

# FREE PRESS

Bulletin of the Campaign for Press Freedom

SEPTEMBER/  
OCTOBER  
1981

Number 9

10p

## Press plot against CND

THE Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has come in for scandalous treatment by the Colchester *Evening Gazette*.

Launching what he said would be a series of thorough studies of the campaign and the nuclear question, John Cleal, an ex-army officer, highlighted the crucial role supposedly played by the KGB in orchestrating all resistance to nuclear weapons in east Essex.

Under the front-page headline 'CND and the Russian Link' on 9 July, Cleal listed three priorities of the Soviet plot: arrangement and control of 'meet the people' peace trips to the USSR; a propaganda effort aimed at schools, churches, professional societies and trade unions; spreading false information showing NATO as potential aggressors while disguising the build-up in Warsaw Pact nuclear weaponry.



Colchester *Evening Gazette*, 9 June 1981

Unsupported by evidence of any kind relevant to CND, each of these claims contained numerous factual errors.

Not content with slandering CND, Cleal accused other groups of being KGB

by Gordon Brotherston  
Chairperson, Colchester & District CND

pawns and dupes: Quakers, trade unionists, campaigners against Cruise missiles, and members of the World Disarmament Campaign, which he wrongly identified with the quite separate Soviet-backed World Peace Council.

This press onslaught had the immediate effect of uniting the offended parties, who met to plan their response.

Three points were unanimously agreed: to demand the right of reply and, if refused, to picket; to draft a press statement and to take up the matter with the Press Council; and to request the journalists' union to consider Cleal's case under its code of conduct.

A delegation visited the *Gazette*'s offices and spent two hours with the editor Peter Laurie and journalist John Cleal. Laurie refused to publish our reply and offered instead to use it as the basis for a piece of their own. Cleal was chosen to do the re-writing!

The doctored version which appeared that week was far from satisfactory and the picket went ahead. Over 2,000 leaflets were handed out explaining the affair. Another picket was held a few days later between

7am and 8am aimed at those working on the newspaper.

*Gazette* readers left its editor in no doubt about what they thought of Cleal's attack. For several evenings the letters page was full of complaints, describing the 'revelation' as absurd, inaccurate, unfounded, and above all irresponsible.

The newspaper wasn't able to produce a single letter in support of its attack.

In its recent report on the affair, *Tribune* diagnosed it as the beginning of 'what could be an officially inspired campaign against opponents of nuclear weapons'. It turns out that Cleal announced his resignation from the staff before our first visit to the *Gazette*, so he is no longer able to carry on with his projected series of nuclear stories. The NUJ charge against him is going ahead.

## No comment

JOHN JUNOR, editor of the *Sunday Express*, prides himself on his fearless column on behalf of right-wing causes. One item accused Labour MP Roy Hughes, who attended a conference of the World Parliament of the Peoples of Peace, held in Sofia, of being a Moscow stooge.

Hughes complained to the Press Council, arguing that he should have been allowed the right of reply. While the council upheld his complaint and the *Sunday Express* duly published the council's findings, this is what the editor had to comment on the matter:

FROM THE  
EDITOR  
OF THE  
SUNDAY EXPRESS  
1st July 1981.

FLEET STREET, LONDON  
01-283 8000

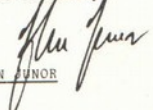
Dear Mr. Sheridan,

Thank you for your letter dated 29th June.

I will tell you exactly what action I intend to take over Mr. Hughes. None.

It took him eight days to make a reply to our article. He then did so at inordinate length and considerable dullness. I see no reason to apologise in any way for the treatment he was given.

Yours sincerely

  
JOHN JUNOR

Geoffrey Sheridan Esq.,

## Journalists take space on page one

READERS of the *Stockport Advertiser* may not have been too surprised when they picked up their newspaper on 9 July to read of management's plans to merge the paper with the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News* group.

Concentration of ownership in the local press has proceeded apace over the past 25 years, with the result that a handful of large groups now own most of Britain's local press.

But what may well have surprised *Stockport Advertiser* readers was that next to the management announcement at the top of page one

was a reply from the journalists on the newspaper, declaring their opposition to the merger, which would have meant the loss of 118 jobs — almost the entire workforce on the *Advertiser*.

NGA members had told management that its statement would not be set in type unless the journalists were given the same space to put their case. And the journalists based their argument on the Campaign for Press Freedom's pamphlet on the Right of Reply.

Sales of the CPF's 40p pamphlet now exceed 10,000.



# 'A flagship for socialist ideas'

Should the labour movement launch a daily newspaper, and if so what kind of paper should it be?

Geoffrey Sheridan asked GEOFFREY GOODMAN, the *Daily Mirror's* industrial editor, who is a member of the committee recently set up by the TUC to conduct a feasibility study into the launch of a labour daily.

OPINIONS are strongly divided over the desirability of launching a national daily labour newspaper.

While the Campaign for Press Freedom's AGM in May welcomed the feasibility study into the launch of a daily which has been set up by the TUC, a number of leading members of the campaign are not so minded. Some of their concerns are expressed in *Free Comment* in this bulletin.

Geoffrey Goodman is among the enthusiasts for a labour daily. A veteran of labour's former Fleet Street paper, the *Daily Herald*, he looks forward to a new model which could, he says, 'provide a political flagship for socialist ideas.

'It could show that a radical, socialist daily paper — without being extreme in the sense of representing a very small minority — can be professional and competitive, with very good journalism.'

He adds that it would enable journalists — 'hopefully socialist journalists' — to show that they have constructive concepts about how new journalism can be developed and evoke a response from people who do not consider themselves radical but feel 'there is something missing from journalism today'.

Geoffrey Goodman regards these as first principles. He makes the point in response to the view that the labour movement should not bite off more than it could chew; that it ought to begin with local and regional papers, and perhaps move on from that experience to launching a national daily.

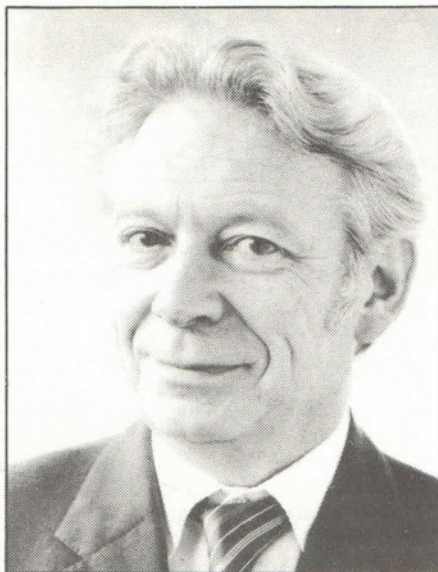
Maybe there aren't the resources to do the latter just yet, he considers, and therefore we may have to compromise with our principles, but the principles have to come first.

He is irritated at those who counterpose local and regional alternatives to that of a national labour newspaper. He finds nothing incompatible in the various alternatives, and says that we should look at the possibilities as a package, each component having its own strengths and weaknesses.

A national paper can best deal with national and international issues, and the development of communications has meant that 'there is a continuity of news and ideas which have to be discussed every day'.

Acknowledging his own baptism in print media, he considers that the weakness of the electronic media is that they 'don't offer an easily retained message'.

Has the experience of the *Daily Herald* left a distaste for a newspaper that might be gripped by the conservatism of the labour leadership? The question annoys the former labour daily's industrial editor. Those informed about what happened on the *Herald* should know better than to ask it, he says. And as evidence he points to the fact that



*Daily Mirror* industrial editor Geoffrey Goodman: 'A viable newspaper would have to be free of institutional controls'

the *Herald* was the first Fleet Street paper to support the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, in 1959, when both the TUC and the Labour Party leadership were opposed to the ban-the-bomb movement.

Geoffrey Goodman envisages a loose linkage between the senior editorial staff of a labour daily and its financial backers. His key word is 'trust', in both the moral and organisational sense.

'A newspaper that's going to be effective and viable,' he believes, 'would have to be independent of institutional control. There is no doubt at all in my mind about that.'

'I've always believed that the best way is to have a trust labelled "independent", which would be appointed by the labour movement. The trust would be give *carte blanche* as an independent body to appoint the editor, who would be responsible to that body to maintain the integrity of the paper.'

And would the trust be accountable to the labour movement? 'The trust might be elected,' he says. 'I see no objection that that.'

And if those on strike, for example, took exception to the coverage of their dispute in what they might well regard as their newspaper, wouldn't it be a matter then of battling for the right to put their case in its columns? Maybe so.

'There are very great dangers,' Geoffrey Goodman says, 'in glibly accepting the idea of total accountability if you are producing a newspaper. It's difficult enough to do that even if you have the assumption of total authority.'

'But if you're continually looking over your shoulder wondering what the Hartlepool branch of NUPE is saying, it's impossible. One would hope that senior executives would never lose sight of what it says, but what the Walsall branch of the AEUW says might be completely different.'

'That's why total accountability is impossible. In the end you have to give trust.'

What, then, of the existing trade union journals: are they an obstacle to winning support for a labour daily?

'With very few exceptions,' Geoffrey Goodman says, 'they have missed out on the vast potential that exists. Trade unions reach into the roots of society, with a potential for a unique two-way communication system that no other institution can achieve.'

'Harnessing that potential ought to be one of the major responsibilities of every trade union general secretary, but even now a great deal of it is going to waste.'

'I see democracy and accountability really flowing in that sort of process. I would, of course, apply this to a labour daily. I want a great deal of readership involvement.'

And lastly the recent report that barely a quarter of the TUC's target of £40,000 to fund the feasibility study has been raised? Geoffrey Goodman says he didn't know the details. As far as he was concerned, the study could be done for nothing, if the committee members simply pooled their own ideas.

● The members of the committee set up to conduct the feasibility study are: Lord McCarthy (chair), John Dixey (production manager of the *Guardian*), Geoffrey Goodman (industrial editor of the *Daily Mirror*), William McClelland (former group marketing director of Reed International), Percy Roberts (retired chairperson of Mirror Group Newspapers) — all serving in a personal capacity, together with TUC representatives.

## Airspace, please

by Simon Partridge  
convenor, Community Radio Group, ComCom

IN A written reply to Parliament, the Home Secretary gave the first official if tentative recognition to community radio on 11 July. William Whitelaw acknowledged that there was 'support for some form of community radio development'. He proposed to 'give further consideration to this matter'.

On the same day a coalition of community, hospital and student broadcasters wrote to 140 MPs about an open letter they had sent to the Home Secretary in response to the third report of the Home Office Local Radio Working Party. The letter detailed an experimental pilot scheme for community radio.

MPs were asked to write to the Home Secretary in support of such a proposal, arguing among other things: 'We believe that low-cost community radio stations, run co-operatively or on a non-profit basis, could make an important contribution to community life and its economy by complementing the work of the larger scale BBC/IBA local radio system.'



# WHEN ACCESS TO TV ISN'T ENOUGH

by Carole James

**LABOUR** councillors eager to reach a wider audience in defence of local services have been learning some bitter lessons.

Typical has been the recent experience of the majority Labour group on Sheffield city council, who agreed to participate in Yorkshire TV's *Where it Matters* as part of a continuing effort to build united resistance against Heseltine's attacks on local government.

The programme could have presented a thorough debate on the scale, standard and cost of services in Sheffield, illuminating the dire choices faced by local authorities in the current climate. Televised nationally immediately following the 10pm news, fronted by Desmond Wilcox, it seemed an opportunity too good to miss.

In place of such debate, the subsequent programme attempted trial by television. The structure of the programme was geared to this end. A filmed prologue was produced, implying that recent dramatic job losses in Sheffield were caused by the council's rating policy and that this resulted from a change of leadership following the May 1980 local elections.

The programme-makers relied heavily on several politically inspired rumours.

"This was in fact proposed by Aubrey Singer, managing director of BBC Radio, in a speech at Edinburgh in 1979. We are asking the Home Office to experiment along these lines, with a localised form of radio that "will reach those parts the BBC and IBA cannot afford to reach".

"These could be urban neighbourhoods under stress, communities of interest across a whole conurbation — such as the old, the young, disabled people, ethnic minorities — or rural areas neglected by mainstream communications."

While the Home Secretary is considering the possibility of developing community radio, all those in favour of it should make representations to him, and, if possible, persuade their MP(s) to do the same. Letters of support should be sent to the Home Secretary, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

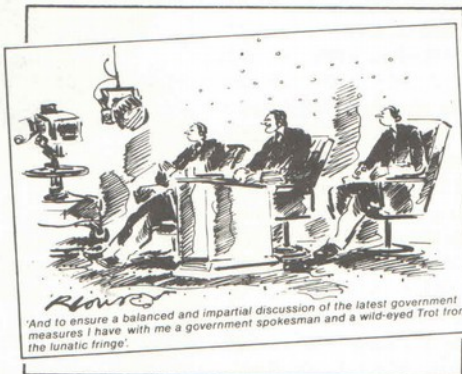
Copies of the open letter — an 11-page document — are available from: **Community Radio Group, 92 Huddleston Road, London N7 OEG**, price 45p incl. p&p, cheques/POs payable to Community Communications Group. We would also be pleased to advise on setting up and lobbying for a community radio station.

page 3

The most damaging of these was that the council had commissioned a secret report on 30 local companies, with a view to taking them over. Understandably this aroused fear and fury among industrialists in the city.

In fact, this was a serious misinterpretation of working papers produced for the economic strategy group, a council sub-committee attempting to develop radical socialist policies to combat rising local unemployment.

This group has been seeking ways of encouraging new forms of productive enterprise, including the production of socially useful products. It is interested in the possibilities of planning agreements between local authorities and failing local firms.



One of a set of six CPF postcards, at 15p each

These papers were designed for the partisan but relatively considered discussion of the council committee room. They assumed the continued confidence of both the local labour movement and the business community.

To turn these issues into drama and 'good television', YTV attempted to engineer confrontation. They flew in Lord Thorneycroft, reputedly at a cost of over £4,000, from a Pirelli board meeting in Milan, to join a panel of celebrities, including a senior executive of a key company reputedly ripe for take-over.

Key representatives from the local authority were placed in strategic positions in the audience, to be challenged and cross-examined before the camera, to answer unanswerable questions of conspiracy and subversion.

Luckily, so undramatic was the discussion that much of it ended up on the cutting room floor, and the result was a confused, disjointed muddle. But in their search for popular political debate, the producers had fallen into the pockets of those in the Sheffield community and beyond who have a vested interest in destroying radical policies, whatever the consequences.

In failing to research and understand their source material, and in trying to surprise the participants with malicious political gossip, they fell short of the most basic standards of 'balance'.

To members of the wider labour movement, frequently subjected to such distortion as the victims of 'professional' journalism, this will be another occasion when mere 'access' to the media was not enough.

## Reselecting the facts

by Graham Smith

**THERE** is no shortage of pundits to tell us why the Great British Press is so uniformly appalling, but few have managed it with as much insight and wit as Brian Whittaker in the latest offering from the Minority Press Group: *News Ltd.*

The book is in two parts, the first telling us why the existing local and national newspapers regularly serve up a diet of trivia and establishment orientated misinformation, and the second describing the history of one attempt to break the monopoly, the *Liverpool Free Press*.

Whittaker wastes no time in exploding the myth of 'objectivity' to which most journalists believe they have exclusive rights.

He explains how the uniformity of journalists' training and early newspaper experiences lead inevitably to a common view of how 'facts' should be selected and then organised, in order to present a 'professionally-written' story.

Most newspaper stories start from a 'source', and Whittaker analyses just how routine they really are. He lists 18 'sources' which every journalist will recognise: it is depressing reading.

News 'values' also come in for a long-overdue hammering, and in a chapter titled 'Publish and be jailed' Whittaker traces the history of Britain's repressive publishing laws.

Throughout the first part of the book, the author substantiates the points he tries to make with detailed annotation and direct quotes: the book should be compulsory reading for all trainees, and might even make seasoned Fleet Street hacks think more carefully about how their newspapers are produced, and question their role on the production line.

The second part of *News Ltd* describes how the *Liverpool Free Press* came into being; how its problems were resolved, and why a suggestion that it should describe itself as a 'socialist' newspaper — as everyone involved with it would individually describe themselves as socialists — was rejected.

The section ends with a series of extracts from the *Liverpool Free Press*, which comes like a breath of fresh air after the depressing reading of the book's first section.

This newspaper provides an excellent study in the politics of radical journalism — campaigning aggressively against corruption, poor housing conditions, and the like... and the fact that it succeeded when more overtly 'political' newspapers failed shows that 'left-wing' newspapers can be popular. *News Ltd* is a book which should be read by every journalist and trades unionist. Although some readers may feel that Brian Whittaker is trying to teach them to suck eggs, it is an invaluable and timely contribution to a vital debate.

● *News Ltd*, price £3.25, is available from the Campaign for Press Freedom.





# A day at the BBC

**HOW often have you sat down after a news or documentary programme on television, tried to contain your anger, and thought of all the ways in which views had been distorted; of all the questions which could have been asked, but weren't?**

A group of trades unionists went one better than that this summer – they took their criticisms to the producers who made the programmes. They did so by invitation of the BBC, at a one-day session held at Limegrove in London. The ensuing discussion would have made a brilliant TV programme!

There were nine trades unionists in all – Engineering Union members from Manchester, and members of various unions from Glasgow. They spent the preceding afternoon and most of the night in a hotel, examining *Panorama* and *Nationwide* pro-

grammes on last year's steel strike, news coverage of the strike, and a *Nationwide* item on the Birmetals dispute in Birmingham.

Then came the confrontation, attended by 20 producers. The result, according to *Panorama* producer David Graham, who got the event together, was that 'all the producers agreed that there was something in what the trade unionists said, which implies they would do it differently if they were doing it again.'

The trades unionists, he adds, 'were attacking about nearly all the programmes.'

They liked coverage which showed trades unionists fighting for their rights, because, they said, they saw themselves in it. But there was little of that, and one of their main criticisms was that they hardly saw themselves anywhere.

They didn't like the conclusion of 'What about the workers?', a news special programme called 'Steel strike', which ended with a scene of pickets surrounding a lorry with a voice-over from Arthur Scargill saying: 'One thing you can be sure of, now they've been through this experience, members of this union will be more political.'

'You can't reduce political awareness,' the trades unionists commented, 'to bashing lorries.'

They had a list of questions that weren't asked in *Nationwide's* coverage of Birmetals, an engineering plant which management says it has been forced to shut because of union demands. Management, they pointed out, was not asked straight out what steps it had taken to explain the situation to the unions. And the producer was told he assumed he could go into the homes of workers, but not those of management.

The producers were asked about their background, says David Graham. At one point the trades unionists asked all those who had been to public school to put their hand up. 'You are pretty different from us,' the producers were told. 'There's a lot about us you don't know.'

One of the trades unionists who took part, Stan McNee, a boilermakers shop steward from the Govan shipyards, says the exercise was useful.

'What surprised me, he comments, 'was that the interviewers – reporters, as they call them – are just a tool. Sue Lawley was pumping out stuff about the Royal wedding for a couple of months before the event, and I asked what she was doing. "It's my job," she said. There's a bit of a lack of consciousness there, I think.'

Photo: G M Cookson (Societist Challenge)

Telling TV producers about their coverage of events like this

## Muting the voice of militants

**IN CASE** you missed it last month, ATV screened *A Question of Leadership*, a one-hour film discussion among trade union activists involved in last year's 13-week national steel strike.

The programme, about the strike and its implications, was of a kind which we all too rarely see on television: a reasoned intelligent discussion of a serious political issue by the people involved. That is probably why it took 15 months to get it on screen. It was put out late at night on 13 August, when most people concerned would have been on holiday. It was shown only in the ATV region.

And if those restraints weren't sufficient, the programme was cut by 12 minutes to allow the insertion of a studio discussion with Bill Sirs and the general secretary of the Welsh TUC, which in the words of the programme's director, Ken Loach, was 'entirely redundant and anaesthetises the rest of the programme'.

*A Question of Leadership* was filmed over about eight hours among a group of people actively involved in the strike or in its support. It showed, in the words of one participant, ISTC official Sandy Feather, 'the anger of

working people'. And he added that it was fairly representative of the kind of views held by activists in the aftermath of the strike.

The participants saw the strike as part of a government offensive on wage rates, and especially jobs, in the public sector. They were highly critical of their own trade union leaderships, and of the role of the police – 'Maggie Thatcher's boot boys', as one speaker described them.

The reason for the delays, the

changes, and finally the insulting slot in the schedule the programme received was given as 'balance'. This raises an important question. In television all programmes must display 'balance'. This one apparently didn't. But 'balance' is supposed to ensure that all sides of a question get a fair hearing.

The views of these people were an integral part of the debate surrounding the steel strike. If they haven't had a hearing before – where was the media's 'balance' then?

The mass media can live, and indeed love to live, with the working class portrayed as victims, or if workers are allowed an inarticulate grunt of anger from a vox pop on a picket line or at a demo. But let them sit down and show a clear, well argued and articulate opposition to the national political consensus, then by all means refuse them a voice. They are evidently unbalanced!

by Barthélemy Piéchut



# WHAT THEIR PAPERS DON'T SAY

## Discuss TV

FOUR discussion evenings are to be held in Birmingham in October and November to examine controversial issues in broadcasting.

Organised by Birmingham Film Workshop and West Midlands Arts, the sessions are to be introduced by Plaid Cymru MP Dafydd Elis Thomas (7 Oct.), Women in Broadcasting and Film Lobby (21 Oct.), Alan Foundation, of Channel 4 (4 Nov.), and Stuart Hood (18 Nov.). Tel: 021-359 4192 for details.

## After 80 years . . .

*If the marketing strategy of New Socialist – the Labour Party's new magazine – succeeds, it will make the history books.*

*The problem for left-wing periodicals in Britain is how to break from the 'ghetto' of a tiny readership. A print-run of more than 15,000 or so brings economies of scale enabling the cover price to be kept relatively low, thus helping to gain more readers, as well as such items as advertising revenue.*

*Launching as a two-monthly magazine on 2 September, New Socialist had by then already gained more than 2,500 subscribers, with over 30,000 copies destined for newsagents and radical bookshops. Selling at 60p for 76 pages, the magazine looks set fair to achieve a ghetto-breaking role.*

*It happens also to be the first analytical and discussion magazine in the Labour Party's 80-year history, and is edited by CPF national committee member James Curran.*

## Disturbing our balance of mind

THE farce of this year's Dimpleby lecture, with one would-be lecturer after another being vetoed by the BBC's upper echelons, has drawn to the attention of a wider audience the crassly conservative regime being run by BBC director-general Sir Ian Trethowan.

His guiding principle is: 'If it might upset Margaret Thatcher, drop it.' This deference isn't merely about getting approval for a rise in the licence fee.

Trethowan is himself a Tory, and he is backed by the chairperson of the BBC board of governors, Sir George Howard, one of the richest landowners in Britain. For good measure, the

newly-appointed deputy chairperson is Sir William Rees-Mogg, another Tory, and a leading candidate for Trethowan's job is Lord Windlesham, former Tory minister of state for Northern Ireland.

So much for the BBC's notorious acts of 'balance'. We seem less than a million miles from the situation in France, where de Gaulle established the practice of making senior appointments in the state broadcasting network from among his supporters. Mitterand's Socialist government is said to be lining up replacements for Giscard's broadcasters.

With the notion of 'balance' increasingly discredited in Britain, it is noteworthy that the *Guardian's* TV correspondent, Peter Fiddick, wrote an item last month with the headline: 'Preserving an independent turn of mind'.

He gave 'two cheers' to the Independent Broadcasting Authority for ruling that local authorities cannot take shareholdings in Independent Television or Independent Local Radio companies. The decision arose from a move by the Labour-controlled Durham county council to buy shares in Tyne Tees TV.

Fiddick wrote: 'For broadcasters to have fruitful relationships with the local community is one thing . . . But actually getting into bed with the community's main political force is surely quite a different and more dangerous matter.'

Presumably we are to consider the industrial and finance outfits which make up the major shareholders of the ITV and ILR companies as politically neutral. Durham county council's say in the running of Tyne Tees would probably have made little impact at the shareholders' meetings, but it certainly is high time consideration were given to gaining labour movement-controlled radio and TV stations.

## Rebels' cause

IF YOU picked up the message that the attempted coup in Gambia this summer was by rebels calling for the dictatorship of the proletariat, you did well.

The information was sent to Amnesty International by informants in West Africa, but amidst the drooling coverage of SAS heroics – 'They had the help of a former SAS major Clive Lee, a civilian instructor to the Gambian

pioneer corps. A tough-looking man about 6ft 6in tall' (*Sunday Times*) – you could search in vain for an explanation of why anyone would want to kick out Gambia's neo-colonial regime.



## Creepie

*FREE PRESS's* diary correspondent, you will not be surprised to learn, was among the boat-loads who took off for Boulogne on the Wedding Day. So was Frank Johnson of *The Times*.

His report was headed 'Defiant left wingers escape the tyranny of the House of Windsor', and the article continued in a similar vein. Fair enough.

Just one thing. Johnson recorded that when he went in search of Richard Balf, Labour member of the European Parliament, who was in charge of one of the escape groups, he was told: 'You can't miss him. He looks like an opportunist, a careerist, and a creep.' Okay, but when did you last see a comment like that about a Tory relayed in their press?

It might be added that Free Press's correspondents nationwide report that the display of bunting on the streets was considerably less than the media's output of Royal-worship.

## Race code complaints

THE executive of the journalists' union has decided to proceed with complaints against six Fleet Street members over their reports of the Black People's Day of Action, when thousands marched through Central London in protest at the handling by police and the media of the Deptford fire.

The complaints have been brought by the NUJ's London Freelance branch against reporters on the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, and *Sun*. They are

charged with being in breach of clause 10 of the union's code of conduct, which states: 'A journalist shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed, gender, or sexual orientation.'

If the complaints are upheld, the journalists face possible fines or expulsion from the NUJ.

● Management of the *Daily Mail* has been warned by the newspaper's journalists in Manchester about the dangers of inciting racism.

The NUJ chapel unanimously passed a resolution criticising a front-page lead headline in the *Mail* during the Toxteth riots which said 'Black war on police'. The journalists pointed out that blacks and whites were involved.

## Who needs Standards?

LONDONERS' one-and-only evening paper, the mis-titled *New Standard*, is the same blend of High Toryism of its forbears, the *Evening Standard* and the *Evening News*, only more so. Its main preoccupations are rubbishing the Labour-controlled Greater London Council, and extolling the Metropolitan Police.

With that in mind, the GLC launches its own newspaper this autumn. The 8-page tabloid will be delivered free to nearly 3m households, at an estimated cost for the first issue of £132,000.



Tony Hart, chairperson of the council's finance and general purposes committee, says: 'We feel we have a duty to Londoners to tell them what we're doing. We get a raw deal from the *Standard*, which is intent on making us out to be a bunch of malevolent Marxists.'

'It's a disastrous situation when a paper which is in a unique position to get across to Londoners is so determined to build up the GLC leader, Ken Livingstone, as an ogre and to give such a negative bias to everything we do.'

Geoffrey Sheridan



# FREE COMMENT

## The case against a national labour daily

THE NEED for a new national daily newspaper to serve the interests of the labour movement has been 'reported' quite uncritically in recent issues of *Free Press*.

A number of the campaign's better-known members have expressed the view that it is only by tackling the *Express*, *Mail*, *Telegraph* et al head on, that the labour movement can get its views across. Arthur Scargill (*Free Press*, July-August) says that such a newspaper would quickly establish a readership of 6m and force advertisers to use its pages for preaching their message, at which point, presumably, the newspaper would cease to be a drain on the labour movement's financial resources.

There are many reasons for believing that no matter how well intentioned these arguments may be, they are quite wrong.

The most important reason, perhaps, is the fear that any national labour movement daily newspaper financed centrally by the TUC would simply become the voice of a TUC committee. This fear has been expressed many times since the campaign was launched, but it has never been satisfactorily laid to rest.

Indeed, the TUC has a less than perfect record on press freedom: the expulsion of Tameside Trades Council in 1979, for seeking to discuss ideas on Northern Ireland at variance with those of the General Council, was roundly condemned by many in the labour movement as narrow-minded, sectarian censorship.

Another important fact to grasp when juggling with the logistics of national daily newspaper production is that there is no such thing in Britain as a national daily newspaper! Instead, there are newspapers which are produced in London and Manchester, and then distributed to the rest of the country.

Wales, the South-west and the North-east hardly get a look in in terms of decent coverage – which is why, in those areas, the local or regional daily newspapers, carrying as they do a round-up of 'important' national stories, are read by just about everybody.

As national newspapers fret over dwindling circulation figures, and indulge in facile competitions to win temporary readers, the local press continues to thrive. You don't need a £40,000 feasibility study (even if you had £40,000) to tell you which area is the more profitable: Associated Newspapers, for example, could not afford to publish the *Daily Mail* were it not for the profits generated by its local and regional publishing subsidiaries.

Scargill's view of how advertising revenue would be generated is not shared by the advertisers themselves. National newspapers carry a relatively small amount of advertising – not because their proprietors don't like making money, but because national advertising campaigns

are run on the basis of competition between different brands, not commodities or (obviously) local retail outlets.

So why doesn't the TUC look to the regional and local press for models on which to base its alternative? The monopoly control of information in the provinces is every bit as repressive as it is in Fleet Street; there is clearly a job to be done.

If the TUC sponsored one pilot project, with a local trades council perhaps linking up with a left Labour-controlled local council, it could minimise the risks it was taking and at the same time light a beacon for radical journalism which might later be repeated city by city, throughout Britain.

But if the TUC continues on its present course, it must realise that as long as there remain more questions about its motives than there are answers, it faces a hard slog to convince even its own supporters that such a project was even remotely worthwhile.

**Graham Smith,**  
Founder member of Hull News



## Regional route to labour daily

OF COURSE, the imagination is fired by the idea that every day we could read a popular, accessible pro-labour movement paper, and of course such a paper is desirable. Then why not wholeheartedly support it and make it happen?

Because there is much more at stake than the creation of just one paper – namely the revival of the entire radical, labour press. It would be unwise to focus our attention single-mindedly on establishing a labour daily, whatever the cost (say £10m) – as if, like the revolution, it will solve all our problems. The re-creation of a labour press cannot be undertaken by simply making a solution happen at the top and expecting the effects to automatically percolate downwards.

Readers for the daily won't appear from nowhere; old reading habits die hard. *Sun* and *Daily Star* readers will have to be weaned off the old product. Thus we require a strategy developing from the grassroots upwards, creating support at the local and regional level, and encompassing new initiatives in the magazine and periodicals field.

Such a range of experiments would tell us which kind of pro-labour paper can sell and be successful.

I suggest a 5-year plan with a labour daily as the goal. In the meantime a trust should be set up to channel funds raised

through the labour movement. In fact the Campaign for Press Freedom is in an ideal position to be the basis of such a conduit, after establishing procedures and some form of accountability towards those who donated the funds.

These resources should then be used to financially support those local and radical weeklies that already exist, and to instigate launches in a planned manner where the labour movement feels there is a gap, or the local monopoly paper is so dreadful and hated by the local population that competition could effectively challenge their monopoly position.

And let's not forget the monthlies. A new magazine like *New Socialist* can play an equally important role in counteracting the media's negative handling of the labour movement. With its print run of 39,000, its impact could be considerable.

The well-known local/regional initiatives like *Rochdale Alternative Press*, *Rebecca* and the *East End News* are only the most visible alternatives. Fifty other such papers exist elsewhere, and every month new initiatives come up. The latest is the projected *Birmingham Inquirer*, due to appear in late 1982. While these developments might seem puny in comparison to a labour daily launch, together they can form the launch pad from which a successful daily could be put into orbit.

**Charles Landry,**  
Minority Press Group

## Co-operatives don't threaten trade unionism

AS A delegate to the Campaign for Press Freedom's AGM in May I thought the most unresolved debate was around the question of whether alternative print/press organisations threaten trade unionism.

Although this may not appear to be an essential part of the discussion about press freedom, if it isn't taken on it could drastically split the support for this campaign.

The debate arose around the NATSOPA motion which supported 'the establishment of an alternative press' and of 'co-operatively-run non-profit making printing works', but which at the same time called upon 'the labour movement of this country to ensure that its printing is carried out by members of printing trade unions and that such members are paid not less than the nationally agreed rates for the work.'

The NATSOPA motion added: 'We further instruct the national committee of the CPF, and the editor of *Free Press* to ensure that they do not support or publicise non-union and non-printing union printing works.'

There is no doubt that alternative organisations only have the political space to exist because of the rights and freedoms won by 100 years of trade union struggle; such organisations can't be found in countries where trade unionism has never developed or where it has been systematically smashed.

It became clear at the AGM that some delegates considered that the alternative organisations are using that space to poach work from the organised sector. Yet the history of these alternatives has not been that a sharp operator has seen an opportunity to carve out a fortune, but that they fill the gaps left by big business.

This is certainly what happened with the Publications Distribution Co-op, PDC. A group



of publishers was forced to get together four years ago because their publications were constantly turned down by the big commercial distributors who didn't and still don't like their critical anti-establishment politics.

The Co-op could only get going because people were willing to work all hours for little pay, and it grew, *not* by distributing publications which would otherwise have been handled by organised labour, but by attracting other material which the commercial organisations wouldn't touch.

If we had to pay ourselves union rates and overtime and stick to the letter of health and safety procedures we'd be forced to close; and remember that we'd be inflicting this damage on ourselves – no employer would suffer and no work force triumph. Our closure wouldn't result in nine more jobs for the organised sector; it would only mean nine more people in the dole queue and over 2,000 radical books and magazines taken out of bookshop circulation. (One of which, by the way, would be the one you're now reading.)

Since a founding aim of the CPF is to challenge the control of the monopolies in the media it would be a strange development if we and the printing works around the country which operate in similar ways were forced out by too inflexible an application of trade union norms.

That we can only exist by self-exploitation is a contradiction of trade union principles and practice, and in any other job all of us would be members of our appropriate trade union and fighting for those principles and practice. But it seems clear to us that it doesn't threaten in any way the conditions and jobs of organised workers that we are not.

There was a body of opinion at the AGM which was primarily concerned with protection of their trade – the NUJ freelance motion which was carried by a two-vote majority reflected the same narrow concern – and lost touch with the aims that brought us all there (on Cup Final Saturday).

Perhaps the people who unsuccessfully moved the NATSOPA motion could get in touch with their local alternatives and find out why they operate as they do and to what extent they interfere with local organised labour. It would be useful if there was grass roots contact between mainstream union and alternative organisations.

I think they'll find that far from having conflicting interests, we are after all part of the same movement.

**Sal Jenkinson,**  
*Publications Distribution Co-op*

## Would that we could do it, too!

MY Council is disturbed that the motion on printing co-operatives should have been allowed to have been discussed by the Campaign for Press Freedom. It appears to us that this matter was properly an issue between the print union NATSOPA and Preston Trades Council.

In all events, *Preston Worker* seems hardly to be a commercial venture. We suspect it would never even get published if the work was done by professional printers.

As we understand it, Preston Trades Council – like most other trades councils – has very limited resources, so we find it unfortunate that it should be criticised for its efforts to communicate to the wider trades union movement. Would that we were able!

**K B Jones,**  
*Secretary, Enfield-Edmonton Trades Union Council*

# Coming to grips with the media

by Malcolm Wright

THE North-East steering committee of the Campaign for Press Freedom has started negotiations with the Northern regional TUC to try to produce a model teaching course for trades unionists on how to handle the media.

The project will centre on formulating a one-day seminar course at which local journalists will work with shop stewards on interview techniques for both newspapers and radio. A CPF-sponsored course has already been run at Darlington Media Workshop, which will be the venue for a weekend school for ASTMS shop stewards in November.

Meanwhile plans are going ahead to produce a series of booklets on the control of the North-east media, concentrating on the monopoly of local newspapers held by the Thomson Organisation and Westminster Press.

The steering committee hopes to launch a North-east branch properly after distributing new recruiting leaflets through the early autumn with the aid of the TUC, the Labour Party, and local trades councils. Anyone wishing to help in setting up the branch should contact Malcolm Wright (tel Darlington 484374) or Linda Perks (tel Darlington 54621). The steering committee can provide speakers on media issues for trade union branches or other organised meetings.

The Yorkshire Media Group is examining the possibility of setting up a new regional CPF branch in Yorkshire, with its headquarters in the Leeds area. Anyone interested should contact Mark Hebert (tel Leeds 780841).

## 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.

## Broadcasters lay plans

THE CPF's broadcasting sub-committee had its first meeting on 3 August (*writes Jenny Rathbone*). The only media union representative present was NUJ broadcasting organiser John Foster, but we hope representatives from the other unions will attend our next meeting in September.

Our first task is to write a broadcasting version of the campaign's founding pamphlet, *Towards Press Freedom*. This is not expected to be a definitive blue-print on broadcasting, but a broad outline of why there is a problem, with suggested alternative solutions.

The next meeting of the sub-committee is on Thursday, 17 September, at 6.30 pm, at NALGO head-office in Mabledon Place, London WC1 (King's Cross tube). All campaign members are welcome.

● Other CPF sub-committees: Right of Reply – convenor, James Curran; *Free Press* – convenor, Geoffrey Sheridan; Press and Publicity – convenor, Jake Ecclestone; Committee for Press Distribution – convenor, Liz Cooper; and involvement with the Labour Freedom of Information Campaign. For details of these sub-committees, please contact the campaign.



## NUJ affiliates

THE National Union of Journalists is the latest trade union to affiliate to the Campaign for Press Freedom. NUJ members were not of one mind on the issue. In a postal ballot, 3,896 journalists voted in favour of affiliation, with 2,385 votes against.

### MEMBERSHIP

Individuals: £5 a year.

### AFFILIATIONS

Below 1,000 members: £10; 1,000 to 10,000: £15; 10,000 to 50,000: £25; 50,000 to 100,000: £50; more than 100,000 members: £100.

☐ I/We would like to join the Campaign for Press Freedom as an individual/affiliated organisation and enclose ... £

☐ I/We would like to receive ... copies of each issue of *Free Press* at 7½p a copy.

NAME

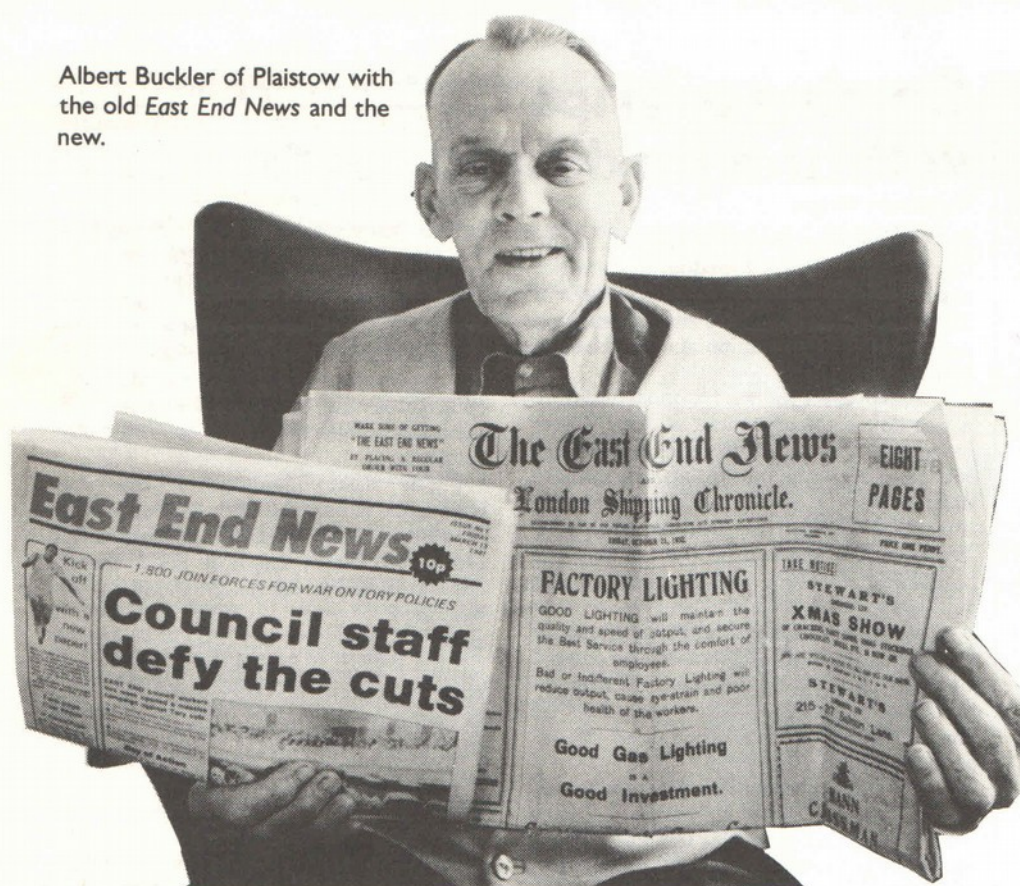
ORGANISATION

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Campaign for Press Freedom  
274/288 London Road, Hadleigh,  
Essex SS7 2DE.



Albert Buckler of Plaistow with the old *East End News* and the new.



# GROWING PAINS

**'THE first freedom of the press consists in not being a business' – Karl Marx, *Rheinische Zeitung*, 19 May 1842.**

by Mike Jempson  
Secretary, East End News Co-operative

**THE *East End News* has survived its first six months, losing none of its bright tabloid appeal. The weekly newspaper is increasingly recognised as a serious alternative to the existing press monopolies in East London.**

But the cost has been phenomenal. Running the paper on a minimal staff – still inadequate, although it has grown from four to 11 – and keeping overheads low, the *EEN* has eaten up £40,000 in direct subsidy from share capital and donations.

While the effort is beginning to pay off, and we can expect advertising revenue to

rise steadily now that we are established, such costs highlight the enormous problems faced by those wishing to challenge the capitalist press in the market place.

There has been constant reassessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper. Our top priorities now are a guaranteed minimum circulation and competitive (which means uneconomic) advertising rates. The need for solid professional business expertise to give substance to idealism and enthusiasm has also become clear.

Discipline and efficiency are prerequisites for the survival of such a project, especially since production pressures have left little time for attention to detail.

The organisation problems of a workers' and consumers' co-operative are onerous and require a quite different style to that of an ordinary newspaper office. We cannot pretend to have worked out the most appropriate methods of involving members in the running of the paper.

Most people are slow to come forward even with offers of help. Yet when people do volunteer to help, the time taken to deal with them, or the inability to make immediate use of them, creates a whole new set of problems.

Imagine what would happen in the ruthless world of the straight press if readers, syndicated columnists, and freelancers were constantly coming into the office, phoning up for a chat, or joining in news conferences.

Slowly, however, a shape and style have developed through the pages of the paper and within the office. Members, contributors, staff, and readers have been quick to draw attention to the many inadequacies of the *East End News* – a

wearing process, but one which keeps us on our toes.

The great difficulty has been in trying to discover when a stable mixture, not to say formula, has been achieved, when even the least polemical newspaper can never satisfy everyone all the time. And it is important to keep major changes to a minimum so that readers can relate to a stable product.

A knowledge of the area served by a local paper is vital. Nothing infuriates readers more nor encourages a belief that 'the press don't care' than simple errors which display a basic ignorance about the distribution area.

When relying heavily on contributed copy there is a danger that outsiders interpreting an environment they do not know can create hostility among readers who do know. It can lead to accusations of superficiality, and destroy the whole credibility of a paper.

Similarly, reliance on local correspondents whose interests may be based more on 'issues' than hard news – a not infrequent criticism of the *EEN* and other radical papers – can also affect readers' reaction.

We have also had to contend with fairly standard challenges to our existence from commercial competitors; undercutting our advertising rates, seducing contracts away from us, and other more subtle forms of dissuasion. The smear campaign of the 'Commie rag' variety, and 'informed' warnings of financial instability rate high. They are difficult to counter without sufficient staff and resources.

Resistance from retailers has proved as big a bugbear as the traditional antipathy of the wholesalers to new experimental publications, particularly if these are sympathetic to the labour movement or positive about multi-racialism.

So a hard time has been had by all, but I doubt that any of us would have it any other way. It is far easier to dwell on the problems, and little time or thought is given to the positive achievements.

With £5,000 in from the Greater London Council, and an offer of £5,000 more from the GLC if we can raise another £10,000, the *East End News* should find sufficient extra subsidy to get us to break even point on a week-to-week basis.

Our hopes and efforts now depend upon how far our friends really want this experiment to succeed. That means digging into their pockets one more time.

Financial and other support to: **EEN, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2. Tel: 01-981 7337/8.**

## In Print

*Free Press* – only 7.5p a copy for multiple orders  
*Right of Reply*, the campaign's latest pamphlet, 40p  
*Towards Press Freedom*, the campaign's founding document, 30p  
*The Other Secret Service*, press distributors and censorship, 60p  
*The British Press – A Manifesto*, £3.95  
*Using the Media*, a basic handbook, by Denis MacShane, £2.50  
*Power With Responsibility* – the press and broadcasting in Britain, by James Curran and Jean Seaton, £2.95  
● All available from the Campaign for Press Freedom, post free

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● Contributions to *Free Press* from campaign supporters are welcome. The deadline for the November-December issue is 5 October. Send your contribution to: Geoffrey Sheridan, 116 Cazenove Road, London N16. Day tel: 01-703 5298.

Published by the Campaign for Press Freedom, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2DE. Tel: 0702 553131.

Printed by Spider Web (TU) 01-794 6575.  
Typeset/design by Redesign (TU) 01-533 2631.