

Tabloid papers in the dock

THE BITERS BADLY BIT

by JOY JOHNSON

THE POPULAR press is on trial at the Leveson Inquiry, where a parade of celebrities, elevated to fame and then hounded by their journalists, turned on them with a vengeance.

In the High Court in London, just 100 yards from Fleet Street, the old journalists' definition of the perfect story – "man bites dog" – finally came true.

The dignified manner in which the witnesses, standing up to the press and exposing the heartlessness with which they had been pursued by Rupert Murdoch's News International papers, was in stark contrast to the hounding they had been subjected to for months or even years.

No one can feel anything but shock at hearing how the mother of Milly Dowler had been given false hope that her daughter may be alive.

Or outrage as Sienna Miller described how she had been chased down a dark street on her way home by ten men with cameras. "Take away the cameras and you have ten men chasing a woman," she said.

Or revulsion when Kate McCann told how she felt "totally violated" when the News of the World published the diaries in which she had recorded her pain over her missing daughter.

Along with bankers and politicians, the reputation of yet another powerful arm of the elite is in tatters.

What makes the testimonies of the witnesses more powerful is that those who had been besieged by photographers, traduced by inaccurate stories, with their privacy violated by the phone hacking and betrayal by official bodies that should have been protected their personal information, is that it is not being reported by journalists, but relayed on camera.

The humiliation of the press is a narrative played out on the 24-hour news channels that Lord Leveson permitted to provide continuous coverage of the drama in his courtroom.

Media standards have been in the dock and it appears that a new regulatory body with teeth, the last thing the owners want, will be the solution to rein in a press that has abandoned moral values in pursuit of profit.

More cuts, more profits for local press

TWELVE LOCAL newspapers were closed in England in November as the big chains hacked away at costs in order to maintain their profits in a declining market.

Northcliffe Media, the local paper arm of the *Daily Mail* group, folded five titles – four of them after the sale of a cluster of papers in Kent was blocked under media ownership regulations.

And Trinity Mirror, which owns the *Daily Mirror* group, shut down six as it retrenched its publications in the Midlands and Merseyside. Both groups are still highly profitable despite the loss of sales and downturn in advertising.

Northcliffe wanted to sell seven weeklies in Kent to local publisher the Kent Messenger company, but the deal was effectively blocked by the Office of Fair Trading when it, which decided to refer it to the Competition Commission.

The OFT was concerned about the concentration of ownership in Kent but regulators have not shown such diligence over much bigger media mergers at national level such as News Corp's bid for BSkyB and Express Newspapers' Richard Desmond's takeover of Channel 5.

Northcliffe then announced the closure of the *Medway News* and *East Kent Gazette* and the merger of three weeklies in the Thanet and Canterbury into one.

NUJ newspapers official Barry Fitzpatrick commented: "It's clear that this comes in a long line of cuts and its becoming apparent that Northcliffe no longer has any commitment to the regional press. They tried to sell the Kent titles, but they weren't even willing to subject that to any referral. Now they are just cutting and running."

Northcliffe has also shut down the *Bridgwater and Burnham Times* in

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What will Leveson conclude?

Special four-page feature on the options for a new media landscape

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Not talking about self-regulation

TIM GOPSILL welcomes a growing appreciation that state-backed sanctions could be needed in any new system to make the right of reply really work. The answer is independent regulation with statutory backing

IT WAS the day after the celebrities had finished telling the Leveson Inquiry about the iniquities inflicted on them by the reptiles of the tabloid press. The cavernous overflow outbuildings that had been packed with press and the public for the previous two weeks were empty. I could stroll into the hearing itself in a small upstairs courtroom and find a seat with no trouble.

Leveson was turning to the journalists, to hear their side of the story, among them Nick Davies, without whose investigations for the *Guardian* there would be no inquiry. But reporters are not celebrities, so by definition the media had little interest in them.

Having given an account of his reporting, Nick Davies was asked about regulating to stop the kind of journalistic practices at issue. He said: "Newspapers can no longer be trusted to regulate themselves. I don't think this is an industry that is interested in or capable of self-regulation."

He said he had been persuaded to

'This is not an industry that is interested in or capable of self-regulation'

this view by the performance of the Press Complaints Commission – which "undermines the whole concept of self-regulation ... It obviously doesn't work. We're kidding ourselves if we think it would because it hasn't.

"The PCC is designed with the interests of the newspapers in mind. No system that is designed within that shape

is going to succeed. We have to stop only thinking about the freedom of the press and build a satisfactory way for the victims of the media to get a remedy."

Nick Davies was backing the long-standing campaign for the right of reply, which was launched by the CPBF in the early 1980s. "If I publish something which falsely damages somebody's reputation, what they deserve is a correction of equal prominence," he said.

Davies also argued that complaints about libel or defamation should be resolved by arbitration without recourse to the courts. "I'd want an arbitration system that's quick," he said.

Of all the voices that are coming up with "something should be done" schemes, Nick Davies's is one that should be heeded. At a time when a consensus is building within the industry that the answer is some kind of beefed-up self-regulation, a "PCC with teeth", his rejection of the notion should be taken seriously.

Even his own editor, Alan Rusbridger, a stern critic of the PCC who walked out of it over that phone-hacking report, has now closed ranks with his peers in calling for its preservation, if in a rather stronger form than some.

There is a circling of the wagons, under the command of *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre, to fend off the hordes demanding media justice. Members of the PCC itself are going on the road to sell the message that the future must be a reborn PCC – or the state!

But this has been their argument against half-hearted threats to legislate on the press for 20 years and it has lost its force. Now the threats are real and people can see through it.

Thanks to the outrages of the Murdoch press, and the futility of the PCC, discussion of media regulation is more open than ever before. Journalists, lawyers, academics, trade unions and campaigners are engaged in lively debate.

No longer is everyone obliged to swear allegiance to self-regulation and throw up their hands in horror at the very mention of the state, because they realise that any system of regulation needs statutory backing to work.

No-one is talking about censorship or control or licensing or the use of the criminal law. No-one wants the registration of journalists, nor any power to strike them off and stop them working; it couldn't work anyway: especially in the internet age, how do you stop people writing?

THESE are a number of alternatives swirling around. Some do involve the use of the direct use of the law; some would institute an arms-length statutory body, equivalent to Ofcom which regulates the broadcasting sector.

Others employ what has come to be called "co-regulation" – an independent commission that has a statutory body as a back-up.

An example often cited is the Advertising Standards Authority, a voluntary body that can refer cases to the Office of Fair Trading (for print and internet) or Ofcom (for broadcasting) in the event of an advertiser breaking the rules.

But there's a better term still: "independent regulation", to describe voluntary self-regulated systems, independent of both state and corporate direction, but given statutory powers to enforce their rulings.

There's general agreement that a new

system must be able to dispense the right of reply, and if recalcitrant publishers refuse to comply, there must be some authority behind it. The right of reply has been facilitated too by technology.

Old-fashioned excuses from publishers who resisted the idea – all the whining about handing over the space to complainers and outsiders – and all the arguments about the prominence of replies, no longer apply when a correction or apology can be easily be posted online.

Replies could go at the top of comment panels immediately below the offending articles; if these had originally been in print, then a notice in the printed paper could draw attention to the full correction on the website.

There is a list of the main options in the panel (right). Some of them would set up membership organisations, in which publishers – not just in print but online, of course – agree to sign up to a regulatory system and be bound by its decisions. Membership would signify adherence to a code of practice and

The conduct of the press has brought matters to a state where compulsion may be required

to honest and responsible journalism, indicated by the use of a logo.

There are varying means of inducing publishers to join up. Some suggest providing a defence in any subsequent legal case, or tax breaks, such as exemption from VAT. This is the plan from the Co-ordinating Committee for Media Reform (CCMR), based at Goldsmiths College in south east London.

The CPBF is involved in the CCMR and half a dozen activists have contributed to its research. Its long and thorough report proposes a News Publishing Commission which incorporates positive features of self-regulation by involving publishers and journalists in upholding standards of reporting.

To supply the backstop of authority, the structure has a News Tribunal with the powers of a court to compel reluctant editors to publish replies. It might be a shame that it's needed, but the conduct of the right-wing corporate press has brought matters to a state where compulsion may be required.

So it might not be self-regulation as we would like it but if it's in line with Nick Davies's thinking it should be good enough for anyone.

● *The CCMR proposal is at www.mediareform.org.uk*

THE REGULATION DERBY

Place your bets

These are the main options in play for a new regulatory structure. There are nine runners. No odds, no favourite

1 NO REGULATION
Abolish and don't replace the PCC. Like the USA, where there is no press regulation, media deal directly with complaints and standards are higher.

Won't satisfy public clamour for effective regulation if not revenge. Will lead to more litigation, leaving those who cannot afford the law without redress.

2 THE PCC-PLUS
Continuing self-regulation with greater investigative powers, more lay members and the power to fine or award compensation. Favoured by the press – as long as it's not effective. Politically unsellable.

3 MEDIA STANDARDS COMMISSION
Known as "co-regulation" – part voluntary, part statute – and supported by learned commentators, academics and the broadsheet press. Independent of industry or government but with statutory backing for decisions, giving it real teeth.

Media participation voluntary, living complainants with no recourse to non-members. Powerful incentives, perhaps tax breaks, needed to get publishers to sign up.

4 OFPRESS
All publishers subject to statutory body, possibly extension of Ofcom regulation of broadcasting, with power to fine or suspend publication for breaches of a Press Code.

Would be seen as state regulation or licensing of the press, which has a completely different unregulated culture.

5 THE JOURNALISM SOCIETY
Would operate in a similar way to representative body/regulators of other professions – law, medicine, accountancy etc.

Would set and enforce ethical standards, monitor training and qualifications. Authority would

depend on power to expel/strike off journalists, effectively non-statutory "licensing", undesirable and anyway impossible.

6 A MEDIA LAW
No regulator but code of practice enacted in legislation and enforceable through the courts which could command right of reply or other remedies. Enforcement by police and judges. Has little support.

7 MEDIA REGULATION AUTHORITY
Statutory regulation as recommended by the Calcutt Committee in 1990.

Media would be obliged to operate within a statutory code, enforced by a statutory regulator with powers to fine and restrict publication and compensate victims of breaches of the code.

8 MEDIA REGULATION TRIBUNAL
A voluntary system under which publishers taking part would be protected from legal action in courts other than the MRT itself: increased regulation in return for increased protection.

Complainants must bring cases against member publishers to the MRT which would adjudicate on and enforce a Code. It would be an independent court.

9 NEWS PUBLISHING COMMISSION
Voluntary body with power to order right of reply and refer cases to a Tribunal in the event of non-compliance. Tribunal has statutory powers.

Cases go first to an Ombudsman to agree terms of reply. NPC has press freedom remit and promotes a code including conscience clause for journalists and transparency for sources of stories online.

Incentive for voluntary membership is continued VAT exemption, with opters-out having to pay the tax.

● Sources: : inform.wordpress.com, www.mediareform.org.uk, blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject

IT'S THE DEMOCRACY, STUPID

All media have obligations to provide news as a public service, says **JULIAN PETLEY**

MUCH OF THE coverage of the Leveson Inquiry has focussed on phone-hacking. Admittedly there have been some compelling stories, but Leveson is not concerned solely, or even primarily, with the practice.

The Inquiry's remit includes a duty to "inquire into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press" and to make recommendations for a "new, more effective policy and regulatory regime which supports the integrity and freedom of the press, the plurality of the media, and its independence".

It has invited submissions to address the "special role to be played by the press in a democracy ... and the whether this role places any obligations or responsibilities on the press".

The press freedom for which the CPBF stands is not the freedom of the owners to do with their papers (and their journal-

Press freedom is not simply a property right, nor merely the freedom from regulation

ists) as they damn well please. When proprietors defend press freedom they're not standing up for the noble ideals championed by Milton, Paine and Mill – they're simply defending a property right in the guise of their free speech.

Nor does the CPBF endorse the owners' view that the free market is the prerequisite of a free press.

On the contrary, allowing market forces to let rip leads not to press freedom but to market censorship: proprietor power, advertiser power, the tyranny of majority tastes, loss of journalism jobs through cost cutting, the privileging of soft news over hard, the decline of investigative journalism, and so on.

Statutory regulation is necessary to counteract the destructive effects on the media of the market, the effects of which are at their most obvious in the market-driven journalism of the popular press.

This is why the campaign supports the principles of public service broadcasting – even if we have little faith in those who are supposed to be their guardians – and why we vehemently oppose the de-regulation of broadcasting.

Such de-regulation is in reality re-regulation, replacing regulations designed to protect the public interest with those designed to further corporate interests.

For the last 20 years governments have pursued policies with the effect of making broadcasting more like the British press. But while the regulations of public service broadcasting cannot be applied wholesale to newspapers, its basic principles can.

If democracy is to function properly, its citizens must be adequately informed, and regulation is needed to lay positive obligations on them.

It is distinctly anomalous that the press should be completely devoid of informative or democratic obligations, apart from those imposed by the more enlightened owners and editors.

Leveson's question whether the freedom which the press enjoys brings with it obligations or responsibilities is a timely one.

Press freedom is not simply a property right, nor merely the freedom from regulation.

It involves freedom from proprietor and advertiser power, and from the ravages of market forces. It also means the freedom of journalists to work genuinely in the public interest, and the freedom of readers to be able to access a wide range of trustworthy news sources.

It is here that the democratic responsibilities of journalists and the democratic rights of readers become one.

Put them

Media ownership reform is urgent, says **JONATHAN HARDY**. There must be limits to how much a company can own and rules on how it conducts itself

IF NEWS Corp's bid for BSkyB had been approved – and it would have been, if not for the public outcry – it would have combined the second and fourth largest news providers in the UK, with a combined reach of 51 per cent.

The regulatory regime that is supposed to protect media plurality but so nearly nodded the takeover through cannot be up to the job. The system urgently needs reform.

With the closure of the News of the World, three media groups now control have almost 70 per cent of the national press. Four companies dominate the local press.

Ofcom's policy is that regulation

Let journa

TONY HARCUP says that the NUJ's call for a "conscience clause" might help improve ethical standards

IN 2004 journalists working for the Daily Express were feeling pressurised to produce stories to fit a pre-conceived editorial line and the NUJ wrote to the Press Complaints Commission asking it to insert a "conscience clause" into its editors' code of practice, whereby journalists who refused unethical assignments would be protected from disciplinary action or dismissal. The request was rejected in what appeared to

... to the public interest test

should prevent “any person [controlling] too much of the media because of his or her ability to influence opinions and set the political agenda”, which sounds fine.

But Ofcom uses this political definition to justify restricting the range of issues to be taken into account, ignoring wider issues.

Media companies have obligations that increase with size and reach. The CPBF wants policies that are effective in strengthening diversity in news, entertainment and all forms of cultural expression.

To this end we propose reforming the public interest test. Currently it applies only in merger situations, and only the Secretary of State can trigger it. Ofcom, with a strengthened remit, should also initiate the test.

There should also be a much stronger democratic input.

Deciding whether there is too much media concentration or insufficient cultural diversity in a nation or region should be open to public consultation and deliberation.

Any media firm that has, or would obtain, a 15 per cent share in a media market would be subject to a public interest test. The outcome could be an order to divest some holdings, but it would be better to apply a range of

obligations. These range from investment in news journalism, safeguarding editorial independence through to requirements on the structure and governance of firms.

Under such conditions there should be an absolute maximum market share of 30 per cent. Above that the company would either need to divest, or

Media and democracy continue to be damaged by concentrations of media power

reorganise the service concerned under a public trust or similar body, to comply with public interest requirements.

These market share thresholds are important, but public interest tests should be initiated on other grounds too, subject to clear rules and criteria, such as when there is evidence of significant public concern.

Richard Desmond’s acquisition of Channel Five to add to his *Express* newspapers and other holdings would not escape a public interest review under our proposals, as it somehow did in 2010.

The BBC and public service media

require special treatment. The market shares used to calculate limits should not include publicly funded or governed media; these are already subject to detailed rules to secure pluralism. The purpose of the test is to ensure that the public interest benefits of pluralism extend across the rest of the media.

It is sometimes said that those seeking stronger rules on media concentration favour a “small is beautiful” world that is at odds with the powerful tendencies towards concentration in media enterprises.

Alternatively it is sometimes argued that digitisation makes media concentration an anachronistic problem, as relevant today as the Betamax-VHS video tape recorder wars of the 1970s.

But our media and democracy continue to be damaged by concentrations of media power – something that is better understood and of greater public concern now than it ever has been.

The complacency towards media concentration that has marked successive Labour and Conservative administrations is exposed as never before, not least in public reaction to the corporate scandals Leveson is examining.

... lists act on their consciences

the journalists to be peremptory fashion.

The clause reads: “A journalist has the right to refuse assignments or be identified as the author of editorial which would break the letter and spirit of the code. No journalist can be disciplined or suffer detriment to their career for asserting his/her rights to act according to the code”

A workplace in which ethical concerns can be discussed can only be good for journalism

When issues of journalistic ethics climbed the political agenda in the summer, the questions arose: would “hackgate” have happened in a newsroom within which journalists

were empowered to speak out about unethical and questionable practices?

And could it have been more than coincidence that the scandal had occurred in a workplace from which independent trade unions had been banished?

Most journalists do want to do a decent job and not to be ashamed of their craft. That is why many believe that a conscience clause might redress the balance and create a climate within newsrooms whereby any journalist might feel able to ask: “Are we sure we should be doing this?”

Many journalists have adherence to the editors’ code written into their contracts of employment, despite the fact that journalists below the rank of editor have no say in how it is drafted, amended or implemented. Should not they then be defended if they put their

head on the block by telling their boss: “What you are instructing me to do goes against the code, is unethical, and I will not do it”?

The chances are that a conscience clause would be used rarely, if ever, but its mere existence could help contribute to a healthier workplace culture within newsrooms in which questions can sometimes be asked and objections can occasionally be voiced.

A workplace in which ethical concerns can be discussed can only be good for journalism and ethics alike, because the essence of journalism is asking questions.

A conscience clause will not heal all of journalism’s ills. But given what has taken place in a system of almost totally unconstrained management prerogative, it might be a step worth taking.

What a surprise: lobbyists lobby against transparency

Promised reforms to set up a register for the industry seem to be receding, reports **TAMASIN CAVE**. The lobbyists have been doing their job

THE LOBBYING industry's professional reputation is on the line. Not from damaging headlines about their hidden influence on politicians and policy. Nor even from the scandal surrounding the former Defence Secretary William Fox's advisor-cum-lobbyist Adam Werritty. They've weathered worse.

The deadly threat is having to operate in the open, which is a fight they can't afford to lose. The industry is engaged in a lobbying campaign to head off transparency regulations: losing this would be a disaster for an industry that sells itself on its ability to influence government.

The lobbyists have lost the public argument. Two years ago Parliament's Public Administration Select Committee concluded an 18-month inquiry with the recommendation for a statutory register. Lobbyists would be required to register who they are, who they are lobbying for, which areas of government policy they are seeking to influence, and how much money is spent on their activities.

The US has operated a register of lobbyists for well over a decade as do Canada, Australia and Germany. In fact lobbyists opposed to a register in the UK routinely comply with regulations abroad.

It's a straightforward proposal and the government agreed: the coalition agreement last May included a pledge to bring in just such a register.

The public appear to agree. In the crisis following the expenses scandal, transparency rules for lobbyists topped polls of political reforms the public would like to see.

Against this backdrop of public and parliamentary support, the industry has fought its campaign privately, behind

closed doors. Tom Watson MP, the scourge of the Murdochs, who as a Cabinet Office minister oversaw the previous government's response to the select committee recommendation, has said he was "persuaded by the industry" of the merits of self-regulation against a statutory register. Mark Harper, his Conservative successor, has reportedly endorsed a blueprint for regulations drafted by the industry.

The proposal has suffered from long delays. Despite numerous reassurances to Parliament – and the Adam Werritty scandal – the government has missed its deadline for publishing its plans, after what *The Times* calls "a lot of lobbying" by the industry.

It's not without irony that attempts to shine a light on this lobbying by the industry are being blocked.

The lobbyists have employed the techniques used to help clients delay, block or amend regulation: stalling tac-

Lobbyists opposed to a register in the UK routinely comply with regulations abroad

tics, misinformation and scare stories, attempts to discredit opponents and behind-the-scenes lobbying.

As David Cameron himself said, before last year's election: "We all know how it works. The lunches, the hospitality, the quiet word in your ear ... It arouses people's worst fears and suspicions about how our political system works ... a cosy club at the top making decisions in their own interest." Now in government, Cameron's hostility appears to have evaporated.

In recent months we have learnt that it is "commonplace" for Whitehall departments to contact corporate lobbyists about government business using text messages to avoid disclosure under

the Freedom of Information Act. We've seen the "systematic use of private emails" by education secretary Michael Gove for the same reason.

Local government secretary Eric Pickles kept hidden a dinner with lobbyists and businesses with an interest in his department, because he attended in a "private" capacity. A week before the publication of the government's radical changes to the planning system, planning minister Bob Neill enjoyed an informal drink with Tesco's chief lobbyist Lucy Neville-Rolfe.

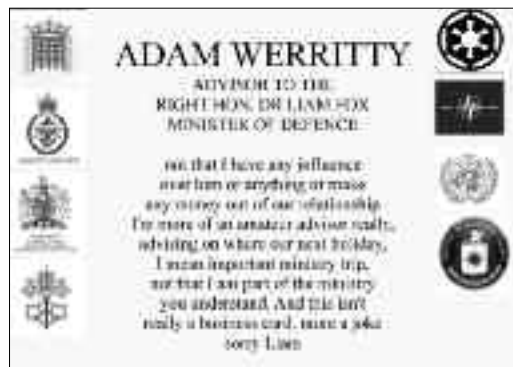
Then there are the very private relationships between members of the Cabinet and lobbyists: former defence secretary Liam Fox's friendship with lobbyist Adam Werritty led to his resignation.

The partner of energy secretary Chris Huhne was caught hawking her services to lobbying firms on the strength of her "excellent" ministerial contacts. Health secretary Andrew Lansley's wife runs a lobbying firm that boasts clients in the drug and food business and advises on establishing "positive relationships with decision-makers".

And Nick Clegg, who is ultimately responsible for the register's introduction as head of the Cabinet Office, is married to a lobbyist.

We were reminded recently of the Prime Minister's friendship with his neighbour and ally Lord Chadlington, thanks to a deal they had struck over a plot of land. Chadlington runs lobbying firms whose clients include HSBC, Tesco and the City of London Corporation. Employees include lobbyists George Bridges, Cameron's former campaign director, and Malcolm Morton, a former adviser to, yes, Mark Harper.

"I believe that it is increasingly clear that lobbying in this country is getting out of control," said David Cameron in opposition. The situation under his leadership is just as bad.



Spoof of Adam Werritty's notorious business card by dumyat

Another life is used up for James Murdoch

SUPPORTERS of the online campaigning group Avaz picketed the AGM of BSkyB in London in November, at which chairman James Murdoch was facing a challenge from disgruntled shareholders.

In the event he won an 81 per cent vote to keep his position, just under half of which comprised the Murdoch holding in the company. A number of big institutional investors voted

against him, as had others at the News Corp AGM in New York in October.

The picket featured an activist in a James Murdoch mask and was joined by Labour MPs Chris Bryant and Tom Watson, who led the backbench charge against the Murdochs in Parliament. Both had proxy shares and put questions to James Murdoch.

A week before the meeting it was revealed that he had stood down from the boards of the News International newspapers in what was seen as a move to limit further damage to his position from the revelations at the Leveson Inquiry.

Meanwhile News Corp came under greater pressure in Australia, where the government has set up an inquiry into media standards similar to the Leveson exercise. News Corp owns 70 per cent of the Australian press.

In October the head of the Australian division, John Hartigan, unexpectedly resigned, saying it was time to "hand over to a new generation". The new chairman appointed to succeed him was expected to be Rupert's son Lachlan, but in the event Rupert Murdoch appointed himself to the post. New generation, aged 80.



Local press

From page 1

Somerset and closed the local office of the *Croydon Advertiser*, which will now be produced from Redhill, 12 miles away.

Meanwhile Trinity Mirror closed three long-standing weeklies in the West Midlands – the *Chase Post* in Cannock, the *Stafford Post* and the *Sutton News*.

Fifty editorial jobs are to go in the third jobs cull at Trinity's Midlands base in the last three years: 65 editorial jobs went in 2008 and 45 in 2009.

The group is cutting back in the same way in Liverpool, where two weeklies have been sacrificed as the *Daily Post*, the morning title, drops back to weekly production – as the *Birmingham Post* has done already.

The *Bootle Times*, the *Maghull* and *Aintree Star* and *Anfield and West Derby Star* are to be merged into a single title called *The Star*.

'RETURN THEM TO THE COMMUNITIES'

A LEADING former regional editor has urged the big four UK regional press publishers to return their hundreds of newspaper titles to local ownership.

Neil Fowler, who edited has four regional dailies and is now conducting research into the industry at Nuffield College, Oxford, said in a lecture in October that TM, Northcliffe, Newsquest and Johnston Press were "stuck in a no-man's land of inertia. They are having to pull as much cash as possible out of their businesses to service their debts – which is in turn causing those businesses long-term damage."

He attacked them for failing to invest in the future during the period from 1989 to 2005 when they were enjoying 30 per cent-plus profit margins.

He added: "The case must be made for the return of the locally owned news business, supported by local enterprises, so that local engagement is maximised. It is good that towns and cities have their own newspapers."

TM also closed the *Darlington and South Durham Herald and Post* in County Durham.

The 12th closure was Iliffe News and Media's *Your Leek Paper* in Staffordshire.

The number of journalists employed on newspapers has dropped by 29 per cent over the last four years, according to a survey carried out by the Society of Editors. The

bulk of the losses have been in the provincial press.

But the big groups last year recorded hugely increased profits on the back of the cutback in costs and a recovery from the worst recession-hit year, 2009.

TM's profits rose by 39.6 per cent in 2010 to £101.5 million, and the *Daily Mail* group by 22.9 per cent to £247 million.

They don't take pictures like this any more

SHAPED BY WAR: PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON MCCULLIN
Imperial War Museum, London, until 5 April 2012

BP BRITISH ART DISPLAYS: DON MCCULLIN
Tate Britain, London, until 4 March 2012

ANYONE who regards the celebrated photographer Don McCullin as a "war junkie" will be swiftly put right by the retrospective of his work at the Imperial War Museum in London. The exhibition reflects not only his great skill as a photographer, but his humility and humanity towards those he photographs.

He spent four decades as a war photographer, in Vietnam, Northern Ireland, Nigeria, El Salvador, Cyprus and Lebanon, but loathes the label. "It's like saying you work in an abattoir," he says.



Don McCullin's Nikon F Camera, showing the damage (top right) caused by a Khmer Rouge AK-bullet in Cambodia, 1970. The camera still worked.

Images taken in Vietnam by McCullin – and other notable photojournalists – filled the pages of a press with an appetite for photojournalism in the 1970s. Photographers became heroes, their pictures etched into the public memory as images that told the truth about war and helped turn the tide of public opinion against it.

It was the golden age of photojournalism but it was not set to last. By the time of the Falklands War in 1982 the British authorities were not taking any chances and refused McCullin accreditation to cover it.

Shortly afterwards he was sacked from the *Sunday Times* – recently taken over by Rupert Murdoch – for which he had worked for most of his career, and that was the end of McCullin's war photography. Exhausted by the madness of war and haunted by his images, he found solace in photographing still lives and the sombre winter landscapes of Somerset where he lives.

Now the photographic coverage of war is almost entirely managed through embedding. There are no images of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with anything like the impact of McCullin's work.

And McCullin himself says he doubts that images have the power to "turn people's minds". He calls that naïve, saying: "I don't really think my photography has changed the world in any way whatsoever."

The exhibition at Tate Britain is a



Don McCullin with US Marines during the Battle for Hue, Vietnam, 1968

special one-room "focus display" of major British artists, sampling the range of his work. It was arranged with his co-operation, yet he also doubts that his work counts as art: "I don't want to be associated with art. I'm a photographer."

Janina Struk

Free Press is edited by Tim Gopsill on behalf of the National Council. This issue went to press on December 4.
Send letters, comments, articles and ideas to freepress@cpbf.org.uk

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