

FREE Press

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BROADCASTING

THE BBC BECOMES STATE TV

THE FICTION of the BBC's independence from political control is now firmly laid to rest. As BBC News is rocked by director James Harding's plans for another £80 million of cuts, it is clear the corporation now exists as a Whitehall department, with its budget and priorities decided in Downing Street.

Unlike other ministers, culture secretary John Whittingdale does not answer to Parliament for the consequences of government policies. He has a spineless BBC Trust to hide behind. And with an unamendable Royal Charter to be imposed this year, there is little parliamentary procedure to stop further damage.

The White Paper published in May is a step towards the neutering of the corporation for political reasons. When the draft charter is published in the autumn, it will become clear whether a public broadcaster faces transformation into a state broadcaster, with editorial content subject to the views of a unitary board made up of a bloc of political appointees.

Independence was given away in 2010, when the new coalition dumped £300 million-plus of annual government spending onto the backs of the BBC. The BBC Trust agreed to take on the burden of the World Service, the Welsh-language S4C and the roll-out of broadband internet – plus a freeze in the licence fee!

The government's argument was that the BBC must carry its share of austerity cutbacks; but the BBC is nothing to do with government spending, and by accepting the move the BBC subjected itself to direction by the state.

This time round another "deal" was reached with the Treasury for £1.3 billion of cost to be borne over five years by the BBC to pay the licence fee for the over-75s. Once again independence was traded for a harsh cash settlement "which could have been worse".

Audiences might wonder why a fifth of the money they pay for BBC programmes should go on a welfare policy for pensioners.

One cost-saving option being pressed as a result is



A senior BBC journalist, writing anonymously, warns that the BBC's submission to the demands of

government could mean the end of its historically independent role and a relapse into state broadcasting

to merge the News Channel and the BBC's commercial 24-hour television news service, BBC World News. Between 10-12 million Britons watch the News Channel every week. They now face losing the service as their licence-fees go to sustain BBC foreign language television news broadcasts in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Tamil. For the first time a BBC news service paid for by advertising and distribution deals would be broadcast into the UK. If rolling news can be sustained this way, why not other services?

In response to the politically-driven attack on the BBC's place in national life, journalists are using industrial means to resist the impact of the cuts. Even before it is merged, the BBC is demanding staff in World News work an additional 12 days a year, to help balance stretched budgets. And if this is imposed, NUJ members will strike. Industrial action has already been taken in Newsgathering and the World Service, even before the latest cuts programme is rolled out.

To set up a Parliamentary safeguard, the NUJ is backing a cross-party group of peers led by the Liberal peer Lord Lester of Herne Hill to make any licence fee settlement subject to the approval of Parliament, and require BBC staff representatives to be appointed to the new unitary board.



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Murdoch, who else?

SAVE THE BBC
four-page pullout
CENTRE PAGES

LEVESON 2

You can't stop now. Keep phone-hack probe going

THE GOVERNMENT is blocking the promised resumption of the Leveson Inquiry into relations between the police and the press.

Stage Two of the inquiry into the tabloid phone-hacking scandal was planned to take place once the trials of the journalists and their informants were over. It was due to investigate phone-hacking at the News of the World and what went wrong with the original police investigation.

In November 2012 Prime Minister David Cameron told campaigners: "We remain committed to Leveson part two ... It is right that it should go ahead, and that is fully our intention."

The criminal trials are now over – though some civil settlements are still outstanding – but government seems reluctant to pursue enquiries that could revive the embarrassment felt by senior police, media bosses and politicians four years ago as evidence came out on how they colluded to prevent evidence of the criminality coming to light.

In June Labour frontbencher Andy Burnham tabled a new clause to the Policing and Crime Bill going through Parliament to "compel the Prime Minister to instigate an independent inquiry such as Leveson two into the relationships between the press and police and the extent to which that has operated in the public interest".

Lancashire MP Andy Burnham, who has campaigned for justice for the Hillsborough families against the lies published about their loved ones in the Sun, said in the Commons debate:

"It seems to Labour members as though the Government have subtly shifted their position in the intervening years ... it is no longer a question

of when the inquiry will go ahead; it is a question of whether. We have had anonymous briefings from people close to the Culture Secretary and others in Government to suggest that it has already been canned. We are not prepared to accept that.

"If the minister were to say clearly to the House that there will be a second-stage inquiry into the culture of relations between the police and the press, we would not press our new clause to a vote."

Home Office minister Mike Penning said: "The Government have made it clear on many occasions that we will wait for the criminal proceedings that are still ongoing to come to a conclusion, and then the Home Secretary will move forward."

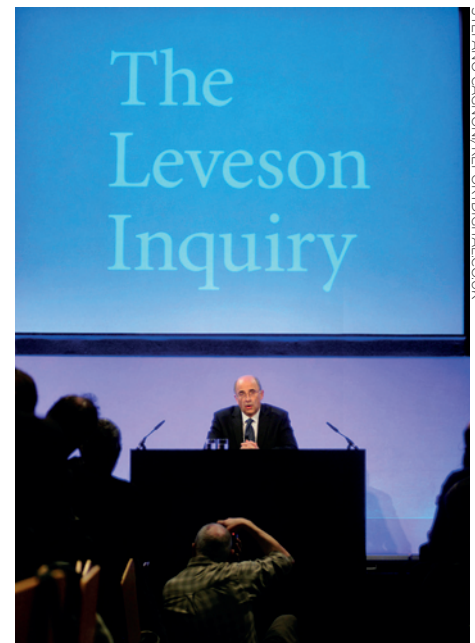
Labour persisted with the clause which was rejected by 268 votes to 158.

Criminal proceedings ended when crown prosecution chief Alison Saunders announced

“Cameron is not going to want to get on the wrong side of Rupert Murdoch all over again”

there would be no further charges against journalists at the Mirror group, because there was "insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction" – despite the company paying out millions to settle civil phone-hacking claims.

Lord Justice Leveson has said that he would not be available to conduct the inquiry himself so a different judge would have to be appointed.



Campaigners are calling in particular for further inquiry into the media ramifications of the case of murdered private detective Daniel Morgan. His partner Jonathan Rees was charged with the killing, but the trial collapsed.

Rees earned £150,000 a year selling illegally obtained phone-hacked data to the News of the World, and among his targets was senior Met police detective Dave Cook and his then wife, former BBC Crimewatch presenter Jacqui Hames.

Dave Cook was head of the murder investigation and Jacqui Hames has accused the NoW of targeting the family to intimidate them. News UK chief Rebekah Brooks has admitted the hacking but claims it was to investigate a supposed "affair" between the couple – who had then been married for 11 years.

The case has become a cause celebre among campaigners against corporate media crime. For powerful media and police bosses associated with Jonathan Rees it may also be a case they don't want reopened.

Guardian media blogger Roy Greenslade explained the decision: "We surely know that David Cameron's government is not going to want to get on the wrong side of Rupert Murdoch all over again."

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There are better ways

All around the media there are people who want to do things better. As large corporations tighten their grip on Big Media – on the internet, in print and broadcasting – there are those who campaign against them, organise to have them regulated and start up independent

media of their own. The CPBF supports much of this activity and in this four-page feature focuses on positive moves on regulation, covering the ownership of Big Media, the regulation of the press and public service broadcasting, including the future of the BBC.

Change the law, change the media

Plans for a new law to protect and increase media plurality are being developed by the Media Reform



Coalition, as **JUSTIN SCHLOSBERG** explains

THE MEDIA Reform Coalition has prepared a media plurality bill to present to Parliament and provide the basis of a legal framework for remedying concentrated media power in the digital age. The bill seeks to redress the present gaps and stalemate in media plurality policy, paving the way for a comprehensive, fair and future-proof approach.

Media plurality is a resurgent issue in policy-making debates in most liberal democracies. The power vacuum left by evaporating profits and retreating corporate investors has put many newsrooms back in the hands of wealthy individuals, from local oligarchs in Eastern Europe hoping to capitalise on opportunities for political influence, to dot com billionaires in the US seeking to redefine the business of news.

Added to this is the new “gatekeeping” power attributed to digital intermediaries which

some consider the pivot of contemporary media plurality concerns. But rather than diminishing the gatekeeping role of traditional news brands, the evidence points to the contrary – that the likes of Google, Facebook and Twitter are progressively amplifying the voice of incumbent and legacy media whilst doing little to support those vehicles of public interest journalism most under threat; especially local and long-form reporting.

Last November Ofcom produced a framework for measuring media plurality, after five years of deliberation and consultation, and persistent calls to set benchmarks for determining how much plurality we have and need. The Ofcom framework contains useful metrics but does not address the crucial questions of what to do about it. Parliament must act to fill this gap.

The dual principles set out in the bill are intended to safeguard media plurality among large media owners, and promote it for community, independent and not-for-profit media at all levels – from hyperlocal to national news.

In respect of the safeguards, the proposed bill would apply “public interest” obligations to dominant publishers, with structural remedies where there is too much concentration of ownership. These obligations should not amount to content regulation. They must not affect content but be limited to measures to preserve an arm’s length between owners and editorial. Or they could spread the range of shareholdings in a company to preserve its long-term sustainability.

The bill would determine the circumstances

in which intervention is triggered, along with the range of applicable remedies. Given the intimacy between media and political elites, the existing plurality regime places far too much discretionary power in the hands of ministers. This renders policy acutely vulnerable to commercial capture or, potentially, leaves media groups vulnerable to political pressure.

On promoting plurality, the bill proposes that funds should be raised from a small levy on the profits of the digital intermediaries to support the most vulnerable and least profitable forms of public interest news. Companies like Google may not profit directly from their use of journalistic content, but the attraction of news does play a role in the “user experience” and add immeasurable value to their businesses.

There is a legitimate case that the huge companies should make a meaningful contribution to supporting independent media, in the public interest. A “media plurality trust”

should be set up to allocate the revenue to initiatives that make a measurable contribution to news plurality, particularly in local and long form journalism.

Progressive legislation in support of media plurality is both necessary and possible – to ensure that citizens can hear a diverse range of voices and perspectives; and that journalism’s unique contribution to democratic life is enhanced.

■ The draft Media Plurality Bill can be accessed at www.mediareform.org.uk/blog/media-plurality-draft-bill

Huge companies should make a contribution to supporting independent media in the public interest

RECLAIM THE MEDIA

Campaign brief and invitation to participate

A NATION-WIDE campaign - RECLAIM THE MEDIA - is planned for the autumn. There will be gatherings in ten cities and a final day festival in London in December. It will be run by the Media Reform Coalition and by Real Media, a grouping of radical independent news producers.

At the events speakers will debate issues facing the media including the future of the BBC, press regulation, digital monopolies, and the local news gap.

The tour will culminate in the second Media Democracy Festival in London on December 10 which will feature addresses from politicians, celebrities and journalists.

The campaign will be supported by a dedicated website and social media channels, as well as a number of digital resources. These include:

- Real Media is to launch an app to facilitate easier search and access to independent news sources, and enables users to sculpt their own news feeds free from personalising algorithms of search and social networking sites. It will also provide a space for users to congregate and organise on media issues and coordinate action and campaigns.

- An exclusive interactive map of media ownership in the UK developed by MRC.

- Draft templates for emailing MPs.

At the heart of the campaign will be a charter of principles for media reform based on the MRC's draft Media Plurality Bill, expressed as a series of five urgent demands:

- 1 A BBC firmly in public hands and wholly not for profit but with a more secure and long term funding mechanism, devolved editorial responsibility, and enhanced accountability to audiences and the public
- 2 A new levy on major online search and social networking services to support local and investigative journalism in the public interest
- 3 New rules on media ownership to prevent dominance of public conversation by wealthy individuals and private corporations
- 4 New and tougher rules on meetings between government ministers/officials and senior media figures to ensure greater transparency
- 5 Government must implement Leveson proposals IN FULL and carry out part two of the Leveson Inquiry to get to the bottom of the phone hacking cover up

ALTERNATIVES PUBLIC BROADCASTING

What public TV

DES FREEDMAN

profiles a parallel inquiry to the BBC charter review process that has a more positive approach



STEFANO CAGNONI

PUBLIC BROADCASTING is under attack and media reformers are preoccupied with the threats to the future of the BBC and Channel 4 posed by the Tory government. This is the background to the independent inquiry, chaired by the leading film producer David Puttnam, set up to sketch a vision for a viable future for public service television.

This is an environment buffeted by

a storm of political, technological and cultural forces.

We have the government's ideological hostility towards publicly owned companies – whether BBC or Channel 4; we have the rapidly changing consumption habits of younger audiences in particular shifting their attention from the TV set to a range of more mobile devices; we have the increasing alienation of minority audiences from the core TV channels; and we have the prospect of a diminished BBC, a privatised Channel 4, a US-owned ITV and a Murdoch-owned Sky.

We also have vociferous demands from minority communities for better representation and improved employment possibilities, together with demands from the devolved nations for more autonomy. We have major television news broadcasters clinging to a political "centre ground" when that ground is shifting and increasingly distrusted by millions of citizens.

All in all, a pretty challenging climate – and that's not even mentioning Netflix and YouTube.

To get to grips with these issues, researchers at Goldsmiths University of

THE ALTERNATIVE WHITE PAPER

The workers know best

BBC STAFF insist that it should remain the cornerstone of UK broadcasting and content production. So says the Federation of Entertainment Unions – which includes unions covering all BBC staff and contributors – in the Alternative White Paper it produced in March.

To ensure this the BBC must be reformed to meet the expectations of licence fee payers and to uphold the highest standards of public service. It must:

- Maintain regional television news and local radio and spending more on original drama production in the regions
- Make all content available free at the point of use, on as wide a range of platforms as possible including expanded services online
- Robustly safeguard its independence
- Provide news free of bias and maintain journalistic of accuracy and integrity.

The BBC's governing structure should have representation from licence fee payers, stakeholders in the cultural sector and staff and other workers.

It must be sufficiently funded to remain the biggest commissioner of written work

and new musical composition. It should continue to maintain orchestras, new music, online and broadcast news, television and radio comedy and drama production, original scripted content and content for children. In-house programme making capabilities must be maintained to retain a critical mass of talent for the content production sector.

The BBC spends 56p of every pound it receives on first-run TV content. Other public service broadcasters spend an average of 44p, while non-PSB broadcasters devote only 9p.

The unions warn there is little scope for more efficiency savings. Over the last 10 years there have been £1.5 billion cuts per year and the real value of the licence fee has fallen by 12 per cent. The BBC was given responsibility for the costs of the World Service, the majority of S4C's budget, and assistance to local TV, which cost it £340 million a year.

The licence fee must not be used to fund other projects such as local TV services. A cash-starved BBC will not only be disastrous for the corporation, it will also have a dramatic effect on the creative industry as a whole.

BBC CHARTER REVIEW 2016

Save public broadcasting

The government has produced a White Paper to determine how the BBC will be run for the next ten years. In the autumn it will publish a new Charter to put its proposals into effect.



The BBC stands for public service broadcasting, the system that produces the best entertainment, education and information that the public want.

The government's plans threaten that system and the whole ecology of British broadcasting.

This special report sets out what's wrong with the plans and what needs to be done.

We want to see an independent, well-funded, democratic BBC, part of a thriving 'public service ecology'; a space on television, radio and online where the huge range of programmes and approaches we have come to value can thrive, all for the cost of a licence-fee which is well below the charge for a commercial subscription channel.

Keep it popular, keep it independent

THE BBC is more than a TV and radio station. It is a pivot of the UK's cultural life, propagating all aspects of social, political and artistic activity. It is watched and listened to by 97 per cent of the UK population

It is the most popular and trusted source of news, and the foundation of one of the country's most important industries.

It leads in pretty well every field in which it operates: popular and serious music, politics and documentary, business and consumer, drama and soap, sport and leisure, comedy and general entertainment. Its website is a world leader.

The BBC is not "subsidised" by taxpayers; it is paid for by every citizen to whom its service is offered, like any other public service. It is also a fantastic bargain: for all those services, £12 a month. The absolute basic subscription to Sky for meanwhile, went up in June to £22.50 a month with the top premium whack at £56. And what channel comes top of those watched by Sky subscribers? BBC1.

Because it is paid for by the licence fee, it is independent of state control. But to justify the licence fee, in the face of criticism that it is an unfair tax, it has to generate huge audiences, to be a mass popular broadcaster. This means producing the same popular programming as commercial broadcasters, only better. It does succeed in this: by and large it does entertainment, sport, news and current affairs much better than ITV or commercial radio and often than Channel 4. It gets much the highest ratings.

Victim of its own success

BUT THE BBC is under attack: It is a victim of its own success. Its popularity and market share make commercial media grind their teeth in jealous fury. They rage that it's unfair competition, that the BBC is subsidised by the taxpayers. What they mean of course is, here are these huge audiences that we can't profit from. They argue that the BBC should not be allowed to produce popular programming. Critics include Culture Secretary John Whittingdale, who was reported in May to be seeking to control the BBC's output to prevent it. The idea didn't make the White Paper – it's simply not possible – but Whittingdale also said that BBC should focus on "distinctive content". "Distinctive" in this context is code for "not popular" – that is, elite minority programming that the market can't make profitable.

This is precisely what the BBC should NOT do. Once it loses its popular lead it loses its claim to universal funding and its whole *raison d'être*. Keep it popular.

In the face of persistent attempts by its lesser media rivals to destabilise the BBC, and it needs constant affirmative action by its supporters to defend it.

What's not to like about it?

THE BBC has its well-known faults; indeed it has more that are not picked on by right-wing politicians and their media. But these are mostly the result of the hostile political environment in which -- astonishingly for a treasured national institution -- it must operate.

The BBC is punch-drunk. There is a climate of defeatism at the top level that paralyses any exercise of independence and makes programming conservative and predictable: the talent shows and "reality" TV with its contrived competition between contestants; the same costume dramas and detective series.

The news is even worse: stifflingly pro-establishment and pro-USA on security, defence and world affairs; and incapable of treating fairly radical alternatives such as those of the new Labour leadership, let alone the Greens! It can only acknowledge the widespread public disillusionment with mainstream party politics by giving unlimited airtime to Nigel Farage.

The BBC always had a tendency to default to wartime "Ministry of Information" mode on security matters, for fear of being accused of treachery. This is not an empty threat. Whenever Britain goes to war, the first thing governments do is accuse the BBC of treason -- no need for evidence -- to bring it into line, and it always works.

With the invasion of Iraq in 2003, however, the government actually had

some evidence: a critical story quoting (anonymously but accurately) a weapons scientist who was found dead shortly after being named by Downing Street. A rigged inquiry was held that reliably found the BBC at fault. The BBC governors caved in and their chairman, Gavin Davies, and Director-General Greg Dyke were forced out.

Never again, government determined, would such independence be allowed. Right-wing trustees with no media experience (Sir Michael Lyons, Lord Chris Patten, and Rona Fairhead) were brought in to head the BBC's governing body, the BBC Trust, and keep things under control.

Since then management has collaborated with every new move against them. Twice, in 2010 and 2015, they capitulated to big government-imposed cuts in funding, which froze the licence fee and increased the costs the BBC must cover, with hardly a whimper.

There is a huge gap between productive staff and the managerial class. The Jimmy Savile scandal went unreported because the BBC is a vast and unresponsive bureaucracy in which workers are scared to rock the boat, to make issues of things that will mean trouble. All the journalists who tried to raise the alarm or report the Savile story have been got rid of; not one is left on the staff.

At times this Kafkaesque apparatus seems incapable of reform. From time to time layers of managers are stripped away, only to somehow reappear.

The BBC is subject to the wrong kind of accountability. Instead of being cowed by government and the corporate media, who have no authority over it at all, it should be taking notice of the public -- its owners and audiences, who want to support, not undermine it.

Who wants to do the BBC down?

SINCE the late 1980s the debate about the BBC has been influenced by policies designed to promote commercially funded communications and reduce, significantly, the role of publicly funded broadcasting, and in particular the BBC, in the UK media.

The Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC (1986) argued that the BBC should eventually, become a subscription service, offering only those programmes which the market could not provide, to those able and willing to pay. The idea that everybody should have access to a wide range of content at very low cost was rejected.

The committee argued that in the future people would have to pay for content like they paid for newspapers or books. It was designed to benefit the major corporations who dominate our media, not citizens, and it undermined the idea that at the core of our communications there should be a relatively inexpensive producer of content, which put the public interest above private profit.

Since then there has been an explosion of commercial, digital, satellite, cable and internet content, much of it barely regulated. A regulator, OFCOM, was set up to promote these developments. Pressure from the BBC's rivals resulted in OFCOM gaining powers over the BBC's ability to develop new projects -- limiting its capacity to engage in projects that its rivals objected to.

These policies were promoted under the Labour governments of 1997-2010, because the party leadership was committed to market 'reforms' across the public sector. But they, at least, believed that the BBC should remain a powerful organisation within the new environment.

The Tory government elected in 2015 changed all that. It is a government driven by a desire to reduce the role of public services in our lives, including broadcasting. Its supporters in the big commercial media companies have continued to press that the BBC be made to provide a radically reduced service. That will allow them to expand into areas formerly offered by the BBC -- and make more money.

The White Paper therefore poses a serious threat to the BBC and through that, to the universal provision of information, education and entertainment, at low cost across television, radio, satellite, cable, and the internet.

Communications should be enriching our lives, not the bank accounts of the large media corporations.

The BBC White Paper: what it says, what it means and what should be done

Who governs the BBC?

The government is setting up a BBC 'Unitary Board, responsible to the commercial media regulator OFCOM (The Office of Communications),. It is handing power over the BBC to an organisation set up primarily to promote the expansion of commercially funded media. On past history it is highly likely that OFCOM will use its powers to prevent the BBC producing material which its competitors object to.

Currently the BBC Trust must promote the interests of viewers and listeners. Now this falls to Ofcom, which should undertake regular audience surveys and facilitate audience participation. Ofcom's board itself needs to be representative of the widest range of views in community.

Currently the BBC Trust puts forward a 'public interest' justification for new initiatives, such as new channels or online services, while Ofcom balances this against their 'market impact'. With its new responsibilities, Ofcom should ensure that 'public interest' takes priority.

Recommendation: OFCOM should be reformed so that its main aim is the promotion of public service communications and to the boards governing both it and the BBC, should be properly representative of the diversity of interests in society. As the regulation of the BBC is to lie with OFCOM, it should set up a department with the specific remit to promote public service.

Distinctive programmes.

The White Paper asserts that the 'distinctiveness' should be at the heart of BBC programming. This means reducing the BBC to producing content which the market cannot, or will not, provide, leaving popular programming to the commercial sector. This is guaranteed to foment popular opposition to the BBC. Why pay for something which produces content the vast majority of people never access?

Recommendation: The BBC should be required to provide the fullest possible range of public service content across all available platforms, and not be relegated to producing 'distinctive' output.

Finances

The BBC's licence fee is being used increasingly to fund things other than the BBC. It is now required to pay for the Welsh channel S4C, the World Service, the licence fees of people over 75 and to fund the production of local news on behalf of private newspaper companies. The government is planning to raid the licence fee to set up fund so that commercial companies can bid for chunks of BBC money. On top of this the BBC must cut jobs and services. The end product will be a continuing squeeze on BBC resources, and a reduction in the quality of its service. This, in turn, will give support to those who argue that the bulk of the licence fee should go, not to the BBC, but to the commercial sector.

Recommendation: The licence fee should be spent on funding BBC services only and not be used to fund other government services or private media companies. The subsidising of licences for the over-75s, the Word Service and other media should be reversed.

Contracting out

The government supports BBC management plans to contract out the production of all its output, except news, to independent producers, and to set up its own production company, BBC Studios, as the equivalent of an independent company, to bid for contracts. This means that, in time, the BBC will lose facilities, staff and expertise, turning it into a mere commissioning organisation. By tying the BBC to the interests of large commercial companies, it will diminish its ability to train staff, pay them properly, encourage equal opportunities and develop innovative, creative output. Why? Because it will lose the capacity that an integrated system of production has given it over the last 90 years to develop staff and programmes and to take creative risks. It will

also bolster the position of those who believe that the licence fee should not go to the BBC, but should be distributed amongst its commercial competitors.

Recommendation: The BBC should produce the overwhelming majority of its programmes in its own facilities with its own permanent staff.

Subscription

The White Paper says the BBC will be encouraged to create subscription services. This is a major step towards reducing the role of the BBC and public service broadcasting in the media environment. A subscription funded BBC is likely to provide only 'distinctive' programmes – that is a service which most people will not want to use because it does not provide the kind of diverse content that the BBC has so successfully produced for decades. A subscription funded BBC, as the Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC (1986) recommended, would be a marginal organisation floating around on the edges of a mass commercial system. It would be like the underfunded and marginal public service television system in the USA.

Recommendation: The BBC should not provide any subscription services.

Online Services

The Government has been pressing the BBC to withdraw from its online services. The claim, as yet unproven, is that these services provide unfair competition for commercial providers. But commercial providers are there to make money, while the BBC provides a range of services for the public. Cutting online service provision is a way of forcing the public to pay more for commercial services, and undermining public support for an organisation which is seen to be no longer providing the services it once did.

Recommendation: The BBC should be allowed to develop and sustain online services on the basis of whether or not they provide a valuable public service.

The licence fee

The licence fee is the foundation of the BBC's independence: collected and allocated without government direction. But for once, when the Tories attack the system, they have a point. They say that the fee is a flat rate levy, the same for rich and poor, and with the force of law. Culture secretary John Whittingdale has said that it is worse than the poll tax because that had relief for the poor. Sometimes people are imprisoned for their inability to pay. It's not an imprisonable offence not to pay the fee but about 50 people a year are jailed for failure to pay the fine and they are all poor people.

The BBC and the culture department have been working on schemes to "decriminalise" the fee but this would be unworkable: the right-wing press would launch campaigns for non-payment.

A second problem has been widely acknowledged: the fee's technological redundancy. It is based on the ownership of a TV set, a box full of wires, at a time when more and more viewing is done online. More than a million households watch TV programmes online or on catch-up and do not possess a set. Measures are being enacted to rectify this anomaly.

It has also been agreed that the licence fee as it stands can go one more round, but it cannot survive the next charter review. Its replacement must be a likewise universal non-government-directed payment.

Best would be a household charge levied with the council tax. County police forces are funded in this way, and similar "audio-visual tax" arrangements are used elsewhere in Europe.

Recommendation: The BBC licence fee must be replaced by a universal national payment, independent of central government, and all BBC services, aired or online, must be free to access.

What kind of BBC do we want?

As we outline what kind of BBC we want, we must recognise that the BBC does not exist in isolation. So we begin with the place of the BBC amongst UK broadcasters, and end by looking forward to the online digital future.

A public service ecology

We want a broadcasting system which will ensure the continuation of the UK's unique 'public service ecology', underpinned by different types of funding and strong regulation.

Over the years, competition between the publicly-funded BBC, and ITV and the other advertising-funded channels has brought many benefits. It has meant that the BBC cannot ignore audience appeal, while the commercial channels must look beyond pure monetary considerations. Channel 4 is commercially funded but publicly owned with a remit to be different. All channels are committed to entertainment, information and education. This has created a UK-based system which is not solely driven by market values and is admired and respected across the world. However, it is under threat. Channel 5 is already US owned, while both Channel 4 and ITV may be bought by global corporations.

A commitment to public service across the channels

Public service content should be more than just programmes which are important but not profitable.

Public service means serving the public in the widest possible sense. We want a broadcasting system in which the regulator will ensure a commitment to broad public values across all UK channels, so that they can continue to complement each other and compete for quality and audience appeal rather than for income.

'Contestable' funds could be made available to all channels to subsidise less profitable programmes, such as children's programmes. These should be raised from major commercial companies, including internet companies, not from the BBC's licence fee.

The commitment to serving the public should be extended to the BBC's free online services, which should not be cut back.

A genuinely independent BBC

We want a BBC which is genuinely independent from government. This means:

- a The renewal of its Charter should be subject to decision by the House of Commons, not the Government of the day.
- b The funding of the BBC should not be under government control as it is

at present. There should be an independent, democratically constituted body to set the level of the licence fee (or whatever revised funding arrangement is in place).

- c It should be recognised that the licence fee/funding arrangement is not a tax, but a fee which goes directly to the BBC. Only the BBC should decide how it is used. The government should not be able to use licence-fee-payers' money for other purposes.

A democratic BBC

The governance of the BBC should be democratised.

It should not be up to the Government to decide who sits on the new 'Unitary Board' which will manage the BBC and take crucial decisions about its policy and content. BBC employees should be represented through relevant trade unions, and there should be representatives who are elected by, and directly responsible to, viewers, listeners and those who use online services.

Powers over licensing, content and oversight should be devolved to the Nations and Regions. These should have their own Boards of Management with local representation.

The BBC should address issues of diversity, both in relation to gender and ethnicity, at all levels, especially at the higher management level.

A digital public space

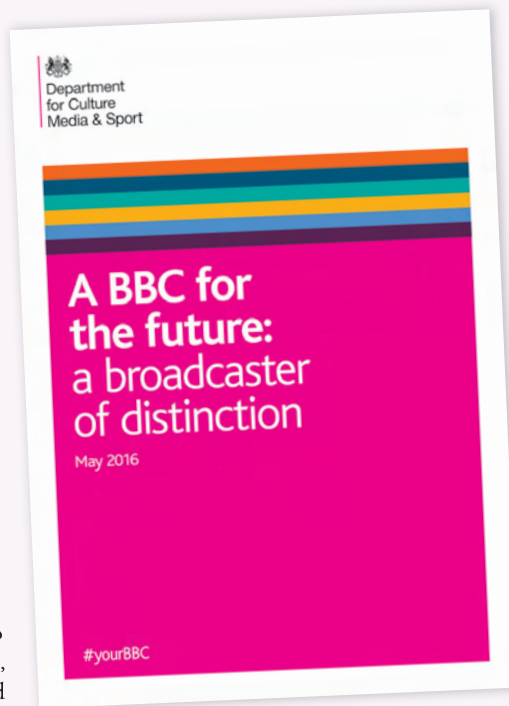
Looking forward, we support the proposal for a 'digital public space'.

As broadcasting is increasingly merging with online services, a 'digital public space' would be the equivalent of free-to-air television. Funded by an extended licence fee/ funding mechanism, it would be an advertising-free allocation of internet bandwidth, free at the point of use, at home and in key public places.

It would be a space where BBC programmes can be found, and will also be available to museums, libraries, art galleries and other public services.

This new form of public service for the digital age would go back to the original purpose of the licence fee: not just to fund the BBC, but to secure the infrastructure which ensured the democratic principles of a universal service funded by a universal payment.

We want to see an independent, well-funded, democratic BBC, part of a thriving 'public service ecology'; a space on television, radio and online where the huge range of programmes and approaches we have come to value can thrive, all for the cost of a licence-fee which is well below the charge for a commercial subscription channel.



WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO, IN ORGANISATIONS OR AS INDIVIDUALS, TO PUSH FOR CHANGE

- Raise the issue in your organisation, political party, trade union, local campaigning group
- Put forward motions for reform of media policy. Contact the CPBF for details
- Ensure that these issues are put forward to your MP
- Affiliate to the CPBF
- Ask the CPBF for a speaker for meetings.

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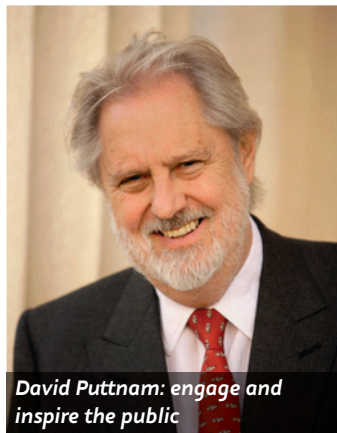
TV could really be like ...

London set up the inquiry, which Labour peer Lord Puttnam, one of Britain's most successful film producers, agreed to chair.

The inquiry team has travelled up and down the UK listening to audiences and taking evidence. Meetings in Cardiff, Coleraine and Edinburgh highlighted the demand for increased control of budgets and commissioning and bemoaned the lack of high quality content specifically aimed at audiences in the devolved nations.

An event with Lenny Henry called "Are You Being Heard?" heard arguments for action to address the structural barriers facing minority ethnic talent and the need to produce content that speaks more effectively to working class issues and audiences.

A meeting in Liverpool asked "Does Television Represent Us?" Film director Ken Loach gave a straight answer: "No, absolutely not. Does it do justice to the nuances and the subtleties and the intricacies of people's lives and their



David Puttnam: engage and inspire the public

concerns and their worries? No, absolutely not. It never has."

Other speakers were more positive, arguing that the main public service channels are a counterweight to the hyper-commercialism of the multichannel operators and that they still play a vital role in nurturing a democratic public sphere.

We have hosted debates with the BBC Director-General, the chief

executive of Channel 4, broadcasters, bloggers and producers.

For some people, the most contentious issues are about agenda-setting and control; others are more concerned with how best to stimulate creativity and to provide a space that is not reducible to ratings, demographics and market imperatives.

The inquiry reports at the end of June and will make recommendations about the future of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. But there are broader issues that we will want to consider.

We can no longer take public service TV for granted. The political settlements and technological landscapes that sustained it are less conducive than they were: neo-liberal governments and digital platforms have undermined the basis of the regulated "compact" between broadcasters and the public.

We need to rewrite its role for a digital future and to design new content and services that are

available to all. We need to treat our television system less as a self-contained set of services than as a complex ecology in which individual components have a material impact on each other.

Changes to one channel will affect the others, and determine the possibilities for the diverse programming at the heart of the public service remit.

We will ask: to what extent does it adequately serve all audiences? Does it need to be fixed?

No single inquiry or report can answer all the questions about the future of an institution that for all the upheavals does remain uniquely powerful and popular in British life.

But, given the manoeuvres of those who would wish further to commercialise and privatise it, a vision of television that engages, represents and inspires the public is worth fighting for.

■ Read the submissions and see details of forthcoming events at www.futureoftv.org.uk.

ALTERNATIVES PUBLIC BROADCASTING

... What it used to be like when it had the chance

Public broadcasting is about entertainment and drama as

much as news and current affairs and **GRANVILLE WILLIAMS** affirms how brilliant it can be when writers and directors are given free rein



STEFANO CAGNONI

A SERIES of television plays had a tremendous impact in the mid-1960s. Central to the plays was the portrayal of ordinary lives, capturing the speech and physical character of people in work, home and leisure. The protagonists were miners,

housewives, dockers, building workers, political activists. The power of these plays lay in the way they exposed social injustice by tackling the big themes of unemployment, strikes, homelessness and racism.

Tony Garnett's memoir, *The Day The Music Died*, and a new documentary, *Versus: The Life and Films of Ken Loach*, are out in June. The creative work the two men did together started in the 1960s, when they worked on the BBC Wednesday Play. The film and the book will draw people back to what was an amazing moment for BBC Drama, and also, I hope, introduce their work to new audiences.

They worked as producer and director on *Up The Junction*, *Cathy Come Home*, *The Big Flame*, *The Rank and File* and *Days of Hope*.

One reason for this miraculous record was the space created by the 1960 Royal Commission on Broadcasting proposal for a third channel, which led to BBC 2 going on air in April 1964. The

Director-General, Hugh Greene, encouraged risk-taking and experimentalism, and Stuart Hood, a Marxist, was appointed head of programmes for the new channel, BBC2.

The BBC recruited young directors, writers, and script editors to staff the new channel – people who were not restricted by previous practice and could move away from the metropolitan, southern English culture.

Stanley Newman, who became head of drama at BBC2, said: "I am proud that I played some part in the recognition that the working man was a fit subject for drama, and not such a comic foil in a play on middle-class manners." He started the Wednesday Play series, which had scripts by writers like Jim Allen and Barry Hines.

Jim Allen wrote scripts for *Coronation Street*, left the Granada soap and moved to the BBC, collaborating with Tony Garnett on classics like

→ continued over page

... What it used to be like

→ from previous page

The Lump (1967), *The Big Flame* (1969) and *The Rank and File* (1971). Barry Hines started at the BBC north region. He wrote a novel called *A Kestrel for a Knave*, which became the script of a classic film on working life: *Kes*, by Ken Loach, then a BBC drama director.

These plays' impact derived from the reality of the fictional world they presented. TV critics described them as documentary drama, "faction", or drama-doc, because producer Garnett and Loach used lightweight 16mm equipment to film in actual locations rather than in TV studios, often using untrained performers in the plays.

Predictably the subject matter and emotional impact of the plays triggered angry coverage in the right-wing press. The new Ken Loach documentary *Versus* covers some of the press response to his plays.

It was politics that did for this strand of politically committed drama. Its last flowering was *Boys From The Blackstuff*, written by Alan Bleasdale and directed by Michael Wearing. The series was first shown in October 1982 on a BBC2 Sunday night arts slot and the publicity for it in the Radio Times emphasised the comic elements at the expense of the political thrust. Such was the response to the five episodes it was shown again on BBC1 in a prime time slot eight weeks later.

The 1979 election victory of Margaret Thatcher made it difficult for BBC managers to defend such productions in the face of constrained budgets and political pressure. Thatcher appointed Marmaduke Hussey, who worked for Rupert Murdoch, as BBC chairman in 1986. He sacked the progressive Director General Alasdair Milne, and curbed the creativity in BBC programming. It never got it back.

Tony Garnett pointed out: "This sort of control is the enemy of creativity ... the main effect of the kind of supervision which penetrates into the details of productions, leading to artistic decisions being made further up the hierarchy, is to stifle the creativity which the organisation is supposed to be encouraging."

But that was what public service broadcasting can do. This should not be forgotten by people who don't remember when it did.

■ Tony Garnett's memoir *The Day The Music Died* is published by Constable. He will be speaking at a CPBF North event on Saturday 16 July – see below.

■ *Versus: The Life and Films of Ken Loach* directed by Julie Osmond went on release in June.

ALTERNATIVES PRESS REGULATION

They don't have to be like IPSO

THE ALTERNATIVE press regulator IMPRESS is amassing a bank of alternative publishers promoting themselves as willing to submit to independent scrutiny in line with the proposals of the Leveson Inquiry.

While the so-called Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has gathered nearly all the national press and the big regional groups into its publisher-controlled safe haven, IMPRESS is signing up a number of small and local ones – 31 in all so far – as it goes patiently through the painstaking process of getting recognised under the Leveson procedure.

This involves a lengthy examination by the Press Recognition Panel (PRP), set up under a Royal Charter by Parliament in the Crime and Courts Act three years ago. The PRP is dragging its way through the extensive consultations apparently required to conform to the requirements of the Act.

It has just ended its second two-month consultation on IMPRESS's application – and IMPRESS itself has launched two more, on its financial structure and its proposed Code of Standards.

The CPBF has supported IMPRESS's application at each stage, as has the National Union of Journalists, but others are not so keen.

Notably IPSO, responding through a front organisation, the News Media Association

(NMA). The NMA is run by the Regulatory Funding Company (RFC), which funds and controls IPSO, though it does not declare the fact in its responses to PRP consultations. This is significant, because in its

responses to PRP consultations it routinely repeated attacks on IMPRESS's own funding.

The NMA says it would be "a travesty" if IMPRESS were granted recognition as

an effective and independent regulator, because of "IMPRESS's dependency for its funding on Max Mosley, a wealthy donor engaged in a personal campaign to bring the press to heel following tabloid revelations about his own private life ... the Mosley funding could be withdrawn at any time." The NMA continues: "IMPRESS'

lack of credibility as a regulator due to the absence of any support from the mainstream press industry.

"IMPRESS was created by individuals seeking to reform the press rather than from a desire to implement self-regulation."

Just as IPSO, you might say, "was created by newspaper owners seeking to prevent regulation rather than from a desire to improve the press".

Walter Merricks, Chair of IMPRESS, said: "It is regrettable that the trade body behind IPSO is trying to prevent competition from a truly independent and accountable press regulator ... even though IPSO has no intention of meeting those standards itself."

The new list of local media that have agreed to submit to regulation by IMPRESS include a number that have been reported in *Free Press*, including Bristol Cable, the Brixton Blog and Bugle (last issue), the crowdfunded investigative reporting group Byline and the Port Talbot Magnet and Caerphilly Observer workers' co-ops in South Wales. So has the long-established pro-third world monthly *New Internationalist*.

Walter Merricks said: "We are building our membership from the ground up, working with independent publications first. The publishers joining IMPRESS tell us that, in this challenging environment, they value the trust and reassurance that we can give them. At a time when the news industry is under intense commercial pressure, audience trust is more important than ever."





Event organised by CPBF North

Tony Garnett on his new book

The Day The Music Died: A Memoir

From his childhood in working-class, war-torn Birmingham to his passionate battle to bring controversial topics into the public eye through film and TV, *The Day the Music Died* is the memoir of BBC director and producer, Tony Garnett.

Film *The Price of Coal Part 1, 'Meet The People'* (1977). The drama was filmed in the disused Thorpe Hesley pit, near Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

Director: Ken Loach; **Producer:** Tony Garnett; written by Barry Hines.

Tickets £5.00 Available from www.unityworks.co.uk/events

Unity+Works, Wakefield, Saturday 16 July, 2.00-5.00pm



OVERSEAS

Not just a racist, a brute and a profiteer, he's Murdoch's

AMID THE scrum of far-right bigots, racists and religious reactionaries that comprise the corps of aspirant Republican candidates for the US Presidential election, the one that emerged was Rupert Murdoch's man.

When Donald Trump crushed powerful rival Ted Cruz in May, the defeated Senator from Texas said: "Rupert Murdoch is used to picking world leaders in Australia and the United Kingdom, running tabloids, and we're seeing it here at home."

Murdoch's right-wing TV network Fox had given Trump more than twice as much airtime. Cruz called Fox News "the Donald Trump network 24/7." Trump led all candidates in interview airtime in every month since he formally announced his candidacy in June 2015.

And in addition to getting more than double Cruz's airtime, Trump had more than three times as much interview airtime on the network as Ohio Governor John Kasich, who was the last challenger to drop out of the race on May 4.

The relationship between the Murdoch media and the Donald has been craftily managed. There was a flood of hysterical media chatter

when Trump boycotted one televised debate in a huff about the way he had been treated by Fox presenter Megyn Kelly in a previous encounter. He then insulted her with a clumsy sexual reference.



The two egos exchanged abusive tweets for some days. The supposed "feud" was blatantly contrived, but this is what passes for political reporting in the USA, while the powerbrokers get on with the real business behind the scenes.

It's not unlike the relationship between the

BBC and Nigel Farage, in which the UKIP leader tirelessly complains about the hostile reporting he has to suffer, while enjoying more access per voter than anyone.

A second illusory snag was the putative Republican candidacy of Ben Carson, the dim doctor whom Fox picked up early on and Rupert Murdoch praised to the skies.

Fox mysteriously made an hour-long programme about him after he was filmed making conservative arguments about health care, tax policy and "political correctness" and national debt at a National Prayer Breakfast.

Murdoch tweeted a call for "a real black president" – in contrast to Barack Obama, by which he presumably unwittingly considered Carson a "real black" because he knows his place. Fox made Carson a formal "contributor", pushed him for President and started reporting a non-existent "buzz" around his candidacy.

They couldn't keep it up for long. Carson said such stupid things – comparing healthcare to slavery, while denouncing his critics as racists – that he soon imploded. He now says he wants to be a TV talk show host and has advanced this career with an assessment of Fox rather different from Ted Cruz's: "The media tries to shut me down. But they can't because the good Lord has provided me with mechanisms like my syndicated column and like Fox News. We'd be Cuba if there were no Fox News."

BIG CASH FOR HILLARY FROM MURDOCH EMPIRE

MURDOCH buys Democrats too and his companies have generously funded their leading candidate Hillary Clinton throughout her career.

21st Century Fox and News Corporation together rank ninth on the list of the top "corporate and union donors to the Clintons over two decades", according to a list in *The Wall Street Journal* (owned by News Corp) in 2014. The list counts donations from "companies, foundations, and employees".

21st Century Fox also ranks as the 13th biggest contributor to Hillary Clinton during her political career, according to a database maintained by the Center for Responsive Politics, with \$340,936 of donations.

"The organizations themselves did not donate, rather the money came from the organizations' PACs, their individual members or employees or owners, and those individuals' immediate families. Organization totals include subsidiaries and

affiliates," the database notes.

Murdoch's charitable foundation and his son James are also contributors to the Clinton Foundation, now being investigated by the FBI over possible instances of "public corruption".

The News Corporation Foundation is listed on the foundation website as a donor to the tune of between \$500,001 and \$1,000,000, placing it alongside progressive donor heavyweights like Peter Lewis and Paul Newman's foundation.

Rupert's son James is himself listed as giving more: between \$1 million and \$5 million.

The Murdochs do not however appear to be backing Hillary Clinton in the current race to the same extent. Their companies do not feature in published lists of big donors. But the Democrat front-runner has so far managed to amass more than \$300 million without them.

UNFAIR TO BERNIE. AND WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT?

THEY ARE calling it the "Bernie Blackout," a failure of news organisations, particularly television networks, to seriously cover the candidacy of the socialist Democrat Bernie Sanders.

A *New York Times* report in May pointed out that Hillary Clinton had received more than twice the "news and commentary" about her campaign.

And an analysis of coverage of all candidates in 2015 found that Clinton received more than six times the coverage on the TV networks – 121 minutes a day while Sanders received only 20 minutes.

Of course, much of the time given to Clinton is negative coverage relating to her various legal transgressions. It is also true that Sanders gets much more attention on social media, appealing to the younger age groups that support him, but this cannot be quantified.

In print, the *New York Times*

was caught out imposing a negative editorial slant on a major feature on the Sanders campaign.

The article, published online, described the way the Vermont senator had managed a significant number of legislative victories in Congress.

It had been up for several hours when *Times* editors made significant changes to its tone and content, turning it from almost glowing to somewhat disparaging.

The headline was changed and new paragraphs inserted saying: "There is little to draw from his small-ball legislative approach to suggest that he could succeed. (He) is suddenly promising ... free college tuition paid for with giant tax hikes and) a huge increase in government health care, which has made even liberal Democrats sceptical."

The *Times* duly ran into heavy criticism – which was upheld in an investigation by the paper's public editor.

Hillsborough: who profited but the owner of the Sun?

AWKWARD SQUAD



TIM GOPSILL

THE RETURN of the soccer hooligan in France brings recollections of the 1980s, when the smart colour magazines carried awestruck interviews with articulate City Boy bullies who travelled round the country on Saturday afternoons staging violent set-piece gang fights outside football grounds – like the international brand now celebrated in Marseille – while the ordinary fans in the stands took the blame in the tabloids.

This was Thatcher's Britain, in which all football fans were cast as hooligans and lined up with trade unionists and socialists as "enemies within". They were demonised by the press, dutifully following Margaret Thatcher's crusade to destroy the traditional institutions of working class culture like unions, football and the old Labour Party. In her great social experiment working class people were to be transformed into property-owning yuppies.

Football was an area from which the middle class had supposedly been excluded by the thuggishness and crudity of people and their language. This was the story: all the family men who couldn't think of taking their wives and children to games. Attendances fell drastically.

As fans came out of matches, they were set on by the police, like demonstrators, then blamed for the consequent fracas. (I was in such scenes myself – at both demos and football!)

The worst crime of which fans were always accused was running onto the pitch. This apparently harmless activity (did it myself at Villa Park) happened from time to time when exuberant fans rushed on to celebrate at the end. Commentators on Match of the Day, which in 1983 first took its massively watched Saturday evening slot, seethed with disapproval.

Thatcher threatened to impose a membership

scheme on the Football League, so that only registered fans could get in. The clubs panicked and started building cages round the pitches, to keep the fans off.

That's what killed the 96 people at Hillsborough in 1989. It wasn't the police who let the crowd in; it was the cages that stopped them escaping. Stewards would not open the



People in Liverpool have boycotted the Sun since its lies about the Hillsborough disaster. But Murdoch made much more money from football on Sky TV

gates in the cages – even though they were there for emergencies – because the imperative was to prevent running on the pitch. The fans at the front were crushed to death.

The Daily Mirror ran a graphic photo of distorted, agonised faces pressed against the mesh, and was widely condemned – for showing the truth while the others printed lies.

The outcome of the Hillsborough inquest

in May was a triumph. The police were stupid and they told stupid lies to try to justify themselves afterwards.

The Sun that printed them with such relish has deserved the condemnation it has suffered ever since, though the other right-wing tabloids did as well.

But that's not the whole story. The demonising of football fans by the media was a big factor; yet it never features in reports or analysis, and nor did it, amazingly, at the inquest. The famous 14 questions for the jury asked about structural problems but barely mentioned the cages, nor asked about decisions not at first to open the gates.

Such inquiries are always set up to pile the blame onto a designated scapegoat which in this case was South Yorkshire Police.

But the collaboration of the press with Margaret Thatcher's project to neutralise working class institutions and culture was an element in many of the catastrophes of the 1980s: most ostentatiously with the big industrial clashes and the turmoil within the Labour Party itself.

As for football, the Taylor commission inquiry into the disaster recommended all-seater stadia with no cages, and they came down within days. The sport has been comprehensively sanitised as a big-money spectacle with ticket prices beyond the reach of most ordinary fans, certainly of the sort to run onto a pitch. Instead, in their millions, they pay Rupert Murdoch for vicarious attendance.

You set the question: who benefits? The answer is always Big Media; like lawyers the only people who invariably benefit from disaster.

The loss of a few hundred thousand sales of the Sun on Merseyside has been paltry in comparison to Murdoch's gains.

PRINT IS DOOMED? NO, THE WEBSITES ARE

WHEN THE Independent newspaper was closed down in March after 30 years, everyone said, it's only the first, this is the way all the papers will go. If that is true we are doomed.

The Independent brand was kept on with its website, but it's not working.

Figures in May showed the digital audience had fallen back below the level the site commanded before the paper disappeared.

Total daily browsers were

down more than 7 per cent to 3,048,377, below the 3,082,936 average daily browsers it attracted in March, according to the latest monthly figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Before then, hits on the site were rising steadily. Now, people are losing interest.

So what was in the brand? The Independent had long lost its unique selling point, of being non-partisan amid the morass of bias and prejudice in

the surrounding papers.

What it had left was a string of top-class writers – columnists and expert commentators, particularly on world affairs.

No-one bought it for its news, because the staff was tiny and the spread of stories, though interesting, was thin.

When the paper closed they sacked the reporters and kept the names. Not enough, strangely, to hold people's attention.

The print sales were pitiful: around 28,000 a day at the end. Yet it must have had a presence in the market beyond its numbers.

What it had, which corporate executives couldn't appreciate, was a critical mass of journalistic endeavour that attracted an interest was greater than its market presence.

Now it's just another middle-of-the-road comment website. Who's bothered about that?