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MEDIA REFORM

NINE VOTES, THAT'S ALL IT CAME TO

ON MAY 9, by 304 to 295, the Commons killed off the continuation of the Leveson Inquiry that had done so much to check the power and corruption of Big Media.

Another vote a week later confirmed the sentence, and Parliamentary support for attempts to enact the last elements of Leveson's proposals for reform fell away. The Labour Party dropped its amendment to confirm the incentives for publishers to offer arbitration to everyone with complaints against the press, and that was the formal end of a seven-year battle for media justice.

It was back to business as usual with a desperate right-wing government pandering to a rampant right-wing press.

The phone-hacking scandal in 2011 had launched the strongest protest ever mounted against the big media publishers. It brought the sensational Leveson Inquiry and its legal changes to introduce fairness to media regulation. Much has been enacted, but the worst and biggest offenders have bullied their way out of it.

The papers would not agree to a fair system of arbitration to settle complaints without incurring the fantastic costs and time consumed by defamation cases in the courts.

Leveson granted the power to supervise this system to the Press Recognition Panel (PRP), a body meticulously established to be free of government influence. But Parliament decided to override this process and grant the supervisory power to Culture Secretary Matt Hancock.

It was a brutal act of double dealing and dishonesty: the press's rallying cry against Leveson's plans was that they constituted state control, even though their whole point was to avoid it.

But now the state run by the papers' friends does have control and can endorse any derisory scheme the media owners choose to adopt through their stooge "self-regulator" IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation).

Highlighting the duplicity, the Sun commented: "The Government, and Culture Secretary Matt Hancock, have saved the free Press from near-extinction. We salute them."

How Leveson got it wrong

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This was wholly untrue. There had been no extinction threat, and the move could actually weaken a free press if a government wanted to.

All along, IPSO has dragged its feet on arbitration. After two years, it grudgingly introduced a voluntary scheme. Publishers were not required to join this scheme, nor to agree to arbitrate every complaint even if they did. There were restrictive conditions for complainants on costs and awards, and no cases were ever brought.

In April IPSO announced what it called a "compulsory" scheme, though signing up to it is still voluntary; some have chosen to join, some not. If they do, they will have to accept arbitration, provided IPSO considers the case is "genuine".

The amount that arbitrators can award, and the limit to the costs that complainants can recover, have been raised, but are still restricted compared with the courts.

In the Commons Matt Hancock praised the scheme: "I think that the low cost arbitration they brought in is good for the press and good for ordinary people who want redress." The change he was proposing gave authority to the Culture Secretary to review it to ensure its continuing "use and effectiveness".

He said it would be "up for the government of the day" to decide how to proceed if the Culture Secretary was unhappy with the outcome of the review. If that isn't potential government control, what is?

The last hope for change lies in a legal challenge to the government's actions on Leveson by the campaign group Hacked Off, which is expected to be heard by the High Court in October.

*Now the state run by
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PAPER'**
Honesty from new
editor of Express

For all campaign news and
info go to cpbf.org.uk
Email:
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Democracy in the media?

More than 100 media activists took part in a day of talking and listening in London in March organised by the Media Reform Coalition.

MORAG LIVINGSTONE was there for Fee Press

FRUSTRATION AND hope on the faces of those trying to find a seat at the opening plenary of this year's Media Democracy Festival in London in March was obvious. Some failed and sat on the floor instead.

The theme of "faking it, breaking it, re-making it" echoed the challenges and opportunities facing the industry and the billing brought them in, despite blizzard conditions weather. Invited speakers from both corporate (or "mainstream") and alternative or "new" media could have created a culture clash, but didn't.

Opening the event Natalie Fenton, chair of the Media Reform Coalition, set the tone saying: "Freedom without accountability is freedom of the powerful over the many".

Guardian columnist Dawn Foster's keynote address showed that "mainstream" editors missed a number of big issues, including the state of UK housing. Before the Grenfell Tower catastrophe editors did not give those who raised safety concerns a voice, despite journalists like her trying to highlight poor housing standards for a number of years.

Editors assume such issues don't sell. Instead they serve up immigrants and those on benefits as scapegoats for the housing problem. This failure to represent voices outside their own world, or to hold those in power to account, was horrifically borne out in the devastating and tragic consequences of the fire.

Dawn Foster heard her editors ask: "How did we miss this?" There was suddenly a focus on the responsibility and accountability of those potentially responsible but it didn't last long. The paper soon returned to its "traditional" ways of reporting.

She said the Guardian also took an odd stance on the calls to resume the Leveson Inquiry. The CPBF then tweeted: "Imagine construction firms saying we should scrap the Grenfell inquiry because improved building regulations might cost them money. That is **exactly** the argument newspapers, including the Guardian, made about Leveson 2". A smart point, picked up later in the panel Policy, Plurality and Press Regulation by Brian Cathcart of Hacked Off. The Leveson 2 inquiry is much needed and we need to fight for it, he said.

Dawn Foster emphasised that many in corporate media believe they have a wide range of views and her Guardian colleague Rachel



Speakers at the Media Fund general meeting in May

MONEY WHERE IT'S NEEDED

A RADICAL group that aims to secure the funding for new and alternative media has launched a programme to raise £60,000 over the next year.

The Media Fund, a collective of independent news outlets of which the CPBF is a member, is planning two UK nationwide tours over the next six months with the aim of recruiting 1,000 new members. At just £5 each a month that will raise enough by the end of the year to give £1,000 to

each of the now 40-plus member organisations and establish a £20,000 pot for which they will be able to pitch their projects.

The tours will consist of media training for Future of the Media discussion sessions around the country. They will be repeats of similar events held last year. The aim is to hold over 100 events in the next six months.

These were decisions of the Media Fund general meeting in Sheffield on May 31. It also saw the first session of the News Clubs

in which everyone gets the chance to join discussions on media policy. More are planned for the regional events.

The fund's Kallum Pembro said the News Clubs were for "news hounds" to debate the week's hot topics. "News Club Live is a live debate show," he said, "that combines a panel of experts with a room full of news hounds to dissect the news stories of the week, taking apart what has been reported and uncovering what has been left out."

Shabi later confirmed that they do believe the mainstream is where reasonable thinking takes place.

Shabi was speaking in the session titled "What's wrong with the media?" with Anamik Saha of Goldsmiths University, David Miller (Spinwatch) and former Corbyn spokesman Matt Zarb-Cousin. They analysed the monolithic structures of our industry which decide who belongs and who doesn't, and how "representation is a matter of social justice".

DISCUSSION AROUND the economic pressure to generate stories quickly, based on few sources, was countered with examples of long-form articles getting the most traffic.

The Financial Times's much-panned investigation of The President's Club, the lewd all-male gathering for City financiers, was the most read story the paper ever had. People will read and pay for high quality journalism, and the tendency to negatively collectivise the commercial media as bad was not always warranted.

The ways newspapers generate revenue was under discussion in "What's wrong with advertising?" – the question the CPBF's Jonathan Hardy posed to the panel.

Campaigner Roz Hardie suggested that advertising "wants us to buy stuff we don't need". James Cusick (Open Democracy) highlighted how the Evening Standard often reports on events such as the Future of Food sponsored

THIS COULD BE THE END OF THE ROAD

Why not?



JANINA STRUK

JOSEF DAVIES-COATES sets the scene for the decisive

CPBF AGM in July

THE CAMPAIGN'S AGM on Saturday July 14 could well be its last. The National Council has decided to recommend that the CPBF be dissolved, and its officers have prepared a plan for winding down.

The decision was, of course, not taken lightly. Some people on the NC have been involved with CPBF since the beginning, fighting for media workers' rights and campaigning for a better media for nearly 40 years.

But with finances projected to run out by the end of the year end, and with obligations to pay for our national co-ordinator and our office space, the NC has agreed to present the following motion to the AGM:

"In view of the continuing decline of the financial situation of our organisation this Annual General Meeting has decided

to close down the CPBF and cease all campaigning, administrative and financial processes by no later than 30th November 2018."

If this goes through, would that be the end of CPBF? Technically, yes. On or before December 1, it would cease to exist.

But the NC is unanimous in the belief that campaigning for better media is more important than ever: giant media mergers and tech giant domination are creating an ever increasing concentration of media ownership whilst newspaper circulation plummets and budgets for public service media are slashed.

The need for more diverse, democratic and accountable media seemingly grows more urgent every day. So what can we all do to help the fight for better media to continue?

In addition to being in poor financial health, it could be argued that CPBF's 20th century name and organisational

structure and status as an unincorporated association are all no longer fit for purpose. But there is still power in our roots. There is indeed an expanding community of people striving to make the world a fairer media place.

When CPBF was founded in 1979 it occupied a unique position – no one else was really campaigning for media reform – but that position no longer exists. Many new players have sprung up in response to growing public awareness of the issues.

The Media Reform Coalition and Hacked Off formed in response to the phone hacking scandal in 2011. More recently Stop Funding Hate has risen to prominence. Launched just after the Brexit referendum, its first video reached millions in a week. Within a year they had raised over £100,000 in crowd-funding to take on "the hate campaigns of the Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express by persuading brands to pull their advertising".

Unlike the CPBF, none of these have union-organised media workers at their core, and none are membership organisations with a democratic, accountable structure.

The campaign was founded by media unions, to co-ordinate their members' resistance to the growing power of the media monopolies, and to bring in other unions and other people committed to the same ends.

Changes in the trade union movement have affected the CPBF as well. The stream of union mergers reduced subscription income, and the heavy pressure on their energy and resources left them with less for media reform.

Now there are many media campaigns, and countless young people moving into the sector media who want to make big media more accountable and small media more viable.

Everyone in the CPBF wants these things too and will encourage endeavours to build a new campaign organisation, still involving media workers but with a wider range of support, to take up this vital work.

by GM giants Syngenta while omitting details of the various court case Syngenta are facing – exemplifying the erosion of speaking truth to power.

Challenging issues were also discussed in the panel "Old News – democratising the broadcast media". Gary Merrill (Roehampton University) highlighted just how unrepresentative senior BBC journalists are of the UK public. BECTU's Riaz Meer spoke about the need for better diversity monitoring. Kam Sandhu (Real Media) suggested we need more transparency around the funding of think tanks.

Representatives of new media and campaign organisations highlighted their passion for reframing the debate, despite funding challenges. Novara and The Canary both grew from campaigning journalism. The New Internationalist identified that an alternative voice was needed so it restructured to become literal and political. In the process they found that people see value in it.

The Media Fund explained how it has created a co-operative model working to support more than 30 independent media producers.

One of these, Peter Jukes of Byline, told the audience that his business model is to be "sued by the Daily Mail". It raised a laugh. What was obvious is that they have in abundance what seems lacking elsewhere: bravery.

An impassioned argument for trade unions from the NUJ's Sarah Kavanagh rounded the day followed up by Joe Todd's (Momentum) belief that things are changing.

Owen Jones also made a case for unionisation, referring to the 1986/7 News International Wapping dispute that resulted in the need for this faking it, breaking it, re-making it festival, three decades later.

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

The exaggerated death of investigative journalism

They said it was finished but they were wrong.

TIM GOPSILL traces a revival of reporting that really does change the world

WHEN WAS the last time a senior UK government minister was forced to resign as a result of investigative journalism? I'll tell you: it was a couple of months ago, on April 29 this year.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd fell on her sword as a result of a dogged six-month investigation by Guardian reporter Amelia Gentleman that exposed decades of heartless discrimination against Caribbean immigrants.

The Windrush scandal only came to light because last year she had followed a lead from a contact that in turn led to others. She wrote more than 40 stories before the importance of them took hold and the outcome, she says, showed the value of investigative journalism.

"I don't want to sound self-righteous," she told the Press Gazette, "but it does really show that, although people are quite cynical about journalists and journalism, it can have an impact."

It is remarkable that investigative journalism (IJ) is still so prevalent 20 years after the world had been led to believe that was a thing of the past. With the wind-down of traditional or "legacy" media since the turn of the century, this time-consuming and expensive discipline was widely agreed to be finished.

In 2000 the media academics Steven Barnett and Emily Seymour wrote in a report entitled "A Shrinking Iceberg Travelling South" that television had "effectively vacated political and economic current affairs" in favour of more ratings-friendly subjects such as crime and consumer issues. They wrote that "investigative journalism has fared particularly badly in the new climate. There is almost no room for 'speculative' investigations which may not produce tangible results."

In newspapers it was even worse, where staff numbers were slashed as publishers protected their profits as sales and ad revenue shrunk. And,

as the resources for proper journalism were denied, content became more commercial, trivial and celebrity-driven.

The great reporter John Pilger wrote in his 2004 book *Tell Me No Lies: investigative journalism and its triumphs*: "corporatism and consumerism are laying to waste the breeding grounds of free, inquiring journalism when it has never been needed more."

The community of investigative journalists, a surprisingly co-operative bunch, were almost convinced of their impending doom. But they also understood the political significance of their craft and began to organise themselves to keep it on the road.

Former Observer reporter Paul Lashmar told a crisis meeting of colleagues in 2009 that a "critical mass of investigative journalists is vital to democracy ... New ways of funding and producing journalism could fulfil the function traditionally left to the fourth estate".

It is against the grain of media change but there has been a boom in big investigations that have had tremendous repercussions.

It is fair to talk of a revival, and one agent has been the establishment in 2010 by the journalists of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ), a group of them that generates stories for other media,

including national papers and the TV networks, often in collaboration with them.

It is based at London's City University and was initially funded by grants from foundations and now earns revenue from the publishers it supplies.

Managing editor Rachel Oldroyd says that commercial newspapers "are starting to realise that if they put a value on the public good their journalism provides, then there could be a way to turn the very journalism that a few years ago



***Can of worms, as prised open by investigative reporters. Artwork by Dan Stockton from the cover of *Investigative Journalism Today: speaking truth to power*, edited by John Mair and Richard Lance Keeble, just published by Bite-Sized Books**

seemed a huge strain into a means of survival."

Rachel Oldroyd is one of the authors of a new book *Investigative Journalism Today: speaking truth to power**. Together with other practitioners they survey the state of craft around the world.

Her point is that the reporters' persistence in pursuing their trade is bringing some commercial media to their senses. The penny is dropping that if they ran more hard-hitting, even world-changing stories, my goodness, more people might want to buy their products!

The Guardian newspaper/website has certainly benefited from this, in its desperate quest for survival without charging for its online output. Debt-laden as it is, the company has spent big money on a stream of major revelations, starting with the phone-hacking scandal of the 2000s; this work was led by Nick Davies but assisted by younger reporters, including Amelia Gentleman, worth citing because it was she who uncovered the crucial story in 2011 of the hacking of the phone of the murdered teenage girl Milly Dowler, the one that after four years finally rocked the Murdoch press.

There followed the great Wikileaks data dumps and the Edward Snowden leaks on US security snooping to four major global tax-dodging scams (the so-called Luxleaks, Swissleaks and the Panama and Paradise papers), and of course the



‘JOURNALISTS CAN HELP US TO SAVE LIVES’

THE NEW boom in positive independent journalism is a response to an increase in leaks and tip-offs, large and small, that lead to investigations. There are the massive dumps of incriminating computer data, and there are the brave individuals who risk their careers to expose local malpractice and corruption.

Whistleblowers have always been vital to democratic accountability but there has been a staggering rise in their numbers, especially in the NHS. The accelerating numbers of accounts of the maltreatment of patients keep bringing yet more to light and the charity Compassion in Care says that more than 5,000 NHS employees have now blown the whistle on their workplaces.

Compassion in Care is run by Eileen Chubb (pictured), a former care assistant in a BUPA home in Bromley who herself blew the whistle on the shocking treatment of

old people. She lost her job but set out to provide the help that others need to follow her lead.

“It seemed the norm to hit people and scream at them,” she told a meeting with journalists at the NUJ in May. “There was a ring of abusers at work”. She raised it with management and then with social services, without result, so took the plunge and went to the Daily Express.

“We were saved by the Express, who named all the abusers,” she said. “Journalists have been extremely supportive ... a great help. It’s the journalists that can help us to save lives.”

Now Eileen Chubb has become a journalist herself – and joined the NUJ – working with whistleblowers who contact Compassion in Care’s confidential hotline, and with the BIJ, to work up their stories for the media.

Her work has attracted whistleblowers from other sectors – the army, police and education – leading to the set-up of another hotline called The Whistler, to deal with their stories.



HAZEL DUNLOP

recent probe into the Cambridge Analytica election-rigging scandal in the Guardian’s sister paper the Observer.

The sensations raised by these stories led to sudden increases in web traffic and even sales of the papers, and they had other significant aspects: all were international cases that depended on the analysis of fantastical quantities of digital data: the 2016 Panama Papers contained 11.5 million files, amounting to 2.6 terabytes of information; last year’s Paradise Papers had 13.4 million files – 1.4 terabytes of data.

To process all this required dozens of people who knew what they were doing, which highlighted two further elements in the investigative revival: the international collaboration of teams of journalists working together – colleagues from major media in the USA, Germany, France and Spain as well as the UK – and the application of a new kind of reporting only invented in this century: data journalism.

Young journalists are queuing up to acquire this skill. It is like the vital traditional investigative practice of reading company accounts, but massively more complicated.

While the practitioners have transformed their work to match the digital age, there remains the problem of funding, because most of the owners are stuck in the last century. The work is still expensive, sometimes for uncertain outcomes.

If the publishers won’t pay, the alternative has to be crowdfunding. In the USA this is well-established, but there is quite an IJ industry there, with reportedly more than 150 non-profit investigative organisations.

There are also entrepreneurial journalists such

as Greg Palast, who funds his own mini-industry of IJ activists from the sale of his books and videos. He was once an investigative reporter on the Observer in London, where his sensational exposés turned out to be bit too campaigning for management’s taste.

In the UK there was a bold attempt at a commercial IJ agency called Exaro (which is Latin for “I dig”, we were told) but it came to grief two years ago. Exaro had placed all its eggs in the once-marketable celebrity child abuse basket but it all fell apart amid accusations that the allegations it was following up were fantasy.

There is still the Byline agency, which crowdfunds investigations mainly on media-related issues, picking up from the revelations of the Leveson Inquiry. Byline also runs a three-day summer festival in rural Sussex, with fun and games on media themes; ironically last year’s festival included a session called “Investigative Journalism is Dying” that heard a line-up of operators proving the title incorrect.

British journalism is still not held in high enough regard for crowdfunding to raise as much money as this kind of investigations demand.

But if investigative journalists continue to generate the political consequences of the revelations on tax fiddling and election rigging, or the Windrush scandal, then they might raise the level of support all round.

As ever, the corporations that still control the bulk of the commercial media, and continue to degrade their standards, are not helping. So good independent journalists and the public who value their work are going to have to do it without them.

Journalism is not held in high enough regard for crowdfunding to raise the money required

One cheer for the Beeb



STEFANO CAGNONI

Ofcom says that public broadcasting has a definite future. Good news ... or is it? **TOM O'MALLEY** takes a closer look.

THE OFCOM report *Public Service in the Digital Age* exudes a tone of cautious confidence in the future of the BBC and public service broadcasting (PSB).

In spite of audiences benefiting from an "explosion of choice" including on-demand services like Amazon and Netflix, it says the main PSB TV channels still account for half of all viewing"; and the BBC is the "cornerstone" of PSB.

In the future, to compete, the four channels (BBC, ITV and Channels 4 and 5) must make "high quality and more distinctive programmes". As viewing moves from linear to on-demand, they must strengthen their negotiating position with smart TV manufacturers to gain a stronger presence on these platforms.

This looks fine – until you realise that much of this exploding "choice" is the product of policies deliberately cultivated by Ofcom. Under political direction it has encouraged an "explosion" of under-regulated competition. The commercial providers have very few strong obligations to provide wide-ranging public service programmes, while Ofcom has corralled the BBC into becoming

the major supplier of PSB content.

It has become a small island of public service TV in a vast ocean of commercial competition, producing content that commercial companies will not. In short, it is there just to compensate for market failure.

The BBC does great and important work, but it should not be alone in being required to do so. Successive Labour and Tory governments since the 1980s are responsible for this state of affairs, keen to support of market forces in communications.

The BBC used to be a major in-house producer of programmes, nurturing industry talent and providing an environment conducive to creative innovation. It is now, in effect, a commissioning body with more and more programme making outsourced. Job losses, a haemorrhaging of talent and the development of a management culture in harmony with the commercially driven ethos of our neo-liberal age have become the order of the day.

Its news agenda is often shaped by a highly partisan national press, which in particular has subjected the leader of the main UK opposition party to what LSE researchers have "a process of vilification well beyond the normal limits of fair debate and disagreement in a democracy".

This dependence on a conservative press is aggravated by two factors. As the Sutton Trust has shown, the social composition of top media executives and news providers is dominated by

the products of private education. Private schools turn out people with a stake in the status quo; why else would they exist?

The second is what writer Tom Mills calls the "institutionalisation of the new neoliberal order at the BBC", stemming from the "highly unpopular organisational" changes initiated in the 1990s by Director General John Birt. Mills says: "Business values ... became increasingly prevalent, not only institutionally, but in the BBC's reporting ... the interests and perspective of business became ever more deeply embedded within the working practices and professional ideologies of BBC journalists".

So the BBC has not only become the provider of an increasingly minority service within the media landscape; its very essence has been re-engineered to make its culture and perspectives on news more closely in tune with the neo-liberal priorities.

The BBC has to be subject to more democratic accountability. We must not see it not even as a "cornerstone" of a public service designed to produce just what the market will not. It has to be just one, perhaps the major, provider of public service content, and across all platforms.

This will require a reforming government to be well prepared with democratically orientated policies, sufficiently confident to brave persistent abuse and ruthlessness of manoeuvre from the interests that the policies implemented by Ofcom have done so much to cultivate.

Business values are increasingly prevalent in the BBC's reporting

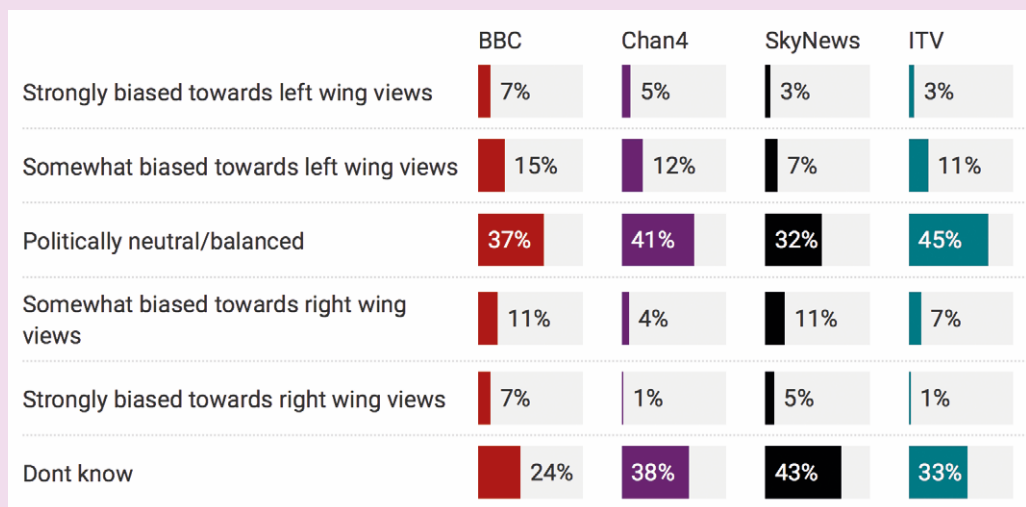
'BBC'S IS THE MOST BIASED NEWS'

THE BBC is no longer a provider of politically balanced news, according to a sensational opinion poll. It lags behind ITV and Channel 4 in viewers' estimation of neutrality.

Research agency BMG surveyed more than 1,000 adults and found that 45 per cent of people believed ITV to produce balanced reporting, with 41 per cent saying Channel 4 was politically neutral and only 37 per cent saying the same of the BBC.

Sky News was trusted to be politically neutral by 32 per cent of those questioned with slightly more people (11 per cent) believing it was biased towards right-wing views than left-wing (7 per cent).

All licensed public service broadcasters have an



obligation to treat politics with due impartiality, but the BBC in particular stakes its reputation on it.

Yet the poll found it was the only one that more people believed to be biased than neutral – a view held by only

37 per cent.

It found the BBC was considered to be the most biased to both left and right: 22 per cent felt it was biased to the left – a common trope with perpetrated by the right-wing press – and 18 per

cent to the right.

In comparison, left wing bias was detected by 14 per cent at ITV, 17 per cent Channel 4 and 10 per cent at Sky, with right-wing bias at 8 per cent at ITV, 5 per cent at C4 and 16 per cent at Sky.



Standards for sale on Osborne's plaything paper

'My paper an offensive right-wing racist rag'

THE NEW editor of the Daily Express has made an outspoken attack on his own paper as it used to be, damning it as inaccurate, Islamophobic and "downright offensive".

Gary Jones told a committee of MPs that some of the Express's past front page stories made him "very uncomfortable". Some of the headlines created an "Islamophobic sentiment", he said. "There have been accuracy issues on some of them, and some of them are just downright offensive, and I wouldn't want to be party to any newspaper that would publish such material."

Jones took over the editor's chair in April after the Express group was sold to Britain's biggest newspaper publisher Trinity Mirror, where he had been editor of the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People.

The takeover is on hold, since both the media regulator Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority are investigating its effects on media plurality (see below), but the Mirror group replaced the editors of the Express and Star titles as soon as the deal was done.

There were diversity concerns, since the Mirror is the only Labour-supporting national group and the Express titles are relentlessly right-wing – not that there is a shortage of such outlets – and

the new owners said they would not change the party lines.

But Jones told the MPs he planned to make changes to the newspapers, and has already transformed the front pages to give them a more positive impact.

THE TAKEOVER has been subjected to inquiries by Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority after a late intervention from Culture Secretary Matt Hancock.

The £127 million deal would see the Daily and Sunday Express and Star titles sold to Trinity Mirror, already Britain's biggest newspaper owner. The combined publisher has been rebranded, in the current style of aspirational titles, as Reach.

Hancock said: "The first public interest ground is the need for free expression of opinion, and concerns the potential impact the transfer of newspapers would have on editorial decision making. The second public interest ground is the need for a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers, to the extent that it is reasonable or practicable."

Both Ofcom and the CMA were to report by early June and the outcome was expected as Free Press went to press. The case could be referred back to the CMA for a more detailed investigation.

LONDON'S MONOPOLY evening paper the Standard had to abandon the scheduled launch of a £3 million campaign after it was exposed as "cash for coverage" on the OpenDemocracy website.

An investigation by OpenDemocracy alleged that six global corporations had been promised "money can't buy" news coverage in return for putting £500,000 into a project called London 2020. They included the online taxi firm Uber and internet monster Google, both of which are dealing with serious PR problems in the capital.

They were offered, among other things, "eight-pages of in-depth material, exclusive", a "standalone microsite", a "bespoke social media strategy" and "native and advertorial content" as well as display ads.

Another global company, Starbucks, reportedly turned down the offer. The company confirmed it had met publishers ESI Media, but had decided not to take the matter further. A company executive privately described the idea of paid-for news as "PR death." Google and Uber have said nothing. The other "partners" are not known.

The Standard is edited by Gorge Osborne, who yields it mainly to pursue a vendetta against Teresa May who sacked him as Chancellor of the Exchequer last year.

The London 2020 project was to be promoted as a "transformation of the capital" into an "economic powerhouse, environmentally and socially sustainable and fit for future" and that sort of thing.

It was planned to be given a fanfare launch on June 5 with "high-profile, high-impact announcements and ambitious promises on housing, tech, and measures to combat pollution" but this did not materialise. The company said: "ESI Media and our partners are committed to launching the London 2020 project and are excited about the potential it holds to deliver tangible change in improving the lives of Londoners. There has been no fixed date for the project to start."

Murdoch can't get his hands on Sky News

THE INTERMINABLE tussle for control of Sky TV inched towards resolution in May as the government ruled that Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox could take complete control the satellite network – as long as it sold off the Sky News channel.

But this would be an unlikely outcome. For the government

has also said it sees no problem with the much higher £22 billion bid for Sky from the US cable company Comcast, which would not be required divest the news channel since it has no other UK media interests.

The scene is set for a bidding war, with Fox needing to up

its £18.5 billion offer to stay in the game.



Complicating things further is the deal Murdoch has done with another US media giant, Disney, which has agreed to buy Fox's movie interests, as well as its current 39 per cent stake in Sky.

The final outcome is impossible to predict, but it does appear certain that Rupert Murdoch will never control Sky News which was his long-held objective.

Campaigners including the CPBF that have put huge resources into opposing his bid over 18 months will have that satisfaction.

Leveson's good intentions were simply never enough

THE FINAL coup dealt by the slimy timeserver Matt Hancock to the Leveson Inquiry's intricate structure for the self-regulation of the press – and, increasingly importantly, of their websites – was a repellent spectacle. But the truth is that the scheme could never have worked.

Leveson got the balance all wrong. He mixed up two different things and took the wrong approach to both: the regulation of journalistic standards, and the handling of complaints from the public.

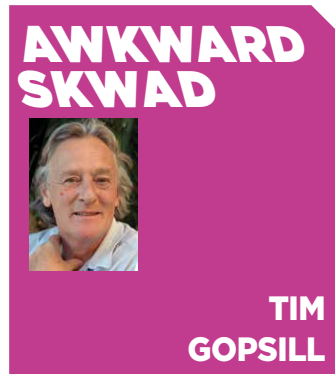
Leveson was too tough on the one and too lax on the other. The good Lord Justice bent over backwards to appease the press barons with a shaky complaints structure he crossed his fingers and hoped they wouldn't knock down. Anyone could have told him they would. They are not going to treat fairly people who complain and that is that.

Redress for grievances is not a professional matter but a judicial one. You cannot ask the criminals to dispense justice; why should they? It can only be done by a tribunal, which can operate independently but has to be established by law. There is no way round that.

Leveson shied away from this, bowing to their argument that the very existence of a court – which is accepted in every single other field of national activity – is state interference in the press. But judgements would not be made by politicians and no editorial interference would be brought to bear.

Look at broadcasting, regulated by Ofcom. You can't get more state-run than Ofcom: founded by law, its bosses appointed and its rules decreed by government. It has the power to impose penalties including the compulsory broadcast of grovelling apologies.

But broadcasters respect Ofcom, because it sets fair and reasonable



parameters for their work. Its penal judgements are always accepted, without demur.

No-one is ever going to suggest a licensing system for the press like



that in broadcasting; the point is that the existence of a body that was set up by law does not in itself trample on press freedom.

The PRP was set up by law after all, so the press screamed it was

censorship. Might as well have set up a proper tribunal with power to award redress.

Indeed in Ireland the UK newspaper owners co-operate perfectly happily

with a statutory Press Council. But no-one has been able to argue this case here because Leveson ducked it.

So we ended up with the demure and pointless Press

Recognition Panel (PRP) and above all the absurd injustice of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, under which the redress that people might attain from a publication that has maligned them would depend on which regulator the offender happens to be affiliated to.

On the other hand, brimming with indignation like everyone else over the conduct of the popular press, Leveson was oh-so-tough on media standards, setting ridiculous requirements on the membership of the various

What a code of practice says matters less than that it is enforced

IPSO's won't be. Except when it suits them for PR purposes, they are empty words.

Regulating standards – properly distinct from dealing with complaints – is a profession's own business. It's hard to imagine lawyers or doctors allowing well-meaning amateurs and busybodies to be planted on their professional panels.

And when they get things wrong, then they should be hammered by the tribunal.

But Leveson's futile gestures put journalists' backs up. This was his second failure: he lost the profession. There are plenty of decent and principled journalists who hate what they sometimes have to do and want a fairer press but reluctantly supported their bosses because they saw Leveson as an attack on their work.

The NUJ found this out when mounting discontent from newspaper members forced the union to withdraw support for the full implementation of Section 40 – it supported the "carrot" element but not the "stick"; a sensible position.

Section 40 has gone and good riddance to it; but the rest of the Leveson edifice will remain: the PRP, Impress and the rest, applying just to a corner of the media.

So the real legacy of his work, his third mistake, has been to divide the media into two: Ipsosites and Impressers, if you like: goodies and baddies, sheep and goats. That is a backward step.

Leveson did a brilliant job in the inquiry, exposing malpractice and corruption at the highest level – the press, politicians and police. There has never been anything so revealing and possibly never will again.

But when it came to remedies, his intentions were too benign and he bungled it.