

FREE Press

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PEOPLE AGAINST THE MURDOCHS

RUPERT MURDOCH'S News Corporation is facing popular protest as it strives to expand its domination of UK national media.

The bid to acquire the 61 per cent of BSkyB satellite TV that it does not already own became a hot issue as the standards of Murdoch journalism were dragged into the spotlight by the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal.

A series of legal actions have been launched by celebrities claiming to have been bugged, while former *NoW* reporters have gone public with allegations that the practice was not only widespread but sanctioned at the highest level.

As the net closed in on the paper, former editor Andy Coulson was forced to resign as government communications chief.

It was a setback for Rupert Murdoch and his son James, who heads his UK operations, to lose their key man in 10 Downing Street – so serious that Rupert abandoned his regular visit to the World Economic Forum, the annual gathering of the world elite in Davos, Switzerland, to deal with the crisis in London.

The Murdochs may succeed in bamboozling the government to nod the merger through, but there will be a bigger political storm than News Corp has weathered with previous acquisitions.

Popular support for a full investigation of the BSkyB bid was revealed in an ICM opinion poll.

The survey of 2,006 people, commissioned by rival media companies that opposing the buyout, found that:

- 63 per cent said there should be an independent investigation into the deal
- 84 per cent said no single organisation should be allowed to control too much of the news media
- 75 per cent said it was important to have competing independent sources of news



GUY SMALLMAN

The CPBF Wapping meeting applauded veterans of the strike

- 5 per cent were in favour of the bid succeeding.

Vocal opposition to the Murdoch empire came at a London meeting organised by the CPBF to mark the 25th anniversary of the Wapping dispute.

In 1986 Rupert Murdoch moved his four national newspapers to a new non-union plant and sacked 5,500 workers, replacing them with a secretly recruited strikebreaking workforce. The year-long strike that followed has gone

down in history as the Wapping dispute, one of the major events of the 1980s.

The public meeting in London attracted more than 200 people. It was addressed by Wapping veterans and leaders of their unions; some of them took part in the CPBF's latest podcast, *Wapping 25 Years On*, which can be accessed at www.cpbf.org.uk.

It is presented by former BBC correspondent Nick Jones, who reported on the Wapping strike and told the January 25 meeting that the journalists had not given the strikers fair coverage. He related how Rupert Murdoch had lied to reporters, and added: "Murdoch has poisoned the well of journalism."

The CPBF is part of a group drawn from the unions involved in Wapping that is preparing a multi-media exhibition on the dispute, due to open in London on May 1.

**Net closes on Murdoch's hackers
BSkyB bid looks set to go through**
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**The Wapping podcast is at
www.cpbf.org.uk**

Murdoch

How Fox caught the Hunt

NEWSPAPER CORPORATION'S bid to buy up BSKyB, Europe's biggest broadcaster, was reported to have won governmental approval as *Free Press* went to press.

There are likely to be legal challenges, as well as a political storm, if, as claimed by the *Financial Times* on February 25, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt has stitched up a deal with Murdoch managers to sidestep the definitive recommendation of the regulator Ofcom that the bid must be referred to the Competition Commission (CC).

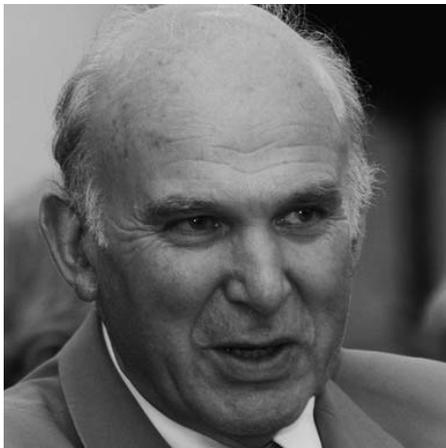
The matter passed into Jeremy Hunt's hands in December after an extraordinary blunder by Lib Dem Business Secretary Vince Cable. He had referred the takeover bid to Ofcom, after a lively campaign by the CPBF and others, and the final decision should have been his, but he was caught on tape by two *Daily Telegraph* reporters boasting that he had "declared war on Mr. Murdoch."

The reporters had posed as constituents and Vince Cable bragged: "Mr Murdoch is trying to take over BSKyB. He has a minority shareholding and he wants a majority – and majority control would give them a massive stake. I have blocked it using the powers that I have."

When the story came out Prime Minister David Cameron gratefully switched responsibility for media matters from the business department to DCMS, where secretary Jeremy Hunt had been on record as "seeing nothing wrong" with the Murdoch bid.

The Ofcom report when it came out was adamant that there was a strong public interest requirement for the CC to conduct an inquiry into the effects on the plurality of media ownership.

But Jeremy Hunt announced that



Vince Cable: costly blunder



Jeremy Hunt: secret talks

before passing the case on there would be secret talks with News Corporation to reach an agreement on a structure of control of BSKyB that would get round the problems.

This will involve some kind of management for Sky news that is distanced from News Corp itself. Ofcom's

report pinpointed news as the problem area, even though many, including the CPBF, see problems elsewhere (see story below).

It is not likely that Sky News will be sold off altogether, since it loses money and no-one would want to buy it. Murdoch managers have argued that if a sale was ordered but failed and Sky News was closed there would be a real reduction in media plurality – the very outcome that opponents of the takeover have said it will cause.

The buy-up has already been cleared under competition rules by the EU. If a deal is now agreed to obviate a CC inquiry in the UK and opponents seek a judicial review of the decision the courts will be able to consider only the process by which the minister took the decision and not the substantial issue of media plurality.

Lawyers believe that such a review would fail and Murdoch would win.

Such is the powerful position Rupert Murdoch is in. Such would be the cost of Vince Cable "declaring war" on him.

OFCOM SAID: INVESTIGATE!

OFCOM'S 156-page report on Murdoch's BSKyB bid was published on January 25, writes JONATHAN HARDY.

It said that News Corp's acquisition of BSKyB would increase its reach from 32 per cent to 51 per cent of the population.

Under full control News Corp could "take decisions involving Sky which are in the exclusive commercial interests of News Corp" and could "appoint or dismiss the senior editorial team at Sky News".

Ofcom rejected News Corp's arguments that audience demand, TV impartiality rules and Sky's internal pluralism would be sufficient safeguards.

It concluded that "the proposed acquisition may be expected to operate against the public interest since there may not be a sufficient plurality of persons with control of media enterprises providing news and current affairs to UK-wide cross-media audiences".

But Ofcom was concerned with news and current affairs only, failing to engage with wider issues of concentration and corporate control

including Sky's monopolisation of (US) entertainment media, control of televised football, wider breaches of editorial independence and corporate cross-promotion.

However, noting the lack of means to address plurality concerns after a merger is approved, Ofcom recommended "that the Government consider undertaking a wider review of the statutory framework to ensure sufficient plurality in the public interest".

● The Competition Commission has slammed Sky TV for making "excess profits" on its movie channels, in a report on a separate reference from Ofcom – which was not blocked by the government.

The Commission said the starting point for its investigation into Sky's dominance of UK TV film subscriptions was that the company has "consistently" made excess profits.

Under scrutiny were Sky's exclusive deals with the major Hollywood studios – NBC Universal, Viacom, Fox, Disney, Sony and Time Warner – which give it a large measure of control over the pricing of US films and their distribution to UK pay-TV subscribers.

Murdoch

Shock: News of the World story turns out not to be true

THE SLOW-MOTION exposure of the truth about phone hacking at the *News of the World* took rapid steps forward in February as the cover-up organised by the Murdoch press and the Metropolitan police began to crumble.

Four years after *NoW* reporter Clive Goodman and private eye Glenn Mulcaire were jailed, the insistence by editors that they had been maverick lone operators, and by police that there were no other cases worth pursuing, was falling apart.

The scandal of the journalistic practices on Murdoch newspapers shot to the top of the news agenda as former *NoW* editor Andy Coulson was forced to resign as Prime Minister David Cameron's chief spin doctor and the rest of the press broke their code of silence on the story.

The very practice of hacking into mobile voice messages has become common knowledge, with past and

present Fleet Street reporters only too happy to demonstrate the technique for TV cameras. Half a dozen former *NoW* journalists have claimed the practice was widespread and alleged that Andy Coulson knew all about it.

The Met had to open a new review of the mountains of evidence it has been shown to hold, and took possession of internal documents from the *NoW*. Even the derided Press Complaints Commission, which had studiously stuck to the "rogue reporter" line, was forced to set up a new enquiry – though there was little confidence that it would reveal any more than its two previous whitewash operations.

The courts delivered a series of orders directing News International, the police and Glenn Mulcaire to divulge information they held on the extent of the practice.

But these were made in response to applications, not from prosecutors or the police, but from the long queue of private individuals bringing legal actions over alleged hacking by *NoW* reporters or private eyes acting on their behalf.

On February 24 Glenn Mulcaire was ordered to identify journalists whose names had been blacked out by police in documents seized in their raids on his office five years ago. He had already stated, in a statement to lawyers acting for the football agent Sky Andrew, that he passed phone-hacking intercepts to the news desk.

In the High Court Mr Justice Vos also ordered Scotland Yard to disclose the information it holds on attempts to hack the phones of former MP George Galloway, former football star Paul Gascoigne, and Mick McGuire, former deputy head of the Professional Footballers' Association, who are bringing privacy actions.

In legal actions brought by the comedian Steve Coogan and the former Sky Sports presenter Andy Gray, Glenn Mulcaire was also told to identify celebrities whose phones were hacked. Lawyers for the police said it was difficult to identify every mention of a

celebrity's name among "hundreds of intercepts".

The Met was also told to publish a list of meetings between senior officers and managers at News International. Scotland Yard revealed that senior officers met editors 13 times between 2006 and 2010 in the aftermath of Clive Goodman's arrest.

But despite the discovery by detectives of 4,332 names, 2,978 mobile phone numbers and 91 PIN codes in the raids on Glenn Mulcaire's home, no other reporters were interviewed.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers, in charge of the new investigation, told former Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott she was "not satisfied" with its work. Lord Prescott is one of about 20 people who have been informed they may have been a target, despite being previously told there was little or no such evidence.

Ian Edmondson, the *NoW* news editor, was suspended and then sacked by the paper after his name emerged in evidence during a case brought by the actress Sienna Miller.

There was yet more embarrassment for the Yard when in a case brought by Sienna Miller's stepmother, Kelly Hoppen it was forced to admit to holding evidence it had twice denied having.

The action related to alleged phone-hacking in 2009 – more than two years after the *NoW* had said the practice was forbidden. The reporter concerned, Dan Evans, has been suspended.

Kelly Hoppen's lawyers twice wrote to Scotland Yard to ask if there was any evidence, to be told there was not. But in February DAC Akers contacted her to disclose that police had indeed found notes written by Glenn Mulcaire detailing her phone numbers and two addresses, her mobile phone account number and the four-digit PIN code which was needed to access her voicemail.

Dan Evans claimed through his lawyer that he had dialled the number by mistake. The keys on his phone were inclined to stick and to dial numbers accidentally.

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism

A showing of Robert Greenwald's film followed by discussion.
Speakers include Granville Williams from the CPBF.

Wortley Hall, near Sheffield
Friday April 1, 6pm.
Tickets £6.50 include pie and pea supper

Contact Wortley Hall 0114 288 2100 or info@wortleyhall.org.uk.

Late bar. Bed and breakfast for those staying over, £35.

Wapping 25 years on

IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

IT WAS 25 years to the day since the first newspapers were printed at the Wapping plant in east London equipped by the tycoon Rupert Murdoch to produce the *Sun*, *Times*, *Sunday Times* and *News of the World*. In the process he sacked 5,500 print, production and clerical staff, replacing them with a secretly recruited strikebreaking workforce.

That was January 25 1986. On January 25 this year veterans of the year-long strike that followed and their union supporters gathered in London to honour their titanic struggle.

The Wapping dispute was bitter and brutal. Murdoch had lined up lawyers, the government and the police to ensure his victory. The cards were stacked heavily against the strikers, but they fought on for a year.

Reps from all the unions involved, including the NUJ, spoke movingly of their memories, and of the legacy of Wapping's legacy, for its effects have stayed with us ever since.

The meeting was organised by the CPBF, and held in the large hall at St Brides Institute, the traditional Fleet Street meeting place of print and journalists' unions.

These are quotations from a few of the 15 speakers. There were others from the engineers' and electricians' unions, from Unite and journalist "refuseniks".

'We became sort of driven underground'



JOHN LANG was deputy father of the SOGAT union clerical chapel at Times Newspapers.

WE WENT from being ordinary working people – I worked in a library – to having to organise ourselves into what was a complete strike rally organisation.

There were 600 of us out on strike, 50

percent of our branch were women. There was a big call for speakers, with many of us ending up speaking at mining pit villages and across the country.

We ran the operations room – taking the calls, that was the clerical people. We were involved in absolutely everything.

We adopted a policy calling for the whole of Fleet Street to be called out to win the dispute. It caused a lot of animosity and argument – we never managed to get that point of view put across. Despite that, we carried on.

We had incredible strength really. We became sort of driven underground. We became almost – it's difficult to explain,



but we found ourselves almost outside of society.

There were things going on we never dreamed we'd get involved in. Things turned against us: the policy of Murdoch was supported by government and its legislation, supported by the police – the permanent police state in Wapping.

We got monetary solidarity, but really we needed people out on the street. We had 40,000 members in Fleet Street—if we had 40,000 members out down at Wapping we couldn't have failed.

'It handed newspapers to the corporations'

GUY SMALLMAN



JEREMY DEAR, General Secretary of the NUJ, said he had been "literally bloodied" during the Wapping dispute, when he had been in the crowd at a mass picket attacked by the police.

THE CONSEQUENCES of Murdoch's actions are still felt in every newsroom, in every media company today.

Wapping delivered newspapers into the hands of corporations and accountants. Other employers rushed to exploit the opportunities Murdoch's assault on the unions opened up.

While the media industry delivered year-on-year record profits, the corporate business model began killing quality journalism, cutting at what is perceived to be expensive – investigative, international and original newsgathering.

It is that vision of a compliant, corporate, profit-at-all-costs journalism at the expense of the truth or journalistic ethics which so many stood against 25 years ago. It is a stand a new generation are making again today.

It is not enough to pay tribute in words to the spirit of resistance demonstrated at Wapping. We must do so in action.

Wapping 25 years on

'We could see right inside the plant'



MIKE JEMPSON was an organiser of community protests against the turmoil caused by the newspaper trucks roaring out of the plant and police attacks on pickets trying to stop them.

I LIVED right behind the printworks. I took my kids to look through the razor wire fences. We had mounted police outside the estate and we couldn't get in.

We could see inside the plant. We could see what route the lorries would take and we had walkie-talkies to tell the picket leaders. The residents came out and sat down in the street and held back the lorries until they were dragged away.

People took food down to the picket lines. The Wapping residents were able to play a crucial role in the dispute.

'We need to hold on to our anger'



GRANVILLE WILLIAMS is a veteran left-wing writer and commentator on the media and former editor of *Free Press*

MURDOCH'S four papers were already making 50 per cent of his world-wide profits. They were printing on clapped-out machinery. They replaced the technology but not the ownership of the press.

Wapping generated fantastic profits. The value of the papers quadrupled, and allowed Murdoch to fund the expansion of



FREE PRESS, FREE TRADE UNIONS

LABOUR MP Jeremy Corbyn ended the rally on a stirring note. He said: 'Those who fought for free media in this country would turn in their graves to know that Rupert Murdoch was taking over 60 per cent of all British media.'

'As we stood at Wapping for these principles – the right to know and a free press – so we stand for them today for a free press and above all for free trade unionism.'

his media empire. He acquired Fox and a string of TV stations in the USA. Then he came back to develop Sky in this country.

Murdoch had access to political favours and still does. We must make sure that his bid to buy out BSkyB is not just another dirty deal done behind closed doors.

'Murdoch poisoned the well of journalism'



NICK JONES was a BBC industrial reporter who covered Wapping. He said the journalists let the strikers down.

RUPERT Murdoch has poisoned the well of journalism. There's been very little attempt

to hold him to account.

In January 1986 he gave the unions a take-it-or-leave-it deal. I was recording and asking questions. "Have you done a deal with the electricians' union?" Murdoch said, "We have done nothing with the electricians union at all." That's what he said.

I was reporting from the picket lines. The fear that I as a journalist had when the trucks came storming out of the plant was like the wild west.

We were struck by how well oiled the police machine was. They made sure that the buses with the new workforce got into the plant then made damn sure that the newspaper trucks got out.

Did the journalists give the print workers a fair deal? I don't think we did.

Pictures by Janina Struk

RIGHT-MINDED READER



JOHN BAILEY was on the NGA composers' chapel committee at the *Sun* – a proof-reader by trade. The chapel had used its muscle to correct anti-union bias in the paper. He is proud of what they achieved for the right of reply

THERE WERE no doubt many reasons why Rupert Murdoch precipitated the last great industrial dispute to have taken place in England in January 1986. Clearly there were huge financial advantages in sacking 6,000 printworkers and replacing them with a few complicit electricians and some compliant journalists, but another factor was the Right of Reply.

It was agreed to by all unions in the industry and delivered a powerful tool into the hands of Fleet Street chapels that were

increasingly aware of the debauched nature of much of what Murdoch and other newspaper barons were reporting in their newspapers.

The cheap shots at enemies of the Thatcher government were becoming commonplace, increasingly vitriolic and lacking in any form of balance. Workers were a regular target, especially those daring to take action in support of jobs and working practices such as the Grunwick strikers.

Production workers at the *Sun* decided that the Right of Reply was due to those the newspaper was determined to malign. Their first move was a statement dissociating themselves from the *Sun*'s distorted reports.

They would warn the politicians, union leaders and others the *Sun* had in its sights about what was to come, and advise them to seek a right of reply themselves. The *Sun* would not comply with their requests so the next step was to refuse to publish these attacks.

The March 1 1984 edition of the *Sun* was to have a feature headlined "Benn on the Couch". This was the day that former cabinet

minister Tony Benn was contesting a by-election in Chesterfield for the Labour Party.

The article consisted of the response from an American psychiatrist to a list of Benn's personal characteristics concocted by the paper. The shrink duly denounced Benn as being off his rocker.

There was no time to warn Benn, so direct action was the only option. The story did not appear. The editor screamed about the loss of freedom of his press, but the result was a serious blow for Murdoch's freedom to publish his banal prejudices.

Similar events followed on other newspapers, the famous front page of Arthur Scargill supporting his striking miners being the most celebrated of several interventions on the *Sun*. The paper had got hold of a photo of the miners' leader with his arm raised and added the witty headline MINE FUHRER. The printers threatened to stop the paper and it came out with blank space for the front page splash.

Those sublime possibilities, that set a challenge to the depths being plumbed by the *Sun*, were lost when we were sacked.

Welsh, worldwide resistance to BBC cuts

AS THE BBC presses on with its relentless programme of cuts to meet the losses incurred in its disastrous self-imposed licence fee “settlement” with the government last October, there is furious resistance from the audiences who will lose out.

In January it announced additional savings of £400 million a year to meet the extra costs, including funding the World Service and the Welsh language broadcaster S4C. And it is cuts to those services that are bringing new protests.

Director General Mark Thompson said that half the cuts will come from efficiency savings but half would have to come from “doing less”.

● The World Service is to close 12 of its services and axe a quarter of the workforce.

In February it shut down the Portuguese service to Africa, the Spanish Latin American service, and those to Serbia and Albania, as well as the medium wave English language service.

This ended the BBC’s claim to be the world’s largest international radio

broadcaster, giving way to Voice of America.

The NUJ reacted angrily, and published further reactions from the regions affected in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

● The handover of S4C to the BBC created a heated response in Wales, with a well-attended and vociferous protest rally in Cardiff.

S4C has been funded by a direct grant from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and governed by the S4C authority, a body appointed by the DCMS.

It was set up in 1982 after a generation of campaigning by Welsh language activists – the only TV company created by popular pressure.

The ConDems had already been looking to find cuts, triggering a row with in which the chief executive of the authority resigned.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt grabbed the chance to dump the channel on the BBC. There was no consultation – in contrast to the way he has dealt with News International over the BSkyB bid.

The decision undermines the

whole future of Welsh language broadcasting.

The BBC, under the pressure of spending cuts, will not be able, whatever it says, to ringfence S4C’s finances in the future.

An alliance of trade unionists, community and language activist is emerging to mount a campaign to reverse the decision.

The Welsh Assembly Government is being pressed to establish a Commission into communications in Wales.

CPBF National Council member Tom O’Malley, a professor at Aberystwyth University, said: “The affair vividly illustrates the lack of accountability in media policy making in Wales and across the UK.”



The NUJ has launched a Save Our Service campaign to stop the World Service cuts

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FROM MARCH 1 this logo will appear on TV screens to indicate there is paid-for advertising within the programme. Product placement, previously banned, was introduced under Ofcom regulations following changes to the EU Audio-Visual Directive last year.

The logo will have to appear for all of three seconds at the start and end of programmes and after ad breaks.

Product placement will be prohibited in children’s programmes, news, current

affairs, consumer affairs and religious programming.

The promotion of tobacco, alcohol, gambling, foods or drinks that are high in fat, salt or sugar, medicines and baby milk will be banned, as well as products and services that can’t be advertised on TV, such as weapons or escort agencies.

The rules state that product placement must not impair broadcasters’ editorial independence and must always be editorially justified.

No product placement will be allowed at the BBC, except for in programmes bought from commercial broadcasters.

Middle east solidarity

AS ATTACKS began in mid-February on journalists reporting the uprisings in the middle east, the CPBF sent a message of solidarity to the Egyptian journalists’ union, before the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak.

The campaign said: “We join with others to express our disgust at the violence of Egypt’s state security officials and riot police, who have been killing, beating and arresting protesters as well as journalists and photographers in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt.”

The union replied with

information on how journalists working for state media were striving to report fairly, resisting pressure to follow the government line.

As the wave of protest has spread to other Arab countries there have been hundreds of reports of assaults on reporters and TV crews.

● At least 94 journalists and other media workers were killed around the world in 2010, victims of targeted killings and other incidents, according to the annual report of the International Federation of Journalists.

Purge the media contempt

A PARLIAMENTARY bill intended to prevent the media identifying people arrested on suspicion of criminal offences was withdrawn after the government said it would re-examine the law on Contempt of Court.

Tory MP Anna Soubry, a former TV journalist, demanded the safeguard following the

“outrageous” reporting of the Jo Yeates murder case in Bristol.

Her bill would have made it an offence punishable by up to six months in jail to name anyone before they were charged – though the media could apply to a Crown Court judge for the individual to be named if it was in the public interest.

Review

Journalism is dead. Long live ...

FOR A DECADE they have been telling us that investigative journalism is dying, strangled by a lack of resources, a lack of will and the captivity of the mass media by the celebrity culture.

For the last three or four years they have been telling us that “professional” journalism itself is on the way out as well. The killer would be Web 2.0 and its successors, which will make every citizen who goes online a journalist.

There has been much gloating about this from academics and some new media journalists, who herald the demise of the “high priesthood” of journalism which has had the presumptuousness to mediate between sources and audience, imposing its arrogant take on the news.

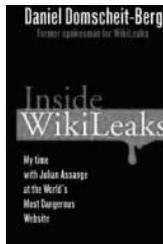
There was cheering when WikiLeaks burst on the scene in a big way last year. Here was the proof that revelations of the most important truths about the world would come not from journalists but from leakers and uploader/publishers like Julian Assange.

WikiLeaks was the great media event of 2010. But the world-wide sensation was really aroused not by the leaks themselves but by their processed versions in the mainstream media – processed by “professionals”. Just how could anybody make any sense out of a cable mountain of 500,000 US diplomatic messages without someone to “mediate” it for them?

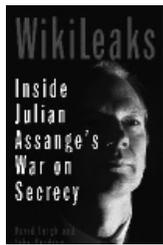
WikiLeaks had different media partners for the various waves of revelations, but central to the whole saga was the *Guardian*, which has brought out an instant book, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy*. And the *Guardian's* media section, in print and online, has been the home ground of the “journalism is dying” team.

Its writers follow the thoughts of the guru Jeff Jarvis, professor of entrepreneurial journalism at New York City University, who pours scorn on traditional practice and argues for collaborative journalism in which the online amateur's contribution is of equal value to the professionals'.

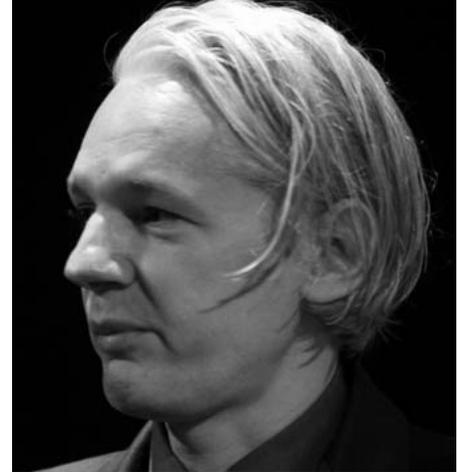
A central figure in *WikiLeaks* is Nick Davies, the respected investigative reporter



INSIDE WIKILEAKS: MY TIME WITH JULIAN ASSANGE AT THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS WEBSITE
Daniel Domscheit-Berg
Jonathan Cape, £9.99



WIKILEAKS: INSIDE JULIAN ASSANGE'S WAR ON SECRECY
David Leigh and Luke Harding
Guardian Books, £9.99



Julian Assange: flawed hero

who became a media hero in 2008 with *Flat Earth News*, a book that spelt out how commercialism is ruining contemporary journalism. He called the manufacture of news “churnalism”, by which stories initiated generally by PR sources are regurgitated without proper scrutiny by the burgeoning mass of media; no-one would direct resources to proper investigations any longer.

There can be few stranger positions to be in than proving yourself wrong. It was Nick Davies that made contact with Julian Assange after its first bombshell release – the cold-blooded shooting of a group of Iraqis by the crew of a US Apache gunship – and negotiated the handling of the two massive releases that followed. It was a triumph for the supposedly doomed serious journalism.

The relationship with Julian Assange carefully built by Nick Davies fell apart within months, not because of the *Guardian's* arrogance but Assange's. He emerges as a mercurial and wilful egomaniac, with, as has become well known, a questionable attitude to women, especially in bed.

WikiLeaks has rather more than you want to know – a whole excruciating chapter – on the pushing and shoving between the sheets that has left Julian Assange facing extradition back to Sweden, charged with sexual assault. The book strains to present both sides of the case – Assange and the women concerned – in some

detail, but at least it doesn't push the repellent “honeypot” allegation once favoured by Assange's lawyers: the women weren't spies; they were groupies persuaded to kiss and tell.

There is acrimony between the *Guardian* and Julian Assange since the split, and it's a pity that although the book was rushed out in February, only two days after the date on editor Alan Rusbridger's introduction, it fails to narrate how this came about.

What *WikiLeaks* does give is a breathless account of the production of an old-fashioned mega-scoop, with plenty of baloney in case readers don't recognise this was “The Biggest Leak In History”, brought to the *Guardian* by “The World's Most Famous Man ... the Rockstar of the Year”!

For all the *Guardian's* web-centricity, *WikiLeaks* brims with excitement over the print publication, the mad rush to meet deadlines and the desperation to keep stories secret until the presses roll. Far from killing off newspapers, internet-sourced stories are their rescue.

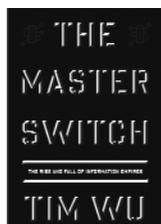
There are more books coming out. Daniel Domscheit-Berg's *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website* is a broken-heart story by a former WikiLeaks journalist who fell out with Julian Assange, which has been plundered by the press for its anecdotes on his numerous failings.

And of course the great man himself has his own account, *WikiLeaks Versus the World: My Story*, by Julian Assange, due out on April 7. It's reported he has been paid more than \$1 million for this (ghost-written) work, which might just pay for the squadron of expensive lawyers he surrounds himself with these days.

Tim Gopill



Stand by net neutrality



**THE MASTER SWITCH:
THE RISE AND FALL OF
INFORMATION EMPIRES**
Tim Wu
Atlantic Books £19.99

IN 1992 Tim Wu, a professor at Columbia University, published a proposal for a “net neutrality” rule to tackle attempts by Internet Service Providers to ban applications or block particular content that was not consistent with their business model.

Net neutrality is the idea that all data flowing across the internet is treated as having equal importance. It means that service providers must treat all traffic equally, and not seek payment from other entities to fast-track their data.

The concept has generated intense debate. In December Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the World Wide Web, was prompted to write a piece in *Scientific American*, warning that the web, “a powerful ubiquitous tool ... built on egalitarian principles”, was threatened by companies like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon who want the power to censor content they don't like, or to set up “toll booths” to

charge for the privilege of driving in the fast lanes. He concluded that, although the internet and the web generally thrive on lack of regulation, “some basic values have to be legally preserved.”

The Master Switch sets discussion on the future of the internet within the history of American media and communications. Tim Wu shows how a series of information technologies, from telephony to radio, movies and television, have been shaped by what he calls “the Cycle”, a progression from “a freely accessible channel to one strictly controlled by a single cor-

poration or cartel.”

Far more than any other communications technology, the internet has become part of the fabric of our lives. If it is subject to the trajectory of previous information technologies, coming under corporate control, the practical consequences will be “staggering”.

Tim Wu argues that there needs to be a “Separations Principle” to enforce a distinction between creators of content, those that distribute it, and the makers of devices on which it is consumed. It's a proposal that deserves serious attention.

Granville Williams

THE WAR YOU DON'T SEE

STAR investigative reporter John Pilger's latest film is promoted as “a powerful and timely investigation into the media's role in war”, and for once the hype is justified.

His films have strong political angles but can sometimes be rather didactic, with Pilger himself delivering a lecture. Not with *The War You Don't See*. John Pilger is onscreen a lot, but mostly he is interviewing senior journalists, who should know better, about their shameful roles in reporting recent wars.

He gets some of them to admit their errors, and if it leaves you asking, “why did they do it, if they knew it was wrong?” then that is the message he wants us to heed.

The film is available on DVD at www.johnpilger.com, for only £9.18, well worth buying.

Tim Gopsill

Free Press is edited by Tim Gopsill on behalf of the National Council. This issue went to press on February 26. Send letters, comments, articles and ideas to freepress@cpbf.org.uk

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