

FREE Press

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Journal of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Media reform remains a vital issue

This final issue of Free Press looks at what the CPBF set out to do, what it achieved and also indicates what the urgent issues for media reform are now. Inevitably space constraints mean that there are gaps.

We mention only a few of the books and pamphlets produced over the years by the CPBF. Free Press did special supplements when the US bombed Afghanistan in 2001 and the Iraq War in 2003. We produced posters mapping who owned the media. We campaigned against the Tory Broadcasting Ban. We organised conferences, public meetings and much more.

The CPBF has been an energetic, critical voice from the left urgently promoting policies for media reform. In recent years its ability to fulfil that role has diminished and the decision to wind up the organisation had to be made.

For me, involved in the North and nationally with the CPBF since it was set up, this is a sad moment. But, because I feel the organisation's achievements need to be celebrated, I am proud to edit this final issue of Free Press. However, I echo Bob McChesney's comment in this issue: "This is no time for nostalgia". Media reform remains a vital campaigning issue.

Granville Williams

END OF THE CPBF

ANN FIELD Chair CPBF National Council

THE SAD decision to wind up the CPBF follows a period of deep reflection. Despite declining resources the organisation's breadth of activity has been maintained somehow: media reform, public service broadcasting, national and regional newspaper monopolisation, News Corp/Sky, Free Press, the website, Media Manifestos, participation in conferences, festivals, seminars and responses to government consultations.

Insufficient income and resources meant that, towards the end of its 40-year existence, the CPBF could not maintain this level of commitment. The Free Press editor and the national organiser gave their services free over several years to save money. Even with the recent engagement of a part-time national organiser, none of the fund-raising initiatives has raised sufficient resources to finance our work.

The CPBF was formed in 1979 at the beginning of the Tory Government's war on trade unionists and trade union rights, following more than a decade of print and media unions challenging regularly the more extreme material carried by newspapers. Trade union membership was at its height (13.2 million in 1979), and public service workers were mobilising against low pay, a period dubbed the "Winter of Discontent" by newspapers keen to attack any action by trade unions.

The Tories were elected on an anti-union ticket ready with a strategy to restrain trade unions and undermine their ability to organise and represent workers effectively. A constant stream of media

propaganda accompanied policies and laws attacking unions in sectors one after another.

Production of Media Manifestos since 1986 has enabled us to reach towards political parties to raise awareness and seek to influence policy but, without the regular pressure on the employers and support of trade unions in the media industries and more widely, the nature of our method of work has necessarily had to change. Campaigning

from without instead of within the media industry has diluted the ability to apply direct pressure on the employers, and indirectly on politicians.

When the CPBF was first formed we were the only media reform organisation. Now there are scores of groups large and small mobilising on every aspect of press content, ownership and freedom – print and online. The National Council and the Annual General Meeting were clear in their support for these current

media campaigns. We believe that the issues spelt out in 1979 are more important now than they were even then and hope that the efforts of the Media Reform Coalition and the initiative of CPBF members to create a Better Media movement will be successful. CPBF members and supporters in Yorkshire, the North West and the North-East are also determined to maintain their activities.

The CPBF may be laid to rest at the end of this year, but the aims and spirit will be carried on and into the other flourishing media campaigning groups.



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THANKS TO AND FROM UNIONS

WE WANT to thank the Unite GPM&IT Sector and Unison (Scottish Region) for the financial support to produce the final issue of Free Press. We received this statement from Tony Burke, Unite Assistant General Secretary:

Unite and its GPM&IT Sector is sad to see the ending of the Campaign For Press and Broadcasting Freedom, after many years of working with the Campaign, and our sister unions from the days of the NGA and Sogat print unions. The CPBF has done invaluable work in highlighting the need for the right

of reply, the concentration of press and media ownership and the lack of accountability of the global ownership of the media.

Unite will be working with the new campaigning group who will continue to press the case for a fair, free and fully accountable press and media here in the UK and across the world.



In May 1984, print workers refused to handle material that the Sun planned to use to concoct a slur against miners' leader Arthur Scargill. The planned front page did not see the light of day, but NUJ member Olly Duke mocked up what it would have looked like so people could see why the action had been taken



ORIGINS

Where it all began

JAMES CURRAN

SEETHING UNION activists at a Nottingham conference in 1979 demanded to know from press workers what they were going to do about press lies and distortions. I was at the conference as a stray media historian, and joined the huddle of people from the press. We decided – rather defensively – to set up a reform group.

We called it the Campaign for Press Freedom (CPF). (Broadcasting was not inserted into the title until 1982). The founding committee produced with surprisingly little difficulty an eloquent founding document, *Towards Press Freedom*.

Sponsors were approached including not only trade union general secretaries but establishment figures like bishops, senior lawyers and top politicians (later supplemented by actors), nearly all of whom said yes. Money initially came from the press unions. CPF was first lodged at the print union SOGAT, before moving into an office in central London funded by Rowntree.

Because CPF began as a union creation, it was first launched at the 1979 TUC Congress. Its London launch later that year was attended by over 400 people, and *Towards Press Freedom* quickly sold out. It was clear that we had the wind behind us.

CPF's first initiative was to launch an industrial right of reply campaign. A small group – consisting of two very impressive print union officials (George Jerrom and Julian Mitchell), an NUJ activist (Anna Coote) and myself – was established to carry the project forward.

We wrote a pamphlet arguing that press freedom was not a property right possessed by owners but belonged to all, urging press workers

to secure the right of reply for victims of press distortion. We then co-opted print union shop stewards, including one with the awesome title "Imperial Father of the Chapel" at the Daily Mail (Mike Power) who turned out to be awesomely effective.

The right of reply to mendacious anti-union and racist articles was secured through the threat of industrial action in a number of papers including the Daily Mail, Daily Express, Sun and Observer (although the News of the World astutely published a blank space rather than permit a reply).

The press response was to cry censorship, and declare that an alternative means of redress was available through the Press Council. Anticipating

measures became part of the official Labour Party programme.

However, the strength of CPBF – its strong union base – was perhaps also its weakness. An attempt was made to build closer links to new social movements and universities. This aspiration was embodied in *Bending Reality* (1986), a CPBF/Pluto activist book, with contributions from feminist, anti-racist and Gay Liberation campaigners and academics like Stuart Hall, as well as from trade union activists. But, apart from affiliates, CPBF had in 1986 only 932 individual members.

The breaking of the press print unions in the mid-1980s, and the refusal of New Labour governments (1997-2010) to contemplate radical media

reform for fear of upsetting media proprietors, could have undone CPBF. But CPBF, with strong broadcasting staff support, came to the aid of public service broadcasting when it was threatened in the 1980s. CPBF activist Tom O'Malley spearheaded an effective parliamentary lobby, with cross-party support, for a legal right of reply in the 1980s and 1990s, and co-wrote

a fine book, *Regulating the Press* (2000).

CPBF fought for media reform for almost 40 years. It published *Free Press*, a high quality publication, for most of this time. It was a pioneer – and has spawned other organisations, such as the Media Reform Coalition, that will fill the space it has vacated.

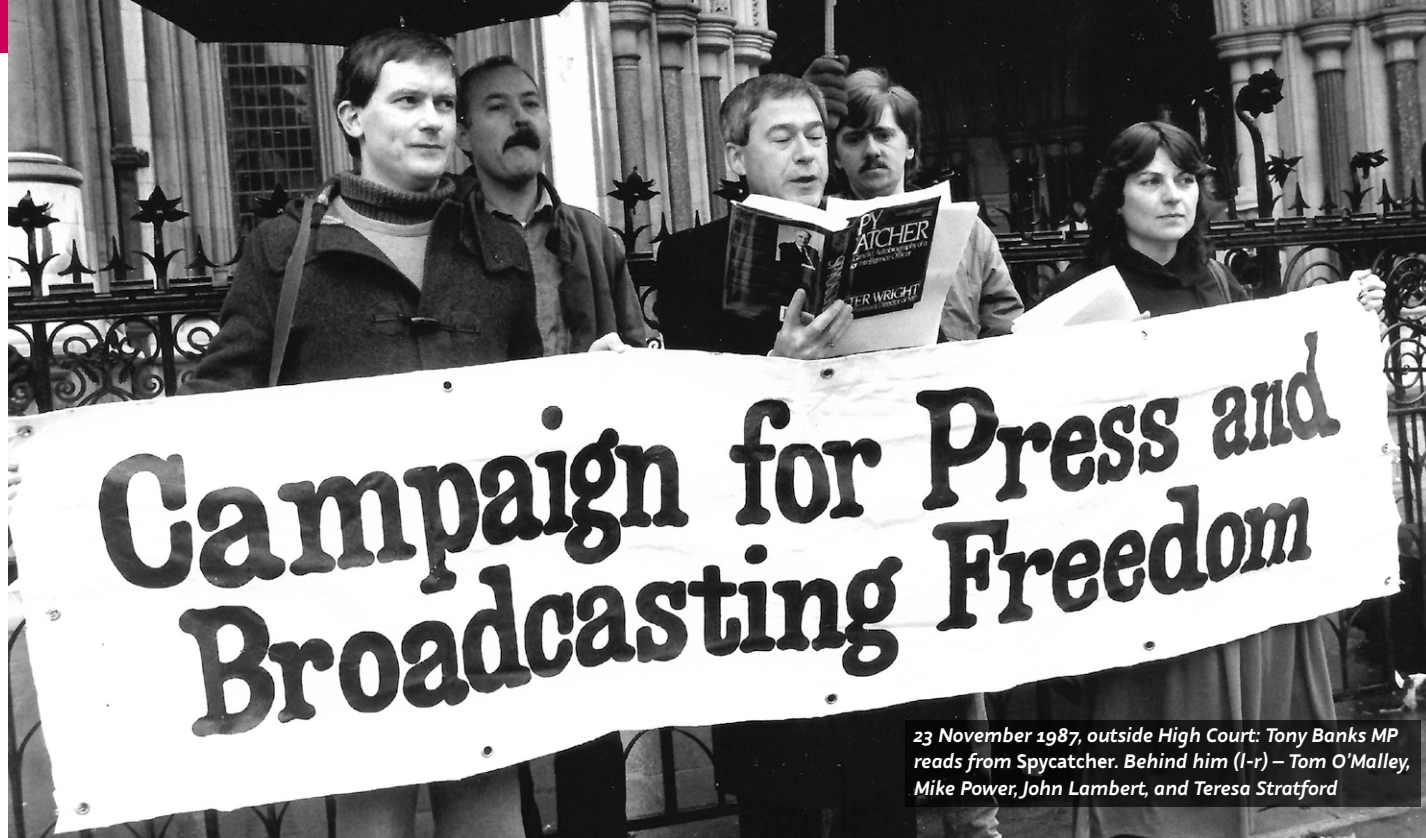
James Curran, Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths, played a key role in the formation of the CPBF. He is the author (with Jean Seaton) of *Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting and New Media in Britain*, now in its seventh edition.



The sheer scale and ferocity of the attack on trade unions by national newspapers in the "winter of discontent" in January and February 1979 spurred the TUC to set up a Media Working Group. It published two pamphlets in June 1979, *A Cause For Concern* and *How To Handle The Media* and another, *Behind The Headlines* in September 1980. These were written to alert trade unionists to media bias but also to give them the skills to try to get their side of the story across.

this, we had set up an inquiry into the Press Council chaired by the lawyer Geoffrey Robinson, who produced a devastating indictment of the Press Council's limitations in a book called *People Against the Press* (1983).

By 1986, CPBF (as it was now called) had 472 trade union and Labour party organisations affiliated to it. With their help, CPBF's proposals for supporting minority papers, part-funding new papers and introducing stronger anti-monopoly controls were adopted by both the TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference. These Nordic style



23 November 1987, outside High Court: Tony Banks MP reads from *Spycatcher*. Behind him (l-r) – Tom O'Malley, Mike Power, John Lambert, and Teresa Stratford

Looking back – looking forward

TOM O'MALLEY

BY THE 1970s, with the ever-increasing power of television and the sharp turn to the right in the tabloid and quality press, there grew a powerful sense amongst trade unionists, the women's movement, anti-racists, the gay rights movement and the Labour party that the media needed reform.

As far as I know, the CPF, founded in 1979 was the first attempt in the UK to establish a popular, democratic campaign for media reform. Many other media reform organisations have grown up since.

None has had the popular orientation, democratic focus, and breadth of campaigning which has been the hallmark of CPBF, in spite of the excellent work they have done.

Over the years, the Campaign combined a great many things. It brought together people working on the ground who were either affected by or worked in the media, with academics who saw the media as an important part of society which should be subject to critical scrutiny and democratic accountability.

It reached out to and involved communities of interest in workplaces and marginalised groups to help make the issue a real issue. It provided a network through which people could share and develop ideas and strategies of change.

The areas in which it has intervened and helped shape the debate are many: contempt of court, women's rights, anti-racism, gay rights, the coverage of war, the ownership of the media, the nature

and purposes of public service broadcasting, the questions of privacy and the obligations of media organisations to promote truthful accounts of the world.

It has argued that media policy should not be the preserve of the few in Whitehall, lobbied and influenced by the media corporations who now spend fortunes influencing governments from Whitehall to Washington. Through all of this, it has relied on the hard work of a great many people associated with the organisation.

The work of the CPBF has to go on – even if the CPBF does not. Not a day goes by without a further incidence of media distortion in the press, broadcasting and social media.

The Labour and trade union movement should put its weight behind supporting work on media reform, work which reaches out to their members. The need to develop policies for a Labour government, and also the need to hold such a government to account in these matters, remains urgent.

The hard fact is that media reform needs resolute action by a future Labour government. It is only through the combined weight of popular campaigning inside and outside the Party and with trade union support that change is likely to come.

A critical, progressive, popular perspective on media reform during turbulent years

IN 1986 the Report on the Committee on Financing the BBC chaired by Alan Peacock was published. It laid out a future in which public service broadcasting would become an ever-decreasing element in a world of commercially dominated communications.

With Greater London Council funding, the CPBF, along with trade unions, campaigned vigorously against the main thrust of these proposals. In *Free Press*, at public meetings, and in publications like *Switching Channels* (1988) we put the case for accountable, diverse public service broadcasting. We promoted media reform in the trade unions and the Labour movement, producing motions for debate and organising meetings across the country.

In 1987 the government banned the publication of *Spycatcher* in the UK. It contained revelations about the murky world of the security services by the disaffected spy, Peter Wright. Copies were smuggled into the UK, and the campaign organised a public reading of passages from the book in Hyde Park with Tony Benn.

We followed this up with a rally and then helped produce, promote and sell Leon Rosselson's *Ballad of a Spycatcher*. We also played a major part in showing copies of the banned Zircon television programme – about Britain's secret military satellite – at public meetings.

We supported the printers in their struggle against Murdoch at Wapping in 1986, and in that year produced our first Media Manifesto – outlining our policies for a fair, accountable, diverse media. We also produced

Chris Searle's *Your daily dose: racism* and *The Sun* (1989).

These are just a few of the numerous activities the Campaign's members engaged in. We promoted a critical, progressive, popular perspective on media reform during turbulent years.

■ Tom O'Malley is Emeritus Professor of Media at the University of Aberystwyth and worked for the CPBF from 1986 to 1989.



FAKE NEWS

GARY HERMAN

FOUR DECADES ago, when the Campaign was launched, the media landscape in Britain looked very different. We lived in an analogue age that was before the arrival of giant global advertising machines like Google and Facebook. It was before the launch of smartphones that gave everyone who owned one a window on the internet they could fit into a pocket. It was before Donald Trump and Brexit.

Now we face the mess of post-truth politics, alternative facts and fake news – or lies, propaganda and disinformation on a worldwide scale.

The interim report of the UK Parliament's DCMS Committee into disinformation and "fake news" (published 29 July 2018) argues that disinformation is a "potential" threat to democracy. Wrong. It is a very real threat.

The report provides some useful basic information and analysis, and covers many familiar and some less familiar cases, including Trump's election, the Brexit referendum, the referendum on Catalan independence and the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Burma/Myanmar.

It looks at the role of individuals like Arron Banks, Robert Mercer, Steve Bannon, and Alexander Nix of Cambridge Analytica and SCL, and how companies like SCL have interfered with elections across the world. It devotes a whole chapter to "Russian Influence in Political Campaigns".

Perhaps the most sobering aspect of the report is its analysis of the part played by Facebook in all this. In one section it draws attention to Facebook's Free Basics service. This, says the report, "is a Facebook service that provides people in developing countries with mobile phone access to various services without data charges. This content includes news, employment, health information and local information".

Free Basics was launched in 2013 as internet.org, a partnership between Facebook and six major tech companies aimed at increasing Facebook's market in the developing world. The name was changed to Free Basics in 2015.

Many critics saw it as undermining the principles of "net neutrality". This was essentially the criticism offered by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) when it pulled out of Free Basics in 2016, accusing Facebook of running misleading ads and "Astroturfing" (giving the false impression that its service was the product of a grassroots movement).

Free Basics is used by an estimated 100m

people in 63 countries, and Facebook relentlessly pursues its quest to build a global market.

What's at issue here is the appearance that Facebook and other social media companies give of being nothing more than "platforms" – disinterested parties in the business of content provision. This is how disinformation has grown to the point where it might legitimately be said to threaten the security of the world.

Take the DCMS report's brief look at the part Facebook played in what many people now recognise as the Rohingya genocide in Burma/Myanmar. The committee notes that the 30m monthly Facebook users in Burma/Myanmar are mostly using Free Basics which gives them some kind of internet access but "severely limits the information available to users".

"Facebook," says the report, "is virtually the only source of information online for the

majority of people in Burma."

And that's how Facebook played a key role in creating the Rohingya genocide, according to the UN, because it provided a space for hatred.

The situation in Burma was "awful," said Facebook. They need to "do a lot more to get hate speech and all this kind of vile content off the platform". But it does little to achieve this. For example, Mark Zuckerberg recently said that Facebook couldn't take down posts that deny the Holocaust because people get things wrong. "I don't think that they're intentionally getting it wrong," he said, "but I think it's hard to impugn intent and to understand the intent."

Such an opinion at the top of Zuckerberg's company demonstrates the failure of social media to accept their responsibility as publishers. Platforms, remember, don't do editorial. And such attitudes feed back into mainstream media under the influence of increasing competition for audiences and the advertising revenue that follows.

Result: a race to the bottom.

Social media are media and must be edited and regulated in the way that other media are: by human beings using experience and wisdom.

Because they are global the regulation must be global too. Think international copyright treaties or marine conventions. Maybe that's where the missing taxes of social media giants should go. Regrettably, the DCMS Committee sees the answer in greater digital literacy and consumer education, which lets media owners, including Zuckerberg, off the hook.



DCMS committee pulls its punches

HATEBOOK REVEALED

A report by Reuters (<https://reut.rs/2wc0xFc>) documents many of the most horrifying cases of anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya Facebook postings in Burma/Myanmar and reveals how Facebook's response to complaints of hate speech on its Burmese site has been under-resourced and inadequate despite repeated warnings from independent observers, some delivered to Facebook executives at its head office in California.

In 2014 Facebook employed just one content reviewer who spoke Burmese. The next year, the company outsourced the work to an office of the global consultancy Accenture in the Philippines. Then there were four Burmese speakers covering 7m active users in Burma/Myanmar. The use of algorithms which scan potentially offensive images but can't or don't read associated text indicates some of the problems with so-called "AI approaches" to monitoring.

Lies and delusions

JULIAN PETLEY

WHAT HAS resolutely united such unlikely bedfellows as the Guardian and the Telegraph, the Mail and the Mirror? It's the Cliff Richard judgement, and their objections to it are as wrong-headed and ill-informed as they are unanimous.

Briefly, they are concerned that Mr Justice Mann "has decided that article 8 [of the European Convention on Human Rights], the right to privacy, now trumps article 10, the public right to know" (Guardian). He has also "effectively declared it unlawful for media organisations to name anyone under investigation by the police" (Telegraph). In such a situation, the Guardian asks: "How are police to be held accountable for their actions unless we reveal what they have done and are doing?"

Where such claims are not simply factually wrong, they rest on a conception of press/police relations which is so idealised as to be utterly delusional.

First, Mr Justice Mann decided that Article 8 trumped Article 10 in this case only. In every case involving these two articles, the courts make it abundantly clear that neither right is absolute, and that each has to be balanced against the other according to the specific facts of the actual case. Newspapers know this perfectly well, but habitually ignore it in their reporting of such cases.

Mr Justice Mann noted that the question of whether a police investigation can give rise to a legitimate expectation of privacy had not previously been the subject of clear judicial determination.

In his view, as a matter of general principle it does give rise to such an expectation. But, leading on from the above point, he ruled that the question is not susceptible to a "universal answer" as it depends on the specific facts of each particular case. Thus the expectation is not an "invariable right to privacy", as there may be reasons why the expectation may be displaced. However, the reasonable expectation is the starting point.

This is all clearly laid out in paras 248-51, but, again, was simply ignored in

most press reports.

Third, the judgement is nothing like as novel or aberrant as the press makes out. For example, in its response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on pre-charge bail in 2015, the government agreed that there should be a general right to anonymity before charge, except in circumstances where the public interest dictates that an arrested individual should be named.

The Leveson Inquiry concluded that "the names or identifying details of those who are arrested or suspected of a crime should not be released to the press nor the public", and the College of Policing Guidance on contact with the media agrees, simply adding "save in exceptional circumstances where there is a legitimate purpose to do so". No such public interest or exceptional circumstances could remotely convincingly be claimed in this case.

Finally, the papers' response to the judgement implies a press that watches hawk-like over the police, ever-eager to champion victims of heavy-handedness and injustice. With honourable exceptions, nothing could be further from the truth.

As the fate of Christopher Jefferies illustrated all too clearly, once the police have a suspect in their sights in a high-profile case, they and significant sections of the press energetically collude in darkening the suspect's name – the police in the hope of influencing any subsequent trial, and the press in pursuit of sensational copy.

Indeed, newspapers have acted as unofficial prosecutors in numerous cases in which police behaviour has been at best thoroughly oppressive and at worst deeply corrupt: Winston Silcott, the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Seven, Colin Stagg and Barry George to name but a very few from a long list.

If the Cliff Richard judgement puts a stop to such collusion, it will have struck a very considerable blow for justice and against the flagrant abuse of press power.



The BBC: what's gone wrong?

TIM GOPSILL

ONE OF the prevailing sounds of the summer was the call of the BBC news bulletin bearing the daily accusation of Labour Party anti-semitism, delivered in tones of feigned regret that the party seemed unable to bring the story to a halt. Of course the entire national press were at it as well, but wasn't the BBC supposed to be different? Not any more.

For years research polls found that people had more trust in the BBC than any other news medium. But earlier this year the agency BMG found that only 37 per cent of 1,000 people thought the BBC produced balanced reporting, while 45 per cent thought ITV did so, and 41 per cent Channel 4 News.

This is not just a drift to the right with the political tide, but a matter of policy. Five years ago the BBC Trust commissioned a policy review on the impartiality of its news from former ITV news chief Stuart Prebble.

He concluded that it should "find new voices even if they are contentious ... The BBC has 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.

The BBC took this to heart, with Helen Boaden, director of news, admitting that the corporation held a "deep liberal bias" that they set out to correct. So, among much else, audiences have had to endure the record-breaking 32 appearances so far of Nigel Farage on Question Time (not the highest overall just yet, but the most frequent).

Writing in *The Independent* in August, the radical BBC critic Tom Mills offered as incisive an explanation of the mindset as you can get: for the BBC, he wrote, "the political spectrum consists of well-meaning privileged liberals, and more authentically representative right-wing populists."

They have steered for the latter but, of course, the BBC's editorial executives and staff all find themselves in the "privileged liberal" cohort, so the populism process has induced the intense self-loathing revealed in the nauseating insincerity of the Corbyn coverage. They know perfectly well he is not anti-semitic. They know that the dispute is not even about anti-semitism – which every senior person in the Labour Party loathes – but about attitudes to Israel and whether criticism of the state can fairly be taken as racism towards the people who share its religion.

In all this it conforms with the prejudice of the right-wing press, and it has over recent years imported a series of national paper executives into top news and current affairs jobs, such as former editor of *The Times* James Harding as head of news, to the anger of much of the staff: one journalist told the *Press Gazette* that Harding had "lost the dressing room".

Among a number of appointments was the head of the *Today* programme, Sarah Sands. She arrived with no news broadcast experience from editing the *Evening Standard*, the stridently Tory monopoly evening paper in London, which had been a raucous cheerleader for Boris Johnson when he was mayor.

The BBC is desperate to ape and appease right-wing governments and commercial media, and what it needs is not more bashing but the confidence to exercise the editorial independence it in theory enjoys.

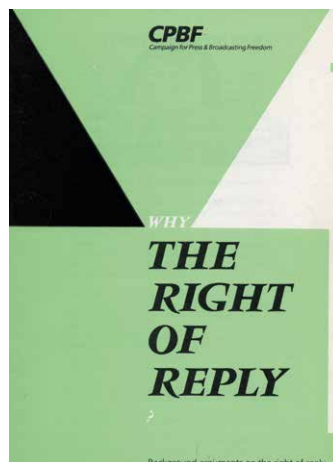
RIGHT OF REPLY

The challenge by printworkers to the publication by newspapers of anti-union and racist material has a long tradition.

Fleet Street was brought to a halt when Daily Mail workers refused to handle anti-miner propaganda in 1926. Again in 1972 when London dockers' shop stewards were imprisoned, printworkers refused to print at all until they were

released. Also in the 1970s, Evening Standard workers refused to process a virulently racist cartoon, and Observer printworkers demanded the right of reply in relation to the Grunwick dispute.

Other examples include the NGA successfully demanding a right of reply to an attack on them by David Astor in The Times, and NUJ members won the right of reply for striking school caretakers when



they picketed The Hornsey Journal after a critical front page.

This long right of reply history continued throughout the 1980s,

particularly during the great coal dispute, until Fleet Street owners took their revenge, led by Murdoch's News International.

We look here at the work done by the CPBF on the right of reply.

First a piece by a former Sun printworker, written as a tribute to all those thousands of newspaper printworkers who fought for the right of reply at great risk to themselves.

Whose press freedom is it?

THE RIGHT of reply became the main focus of the CPBF's activity in 1980, particularly in Fleet Street. Printers were aware of the forceful arguments the campaign had made for those maligned and attacked by newspapers in an effort to increase circulation, advertising rates and profit, but disregarding falling editorial standards.

This included faking an interview with the widow of a Falklands war hero as well as impugning Tony Benn's mental health and, most egregious of all, heading a front-page picture of Arthur Scargill during the 1984 miners' strike as "Mine Führer".

Fleet Street chapels demonstrated their support for the right of reply most dramatically during the 1984-85 miners' strike, as well as donating over £2 million to striking miners, along with lorries loaded with food and other essentials.

Printers throughout Fleet Street pressed for a right of reply and if this were denied, refused to print offending articles.

Newspaper publishers, their editors and some journalists saw it as their sole right to decide what to report and there was genuine disbelief that printers could challenge what editors saw as their freedom of the press.

Even the Scargill front page, perhaps the most infamous example challenged by the CPBF's Right of Reply Campaign, was presaged by the Sun's attempt to publish a ballot form on the miners' overtime ban headlined: "The ballot Scargill will not give you". Printers got a disclaimer on that occasion and a right of reply for Scargill. Daily Express printers took action after a supposed "confession" by Scargill became a front-page splash. They secured a right of reply

for Scargill, but some journalists refused to work on the copy because they saw it as editorial pressure applied by printers. Never mind that the NUJ had also signed up to the Campaign's Right of Reply.

The CPBF's Right of Reply Campaign made its mark in Fleet Street and in newspapers throughout the country where it was pursued widely, often with success.

Since print unions left the scene, who now argues for a right of reply? Who now contests the assumed right of newspaper proprietors and their editors to print whatever they like?

When printers were defeated after championing the CPBF's Right of Reply Campaign – the most direct challenge to Britain's rotten mainstream media ever – there was no one else willing to pick up the challenge.

Whatever happened to the right

MIKE JEMPSON

ONE OF the Campaign's primary aims was to achieve a statutory right of reply as already enjoyed elsewhere in Europe.

In Belgium it had existed since 1831, in France since 1881, in Finland since 1919, and in Austria since 1922. The right was recognised in Denmark, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe had voted for it as far back as 1974.

Journalist and Labour MP Frank Allaun took up the cudgel with his Right of Reply in the Media Bill. Speaking at its Second Reading in 1983, Frank outlined the aim of each of the five Bills the CPBF had backed over the years.

"The Bill aims to give the ordinary man and woman some protection against powerful newspapers and radio and television programmes. The object is to protect individuals, companies and organisations against unfair, ill-founded and inaccurate reports. With the growth of vast press monopolies and the concentration of newspaper ownership in fewer and fewer hands, the dice are loaded against ordinary people."

Tory MP Sir Angus Maude, reminded the House that "inaccuracy is inevitable in newspapers. There is no escape from it." He pointed out that such errors have a long shelf-life in the

cuttings files, and predicted that winning a right of reply would be even more difficult if the electronic media replaced print.

The Allaun Bill fell, but the case was swiftly taken up by Labour MP Austin Mitchell. His 1984 Right of Reply Bill included plans for a Press Commission and legal aid in libel cases. Despite cross party support, his Bill also fell.

Four years later Labour MP Ann Clwyd introduced her Unfair Reporting Right of Reply Bill. The Campaign now had its own Right of Reply Unit and was able to provide evidence of the harm caused by inaccurate stories, but all to no avail.

Another Labour MP Tony



A source of confidence, strength and resolve

TERESA STRATFORD

IN 1989 my feminist group, the Women's Media Action Group (WMAG), merged with the CPBF's Women's Section.

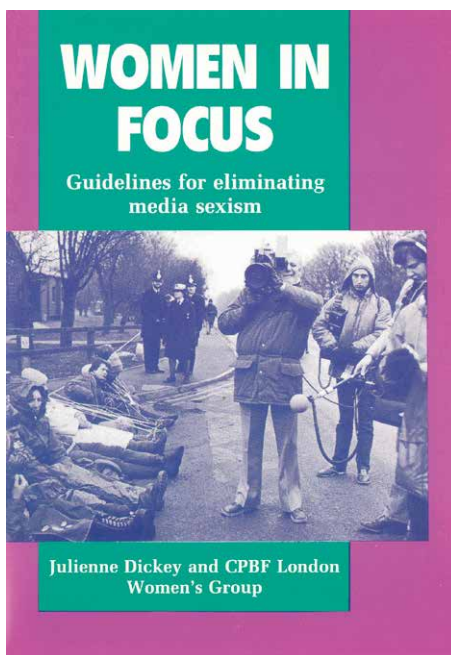
This was a big step for us: we were a separatist feminist group, campaigning to force change on patriarchal structures from the outside, through protests and pressure.

Some of us worked in the media: in television and radio, for example. But some of us worked in other areas: shops, hotels, the health service (that was me – and I'm still in it). Therefore our observations and protests were made as consumers of the media, rather than producers of it. We had just produced our book: *Out of Focus*, for the Women's Press, and had a membership of about a dozen.

The women's section had existed before our participation, but such an influx of new members, with strongly held beliefs, naturally influenced it. We brought our campaigns to the CPBF, and tried our best to communicate with the wider membership, not just women.

It was important to us to be part of a larger group, to have the support of members in general, because it had been lonely and difficult campaigning on our own.

Nowadays, we forget how entrenched and vicious sexism was in the 1970s and 80s. We were campaigning against the pornography business, which we saw as exploitative to women and damaging to relationships.



We campaigned against Page 3 in the Sun, long before it was ever questioned, and supported Dawn Primarolo's efforts to redefine newspapers – we drafted her Private Member's Bill.

We campaigned against the widespread use of women's bodies, or pieces of them, to sell things, at a time when this practice was used, and hardly

questioned at all, to sell everything from magazines to household furnishings.

Above all, we demanded that women be respected and taken seriously – how else would we ever make any progress in the workplace, public life, and the institutions which govern our lives?

We were very active in the CPBF: as we gained confidence in the organisation, we joined in with many of its campaigns, for free speech and media workers' rights. In return, we gained strength and resolve from being a part of a well-run and respected organisation.

It meant that when we were attacked by male journalists, as we invariably were, (and these were intellectual men whose reaction to having the established order challenged was to resort to adolescent-style insults) we had some support behind us, and, though hurt, were neither demoralised, nor deflected from our campaigning.

On reflection, we were successful. How times have changed. But at the time, it felt as if we were forever pushing a boulder up a hill, and without the CPBF's support, and the friendly atmosphere at its events, we would, I think, have felt exhausted and defeated all the time – instead of just occasionally.

So – many thanks to the CPBF, and all the fantastic people I worked with there. You are a part of my life which I will treasure forever.

t of reply?



Worthington immediately took up the challenge with his own Right of Reply Bill. As in previous debates much was made of the failings of the Press Council, set up six years after the 1947 Royal Commission on the Press had declared the need for a body to deal with complaints about inaccuracies. Little had been done to adopt reforms proposed by two subsequent Royal Commissions, and the NUJ had withdrawn from it.

Worthington's Bill also fell, but the NUJ rejoined the Press Council when its new chair, Sir Louis Blom Cooper, introduced a Code of Practice against which allegations of press malpractice

could be judged. The industry's response was to pull the plug and set up the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) excluding working journalists.

The PCC's shortcomings led to Clive Soley's Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill in 1992 which mooted an independent body to both deal with complaints and defend press freedom.

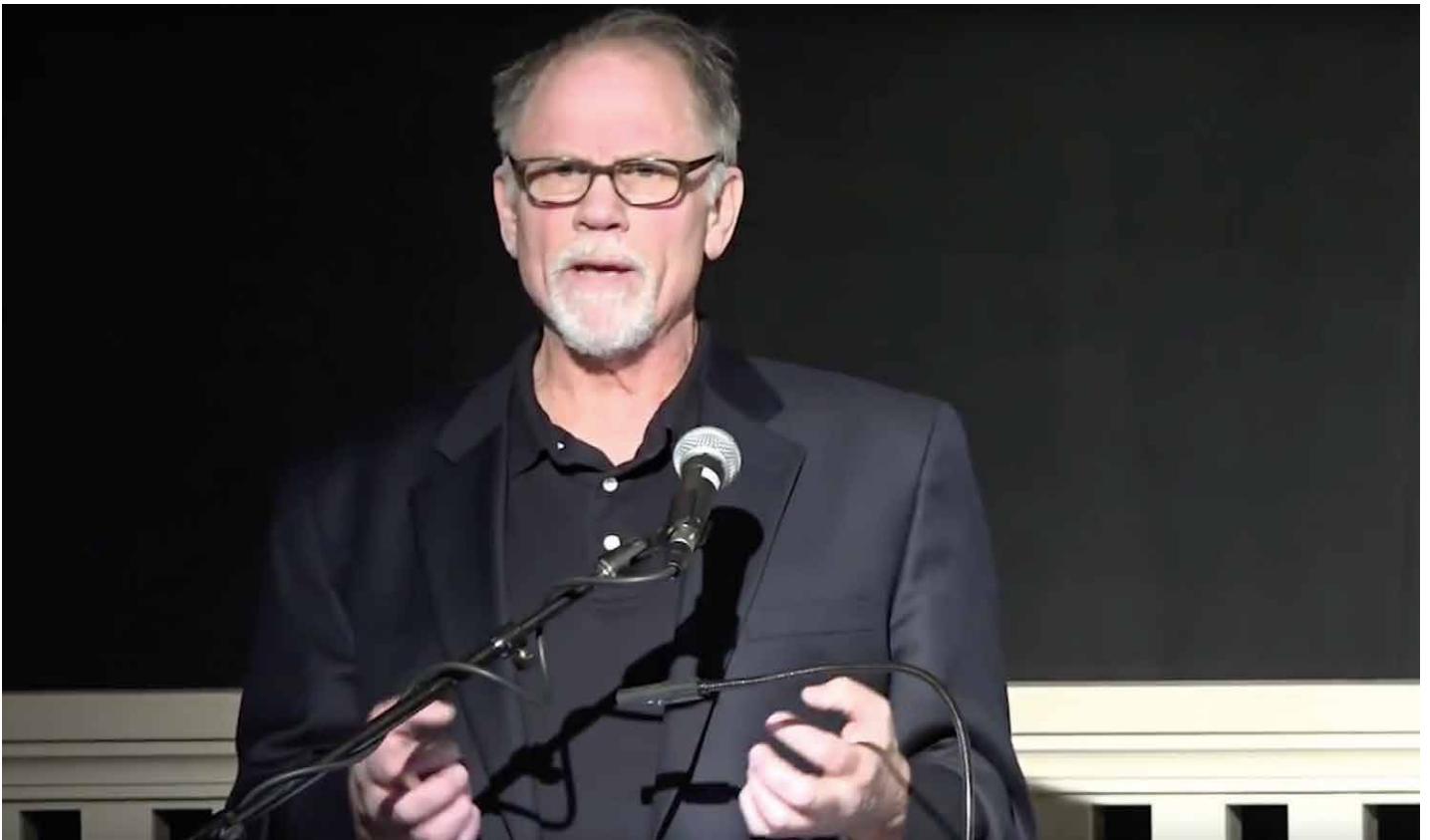
Yet again the Bill was misrepresented in much of the mainstream press despite special all-Party hearings at which the PCC and those affected by inaccurate or intrusive coverage had their say. It did not make it beyond a Second Reading, but

led to "victims of media abuse" setting up PressWise (later MediaWise) to help complainants challenge editors and media regulators.

The last attempt to achieve the CPBF's founding aim came in 2005 with Labour MP Peter Bradley's Right of Reply and Press Standards Bill. It too was pilloried and failed to reach the statute book.

Despite the collapse of the PCC, phone hacking, and the Leveson Inquiry, as we go to press for the last time, there is little sign that UK citizens will ever be granted the Right of Reply.

■ Mike Jempson worked with Clive Soley on his Bill and has been director of MediaWise since 1996.



A MODEL FOR OUR WORK AND MISSION

No time for nostalgia

ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

I AM flattered to be asked to contribute to this, the final edition of Free Press, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom newsletter.

I have followed and admired the work of the CPBF for over two decades from afar. When I co-founded Free Press (no, we did not intentionally steal the name!) in the United States in 2003, the CPBF provided a model for how to go about our work and mission.

Over the past two decades I have collaborated on issues with the CPBF on several occasions and I treasure the relationship.

I could devote this column to waxing nostalgic, but, alas, our times do not permit us that privilege.

The work begun by the CPBF and Free Press is more important than ever. Some of the issues that drove the work at the beginning – for instance media concentration; corruption of journalism by commercial pressures; government and corporate propaganda masquerading as journalism; the attacks on independent public broadcasting – remain important, and in some cases are more dire than ever. But the terrain has shifted dramatically, and the nature of our struggles going forward has changed qualitatively.

Most striking, the freefall collapse of the commercial model of journalism, based upon advertising as the basis of the majority of revenues, is among the great issues of our times.

How ironic that the internet – ballyhooed as the great liberator and revolutionary generator of democratic communication – is largely responsible for the permanent loss of advertising. It has

left nations all across the world in a situation where there are far fewer paid editors and reporters today per capita than there were a generation ago.

Local journalism is in many respects the foundation of democracy and it has all but disappeared in the United States. National news is not much better. Whereas a generation ago there were scores of newsrooms covering the capital, today there are but a few, and their staffs are much smaller.

This means that all the problems traditionally associated with commercial journalism have become more severe: extreme reliance



on official sources and PR for what is “news” and obsession with “monetizing” content. This is singularly destructive of any notion of an informed citizenry engaging in self-governance. It is a dream world for tyrants and criminals eyeballing the public coffers. It is a golden age for propaganda and fascist movements.

One need only look at how President Trump dismisses any journalism that is critical of him as “fake news”. The institution is so weak that it cannot defend itself against this charge.

Clearly, solving this crisis of journalism is a public policy issue of the highest magnitude. Determining a way to provide for well-funded, competitive, independent, uncensored, nonprofit news media is the great issue before us, and damned near everything hangs in the balance.

I have worked with journalists and activists on this very issue in numerous places across the planet in the past five years, including England and Scotland. It is a problem that is only going to get worse unless there is a political solution. Technology and markets will not solve the problem. That is the task before us.

There are several other great issues to be addressed owing to the digital revolution, and I will leave you with but one of them: the world economy has been transformed such that the five most valuable firms in the world are all digital monopolies: Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Google (Alphabet).

This amount of largely unaccountable economic power is incompatible with any known notion of political democracy. Converting these enterprises to publicly owned and operated utilities is going to be the great political struggle of our times, and it will be all the more difficult without a credible journalism. But it is the hand we have been dealt. As I said, there is no time for nostalgia.

■ Professor Robert McChesney has written extensively on the media. His most recent book (with John Nichols) is *People Get Ready: the Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy* (2016)

The CPBF's inspiring role in Canada

BOB HACKETT

WHILE CPBF'S closure is a sad day, Campaign members can be proud. For nearly 40 years, they've directly inspired democratic media reform movements outside of the UK.

In Canada, a "common front" using (with permission) the CPBF name emerged in the mid-1990s. Spearheaded by the 60,000-member Council of Canadians, media and journalism unions, researchers and community activists, the Canadian CPBF launched a campaign against growing press concentration – specifically right-wing media mogul Conrad Black's efforts to expand his newspaper empire. The CPBF initiated research, public events, and a federal court case. While it did not stop the takeover, CPBF put media concentration on the public agenda, and generated several active chapters.

In Toronto and Vancouver, CPBF chapters organized a Media Democracy Day in 2001, intending to popularize media reform amongst broader communities, and promote the quality of journalism and the achievements of independent media in Canada.

In 2002, during the heyday of independent media centres, MD Day events were held in communities



across Canada, the US and several other countries. In Vancouver, MD Day has become an annual public event, a "gateway" to media reform issues, a facilitator for movement-building, and a catalyst for independent journalism. For example, the award-winning online news magazine *The Tyee* grew out of discussions at MD Day. Vancouver's MD Day has in turn inspired the recent

Media Democracy festivals in London – what goes around, comes around!

In 2007, MD Day activists (particularly then-graduate student Steve Anderson) launched OpenMedia, with support from the US media reform group Free Press, which itself had been inspired by Britain's CPBF.

OpenMedia took on issues like media diversity, net neutrality, mobile phone rates, internet surveillance and censorship, and public service broadcasting.

Using sophisticated online strategies, its citizen-based campaigns have sometimes forced telecommunication regulators and politicians to modify or reverse decisions that would have rubber-stamped telecom companies' agendas. Its 500,000 online supporters make OpenMedia possibly the largest public interest advocacy group in Canada.

Without CPBF's pioneering media reform campaigning, none of this may have happened. The CPBF is dead! Long live the CPBF!

■ Bob Hackett, professor emeritus of communication at Simon Fraser University, is a co-founder of Media Democracy Day, co-author of *Remaking Media* (with a chapter on CPBF), and a longtime member of CPBF who appreciatively recalls encouragement from Barry White, Granville Williams and others since the 1990s.



With gratitude from across the pond

JEFF COHEN

IT'S SO horribly sad to see you go.

Because you helped give life to the US media watch group FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting). Without you, I'm not sure FAIR would have been born.

And FAIR is thriving today at www.fair.org – in this era when the US president declares journalism to be "the enemy of the people," while corporate TV networks rake in huge profits not by doing real journalism, but by treating the president as the main character in their endless soap opera.

I admit that I was flailing in the mid-1980s until I visited London during the battle over the Greater London Council. Nearly drowning. And then I was thrown a life preserver named CPBF.

I knew I wanted to launch something to address the serious US media problem, which I described in a 1985 fundraising document as "neering an all-time low during the Reagan era." (Little did I know!) I wrote: "Reagan continues to be pampered, protected and cosseted by the same reporters who then marvel at the fact that we have a 'teflon president.'"

At the time, my ideas spanned wildly – from launching religious programs for progressive theologians to a national left-wing daily.

But then I came across CPBF, a civil society group dedicated to holding British media accountable. I visited your office (was it on Poland Street?) and picked up loads of literature, including criticism of

biased coverage of the miners' strike.

My future was now clear, thanks to CPBF. I returned to the US determined to launch a media criticism and accountability group. FAIR was born in 1986.

Over the decades, FAIR has visibly challenged MSM over racism, sexism, classism, war-mongering, etc. Our academic studies of biased and exclusionary coverage – including on "public" TV and radio – have been front-page news.

FAIR's 25th anniversary party in New York City featured speakers like Noam Chomsky, Glenn Greenwald, Amy Goodman, and Michael Moore, who led the crowd in singing "Happy Birthday."

In London, I saw that unions – including journalism unions – were backing CPBF. That wasn't possible in the US, but FAIR's launch had one fundraising advantage: a much larger sector of "liberal" foundations in the US. Of course, foundation funding has a major downside. Or two. It disappears if your group is deemed too critical of the corporatized Democratic Party leadership, or too critical of the Israeli occupation.

The internet has kept FAIR afloat – in circulation, activism and donations.

As FAIR moves forward, we will look back in sadness. But there will be a bit of CPBF in every step FAIR takes.

■ Jeff Cohen founded FAIR in 1986. He is the author of *Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media*.

Gaps in the media: the demise of industrial reporting

NICHOLAS JONES

IF ONLY labour and employment correspondents were still the force they had been at the height of trade union membership and influence.

In the many months of uncertainty that have followed the 2016 European Referendum, my personal despair has been that I and former colleagues have no longer been assigned to what we reporters called the “industrial beat”, out and about around the country, talking to our many contacts in the trade union movement.

We would know far more about the uncertainty over future investment in new plant and products; there would be a far clearer picture of the jobs and opportunities to be lost or gained; and a wider appreciation of employment terms and conditions – and especially safeguards – that might be jeopardised or lost by EU withdrawal.

No wonder ex-labour hacks are so bereft: with so few of today’s journalists having a thorough grasp of employment issues (and the requisite contacts book), the Brexit-supporting newspapers have even less reason to temper their “Britain is booming” propaganda.

Sadly, there is no balancing coverage from the BBC or other television and radio services as most broadcasters seem to be taking the easy way out, still locked in tit-for-tat, Punch and Judy reporting, of Leave versus Remain.

The devastation of the provincial press has meant that today’s young reporters on evening and weekly papers don’t have the opportunities that I had in the 1960s and 1970s to call in at the local offices of what were then the T&G, AEU, GMB and Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Similarly, at a national level there isn’t the same corps of correspondents that once made it their business to keep in close contact with researchers and officials at the TUC, CBI, Engineering Employers’ Federation and Department of Employment.

If that had been the case I am sure the labour and industrial group would have been able to counter the terrible twins – Project Fear and Project Deception – with a detailed assessment, and some stark analysis, of the dilemmas surrounding Brexit:

How many car plant jobs are threatened by new models that might go elsewhere? What are the implications for food processing and distribution if EU exports and imports are threatened? How many financial jobs, not just in the South East but also big regional centres, are in the balance?

Such has been the extent of the news media’s switch towards financial reporting and



the affairs of the City of London, that the focus remains fixed on profit, loss and share prices, and rarely, if ever, on the workplace.

But there are thankfully signs of a fightback, and the labour movement is succeeding in raising its media profile as it tries to engage and organise a rapidly expanding casual workforce dependent on zero-hours and short-term contracts.

Given the dearth of funding for investigative journalism, in both print and broadcasting, there is an appetite within the media for the kind of probing research and investigation that was once undertaken by labour and industrial correspondents but is now being pursued by trade union research staff and on-line activists.

Freedom of Information requests to ambulance services were used by the GMB to support the union’s complaints about physical

pressures and unsafe conditions at Amazon’s UK warehouses. Call-outs to Amazon’s Rugeley warehouse far exceeded those of a comparable nearby Tesco warehouse.

Yet another fall in union membership is being countered by the TUC through the launch of its app WorkSmart in a bid to recruit younger workers, and to give them information on employment rights and conditions.

Original research on the widening pay gap between the under-30s and over-30s – and on insecure contracts and employer abuses – are essential tools if unions are to counter the fears of the TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady, that a Brexit Britain could end up having a “flexible” workforce on the edge of Europe.

Trade unions have the resources and staff to produce badly needed data and analysis and, although there is no longer a dedicated band of journalists ready to process and publicise that information, there is plenty of editorial space and air time to fill, as well as endless opportunities online, to communicate a story that is there, but just needs telling.

■ Nicholas Jones was a BBC industrial and political correspondent for 30 years. His books include *The Lost Tribe: Whatever Happened to Fleet Street’s Industrial Correspondents* (2011). News archive: www.nicholasjones.org.uk

Nick Jones will be speaking with Kate Flannery, secretary of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, at a CPBF North/Newcastle NUJ public meeting on Thursday 22 November at 7.30pm in Newcastle’s Irish Centre, NE1 4SG. For further details contact: cpbfnorth@outlook.com

CPBF (North) is to live on

**CAMPAIGN
FOR PRESS
AND
BROADCASTING
FREEDOM** **NORTH**

GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

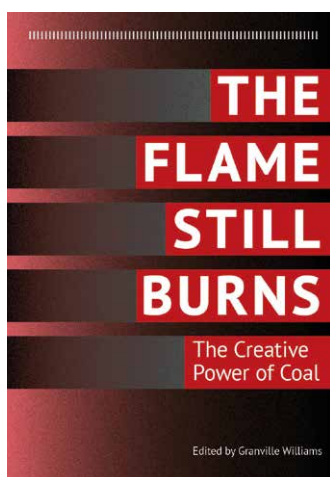
WE HAVE always done things differently in the North. With the support of the Salford MP Frank Allaun, we won funding from Greater Manchester Council in 1985 and ran CPBF (North West) until 1992.

We then set up Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom (North) which has continued to run public meetings and work with regional trade unions and organisations like the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

The CPBF (North) covers the North West, Yorks and Humber, and the North East of England. CPBF (North) highlights threats to regional media such as the assaults on jobs and conditions in local and regional newspapers, and campaigns for strong regional voices in broadcasting.

We have also published two books, *Pit Props* and *The Flame Still Burns* and a pamphlet on the writer Barry Hines.

CPBF North has also worked with the Leeds International Film Festival, West Yorkshire Playhouse and the Hyde Park Cinema in Leeds.



The most recent Hyde Park event was a discussion session after *The Post* – Steven Spielberg's film about *The Washington Post* and the Pentagon Papers.

The biggest CPBF North meeting was at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in February 1992, coinciding with the play by Trevor Griffiths, *The Gulf Between Us*. The play was inspired by the Iraq war, which began in January

1991. We had the Courtyard Theatre and it was jam-packed with over 350 people at the event.

Speakers dealt with the way the media covered the war (CNN provided satellite coverage for the first time) and Tony Harrison read his poetry.

The most recent CPBF North public meeting, Coal's Death Throes, was at the South Yorkshire Festival at Wortley Hall on 12 August. It was standing-room only, with Jeremy Paxman a surprise member of the audience – he's writing a book about the impact of coal mining on the UK.

Nick Jones gave a great presentation on the revelations in 1992-3 Cabinet papers dealing with the announcement of 31 pit closures and the loss of 31,000 jobs.

He revealed how the sheer scale of public opposition to the pit closures took the Major government by surprise.

Flis Callow and Debbie Mathews also spoke very movingly about their project and the book, *You Can't Kill The Spirit*, on the seven pit camps set up in the wake of the threat to close the pits and their own personal

involvement in the Great Houghton pit camp.

Organisations and individuals who support the CPBF in the North have been contacted to let them know that we will continue to be active across the North after the demise of the CPBF, and we welcome suggestions for future meetings.

Our next public meeting, organised jointly with Newcastle NUJ, is at the Irish Centre, Newcastle NE1 4SG on Thursday 22 November at 7.30pm.

Speakers include former BBC Industrial Correspondent Nick Jones and Kate Flannery, Secretary of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

A publicity leaflet will be produced mid-September with full details.

There are two things you can do if you want to find out more about our future activities. You can email cpbfnorth@outlook.com and join our email list or become a friend on our Facebook page: Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North).

PIT PROPS

Music, International Solidarity
and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike



Barry Hines (1939-2016) Celebrating His Life and Work



Media reform for the future

NATALIE FENTON chair of the Media Reform Coalition

THE CPBF has been the grandmother of all media campaign groups – encouraging and supporting others around it to blossom and grow and become the emergent movement for media reform we have today. The Media Reform Coalition is one such body lucky enough to have benefitted from CPBF's active involvement, and the wisdom and support of its members and we are eager to build on its legacy.

The MRC was founded in September 2011 and, in the last six years, has brought together dozens of leading civil society groups and academics to develop policies and campaign for media reform in the light of a communications environment that continues to be dominated by a handful of large organisations and is characterised by insufficient plurality, diversity and accountability.

If you are reading this publication then you will already know that media institutions in the UK are facing multiple crises: of funding, trust, representation, accountability and legitimacy.

Newspaper and magazine readership is in serious decline as large digital intermediaries gobble up the majority of advertising revenue, while public service broadcasters like the BBC and Channel 4 are presiding over a falling share of total TV revenue.

Local news is increasingly under threat, with at least 25% of local government areas having no local newspaper at all. These trends significantly undermine the ability of media to act as a "fourth estate", holding power to

account and acting as an independent intermediary between citizens and the state.

The resulting democratic deficits are most acutely visible in relation to news media, though sections of the population including BAME audiences, older women and those living in Scotland and in the English regions have identified concerns about how they are represented in the media more broadly.

This is perhaps unsurprising given how unrepresentative the cultural industries' workforce is of the wider population, and the barriers to entry faced by those from minority ethnic and working-class backgrounds.

The rapid growth of digital media is strongly implicated in this changing context, on the one hand precipitating the funding crisis for newspapers and magazines, and on the other looked to as a way of plugging the growing

democratic deficits.

While social media may have helped to extend the range of voices available, they have thus far intensified narrowly partisan behaviour and fostered a combative approach to politics that has little in common with visions of a more expansive and democratic public sphere.

Digitalisation has fuelled a decentralisation of media practices, but it has simultaneously intensified the concentration and consolidation of media power across different market sectors.

Repairing the democratic deficits caused by an inadequate media environment requires not just rebuilding trust but also the creation of a healthy communications environment – one that is not just economically robust but innovative, diverse, and independent of vested interests. This premise underpins the work of the MRC. Over the next 12 months here's an outline of what to expect:

- responding to the Cairncross Review call for evidence on press sustainability
- public meeting on the 4 October on the Cairncross Review with Michelle Stanistreet (NUJ), Angela Phillips (MRC), Martin Moore (Media Standards Trust), Kerry-Ann Mendoza (The Canary) and Jim Cusick (Journalist)
- public event in Parliament on 16 October on BBC reform with Clive Lewis, Zoe Williams and Tom Mills
- updating media ownership figures to provide an accurate current analysis of who

owns what in the UK media landscape to feed into Ofcom's review of media ownership in the autumn

- public debate on 'what next for press regulation?' on 17 January 2019
- developing a media policy fit for the 21st Century that works across digital platforms and publishing
- developing a Media Democracy Bill
- picking up the good work of the CPBF by renewing the Media Manifesto based on the above discussions
- Media Democracy Festival 16 March 2019.

Keep an eye on the Media Reform website (MediaReform.org.uk) for further information and drop us a line (info@mediareform.org.uk) if you want to be put on the mailing list.

Goodbye and thank you to the CPBF – long live the movement for media reform!

Goodbye and thank you to the CPBF – long live the movement for media reform!

Fed up with ultra concentrated media power? Join Better Media

JOSEF DAVIES-COATES

IF WE want peace, justice and sustainability we need land, money and media reform.

Land and banking reform are the big ones, but we need media reform first; without it we'll never have the quality of public discourse needed to bring about wider systems change.

As activist and author David Korten once put it: "The key to changing the course of the human future, is to change the stories by which we live".

But the UK media reform movement consists of a handful of mostly very small and massively under-resourced groups and organisations who just about manage to punch slightly above their rather slight weight.

To have a fighting chance of ever fulfilling our aims, we need to think bigger. That's where Better Media comes in. Our goal is to build a large scale democratic movement to organise, fund and support campaigns for Better Media in the UK. A "Greenpeace for the media", if you like.

Right now, despite growing numbers of people recognising the dire need for media reform in the UK, there is no default membership organisation for these people to join and support with a monthly direct debit.

The Media Reform Coalition (MRC) and Hacked Off, both formed in response to the phone hacking scandal in 2011, and more recently Stop Funding Hate have risen to prominence. But, unlike the CPBF, none of these have union-organised media workers at their core, and none are democratic membership organisations.

As the only democratic membership organisation in the space, CPBF is the closest thing to what needs to exist: but its 20th century name and organisational structure are no longer fit for purpose, and it's closing down.

The Better Media idea is simple: get everyone who recognises the need for Better Media to routinely contribute funds to help make it so.

How will it work?

Better Media is a transparent co-operative endeavour, empowered by collaborative open source tools. Everyone can see where all our money comes from, and how it is spent. Everyone who signs-up as a contributor is invited to join our online organising and decision-making spaces.

Exactly what Better Media becomes will depend on what we do together, but to begin with we'll be rallying around the proposals in the MRC and CPBF's Manifesto for Media Reform:

- Controls on media ownership
- Independent, trusted and effective regulation of the press
- Well-funded, independent public service media
- Protection for communication rights
- Action on lobbying and transparency

If this sounds good, sign-up as a regular contributor now: opencollective.com/bettermediauk

Together we can build the movement for #BetterMedia the UK so desperately needs.