

FREE Press

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Regulation under the spotlight

By Barry White

This year's CPBF Annual General Meeting was held in London on 14 July and featured an in-depth discussion on the future of media regulation. The questions posed were: does convergence mean that we throw away the rule-book and forget all about regulating more particularly for public service values in broadcasting? Does the internet throw everything we stand for out of the window?

Introducing the debate, CPBF co-chair Tim Gopsill said the Campaign should assess whether its policies and attitudes need to be revised. When the CPBF was founded in 1979, it was a time of rapid technological change. The print and media unions, as well as media academics and campaigners, were concerned about the impact of computer technology and a number of industrial disputes took place. With change there was a public discussion about the future of media. Talk was of "cheap production", which would lead to a transformation, when almost anybody would be able to produce his or her own newspaper or magazine.

But now, 25 years later, it was worth reflecting on what the unions and the Campaign said at that time — that the media corporations would take control of this new technology. Only one new national newspaper, which started post 1979 — the *Independent* — remains today (although there has been an increase in the number of specialist magazines).

The same concerns were aired about the growth of the internet — the potential for democratisation of the media — a media open and accessible to all. But people were more sceptical, as the big media companies like Murdoch, AOL and Yahoo have either

bought up new ventures, or started their own enterprises.

Whilst newspapers were for historical and political reasons self-regulating, there had been an acceptance that because of limited outlets, broadcasting needed to be regulated. But with more outlets and technological change the argument was now that these matters should be left to market forces to decide. In effect the market would be the new regulator, much in the same way as newspapers operate.

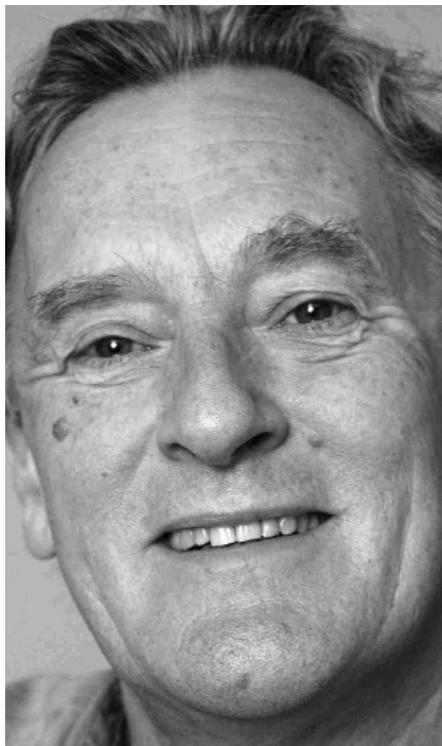
Websites presented a new problem. They were difficult to regulate, many were run by big media owners and there were serious questions about how present regulatory systems

should relate to so called "new media". These are some of the issues confronting the Campaign, which needs to lay down policy markers over the next year so that we can contribute effectively to public and political debate.

During the wide-ranging discussion that followed it was stated that we should look at the humane and social uses of new technology. We should not just accept it as the determining factor or driving force in a society that it somehow remains outside. Regulation was now more difficult, but it was not impossible. The past few years have seen not just de-regulation but rather re-regulation in favour of big corporate interests.

Reference was made to the strict regulation of political broadcasting especially during election periods and the lack of such regulation in internet broadcasting where "attack advertisements" are commonplace. Websites are also moving into television in a big way without the same regulatory structures faced by the main TV broadcasters — especially in news presentation. With public service broadcasting withering on the vine, there was a call for the Campaign to develop a principled opposition to a market-led communications system by promoting public service media at its core and greater democratic supervision of Government communications policy.

Over the next few months the CPBF National Council will look at questions which need to be addressed around the broad and linked areas of convergence, neo-liberalism and the best way to take these discussions forward to a wider audience with some form of publication. The CPBF web site and *Free Press* will keep you informed of developments.



Tim Gopsill: need for reflection

Murdoch takeover of WSJ 'is bad news'

The 118-year-old *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) is hugely prestigious in the USA, where it has the second-highest circulation of any newspaper.

It comes complete with tailored editions for Europe and Asia and a radio news operation that sells business reports to 280 American radio stations. With 931,000 paid subscribers, its internet edition, WSJ Online, is the world's largest paid-subscription website.

To this Dow Jones adds online financial and business information services, which enjoyed a 30 per cent increase in advertising revenue between the first quarters of 2006 and 2007.

Other products including *Barron's* magazine, a weekly title providing detailed market analysis as well as its own subscription-only website. MarketWatch, a financial news and information site, are other powerful Dow Jones assets.

After weeks of uncertainty and media speculation, the Bancroft family accepted the \$5bn offer from Rupert Murdoch. The sale is unlikely to meet any resistance from the US regulators.

The news prompted a swift reaction from US Free Press president Robert W McChesney who issued the following statement on 30 July:

"This takeover is bad news for anyone who cares about quality journalism and a healthy democracy. Giving any single company — let alone one controlled by

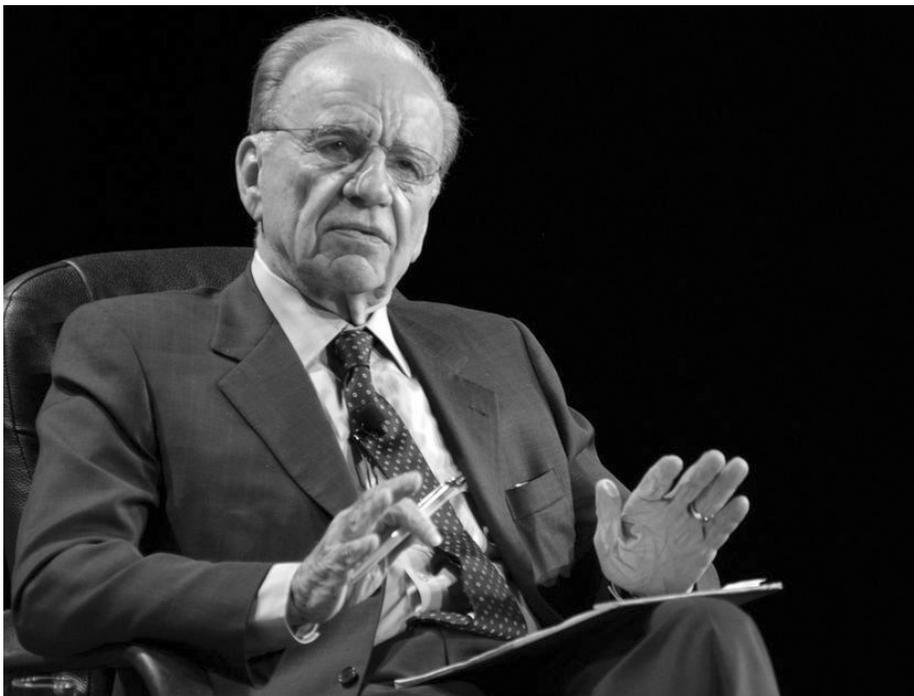
Rupert Murdoch — this much media power is unconscionable.

"Media consolidation has replaced investigative journalism with infotainment, foreign affairs reporting with fluff, and local coverage with cookie-cutter content. Contrary to industry spin, emerging internet outlets fail to offset consolidation's effect on journalism. Now Murdoch will control a broadcast network, a cable news channel and a national newspaper — three of the small handful of outlets that set our national news agenda.

"Rupert Murdoch — who has never hesitated to use his pulpit to advance his own ideological and business interests — won't change his ways. But we can change the policies that allow companies like News Corp. to dominate our media.

"We can only hope the culmination of this deal is the wake-up call Washington needs to start rolling back media consolidation. The first step is to pass new 'cross-ownership' laws that would prevent the owner of a national television network from owning a national daily newspaper.

"Murdoch's empire wouldn't exist if he hadn't been aided and abetted by Washington policymakers in Congress and at the Federal Communications Commission [regulator]. Only by restoring public input in the policy-making process can we create the kind of diverse, accessible and independent media that journalism — and our democracy — so desperately needs."



Rupert Murdoch: bid of \$5bn for the *Wall Street Journal* and Dow Jones

New inquiries into ownership

By Barry White

The House of Lords Communications Committee has launched a new inquiry into the news and media ownership. It will be in two parts, with the first focusing on changes in the way people access news, developments in the way news is provided and how concentrated media ownership affects the balance and diversity of news. The committee will later go on to consider the concentration of media ownership, cross-media ownership and the regulatory framework.

The inquiry comes at an important time as the Competition Commission considers the implications of BSkyB's purchase of 17.9 per cent of ITV shares last November. The CPBF and other media campaigners have argued the Commission should examine the wider question of Murdoch's British media holdings.

Meanwhile Ofcom has published a discussion document *New News, Future News — The challenges for television news after the digital switchover*. The report was commissioned ahead of its Public Service Broadcasting review to be launched in the autumn. Closing date for comments on the report was 7 September.

Details of the CPBF response will be posted on the web site at: www.cpbp.org.uk

Murdoch junior takes the money

By Barry White

BSkyB chief executive, James Murdoch, has received a cash payout of almost £4m following the achievement of operational targets over the last three years. The *Media Guardian* website reported on 14 August that the £3.91m cash sum comes on top of the near-£3m remuneration package Murdoch received for the year to the end of June, as stated in BSkyB's annual report.

The payout related to the vesting of shares James Murdoch received in August 2004 and November 2005 under BSkyB's Long Term Incentive Plan. On 11 August, 70 per cent of those shares — a total of 582,750 became exercisable and BSkyB agreed to pay the amount in cash at 671.5p per share. The share price used was the equivalent to Sky's closing mid-market price on 13 August.

Murdoch's shares became eligible to be vested following the achievement of a number of operational targets relating to earnings per share, subscriber growth and free cash flow growth.

Campaigners win official secrets case concession



The Old Bailey: scene of a small but significant triumph

By Julie-ann Davies

The media have dragged a small concession from the jaws of censorship. A coalition of British media organisations has won a limited victory in an appeal against restrictions imposed on reporting the Official Secrets Act trial of David Keogh and Leo O'Connor.

Keogh and O'Connor were jailed in May for breaching the Official Secrets Act (OSA). The Old Bailey heard that Keogh, a Cabinet Office civil servant passed a memo containing minutes of an April 2004 meeting between George Bush and Tony Blair to O'Connor, a political researcher.

O'Connor, who opposed the Iraq war, placed a copy of the document into papers belonging to his boss Anthony Clarke, the Labour MP for Northampton South. The court heard O'Connor and Keogh wanted the document's contents to become public. But, when Clarke found the memo he contacted the police.

Downing Street was made aware of the leak, but in November 2005 the Daily Mirror ran a story on the alleged contents of the memo. It said the document contained details of a conversation between Bush and Blair in which Bush discussed bombing Al Jazeera's Qatari headquarters but was dissuaded by Blair.

The White House quickly dismissed the Mirror's allegations. An official said: "We are not going to dignify something so outlandish with a response." However, within 24 hours of the Mirror's publication, newspaper editors were contacted and threatened with prosecution if they published the document. Lord Goldsmith, the

Attorney-General, told editors "publication of a document that has been unlawfully disclosed by a Crown servant could be in breach of Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act".

During the trial Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Tony Blair's foreign policy adviser, said that conversations between political leaders must remain confidential — even if their content was immoral or illegal. He added that publication of the document's contents could "seriously damage relations with friendly governments".

Prosecutor David Perry QC told the jury the OSA does not exist to prevent Governmental embarrassment but to protect the interests of the State. He said: "We are not talking about what may be embarrassing or an act of disloyalty. Even in the age of mass communication, something remains sacred."

The interests of the State and the interests of "friendly governments" were openly taken into account during the Keogh and O'Connor trial. But it is argued that far less consideration was given to the public's right to know. During the trial discussions related to the contents of the document were held in secret. The media and public were excluded, only the jury could hear that evidence. Publication was prohibited.

The strictures on reporting the trial were tightened when the trial judge, Mr Justice Aikens used the Contempt of Court Act to impose a further injunction preventing the media from discussing the trial and speculation about the contents of the memo in the same article. Nor were the media allowed to publish this information in two separate articles placed on the

same page.

Additionally, the media was prohibited from publishing a comment made by Keogh when quizzed about the memo in open court. This placed the media in the Kafkaesque position of not being able to repeat material they had previously published and that remained available on their websites.

Seventeen British media organisations launched a joint appeal against Justice Aikens' injunction. They were partially successful. On 30 July the Court of Appeal ruled the media could once again report allegations about the memo's contents. However, they were warned that suggesting these allegations accurately represented the evidence given in secret could be in contempt of court. The media are still not permitted to publish Keogh's comment. But they can say Keogh is reported to have said the contents of the document were "abhorrent" and "illegal" and that he felt the document revealed Bush to be a "madman".

The document is reported to pertain to the time around April 2004 which was a particularly sensitive period in the Iraq war. There are numerous reports of British unease and concerns surrounding the attack on Fallujah and the use of white phosphorus at this time. This is not just an issue of media freedom. When the media is gagged the public is simultaneously blindfolded. For genuine democracy to exist an electorate needs to be able to hold their Government to account. The Iraq war has been masked by a confection of official spin and disinformation, now we are being prevented from hearing the truth behind the fiction and discovering what Blair and Bush really said behind closed doors.

CPBF welcomes Scottish broadcast commission

By Barry White

The CPBF has welcomed the recent announcement by Alex Salmond, First Minister for Scotland, that he will establish a Scottish broadcasting commission to examine the future of broadcasting in Scotland.

Blair Jenkins, former head of news and current affairs at BBC Scotland will chair the Commission. It is expected to meet during the autumn and report in early 2008.

The Campaign looks forward to cooperating with the Commission and hopes to submit evidence to it, following consultation with CPBF supporters in Scotland at a meeting in the near future. Details of the meeting will be circulated to Scottish CPBF supporters and placed on the CPBF website.

The announcement has triggered debate about whether the Scottish Parliament should be handed control of Scottish TV and radio policy and if Scotland should get its own publicly funded service. It has also raised once again the question of a 6pm Scottish television news programme.

Writing in the *Guardian* on Monday 13 August, Alex Bell, the director of

allmediascotland.com and Brian McNair, professor of communication at Strathclyde University, debated the issue.

Bell said: "The proposal for an hour-long teatime news programme produced and presented from Glasgow — the so-called 'Scottish Six' — would reflect a mix of national (Scottish), UK (English, Welsh and Northern Irish) and international (nations with bigger things to worry about) news.

"From a technical point of view, it would be easy, and join the many platforms that use BBC content to present a picture of the world. The peculiar level of hostility to the idea comes not from journalists but from politicians.

"The teatime TV news is, remarkably, either a flagship of Britishness or the ice-breaker of nationalism. Who would have thought that Natasha Kaplinsky bore such a constitutional burden?

"Labour argues that if the evening output changes, the Union will unravel, while the SNP says that change is both inevitable and desirable, as it will boost the creative industries.

"While it is SNP policy that, post independence, there will be a Scottish Broadcasting Service, there is no

assumption that relations with the BBC should end.

"If you look on the Beeb not as a symbol of Britishness, but as a world-beating broadcaster guided by the Reithian mission to educate, inform and entertain, then why not share the institution, even as the constitution changes? That doesn't sound parochial in anyone's language."

McNair argued: "The debate about the future of Scottish broadcasting is an opening skirmish in the debate about independence which the SNP government has launched.

"The issue is straightforward. Is Scottish broadcasting stronger as part of a UK structure with access to the financial, cultural and human capital of 60 million people, or going it alone as an independent nation of five million?

"The SNP argues the latter, accusing the BBC of doing down the poor wee Scots, and stealing our rightful nine per cent of network spending.

"It is, as we say up here, 'a pile a' shite'. Notwithstanding dips in its share of network commissions, Glasgow is still the third biggest producer of TV programmes in the UK, after London and Manchester.

"BBC Scotland has just moved into a £188m digital production centre on the River Clyde, next door to SMG, owner of the two Scottish ITV franchises.

"ITV's executive chairman Michael Grade and BBC director general Mark Thompson were at least partly right in their diagnosis of the reasons for Scotland's falling share of both BBC and ITV network spend — it's about ideas, stupid, and it's a Scottish problem, not theirs.

"The SNP's alternative explanation is based on a nationalist fallacy — that the BBC and its commercial counterparts are colonialist structures, something the English have done to us Scots, and which hold us back from discovering our true genius."

Alan's thanks

By Barry White

BBC Gaza reporter Alan Johnston was finally freed on 4 July, after 114 days of captivity and as the last edition of *Free Press* was being distributed. Although he has avoided media interviews, he gave an exclusive interview to the NUJ's magazine *The Journalist*.

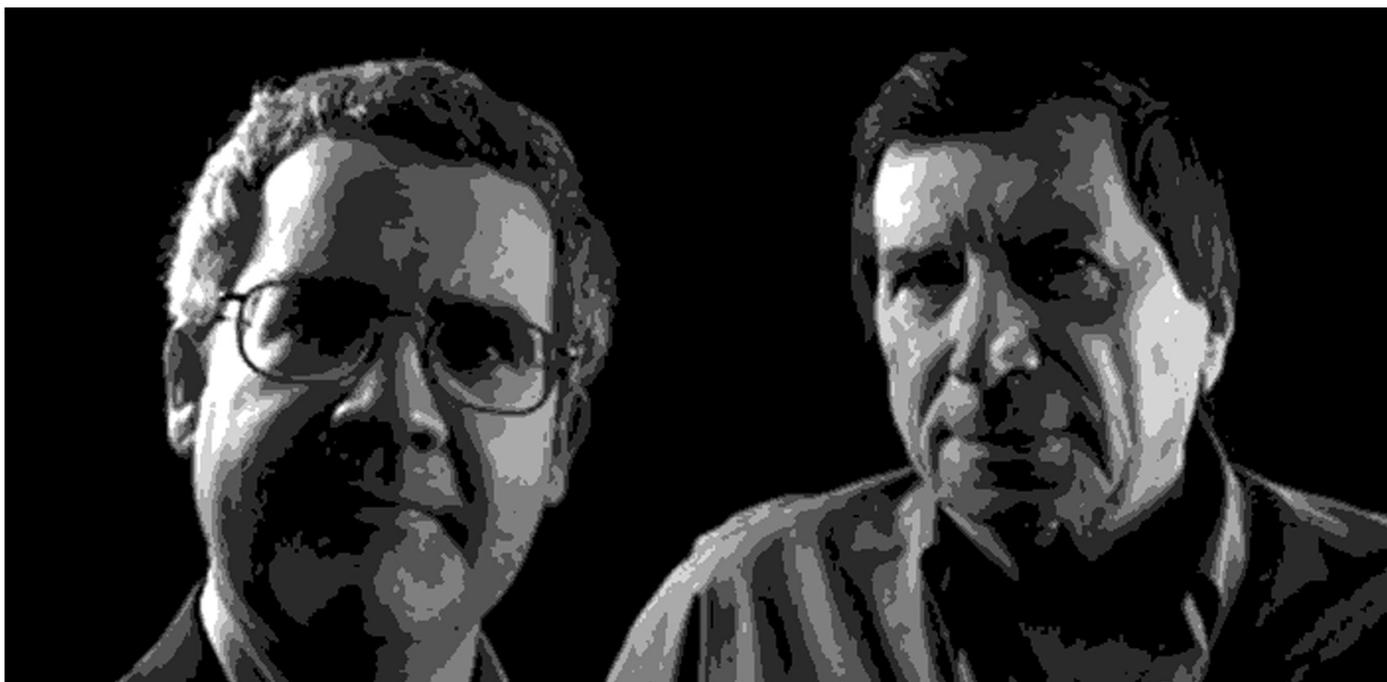
In the article he thanked everyone for their support. "I'm the luckiest journalist alive" he said. "My name was mentioned so often on the BBC World Service, it felt like my own personal radio station. I was over overwhelmed by the extraordinary tide of support. People were demonstrating, calling for my release in Angola, in Bangladesh, in Belgium — gathering in the sun in places I'd never visited. It is strange and wonderful to be free."

After his release Alan went home to his parents' home in the west of Scotland to rest and recuperate.



GUY SMALLMAN WWW.GUYSMALLMAN.COM

Let us know your thoughts. Send your views to the web site at: www.cpb.org.uk and help get the debate going within the Campaign before the Scottish CPBF meeting on the Commission.



Guardian journalists Rob Evans and David Leigh: years of work uncovering the activities of Europe's largest arms company

School's in for summer

By Julie-ann Davies

The Centre for Investigative Journalism's summer school was held in July at City University in London. Journalists from all over the world gathered to attend the workshops and seminars. The event attracted an international cast of speakers including Lowell Bergman, David Leigh and Ali Fadhil.

Lowell Bergman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and TV producer. His investigation of the tobacco industry, and his subsequent battle with CBS to get the story aired, was immortalised in the 1999 Academy Award nominated film *The Insider*.

Bergman spoke about the difficulties facing American journalists fighting to protect the identities of their sources. He said: "With whistleblowers and confidential sources, my first caution to you is that you have to be prepared to get fired, to say 'no' to your employer."

He discussed the relationship between the US Justice Department and the journalistic community. Bergman says more subpoenas are being sought and enforced against the media. "In a criminal matter, in Federal Court, it is unlikely that you would be able to protect your sources — you would have to go to jail to protect them."

Additionally, he says, presented with the prospect of legal action, publishers and broadcasters often pressurise their staff to surrender the information.

"Generally speaking most publishers and broadcasters will give up the ship. They are in it for the money or have various other interests. Eventually even non-profit broadcasters or publishers will see that

legally they will have to give in because it's too much of an economic strain on them."

Also speaking was the *Guardian's* David Leigh. Leigh, along with Rob Evans, recently reported that Europe's biggest arms company BAE has engaged in corrupt practices to sell arms abroad.

Asked if he had been concerned about the wider repercussions of his BAE exposé Leigh asserted his first duty was to the public interest. "It is not my job to think for one minute about the larger consequences of anything. It is certainly my job not to let myself be manipulated by people who have got axes to grind.

"Most of the claims people make when they are trying to stop publication are a pack of lies. The claims that if the BAE stuff came out it would cost British lives certainly turned out to be a pack of lies. It is absolutely wrong for a journalist to ask themselves what the political consequences of what they are running might be.

"Everything we did in the BAE story was only designed to get more information and get it out there. It was never designed to have any political consequence whatever."

Iraqi journalist Ali Fadhil started his career as an interpreter in Iraq. His documentary, *Iraq's Missing Billions*, showed how the American-led interim government squandered \$20 billion of reconstruction money but failed to improve conditions for Iraqis.

Fadhil graphically recounted the hazards of working in Iraq. He said: "Reporting in Iraq is difficult now. I just came from Baghdad and I felt lucky every time I returned to the hotel. You risk your life every day and depend on luck and a bit of experience. It's

just by chance that you stay alive.

"Since I arrived in Baghdad in May I cannot count a day that passed without an explosion or an incident happening close to me. The problem is the people now resent Westerners in general. If you are British they will think you are American.

"Every foreigner in Iraq is American until proved otherwise. When they kill you then they will find out.

Fadhil said young people in Iraq have been, and continue to be, brutalised by the constant violence surrounding them. "The problem is also the mental problem we are having in Iraq. The younger generation, the children, they have no language whatsoever, apart from 'car bomb', 'bullets' and 'let's kill this man'.

"I was filming kids playing soccer in Baghdad. Because I did not speak Iraqi to them, they thought I was a foreigner. They were saying 'How much would this foreigner worth, if we tell someone about him?' They were about 10 or 12 years-old."

Fadhil said although it was possible that his reporting could contribute to anti-Western feeling in Iraq he would not exercise self-censorship. He said: "I think truth is always good. I must always show what is happening. It is good for the people. Iraqis are already seeing this every day, they are living in it.

"Is my work going to increase the hatred of the Iraqis against the Americans? Probably, yes. But, I am a journalist. My duty is to get the truth out nothing else. I should not care about any government. I should not care about any public figure because these are the people responsible for what is happening in Iraq."

Sound advice



THE ETHICAL JOURNALIST
Tony Harcup
Sage Publications, £18

By Nicholas Jones

After this summer's soul searching over the alleged faking of television and radio programmes, the obvious title for Tony Harcup's next book must surely be *The Ethical Broadcaster*. He has pulled together an invaluable compendium of the numerous ethical dilemmas every journalist will probably face at some point in their careers. A timely reminder, if one was needed, that public trust in the news media is hard won and easily lost.

While the argument over the need for an enforceable code of conduct ebbs and flows, journalists cannot ignore the fact that our behaviour and ethics are under greater scrutiny than ever before.

Journalists must not forget the essentials of reporting: for example, quotation marks should mean what they indicate, that the words reproduced are those which were used and that the quote does represent an honest account of what was said.

While I readily accept that journalists down the ages have taken advantage of anonymous quotes and justified them with formulations along the lines that their source was someone "whose probity cannot be questioned", there is no doubt that lack of attribution has become more common in recent years.

When I worked in the local and national press in the 1960s, news stories required quotes from named individuals. While a greater degree of freedom was allowed for columnists and investigative reporters, the news pages were sacrosanct: stories without identified sources stood little chance of being published.

My one disappointment when reading *The Ethical Journalist* was to find how quickly Harcup skated over the insidious culture of the anonymous quote. His chapter on journalists and their sources provided a wealth of background and perceptive insight, for example, into



The 1984-85 miners' strike: broadcasters' mistakes were entirely innocent

events surrounding Andrew Gilligan's infamous broadcast on weapons of mass destruction and the subsequent failure of the BBC and the wider journalistic community to protect Dr David Kelly's identity.

Harcup cannot be faulted on the soundness of his advice: all journalists should reflect on the importance of taking and keeping good notes and their responsibility not to betray confidential sources. But although he agrees that a reduction in the use of anonymous quotes might help increase the trustworthiness of journalists among readers, viewers and listeners, he does not explore the reasons why reporters have become so pressurised that, on some occasions, they seem to think there is no alternative but to make it up.

Whether it is the ubiquitous "insider" who is being quoted or one of the legion of anonymous sources in and around Westminster and Whitehall such as "Downing Street aide", "Whitehall official", "cabinet colleague", "close friend" or "senior MP", the tell-tale signs are pretty obvious; the quotes all have an uncanny knack of having been tailor-made for the story line and the lack of any attribution whatsoever suggests a fertile imagination might have been at work.

Why is it that trainee journalists from universities and colleges slip so easily into the world of the anonymous quote? My hunch is that all too often reporters are denied the opportunity to leave the office and rarely get the chance to make face-to-face inquiries. Instead they are tied to their telephone and computer keyboards and, in their struggle to meet ever-pressing deadlines, opt for the safety of non-attribution.

My heart sank when discussing these pressures with newly-hired reporters on a suburban free sheet. The latest edict from their editor was that instead of having to have two named residents to substantiate a local story, one resident would do and identification was not required. Is it any wonder that a generation of journalists have no hesitation

when writing the line "an onlooker said..."?

More power to Tony Harcup's elbow. He should strive to keep *The Ethical Journalist* updated and if he does venture into the world of broadcasting he might like to ponder on my own anecdotal experiences. When I began preparing reports for BBC television news in the mid 1970s I was struck by the meticulous way in which the editors stuck rigidly to the time sequence in which the material had been filmed; arrivals shots or something similar invariably came first followed frame by frame by subsequent events.

When I asked why packages produced by our competitors often opened with the newsiest pictures first, I was told that the BBC always tried to tell the story in the sequence in which it had happened, even though this might not be the best way to grab the viewers' attention.

As events would show, increased competition and tighter deadlines put enormous pressure on production teams, especially in edit suites out on location. In the rush to meet a live transmission, the nearest and most appropriate shot would have to do; there was no intention to deceive, the aim was simply to make sure that the best and most-up-to-date material got to air. I admit having succumbed myself to these very same pressures.

There was no BBC conspiracy during the 1984-5 pit dispute to show the mineworkers in the worst possible light. If, as alleged at the time, shots of baton-wielding police and picket-line strikers were in the wrong order, I am convinced it was an entirely innocent mistake; the pictures were still a faithful representation of the story line.

Nonetheless while the BBC might get away with putting striking miners and the police in the reverse order, the same cannot be said about the Queen. Yet again we are back to the nuts and bolts of our craft: if quotation marks appear in print they should have been used honestly and the same goes for the time line when reporting for television or radio.

Save Storyville

By Tom Roberts

After a miserable summer, the BBC is facing an even more testing autumn. In early October, Director-General Mark Thompson will ask the BBC Trust to approve a new round of budget cuts. A three per cent reduction is required given the Government's less than generous licence fee settlement.

Caught between their programme aspirations and promises to move major London-based departments north while managing the digital switchover in 2012, the BBC will have to prioritise.

Early indications look bad, raising fundamental questions about the purpose of the BBC. The BBC1 documentary series *One Life* is unlikely to be re-commissioned; *The Money Programme* is said to be closing; *Newsnight*, documentaries, indeed all factual output, are facing substantial cuts. Michael Lyons, Chairman of the Trust, even hinted recently that a whole channel, either BBC2 or BBC4, may have to go.

In a skirmish earlier this summer, *Storyville*, the award-winning international documentary strand on BBC2 and BBC4, was informed its budget would be slashed by 60 per cent to save a mere £1.2m. BBC managers no doubt thought it would hardly register on the broadcast Richter-scale. Instead, a lightning campaign to save *Storyville* is underway.

Top filmmakers like Paul Greengrass and Michael Apted are up in arms. Three separate cinema celebrations of *Storyville* films will screen in London and Berlin this September. The online petition of industry professionals grows daily. But what really distinguishes this campaign is the large number of commissioning editors and broadcast executives, from SBS in Australia,

to Arte in Europe and PBS in the States, who have come out publicly to ask the BBC to stop.

Why are so many key people so exercised over such a small cut? After all, *Storyville's* budget represents only about seven one-hundredths of one per cent of the BBC's total income. The answer lies in *Storyville's* uniqueness and the devastation wrought on the documentary output over the past decade.

When *One Life* goes, an emasculated *Storyville* will be the last documentary strand on the BBC. But it's much more important than that. *Storyville* is the home of the creative documentary and is the only place on the BBC where filmmakers produce original work without the constraints of format-led programming or schedule-led commissioning — hence its illustrious output.

It's international down to its fingertips — producers get no more than a third of their production costs from *Storyville*, and so have to construct elaborate co-productions in Europe and North America. That means that the tastes and concerns of foreign broadcasters influence what *Storyville* commissions — in addition to giving the UK audience remarkable value for money. *Storyville* virtually single-handedly fulfils the BBC Charter's requirement to bring "the UK to the world and the world to the UK".

The BBC, through *Storyville*, dominates this small market of internationally made and internationally acclaimed films. If it pulls out, it will profoundly damage this last remaining habitat for truly imaginative and innovative documentaries. It must not happen.

Sign our petition, write to the BBC, and join us. www.ipetitions.com/petition/savestoryville



Mordechai Vanunu: whistleblower

Vanunu faces further prison sentence

By Barry White

Mordechai Vanunu, the whistleblower, who revealed Israel's nuclear programme to the *Sunday Times* in 1986, faces a further prison term after being found guilty of breaching the severe conditions imposed on him.

Vanunu was released in 2004 after spending 18 years in prison — much of it in solitary confinement — for his revelations. He was sentenced in July 2007 to another six months in prison with a further six months suspended for talking with foreigners, and travelling to Bethlehem at Christmas.

Upon Vanunu's conviction his lawyer said that Mordechai had not been found guilty for what he said but simply just for talking. Amnesty International, the International Federation of Journalists and *Index on Censorship* have condemned the sentence.

Vanunu is likely to start his imprisonment in September, although talks between his lawyers and the authorities about a possible appeal were ongoing when *Free Press* went to press.

Vanunu worked as a nuclear technician in Israel between 1976 and 1985, then left the country. Having told his story to the *Sunday Times*, he was lured by an agent of the Israeli secret service Mossad to Rome, where he was drugged and abducted by Mossad to Israel, where he was tried in secret for treason.



US soldiers in Iraq, from Tom Roberts's *Storyville* film *A Company of Soldiers*

Spin conference in Glasgow

Many speakers of interest to *Free Press* readers will be featured at a conference in Glasgow in September.

Communication and Conflict Conference: Propaganda, Spin and Lobbying in the Global Age will be held in Glasgow between 7 and 9 September.

Speakers include: Ken Silverstein (founder of *Counterpunch* and Washington editor of *Harpers Magazine*); Mark Curtis (author of *Unpeople* and *Web of Deceit*); Mark Daly (BBC, *The Secret Policeman*); William Carroll; Nick Jones; Greg

Philo; Sharon Beder and David Miller.

There will be sessions on the role of spin and propaganda in reporting conflict, the War on Terror and panels on resisting the influence of lobbyists and spin doctors on channels and processes of public communication and reclaiming the media. There will also be a sessions on investigative journalism and science communication.

There are discounts available for campaigners, students and the unwaged. To register visit gs.strath.ac.uk/component/option.com_wrapper/Itemid,126/

Conference on media war bias

Under sustained pressure from the government, the mainstream media have become markedly less critical in their coverage of the "war on terror" at home and abroad.

Noting this trend, Peter Wilby wrote in the *Media Guardian* in April: "The press has apparently learnt nothing from the dodgy dossiers and phantom WMDs that preceded the Iraq war."

This is the context for a half-day conference hosted by Media Workers Against the War entitled *The First Casualty? War and the Media Today*, at the London School of Economics on Saturday, November 17.

Speakers include Andrew Gilligan (ex-BBC writer and broadcaster), Peter

Wilby (*Media Guardian* columnist and former editor of the *Independent on Sunday* and the *New Statesman*), Philip Knightley (author of *The First Casualty*) and Sami Ramadani (Iraqi Democrats against War).

The event aims to bring together practising journalists from print and broadcast media to develop concrete proposals to help combat inadequate and, less often, deliberately misleading work that leads to pro-war bias.

● Tickets £10/£5 from info@mwaw.net
Further information from Media Workers Against the War, www.mwaw.net

'Worst lobbyist' nominations sought

The problems of secrecy and lobbying still occupy the minds of legislators, lobbyists and campaigners in Brussels. As the Commission's European Transparency Initiative rumbles on through a drawn out 'stakeholder dialogue' process, news reaches us of an interesting development.

Transparency campaigners are seeking nominations for the Worst Lobby Award for 2007. Now in its third year, the prize is given to the lobbyist, company or lobby group that has employed the most deceptive, misleading, or manipulative lobbying tactics in their attempts to influence EU decision-making.

This year's event includes a special Worst EU Greenwash Award for the company whose advertising, PR and lobbying lingo is most at odds with the real environmental impacts of their core business activities.

Last year's winner of this award was Exxon for funding front groups and think tanks involved in climate change denial. In 2005 the award was won by the Campaign for Creativity, a front group which was used by large IT companies to lobby for software patents and intellectual property rights. You can view this year's rogues gallery, and even submit your own nominations at www.worstlobby.eu/2007

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