

## Statement of Aims

- 1 To challenge the myth that only private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access, and to generate public debate on alternative forms of democratic ownership and control
- 2 To carry out research into alternatives, including ownership by independent trusts or co-operatives, which would guarantee freedom from either state control or domination by major business conglomerates.
- 3 To encourage the creation of alternative newspapers of all kinds including a newspaper or newspapers sympathetic to the labour movement.

- 4 To encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper, broadcasting and television industries.
- 5 To follow up the general principles contained in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Press, including proposals for a National Printing Corporation to provide a competitive public sector in the printing industry and a launch fund to assist new publications.
- 6 To campaign for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council to promote basic standards of fairness and access to the press on behalf of the public.
- 7 To work for a reduction in legal restrictions on freedom of publication and increased access to official sources of information through reform of the Official Secrets Act and similar restrictive legislation and the introduction of a Freedom of Information Bill.

## Annual Meeting

ALL individual members and affiliated organisations should already have received an invitation to the annual meeting, to be held in the course of a one-day conference on May 24.

We hope that the overwhelming bulk of the day will be devoted to discussion of press freedom. The steering committee has agreed to launch six aims groups and this conference seems an excellent opportunity to get them focused.

The groups will each look in greater detail at one or two of the Campaign's aims and will give members the chance to get down to discussing the future progress of the Campaign.

If you are not going to be able to attend the meeting on May 24, but have a particular interest in one or more of the aims, let us know. No one will be excluded from discussing anything just because they haven't joined the relevant aims group, but invitations to group meetings will go only to those who joined.

If you are going to be able to attend, look forward to a busy day.

## Printing on the rates

THERE IS a noticeable difference between those papers produced on

commercial printing presses and those produced privately. There's a big difference in price too, particularly because of the high capital cost of providing high quality typesetting and reproduction.

One possible solution to bridge the gap, raised at several Campaign meetings is to persuade local authorities to provide the capital equipment for the use of community groups. One or two councils have already made moves in this direction and more should be persuaded that local press freedom is a vital element of local democracy.

Inevitably councils under severe pressure to make cuts are not going to be rushing ahead with plans for new community presses. But given the sort of time-scale operating in local government, now is the time to start persuading councillors to put the community's money where the community's mouths are.

## Handing over cash the

SHOULD the Campaign set out to administer a fund for the development of new papers?

Or should it restrict itself to supporting ventures by urging the potential donors to choose which projects they support?

The steering committee is now thinking about supporting new ventures at three levels: nationally, regionally, and locally.

A national paper, clearly the desire of many Campaign supporters, would not appropriately be funded by way of the Campaign itself.

And it may be that a Campaign fund could provide only token support for ambitious regional papers.

But community papers, whether they exist already or are merely in prospect, could probably be helped a lot by relative small sums. Should the Campaign be asking supporters and affiliates to donate to a fund which would be used to support the general principle of encouraging the creation of alternative newspapers of all kinds?

## Membership

INDIVIDUAL membership of the campaign costs £3. ORGANISATIONS can affiliate for an annual fee at the following rates, depending on size of membership. Less than 1,000 - £5; Between 1,000 and 10,000 - £10; Between 10,000 and 50,000 - £15; 50,000 to 100,000 - £25; more than 100,000 - £50.

Write to John Jennings giving your name, or the name of the organisation and its secretary as applicable, and your address. Cheques should be payable to Campaign for Press Freedom.

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# FREE PRESS

Bulletin of the Campaign for Press Freedom May 1980: No2

## Journalists back Campaign, reject Press Council

PRESS FREEDOM has become a major issue in the journalists' union, the NUJ. Growing frustration and discontent, built up over years, erupted at the union's annual delegate meeting in Portrush, Northern Ireland in April.

Delegates agreed to:

- Adopt the whole of the Campaign's aims
- Ballot NUJ members on affiliation to the Campaign
- Withdraw from the Press Council
- Condemn the BBC governors for their handling of the Panorama/Carrickmore incident.

The meeting specifically welcomed the call for a new daily newspaper to be controlled and funded by the labour movement, and welcomed local labour papers such as East End News, Dundee Standard, and the Workers Chronicle in Newcastle.

Panorama's film of the IRA in Carrickmore was greeted with hysterical reactions not only from the BBC's Board of Governors but also from politicians and some journalists, the meeting agreed.

The reaction was a threat both to the lives of NUJ members and to press freedom. The governors were accused of consistent failure to defend their journalists in the face of political attack.

The meeting, in critical mood, also agreed a lengthy resolution, moved by the London Freelance branch, claiming that the Press Council has lamentably failed to act as a creditable or effective body to monitor editorial standards in the media.

It noted that during the past year journalistic standards failed to meet the union's own code of conduct, particularly in coverage of industrial relations and women's issues. The Press Council had failed to condemn the fall in standards and was "beyond redemption".

The union was instructed to withdraw its representatives, its subscription to the Council, and any co-operation with it.

The same motion went on to urge the union's executive to work with the TUC and the Campaign for Press Freedom.

It then adopted for the NUJ the seven aims of the Campaign before instructing the union to carry out a postal ballot of members on the question of affiliation to the Campaign - a move required by the union's rules.

Finally the executive was urged to support journalists who stand up for editorial standards against their employers.

The debate on Monday morning followed a fringe meeting on the Saturday night which attracted more than 100 of the 250 delegates. There was standing room only at the meeting in the Londonderry Hotel, called by the Campaign and the East End News.

## INSIDE

Why the NUJ quit the Press Council and what the Campaign is doing about it: page 2

Freedom to be sold: where the radical press is not: page 2

What's up down under? Press on notes what the Campaign is up to, at home and abroad: page 3

## First Annual General Meeting

and

## One-day Conference

10.30am-4.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1  
Saturday May 24  
see page 4 for details

# Press Council leaves reform too late

THE CAMPAIGN for Press Freedom is to establish a high-powered Commission to investigate alternatives to the Press Council.

The decision follows the NUJ's decision to withdraw its members from the council.

The Campaign feels the NUJ's move to some extent pre-empts the opportunities for reform of the Council and shifts the emphasis to reconstitution. The commission will also be asked to investigate and consider alternatives to the Press Council assuming it survives this latest blow.

Speakers at the NUJ annual delegate meeting felt the Council had outlived its usefulness and was now so much the pawn of the owners that it was no longer worth trying to reform it from within.

It was more interested in protecting its masters than protecting press freedom. The time had come for the NUJ to leave and seek a replacement.

There was a strong feeling that the TUC should play a part in establishing a new body which could attract the confidence of the public.

Jake Ecclestone, retiring president of the NUJ, has agreed to convene the commission and it is expected that further names will be announced at the Campaign's annual meeting.

It will be asked to gather evidence widely, both inside and outside the Campaign.

Jake Ecclestone, in a presidential speech given before the decision was taken — and at that point still a member of the Press Council — told journalists: "By remaining in membership we provide implicit — and in some cases, sadly, explicit — support for a system of ownership and control which is undemocratic and unaccountable. The banner of press freedom is waved so furiously in order to mask the moral and political bankruptcy of the system".

If the NUJ withdrew it had been predicted that the Council would be replaced by a statutory body. "The prospect is intended to intimidate: a bogey to frighten the children".

It was curious that the editors who regularly praised our parliamentary system should be so frightened.

"Having seen the Press Council at work," he said, "I would rather take my chance with parliament's conception of democracy than that of the Newspaper Proprietors Association or the Newspaper Society".

Later in his speech he said: "The Campaign for Press Freedom, launched at the TUC last autumn, has touched a nerve. There has been a remarkable response throughout the country by individuals and groups who want to see a truly free and responsible media.

"Working journalists in Britain have tolerated for too long the perversions of freedom which people like Rothermere, Hartwell, Matthews and Thomson — and their editors and business colleagues — have indulged in.

"The incantation of empty phrases by our Lords Goodman, Shawcross and McGregor and others has served merely to obscure the monopoly control, the supine obedience to authority, the scarcity of investigative journalism and the elevation of advertisers' interests above those of truth . . . which are the characteristics of too many of our newspapers.

"Jury vetting, majority verdicts, courts without juries — our entire system of justice is under attack. These are the symptoms of a society under pressure from an overweening law-and-order lobby.

"Telephone tapping, electronic eavesdropping, the Official Secrets Act, the hacks on the D-notice committee: these are also symptoms.

"The British Foreign Secretary will wring his hands in remorse in order to pacify some medieval, middle-eastern tyrants; a High Court judge will solemnly instruct Granada Television to betray their informant: these are but the latest examples of an establishment which proclaims truth and freedom to speak out but which in fact seeks to suppress the truth, to limit freedom and to punish social conscience".

The pamphlet says: "We think that parliamentary action is the obvious way to make sure that the political bias in distribution is counteracted; it requires a simple piece of legislation.

"In France, commercial wholesalers have been required by law to take any periodical whatever its politics or circulation level.

"One consequence of this is the magazine like Undercurrents [magazine of alternative technology, circulation 6,000] are available all over France and have much higher circulation figures. This "French connection" has never, to our knowledge, been seriously considered in discussions and campaigns on the freedom of the press in Britain".

In conclusion the pamphlet says: "The political issue of distribution has not so far been seen as part of the 'freedom of the press'. In whatever way the struggles for the freedom of the press may be fought and won, if the publications are not available—what's the point?"

*The Minority Press Group can be contacted at 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG, phone 01-437 8954.*

## Press on

MORE than 500 people packed Central Hall, Westminster for the Campaign's first major public meeting in February. They listened to more than half a dozen speakers for over two hours and handed over £600 to be divided between East End News, Rochdale's Alternative Paper (RAP), and the Nottingham News. Unsurprisingly the meeting received almost no mention in the press.

## Banned!

CAMPAIGN supporters from London met in March for a wide-ranging debate on the issues of press freedom. Interestingly the attendance was divided fairly evenly between print workers, journalists, and people who don't work in the media. Plans to hold a further meeting on the proposals of the Royal Commission minority report (aim 5) foundered when the St Bride's Institute, just off Fleet Street, banned the Campaign because it is "political".

## On the Stump

MICHAEL Meacher will represent the Campaign at the National and Local Government Officers' Association conference next month. He will be talking about press freedom at a fringe meeting on June 8 organised by the union for its delegates.

JOHN Jennings, Campaign convenor, joined NUJ president Francis Beckett, SOGAT general secretary Bill Keys and former solicitor-general Lord McCluskey, at a conference organised by the Scottish TUC and Campaign this month.

The conference on May 10 in Glasgow, chaired by STUC general secretary Jimmy Milne, had been called to establish the Campaign for Press Freedom in Scotland.

THE YORKSHIRE regional council of the TUC, the Yorkshire Area Council of the NUJ, and the Campaign are co-sponsoring a conference — provisional date July 12 — on press freedom.

DEMAND for speakers is rapidly escalating but the Campaign is (just about) managing to keep up. If you are organising a meeting or conference we can supply pamphlets, bulletins, speakers etc, if you give us enough warning.

## Young Libs Weigh in

YOUNG LIBERALS devoted a workshop at their annual conference to press freedom — and backed the broad principles of the Campaign.

John Ozimek, executive member of the National League of Young Liberals chaired the workshop. He said afterwards that the executive were to consider submitting a resolution on press freedom to the party's annual conference in the autumn.

The workshop discussion was led by John Jennings, campaign convenor, with Mark Hebert and Clare Hudson of Wakefield branch of the NUJ.

## Australians want press freedom too

INTERNATIONAL support for the Campaign has started to come in (unsolicited) from Australia.

The acting secretary of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, C.L.N. Harvey, says his executive wants to join the Campaign because "the problems facing people in the United Kingdom in respect to media control have an affinity to the developing situation within Australia".

The union, which represents printing workers throughout Australia, found out about the Campaign from the journals of the UK print unions — not surprisingly, the Australian publishers, including such well-known owners as Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer, have been no more anxious to publicise the Campaign than their British counterparts.

Mr Harvey says: "It cannot be stressed too strongly that fraternal support for campaigns such as those envisaged . . . even if that support comes from the other side of the world, should be of some value".

We think so too.

IN A SIGNIFICANT move, the Labour and Industrial Correspondents Group of Journalists, has affiliated to the Campaign.

Its members include the industrial reporters on national newspapers and magazines.

THE construction section of the engineering union, AUEW, is the 16th, and latest, national union to affiliate to the campaign.

Others to be added to the affiliates since the last issue of the bulletin include the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association, and the National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades.

There are now about 140 other affiliated organisations. These include union branches and regional organisations, student unions, Labour Parties, the Minority Press Group, radical newspaper groups, a printing co-op, and chapels of the National Union of Journalists and other print unions.

THE JUDGES have never had the responsibility to decide what is and is not press freedom, said the Campaign following the Appeal Court order to Granada TV to reveal who gave it confidential British Steel documents. It condemned the decision, which showed that the judges set their face against free dissemination of information.

THE LABOUR Party and TUC, both of which passed resolutions last year in line with the aims of the Campaign, have been urged to commission a feasibility study for a new national daily paper supporting the labour movement.

The Campaign stressed that a national paper should not exclude the possibility of provincial papers: the approaches were complementary.

The Campaign said: "In the short term it seems likely that support for local publishing ventures, providing they are properly undertaken, may be the most fruitful area for the Labour and trade union movement to become involved in.

"However even a considerable number of regional or provincial newspapers would not provide the same sharp focus on major national issues as would a national daily paper".

THIS EDITION of the Free Press bulletin has been edited for the steering committee by Harold Frayman. The next edition will be produced some time after the annual meeting.

## Where is the other news?

SOME MAGAZINES get distributed more than others. While some are on sale in every High Street and railway station others have to be sought out in the occasional byways.

A forthcoming pamphlet from the Minority Press Group, *Where is the Other News?* draws on the experience of the Publications Distribution Co-operative and individual journals in an examination of the news trade and the radical press.

The pamphlet reports that in effect the wholesaling of magazines is dominated by the Big Three — WH Smith, John Menzies and Surridge Dawson. And that it is nearly impossible for a radical magazine to break into their market and even harder for it to stay there.

In 1975 the Big Three between them controlled 69 per cent of the magazine market in England and Wales. In Scotland John Menzies alone had 93 per cent of the market. Between them they owned 235 of the 415 local wholesalers in England and Wales in 1979. WH Smith supply 16,500 of the 39,000 newsagents in the UK, Menzies about 12,000 and Surridges 4,000. Independent wholesalers supply the rest and about five per cent of newsagents are supplied by two wholesalers.