

## No more Murdochs

NO MEDIA corporation must ever again be able to wield such power and inflict such corruption on British society as Rupert Murdoch's companies have done for the last 30 years.

There need to be laws putting sensible limits on how much of a market a company can control – and those laws should come quickly.

It is nearly two years since the Leveson report expressed concern for media plurality – threatened by the monopoly control of Big Media – though it made no specific proposals. And this year we have seen the first of a long series of trials of Murdoch journalists and public officials charged with corruptly accessing or exchanging private information – all arising from investigations into the conduct of the News of the World.

The former editor of the paper Andy Coulson and five of its reporters have been jailed and there are a dozen more trials to come.

Politicians trooped into the witness box at the Leveson Inquiry to tell of the menacing influence that Murdoch's News International newspapers held over political life.

When the phone hacking scandal broke there were urgent public demands for action against excessive media control. Cameron and Clegg promised action from the coalition. Miliband made similar commitments and last year Labour endorsed the idea of specific limits that campaigners like the CPBF have been calling for for years.

Now three years on a UK general election is eight months away and the parties should be airing their plans.

But they've gone very quiet. In August the government produced a long-awaited policy document as a response to its consultation on media ownership and plurality.

This meagre, vapid response could serve as a case study on ways to neutralise public demands that don't suit the interests of ruling politicians seeking media support, or of media businesses which will tolerate regulation only on their own terms.

The historic opportunity for action appears to be closing down and there is a real danger is that the public interest and anger will die away.

Cameron's communications chief Lynton Crosby brings his template from Australia: use

Limits on media ownership, to prevent the growth of unaccountable media power, could almost be an election-winner, but as the UK election approaches the parties find themselves reluctant to take on Big Media. **JONATHAN HARDY** watches the government kicking the issue into the long grass

the media (Murdoch's to the fore) to attack the opposition. In the fiercely ideological restructuring of civic values the Tories depend on to rally economically battered voters, the media matter a lot, and motivations to close down questions of media power only intensify.

The government response "does not seek to review existing regulatory and policy levers, nor ... propose potential remedies. It simply sets out the proposed scope and objectives of a measurement framework".

No action will be considered until after another Ofcom review, kicking the issue well past the election post.

This pivotal move discounts the very problems that triggered action in the first place: in July 2011 Murdoch was days away from winning total control of BSkyB, a fact that exposed a flawed system of public interest scrutiny; a deeply concentrated national and regional press, with monopolies in over 35 per cent of local communities, and growing problems across digital media supply, funding, control and access.

The entire exercise sets up windbreaks to change. Instead of the public platform erected by the phone-hacking scandal, media policy-making is to return to its more rarified, technocratic

**Media policy-making is to return to its more rarified, technocratic arena where the likelihood of a collusive fix is so much greater**

## THREE ISSUES FOR THE 2015 ELECTION

**5 LIMITS ON THE OWNERS**  
Companies cannot get too big

**6 CLEAN UP THE PRESS**  
Corruption kept lid on crimes

**8 HANDS OFF THE BBC**  
Keep it for the public

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

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# No more Murdochs

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arena where the likelihood of a collusive fix is so much greater. Ofcom is invited to draw up proposals “in consultation with industry” – but not with the civil society on whose behalf media plurality is ostensibly sought. Even exposure to parliament is to be limited.

There is no systematic attempt to engage with the responses to the consultation; we get only selective quotations, weighted towards calls for caution and inaction.

The proposals for reform by the CPBF and other civil society groups and individuals are almost entirely sidestepped. In 2011 even the then Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt asked Ofcom to investigate the practicality of imposing “absolute limits on news market share”; that line of enquiry is now halted.

There are some sound if sluggish reiterations of intent, but this is of limited comfort since the government has ruled out addressing any remedies at this stage.

The scope of plurality under review is narrowed to cover only news and current affairs – something the CPBF has opposed. If plurality measures are limited to news, then the commercial linkages that drive cross-promotion, sponsorship and advertising, the market power in the supply of communication services, sports and entertainment, and the wider problems of political and economic influence – in short, the many threads of modern media – will not be considered at all.

So 18 months after Lord Leveson’s call for action to limit media ownership and its associated political power, the government’s proposals for tackling plurality actually reduce the existing public interest provisions.

The prospects of any of the main parties threatening to curb media power before, or even after, the coming election now seem remote. This at a time when public calls for action against corporate media misrule are the strongest for decades. The government’s sotto voce response must not be the last word.

■ For a fuller version of the CPBF’s plans for media ownership go to [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk)

# ‘Time short to save TV from US giants’

AN ASTONISHING warning that the British TV industry is being taken over almost wholesale by US media companies has come from the head of Channel 4, David Abraham.

The chief executive said public service broadcasters such as the BBC and his own channel were “the only bulwark” against industry domination by US media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch.

Speaking at the Edinburgh international television festival in August David Abraham urged politicians and regulators to act decisively to “update and strengthen” public broadcasting, which he said was “a great British invention that had created the best conditions for creative programme-making on the planet.

“This special landscape of ours did not happen by accident,” he said. “So we should not assume that, left purely to the market, it will continue to thrive.

“If you care about creativity, speak up and speak up now. Stay silent and our special system may wither. Once gone, it will never come back.”

Already this year the UK’s largest production

company All3Media has been taken over by Discovery and Liberty Global – which also snapped up BSKyB’s stake in ITV – and Channel 5 has been bought by Viacom.

Abraham, a former advertising executive, warned of Rupert Murdoch’s attempt to create one of the world’s largest TV production businesses in a venture combining Fox’s Shine Group, Big Brother producer Endemol, and Core Media. “Such an entity would have combined revenues three and a half times the size of the entire UK television industry.”

In the US Fox had made a rebuffed attempt to take over the world’s biggest media giant Time Warner, and in Europe the Murdoch-dominated BSKyB’s is taking over Fox’s Sky channels in Germany and Italy.

He said the renewal of the BBC charter and licence fee in 2016 offered a “critical opportunity to strengthen the public service broadcasting settlement”.

Politicians and regulators had to “act and act decisively”.

■ Saving the BBC: page 10

## LABOUR’S RECORD ... CAN THEY STICK TO IT?



IN 2011 Labour leader Ed Miliband said he did not believe that one person should “continue to control ... 34 per cent of the newspaper market.”

Labour’s front-bencher on culture and media is Deputy Leader Harriet Harman (left), who last year made a strong case for taking action against media monopoly in a lecture at the University of Westminster. She said:

“Media monopoly matters in a democracy. The concentration of unaccountable media power distorts the political system. The media shapes how we see

ourselves and how we see the world. In a democracy, the free flow of information, of different points of view, is crucial for open debate.

“Too much power in too few hands hinders proper debate. Plurality ensures that no media owner can exert such a damaging influence on public opinion and on policy makers.

“It ensures that no media company can have so much influence that it feels itself immune, above the rule of law. It ensures no private interest can set itself above the public interest ...”



## NUJ PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

Proud to be supporting press freedom and congratulating the CPBF on 35 years of great work.

Wishing the campaign a successful future in the years ahead.

Phil Morcom/Nic Mitchell  
Co-Chairs NUJ PRCC

## Leeds and Wakefield Branch



Standing up for quality journalism  
in Yorkshire

# TTIP, just the job for Big Media

US MEDIA companies investing in the UK could succeed in resisting any government regulations restricting their activities when a new trade deal is signed.

Secret negotiations are reported to be gathering pace between the European Commission and the USA over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which would empower global corporations to mount legal challenges to government imposing regulations that harm their interests.

The French government has secured an exclusion for audio-visual services – in the face of opposition from the UK, Germany and the EC itself.

The US has confirmed however, that it will “advocate aggressively” on behalf of its film and TV industry to include audio-visual services in the agreement.

The EC insists that there will be “no carve-out” for audio-visual services in TTIP and it will try to reintroduce them to the negotiations.

TTIP is described as a free trade deal, yet unions point out that tariffs are already low between the US and EU. They believe it is about increasing the power of multinational investors, generally big business and hedge funds, and reducing regulation on these organisations.

Global corporations could bring their cases against foreign governments to the secret courts (ISDS) Investor-State Dispute Settlement where administrative lawyers will determine primacy of national sovereignty or the rights of corporations.

# No-one seems to want local TV

BIRMINGHAM'S CITY TV has become the first of the government's vaunted network of local TV stations to go bust – before it even went on air. The franchise has been put up for sale.

The network was launched by former culture secretary

Jeremy Hunt to boost local media following the decline in local papers, but critics have warned all along that licensees would be unlikely to have the capital or secure the revenue to finance a level of programming sufficient to attract audiences or advertising.

Ofcom has so far awarded 30 licences, with six so far on air – including London Live, which despite heavy promotion in the London Evening Standard, also owned by proprietor Evgeny Lebedev, has been winning audiences too small to be measured. London Live has applied to Ofcom to have its programming

commitments cut back.

City TV, which is run by former Birmingham City Council PR chief Debra Davis, had promised to be the first local TV station to launch in the spring of 2013. But the prospectus for the sale reveals that



the business has “no studio premises or broadcast equipment”.

It is likely to be bought up by Made Television, a chain of stations based in Leeds.

## Join the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

**THE Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom depends on its members for day-to-day operating funds – including the production and distribution of *Free Press*.**

**Taking out – and maintaining – membership will allow the Campaign to maintain its work, strengthen its voice and enhance its profile at a time when the media industry is facing more repressive political and commercial constraints than for generations.**

**If you are interested in a media and journalism that contribute to an informed electorate, then please join the Campaign or renew your membership now.**

### MEMBERSHIP RATES PER YEAR

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a) Individual membership  | £15 |
| b) Unwaged  | £6  |
| c) Supporting membership (includes free CPBF publications)        | £25 |
| d) Institutions (eg libraries) (includes 10 copies of FREE Press) | £25 |

### AFFILIATION BY ORGANISATION

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|---------------------------|------|
| f) Fewer than 500 members | £25  |
| g) 500 to 1,000           | £30  |
| h) 1,000 to 10,000        | £50  |
| i) 10,000 to 50,000       | £115 |
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**Join online at [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk)**



# London Freelance Branch

## Freelances for real press freedom

The rights of journalists are the rights of the public to be freely and fairly informed.

The threat to these rights comes from the big companies that dominate the commercial media.

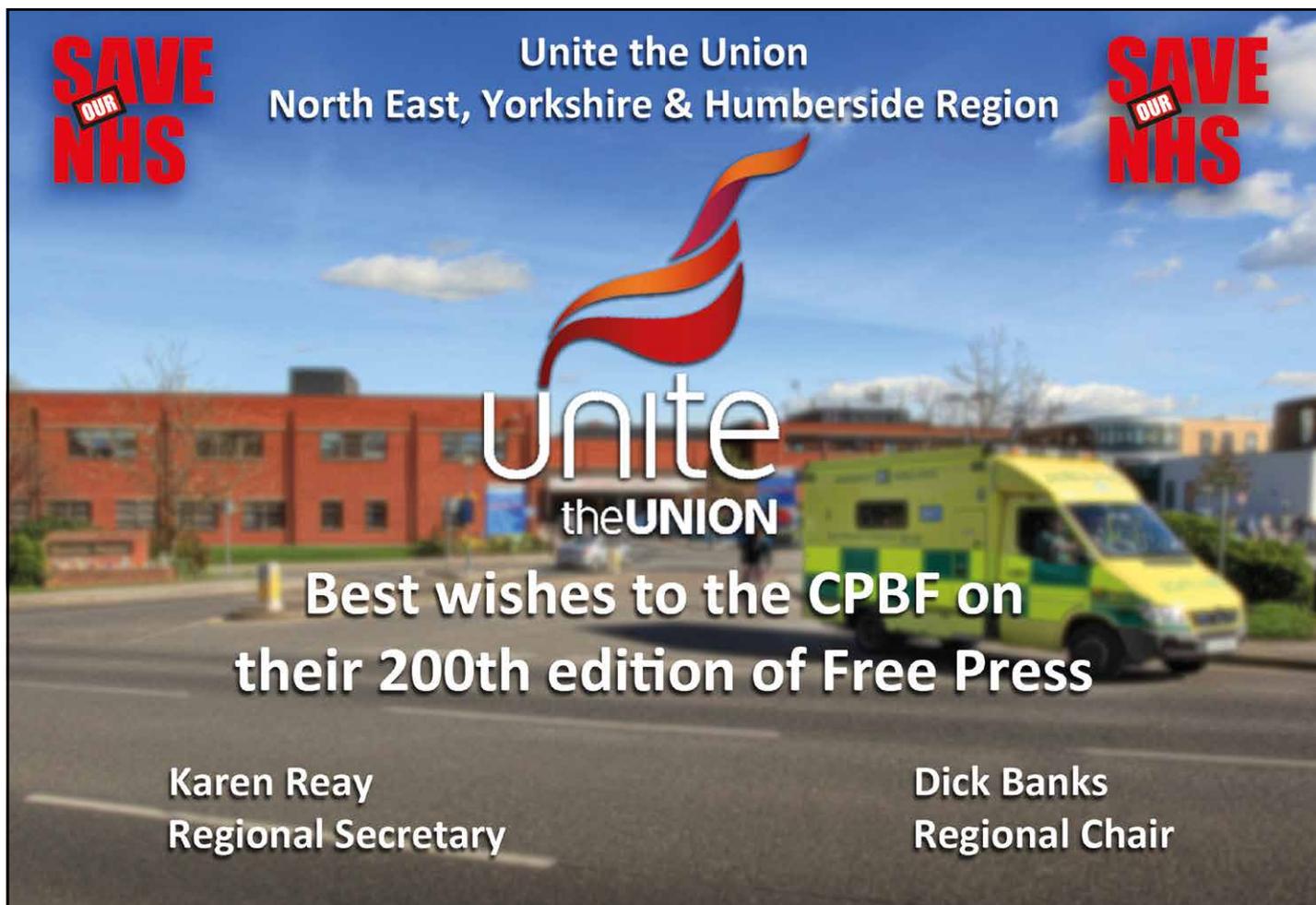
The Leveson Inquiry revealed more of the corruption and malpractice that they bring to our industry than had ever been seen before.

There must be limits on the power these companies can wield, and better self-regulation to make sure journalists can stick to decent professional standards.

The NUJ London Freelance branch – representing more than 3,000 journalists – has been affiliated to the CPBF since it was formed in 1979.

Together we will work towards these ends.

Go to [www.londonfreelance.org](http://www.londonfreelance.org)



# Press reform now: what are the odds?

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE



It's a crucial time for media reformers as the UK General

Election nears. CPBF founder member **James Curran** sets the scene

THE FIRST official attempt to reform the press was in 1949 when a Royal Commission recommended the setting up of what became the Press Council. The CPBF viewed it with total scepticism, as it did its successor, the Press Complaints Commission. Press self-regulation proved to be ineffectual and to serve principally the interests of the press.

That is why the Campaign pressed for a right of reply, and built cross-party support for a number of private members' bills in the Commons that brought to public attention the inadequacy of press self-regulation and laid the foundation for a broad-based campaign for reform.

A second official attempt to reform the press occurred in the 1960s. A Royal Commission recommendation led to the introduction of press anti-monopoly legislation in 1965, but this proved to be ineffectual.

There was a fear that newspapers would close if not swallowed up by larger groups, and ministers were sometimes keen to ingratiate themselves to powerful media moguls by waving acquisitions through.

The CPBF has been at the centre of rethinking what should be done to rectify this failure.

One part of the solution is to limit the power of ministers to override the curbs on media concentration.

Another part is to impose public service duties on large press groups, and another is to take a proactive role in fertilising press diversity, by facilitating new online start-ups and other ventures. Different reform organisations have different formulae, but this is the common denominator of all of them, centrally inspired by new thinking at the CPBF.

The third major area of CPBF activity has been a rearguard action to defend public service broadcasting, and to make sure that it is worth defending. The campaign was joined by many others in successfully opposing the introduction of advertising in the BBC, resisting the

destruction of its websites by commercial rivals buying for blood, and objecting to the government-imposed use of BBC revenue for other media purposes. The battle now is ensure that the BBC charter is renewed in a viable form, and that the corporation keeps its creative nerve and impartiality commitment in the face of growing press hostility.

For a time, the CPBF's role in fighting to create accountable media that serve the public

seemed like a lonely vigil in a world dominated by market liberalism. But with the Milly Dowler scandal, something changed. Following the Leveson inquiry, all parties in parliament came together to enact a scheme that would improve press self-regulation, backed by

big majorities of the public in a succession of opinion polls.

The press's obdurate opposition to this is now creating a gathering momentum for action to curb media monopoly. The CPBF is now one of a number of campaigning groups – with roots in the trade unions (our own base), other parts of civil society, political parties, universities, and even celebrity power – that are working together to press for media reform. Everything now seems possible.

★ James Curran is Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths College, London

**One part of the solution is to limit the power of ministers to override curbs on media concentration**

## We need more voices at work

SARAH TURTON



TUC General Secretary **FRANCES O'GRADY** explains the links between plurality in the media and the workplace, and why the TUC campaigns for both

ACROSS THE UK trade unions work hard to build stronger, fairer and more productive workplaces.

But this vital day to day work is seldom reported, and even when strikes make the headlines the reality of the challenges that the workforce face is rarely fairly considered.

They say that complaining about the news is like complaining about the weather, yet I feel sure we can do better than this. Perhaps if three companies – News UK, DMGT and Trinity Mirror – didn't control 70 per cent of national paper coverage, with Rupert Murdoch's News UK holding a third – things might be different. Yet over several decades, media power has been concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

That's why the TUC works with the Coalition for Media Pluralism, which makes the case for legislation to prevent such a concentration of media ownership and protect press

**A plurality of voices leads to better decisions and a healthier democracy**

independence. It argues for rules to ensure transparency and for media monitoring to continually assess whether media independence is a reality.

The TUC also campaigns to

ensure that democracy becomes a reality in the UK's workplaces. This means we oppose measures to curtail the rights of trade unions to undertake their lawful activity, protecting and advancing the interests of their members.

A plurality of voices always leads to better decisions and a healthier democracy.

That means ensuring greater press independence as well as making sure that employers take greater account of the views and experiences of their workforce.

Through campaigning for media pluralism, and setting out the economic and social benefits that trade unions bring, the TUC will continue to make the case for change.

# The alliance of si

THE EIGHT-MONTH trial of News of the World executives and journalists ended in June with five of them jailed, including former editor Andy Coulson, and the sensational acquittal of his predecessor Rebekah Brooks.

The trial and the linked events around the Leveson Inquiry and press regulation come down in the end to one reporter, Nick Davies, and his dogged investigations into wrongdoing at the paper for the Guardian.

Now he has produced a book retracing the story. **JULIAN PETLEY** draws a couple of lessons from the story.

ACCORDING TO most British newspapers, the Leveson Inquiry was a complete waste of time and money, based on the false premise that in 2002 News of the World employees deleted messages on Milly Dowler's phone by hacking into it, thereby cruelly giving her parents the impression that she was still alive.

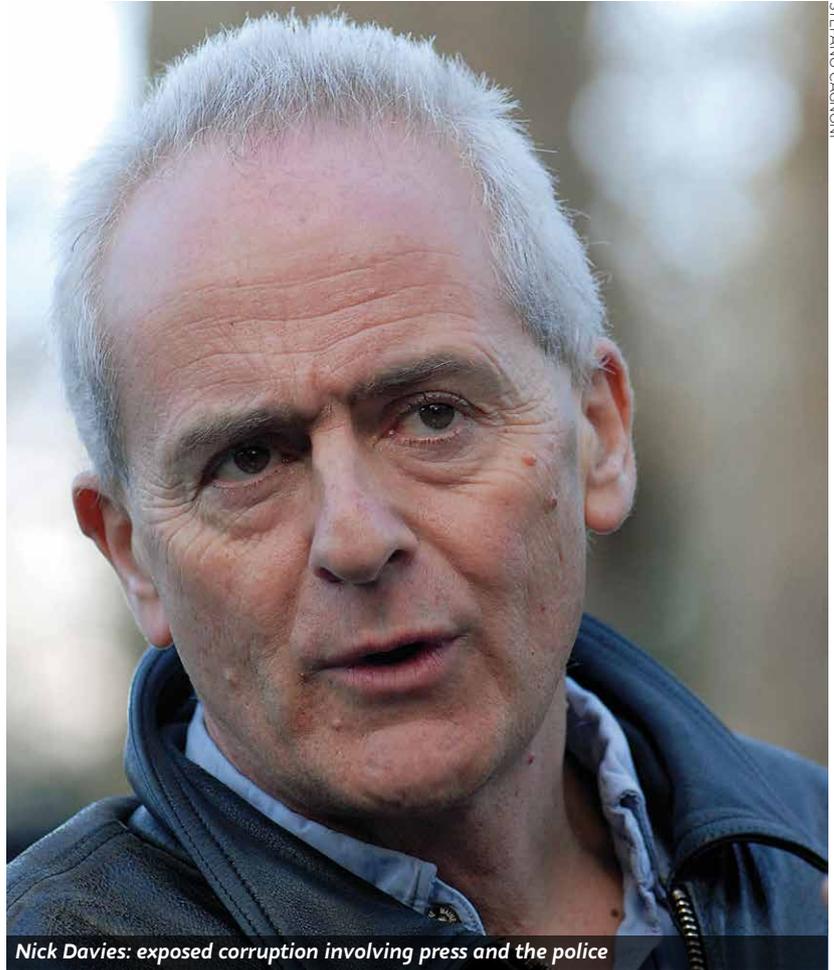
The subsequent hacking trial, say the press, was an even bigger waste which simply proved what everyone knew already, namely that phone hacking at the paper was the work of a few rogue reporters and the private investigators that they employed.

For anyone who wants to know the truth behind this poisonous fog of disinformation, this blanket of self-serving propaganda, Nick Davies' Hack Attack is a must-read.

For those who have followed his tenacious pursuit of the truth about phone hacking in the Guardian since July 2009, much (though by no means everything) will be familiar.

The News of the World comes across as a microcosm of the Murdoch empire, which illustrates much about both the state of modern Britain and the workings of global media corporations in a neo-liberal age. As Nick Davies puts it, this is a story about "the secret world of the power elite and their discreet alliances", which illustrates the "abuse of power and the secrets and lies that protect it ... in which news organisations which might otherwise have exposed the truth were themselves part of the abuse".

This "alliance of silence" is one of the most revealing and disturbing aspects of the phone hacking story. If the press is supposed to be the public's watchdog over those in power, as it constantly claims to be, why did most journalists remain silent about this story? In Nick Davies's view, some did so because they were linked to the crime by common ownership or by their own guilty secrets about the law-breaking in their own newsrooms; some turned away for fear of upsetting their political allies.



STEFANO CAGNONI

Nick Davies: exposed corruption involving press and the police

"Too many journalists had simply ceased to function as independent truth-tellers, separate from and critical of the people they were writing about. The crime reporter" (Nick Davies's own background) "made common cause with the police and also with criminals. The political correspondent developed a loyalty to one party or faction. The media reporter became a tool for his

**This is a powerful malediction on the state of modern journalism, which goes way beyond the specific evil of phone hacking**

or her owner. The news executive turned into a preening power-monger, puffed with wealth and self-importance, happy to join the elite and not to expose it".

This is a powerful malediction on the state of modern journalism, which goes way beyond the specific evil of phone hacking.

One of the most revealing examples concerns the four journalists at the Mail on Sunday who, in

2006, were among the very few people informed by police engaged in the first investigation that their phones had been hacked. Neither the Sunday nor Daily Mail published a word about it. Neither did their respective editors, Peter Wright and Paul Dacre, inform the Press Complaints Commission, though both sat on it while it produced its whitewashing reports in support of the NoW's contention that phone hacking was the work of one rogue reporter and had involved very few victims. So much for the press as watchdog and the PCC as regulator.

In July, after eight years, Peter Wright broke his silence, forced out by the Guardian — inevitably — revealing these embarrassing facts. He wrote a letter of protest, attacking the paper for doing so, and rather effectively if inadvertently proving Davies's point. These people are not sensitive to the effects of their actions.

This silence of the press was compounded by inaction and, at times, obstruction, by the police. Nick Davies suggests a number of reasons: first, the culture of secrecy that bedevils so many British institutions, "the casual, routine assumption among those responsible for the Yard's public face that ... there was nothing controversial about keeping the public in the

# silence

dark. Power and secrecy walk hand in hand.

"Second, the extremely close relationships between senior members of the Met and the Murdoch empire. To take a few examples: in 2005 the deputy editor of the NoW, Neil Wallis (known at the paper as the "rasping fuckwit"), arranged for the retiring commissioner, Sir John Stevens, to write a weekly column, for which he was paid up to £7,000, even though Wallis actually wrote it. After assistant commissioner Andy Hayman left the Met in 2007 he was given a regular column in The Times, to whom he also sold the serial rights to his memoirs. In the months following the Guardian's first phone-hacking story in 2009, the commissioner of the Met, Sir Paul Stephenson, its director of communications Dick Fedorcio, and assistant commissioner, John Yates, wined and dined with senior figures from the NoW at least ten times – and Scotland Yard hired Neil Wallis as their media consultant."

As Davies puts it: "News International was a friendly organisation to be cultivated, rather than an organisation which might be routinely engaged in illegal activity and needed to be brought to book".

The Guardian, on the other hand, was treated by senior police officers as it were the wrongdoer. One of the paper's crime correspondents was told by Stephenson that the whole story was a "load of middle-class wank".

Third, when the police were finally forced, after four years, to take phone hacking seriously, they were severely obstructed by the Murdoch empire – and on at least two occasions physically prevented by NoW staff from doing their job.

And finally there is the fact that four of the figures involved in this story – Hayman, Yates, the DPP Ken Macdonald, whose office is responsible for initiating prosecutions, and the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith who was ultimately responsible for prosecutions, were having secret affairs at some points during the phone hacking saga, three of which were exposed by tabloid journalists. Davies concedes that he has no evidence that the NoW used these affairs to put pressure on those involved, nor that any of these senior figures had compromised their work. But, he adds, "what was alarmingly obvious was the sheer potential power of a newspaper which specialises in gathering painful and embarrassing secrets about the private lives of influential people".

Fortunately not all journalism has been reduced to this debased state, as Nick Davies' work, and the Guardian's support for it, amply prove. But Davies is under no illusions about the consequences of his exposure of the hacking scandal. Truth did catch up with power for a while, but the power elite whose machinations the scandal exposed are still firmly in place. A battle was won, but the war has barely begun.

*Hack Attack: How the Truth Caught up with Rupert Murdoch.* Chatto & Windus, £20.



**RUPERT MURDOCH'S companies have passed the £100 million mark in legal fees for work around the phone-hacking scandal. The accounts of News Corporation for the last financial year revealed that the bill for the solicitors and barristers dealing with criminal and civil cases in the Old Bailey and the high court stood at \$169m (£100m).**

# 63

**JOURNALISTS HAVE been arrested and/or charged in investigations around and following the phone-hacking and blagging allegations. According to the Press Gazette:**

**5** have been convicted (with three jailed)

**3** have been found not guilty

**28** are awaiting trial

**1** has accepted a caution

**1** had the charge dropped on health grounds

**19** have been told they face no further action

**6** remain on police bail.

## PRIVACY

# 'We know where you live'

AN ENTERPRISING freelance reporter who crowdfunded his work to cover the sensational first phone-hacking trial had his finances investigated by the Daily Mail.

Peter Jukes was tweeting from the trial, to more than 10,000 followers, but earning no money and worrying how to live. A sleepless-early-hours inspiration had him tweeting appeals to his 10,000 followers and within days he had the means to live and work for eight months.

His appeal necessarily included information on his personal finances, and after the trial was over and he announced he would be working his tweets into a book, he began receiving "anonymous texts mentioning vague legal threats and hoping I would 'enjoy the weekend.'

... and suggesting some kind of 'Daily Mail Tuesday.'

Peter Jukes wrote in the Press Gazette: "On Monday morning I received a call from a Daily Mail reporter, asking to know about my mortgage payments. He reminded me of my original crowdfunding blog, when I had said I was so broke I missed a mortgage payment. I told him this was true ... He said I could

have been raising money under false pretences [because] I didn't have a mortgage."

The reporter told me that he'd been handed an anonymised email with personal financial details. I explained to him that there was no mortgage on my property because I had sold it. I could easily prove I had quite a sizeable mortgage until then."

Nothing was published and Peter Jukes wrote: "My minor brush with press investigations has made me more attuned to the acute and systematic intrusions into personal privacy by the News of the World. The threat to me was minor and nothing was published. But thousands of people were targeted by Mulcaire's hacking, and hundreds of relationships, friendships and marriages were badly damaged by the cruel publication of private secrets."

■ Peter Jukes's book on the trial, *Beyond Contempt*, is available in electronic and paper form through [www.hackingtrial.com](http://www.hackingtrial.com)





**Congratulations to all at the CPBF on its 200th issue – here's to many more ahead in the vital campaign for a diverse, democratic and genuinely free media**

**Best wishes from all at the National Union of Journalists**

**Michelle Stanistreet  
General Secretary**

**Adam Christie and Andy Smith  
Joint Presidents**



**BECTU**

**BROADCASTING**

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**THEATRE UNION**

**BECTU supports a free press and campaigns for a strong public service broadcasting regime**

**General Secretary**

**Gerry Morrissey**

**President**

**Jane Perry**



**Congratulations to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom on the 200th issue of Free Press**  
For 35 years, the CPBF has challenged anti trade union bias in the media and the power of the media moguls

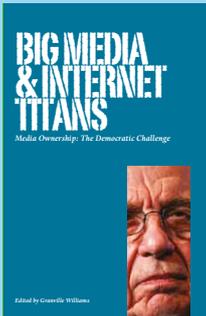
**Today, it is still campaigning for a diverse, democratic and accountable media**

**The fight goes on!**

**NUJ Manchester & Salford Branch**

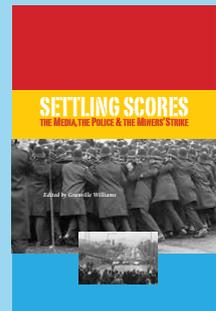
# TWO NEW BOOKS

from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom



**BIG MEDIA & INTERNET TITANS** highlights the democratic challenges posed by excessive media power, both in the hands of 'old media' - newspapers, television, radio - and through the emergence of the giants of the internet age - Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon. Never before have such global behemoths grown so fast or spread their tentacles so widely. The book's editor Granville Williams says: "Governments need to recognise that unless there are clear rules and limits on media ownership, democracy suffers". The book throws down the democratic challenge for politicians to follow policies that promote diverse, democratic and accountable media.

**SETTLING SCORES** was published in March 2014 on the 30th anniversary of the miners' strike. It is a collection of chapters, edited by Granville Williams, on the coverage of the great strike of 1985-85. Nick Jones, former BBC Industrial Correspondent, writes on the revelations in the Cabinet papers about the government's role in the strike. Mirror columnist Paul Routledge and Yorkshire journalist Pete Lazenby reflect on media coverage of the miners. Media academic and campaigner Tony Harcup used freedom of information laws to find out more about BBC TV coverage of the Battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984.



**Both are paperback books – you can buy them from the CPBF online at <http://cpbf.org.uk/buybook.php>**



## Manchester Community and Mental Health

To fight privatisation and cuts and to support trade unionists in the NHS we need the media to publicise what is happening. Information about the good work of the NHS and of trade unions is generally not reported.

We support the work of the CPBF in their campaign for responsive, democratic and accountable media, and curbs on monopoly media ownership.

Please support us in our fight for decent pay and an end to privatisation in the NHS. We are balloting over our pay.

Join us on our picket lines when we take action.

**Ben Jackson**  
Branch Secretary

**Neil McAlister**  
Branch Chairperson



NUJ Newcastle Branch  
congratulates the CPBF on the  
200th edition of Free Press

George Macintyre Branch Chair

Got a point to make about Free Press or the CPBF?

Email [freepress@cpbf.org.uk](mailto:freepress@cpbf.org.uk)

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Croydon Retired  
Members' Branch

**Keep fighting  
for our voice  
in the Media**

Secretary Ted Knight  
Chair Alan Crawley

# Corporation rotting from the head down

A SENIOR BBC insider lifts the lid on the state of play within the Corporation as it readies itself for the decennial ordeal of the renewal of its Charter by Parliament

THE BBC is a barrel of quality goods rotting from the top. The fiasco over attempts to replace retiring Trust Chairman Lord Patten indicates where the problem starts. And there's no sign the nice Lord Tony Hall as Director-General is committed to holding back the free-market hordes in defence of the corporation's public service ethic. The fight doesn't seem to be there.

With the licence-fee pursestrings drawn firmly tight and 20 per cent cuts across the board as a consequence, 2014 was always going to be tough. But it's the failure of what the BBC likes to call its "leadership population" to make the case for licence-fee funding beyond 2016 that is worrying.

The message is not getting out in Westminster and Whitehall that the BBC's role as a public broadcaster is an essential part of the broadcasting and democratic landscape. With eight months to a General Election, after which the BBC expects to start negotiating Charter renewal right away, this failure of confidence is inexplicable.



It's the grunts on the programme-making frontlines that are seeing the incoherence at the top. They have to pick up the work of colleagues shown the door and prepare for the stress of seeing a further 500 jobs in News go under the programme of cuts so laughably called "Delivering Quality First".

They must also avoid the journalistic errors that have caused so much reputational damage. But when asked: "Have you assessed the likely impact on quality of DQF?" BBC managers admit they haven't.

Parliament isn't so laid back. In 2012 the Commons Public Accounts Committee looked

into the previous round of cuts in the BBC and concluded that the BBC "... does not fully understand the impact individual savings have on the quality of its services." On being challenged on this recently, managers confessed they didn't know about it.

The picture emerging in News and Current Affairs indicates the damage being done. The BBC has up to now prided itself on having the largest newsgathering operation in the world. But if Director of News James Harding gets his way, it will no longer even be able to report news from the whole of the UK.

Producer posts are being made redundant

## With enemies like us... the BBC

It's like family: the BBC can drive us to fury but we have to defend it – and we will, of course, says **TIM GOPSILL**

THE BBC is managing to present its worst face to its supporters at the very time it most needs them.

It is a wonderful broadcaster that produces an inspired array of popular and serious programming unmatched in the world. But as a public institution it just can't seem to overcome its deference to state and corporate power.

The BBC's coverage of this summer's conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq – always deferring

to the government line – has driven those who support its proclaimed values to despair.

From time to time people try to organise boycotts of the BBC or refusals to pay the licence fee. There was a boycott organised on Twitter a year ago over the BBC's failure to report the creeping privatisation of the NHS; there is a Boycott the BBC Licence Fee community on Facebook and there is an anonymous right-wing blog with the same name.

There have been numerous calls in the right-wing press to withhold the fee and one right-wing figure of fun, the Thatcher-worshipping former Daily Telegraph editor Charles Moore, actually refused to pay (over the on-air indiscretions of Jonathan Ross).

Demonstrations are held outside Broadcasting

House in London and are ignored. Not just against the BBC itself: the People's Assembly Against Austerity in June gathered 50,000 people right there in Portland Place. This was not reported until the next day, when after protests the BBC posted a 52-word story and 24 seconds of footage without commentary. The same day, as the *Pride's Purge* blog pointed out, the BBC managed to find and give airtime to a Scottish person cheering the England team at the World Cup in Brazil.

The BBC's world news is wretched (see panel) and people are right to protest, because after all they own the corporation, but the object must be to boost its ability to stand up to power and keep its journalism on track, not to undermine it or join the commercial forces lining up to bring it down.

For all the BBC hate in the right-wing papers

in Plymouth, Salford and Newcastle, and with the “streamlining” of operations in Birmingham, national news will no longer be able to give proper cover to almost a third of the country.

Taking the BBC in the direction of a flatter organisation, with fewer tiers of management and reasonable salaries, would change the picture right away.

Instead Lord Hall wants to impose another below-inflation deal on the staff, to show that the BBC “gets” austerity. BBC staff have been “getting” austerity for years.

The differential between top pay and the salaries of those making the output has increased out of all proportion, and if there’s

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any evidence that the BBC is the slightest bit better managed as a result, they’re keeping it remarkably secret.

Well over 100 bosses are paid more than £150,000 a year. A cap set at £150,000, and a proportionate reduction in other management salaries would save £20 million a year to reduce pressure on programme budgets.

But Tony Hall’s “compete or compare” proposals he set out in July just amount to “outsource everything”.

In-house, the message is: less money, less time, fewer commissions, fewer staff. It’s not obvious to programme-makers that a single instance could be found where outsourcing has led to better services.

At best, it just leads to cheaper services – by putting more pressure (less money, less time, less job security) on the people who do the work. And very often it leads to worse services too.

## WHY ISRAEL?

NOTHING THE BBC does annoys people who generally support it more than its reporting of Palestine. The bias seems so flagrant, with the one-sided studio discussions, the constant justification for the slaughter. How can decent honest journalists do it?

Many believe that they cave in to harassment by pro-Israeli activists groups with their menacing phone calls and messages, but in truth this is a myth propagated by the pro-Israelis themselves, to vaunt their prowess, like the dog that believes its barking has driven the postie to retreat when, having delivered the mail, he or she was going anyway.

It is in any case an insult to journalists, who are trained to stand up to harassment. But, like the postie, they were doing it anyway, because the BBC cannot do other than favour Israel.

It is actually nothing to do with Jews and Arabs, nor Israel, nor even the middle east. It is because the BBC is pro-American; pro-western, pro-NATO. It is part of the official establishment. Above everything, it

is pro-“security”.

This summer, it wasn’t just about Gaza. The reporting on Ukraine was equally shocking, with the BBC ignoring the devastation caused by the government’s bombardment of rebel-held areas – even the fact that it so seriously hampered the efforts to get to the wreckage of the downed Malaysian plane. Instead it insisted that the blame for everything lay at Putin’s door – which of course is the official line of NATO.

My own pet hate: the BBC persistently airing the threats of the preposterous NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (*below*).

BBC editors are not stupid. They know the truth and they know they are not telling it. They know Ukraine is nothing to do with NATO. But in times of perceived peril, real or (mostly) imagined, the BBC must revert to Ministry of Information mode. It’s all about “security”.

In a world apparently besieged by terrorists and fanatics, Israel, vicious as it may be, is simply one of us.

*Tim Gopsill*



# still needs all its friends

and all the “poll tax” jibes, people understand this and the level of response to boycott calls is poor. The Twitter boycott fizzled out; the FB page has in three years amassed all of 232 “likes” and the blog has posted nothing since 2011. Charles Moore, summoned to court, was fined £262 and paid up.

All the same, the external threats are mounting in the run-up to the renewal of the BBC Charter in 2016 and the BBC’s friends will have to swallow their distaste and defend it, since the BBC is incapable of defending itself.

This has been especially so for the last 10 years, since its humiliation by the Hutton report into the coverage of the invasion of Iraq, which hammered the BBC for unwittingly stepping out of line and telling an embarrassing truth. Now

it’s run by a vast cadre of highly paid cowards, memorably described at the time by a BBC journalist as the “quivering suits on the sixth floor”, who are terrified of upsetting, let alone confronting, the government.

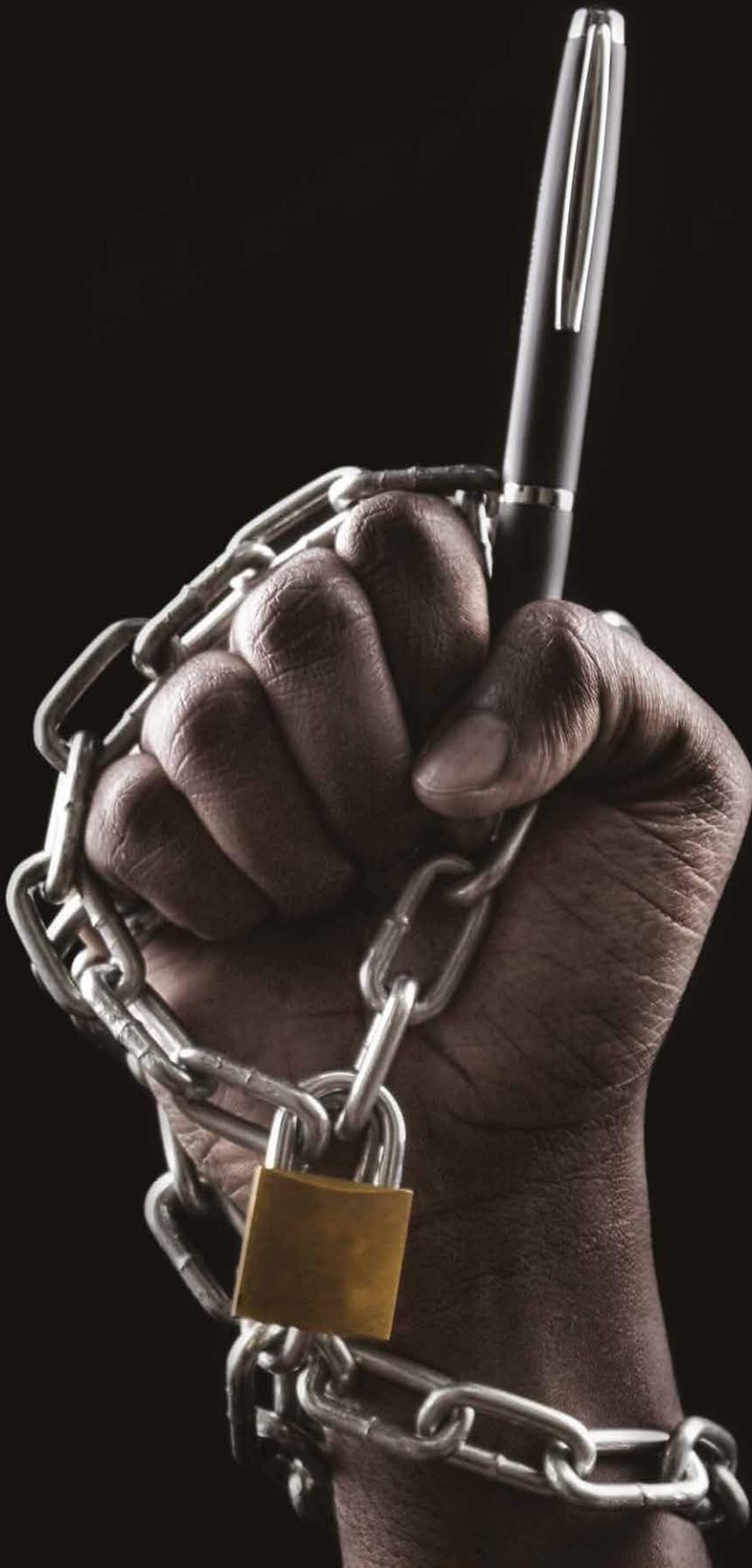
When the coalition government took over in 2010, the then Director-General, Mark Thompson, rushed to offer a five-year freeze in the licence fee, plus taking on extra costs, that have amounted to a real 20 per cent cut in spending. “Getting his capitulation in first” was Free Press’s definition of Thompson’s strategy. The nightmare now is the same happening again.

All is not lost. The BBC has in fact withstood decades of political change remarkably well. In 1985 Margaret Thatcher set up a group of free-market economists to recommend the

abolition of the licence fee and its replacement with advertising, but the Peacock Committee pulled back and concluded that the fee was the least-bad option.

Governments since then would have destroyed the public service element if they could, but that has always been a political impossibility. The BBC still gets the highest audiences, by miles, and the licence fee is cheap – too cheap; it needs to rise.

There are doom-mongers who regard the media industry as being gripped by an inexorable process of conglomeration into fewer and bigger corporate entities, with public broadcasting a relic of the last century. Don’t believe it. Maintaining it has been a political success and is still a political reality.



**Free Press has publicised the campaign for the protection of civil liberties and genuine press freedom in all of its 200 editions.**

The media bosses' version of press freedom is the ability to launch frenzied attacks on unions and our members' struggles for fairness and justice at work.

Without the right of reply and without recognition of workers' rights to collective bargaining and representation means freedom only for the media moguls.

Restoration of union rights for all grades of worker supported by a conscience clause to empower journalists to refuse instructions to work unethically without putting their jobs at risk, is as important for press freedom and diversity as the need for ownership caps within and across the sectors of the industry.

Congratulations to the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom on the 200<sup>th</sup> edition of Free Press.

**Len McCluskey**  
General Secretary

**Tony Woodhouse**  
Chair of the Executive Council

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