-established *West Highland Free Press* continues to thrive along co-operative lines.

How to make it pay remains the perennial question, and issues discussed ranged from

subscriptions and membership, how surpluses are reinvested and micropayments.

The NUJ hopes to build on the expertise provided at the conference to create a directory of advice for people looking at alternatives. Co-operatives UK could make a small amount of funding available, as well as expertise. There are no easy answers, but the questions should start being asked.

### From page 4

easier to deliver and better connected to the communities they are designed to serve. This is a step in the right direction but doesn't solve the central dilemma: how will these stations will be commercially viable?

Last year's BBC licence fee settlement included £40 million to get the stations up and running, but after that they will be on their own. Quality news is expensive to deliver, because it means investing in professional journalists, and quality television news is the most expensive of all. It is difficult to see how these stations can attract enough viewers and advertisers when so many have failed before.

Even the big regional publishers, who have in recent years been in close harmony with the Conservative leadership over the weakening of the regulations on ownership, have treated the local TV idea with scorn.

Furthermore, 10 to 20 TV services will only serve a tiny proportion of local communities if they are to be truly local. Alternatively, they will simply end up as regional services and further entrench the disconnect from local communities that is at the heart of the democratic deficit of local news provision.

This is the problem: the economies of scale required to deliver profitable local news mean the diminution of the very thing people are crying out for: news that serves their local community. In

research carried out last year by a team of us at Goldsmiths College in London on the news needs of local communities there was fierce criticism of what consumers understood as a long-term decline in the quality of local news.

This they associated with the primacy of commercial values in local news provision. Interviewees professed a strong sense of the loss of local journalism as watchdog and an equally strong desire for its return. They called for active, visible reporting that speaks to

## Deregulation has little regard for the democratic implications of news provision

people, recognises and listens to the various voices in community – particularly those without authority or power.

The social benefits of local news were recounted time and time again. When they had lost their local newspaper they felt they had lost a sense of community and belonging that went with it. They wanted independent local newspapers with a physical presence in the locale and journalists who could challenge the powerful, investigate wrongdoings and campaign for social change.

The local journalists we spoke to also saw this as their role but were con-

strained by the configurations of production, with fewer and fewer journalists employed to fill more and more space, often detached and disconnected from the area they were supposed to cover.

Evidently, the critical relationship between local news and democracy only works under certain conditions. Currently, on the whole, those conditions do not meet the news needs of the communities we spoke to. Through prioritisation of the pursuit of profit and shareholder returns news organisations that deliver local news have lost sight of their product value – a value recognised and desired by all of the participants in this study.

Will the government's plans for local television reinvigorate local news and deal with this democratic deficit? Not if they are based on a purely commercial model, not if they are local in name alone, and not if they refuse to understand what people want from local news.

Corporate models are failing journalism. Increased deregulation has little regard for the democratic implications of news provision. Economic concerns for innovation, growth and wider competition in a communications market must not block out the critical social and political importance of the relationship of news to democracy, or the proposals for local television will simply fail, again.

● *Natalie Fenton is Professor of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths College, London*

# So wrong on 'political correctness'



**POINTING THE FINGER: ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN THE BRITISH MEDIA**  
Julian Petley and Robin Richardson (eds)  
Oneworld

regularly in the tabloids in recent years and, while they have no basis in reality, have served a purpose: to demonise and defamiliarise Muslims in the UK.

*Pointing the Finger*, a collection of essays on the representation of Islam and Muslims in the British media by a range of journalists, campaigners and academics, is the perfect antidote to the distortions, exclusions and guiding assumptions of this coverage.

The book illustrates and challenges the dominant approach to reporting

which, according to researchers at Cardiff University who found that two-thirds of all news stories on Muslims focused on either terrorism, religious issues or extremism, "stresses certain forms of difference and portrays Muslims as a problem or a threat".

One chapter corrects many of the most high-profile tabloid stories of allegedly "politically correct" responses to Muslim demands (for example, the idea that a London council banned Christmas in order to appease Muslim sensibilities), while another provides

a substantial critique of *Panorama's* attack on the Muslim Council of Britain.

The book concludes with some disturbing interviews with Muslim journalists about the issues they have faced in terms of employment and representation and a final chapter that considers practical ways of achieving what the authors call "responsible journalism".

This is the book's overall approach: to detail systematically the problems but not to accept them as immovable.

**Des Freedman**

**M**USLIMS killing swans for dinner, a Muslim "hate mob" vandalising the home of soldiers returning from Afghanistan, a Muslim bus driver kicking passengers off his bus so he could pray ... These stories – and more – have featured

## What happens in the USA today ...



**WILL THE LAST REPORTER PLEASE TURN OUT THE LIGHTS: THE COLLAPSE OF JOURNALISM AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO FIX IT**  
Robert McChesney and Victor Pickard (eds)  
New Press, £13.99

**BACK IN 2009** the crisis facing American journalism was profound. Newspaper advertising revenue had dropped by nearly half in five years; staff and editorial spending on daily newspapers had shrunk by 25 per cent. More than

100 ceased print publication in that year alone.

Journalism seemed to be in free fall and the negative implications for democracy prompted journalists, academics and activists to grapple with the problem and pose solutions. Politicians and regulators held hearings and commissioned reports to investigate the causes of the crisis.

At one Senate hearing David Simon, a former reporter on the *Baltimore Sun* who went on to create the HBO series *The Wire* said, "It is going to be one of the great times to be a corrupt politician."

This is one of the themes in this

excellent collection of essays. Paul Starr's contribution, *Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers* (Hello to a New Era of Corruption), pinpoints the consequences of newspapers abandoning their critical watchdog role over key areas of political and economic activity.

There are thirty-two contributions in the book, arranged in three sections: *The Crisis Unfolds*, *The American Traditions* and *The Way Forward*. While obviously the focus is on the USA, key aspects of the discussion are relevant to the UK -- in particular, whether the internet and the market will combine to solve the crisis in journalism.

**Granville Williams**

## Telling echoes of the Wapping strikers



**BAD NEWS: THE WAPPING DISPUTE**  
John Lang and Graham Dodkins  
Spokesman, £15

**A**FTER 25 years hindsight might not be what it was, but the authors of this remarkable account of Rupert Murdoch's ruthless sacking of 5,500 of his workers in 1986 had the prescience to record the thoughts and feelings of strikers during the Wapping dispute.

The recordings are of sacked clerical staff, the less

well-paid of Fleet Street's workers who suffered but also contributed more than most in the year-long strike.

The events of the strike are recorded more succinctly and with less prejudice than any of the previously published accounts of this, the last set-piece industrial dispute in Britain.

Beyond recording the harsh realities of picketing at Wapping, John Lang and Graham Dodkins have included the setbacks, the letdowns and the disagreements suffered during the long 13 months of the dispute.

It is far from one-sided: the union leaderships are not spared in the descriptions of the weaknesses and lack of

foresight of those who might have known better how to deal with Murdoch and his outrageous deception.

But it is the moving and often angry recorded excerpts that give this book its edge. The recordings, stored away for 24 years until last year, bring back into focus the forces of the state ranged against the strikers to prevent any possibility of their succeeding.

If you were at Wapping, *Bad News* will bring back vivid memories, some intensely moving; if you weren't there, *Bad News* will help to explain why many strikers are still in their own personal disputes with Rupert Murdoch.  
**John Bailey**

# Bring back the labour corrs



**THE LOST TRIBE OF FLEET STREET**  
 Nicholas Jones (ed)  
 Biteback, £5

**I**N THE JIGSAW of history, the downfall of British national newspaper labour journalism fits neatly between the triumph of Thatcherism and the growth of the finance industry in the late 1980s. Quite suddenly, a corps of seasoned and senior journalists who could command front page space at any time simply faded away.

With defeat of the unions in the set-piece battles of the mid-decade and the "Big Bang" deregulation of the City of London, the story was no longer labour, but capital. Today there are no dedicated full-time labour correspondents on any paper, but there are desks of business and finance reporters, who cover labour stories with a perspective different from those who knew and understood trade unions.

Perhaps sensing the coming change, BBC labour correspondent Nicholas Jones switched in 1988 to political reporting. He has since transformed himself again, into an author, with half a dozen titles on political topics to his

name. His latest, *The Lost Tribe of Fleet Street*, is a collection of chapters by five industrial writers, including himself, that tell the story of this great upheaval in journalism.

The central theme of Nicholas Jones's books is the fakery of New Labour, and he recounts how from the start he ran into its fear and loathing of organised labour. The personal abuse and accusations of contamination from his labour past directed at him by Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell are quite shocking.

*The Lost Tribe of Fleet Street* could easily have been sentimental, full of nostalgia for a golden age of reporting, and there is an amount of that sort of thing in it. But it is enhanced by a couple of thoughtful pieces about the consequences of the loss of the labour angle from journalism.

One, by the former *Financial Times* correspondent and *New Statesman* editor John Lloyd, concerns the contemporary world of work on a global scale: the effect on communities worldwide of neo-liberal policies, the effects of mass migration and precarity of employment.

It's the story of our age, he says, and asks: where are the journalists to cover it? (As a matter of fact, there is a notable British journalist, unacknowledged by Lloyd, who does cover the

area, and with some insight – Paul Mason of *BBC Newsnight*.)

The second concerns management. It is a corollary of the absence of a workers' perspective from the media that the bosses get a free ride. With the decline of the unions, managers have lost a source of information about employment; they have become arrogant and ignorant of their workers' lives and concerns, writes Stefan Stern, a former *FT* columnist. And no-one is writing about them.

These are glaring gaps in contemporary journalism, which leave the public poorly informed. It will take a transformation of society itself, with a revival of trade unions, to redress the balance.

Tim Gopsill

## CLICK AND LISTEN

The media and the unions – how the media lost touch with work – is one of two new podcasts on the CPBF website. In the first, Nick Jones talks to three trade union communicators about the decline of coverage. In the second, he interviews Jeremy Dear as he stands down after 10 years as of NUJ General Secretary.

Go to [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk)

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 Send letters, comments, articles and ideas to [freepress@cpbf.org.uk](mailto:freepress@cpbf.org.uk)

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 d) Institutions (eg libraries) £25  
 (includes 10 copies of *FREE Press*)

### AFFILIATION BY ORGANISATION

- f) Fewer than 500 members £25  
 g) 500 to 1,000 £30  
 h) 1,000 to 10,000 £50  
 i) 10,000 to 50,000 £115  
 j) 50,000 to 100,000 £225  
 k) Over 100,000 £450

I/We want to join the CPBF and enclose a cheque/PO for £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Return form to CPBF, 2nd floor, Vi and Garner Smith House, 23 Orford Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9NL Tel: 07729 846146