

# FREE Press

No 179 November-December 2010 £1 Journal of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

## RADIO FREE PRESS TAKES TO THE AIR

THE CPBF has launched an internet radio service, with a podcast on Rupert Murdoch's bid to buy up the whole of BSkyB.

The half-hour podcast is planned as the first of a regular series, starting monthly, to discuss and campaign on vital questions of media policy.

The programmes, presented by former BBC political correspondent Nicholas Jones and recorded by freelance Claire Colley, will involve media activists, MPs, academic experts, media workers and union reps. The aim is to inform people who are concerned to preserve independent, diverse and accountable media in the UK.

This first podcast, talking about the rise and rise of the Murdoch empire

and its bidding for complete control of Sky TV, features Labour MP Austin Mitchell – a former TV journalist himself; Professor Steven Barnett of Westminster University, a leading media commentator; Pat Holland, lecturer in media at Bournemouth University and author of books on television history; and Tim Gopsill, editor of *Free Press*.

The second programme, on the future of the BBC in the wake of October's licence fee decision, was to be recorded shortly after *Free Press* was printed.

The podcasts are on [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk). Please pass the link to colleagues, friends and fellow campaigners.



Under siege: WikiLeaks' Julian Assange

## Man on the run: the media that join the hunt

IF YOU declare virtual war on the greatest power on earth, if you are going to expose the arrogance, ignorance and small-mindedness of its officials, you can't be surprised when it turns its full armoury of political and security weapons on you, so when Julian Assange brokered the deals for publishing selections from WikiLeaks's monster database of leaked US diplomatic traffic he must have anticipated the manhunt that ensued.

And since this armoury includes the tame US media he can only have expected the networks to join in.

The WikiLeaks site had been brought down three times in the week before *Free Press* went to press, by a combination of cyber-attacks and the compliance of internet service providers. The organisation was under siege, digitally and physically.

Julian Assange himself was holed up near London with a small team of journalists and analysts, awaiting a visit from police brandishing an Interpol warrant to take him in and ship him to Sweden for questioning on contested sex offence charges.

Even more alarming was the possibility that, once taken in by Scotland Yard, he could be handed over to the

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### BID IN THE BALANCE

THE LONG-AWAITED bid by the Murdochs' News Corporation to buy out Europe's biggest broadcaster, BSkyB, was finally announced in November. Business Secretary Vince Cable referred it to Ofcom following the high-pressure campaign from the CPBF and other groups.

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### EXPLOITING THEIR OWNERSHIP

HOW THE big groups like News Corporation abuse their outlets to promote their businesses.

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### WHO'LL PAY FOR JOURNALISM?

AS COMMERCIAL publishers are less and less willing to pay for investigative journalism in the public interest, the leader of the International Federation of Journalists, Aidan White, looks at the possibilities for public funding.

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### THE JOURNALISTS FIGHT BACK

AFTER TWO years of sackings, pay freezes and demoralisation, journalists working for one of Britain's biggest regional chains are rediscovering the strength to fight for their jobs and their papers.

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### THE MASTER'S VOICE ...

“ We said to the cable operators when we put the price up, we said, do you want a monument to yourself? Cancel us, you might get your house burnt down. ”

RUPERT MURDOCH interviewed in the *Australian Financial Review*, talking of his business practices in dealing with cable companies that carry his TV channels

# Mutiny at Newsquest as journalists fight back

**A** WAVE of union militancy is gaining strength among the journalists working for the Newsquest group of provincial newspapers, one of Britain's biggest, owned by Gannett Corporation of the USA.

Newsquest has been the highest earner even in this publishing sector of fantastic profitability. In every year this century except 2009 it has returned more than a quarter of its earnings to the US as profit. Even in 2009, as the industry went through its worst recession ever, it made 24 per cent on turnover.

During that year Newsquest axed 300 journalists, one in six of its staff.

But playing on the recession – and no doubt fears of redundancy – the group has enforced a pay freeze for the last three years.

In the summer it came out that chief executive Paul Davidson had helped himself to a 20 per cent pay rise, from £501,000 to £609,000 a year. The company still said it could not afford a rise for its staff.

In the US, Gannett's chief financial officer told advertisers at a conference that Newsquest was making "a lot of money".

Then Newsquest announced it was closing its final salary pension scheme. Small wonder that the remaining staff erupted and began a series of strikes that is now spreading round the group.

Staff on two of Newsquest's 16 daily papers came out in October, in Brighton and Southampton. Theirs are linked disputes, because in addition to the pay problems, Newsquest is planning to get sack the sub-editors in Brighton and shift production work to Southampton, 60 miles away.

This is the latest manifestation of a fad among local newspaper group managements, who love to imagine that the papers are not damaged by centralising production and sometimes even newsdesks in "hub" offices, covering the areas of numerous papers.

It has been tried again and again. Always editorial standards suffer as mistakes get into the papers, and usually the schemes are abandoned.

In Southampton, the journalists put off a second planned strike to hold talks. When they took place managers flatly refused to discuss either the pay freeze or the pension scheme, so the

strikes were reinstated. Now NUJ chapels in 10 centres are either planning or holding ballots for action: in Darlington, Andover, York, Bradford, Bolton and Blackburn.

NUJ organiser Chris Morley said: "It is no coincidence that there is a whole string of Newsquest chapels queuing up to be balloted for strike action. The company's arrogance and gross insensitivity gives our members no alternative in doing all they can to defend their standard of living, their jobs and ultimately their profession.

"Staff are shocked at Newsquest's preparedness to jettison so many of their most valuable assets – experi-

enced, dedicated staff who have been responsible for the success of the titles.

"We are not prepared to stand by and allow Newsquest to press ahead with their plans for staff redundancies and, ultimately, business suicide."

The Newsquest mutiny follows two years of terror for journalists on local newspapers. There have been wholesale sackings and pay freezes in all four big groups – Newsquest, Trinity Mirror, Northcliffe Newspapers (owned by the daily Mail group) and Johnston Press.

Earlier this year the NUJ tried to organise coordinated strikes at Johnston Press, where members were enraged by the introduction of a new editorial computer system that eliminated the whole sub-editorial process, with reporters writing straight into template pages without supervision – a recipe for mistakes, misjudgements and worse. Inevitably, dreadful howlers duly appeared in print, including a front page of the *Bedford Times* with a garble for the splash headline.

But the strike plan collapsed, with Johnston Press making good its pledge to have the ballot result struck down by the courts and the membership lacking the confidence to fight on.

Only six months later, things seem to be changing and journalists are rediscovering their strength.



Front page of the *Bedford Times*, thanks to Johnston Press's new computer system

## Don't have to be big

**THERE HAS** been a huge growth in community radio, with around 11 million people now able to tune into a local station.

**This figure is up 17 per cent year-on-year and by 36 per cent in two years, according to Ofcom's Community Radio Annual Report.**

**Since the first one went live five years ago, a new community station has launched on average every 10 days. A record 181 community stations are broadcasting with another 30 setting up.**

**The stations, run by volunteers, serve rural and inner city areas with content ranging from community news and information to religion,**

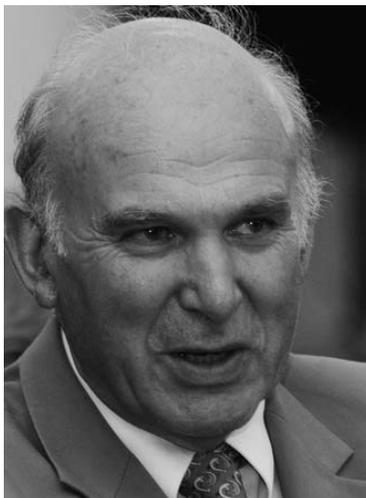
**experimental music and rhythm and blues, for example.**

**Diverse FM in Luton broadcasts in ten languages, with ethnic communities offered radio slots to broadcast their own programmes. Ashuk Ahmed of Diverse FM says this "promotes better understanding of each other's culture, religion and issues ... this has brought about better community cohesion, enabling celebration of cultural diversity and understanding."**

**Stations deliver additional benefits to communities, such as training opportunities, contributions to local education and contact points for isolated people.**

**shmuFM in Aberdeen has helped create a training programme for prison inmates.**

# In your hands, Vince



NEWS CORPORATION'S bid to buy out satellite broadcaster BSkyB was in the UK government's hands after Business Secretary Vince Cable referred it to Ofcom to judge its effect on media plurality.

Vince Cable's intervention came after a mounting campaign to stop the takeover. The CPBF's online campaign, with 38 Degrees and the NUJ, had been joined by the international online pressure group Avaaz, and together they amassed 60,000 signatures calling for government intervention. There was also an unprecedented combined approach from most of all Britain's newspaper and broadcasting companies.

Ofcom will produce its opinion before the end of the year. If it rules there is a case to answer, Vince Cable can refer it to the Competition Commission for a ruling under the "public interest" provisions of competition law.

The effects of the buyout on competition are also being examined by the European Commission.

## A CORROSIVE, NEGATIVE IMPACT IN POLITICS

**R**UPERT MURDOCH has played a thoroughly corrosive role in UK politics with governments, fearful of antagonising him, shaping policies to win or hold on to his support.

This is the core argument in the CPBF's submission to Ofcom's inquiry into the BSkyB bid.

If he gets complete control of the satellite broadcaster he will be able to "crush rivals through cross-subsidy, product bundling and financial muscle.

"The sheer scale of resources (financial, programming, marketing) which News Corporation could deploy against its UK competitors in broadcasting and publishing would put them at a massive competitive disadvantage," the submission says. It would be a "transformative shift" in UK media ownership that would have "considerable negative impact on media plurality".

The full submission, written by Granville Williams, is at [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk)

● In its own submission in support of the takeover BSkyB made the extraordi-

nary claim that the Murdoch bid would enhance plurality.

If it were turned down, BSkyB says, it would reduce plurality by undermining the incentives to continue running Sky News, which unlike terrestrial news services is not required by the terms of a licence, and which makes a loss.

BSkyB's other shareholders stand to make around £8 billion from the Murdochs' share purchase.

James Murdoch, the head of News Corporation in Europe and Asia, James Murdoch, himself told the government that blocking it could threaten UK jobs and future investment in this country by the US media giant.

However, BSkyB has announced that it is investing in an Arabic TV news channel, following the BBC and half a dozen operators in the middle east. It has gone into partnership with Abu Dhabi investor Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the owner of Manchester City football club. Based in Abu Dhabi, the channel will broadcast under the Sky News brand.

## TWO FACES OF SLY

**T**HE LEAST welcome recruit to the Stop Murdoch campaign is Sly Bailey, chief executive of the rival Trinity Mirror group (TM). She said it was a "massive threat to media plurality in the UK" and she knows what she is talking about.

"Plurality is about making sure that there is a broad range of people who control our media and this deal would further concentrate News Corporation's power," she told the *Press Gazette* in December.

The same issue of *Press Gazette* carried a story on local paper proprietor Chris Bullivant who launched a weekly paper in Birmingham this year. It failed and he has submitted a formal complaint to the Office of Fair Trading about the dominant newspaper publisher in the city, which he claims slashed advertising rates to price him out of the market.

Yes that's right ...

It has also been revealed that TM, an aggressive acquirer of regional papers, tried to buy Northcliffe Newspapers, the regional arm of the *Daily Mail* group, earlier this year.

## 60,000 SAY 'STOP THE MURDOCHS'

**BOXES** of signatures were delivered to the Department of Business Innovation and Skills as BSkyB announced that the Murdochs' News Corporation had made its long-awaited move to buy up the 61 per cent of the satellite broadcaster it does not already own.

The names had been collected online by 38 Degrees in conjunction with the CPBF, NUJ and the online campaigning group Avaaz.

38 Degrees wrote on their website that it was "a morning Ofcom won't forget in a hurry. Their usually quiet office was transformed! Journalists and photographers, box loads of letters, and one powerful message from all of us: Stop the Murdoch Power Grab."

"You could see how big an effect we were having from the faces of the Ofcom staff - they'd never seen anything like it! As they arrived to work, everybody had to walk past our massive stack of messages.

As we struggled to carry the heavy boxes of submissions into the building, we saw the rest of the Ofcom office had come to a standstill as people crowded round to watch. Everyone knew why we were there.

Ofcom usually hear from media insiders, including Murdoch's own henchmen. This time we've made sure the public is impossible to ignore."

## PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM

# Who'll pay the price?

Journalism is a 'public good', says **AIDAN WHITE**. But commercial news publishers are less and less willing to spend the money needed for the proper in-depth reporting that citizens need in a democracy. Public funding is one option now being widely promoted, and the European Union is to fund a scheme for investigative reporting. But reporters must retain complete editorial independence.

**W**E DON'T need reminding about the sorry state of journalism these days, but the story behind the stories that won Clare Sambrook two of investigative reporting's glittering prizes this year should worry anyone who cares about the future of the craft.

Clare Sambrook won the 2010 Bevins and Paul Foot Awards for detailed reports on the scandalous mistreatment and abuse of the children of families seeking asylum. This exposure of public neglect and private corruption was reporting of a high order: well-researched, brimful of facts and delivered with lashings of style.

But Clare Sambrook is a freelance and she had to finance the work herself. As a contributor to the Open Democracy blog site she published much of her prize-winning journalism online for free.

Journalists like her are paying out of their pockets to keep public-interest jour-

nalism alive. The kind of work they do is bumped off newsroom agendas because of either political bias or staffing and spending cuts by cash-strapped newspapers.

She says it's impossible to get support for stories unless they fit the political bias of national newspapers. "It's astonishingly difficult unless you are doing investigations for the right wing press," she told the *Press Gazette*.

The media obsession with celebrity and entertainment at the expense of analysis and scrutiny of public affairs has created an information vacuum that worries many. And this raises a question making the rounds in media policy-making circles: if commercial media no longer want this kind of story, who will provide them in future – and who will pay?

The question has caused much head scratching among academics, journalists and media activists in Europe and North America. Some believe the internet will provide solutions, but it is increasingly clear that no amount of tweeting and social networking will fill the void caused by the decline of thorough investigative journalism.

Responses are on the way. Networks of

**Journalism is good for democracy and gives added value to the social and cultural life of the community**

journalists, many of them displaced in the culling of around 60,000 editorial jobs across Western media over the last two years, are keeping investigative reporting alive, thanks to foundations and agencies that provide travel grants and pay for research time. This private funding is vital, but not enough to fill the enormous hole that cost-cutting media have gouged out of editorial budgets. Which raises another question: if journalism is a public good, why should public money not be used to support it, without of course compromising editorial independence and encouraging yet more political interference in journalism?

This is a theme that Dan Hind takes up in his thoughtful book *The Return of the Public\**. He argues that the media crisis and the decline of -public trust in political life provide a gilded opportunity for redefining the public information space.

Dan Hind says it's time not just to promote good journalism, and to look for new ways of getting public money to pay for it, it's also time to change the system. Organising public funding for journalism provides an opportunity to give citizens a role in defining what investigations and stories they want from journalists.

Mass media have always enjoyed state subsidies in one way or another, even if media companies are reluctant to admit



Clare Sambrook won the Bevins Prize for investigative journalism in November.

THE BEVINS PRIZE

## Journalism



### WHAT THEY PREACH ...

**Aidan White has been General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the worldwide grouping of journalists' trade unions, since 1987.**

**The IFJ collaborates with a number of European**

**institutions to sponsor awards for journalism of the highest standard. In partnership with the German-based media group WAZ it has just announced the winners of the Prize for Courage in Journalism 2010.**

**Hungarian journalists József Gelei and László Murányi were awarded 10,000 for a series of articles on "slavers of modern times" in the regional newspaper Új Néplap.**

**The reports describe the suffering of homeless and destitute people who have fallen into social slavery via extortionate loans and mafia-like real estate transactions and become "enmeshed in criminal machinations".**

**The jury said their "well-crafted, sensitive interviews gave voice to the human drama of the victims of a system of exploitation that is a scar on the face of European society."**

it. The myth of total financial independence from the state has taken root, but in every country media companies have benefited from tax breaks, subsidies for postage and preferential treatment for public advertising, and in some cases they have received direct subsidies from the state. This year in the USA federal, state and local governments will spend well over \$1 billion to support commercial news publishers.

All of this is in recognition of the fact that journalism is good for democracy and gives added value to the social and cultural life of the community. Now the weakening of the commitment to public interest journalism in traditional media is an opportunity, says Dan Hind, to promote fundamental change in the way that journalism connects with the public.

He has worked out an elaborate process of establishing public trusts to distribute funds to worthy projects. He outlines a framework for "public commissioning", through which people would vote for assignments to be supported. Public meetings and consultation would ensure that citizens have a voice in deciding how public money is used to support journalism.

He makes a provocative case for seizing this moment of historical change in media to promote a return to journalism as a public good and to democratise the news business.

Dan Hind's ideas will run into opposition, both political and professional, but they deserve consideration because without fresh thinking about the institutional framework for the independent and democratic dispersal of public money, the initiative will rest with governments alone.

Allowing the dead hand of government

### Allowing the dead hand of government into the work of journalists inevitably compromises their independence

into the work of journalists inevitably compromises the principle of independence. At the heart of the European Union in Brussels this stark choice – money or independence? – is being debated as this article is going to press.

Some months ago the European Parliament called for a pilot project to inject taxpayers' money – more than €1.2 million – into transitional investigative journalism across the EU. The European Commission launched a proposal to distribute the money, but rejected the advice of a group of experts, including myself, who insisted that any process for allocating dosh must avoid governmental supervision.

The Commission said that European law and its own mandate prevent it creating a truly independent structure. It said it had tried to limit the role of officials, but whichever way it is dressed up, journalists who applied for these funds ran the risk of governmental supervision of their work.

It could never work in the interest of probing journalism. For one thing, the European Commission itself may well be a fitting subject for investigation. Does anyone really trust an institution that spends millions on a sophisticated spin machine to communicate its shining face to European citizens to encourage nosy

journalists to do precisely the opposite?

And does support for investigative journalism organised in this way have any credibility when it comes from an institution that hounded German investigative journalist Hans Martin Tillack out of town ten years ago as a reward for probing alleged fraud in its budgetary operations and lambasted journalists who exposed the corruption at the heart of the Presidency of Jacques Santer?

We have put these points forcefully and the Commission has just agreed to look again at the mechanism for distributing the funds.

At a time when in many countries media companies are knocking on doors of government seeking hand-outs and bank-style bailouts to keep them in business, journalists are going their own way – and they are not in it for the money. They are, like Clare Sambrook, jealous of their independence and it is not for sale.

Once the political elite of Europe begin to understand this, a long-overdue debate about journalism and its place in the public information space can start.

*\*The Return of the Public, Dan Hind, Verso, £14.99*

### WAYS AND MEANS

**There are a number of models for funding investigative journalism outside the mainstream commercial media.**

**In the UK, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ) is effectively a self-financing agency that works up investigations and sells them to publishers in television, radio and print.**

**The BIJ should not be confused with the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ), a grouping of specialist reporters based at City University in London.**

**In the US there are numerous operations that survive by raising donations from supportive consumers, such as the Real News online TV channel and investigators like Greg Palast and Michael Moore.**

### AD SLUMP TO BLAME

**It is not the internet that is killing British newspapers but their dependence on advertising, according to a new book edited from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University.**

**In many countries where online activity is high, including Scandinavia and Germany, newspapers are still faring well, with titles generating half their of revenue from advertising.**

**In the UK and the US, where advertising accounts for a larger proportion of revenues, the picture is far gloomier, because of the advertising recession.**

**The research found that papers in countries with a long tradition of state-sponsored public-service journalism are performing well in the internet age.**

# 'A shot in the arm for investigative journalism'



## From page 1

USA, which could lay any charge it wished against him and secure his extradition without challenge under the treaty between the countries.

The Swedish charge of "sex by surprise" is not rape – yet the "rape" smear has stuck fast. Julian Assange's lawyer Mark Stephens claimed that "3.6 million web pages now contain his name and the word 'rape'. Indeed, three out of four web pages that mention Mr. Assange's name also now mention the word 'rape' – a direct result of incompetent and malicious behaviour by Swedish government prosecutors.

"The basis for the 'rape' charge seems to constitute a post-facto dispute over consensual, but unprotected sex days after the event. The warrant for his arrest was withdrawn within 24 hours by Chief prosecutor Eva Finne, who found that there was no 'reason to

suspect that he has committed rape'. Yet his name had already been deliberately and unlawfully disclosed to the press by Swedish authorities."

You do not have to condone any kind of sexual coercion – nor the apparently egocentric behaviour of Julian Assange – to see that he is being subjected to an intensive media operation, with which many of the media themselves are collaborating.

In the US, commentator Glenn Greenwald of salon.com wrote in October of the combined government/media strategy to deal with political setbacks: "Government officials (usually anonymous) make wild and reckless – though unverifiable – claims. The US media mindlessly trumpets them around the world without question or challenge. Those claims become consecrated as widely accepted fact.

## 'WikiLeaks is the guerrilla front in a global movement for greater transparency and participation'

"And then weeks, months or years later, those claims get quietly exposed as being utter falsehoods, by which point it does not matter, because the goal is already well-achieved."

The great falsehood with the earlier leaks was that its revelations were putting lives at risk – an argument still heard despite the uncontested fact that not one soul has been attacked in the five months in which the tens of thousands of documents about the Afghan and Iraq wars have been released.

The Afghan releases did not have the names of supposed collaborators redacted – leading Amnesty International, among others, to join the hue and cry – but subsequent releases have. The Department of Defense conceded that 300 names had been removed from the Iraq releases. Yet Fox News commentator Christian Whiton could editorialise that "the US should classify the proprietors of WikiLeaks as 'enemy combatants,' opening up the possibility of non-judicial actions against them."

Fox may have been predictable but CNN chimed in. Glenn Greenwald wrote that political pundit Wolf Blitzer was "beside himself with rage over the fact that the US government had failed to keep all these things secret from him.

"Then – like the Good Journalist he is – Blitzer demanded assurances that the Government has taken the necessary steps to prevent him, the media generally and the citizenry from finding out any more secrets.

"The central concern of Blitzer – one

of our nation's most honoured 'journalists' – is making sure that nobody learns what the US government is up to."

The *New York Times* was part of the joint international operation to process and publish the Afghan and Iraq military stories, but it also published a hatchet job on Julian Assange by John Burns, a writer "known for touting the various agendas of the US government", according to Glenn Greenwald.

As a result WikiLeaks excluded the NYT from the group to work on the diplomatic leak and it was the Guardian in London that decided to share the database with them. A copy had already been obtained – in a leak from WikiLeaks! – by freedom of information champion Heather Brooke, who is writing a book on WikiLeaks and joined the *Guardian* team.

But elsewhere the UK press has pushed the "Swedish rape" and the "blood on their hands" lines, and has added a characteristic one of its own – the "triviality" charge. According to this, the revelations are worthless: Prince Andrew is a berk; Presidents Gaddafi and Ahmadinejad are mad; Karzai and Zardari are bent; what's all the fuss about? Richard Littlejohn in the *Daily Mail* led this attack.

The effect is to downplay the significant disclosures: that the Chilcott inquiry was rigged to protect the USA, that Iran does not possess long-range missiles, that Mahmoud Abbas collaborated with Israel over the assault on Gaza in 2009, and so on.

It's not the particular stories that have made the great rush of information from WikiLeaks over the last six months so important. As Heather Brooke wrote in the *Guardian*, "we are at a pivotal moment where the visionaries at the vanguard of a global digital age are clashing with those who are desperate to control what we know. WikiLeaks is the guerrilla front in a global movement for greater transparency and participation."

It has also been a shot in the arm for investigative journalism, that great public service that we keep being told is dying. It might be amateurs doing the leaking and dumping, but it takes dedicated, competent professionals, versed in the new skill of computer-aided reporting, to make sense of hundreds of thousands of inchoate documents.



**Three out of four web pages that mention Julian Assange also mention the word 'rape'**

# Plugs that should be blocked



**CROSS-MEDIA  
PROMOTION**  
Jonathan Hardy  
Peter Lang, £21.40

by **TIM GOPSILL**

**J**ONATHAN HARDY is a media activist and academic at the University of East London. For years he has been researching and writing on the dubious activities of media corporations in the dark places where editorial and marketing meet.

The big groups like to capitalise on their range of publishing interests by relentless cross-promotion – giving themselves not just free advertising space but uncritical editorial as well.

The more outrageous examples tend to feature in the I-Sky column in *Private Eye* magazine: gratuitous plugs for Sky TV, usually in the *Sun*.

Yes, the Murdoch family's News International empire is the worst offender, and the plugging is quite

shameless, but there's a resigned air about the phenomenon that reflects the prevailing attitude among media practitioners reported by Hardy: that it's a slightly embarrassing but inevitable aspect of media ownership and you can't do anything about it.

There is, however, a mildly positive side to this. Journalists' discomfort at being required to promote does impel them to make occasional countervailing criticisms of the favoured products, says Hardy. And erratic as these are, they do offer the public a slight degree of protection, in the absence of regulatory measures.

For the fact is that something *could* have been done to limit the slanting of editorial material for commercial ends, if the regulators had the will. The law may not care about journalism but it does concern itself with competition and cross-promotion is an abuse of market dominance.

The book tells in detail the sad tale of the Sadler Inquiry of 1990-91, set up by Margaret Thatcher's government to investigate blatant cross-promotion between the *Sun* and Sky – only a year after its launch, when it was competing with BSB. Half way through the inquiry, when Sky and BSB merged to form BSkyB and the

problem was deemed to have disappeared, the focus switched to the BBC's internal programme promotion.

The outcome was a triumph for anti-BBC forces. The corporation's commercial operations were limited, while the press was left to self-regulation: Sadler's mildly useful recommendations on disclosure – that programme puffs should be accompanied by statements that the two media were under the same ownership – were simply ignored.

This episode is now utterly forgotten, no doubt to the relief of those involved, but the matter at hand increases in importance with the concentration of media ownership.

The mutual promotion of the Murdochs' media has become a top-level political concern with NI's bid to buy out the whole of BSkyB.

There is also the micro-Murdoch phenomenon of the *Express* group with its ownership of Channel Five. *Private Eye* has gleefully launched a "Five A Day" feature to reprint plugs for shows in the *Express* papers.

Hardy's work is a providential instance of a committed academic digging away at a seam that will produce riches when the time comes, and the time for media cross-promotion to become a central issue of media debate is now upon us.

## Murdoch has millions. Help us to fight him

The CPBF's work involves taking on some of the most wealthy and powerful companies in Britain. It can be a costly business and we need resources to do it.

You can help by donating through a Standing Order from your bank. Please complete this form and send it to your bank; that's all you have to do. And Rupert Murdoch could regret it.

To the Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Bank/Building Society

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please set up a Standing Order to:

Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom

Account No 50508701

Sort Code 08-90-33

The Co-operative Bank, 1 Islington High Street, London N1 9TR

For the amount (please ring) £5      £10      £15      Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

First payment to be made on \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 20\_\_ followed by monthly payments for the same amount to be made until further notice.

Account name \_\_\_\_\_

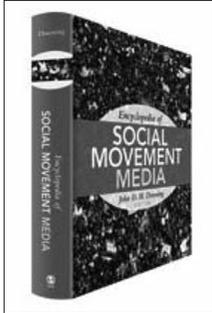
Account no

Sort code   -   -

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Review

# Encyclopaedia Erratica



**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT MEDIA**  
**John D H Downing (ed)**  
 Sage, £80

by **TIM GOPSILL**

**E**DITOR JOHN D H Downing says this book is “the very tip of the top of a gigantic iceberg”, below the surface being the whole bulk of alternative and community media produced by activists around the world over the last 100 years, with their “dizzying variety of formats and experiences, far greater than mainstream commercial, public or state media.”

So this collection of around 260 potted histories – they’re not numbered or counted – is just a sample, and while it shows the spread it cannot claim to be representative, let alone encyclopaedic.

For the UK, for instance, there are just seven entries, three of them in Northern Ireland: paramilitary

media, murals and songs. Again, this indicates the vast range of “media” offered: we are not just talking print and radio but visual and performance arts, graffiti, campaigns and “cultural contestations”, whatever they might be.

There are a number of far right-wing media, including material produced by the Nazi party in Germany before 1933 and by Belgian neo-Nazis today.

There are even some mainstream media, but presumably in the USA the multi-million petrodollar-financed Al-Jazeera television station is considered alternative.

The biggest gap has to be the internet. At a time when there are tens of thousands of local, political and cultural initiatives online, the book can only manage 15 (three of them Indymedia outlets).

Of the other UK entries, by the way, three are predictable and from the 1970/80s: the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, the independent left magazine *Leveller* and the wave of alternative local newspapers.

The seventh, though, is an eccentric treat: the Belle du Jour blog, which broadcasts the anonymous thoughts of a part-time upmarket hooker (identified last year as research scientist Brooke Magnanti).

This says it all. As an “encyclopaedia” this collection is a mess: random, undefined and erratic.

The stories themselves are intriguing and some of them inspiring, but for a proper reliable survey we will have to wait for the next edition, if not the one after that.

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