

WE'RE GETTING BIGGER!

THE LATEST big recruit to the Campaign for Press Freedom is the Post Office Engineering Union, with over 120,000 members. This brings the number of national trade unions affiliated to nineteen, including the TGWU, GMWU, NALGO, NUPE and COHSE, the miners, shop workers, communications workers and the print unions.

Although for obvious reasons the unions are playing an important and active part in the CPF it is not just a labour movement campaign.

Other supporters include local community newspapers, printing co-operatives, community workers, Liberals, Welsh Nationalists, students' unions and pensioners.

In the relatively short period the Campaign has been in existence we have recruited 250 affiliated organisations and over 300 individual members.

The campaign was launched in September 1979 to challenge some of the myths about Britain's 'free press' and to generate a wide-ranging national debate on the question. In May 1980 we held our first AGM



JOIN!

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'.

Articles in this bulletin can be freely reproduced provided *Free Press* is acknowledged.

The December 1980 issue of *Free Press* was incorrectly numbered 'No. 5'. It should have been number 4, this issue, to maintain the serial sequence has been correctly numbered 'No. 5'.

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Affiliated Unions

The following trade unions are nationally affiliated to the Campaign for Press Freedom. Is your union among them?

Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians; Confederation of Health Service Employees; Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union; General and Municipal Workers' Union; Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association; National and Local Government Officers' Association; National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees; National Graphical Association; National Society of Operative Printers, Graphical and Media Personnel; National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades; National Union of Mineworkers; National Union of Public Employees; Post Office Engineering Union; Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers, Engravers and Process Workers; Society of Graphical and Allied Trades; Transport and General Workers' Union; Tobacco Workers' Union; Union of Communication Workers; Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. The Printing and Kindred Industries Union of Australia is also affiliated.

by John Jennings, CPF Secretary

and elected a national committee to replace the steering committee which brought the campaign into being.

We have produced tens of thousands of copies of pamphlets and leaflets, organised meetings and sent speakers to address groups and organisations all over the country. We have already had considerable success in stimulating debate within the TUC and among journalists themselves.

The TUC has carried resolutions two years running which are closely in line with our aims. The National Union of Journalists debated the question of press freedom very thoroughly at their conference last year and voted to support the aims of the campaign.

For more information write to John Jennings, secretary, CPF, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2DE.

Contribute to Free Press

WITH THIS ISSUE of *Free Press*, the campaign's bulletin has gone bi-monthly. The next issue will be for March-April 1981.

Affiliated trade unions have been asked if they would increase their order for the bulletin, and several have already responded with increased orders topping 3,000.

Our target is a circulation of 10,000. We would therefore like every affiliated organisation and individual supporter to consider taking additional copies for sale.

Multiple orders are supplied at 5p per copy. Pre-payment for orders is requested.

Free Press needs your news and views. Ideas for the bulletin, letters, meetings and conference announcements and reports, reviews of publications and programmes on the media, cases of censorship and bias, and other articles on press freedom from campaign supporters are all welcome. We also need graphics, especially cartoons.

Send your contribution to: Geoffrey Sheridan, 116 Cazenove Rd, London N16.

What we stand for

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.

FREE PRESS

Bulletin of the Campaign for Press Freedom

Time to be Serious about a Labour Daily

THE NEED for a Labour Movement newspaper is overwhelming – nobody, not even the most bigoted Tory press baron, can conceivably claim that the political balance in the press accurately reflects the range and balance of opinion in our society.

So the case does not need to be made yet again. What we should be concentrating on is *how* we can bring it about.

There seem to be three alternatives. One is to go for a national daily paper straightaway, with the unions guaranteeing the main financial back-up.

Of course, such an option would demand the most thorough market survey of all the logistics involved, and it might decide for clear, particular reasons that it was not possible, or not possible in certain forms.

But at least we would know what the practical possibilities really were, and alternative strategies could then be seriously and realistically planned. The TUC's decision last month that a feasibility study should be undertaken will provide us with that information.

The likely objections can easily be listed now. One is cost, but whether it is

by Michael Meacher MP

£7m as Norman Atkinson, Labour Party Treasurer, has suggested is necessary to launch such a paper, or only £4m as initial outlay as suggested by a survey in the October 1979 issue of the advertising and media magazine *Admap*, it is a cost that the unions *could* afford if they were determined about it.

Other objections include questions of industrial relations: Would all the relevant unions co-operate to give it a real try? And doubts about motivation: How supportive, not to say lukewarm or even opposed, would some Labour and trade union leaders be?

There are problems of ensuring the adequate entrepreneurial flair to succeed; issues about securing genuine editorial independence (a heavy hand from either Walworth Road or Congress House would destroy it); questions about the form of industrial democracy that would be involved; problems about obtaining sufficient advertising revenue; and so on.

But the important thing is surely that all these obstacles should be brought out into the open, be systematically examined, and every form of realistic solution canvassed. That is only the first step. But if we could at least get to first base, the whole proposition might then start to take serious shape – which at present it doesn't begin to.

The second main strategy, for those who believe cost rules out this first one, is to approach a national daily indirectly via a launching pad created by setting up a series of regional evening or weekly papers in towns where there is currently a monopoly and the existing title is weak.

Again, a thorough, systematic analysis of this option needs to be made.

Thirdly, for those who think that a launch fund, a national printing corporation, and an advertising revenue distribution board are merely tinkering with the system, there is the option of taking over one of the existing nine national dailies.

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That doesn't necessarily mean nationalisation. If ITV stations can be re-allocated and whole companies dispossessed in the national interest through a franchise system on a 7-year tenure, why not newspapers? The grounds would be the interests of press freedom – for the people, not the owners – and a wider range of opinion for the public.

Whatever option is chosen, this matter must be put *seriously* on the political agenda – now.

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About the Campaign

New National Newspaper

THE TUC General Council's Media Working Group is to draw up proposals for a feasibility study which would examine the possibility of a new national newspaper being established to reflect the interests and concerns of the labour movement.

The General Council considers that there has long been a need for a new paper of this kind. It also recognises, however, that before any further steps could be taken there must be a detailed study of all aspects of such a development aimed at assessing its overall feasibility.

This would examine the financial implications of a new paper as well as its potential circulation, format, content, potential advertising revenue, and management and organisational structure.

TUC statement, December 1980
See interview, page 2

Moss Evans on the TUC's media plans

TRANSPORT UNION general secretary Moss Evans has taken over from Bill Keys as chairperson of the TUC's Media Working Group. He is a firm supporter of the moves towards a labour daily. He told Geoffrey Sheridan about this and other media developments.

One example from Moss Evans about media bias, although a slightly personal one. He had just seen his brother — an airport worker — for the first time in 18 months. "So how is Derek Robinson getting on as a TGWU official?" he had asked Moss.

The fact is, Moss Evans explains, that contrary to the report which first appeared in the *Daily Star*, the former BL convenor had never been offered a job with the TGWU. Yet in spite of a correction published by that newspaper, the story had stuck.

If malice aforethought hadn't been the motive for that item, he gives other examples of Fleet Street's hostility to the labour movement, such as the hounding of Len Murray over the TUC's Day of Action and denigratory portraits of members of the Labour Party's newly elected Shadow Cabinet by the *Daily Mail's* parliamentary correspondent.

What to do? Moss Evans says that the TUC has asked for changes in the structure of the Press Council. But if that body cannot be modified there is a strong possibility that the TUC will follow the example of the NUJ and withdraw labour movement representatives.

The right to reply to hostile coverage is essential, he considers. "There's no argument about that."



To ginger up trades unionists, those who attend TUC conferences are to be handed a guide to critical reading, listening and viewing, which will probably include a form inviting comments on industrial coverage. The Media Working Group itself plans to set up a permanent monitoring facility.

Moss Evans is an enthusiastic advocate of establishing a daily paper sympathetic to

the labour movement. The day after we met, shortly before Xmas, the General Council endorsed a proposal for a feasibility study which had been unanimously approved by both the Media Working Group and the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

He is concerned that the daily should not be regarded as his project, but he has some definite views.

His idea is for a serious tabloid with room for international and entertainments coverage. Initial circulation could be in the order of 250,000 - 350,000 (there happen to be 300,000 shop stewards in Britain).

It would be backed by the trade union movement and he hopes the labour movement generally, but it would be free to criticise the unions. 'We're not angels', he adds.

The structure he envisages would be an owning body consisting either of the TUC alone or a consortium of the TUC, the Labour Party, and all other interested organisations — 'the catchment should be as wide as possible'.

While this body would hire and be able to fire the editor, that would be the extent of editorial control. There would be an independent editorial board.

It would certainly be a campaigning newspaper, Moss Evans considers, but it would do more than 'preach'. Open debate and the right of reply he regards as essential.

"There is a crying need for this sort of paper," he adds. "We want many, many people to discuss the kind of paper we should have." Whether the project advances or is abandoned will depend on the results of the feasibility study which the TUC is now in the process of setting up.

FIG. G. COOKSON

Why a Youth TV programme was banned

by Zadoc Nava
Youth TV

YOUTH TV is a group of young people who want to see more youth participation in the media. Young people's interests are mainly ignored by TV and we're fed up with the crap that goes on.

There are a few programmes which take young people seriously, up to a point. There is Thames TV's *White Light*, for example, which deals with subjects like contraception, school, and the police, but then after a 7½-minute discussion they throw in a pop group in case we get bored.

Our experience presenting a series of *Help* programmes for Thames — the last one of which was banned — shows both the need for youth participation and the limitations of what the TV companies will allow.

Thames offered Youth TV the chance to present nine five-minute programmes, and Sarah Kogan and I — both of us sixth-formers at North London comprehensives — were selected as presenters.

The programmes ranged over a variety of subjects: Amnesty International and the events leading to the arrest and beating up of two black school students in Soweto; Islington Grapevine, which is a counselling service for young people, dealing mainly with sex problems; Radio Lollipop, which is run by and for disabled young people in Carshalton, Surrey.

Two programmes dealt with young people's rights, and an invitation to viewers to ring in for a leaflet resulted in 20 phones being jammed with calls for 1½ hours.

The last programme was due to be shown just before Xmas. It was about Schools Against the Bomb (SAB), which is a group of young people fighting for nuclear disarmament.

In the three minutes available to them, SAB presented their views. They called on the BBC to transmit the banned *War Games* film and raised the issue of Cruise missiles being sited in Britain.

We believe it was these points which caused the programme to be banned. The controller of features at Thames said the programme contravened the Television Act because it was biased. The idea seemed to be that we would need to include school students in favour of the bomb. There might be one or two, I suppose.

Thames asked Sarah and I to do a replacement programme on STOP, the organisation which is against caning in schools. Together with the researchers on the programme, we refused to do this — as a matter of principle. We then contacted

Youth TV can be contacted c/o Theo Turner, 89 Fitzjohns Avenue, London NW3. Schools Against the Bomb, c/o 29 Great James Street, London WC1.

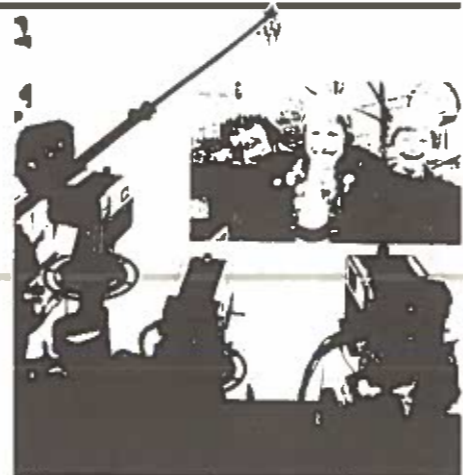


FIG. J. SILBERMAN

the press about the censorship.

What happened with the last programme summed up the exercise. It was a token gift from Thames. It felt like they were cashing in on another section of the population.

There are all sorts of programmes which could be made by youth — plays written, directed, and acted by young people are one example. None of us in Youth TV knows exactly what we want. We had hoped to invite young people to write in and say what they would like to see, but this was part of the last *Help* programme which was never broadcast.

Who knows what is happening in the North of Ireland?

by Mike Jempson
NUJ East London branch secretary

'Any interview with a person purporting to represent a terrorist organisation is potentially a source of information of the nature referred to in Section 11 of the (Prevention of Terrorism) Act arising not only from the actual contents of the interview but also from any negotiations leading up to and the actual arrangements for it,' wrote Attorney General Sir Michael Havers, in a letter to the then chairperson of the BBC, Sir Michael Swann, on 20 June 1980.

'If this is really what the law says,' Swann replied, 'then all reporting of who terrorists are and what they say would, in practice, be halted abruptly.'

This exchange followed the notorious Carrickmore incident, when a *Panorama* team filmed a road block mounted by the IRA — with outraged criticism from the Prime Minister and the press — and a filmed interview with representatives of the Irish National Liberation Army.

Swann's comment brought criticism of the BBC by the Attorney General in a Commons debate for 'not accepting the law which is perfectly clear on this point'.

The *Guardian* reported that the Attorney General believed there was enough evidence to prosecute BBC-TV journalists under the PTA, but had 'decided that a prosecution would cause an embarrassing row about press freedom'.

More often than not the government has stopped short of prosecuting journalists who dig too deep or go too far in their coverage of Irish affairs. But that is not to say that censorship, whether direct or indirect, does not exist in this area.

Journalists and broadcasters reporting on Ireland have their own catalogues of distortions to the point of untruths, harassment, threats, editorial and governmental 'instructions', and constant reminders that Section 11 of the PTA might apply to them.

Many instances have been recorded by Dorothy Connell in the June 1980 issue of



FIG. BILL SANDERSON

Index on Censorship, and by the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland in their pamphlet *The British Media and Ireland*.

There can be few who doubt that the British public are being prevented from fully understanding what is happening in the Six Counties, when a colour supplement is pulped because it contains a human interest story about an Irish Catholic family, when investigative journalists are held for days and nights of interrogation and released without charge, and when newspaper offices are constantly raided and equipment impounded.

Such incidents have occurred in the last three years; the current 'troubles' in the North of Ireland are about to enter their 12th year.

Chief among the constraints used to shape press coverage has been a complex system of self-censorship based on editorial guidelines often laid down in collaboration with government agencies.

We have also seen increasing use of Section 11 of the PTA, despite the recommendations of the Shackleton Report, reviewing the Act in 1978, that this section should be dropped because 'it has an unpleasant ring about it in terms of civil liberties'.

More worrying still, perhaps, is the view taken by many that anyone who wants to discuss Ireland has already taken sides — with Republicans.

This is the inevitable corollary of the government's clamp-down on the Republican cause — with any mention of the border, reunification, or the impact of the troubles on the Catholic community seen as propaganda.

Yet that stalwart of civil liberties, the *Guardian*, happily prints an in-depth interview with Andy Tyrie, leader of the largest private, self-declared para-military organi-

sation in Ireland, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

The UDA is not a proscribed organisation. Yet it has openly championed violence, taken part in assassination campaigns and bombings, and has been the scourge of the Catholic minority.

In any other part of the world such an organisation would be regarded as an unofficial arm of an oppressive government, and the troubles would be described as war.

What makes Northern Ireland so peculiar a 'problem' for the people of Britain, and so urgent an issue for those who believe in freedom of the press, is that it is on our own doorstep — and what really happens there is smothered by a cloak of censorship the very existence of which has been obscured.

Really Bad News

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY Media Group, which has produced two *Bad News* books examining the bias of television's coverage of industrial disputes, is shortly to publish a third volume — *Really Bad News*.

Published with the Writers and Readers Co-operative, it includes analysis of the coverage of the Labour Party in the period of the leadership struggle and the aftermath of the conference decisions on internal democracy.

With a probable cover price of £3, the book will summarise the work of the Glasgow University Media Group on industrial and economic coverage over the past five years. It will also have a large section on future policies for broadcasting and on alternative media.

Conference on Media Censorship in Northern Ireland

Called by the NUJ and supported by ACTT, ABS, and SLADE

11.00 am - 6.00 pm
Saturday, 28 February 1981
at Digbeth Civic, Birmingham
(5 minutes from Birmingham New St Station)

Resolutions for this open labour movement conference should be sent to:

Ron Knowles, NUJ,
314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.
Tel: 01-278 7916.

Leaflets are available.

Among the proposals on the future of *The Times* has been the suggestion that it might be owned and run like *Le Monde*, the French daily paper whose journalists have the power to nominate their editor.

RICHARD NICE, a lecturer at Surrey University, examines the background of a newspaper which provides a depth of domestic and foreign news coverage far out-stripping that of the British press.

The French Answer

Le Monde 'Quality' and Quantity

The present state of the French media is generally nothing to write home about. Oligopoly in the press and state control of broadcasting are steadily growing.

Le Monde is a famous and honourable exception to this bleak picture. Two recent examples: the paper's journalists have elected the editor-in-chief who will succeed the present incumbent in 1982; and the paper is currently in head-on conflict with the Minister of Justice over the right to comment on judicial decisions.

Le Monde is not the perfect newspaper. Two disgruntled ex-journalists have shown that it is not always exempt from compliance with the preferences of governmental and financial interests. The newspaper depends on advertising for 60 per cent of its income. To Anglo-American eyes, it is short on investigative journalism. However, its financial and administrative arrangements might well serve as a model.

These owe their origin to a peculiarly favourable set of circumstances.

When Paris was liberated in August 1944, the power relations within the Resistance, the discrediting of the traditional right by Vichy, and the euphoria of Liberation produced for a few months a climate of progressive consensus.

The tripartite government under de Gaulle encouraged the creation of a pluralist press free from both foreign influence, unlike the Vichy press, and from internal capitalist influence, unlike the 1930s press.

An *ordonnance* of 26 August 1944 aimed to prescribe conditions in which newspaper businesses would be financially

independent and 'transparent'. However, these provisional clauses were never followed up by systematic legislation, and have become a dead letter, as the present state of the French press shows.

Le Monde was created because the pre-war paper *Le Temps* could not be allowed to continue — it had fallen under the control of the iron and steel barons and had supported appeasement — but it had to be replaced by some equally prestigious newspaper.

De Gaulle attached particular importance to the existence of an internationally read and reputed French newspaper, which would be recognised abroad as the quasi-official voice of France and would thus serve as an instrument of his foreign policy.

A group of nine individuals offered themselves as the inheritors of *Le Temps*. Only one was a journalist: Hubert Beuve-Méry, who had resigned from *Le Temps* over the Munich agreement, and who enjoyed the confidence of de Gaulle.

The nine put up between them a modest 200,000 francs to form the Société à responsabilité limitée *Le Monde*. The premises and presses of *Le Temps* were handed over to them and the ex-employees offered their services. The state provided loans and subsidies, as it had to the other papers, though *Le Monde* was able to return its loan unused.

A public avid for news and opinion awaited the new publication.

The prestige of *Le Temps* was exploited by maintaining the same typography and austere layout. The elements of continuity with *Le Temps*, the predominantly bourgeois readership, and the conservative line taken in internal politics, such as on nationalisation, aroused some suspicions on the left.

But it was difficult to impugn *Le Monde's* formal independence. The founders ensured in the statutes of the company that the paper would never pass into undesirable hands: the approval of the holders of three-quarters of the shares was required for any transfer of shares to non-associates. Appropriation of profits was similarly limited by statute.

The ideology of the paper's foundation was one of 'public service'. The alignment on de Gaulle's foreign policy arose from Beuve-Méry's own convictions and was echoed by a certain consensus.

After de Gaulle's withdrawal in 1946, the onset of the Cold War and American pressures for West German re-armament opened deep ideological rifts. Beuve-Méry led *Le Monde* into 'neutralist' and 'defeatist' positions which were contested by his associates. The conflict within the Société culminated in 1951 with Beuve-Méry's resignation.



At this point the journalists revolted, threatening to strike unless they were given a say in running the paper. The outcome was a revision of the statutes, giving the journalists' syndicate, the Société des rédacteurs, 28 per cent of the enlarged capital.

Since a three-quarters majority was required for all major decisions, this amounted to a right of veto. Beuve-Méry then resumed his editorship.

In March 1968, after six years of negotiation, the statutes of the SARL *Le Monde* were further modified. These new arrangements give the decisive say in nominating the editor to the journalists and safeguard the paper's financial autonomy.

They emerged from a collective determination to consolidate an independent newspaper. Its conspicuous objectivity has been a major factor in *Le Monde's* steadily growing success, and this in turn has produced the financial means of maintaining that independence.

Le Monde rose to its present position thanks to uniquely favourable circumstances at its inception and the tenacity of a remarkable editor. It cannot be assumed that the model it offers will always guarantee success.

Aiding new launches

by Mike Power NGA

THE FIRST meeting of the campaign's aims group five (see aims, page 8) took place in mid-December. We decided to concentrate on the issues raised in the minority report of the last Royal Commission on the Press.

In particular we want to discuss the proposals for a launch fund for new publications, an advertising revenue board, and a national printing corporation. We decided also to consider subsidies to the press and the idea of municipal press.

Those present felt that our first job was to discover exactly what work had been carried out into these matters, and to look at the policies of the unions and other organisations.

Completed research will be reported by the end of January and circulated to group members. Anyone interested can attend the next meeting of the group, on **Monday, 23 February, 6.00 pm at 9 Poland Street, London W1.** The group can be contacted c/o the Minority Press Group at that address.

Lady Diana, the press, and the Catwoman of Balham

by Duncan Campbell, News Editor, *Time Out*

THE PRESS COUNCIL—the 'watch-dog' body that oversees the press—called a special meeting of all the editors of the national papers in December.

What prompted this unusual and awe-inspiring summons? Concern over the future of Times Newspapers? Worry about press handling of the H-block hunger strike? A united determination to campaign against the contempt verdict against Harriet Harman over her co-operation with a journalist at the High Court?

No, none of these things which you might have thought worthy of a frank discussion of our Fourth Estate-managers. It was to hold 'private' talks on the press treatment of Lady Diana Spencer, Prince Charles' friend.

Anyone who had picked up a paper on any morning at the tail-end of 1980 would have been aware who Lady Diana was. You would also be aware, if you watched the TV news at this time, that her every move was watched and recorded by around thirty journalists both from our own press and abroad.

Contempt for press freedom

by NCCL

AT LEAST since the abolition of the Star Chamber, it has been a principle of British justice that the courts must be open to every citizen. But in the Harriet Harman case the judge admitted that he wanted to reduce the 'risk' of publicity for evidence given in open court.

Harriet Harman, the NCCL's legal officer, was found guilty of contempt of court on 27 November. Her 'crime' was to show to a *Guardian* journalist Home Office documents about prison control-units which had been read out publicly in court.

As well as being an attack on the openness of the courts, the contempt conviction—which is being appealed—is a blow to open government. The Home Office tried to keep its documents secret, but failed. Now it has refused requests to place them in the Parliamentary Library.

The case is also a direct attack on the NCCL. Generations of lawyers have shown documents obtained in court cases to reporters. Why should this case be contempt?

We need to raise £20,000 urgently to get this decision overturned. You can help by sending us a donation, asking your organisation to make a donation, and circulating copies of an appeal sheet, from: **NCCL Contempt of Court Appeal, 186 King's Cross Road, London WC1. Tel: 01-278 4575.**

You would gather that 'harassment' would not be too strong a word to use for the treatment that she got—and the fact that she stood with her back to the sun in a dress, was, well, in the *Sun*.

Every paper did it—the tabloids with relish and the qualities reporting what their less respectable colleagues were doing on a kind of 'aren't-they-awful?' basis now popular in the *Sunday Times* and the *Guardian*. (And, yes, I hear you say—here we are having another go.)

Eventually, Lady Diana's mother wrote a letter to *The Times* attacking the press and asking for them to be called off. And the press officer at the Palace, Michael Shea, also made a more oblique 'hands-off' request.

Now most reporters and photographers if they search what is left of their soul would be able to tell a story about themselves and their pursuit of some equally pointless story.

A friend of mine said he finally felt that his days at the *Daily Express* were up when he found himself on his knees bellowing through the letter-box at a frightened old lady who was about to become The Catwoman Of Balham because she had an eccentric habit of taking in all the neighbourhood cats and now had about eighty of them mewling their way round her home.

And when I worked at London Broadcasting I remember one day spent stationed outside the suburban home of the *ex-wife* of the father of the illegitimate son of the woman who had just ceased to be Miss World. (The *Daily Mirror* had already bought her so the LBC news editor suggested I record myself knocking on the door and being refused entry. 'And I'm walking

down the gravel, lupin-lined path of 17 Lyndhurst Avenue... I'm lifting my hand to the door...')

But the pursuit of Lady Diana raises some key issues about invasion of privacy, keyholing, doorstopping or whatever.

First of all, there would never have been any outcry if she had come from any other circle. Just as in the same way crocodile tears were shed over Lady Barnett, Lady Diana's harassment was thought eventually to be not on.

Okay, to pillory and invade the privacy of the late Tom Litterick, Arthur Scargill, Maureen Colquhoun, 'Superdad' and 'Super-scrounger', Tony Kelly (remember the Red Beast of Newham NE?), the schoolteacher who killed himself after his wife-swapping was exposed by the *News of the World*, the '£14,000 A Year Caretaker', Alan Thornett, and dozens of others whom you may either like or dislike but who are unlikely to be the subject of a solemn discussion at the Press Council.

Well, you might say, what do you expect? Are the Fleet Street papers expected to be polite to revolutionaries, gays, well-paid caretakers, trade union militants? And don't the left press take the same joy in exposing and doorstepping property developers, wicked landlords and unscrupulous hacks (on the other side, of course)?

No, what Lady Diana has brought home (apart from that Prince of Wales chappie) is first the breathtaking waste of money and effort on a non-existent story which our press is prepared to indulge in.

And secondly, that while a 'harassed' public figure may eventually be protected from the press if she or he has sufficient pull, the equally harassed caretaker or shop steward won't extract quite the same sympathy.

But finally Lady Diana's treatment serves to illustrate an acrobatic act of hypocrisy whereby a press that 'shows no fear or favour' is prepared to draw in its fangs if the country's biggest property-owner—the Queen to you—is involved.

Act to free information!

by Martin Smith
Labour Committee for Freedom of Information

THE Labour Committee for Freedom of Information has recently been formed by Labour Party supporters of open government with the aim of generating discussion and pressure for legislation on this issue. Its broad purpose is the implementation of the 1974 Labour Party manifesto commitment.

This stated: 'Labour believes that the process of government should be more open to the public. We shall: replace the Official Secrets Act by a measure to put the burden on the public authorities to justify withholding information.'

Following that general election, a commitment to repeal the Official Secrets Act was given in the Queen's Speeches of 1975, 1977 and 1978. It was not implemented.

Among the reasons why the Labour government failed to act was that the party

in the country had simply not thought the issue through. Nor had there been any serious debate about the strategy required for a successful campaign against governmental and administrative secrecy. Little effective pressure was brought to bear on an unenthusiastic leadership.

The activities of the new committee will include: discussions of alternative proposals for legislative change; the encouragement of local initiatives; and the publication of a detailed case for a statutory right of access to official information. The committee is happy to supply speakers to CLPs and trade unions.

In the immediate future, the committee will be backing Frank Hooley MP, who drew third place in the recent Private Member's Ballot, and is to introduce a Freedom of Information Bill.

Further details about the committee's activities from: **Martin Smith, 1 Grange Gardens, Grange Road, Cambridge CB3 9AT.**

East End News seeks £7,000

THE EAST END News Co-operative Society is now registered as a Friendly Society and elected its first management committee on 12 January. Among those elected to the committee are CPF national committee members Jake Ecclestone and Mike Jempson.

The equivalent of four full-time staff are shortly to be appointed to work on the new weekly paper.

So far the *East End News* has net capital of £18,000 and still needs to find another £7,000 before the 13 March launch date. Donations or share applications (minimum £5) should be sent to: **EEN Treasurer, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2. Tel: 01-981 1221.**

HOW WE CAN COME TO GRIPS WITH THE MEDIA

by Tom Sawyer
NUPE Northern Divisional Officer

THERE NEEDS to be a conscious effort by the trade unions to see that the subject of media bias is high on their list of priorities. The media, press freedom, television coverage and related issues are central to the political and industrial campaign against the Thatcher government.

In the Northern division of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), which represents 50,000 members in the five northern counties of England, the divisional council has insisted that the media occupies a central place in the union's contribution to the TUC's Campaign for Social and Economic Advance. Throughout 1980 we took every available opportunity of pressing our case within the movement.

In May, for example, at the Regional Labour Party Conference, we moved a successful resolution condemning the media's coverage of the TUC's Day of Action, and in particular the personal attacks made on Len Murray.

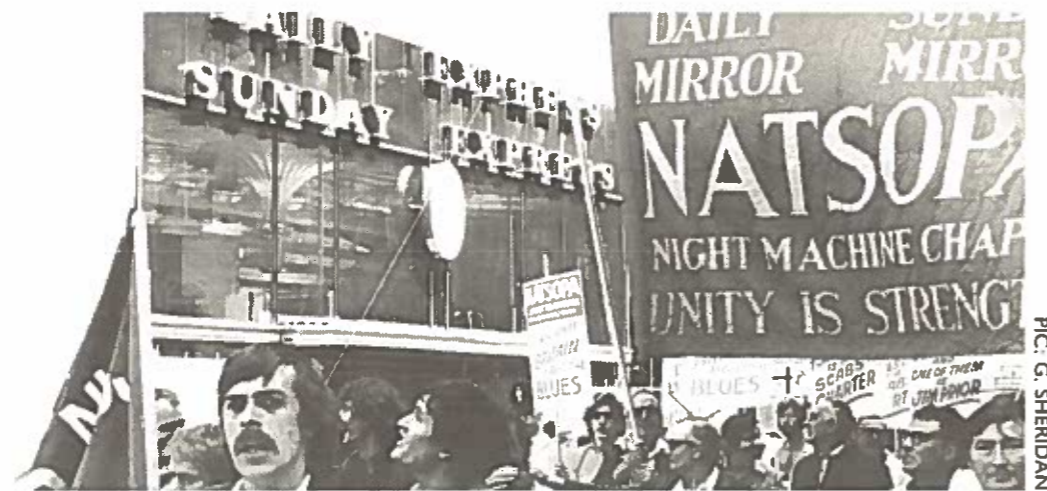
We called on the party's National Executive to pursue vigorously the requests made on them in composite resolution 7 at the 1979 annual conference, which included a range of measures to improve press freedom, give access to non-owning groups, establish the principle of industrial democracy, setting up an independent press council and an advertising revenue board, and extending the influence of *Labour Weekly*.

We followed that initiative during the summer and autumn by taking an active interest in the applicants for the ITV franchise in the Northern region.

Three applicants applied for the franchise. There was the existing Tyne Tees TV company, a subsidiary of Trident Television. This had a number of old Northern land-owners on its board. In the event the IBA renewed Tyne Tees' franchise, but said that it had to separate from Trident.

The other applicants were TV North, chaired by Sir Monty Finniston and supported by other prominent members of the regional ruling class, and Norseman Television, headed by a local brewer, Paul Nicholson. Norseman was supported by some prominent Tories, not least Sir Richard Storey, the owner of Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers, but also by two prominent unions in the region, the TGWU and GMWU.

We felt that the most active intervention that could be made in the franchise application was to submit a 12-point questionnaire to all the applicants, asking their views about access programmes, the treatment of traditionally exploited groups, the examination of causes behind disputes rather



Print workers on the march on the TUC's Day of Action, 14 May 1980.
'It's only by a combination of unions inside and outside the media that real progress can be made'

PICTURE BY G. SHERIDAN

than effects, giving the unemployed a voice, and a whole range of measures which, if implemented by the successful company, would provide a much improved television service in the region.

We did not expect that the successful company would actually implement the principles included in our questionnaire. But interestingly enough they all replied, and their replies suggest that if sufficient support could be gained through the trade unions and other representative organisations in the region to mount concerted pressure on the ITV companies, it would be possible to change their approach to a number of issues.

'Every trades council should have its own media working group . . .'

We believe that Tyne Tees should now be subject to continuous organised representation by groups in the community, including the unions, who want to see programmes made and presented in a more acceptable way.

This is not our only intervention in the media. We are also trying to extend the circulation of labour movement newspapers and publications to a wider group of our members.

At our divisional conference held in Newcastle in November, which was attended by 100 delegates, a special part of the proceedings was reserved for a presentation of the available literature from socialist and radical bookshops in the region, as well as *Tribune*, *Labour Weekly*, and the *Morning Star*.

The divisional council went further in its positive discrimination to support the labour movement's own press by awarding every branch represented at the conference a money voucher enabling them to buy books for their branch and which could be supplemented by spending from the branches themselves.

This approach of organising the labour press into the mainstream activities of the union is seen by the divisional council as being of fundamental importance to the development of the media campaign within

the union. This year steps will be taken to extend this kind of experience to branch level.

Finally, the divisional council has demanded that the Northern Regional Council of the TUC should establish a regional media working group to carry out on a regional basis the kind of work that the General Council's media group conducts at national level. This group would advise the regional council on matters relating to the reporting and presentation of the trade union movement in the press and broadcasting in the region.

The new ITV franchise holders have been told to produce much more regional television than they have in the past, and it is doubtful whether the BBC will be able to resist this trend. Considering that there are an enormous number of newspapers and radio stations in the regions, NUPE believes that the main focus of trade union media working groups has to be at regional and local level.

This is where the voice of the trade union movement, organised through the TUC, can have a considerable effect on programme-makers and newspaper editors.

For example, regional TUC representatives recently refused to appear on a programme that was being made by Tyne Tees Television dealing with the regional economy, because they did not feel the trade union view was being properly represented. We know from discussions with the unions in the company that this stand by the TUC did give rise to considerable cause for concern within Tyne Tees, which thought at one time that it might be difficult to produce the programme without the active co-operation of the unions.

Regional trade union media working groups can form a very important focus for a campaign against biased media in the regions and can mobilise a considerable and effective body of opinion against TV companies, radio stations and newspapers which are not prepared to listen to isolated individual approaches.

There is a need to extend this kind of initiative to the grass roots level of the trade union movement. We should be thinking about every trades council having its own media working group, consisting of affiliated unions, and particularly those unions which are represented in the media. It is only by a combination of unions inside and outside the media that real progress can be made.

Benn and ITN

Broadcast journalists reply to *Free Press*

by Ivor Gaber
Secretary, NUJ London Television Branch

THE LONDON Television Branch of the NUJ was one of the founder members of the Campaign for Press Freedom and it is therefore from a position of broad support for the aims of the campaign that the branch offers the following observations on the item in the last issue of *Free Press* entitled 'ITN offers Benn five minutes', which was both inaccurate and tendentious.

As to the factual inaccuracies - ITN did not lead its Labour Party conference coverage with the 'Gang of Three', as the item suggests. ITN's conference coverage began on the Saturday and it was not until the following Tuesday that a 'Gang of Three' story headed the bulletin, and that was for the one and only time. (For the record that Friday's *News at Ten* led with the *Tribune* meeting.)

Secondly, Peter Sissons (a long-serving NUJ member) did not offer Tony Benn time on *News at Ten* as suggested, but on *News at One*, the programme that he fronts.

Thirdly, Tony Benn's remarks were not made at the *Tribune* meeting, as reported, but at a meeting of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

So much for the facts, now to the argument. The article quotes Tony Benn as saying to Sissons: 'You're here to report the conference.' This raises two questions - firstly, does CPF accept the right of politicians to dictate to journalists what they should or should not report? And secondly, what is meant by reporting the conference?

Is *Free Press* seriously suggesting that the conference only consists of what appears on the agenda paper? Anyone who has attended such gatherings will know that they consist not just of the order paper but of various elections, decisions, by bodies such as the NEC, and finally the fringe, which has come to pay a more and more important part in the life of party conferences. Both ITN and the BBC attempt to reflect this reality in their coverage.

Free Press also says that Tony Benn told journalists at the conference that he



would not be available for interviews. That is his choice but given the nature of the events at Blackpool last year and the role he played in them no reporter should be condemned for seeking to interview Mr Benn during the week of the conference.

Finally, it's worth pointing out that the offer of five minutes on *News at One* amounts to a quarter of that programme's air-time. Had the editor of the *Guardian* offered Mr Benn four pages, or the editor of the *Mirror* eight (the equivalent of five minutes on *News at One*), would *Free Press* have regarded the offer as derisive?

Save the Camden Journal!

JOURNALISTS ON the Camden Journal and supporters in the North London borough are mounting a vigorous campaign to stop the closure of the weekly paper.

The editorial staff - all NUJ militants - were handed a month's notice just before Xmas and were told the paper is to be folded.

With a circulation of 6,500, Heart of England Ltd says that the *Camden Journal* is uneconomic. It so happens that management has never hidden its dislike of the paper's pro-Labour policies, and has failed to promote the paper in any way.

A defence committee has launched a Save the Journal weekly paper, which is building support for the campaign against closure and covering local news. The journalists, together with NUJ members on the *Hornsey Journal* and *Islington Journal* - part of the same group - are out on official strike.

Donations and offers of help to: Save the Camden Journal Campaign, 38-40 Camden Road, London NW1.

The search for scroungers, Part 91

by East London Claimants' Union

'SCROUNGERS' are regarded as good copy, with labels such as the 'workshy', 'superdad' and 'fallen women'.

We have never had open access to put the other side of the story. Low benefit rates, hectoring, and character assassination by Social Security are not news items.

Over one recent instance we complained to the Press Council, and were offered but then subsequently denied the right to reply.

On 5 November the *Sun* carried an item about soft living on supplementary benefits. The article purported to be cover-

age of a statement by Secretary of State for Social Services Patrick Jenkin, assuring the 'general public' that people on SS were no longer to get away with having HP debts on consumer goods paid for by the DHSS.

Even though the headline 'No more Hi-Fi living on the dole' suggested that such a life-style was possible, what emerged in paragraph four was that there was no record of any payment of this type having been made for the previous five years.

We wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of the *Sun* on the following day. We also wrote to the chapel representatives of the print unions at the newspaper, enclosing a copy of the letter to the editor and a reminder of the support given by their delegates at the TUC to the right to reply campaign.

We have yet to receive a reply from anyone on the *Sun*. Not least in view of the current level of unemployment, that is very disappointing.

On the same day as the *Sun*'s story, the *Daily Star* gave front-page treatment to the story of an unemployed man being paid in kind for 'helping out' behind a bar who was prosecuted by the DHSS for fraud.

The *Sun*, having failed to find any instances of 'Hi-Fi living on the dole', put the item on the convicted man on the dole under that article, proving claimants' culpability by inference!

Two days later the *Daily Mirror* carried a piece about an almost identical prosecution which was dismissed by the magistrate as frivolous. Neither the *Sun* nor the *Daily Star* saw fit to give that news item house-room.

