

# FREE Press

No 194 July–August 2013

£1 Journal of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

## REGULATION

# Not humbled but rumbled

By **JOY JOHNSON**

SO NOW we know. When Rupert Murdoch interrupted son James to insist that he had something he wanted to say to the Commons Culture, Media and Sport committee two years ago he was playing to the gallery.

"This is the most humble day of my life," he whined. Maybe it was, after all here was the most powerful media mogul on the planet hauled up before mere MPs; but it's clear from the release of the tape recording of Murdoch addressing Sun journalists in March that it had been all part of the show.

That secret tape has given us a real insight into what is happening at Wapping. Sun journalists, once loyal to a fault, are rebelling. Mutiny was in the air. In the meeting they complained they'd been hung out to dry.

Rupert Murdoch was forced to try and put himself on their side. On the tape he admits that payments to public officials were part of "the culture of Fleet Street". So much for humility.

During the 1980s, with his ally Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he was able to rely on the state to smash the unions at Wapping. From then on his empire was able to go from strength to strength. Nothing stood in his way.

We were a hair's breath away from Rupert Murdoch taking control of BSkyB. Then he and his empire crashed down to earth with the shocking revelation that the murdered teenager, Milly Dowler's mobile was hacked into by the News of the World.

It seemed that the subsequent Leveson inquiry would finally bring some sanity to a press that had got out of control. At the very least the ineffective Press Complaints Committee would be scrapped.

Yet where are we after Leveson?

We've had a flurry of activity with senior politicians and the campaign group Hacked Off agreeing a Royal Charter. And we've had the breakfast meeting of newspaper editors in a posh restaurant that seemed to be constructive.

But after great expectations the government has decided to delay pressing ahead with the all-party supported Royal Charter. And in comes



the press Charter which is no more than a wrecking device.

If Tory MPs are once again driven by fear or political expediency, at least the Labour Party appears to be standing firm.

Leveson didn't go into media ownership – which was a shame. Ed Miliband referred to media ownership in his evidence to Leveson but it's his number two, Harriet Harman, in her culture and media role, that is making the running.

She has declared that that more plurality was needed to ensure that no media owner can exert such a damaging influence: "Too much power in too few hands hinders proper debate".

She called for cross-party agreement for a new Communications Act with an upper limit for cross-media ownership with a starting point of a 15 per cent market cap.

It is pretty apparent that the coalition government won't do anything meaningful. It's not worth relying on the Lib Dems so it's down to Labour.

Ed Miliband was quick off the starting line when the hacking scandal broke. He mustn't buckle and must include the media ownership cap in Labour's 2015 manifesto.

***A media ownership cap must be in Labour's manifesto***

**3** TIME FOR A STITCH-UP  
Charter delay set up for deal

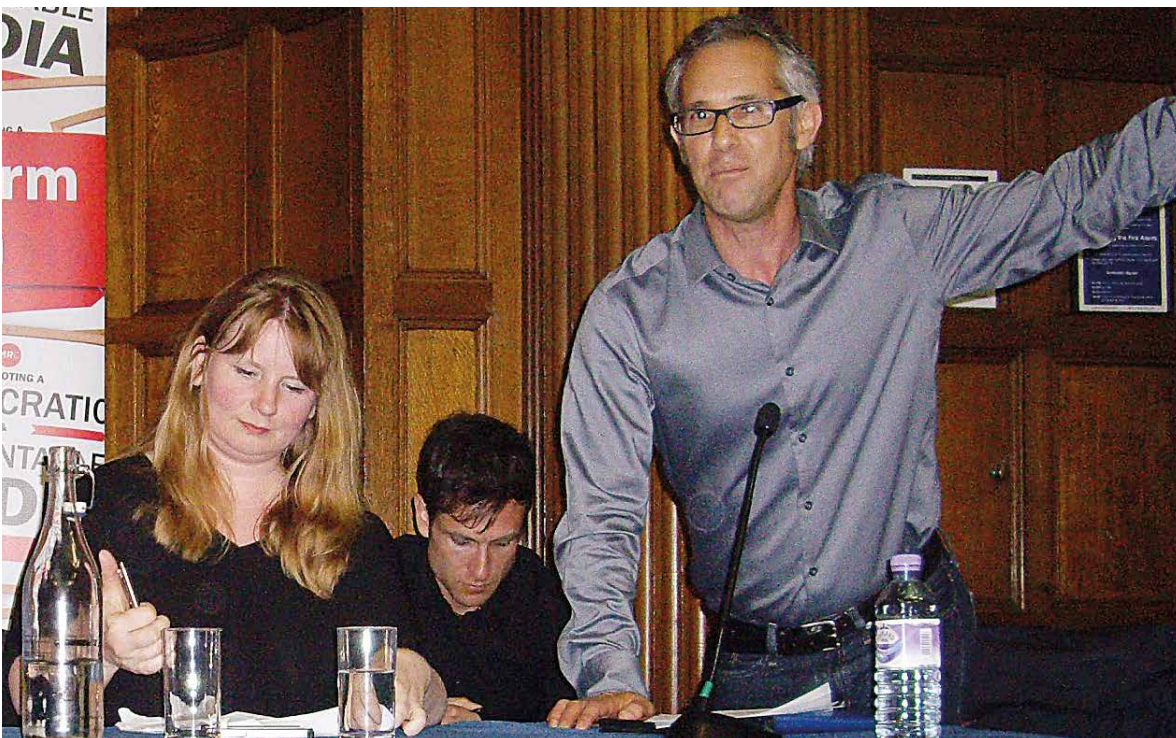
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For all the latest on the campaign go to [www.cpbpf.org.uk](http://www.cpbpf.org.uk)

BARRY WHITE



*Des Freedman, with Michelle Stanistreet and Justin Schlosberg, tells the rally: We need the conscience clause*

# Nothing will work without changes to ownership rules

NEW RULES on media ownership are the top priority in improving the fairness and accountability of the UK press, a London rally heard in June.

NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet said the Leveson Inquiry had shown that corrupt relationships between politicians, press and police were the result of one man – Rupert Murdoch – controlling 37 per cent of the national newspaper market.

“Politicians, at their own admission, were too craven to take on the Murdoch press. They feared they would be pursued personally, or their party’s policies would be savaged,” she said.

“Prime minister after prime minister felt they had to pay homage at the court of Rupert.

“They met up in Mayfair gentlemen’s clubs with promises of being backed by the Murdoch press at the

next election.”

Justin Schlosberg of Birkbeck College and the Media Reform Coalition, which organised the event with the support of the CPBF, said: “If there is one lesson about British politics we learned from the Leveson Inquiry, it is that if you want to be a big player in government, you have to flirt with Rupert’s henchmen and women.”

A lack of media plurality also

means that journalists have little say about the content of the publications they produce.

That is why, said Des Freedman, reader in communications and cultural studies at Goldsmiths College, there is a need for a conscience clause for journalists, to give media workers the right to refuse to work in breach of their code of conduct.

**Frances Rafferty**

## It’s business as usual at the PCC

THE PRESS Complaints Commission, reports of whose death seem to have been exaggerated, received a record number of complaints in 2012, and found fewer publications at fault.

No fewer than 12,191 people lodged complaints – though this includes 3,800 riled by the Sun’s photos of the naked Prince Harry.

Of the rest, the PCC acted on 1,937 cases, “found merit” (potential breaches of its code) in 649, found that 101 cases had been resolved by appropriate action by the publication, and issued adverse rulings on 13 (compared with 20 the year before) – just over 0.1 per cent of those received.

Lord Hunt, Chair of the PCC, virtually admitted that the operation was ineffectual. He said: “I have always made clear that the present system of press self-regulation needs to change ... Significant reform is needed and will be delivered.”

■ **IN JUNE the PCC ran true to form with a**

**pair of judgements hammering a local paper for an inadvertent error it corrected at once, and letting off the Sun for a grotesque distortion.**

■ A COMPLAINT was upheld against the News Shopper (Bexley and North Kent), after it published a story about a police investigation into an allegation of rape. The online version of the story included a photograph of the site where it had occurred, along with video footage of forensic officers entering the property. The site was the victim’s home. The newspaper accepted that it had published information which had led to the complainant’s identification and offered to apologise. The police had not told them that the incident had taken place at the victim’s home. The images and video were taken down immediately.

The Commission ruled that the images and footage enabled “easy identification” of the property and “plainly had the potential to

contribute to identification of the victim” (which is against the code and the law).

■ MEANWHILE THE Sun on Sunday was found to have been at fault rate but its offer to publish a correction was sufficient remedy.

The report was of a Court of Appeal ruling that the UK’s system for the provision of criminal record certificates was incompatible with the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

There was a quote from a victim of a crime committed by Ian Huntley who said that the ruling could put children at risk. A subheadline read: “Now EU could let fiends like [Huntley] prey on your children”. The ECHR is nothing to do with the EU and an EU official complained. The newspaper offered to publish a correction to that point.

The PCC ruled that this offer was sufficient remedy. A complaint about the Sun on Sunday’s interpretation of the ruling was not upheld.

# Collusion is on the cards as recess looms

**NICHOLAS JONES** says the delays over implementing the Leveson reforms are leaving the doors open for a stitch-up

SUCH IS THE sense of bravado among the proprietors of newspapers such as the Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and the Sun that they seem prepared to do all they can to prolong the impasse over the Leveson recommendations, call the government's bluff and then go their own way on press regulation.

Indeed the word is that the Press Standards Board of Finance, which funds the Press Complaints Commission, has already taken the precaution of registering the name of a new and "independent" organisation to continue self-regulation of the industry.

The longer the stalemate lasts – and it will be October at the earliest before decisions are taken – the greater the possibility that ministers will retreat even further.

As the government has been forced to admit, it was Pressbof which made the first formal application to the Privy Council for a rival royal charter on press regulation, effectively blocking the royal charter agreed in March by the party leaders with the support of groups such as Hacked Off.

Having stolen a march on lawyers in Maria Miller's Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the proprietors believe their hands have been strengthened by rising concern within the industry about the unquantifiable cost, especially for the provincial press, of an arbitration system for complaints which the publishers claim could be exploited by lawyers.

The industry has shown by its tactics that David Cameron remains open to persuasion. While insisting in the Commons that he had not changed his mind on the need to implement the cross-party agreement on press regulation, he did not close the door on the industry's rival royal charter, simply saying it had "serious shortcomings".

Little has emerged about the secret contacts between leading figures in the newspaper industry and senior Conservative politicians in the eight months since Lord Justice Leveson published his report but it has descended into a classic illustration of the kind of political collusion when the judge was so loathe to investigate when his inquiry had the chance.

The conduit for these hole-in-the-corner

negotiations has been the Privy Council, an age-old institution among whose many roles is its use by ministers to resolve conflicts of interests while keeping the government at arm's length.

The Prime Minister agreed that the industry could put forward its own royal charter after what was said to have been a last-minute intervention by Lord (Guy) Black, executive director at the Telegraph group and a former director of the PCC.

With the parliamentary recess beckoning there is every opportunity for a stitch-up behind the scenes.

Editors have briefed that one of the news media's "great and the good", such as Lord Grade, Lord Birt or Greg Dyke, should be called in to

broker a deal. Collusion between Prime Ministers and press proprietors has often been in the hands of invisible fixers – the Lords Goodman and Wakeham fulfilled this role in the Wilson and Thatcher eras.

Trevor Kavanagh, the Sun's political columnist has thrown down the gauntlet: if this "fiasco" isn't sorted soon, he wrote, it would "serve MPs right if the newspaper industry withdrew from the process, flatly rejected press regulation – and challenged Parliament to do its worst".

Unless a compromise is reached, the press proprietors might well go their own way, safe in the knowledge that with a general election getting ever closer the politicians will be in no mood for a fight.

**With a general election getting ever closer the politicians will be in no mood for a fight**

## THE DIFFERENCES THAT MATTER

**THE Privy Council, archaic and undemocratic that it is, is the place where the future of UK press regulation will be decided. Its meeting in July was expected to consider the proposed charter from the newspaper bosses (not all of them – the Guardian, Independent and FT have kept out of it).**

**This means the charter agreed by Parliament in March cannot be considered until the next gathering in October. That delay has infuriated many MPs, and**

**the former Labour deputy leader Lord Prescott has resigned from the council in protest. It has been agreed that only Privy Council members who are currently ministers will take part in the discussions.**

**The government says that the law requires the press's charter to be considered first because it was submitted first.**

**These are among the principle points at issue between the two prospective Royal Charters:**

	PARLIAMENT	PRESS
<b>Independence of the process</b>	Total independence from the industry for the recognition panel which will licence a new press regulator	Recognition panel should include representatives from the industry
<b>Permanence of the Royal Charter</b>	Charter can be changed with a two-thirds majority of both houses of Parliament	Change needs unanimous support of members of recognition panel, the regulators' board and all trade associations
<b>Editors' Code Committee</b>	Committee should comprise one third editors, one third members of the public and one third working journalists (It is currently all serving editors)	Some independent members but majority of serving editors (no journalists)
<b>Arbitration</b>	Regulator must include arbitration service to agree libel compensation without going to court	Regulator MAY provide an arbitral process

# Amateur ho

The UK government is rolling out a programme of sponsorship for local TV stations around the country which will have to compete commercially for audiences and ads while running on a shoestring. Industry critics say the



formula is impossible, and **ADAM CHRISTIE** agrees.



HOW LOCAL is local? That's one of the questions now that Ofcom has announced who will be running the first 19 UK "local TV" stations on Freeview channel 8. Others are about the stations' viability and whether they will advance media plurality.

The ownership question arose when a company based in London called Made TV, run by a former Sky executive, won franchises in Cardiff, Bristol, Newcastle/Sunderland and Leeds; since then it has shifted its HQ to Leeds – just as bad for the three other areas.

The much-criticised move towards "local TV" was regarded by much of the media industry as a crazy personal idea from former culture secretary Jeremy Hunt, but his successor Maria Miller is pressing on with it, and Ofcom invited bidders for a further seven city stations in June.

The stations will become part of the UK's media landscape at a particularly difficult time. There is desperate competition for local advertising, already thin on the ground, and TV ads incur big production costs. Local TV faces the prospect of viewers used to the ultra-sophisticated messages of national agencies seeing the most basic of PowerPoint presentations, like the cinema adverts for local takeaways.

Likewise with editorial video; viewers are discerning and unlikely to watch see amateurish material that compares poorly with national and regional TV. Local papers discovered this when

they started putting untrained reporter-shot footage on their websites.

Regional newspaper publishers are only now, slowly and painfully, realising that the minimum production cost for an online video report is about a working day.

With the UK now facing years of austerity, the wisdom of launching a costly new medium into local markets is questionable to say the least.

This puts a further question over staffing: how can they produce decent programming on the meagre payrolls they'll be able to afford?

In Leeds, station head Isi Adebé has promised a 24-hour schedule but only 14 hours a week of "prime time" TV produced in-house. He said there would be 25 full-time jobs.

So a production and journalistic staff of, say, 15 (taking out admin jobs) would have to produce an hour's worth each a week; a tall order.

Leeds's news updates, by the way, will come from the city's Radio Aire, part of the Bauer network of commercial radio stations.

That raises plurality concerns, which arise elsewhere as well. The Norwich franchise for example went to Mustard TV, owned by Archant Media, publishers of the local morning and evening papers. Their websites of course carry news video; will it be just the same stuff on TV?

In London, the franchise went to ESTV – that is, Evening Standard TV – owned by Russian

oligarch Yevgeny Lebedev who owns the capital's only evening paper as well as the Independent national titles. How will a station with balance obligations under Ofcom regulations sit with papers' political stances? The Standard is a virulently pro-Boris Johnson Tory paper.

Even where local papers subsidise a station, it's doubtful whether such relationships will survive with the economic pressure on both.

In other cities, links between the winning bidders and local universities have raised suspicions that the stations will rely heavily on student labour.

Underlying all this remains the question of finance. Initial money will be sliced, shamefully, from the BBC licence fee, but no-one has



provided a convincing rationale for the sustainability of the stations after the first couple of years.

Local radio stations are closing – two in recent months, in North Lancashire and Gloucester. If radio is finding life difficult, what hopes are there for local TV?

In 2010, commissioned by the government,

# urs

**No-one has provided a convincing rationale for the sustainability of the stations after the first couple of years**

investment banker Nicholas Shott calculated that a network of just 10 local TV stations – half the 19 licensed by Ofcom – would cost £25 million a year to run. That averages out at £1,500 an hour for production costs per station for those 14 hours of original programming each week – with each video package, remember taking one staff day.

With 19 stations, hourly budgets could be as little, pro rata, as £800. ITV puts its cost of regional news production at £250,000 an hour.

Previous attempts at local television have ended in failure. The Guardian Media Group was forced to close Channel M in Manchester – a bigger city than any on the current list, where the local economy might have been expected to be strong enough to carry such a venture. In the 1990s the Daily Mail group announced a string of local cable stations around the country, branded as Channel One. Only a handful actually opened and even the biggest and best, in London, lasted only three years.

Those with even longer memories may recall public meetings held around the country before ITV and early independent radio franchises were awarded in the late 1970s and early 80s – when community groups were given the impression they'd have programmes of very particular local and community interest, only to be disappointed when the financial realities of programme-making demanded a broader appeal.

Local TV may see history repeating itself.

## LOCAL NEWS

# Untouched by human hand

ROBOTIC MEDIA owner David Montgomery has spelt out his program for extracting the maximum profit from the rump of the local press and its websites.

The boss of the Local World provincial chain told the Commons culture committee in May that he wants much of the “human interface” involved in local news publishing to disappear within four years.

“We are going to have to reinvent the model,” he told the committee. “We can't keep taking costs out but employ the same production techniques in print. We have to be truly digital, so that in three or four years from now, much of our human interface will have disappeared.

“Journalists collecting stories one by one is hugely unproductive. They will have to have new skills, greater responsibility for self-publishing on different platforms.”

Local World was created late last year when David Montgomery engineered a buyout of the two oldest surviving regional groups, Northcliffe Newspapers (owned by the Daily Mail group) and Iliffe News and Media.

He took over their 100-plus titles, which currently include 16 local dailies and 400-plus websites, for firesale prices and

stakes in the new business.

David Montgomery is the former editor of the News of the World installed by the banks to get a grip on the Mirror group after the Robert Maxwell pension scandal in 1991. Having served his purpose he was booted out, and the same thing happened at his next venture, Mecom, a company he set up to buy up eastern and central European papers after the fall of the communist regimes.

Montgomery told the MPs that the local news industry “cannot sustain a hugely wasteful model from the middle ages, where a single journalist goes out on a single story, comes back and writes it up.

“It's about getting people to organise themselves sufficiently to manage the amount of content a local publisher exploits. Not a two-fold increase but a 20-fold increase in the amount of content a local publisher exploits.”

He also wants to get rid of sub-editors – “sub-editing is a twilight world, checking things you don't really need to check” – and even editors will become “pretty redundant” as the job of journalists is to “manage content and lots of content that comes from the community itself”.

**Tim Gopsill**

# Give co-ops a chance instead

DAVID MONTGOMERY might be right about one thing: the business model for local newspapers is broken. But the problem is not, as he might think, old-fashioned journalistic practice; it's the ownership – such as his own.

Corporate owners have been creaming off profits for shareholders or to service massive debts, leading to vicious cutbacks in staffing and the closure of papers. Once a title ceases to be lucrative, it will be shut down and locked away, still owned by the group so it can't be regenerated by anyone else with a different vision.

There can be alternatives: Co-ops UK, supported by the NUJ and funded by the Carnegie Trust, is holding a series of meetings around Britain on setting up co-operatives.

Co-ops UK argues that people who value news might change their mindset from consumption – simply paying for a product – to an awareness of the value of supporting local news in principle. Co-operative start-ups could be owned jointly by the workers and the community.

Employee ownership is another alternative. The West Highland Free Press successfully operates on this model, with employees selling their shares back to the business when they leave.

Co-ops UK hopes that following this series of meetings, people will give co-operative media start-ups a real try.

But whatever happens there must be a new deal for the sector. One in which co-operative models can play a part. Newspaper groups must realise ownership of a title is a privilege and not a right.

Such ventures would put these media assets in trust for their readers and recognise that they must provide a public service in return for such benefits as VAT exemption.

Our local papers are not a cash cow to be milked and then put down without public debate or exploration of alternatives, once the money ceases to flow. Left to the market, many local newspapers as we would wish them to be (in print or online) will die.

**Laura Davidson**

# Never mind the quality, count the clickthroughs

They're big and powerful but, says

**GARY HERMAN**, the new media moguls, the internet aggregators, are heading for more trouble as they get even bigger

ANYONE WITH an Apple or Amazon account or who uses Facebook or Twitter, a catch-up TV service or YouTube, will know how much we rely on enormous server farms in remote locations to provide us with information and entertainment. In these soulless buildings vast rooms hum with the song of a thousand cooling fans and every form of cultural expression is reduced to data.

Since Google's chief economist Hal Varian coined the phrase "information goods" to describe this data it has become the stuff of enormous businesses all pursuing the same goal – to own the global market for content in digital form.

In the West, we recognise these companies – so-called "content aggregators" – as the new giants of global capitalism: Google, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and Yahoo! There are others like them across the globe.

In financial terms, these companies are often bigger than familiar media giants like News Corp, Time Warner or Disney. And, make no mistake, they are increasingly driven to become media companies – because that's where big money can be made year in, year out.

All of them want to sell "immaterial goods" – ads, online music and movies, e-books, games, apps, yes and even news – though they have no real interest in, or commitment to, the content itself.

Often they sell through deals with more traditional companies. In recent months such deals have been announced between Viacom and Amazon, HBO and Apple, and WPP and Twitter.

The content aggregators' appetite for growth is insatiable and, in the internet's borderless market, there is little except the competition to stop them monopolising their sectors.

When Google announced its All Access online music service in May, Apple responded with iTunes Radio. Twitter has launched music.twitter.com, Yahoo! has created music.yahoo.com, and Amazon has brought us Amazon Cloud Player and its AutoRip service. And so it goes.

Amazon's focus is on shifting material stuff. Its business model is simply to undercut its competitors and grow market share. Its 2012 revenue was \$61 billion, yet it made

a loss of \$39 million after tax – and, as everyone knows, it pays precious little tax. Aggressive price cutting has led the company to dominate the supply of books, e-books and entertainment, with almost a quarter of the global market, but the strategy may not be sustainable, because its marketing and technology costs are enormous. It will have to move increasingly into cheaper "immaterial" production and distribution.

Google's business model is similarly shaky. In 2012, it made a whopping 87 per cent of its \$50 billion revenue from the advertising it sells or facilitates through its AdWords and AdSense services.

Pretty much everything it does is designed to create more advertising opportunities or to strengthen its brand. And, like other content aggregators, almost everything it produces or distributes is based on a product or service it has bought, not developed itself.

Content aggregators start out as innovators but they rapidly turn into capitalist machines driven by imperial ambitions, hoovering up smaller businesses and making deals to build markets. They have to supply more and more undifferentiated digital content just to survive.

But the reduction of content to mere bits and bytes can be problematic. For example, online ad businesses, like Google, Facebook and Twitter, are designed not to be creative, but to be effective – they are about the algorithms that put ads in front of people who want to see them.

They are not concerned with the more creative job of putting ads in front of people who don't yet know they want to see them.

The reason? Better algorithms are not difficult to create; persuasive advertising is.

There does remain a lurking suspicion that nobody pays much attention to online ads. There is persistent talk of better targeting, indicating how difficult it is to get ads to the right people.

Facebook's recent poor performance puts into sharp relief the weakness of businesses where size is its own justification. In the last year its shares fell by more than 40 per cent as the company was overtaken by waves of negative news – the flopped launch of Android app, Facebook Home; Yahoo!'s purchase of social network Tumblr (Facebook shares fell 2 per cent); an anti-sexism campaign leading major companies to pull their ads; and the layoffs of 520 workers by Facebook games creator Zynga, because its products like Farmville underperformed.

That's a crisis that even having more than a billion active users will not resolve. In 2012 Facebook made 84 per cent of its \$5 billion revenue from selling ad space.

The move by the internet giants to producing and distributing content is unavoidable. In Facebook's case it looks like video and games in the first instance, bringing it into direct competition with Apple, Amazon and all the others.



*In their dreams – there remains a lurking suspicion that nobody pays a lot of attention to online advertising*

## REVIEW

# The establishment always wins

*Power Beyond Scrutiny* by Justin Schlosberg, paperback, Pluto Press, Paper £16.99; Kindle £13.49

JOURNALISTS KNOW the feeling, when, after writing a really big exposé, the many hard hours of digging and sifting might perhaps, just perhaps, have not turned up quite the full story?

Justin Schlosberg's look behind some of the big headlines of recent times suggest that this after-thought is more than likely justified. He finds that no matter how far journalists think they have gone in revealing facts that others want to bury, the real story will still be at bay.

It is not just a thesis. Though he is an academic, a lecturer in journalism and media at Birkbeck College, London University, he tests the idea journalistically by interviewing newsmakers about their aims and achievements in covering UK arms-trade bribery, Iraq war, hackgate, MPs' expenses and other scandals and, in impressive detail, Wikileaks.

Perhaps he should also have interviewed bloggers as well as

people in the press, broadcasting and publicity spheres because their influence has grown to an extent few media observers predicted.

But I doubt that it would have altered his conclusion: that the more aids to discovery are given to reporters, including the internet itself, freedom of information laws and the leaking of oodles of online state secrets, the more the authorities will find a way of acting in their own and against the public interest, even simply dragging out a story so long that it dies.

As Schlosberg puts it in answer to his question, "how far do the news media deliver on the accountability promise of watchdog journalism?", in every case he examines it went "unfulfilled".

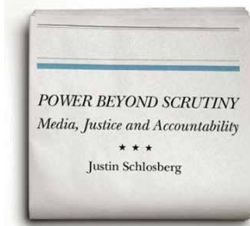
The sad truth, he finds, is that challenges from journalists, pro bono lawyers and other agencies out to uncover the truth is that those challenges are always contained

and society, or at least, what used to be called the Establishment, emerges with minimal damage.

Schlosberg's academic writing style can make *Power Beyond Scrutiny* unnecessarily difficult to read. That is a pity because the case he presents for journalism's failings is detailed and a spur for them to do better in the struggle to wrest information from entrenched power.

**David Altheer**

*The writer edits the Hackney news website LovingDalston.co.uk*



# Whole lot of digging needed here

*Deep Web for Journalists*, Alan Pearce, in PDF, Kindle and ePub formats only, \$9.99

JOURNALISTS HAVE a complicated relationship with secrecy. They're against it when it hinders their mission, but when it comes to protecting sources, or scooping the competition, they will defend it – sometimes to the point of risking a custodial sentence.

Uncovering the truth itself can be risky, as demonstrated by the cases of Wikileaks and Edward Snowden.

So a book that seeks to shine a light into the darkest and most secret places on the internet must be of interest to hacks – either because it will help them navigate the greatest source of information ever, or because it may even be able to help them preserve their own secrets.

In fact, as Alan Pearce points out in this useful primer, it is often difficult to disengage these two aspects of secrecy. The simple act of researching on the internet may bring you to the attention of our ever hungry security services. You need only share your name with a suspicious person to risk being put on a security watch list.

*Deep Web for Journalists* draws

to our attention the routine practices of security services, and recommends tools and techniques to avoid being snagged. This is where the book really scores.

But what exactly is the Deep Web? Alan Pearce explains that it "encompasses everything that the conventional search engines can't find". There are vast areas of the internet that are simply ignored by most search engines or unreachable through their algorithms.

According to Alan Pearce, this is where the "arms dealers, drug cartels, spies, pedophiles (sic), kidnappers, slave traders and terrorists" hang out. It has a bad reputation, but it also provides a treasure-trove of resources and, perhaps just as important, a means of avoiding the commonplace surveillance of security services everywhere.

Journalists ought to be aware of the internet's built-in weaknesses and the threats it poses to the privacy of its users. Sadly, they are often ignorant of the risks they run.

A keynote quotation from Edward Snowden suggests that the book may have been produced in something of a hurry from old material. There are sections which could have been more up-to-date. For example, Pearce recommends Intute, "a searchable database of trusted [Deep Web] sites", but it actually closed in 2011. Nevertheless many journalists will still find it an invaluable place to start their education.

■ This digital book is at [www.deepwebguides.com](http://www.deepwebguides.com)

**Gary Herman**

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# The wrong kind of extremism



**TIM GOPSILL**

says the BBC's idea of widening the range of

opinion permitted on air is hopelessly one-sided

A GREAT stride has been taken at the BBC towards putting a wider diversity of opinion on the air. Or has it?

In July the BBC Trust published a report recommending that the corporation should find ways to report more "extreme" opinions in political coverage. Good thinking: imagine all the radical and community activists, the anti-war campaigners, the trade unionists (apart from General Secretaries), the anti-austerity movement, squatters and Occupiers and parties of the left being invited onto Newsnight and Question Time and interviewed on the news.

Unfortunately, this is not the sort of "extreme" the BBC Trust has in mind. The people who aren't getting enough exposure are right-wing, anti-immigration, anti-European and religious.

The report into the state of BBC "impartiality" was produced by former ITV chief Stuart Prebble, who praised the corporation for an "impressive breadth of opinion" but added: "The BBC cannot afford to rest on its laurels and it should ensure it does all it can to keep up with the ebb and flow of public opinion, which means avoiding over-reliance on Westminster voices, making efforts to find new voices even if they are contentious."

His report found the BBC had been slow to catch up with public opinion on areas such as immigration and the EU. It had not fully reflected concerns about the effect of immigration to Britain, calling the coverage "dry and clinical". Stuart Prebble presumably thinks the reporting of immigration should be more bigoted and hysterical.

Helen Boaden, the BBC's former news director, reportedly admitted to the review that the corporation held a "deep liberal bias" in its coverage of immigration. Obviously it should have a deeply prejudiced approach. She

confessed that the BBC had not taken the views of lobby group Migration Watch "as seriously as it might have".

What? Migration Watch's creepy chairman Sir Andrew Green is always cropping up on the BBC with his small-minded strictures. How often, by contrast, do we see or hear anti-deportation campaigners?

As it happens, I did catch the only BBC interview with the redoubtable Birmingham-based activist John O, then running the NCADC (National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns). It was conducted by Peter Allen on Radio 5's Drive programme. John O refused to assent to any restriction on immigration. Incredulous, Peter Allen asked; "Are you saying everyone should be free to go anywhere they want?"

"That's right", said John O. "Good heavens," said Peter Allen and ended the exchange. Some kind of mark must have been put on John O's contact details because, he told me a few years ago, he had never been asked back.

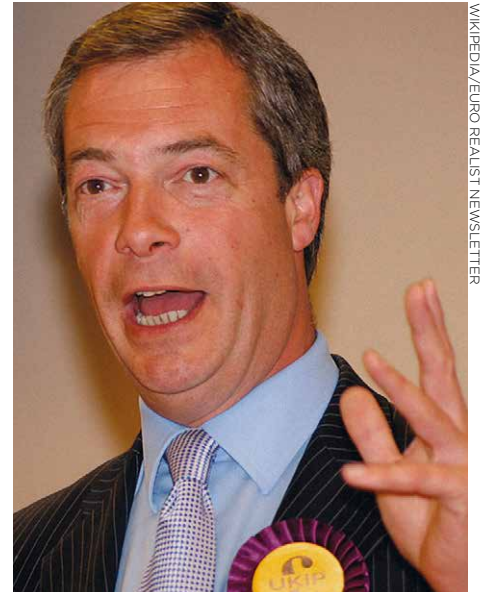
Perhaps the BBC Trust report was finalised before the record-breaking 14th appearance on Question Time of UKIP's Nigel Farage on June 13, but even before that he was the most frequent

**Xenophobic attitudes to immigration are not 'extreme' in contemporary Britain and the BBC's falling into line confirms their legitimacy**

guest on the programme; or EDL leader Tommy Robinson's soft-soap interview on the Today programme two days earlier.

By contrast, look at Today's discussion of the People's Assembly Against Austerity in London on June 22, reportedly attended by 4,000 people. There was an item on the assembly, in which its significance was assessed by two commentators, but I didn't hear anyone from the anti-austerity movement itself; clearly the wrong kind of extremists.

It was the same all through the Iraq and Afghan wars. The Stop the War Coalition, articulating the view of what was, after all, a majority of the population, according to the polls, was



**Nigel Farage: More appearances on Question Time than anyone else**

never allowed to gatecrash the clique of generals, American neo-cons and Tory MPs that fill the studios.

After Nigel Farage the next most invited persons on QT are, in order: Vince Cable, Ken Clarke, Caroline Flint and Peter Hain. If that's what the BBC wants, it must consider that speakers from the left would be insufficiently muddle-headed (though I can think of one or two who might make the grade).

I don't mind more voices from the populist right being heard. They represent a solid strand of opinion. I'm not one of those lefties who want to hound even the far right off the airwaves, for many reasons, including that if you censor your enemies you can't complain when you're censored yourself.

But there is a desperate problem with the lack of opposition voices from the left. The BBC is right that we could hear a lot less from the political class – which I'll believe when I see it, by the way – but wrong to conclude that instead we should turn to the reactionary right that the politicians are constantly trying to appease.

The sad irony is that xenophobic attitudes to immigration are not "extreme" in contemporary Britain at all, and the BBC's falling into line just confirms their legitimacy.