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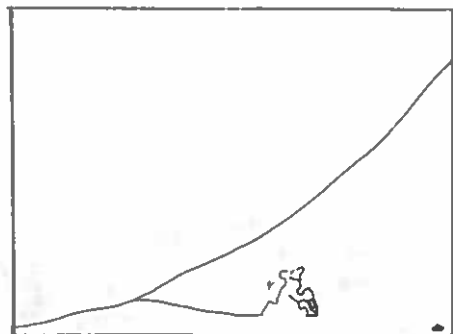
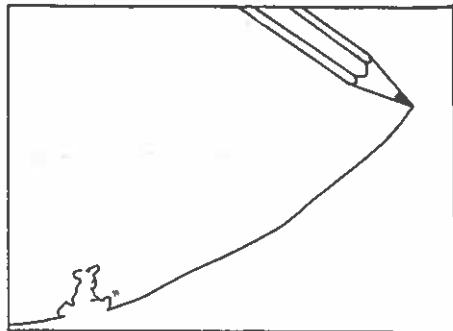
Labour Party broadcast attacks bias

By David Aldridge

A LABOUR PARTY political broadcast in October made a lot of people sit up and listen for a change.

Instead of the usual formula of tackling an issue likely to be popular with the public and then appealing for votes, the Labour Party used its ten minutes to examine the role of the media.

The aim was to ask: Are you sure that the picture of the world you receive from the media is an accurate, impartial



one? Or is it one with a built-in bias against the labour movement, against blacks and against other groups?

The broadcast began by establishing the case that there is an undesirable bias in the media. It went on to suggest why the problem had come about, and ended with some tentative proposals for reform — tentative because the Labour Party has not yet developed in full its policies on reforming the media.

The broadcast attempted to prove its case by example. It pointed out that despite the impression that Britain has a chronically bad strike record, figures from the International Labour Organisation show that in the international capitalist league table of strikes, Britain is in 11th place out of 21.

On the other hand, the broadcast pointed out, there is a strike which is seriously damaging the country — that of international capital. Yet how often do popular newspapers carry headlines about 'Investors hold country to ransom', or 'Three million on the dole as capital flows abroad'?

It also contrasted the attention paid by the government and the media to digging out so-called social security scroungers with their treatment of the vast amounts of social security which go unclaimed every year or the even larger sums that the exchequer is deprived of as a result of tax fiddles.

Other examples of bias were presented, including TV coverage of Northern Ireland and the treatment of the debate about nuclear disarmament. Then the programme asked why the media should reflect such a skewed vision of the world.

It illustrated the concentration of media ownership in the national and provincial press, ITV and commercial radio. And stressed both the inter-connections between the various sections of the media, and their stake in such activities as mining, oil exploration, travel.

The programme measured the claims of the BBC and IBA to be impartial against the many volumes of academic and other research which have proved conclusively that broadcasting is as much subject to bias, as are the national and local press, although in a different form.

In response to claims that we have the best press and broadcasting in the world, the programme went on to indicate that there were international alternatives worthy of consideration — the greater diversity of control in broadcasting as practised by the Dutch; the subsidies to new publications given by the Scandinavians, and the Freedom of Information Act that has done so much to aid investigative reporting in the United States.

The broadcast ended with an appeal for people to join the Labour Party and participate in the discussions about the media that should eventually lead to the framing of a definitive media policy.

The fact that the BBC felt constrained to reply to the broadcast later that night, and that the Labour Party received a large batch of membership applications suggests that tackling controversial issues in party politics is more popular than some might imagine.

'Change is overdue' says new BBC editor

AT LAST a senior journalist has acknowledged bias in the mass media.

John Cole, who has just become the BBC's political editor, says: 'What journalistic mentors in the '40s and '50s used to criticise as shoddy "angle-writing" fit only for the least demanding newspapers, is now too often the norm.'

Writing in the *Observer* on 25 October — his final column on leaving the newspaper for his new job — Cole went on to ask: 'Is there no merit left in Tennyson's "honest doubt", in leaving the reader a little room to make up his mind either way? A change is overdue.'

Cole records that shortly after he joined the *Observer* six years ago, Tony Benn complained to him that too many newspapers 'saw the political debate taking place in a spectrum extending from, say, Denis Healey to Jim Prior.'

'It seemed a fair point...' Cole confines his criticism to the press. But the same points can be made about broadcasting. Will his appointment at the BBC make any difference? Watch your screens — and this space.

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Censored - flowers on an Irish grave

'THE British media,' says a recent letter from an Irish friend, 'seem to have become little more than mouth-pieces for the government version of events in Northern Ireland.'

My friend is a journalist who lives in Dublin and is therefore able to receive both Irish and British television.

His letter went on: 'While I find the hypocrisy and media-manipulation on the Provos' part nauseating and am quite cynical of the reactions of people like cardinal O'Fiaich and Sile De Valera, I find the British behaviour unbelievably ignorant.'

'Are you aware that security forces have killed eight or nine people in the last few weeks, many of them apparently not involved in riots. Imagine if that happened in Poland, or indeed even Bristol.' The list of television programmes on Northern Ireland that have been altered, delayed or stopped altogether grows ever longer.

Twice this year the IBA has demanded cuts in current affairs programmes (*World in Action* and *TV Eye*) and BBC management also stepped in this year to prevent Bernadette McAliskey being interviewed on the hunger strikes (for one of *The Heart of the Matter* series).

'The most insidious characteristic developed by the media in dealing with Northern Ireland,' wrote Ian Studdard, co-producer of *The Troubles*, the excellent Thames series on Irish history, 'is the propensity to censor itself.'

I take that quotation from a recent issue of the Irish magazine *Sunday Tribune*; but there have been some attempts to raise the issue in Britain too. Last year the ICA organised a day-conference on the media and Northern Ireland in London and this summer the Arnolfini Gallery held one in Bristol.

by Colin Thomas, ex-BBC director

There were few media employees at either, but those who did attend provided invaluable information about why the conflict in Northern Ireland is so often presented simply as a law and order issue. The army in Northern Ireland employs some 60 press officers; the RUC 14; the Republican Press Centre has one phone.

Inevitably, that affects the way television journalists see the conflict, especially as they are heavily dependent on sources in the army and the RUC for tip-offs on where to get dramatic shots of street violence, ie, 'good television.'

Rioting tends to happen suddenly and briefly; if a journalist's report has annoyed the security forces then they simply don't tell him or her what is happening until it is all over. In any case, there is throughout television news an all pervading assumption of consensus; deviation from the consensus is seen as irrational.

As a television journalist pointed out in Bristol, 'you don't need to have a conspiracy.' It doesn't need phone calls from Downing Street to the BBC and the IBA and internal memos down the line. The sort of people the organisations recruit and the desire for promotion usually ensures that the process of self-censorship operates smoothly enough.

Just here and there, however, there are hints that self-censorship is breaking down. That growing list of tampered programmes is one, and more important are the signs of a collective response from television employees — the Thames ACTT shop's blacking of the screens because of the IBA's interference with *This Week* and the BBC NUJ chapel's refusal to accept the sacking of the then Panorama editor over the filming of the IRA at Carrickmore.

I must add a personal footnote. Three years ago I resigned from the BBC because of changes made in documentaries filmed in Northern Ireland on which I had worked as a director.

One of the changes included an instruction from the Controller of BBC-1 to remove a sequence showing a mother putting flowers on the grave of her son shot on Bloody Sunday. On the gravestone appeared the words 'Murdered by British Troops'.

The whole traumatic experience made me acutely aware of how difficult it is to avoid what my Irish friend calls 'media manipulation'.

I wrote an article for my union journal attempting to say precisely where I thought the BBC had got it wrong and also where I thought I had made my mistakes too.

Subsequently, another version of my article was used to argue the case about media distortion on Northern Ireland. Without my permission, reference to my two mistakes had been deleted and the word 'Provisional' had gone from my phrase 'Provisional atrocities'.

It is vital that in challenging the distortions of BBC and ITV, the alternative media do not slip into counter distortion.

The Fermanagh and South Tyrone election result has demonstrated that the courage of the hunger strikers — and the arrogance of Thatcher's government — has won the Provisionals enormous support.

That should not close our eyes to the fact that they are still apparently prepared to pursue a campaign involving the bombing of civilians. As George Orwell demonstrated so memorably in *Homage to Catalonia*, trying to tell the whole truth need not mean retreating into prevarication, cynicism or despair.

This article was first published in *Labour Weekly*.



WHAT THEIR PAPERS DON'T SAY

Enemy No. 1

NUMBER ONE target for vilification by the national press last month was GLC leader Ken Livingstone. Furious that a leading politician should dare to step outside the consensus on Ireland, the *Sun* led the pack with the page-one headline: 'This damn fool says the bombers aren't criminals.'

An immediate result was that Livingstone suffered two physical assaults in as many days.

Yet when the press was invited to face Livingstone on a Thames TV programme, only one journalist — Max Hastings, of the *London New Standard* — turned up. Livingstone repeated his point that: 'The military "answer" to the problems of Ireland has failed so often that by now it ought to be commonplace that Ireland needs a political solution.' When



criminals are shot, he added, no one steps in at once to replace them.

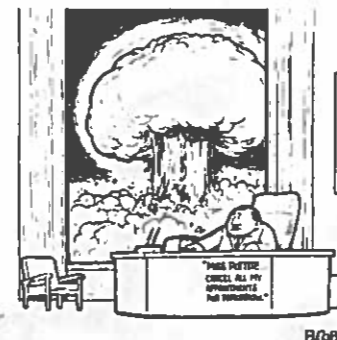
Hastings was reduced to silence. As Ken Livingstone told *City Limits*: 'If Nixon and Johnson had had such a compliant press as we've got here, they'd still be in Vietnam.'

On sale here

THIS autumn has seen the most recent push by socialist magazines to gain newsagent distribution.

Marxism Today, which had relied on bookshop and subscription sales, felt that was 'laudable but limited', hence its newsagent launch in October with a print-run of 22,000 copies. This followed a trial in three dozen WH Smith shops in London, which produced good results.

New Socialist, backed by the Labour Party, launched in September with a total print-run of 54,000 copies. Initial returns show a sale nearing 40,000, which puts it on a par with the *New Statesman's* sales in Britain.



Sane warmongers?

MEDIAWATCH aims to collate and publicise media bias and distortion on nuclear arms. Set up last March, we now have subscribers around the country who send in cuttings, and it is this voluntary work that we rely upon to provide us with information.

If you hear of anything that connects peace groups with 'Reds' — like the Colchester Evening Gazette story exposed in the last issue of *Free Press* — or grossly distorts or omits crucial facts, or you simply happen to know of facts that are being manipulated, send them to us.

The concern has even prompted a TV company to produce a programme on media bias concerning nuclear disarmament.

The questions to ask yourself when you read an article or see a programme dealing with war and nuclear weapons are: What terms of reference is it based upon? What assumptions, implicit or explicit, lie behind it? Do the disarmers have to first convince the interviewer that they are sane? Or does the reporter start from the premise that nuclear disarmament is plausible?

Media Watch, c/o END, 6 Endsleigh Street, London W1. DAVID PLUMB

Blind eye on racism

FLEET STREET journalists were accused of ignorance and racism at a special meeting of the National Union of Journalists' race relations sub-committee held in September.

Although it had been widely advertised, was held less than a minutes walk from the *Daily Mirror*, and featured three members of the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee — who spoke openly about the continuing disturbances and riots in

Toxteth — only three Fleet Street journalists bothered to attend.

Daily Mirror NUJ father of the chapel David Thompson, one of the speakers at the meeting, was severely criticised when he tried to defend the 'closing of ranks' of Fleet Street NUJ chapels when their members face disciplinary action under the union's code of conduct.

Under these rules, journalists guilty of racist reporting and headline-writing may be censured, fined or even expelled from the union. But so far all attempts to implement the code have failed because NUJ members on national papers have failed to co-operate. They have refused to provide the names of journalists responsible for originating or processing racist material.

Many of the NUJ members among the 30-strong audience said journalists working in Fleet Street had a responsibility to help make the union's code work and help fight for the right of reply.

The L8 Defence Committee representatives wanted to know why no national newspaper has carried a report of the continuing street fighting in Liverpool. NUJ deputy general secretary Jake Ecclestone said Fleet Street journalists accepted very high salaries in return for turning a blind eye.

A collection for the committee, which is campaigning for the rights of people held on remand, raised more than £30.

GRAHAM SMITH

Speak out

TRADES Unionists and campaign activists in the West Midlands now have a handy guide to dealing with the media.

Get Yourself in the News contains a directory of all the main news outlets in the West Midlands (both national and local), home contacts, the times of deadlines and those of editions and planning conferences. The 20p handbook also has advice on how to interest newsdesks in items, how to deal with reporters, and how to complain.

The NUJ Birmingham branch, which produced the guide, regards it as valuable to all activists — whether they are trade unionists, politicians, anti-nuclear campaigners or community groups. But its main aim is to help trade union shop-stewards, workplace representatives and branch secretaries, who may not be as skilled in coping with the media as most full time officials.

The publication is the result of NUJ involvement in Birmingham Trades Council's media advisory group. It was set up after relations between the local press and the labour movement became so bad that the trades council and the local Labour Party refused to speak to reporters from the Birmingham Evening Mail.

The directory is seen as a positive contribution by the NUJ to improve liaison between trade unionists and the media.

Copies from: Charles Tremayne, NUJ Branch Secretary, 21 Coronation Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 7DE. Send 30p for one copy or £1.00 for four (incl. p&p). Payable to the NUJ.

On editors who claim to be 'impartial'

Watch out for what he doesn't say,
Suspect a man who is
Too bland: who does he choose for friends
And who as enemies?

Which side is he 'impartial' on?
Where does his bias lie?
It's hard when sitting on the fence
Only to face the sky . . .

I know an editor who says
He's neutral through and through,
but he keeps his guns a blazing
At radicals like you.

Give your applause and your support
To the journalists who show
Who the real villains are
And tell them where to go . . .

by KIT MOUAT

The road to a reformed press

By James Curran, editor, *New Socialist*

THE TRADITIONAL strategy for reforming the press has been to foster and promote professional standards among journalists.

This has been the principal solution to the shortcomings of the press advanced by all the Royal Commissions on the Press. It is also the approach most favoured by both newspaper managements and union spokesmen in public statements.

This worthy strategy has given rise to the Press Council, the National Council for the Training of Journalists NCTJ, and the NUJ's Code of Conduct. None of these innovations has had an appreciable effect on the press.

The Press Council has proved so inadequate that the journalists' union walked out of it. Yet the NUJ itself has not been notably active in enforcing its own code.

And the NCTJ training has turned out to be narrowly vocational courses of indoctrination, presenting the dominant press values which serve the interest of newspaper managements rather than of the public.

The results of this reformist strategy have thus been somewhat disappointing. While there is no reason why we shouldn't push further along this path — a more representative Press Council, a more effective Code of Conduct, and better journalist training are, after all, desirable goals — we should not delude ourselves into

thinking that they will in themselves transform the press.

The basic fallacy underlying this approach is to imagine that the quality of the press depends on the quality of the people working on it. Journalists do not work in a vacuum unaffected by hierarchical pressures or the values of the organisations which employ them.

It is only by changing the ownership and structure of the press that we will have better newspapers and magazines.

Two strategies have emerged which go beyond the professionalism approach to tackle press ownership. Both draw upon the ways in which broadcasting is organised in the belief that broadcast journalism, despite its shortcomings, is superior to that of the press.

One approach canvassed by Michael Meacher and Chris Mullin, among others, is to establish an Independent Press Authority (IPA) which would function in much the same way as the Independent Broadcasting Authority does now.

The IPA would franchise all newspapers, just as the IBA franchises all radio and TV

companies; and, like the IBA, it would be responsible for ensuring that public affairs coverage is balanced and impartial.

However, their proposal includes significant modifications to the way in which commercial broadcasting is organised. The IPA would be required to favour workers' co-operatives and public trusts when awarding franchises to applicants.

Publishing franchises would also include a number of publications, so as to facilitate the cross-subsidy of ailing papers by healthy ones as occurs within existing publishing groups now.

Strong objection to this proposal has been expressed on the grounds that public regulation, necessitated by the technical need to ration public airwaves, is not needed for the press. Anyone is free to start a newspaper, it is argued, unlike a TV company or radio station.

This objection is not entirely convincing. The freedom to publish in some sections of the press is restricted almost solely to millionaires and multinationals, due to the production costs of publishing. In these sectors a franchising system represents a

means of extending rather than limiting access to press ownership.

For example, the last Royal Commission on the Press found that in 1970 it cost £2m-£3m to establish a local evening paper. Under the proposed IPA system, a group of local people who could not amass this sum of money would nonetheless have a chance of winning a local press franchise.

The second main objection to the IPA proposal is that it might introduce political censorship. Such fears should be put into perspective. Why is it politically acceptable to have a local radio station subject to a public agency but not a local newspaper?

My own misgivings about an IPA are more pragmatic. I do not believe that a political campaign calling for public licensing of newspapers — for that is what the IPA proposal amounts to — will ever get off the ground.

In its present form, the IPA proposal — as I understand it — also involves limiting access to press ownership in certain sectors of the press, where publishing costs are low and public access to press ownership relatively open.

An alternative and preferable strategy would be to establish an Open Press Authority (OPA) rather along the lines of the Open Broadcasting Authority proposed by the Annan Report for the Fourth Channel. The OPA would be accountable to Parliament, and be composed of representatives from all the major political parties, as well as from the press, trade unions and management.

Its aim would be to extend the political and cultural diversity of the press by assisting groups with limited financial resources to start up in publishing. It would administer a launch fund, which would assist in providing start-up capital for new publications judged to have a chance of becoming economically viable and adding to the cultural and political mix of the press.

The OPA would also be responsible for checking that open access to distribution was maintained. This could only be done effectively after a law has been introduced, as in France, which gives publishers the right to be handled by all wholesalers and retail agents on request, subject to a handling charge.

The major objection to this approach is that it does not more than create a new space in which publications have a chance to flourish. It does not directly challenge the existing concentration of press power in the hands of major media monopolies.

Clearly, existing anti-monopoly measures are inadequate. Between 1965 and 1977, not one of the 50 newspaper acquisitions and mergers referred to the Secretary of State was refused.

In any case, a law designed to prevent further acquisitions in the future is like attempting to close the proverbial stable door. The succession of newspaper acquisitions and mergers over the past two decades has resulted in just three publishing groups controlling two out of three daily and Sunday papers — both national and regional — sold in Britain.

The only effective anti-monopoly measure is to break-up the major press groups. The prime target for divestment is, of course, News International which controls *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun*, and *News of the World*.

Divested publications could be established as worker co-operatives along the lines of *Le Monde*. In this form, the objectives of the IPA strategy could be pursued in a way which has a chance of getting political backing.

But whatever policy is backed, one thing is clear. It is not enough to earnestly call for greater professionalism on the part of journalists, nor should we carry on complaining about the defects of the press without thinking practically about what we can do to remedy the defects.

It is time all of us in the Campaign for Press Freedom concentrated on developing — and debating — a programme for reconstructing the press.

'Sorry, we don't sell it'

THE 1977 Royal Commission on the Press said that there 'should be an obligation upon major distributors to supply any periodical'. The big three distributors did not agree.

WH Smith, John Menzies, and Surridge Dawson asserted that they had a 'divine right not to handle publications they found abhorrent though lawful'. How is it that a group of privately owned companies which control over 75 per cent of the market have been allowed to decide for so long, what the public should not read?

This system of censorship is an affront to the idea that we have a free press in Britain. The time has come to act to guarantee a free press.

In France, a system has been established by law whereby the publishers own 51 per cent of the monopoly wholesale/distributor and they decide how and where their publications will reach the public. All publications are guaranteed distribution through this company.

They arguably have the most efficient and modern system of distribution in the world. We could learn some lessons from the French.

They had the advantage of starting from scratch after the war so our task will be more difficult. We are also hampered by libel laws which make wholesalers, distributors, and newsgagents liable, as well as publishers.

W. H. Smenzies — the big three — safeguard their position by employing lawyers to prevent distribution of journals that might be 'deemed to be libellous in a court of law'. Such journals are guilty before being proved innocent.

So what changes are needed to guarantee a free press? There are two options. One is to copy the French. This would need a re-organisation of the wholesale/distribution companies, the co-operation of the big publishers (who have no argument with the existing system) and a change in government to enact it.

Such enforced change could turn the industry and public opinion



By Geoff Dixon, NATSOPA

against the idea. The second option could be the first practical step towards a more radical change.

This would require an Act laying down principles for distribution, and publishers' rights, with full recourse to an appeals system and the sanction of the courts.

The principles should include the following:

*There must be unrestricted distribution of the printed word, except for publications aimed at encouraging discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation.

*Publishers should have the right to determine which retail outlets carry their journals.

*Newsagents must be required to display all journals that they have available, and be supplied with any journal they request from publishers.

In return, a section of the Act should indemnify newsagents, wholesalers, and distributors against the libel laws.

Many other things need to be done, but as a first step these proposals could be introduced with the minimum of disruption to the existing distribution industry while maximising access by the public to a much wider range of publications.



Left Tapes for the Blind

VISUALLY-handicapped people should have access to socialist and feminist material in just the same way that the sighted take for granted, says the *Alternative Talking Newspapers Collective*, a new group formed this year.

Most braille and tape material for the blind comes from charitable organisations such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind, writes *Humphrey Evans*. The RNIB points out that it has limited resources which it devotes to meeting the wishes of old people who form the majority of the blind. The elderly, it claims, are not much interested in left-wing and feminist ideas.

Smaller groups producing talking magazines take their material from local newspapers with their limited political perspectives. The result is a kind of censorship by default.

The new collective has launched its own monthly tape magazines to help visually-handicapped people gain a wider political awareness. So far one

magazine, *Left Out*, collects together articles selected from the left press. A second puts the whole of *Spare Rib* on tape, and a third, *Women's Tape-over*, will bring together extracts from other feminist publications. Each magazine costs £3 for a year's subscription.

The editorial selection is carried out by visually-handicapped people. The collective says what topics it wants to cover, sighted scanners trawl through the left and feminist press for potential articles, and the collective then decides which to use. It has plenty of readers, but is still looking for extra technical helpers who can twiddle the knobs on a tape-recorder and would welcome offers of high-speed tape duplicating facilities.

You can contact the collective by post, either in writing or braille. Mark the envelope 'Helper' or 'Subscriber' and address it to: The *Alternative Talking Newspapers Collective*, Box 35, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS.

Time for change

What changes in the ownership and control of the press and broadcasting are required to move towards media freedom? Should we continue to put up with the Murdochs and Matthews? How can the labour movement effectively establish its own forms of mass communication?

The Campaign for Press Freedom wants to develop debate on these issues. *Free Press* will be pleased to publish your views.

The struggle for Poland's media

IN a sense the current conflict in Poland can be summed up in two simple questions: Who controls the factories and who controls the media?

The fight between Poland's ruling Communist Party and the working people of the country has been continually expressed through a struggle over media control. It is quite fascinating for a Western visitor to Poland to see the resonances between workers' criticism of the media in the West and workers' criticisms of the media in Poland.

One of the key demands raised by Solidarity in the historic Gdansk agreement which gave birth to the new union was for greater media freedom.

The union has been busy creating its own press — there are now more than 600 Solidarity bulletins, journals and properly printed newspapers which circulate inside workplaces and the community. In addition there is a continuous flow of Solidarity tape news cassettes which are played on factory radio systems or at union meetings.

In fact, there is a strong argument for believing that it was the decision of a group of workers and socialist intellectuals to launch a workers' paper, *Robotnik*, in 1977 that provided the crucial breakthrough for Poland's workers who up to that moment had lacked links, arguments and a sense of common problems.

The official mass media ignored workers' problems, never reported their demonstrations except in terms of 'hooliganism', and branded all those committed to working class interests as 'extremists'.

Since August 1980, there has been a

by Denis MacShane, NUJ



Lech Walesa signs the Gdansk agreement with Mieczyslaw Jagielski, left, in August 1980.

shifting, uneasy development of media freedom in the official press but this has not been institutionalised in a way satisfactory to the working people of Poland. Although the Polish Journalists' Association kicked out its party-appointed President last autumn and replaced him by a noted liberal reformer, Stefan Bratkowski, journalists themselves tend to keep aloof from Solidarity. Individual journalists may join and there may be considerable private sympathy expressed but as an institutional bloc, journalists have kept out of Solidarity.

Information goes West

By Alan Marshall, SOGAT

INFORMATION is a commodity which is now essential to both the developing and the developed world.

Europe, North America, and Japan are heavily dependent on communications, politically, industrially and culturally, and it is difficult to conceive of the Third World making the smallest progress without the basics of telephones and newspapers.

The UNESCO report *Many Voices, One World*, makes clear that money buys information and information creates power — a vicious circle with potentially devastating consequences both for developing countries and for minorities within the developed world.

We are seeing the growth of national and transnational information conglomerates, merging the once separate areas of newspapers, publishing, television, computers and telecommunications.

Such projects call for massive capital

investment, which has so far been based on concentration of ownership with little effort being made by governments to intervene in the interests of democracy.

The report frequently underlines that in many countries the needs of capital and the state coincide and restricted access to the media protects authoritarian regimes.

In the United States, corporations such as Harte-Hanks are using detailed computer analysis of census data to identify precise markets for their multitude of local newspapers and cable TV stations.

Their so-called Community Information Centres are even looking to returned bar-code information from supermarkets to tailor the advertising in their free-sheets to individual districts within a town.

In Britain companies with little or no public image or accountability dominate the media, and the possible deregulation of British Telecoms threatens to create further possibilities for the integration of information and communication industries under private control.

Developing countries have become increasingly vocal about the inequalities of world communications, protesting about indigenous cultures being swamped by Western media values.

They have tried to counter the one-way traffic in news from industrialised countries by establishing co-operative news agencies.

But the growth of satellite systems is pushing the balance further against the Third World. It is now possible for the

United States to know more about another country's natural resources than does that country itself, without its knowledge or consent.

Such disparities in communications raise particular problems for the printing industry. At a time when the book trade is in a major recession, and developing countries are expanding their own printing and publishing industries is it enough to simply raise the cry to 'buy British'?

British book exports are valued at over £120m, making up 40 per cent of sales, and the TUC has pinned its hopes for the future of the British printing industry on the use of new technology to exploit new markets, including overseas. Yet we need to avoid lining the pockets of British capital at the expense of the Third World.

New communications technologies create as many possibilities for increasing democracy as they do for strengthening multinational control, and *Many Voices, One World* extensively documents both.

Despite the spectacular growth of the new communications technologies there is as yet no sign of the imminent death of the printing industry. It continues to support a massive publishing industry and remains the backbone of packaging and promotion.

What we are seeing at present is the ruthless rationalisation of print and its integration into a global communications industry.

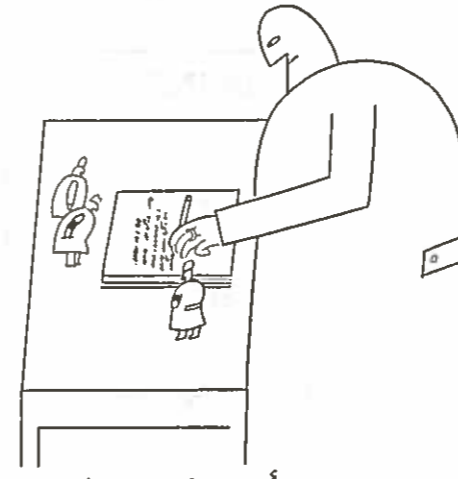
This process has to be matched by informed debate and flexible co-operation among all media trade unions, from print to telecommunications, from computers to television — and not just within Britain.

The party, in the form of the central office of censorship, the party press and information committee and the regional secretaries have still kept a tight hold on editorial policy and reporting style.

It varies from region to region, and in some regions, notably around Cracow, Szczecin, and Gdansk, newspapers have been much more open to Solidarity statements, but none of the mass media has made a decisive break with party control.

In one sense Solidarity does not know how to do this. A newspaper strike was called during August to protest against the stepping up of a media campaign against the new union. It was successful — about 85 per cent of printers and newspaper workers are Solidarity members — in so far as papers did not appear — except for a handful of national papers produced on military presses. But having proved that they could stop the presses, Solidarity did not appear to have any clear idea of how to take their claims for a freer press any further forward.

The continuing anger over biased coverage was reflected in the refusal to permit Poland's state television and radio to cover the Solidarity Congresses held in September.



Censorship USSR style, by Latvian cartoonist Maris Bishofs who left the Soviet Union in '72.

One suggestion put forward by Solidarity was that it should have its own columns or section in a newspaper and its own programmes on television. So far, the authorities have rejected this in the knowledge that the Kremlin regards any further weakening of party control over the media as proof of the situation getting out of hand — out of hand from Mr Brezhnev's point of view that is!

Solidarity knows that having a workers' press — successful as the Solidarity produced media are — is not enough. For most people in Poland, as in Britain, it is the evening television and the hastily glanced at newspaper that provides information and forms opinion. The search for an honest, free and pluralistic press and television is difficult in Poland as in Britain. But for Solidarity it is a central question.

● Denis MacShane's *Solidarity — Poland's Independent Trade Union* (Spokesman Press, Gamble Street, Nottingham, £3.50) includes a chapter on the Polish media since August 1980.



L-R Ron Bowey, ACTT; Kate Holman, East End News; Aidan White, NUJ; John Jennings, CPF Secretary

In Congress

The Campaign for Press Freedom's fringe meeting held at the TUC. In the Congress debate Alan Sapper, this year's TUC president, urged unions to support CPF's right of reply campaign.

He said selective presentation arose from class bias in the media against working people, and he accused the BBC of refusing to run programmes discussing bias.

Bill Keys of SOGAT said it was time the unions put their money where their mouth is, by helping to fund alternative papers.

Aidan White of the NUJ told delegates that journalists were beginning to take more seriously their individual responsibilities under the union's code of conduct.

Affiliated Unions

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

Association of Broadcasting Staff; Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians; Confederation of Health Service Em-

ployees; 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 Journalists; National Union of Mine-workers; National Union of Public Employees; Post Office Engineering Union.

Society of Civil and Public Servants; 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.

FUND-RAISER/ORGANISER

SINCE our establishment two years ago, the Campaign for Press Freedom has been in the forefront of the battle for media democracy, access and accountability. We now need to expand our activities in response to growing demands for change in the way the media operate.

We are therefore looking for someone to assist in developing all aspects of our activities, but particularly in the areas of fund-raising and organisation. Initially the appointment will be on a temporary and part-time basis, but with the possibility of developing it into a full-time post.

Energy and commitment, together with basic administrative and typing skills, are essential. Experience in other campaigning work, in journalism or in the trade union movement would also be useful. Salary by negotiation.

Apply in writing to: John Jennings, secretary, CPF, 274/288 London Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, Essex SS7 2DE, by 1 December.

MEMBERSHIP Join!

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.

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Essex SS7 2DE.

SPIRIT SHARING

By John Fordham, editor *City Limits*

AS THE straight press keeps its tongue firmly in its cheek in its observations of the listings magazine battle currently rumbling around London, the staff of *City Limits* grows increasingly accustomed to circumstances uncannily similar to those experienced by the late-sixties alternative papers.

That was when *Time Out* was born, the journal that nearly all of the *City Limits* staff had worked for until this summer's dispute. Why did we abandon that chi-chi office in Covent Garden and go it alone?

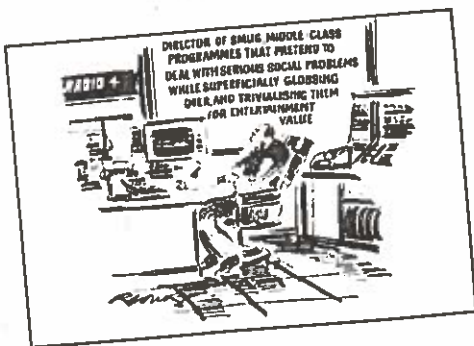
It was a mixture of practicality and idealism (caricatured unfairly as adventurism in some quarters) that made more than 40 journalists, designers, and production staff decide to accept more limited pay and conditions in order to preserve the system of wage parity that had been the issue in the *Time Out* dispute.

I wrote in the first issue of *City Limits* that our principle had been thus:

'... if it was worth being a paper that campaigned for change and showed you a good time, then it was worth running it in a way that was unconventional and made work a pleasure.'

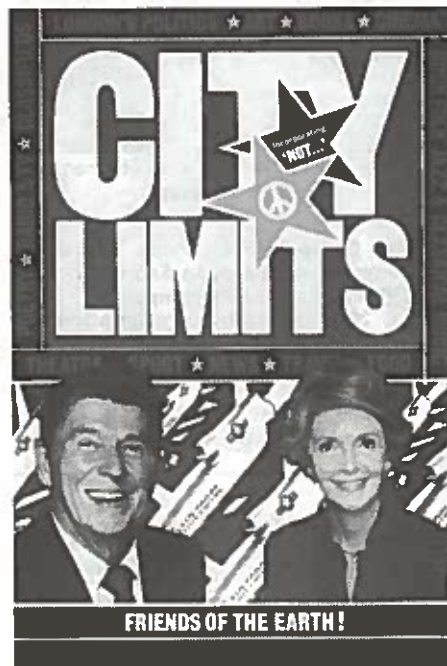
If any single factor was decisive in ensuring that a split with *Time Out* would finally come, it was parity.

Postcards



Two new postcards in CPF's popular set. Price 15p or 10p for five, post free.

It was the last retreat of a group of people who had been fired, evicted from their offices, threatened with legal action for the production of a strike bulletin, and then told that the only terms on which a solution might be possible would be one in which a genuinely adventurous and visionary working structure would have to disappear.



A background to all this was an emerging preoccupation that we had brought to *City Limits* from *Time Out*; that there ought to be a way in which the views we held could be presented as not simply fairer than all the old boring orthodoxies that most of the press is so keen on, but more fun.

The left press has become rightly notorious for battering its readers over the head with massive slabs of turgid righteousness, a form of sado-masochism that has undoubtedly helped to keep the cause out of the hands of the frivolous and thereby given socialism a rather peevish, judgemental air.

The search for a new journalistic language to suit these ends is nothing unusual. In 1850, Charles Dickens was writing of his own magazine *Household Words* that, while its aims were those of radical reform, it was animated by 'no mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities'.

The problems, of course, are formidable. We are understaffed and getting use to improvising with far more limited resources than we are accustomed to.

And though support from the public has been the most heartwarming aspect of this entire affair, we have found ourselves on the receiving end of the kind of clapped-out 'weirdos on the rates' coverage that was probably inevitable once it was announced that part of our start-up capital was coming in under a Greater London Council industrial finance scheme.

What we have on our side is commitment, enthusiasm, skill, and the encourage-

ment of a great many sympathisers — some of whom have been able to become investors in our cooperative, many of whom have invested their support in letters, suggestions, criticisms, even gentle persuasion of their newsgagents.

We also have the support of a great many freelance photographers and journalists who have offered work for us in the knowledge that they could get better rates elsewhere.

For everyone on *City Limits*, the weeks leading up to the publication of our first issue have been the experience of a lifetime — exhilarating, sometimes chastening, an education in the most life-enhancing sense.

Our hope would be to keep the spirit of that experience alive in every issue.

City Limits, 313 Upper St., London N1.
Tel: 01-226 6433.

Meet and Speak

THE Campaign for Press Freedom is frequently asked to provide speakers for meetings, which we are pleased to do. If your organisation or group would like a speaker on any of the issues raised by the campaign, please get in touch with: John Jennings, CPF, 274-288 London Rd., Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2DE. Tel: 0702 553131

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