

New contempt law puts journalists in the firing line — so much for “freedom”

Contempt for Free Speech?

by Andrew Nicol

THE Contempt of Court Act is like the curate's egg: some good parts, some bad.

While journalists now have a much clearer idea of what they can report when court proceedings are “imminent”, they face new threats which did not concern them before the Act became law.

The Act gives belated recognition to that recent invention, the tape recorder. It is contempt to use a machine without permission, but this should be readily granted (according to subsequent Practice Directions). A request could be passed to the associate or clerk by the reporter.

Rob Rohrer of the *New Statesman* had to quote Lord Hailsham and the Attorney-General before one Crown Court judge would give his consent, and the House of Lords bluntly turned down a request by Christopher Price to record the Greater London Council London Transport Fares appeal.

So much for the good and half-good news; the bad news is that the Act extends the law of

contempt in other directions. It reverses the *New Statesman* decision of three years ago and bans any disclosure of jury deliberations.

David Pallister of *The Guardian* has already been reported to the Attorney-General for what was said to be a casual conversation in an Old Bailey corridor with a juror in the Howard Marks' drug case. The original Bill would have allowed reports of jury discussions which did not disclose the identity of the jurors and the case, but the clamps were tightened by a last-minute amendment in the Lords.

Now it is technical contempt for a juror to reminisce with a spouse in bed without jury room debates. The Attorney-General's consent is necessary, though, for a prosecution.

The courts can also make two new types of gag order. They can ban indefinitely revelations in the Press of the names of witnesses whom they have allowed to remain anonymous or other evidence which they have kept from the public.

They can also postpone publication of reports of legal proceedings that might prejudice

those or other proceedings. The limits of these new powers are already being fought over. Indefinite bans depend on some common law power to keep names or evidence from the public.

Blackmail victims and Colonel B's can be protected. The court this year allowed women prosecution witnesses in a procuring and obscene publications case also to conceal their identities.

Ian Farquharson, a journalist on the *West Sussex County Times*, and the NUJ challenged a ruling by Horsham magistrates banning any report of an old style committal after reporting restrictions had been lifted.

The Divisional Court said this was far too wide; the Court of Appeal ruled 2-1, with Lord Denning dissenting, that the NUJ was wrong. The NUJ was given leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

“It's pretty rich,” said NUJ Deputy General Secretary Jacob Ecclestone. “The one time we get Denning on our side and the other two over-rule him.”

“Knowing his proclivities for spouting off about freedom, we thought he might issue guidelines for magistrates — he was

moving in that direction when he got jumped on from a great height.”

Vital rights to gather information and report proceedings will be lost by default unless the journalists are vigilant and are ready to challenge over-wide court orders. At the very least, their use should be monitored and reported to the Campaign.

Andrew Nicol is a Barrister and lecturer-in-law at the London School of Economics

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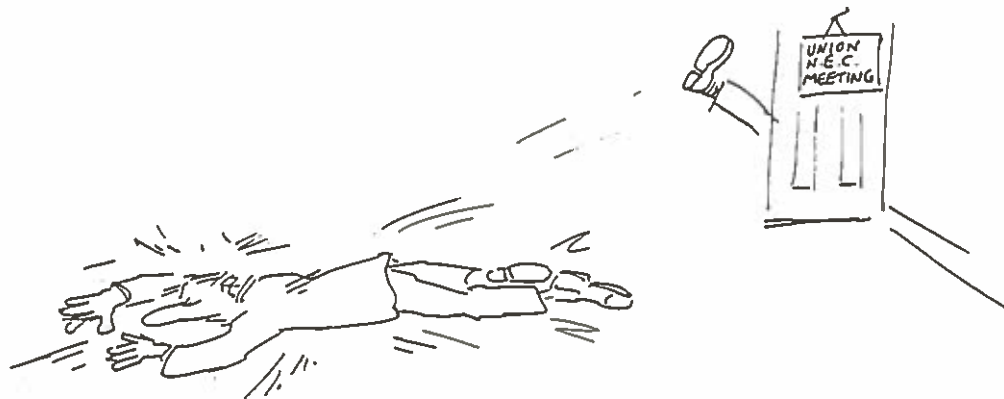
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Cartoon by Phil Evans, Socialist Worker

THE OFFICIAL WHO SUGGESTED THAT ALL UNION FULL-TIMERS SHOULD BE ELECTED...

COUNCIL DEMOLISHES 'DEMOCRACY WALL' IN LINCOLN

by Jeff Linden

FOR many years, local groups in Lincoln, like Amnesty International, War on Want, Friends of the Earth and CND have displayed posters in Lincoln City Library, promoting their causes and advertising events.

From time to time some have also held exhibitions. For instance, Friends of the Earth held an exhibition which gave an alternative view of nuclear energy. This followed an ultra-professional PR exercise by the Central Electricity Generating Board to promote the pro-nuclear case.

In future it seems that only "official" views can be aired as a result of a ruling by Councillor Jean Bassett, new chairperson of the Libraries Sub-Committee of the Conservative-controlled Lincolnshire County Council.

Her view is that libraries should not display any posters which are against the Council's interest. So out goes anything which the Council thinks is political, not just Party political.

"We are trying to be democratic," said Councillor Bassett. "The library is a quiet and peaceful place, and we want to avoid anything controversial... we are merely concerned with our library and our image."

Whose library? Whose image?!

The new ruling follows a decision taken a couple of years ago to withdraw political publications from the reading room, allegedly on economic grounds, although the library refuses to take donated

materials. The Council does not consider the *Telegraph* or *Sun* to be politically motivated.

Reaction from local groups has been swift. Lincoln Amnesty Secretary Richard Skipworth said: "The Council decision flies in the face of all that Amnesty stands for, and is directly opposed to British traditions of democracy and civil liberty. It seems that even here in Britain we will have to fight for freedom of expression."

War on Want is a registered charity, yet was refused permission to display a poster of a starving child, as this was deemed to be "political." Why War on Want posters are refused when those of other charities, like the RSPCA, are allowed remains unclear.

Ray Longmore, secretary of Lincoln CND said: "Surely all law-abiding non-Party-political groups are entitled to promote themselves in public buildings run for the benefit of ordinary people?"

Meanwhile back at County Hall, Chief Executive Bob Prentice said the Library Sub-Committee would review the ban on December 9. (After our deadline — *Free Press*). Until then the ban has meant that these groups, and others, have been undemocratically censored, without any debate in Council.

Free Press would like to hear from any groups or individuals who have suffered the same experience. Jeff Linden is an assistant branch secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union in Lincoln.

The Times, Tebbit's law and Rupert Murdoch

by Jake Ecclestone

STUDENTS of Fleet Street may have noticed a rather curious leading article in *The Times* on November 25. Headlined "Mr Tebbit's Lost Clause", it greeted the latest proposals for anti-trade union legislation in an entirely predictable way apart from the last paragraph.

This said Mr Tebbit's proposals were deficient and argued in favour of a "lay-off clause" which would enable an employer legally to stop the pay of all employees during a dispute even if there was no provision for such a penalty in the contracts of employment.

The purpose of such a clause, as *The Times* made clear, would be to strengthen an employer's ability to "resist opportunistic claims" by one section of the workforce by enlisting the support of those not immediately involved in the dispute, but whose pay had nevertheless been stopped.

The next day *The Times* followed up with an article by Anthony Frodsham, Director-General of the Engineering Employers' Federation, taking up and expanding on the scheme with some enthusiasm.

None of which need surprise us, much less merit comment. But what caught my attention was the source of the idea.

At the end of January, 1981, Rupert Murdoch was given a fortnight in which to get agreement with all the unions at Times Newspapers on redundancies, staffing levels and disputes procedures. One of the more quaint proposals he came up with was that all employees would be put off the payroll in the event of a dispute arising with one

group of workers, no matter how small the group. Everybody would be penalised, therefore, for the actions of others.

It was an ingenious little scheme, and was promptly blown out by all the unions at Times Newspapers. Fighting management is one thing; fighting each other — for that was the real purpose — not at all attractive.

So, the idea was dropped; Murdoch reached the necessary agreements, got his papers and everyone settled back. Then, come the end of September, there was a dispute in the machine room and notices went out saying that all staff on *The Sunday Times* were being taken off the payroll.

The scheme had plainly not been dropped, notwithstanding the agreements he had signed seven months earlier and notwithstanding its dubious legality. That remains to be tested, should it be tried again, for in this instance the dispute was quickly resolved.

The point that concerns me is this: Harold Evans, then the editor of *The Sunday Times*, was one of that select group of people who vetted Rupert Murdoch's suitability as the future proprietor of our most famous newspapers. After giving his approval Mr Evans was subsequently made editor of *The Times*.

Mr Murdoch had, of course, given all the undertakings and assurances that he was asked for on the little matter of editorial independence and proprietorial interference. Indeed, such a suggestion was unworthy of this great and good man —

particularly as Mr Evans was there to defend his journalistic staff and guard the sanctity of *The Times*.

How cynical it would be, therefore, to see any connexion between Mr Murdoch's proposals for industrial relations reform in February and the editor's proposals in the leader columns of *The Times* in November, identical though they are.

Jacob Ecclestone is the Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists

Freedom Fund

TRIBUNE is being sued for libel damages by the Right-wing pressure group, the Freedom Association, and its deputy chairman Norris McWhirter.

The FA has issued a writ over an article entitled "Fighting the advances of the 'libertarian' Right", published on August 21. Tribune say they plan to contest the action because "we believe that an issue of considerable importance will be examined".

But legal actions are costly, and Tribune's financial resources are already under strain. Donations to: "Freedom Fund", TRIBUNE, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 3DY.

ONE-SIDED VIEW OF A MAN WHO KILLED WOMEN

FLEET STREET's coverage of the "Yorkshire Ripper" trial, at which Peter Sutcliffe was jailed for the murder of thirteen women and the attempted murder of another seven, has been criticised in a feminist journal.

The current edition of *Feminist Review* publishes an article by Wendy Hollway which accuses the Press and media of "covering up" male aggression in their reports of the trial.

"The lay, legal, psychiatric and journalistic disclosures all shared an assumption about what is normal masculine sexuality," says Ms Hollway.

Many newspapers carried headlines similar to those of *The Guardian* which read: "He has shown himself to be a jovial, likeable individual, capable of showing great kindness... A man concerned with old values and customs, one who shows concern for the unfortunate and the elderly."

According to Ms Hollway: "Able to provide no satisfactory explanation, the Press split of his bad/mad side from the normal man offered to the public in such Press comments as 'everyone who knew

Sutcliffe thought he would have made an ideal father.'"

Ms Hollway, who teaches Occupational Psychology at Birkbeck College, University of London, points out that the journalists involved in covering the trial were almost exclusively men.

"Sutcliffe's claim that 'God encouraged me to kill people called scum who cannot justify themselves to society' was eagerly seized upon by the Press," says Ms Hollway, "who failed to point out the inconsistency of the fact that for Sutcliffe only prostitutes fell into this category (and not, for example, the men who, like him used and abused them)."

Ms Hollway says her study of the trial's coverage was based on reports in *The Guardian*, but: "The coverage in quality newspapers such as *The Guardian* is a good deal less sensational, and often less blatantly sexist in its lines of reasoning. If the case I am making stands up from these reports, it would thus go for any reports — save feminist ones — of the trial."

Feminist Review is available from 65 Manor Road, London N16.

Towards a Left Alternative Press

by Simon Partridge

JAMES Curran proposes the establishment of an Open Press Authority (OPA) to "reconstruct the press" (*Free Press* no. 10). I have grave doubts as to whether the creation of another bureaucratic quango would achieve his aim (we will leave aside the thorny problem that its creation would seem to be dependent on the election of a Labour government).

For instance, Left critics of the Press always seem to ignore the inconvenient fact that — Bingo wars notwithstanding — there is strong reader loyalty when it comes to newspaper/magazine consumption.

I don't see, therefore, that the *Sun* divested from News International and run as a workers' co-op (it is not clear how such a co-op would buy out the capital or whether it would remain with the OPA) would be very different from the *Sun* owned and run by Rupert Murdoch. Whether the Left likes it or not, readers of the *Sun* buy it partly because of p.3. It seems to me that similar arguments could be applied equally well to the *Express* or the *Times* etc.

The OPA might have more of a role in assisting the start-up of new papers/magazines. However, there seems to be little evidence that there are masses of groups rearing to go. As far as I can see the great majority of criticism of the existing Press comes from a political position one might define as "Left Labour" (those to the Left of this position seem to be able to maintain their own Press — e.g. *Morning Star*, *News*

Line, *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Challenge*).

Now it may be that there is a sizeable market for a Left Labour Press both nationally and locally, and presumably this is what the TUC feasibility study is designed to test. I would therefore suggest that the CPF sets itself a rather more modest aim than "reconstructing the press" — that is, trying to ensure that the TUC produces a well researched and argued feasibility study reasonably shortly (indeed the CPF AGM undertook to "publish a discussion document on this theme in Autumn 1981" — where is it?).

It should also be recognised that at least four new Left Labour publications have been launched recently despite the absence of an institution like the OPA — these are *New Socialist* (perhaps in a future *Free Press* James Curran could let us know in detail how this was achieved), *East End News*, *Rebecca* and *City Limits*. It would seem essential to monitor these projects carefully (so that lessons can be learned for the future), and to give them as much support as possible to see that they have the best chance of survival through the critical launch period.

It is also worth noting that none of these ventures uses a strictly workers' co-op structure as James advocates — the *East End News* is formally structured as a joint reader/producer co-op (with the readers being in a majority on the Committee of Management), while *New Socialist*, *Rebecca* and *City Limits* also approximate more closely to this model

TUC goes ahead with 'national daily' study

THE TUC General Council has decided to go ahead with a feasibility study into the prospects for a national daily newspaper funded by the labour movement.

The decision has surprised some trade unionists, as the TUC only managed to raise £27,000 from its initial £40,000 appeal. The poor response led some to think that the project might be dropped and the cash returned to the original donors, chiefly the Transport and General Workers' Union and the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades.

Now, though, it looks as if the task of carrying out the feasibility study will be handed over to a private firm. According to the *New Statesman*, the study will look into the cost of launching a daily and try to find out what kind of newspaper is likely to prove popular.

The study is to be chaired by Lord McCarthy of Nuffield College, assisted by John Dixey (production director of the *Guardian*), William McClelland (former IPC marketing director), Percy Roberts (ex-chairman of the *Mirror* Group) and Geoffrey Goodman of the *Daily Mirror*.

The £13,000 shortfall in the TUC's appeal for funds for the feasibility study has provoked the question of exactly how the TUC could raise the millions of pounds necessary to launch a national daily newspaper. Some critics of the project want the study to include an investigation into the possibilities offered by funding radical local newspapers. (*Reviving the Radical Press* — see page 8).

than that of a traditional producer co-op.

In this way, not only can start-up capital be raised, but the close involvement of readers in their publications can be catered for within their management structures. In my view, if this organisational model were adopted and the possibilities inherent in the new technologies of printing were exploited to the full (which could bring a drastic lowering of unit costs), I can see no reason in principle why the Left can't create a greater "political and cultural diversity of the Press" without resorting to the creation of yet another State bureaucracy.

In short, why doesn't the Left stop whining about "bias" and debating castles-in-the-air for reconstructing the Press, when it could be getting on with the job of creating practical Left alternatives?

The Press and broadcasting in Britain, by James Curran and Jean Seaton: £2.95.

Available from the Campaign for Press Freedom.

Maggie's Farm

THE NUMBERS GAME



Thanks to City Limits

How the SDP tries to rubbish the Left

WHEN NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS!

THE Social Democratic Party is trying to persuade *The Sunday Times* to publish a "smear story" about Left-wingers in the Labour Party, according to the independent Labour weekly, *Tribune*.

In what *Tribune* says is a "classic attempt at media manipulation," the "dirty tricks" department of the Social Democratic Party is trying to persuade the *Sunday Times* to publish another so-called "hit list" of Labour MPs.

"SDP sources have made available to the *Sunday Times* the long lost list of the 179 Labour MPs who, in July 1975, signed the famous letter to Newham North East Labour Party in support of Reg Prentice shortly before he defected to the Conservatives," says *Tribune*.

Earlier *Tribune* had revealed that the "Save Prentice" campaign had been almost entirely financed by the extreme-Right-wing pressure group, the National Association for Freedom.

According to *Tribune*: "The problem was that, from the point of view of most *Sunday Times* readers, the list was old history. If it was to be used, it had to be made 'newsworthy'. One way of making the subject newsworthy would be to persuade prominent Left-wingers to denounce the MPs on the list."

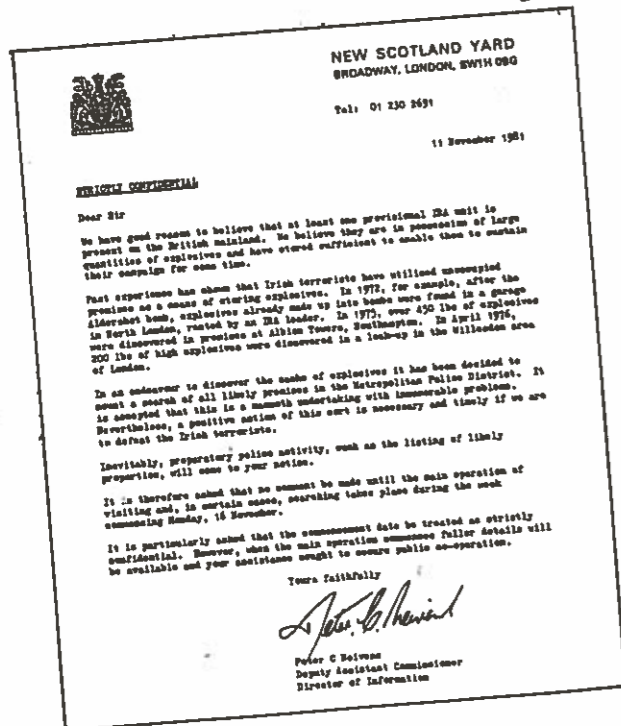
Tribune reports that a prominent supporter of Tony Benn was subsequently sent a copy of the list and asked to comment. *Sunday Times* political staff deny that they were trying to implicate the Labour Left in another "hit list" story.

But *Tribune* quotes Michael Jones, the *Sunday Times* political correspondent, as saying of his SDP sources: "They are involved political people and they are getting weary of waiting for the *Sunday Times* to publish. They are talking about taking it to *The Observer*."

This is the full list of MPs who signed the "Save Prentice" letter:

Edward Short, James Callaghan, Roy Jenkins, Anthony Crosland, Harold Lever, Fred Peart, Roy Mason, Merlyn Rees, John Morris, Bob Mellish, Eric Varley, Shirley Williams, Leo Abse, Donald Anderson, Peter Archer, Ernest Armstrong, Jack Ashley, Gordon Bagier, Albert Bates, Bob Bean, Arthur Blenkinsop, Harold Boardman, Betty Boothroyd, James Boyden, Jeremy Bray, Alfred Broughton, Hugh Brown, Robert Brown, Ron Brown, Richard Buchanan, Ian Campbell, Bob Cant, Raymond Carter, John Cartwright, Ivor Clemitson, Stanley Cohen, Donald Coleman, Maureen Colquhoun, Bernard Conlan, Robin Cook, Robin Corbett, Jim Craigen, Richard Crawshaw, John Cronin, George Cunningham, John Cunningham, Tam Dalyell, Arthur Davidson, Bryan Davies, Jack Dormand, Denzil Davies, Ifor Davies, Joe Dean, Geoffrey de Freitas, Edmund Dell, James Dempsey, Peter Doig, Bruce Douglas-Mann, Pat Duffy, James Dunn, Jack Dunnett, Maurice Edelman, Tom Ellis, Michael English, David Ennals, John Evans, Harry Ewing, Andrew Faulds, Alan Fitch, Ben Ford, John Fraser, Reg Freeson, Ted Garrett, Bruce George, John Gilbert, David Ginsburg, Brian Gould, Harry Gourlay, Ted Graham, George Grant, John Grant, Bruce Grocott, William Hamilton, Peter Hardy, Joe Harper, Roy Hattersley, Helene Hayman, Frank Hooley, John Horam, Denis Howell, Mark Hughes, Adam Hunter, Sidney Irving, Colin Jackson, Greville Janner, Brynmore John, James Johnson, Walter Johnson, Barry Jones, Dan Jones, Harry Lamborn, Ted Leadbitter, Ron Lewis, Ken Lomas, Evan Luard, Alex Lyon, Edward Lyons, Dickson Mabon, Hugh McCartney, Roderick McFarquar, Michael McGuire, Gregor McKenzie, John Mackintosh, Robert MacLennan, Thomas McMillan, Brian Magee, Simon Mahon, J. P. W. Mallalieu, Kenneth Marks, David Marquand, Bruce Millan, Maurice Miller, Robert Mitchell, Eric Moonman, Charles Morris, Roland Moyle, Ronald Murray, Michael Noble, Eric Ogden, Michael O'Halloran, Maurice Orback, John Ovenden, David Owen, Arthur Palmer, George Park, John Parkler, Ernest Parry, Colin Phipps, William Price, Giles Radice, Albert Roberts, William Rogers, John Roper, Paul Rose, Edward Rowlands, Neville Sandelson, Harry Selby, Arnold Shaw, Sam Silkin, James Sillars, William Small, John Smith, Michael Stewart, George Strauss, Shirley Summerskill, Jeffrey Thomas, Sid Tierney, James Tinn, John Tomlinson, Frank Tomney, Raphael Tuck, Edward Wainwright, Brian Walden, Michael Ward, David Watkins, John Watkinson, Ken Weetich, David Weitzman, James Wellbeloved, Frank White, James White, Philip Whitehead, William Whitecock, Alan Williams, Alan Lee Williams, Thomas Williams, Alec Woodall, Ian Wigglesworth.

HE'S ONLY DOING HIS JOB...



DEPUTY Assistant Commissioner, Peter Neivens, of the London Metropolitan Police, sent this letter to Fleet Street news editors. Although it's hardly a D-Notice, and was totally ignored by most journalists, it's a good example of the "you-scratch-our-back-and-we'll-scratch-yours" method of Press control.

Black journalists want fair play

by Elaine Smith

BLACK JOURNALISTS in Britain are setting up a pressure group to ensure fair treatment of black people in the Press and media.

About 110 Afro-Caribbean, Asian and African journalists met at a conference held in Birmingham, sponsored by the National Union of Journalists and the Commission for Racial Equality.

The conference agreed to set up a pressure group and an 11-person committee to look into the immediate problems of

black people in the media.

The conference acknowledged the lack of training given to encourage black journalists, and the consequent inequality in employment opportunities. It decided to campaign for greater employment of black journalists, create a central pool, and develop a new code of conduct for journalists to provide fair coverage of issues concerning black people.

The conference also wants greater liaison with organisations prepared to support the aims of the pressure group.

RIGHT OF REPLY CONFERENCE — DON'T MISS IT!

THE CAMPAIGN spotlight in March focuses on the right of reply — and media freedom — at a special conference in London.

Despite increasing public awareness of Press and media distortion, the flow of misinformation continues to flood our popular newspapers and broadcasting channels.

Recent experiences include the treatment given to the massive demonstration organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the People's March for Jobs and the continuing debate within the Labour Party.

The conference is at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1, on Saturday March 6, between 10.30 am and 5pm. The conference can best be reached by London Underground's Mile End and Stepney Green stations.

Participants include Frank Allaun, Tony Benn, Sarah Boston, Anna Coote, James Curran, Jacob Ecclestone, Jill Tweedie and Patricia Hewitt. They hope to examine the controversy and practical problems surrounding the right of reply.

The opening session is on the broad political, legal-parliamentary, institutional and European aspects of the right to reply; and there will later be workshops on the Press Council, alternatives to the Press Council; political and Parliamentary issues such as future Labour Party policy on broadcasting and the right of reply.

Further details about the conference can be obtained from John Jennings, Secretary, Campaign for Press Freedom, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2DE. Telephone: 0702 553131.

FREE COMMENT

Why don't YOU contribute to this debate? Send your views to the Campaign for Press Freedom, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex S57 2DE.

Trade Union journals — should their editors be elected or not?

WHOSE FREEDOM?

Why editors should be elected and why they should not

by Ron Knowles

THE problem with most trade union journals is that they are many of the worst features of our commercial Press.

They offer a consensus approach to internal debate, are secretive within their own community and attack only predictable and safe targets.

This is inevitable, given that they also copy the management structures of the commercial Press. The "editor" is usually reduced to the status of a management technician, while the really crucial decisions are taken by a general secretary or president.

If union journals are to serve their members properly they should be providing a wide range of internal information, unfiltered through the warping prism of the hierarchy's view, and thereby stimulating unfettered debate within and outside their pages.

This can only be achieved if journals are put in the hands of independent editors whose allegiance is to the union as a whole and not simply to the executive or its fulltime officials.

To secure this independence the editor needs to be elected by the membership of the union on a prospectus laid before it.

An appointed editor is trammelled by the explicit and implicit conditions laid down by those who have hire and fire powers over him or her.

An elected editor, subject to periodic re-election, has a glorious independence, circumscribed only by individual limits of courage and imagination.

Nothing gives an editor more strength than the knowledge that what he or she is doing is in accord with the policies that were laid before the readership. And nothing curbs more definitely

the arrogance of executive decisions than the knowledge that they are to be subject to the membership's scrutiny through the reports of an editor beholden only to that membership.

An elected editor has a vested interest in serving the membership. His or her job will depend on satisfying the membership with information and the opportunity to comment on it.

Fulltime officials frequently behave like civil servants, amending policies to suit their own prejudices, operating in secret and releasing only such information as they deem suitable. They have a vested interest in keeping a tight control over information, which is why so many of them double as editor of their union publications. Thus union journals become propaganda for their executives, talking down to the memberships and stultifying debate.

Therefore, an elected editor must be supported by the right terms of employment if he or she is to avoid becoming a prisoner of the established leadership. Accountability is only part of the battle in freeing journals from the grip of the leaderships. Editors must also be given the right of access to all levels of the unions' structures and, of course, to their documents.

There are doubtless difficulties in applying the principle of elected editors universally in the movement, but, in the final analysis, a union is either in favour of freedom of information and democratic accountability, or it is not.

Ron Knowles is the editor of "The Journalist", the newspaper of the National Union of Journalists. He is due to stand for election again (the last time being in 1979) at the NUJ's Annual Conference in March.

by John Jennings

THE Campaign for Press Freedom is not generally in favour of trade union journal editors being elected. An amendment on this very point was overwhelmingly defeated at our AGM in May this year.

What the Campaign is in favour of is union journals being responsive to the needs and ideas of the ordinary members, as well as to officials and national executives.

This principle was established by an AGM motion which was carried, albeit only narrowly.

But the same motion also said that union journal editors should be journalists, (and members of the National Union of Journalists) not union general secretaries or other officials.

So what is needed is on the one hand, a higher standard of professional journalism in the trade union movement, and on the other hand, democratic accountability to the membership.

There is a certain amount of conflict here. Election of editors is one way (though only one way) of dealing with the second point. It does not deal with the first at all.

The unions must learn to make much better use of professional journalistic skills. People today are accustomed to highly sophisticated communications techniques. Old-fashioned, amateurish, dreary and badly-produced union journals will not persuade or convince.

We must try to match the skills of the media professionals.

There is no need for a lot of mystification about this. Non-journalists can learn writing, reporting, sub-editing, typography and lay-out. But it does take time, and some people have particular talents in one direction or another.

The standard and quality of trade union publications has improved enormously in recent years, though maybe not fast enough. This has come about through the employment of journalists with professional skills, training and experience which they have brought into the unions from outside.

Election of editors, which must be from within the union, would put a stop to this.

The National Union of Journalists is of course the exception to this rule. The NUJ elect their editor. But in a union full of professional journalists it is reasonable to assume that a competent, professional journalist will be elected.

It would be wrong to simply try to extend this principle, which works well for the NUJ, to all other unions.

John Jennings is the Secretary of the Campaign for Press Freedom and the editor of SOGAT Journal.

Campaign diary

ALL individual members of the Campaign for Press Freedom, together with sponsors and delegates from affiliated organisations are invited to the campaign's Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 17 April 1982.

It's at the Royal Commonwealth Society, London, commencing 10.30am. More details from John Jennings, Campaign for Press Freedom, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex S57 2DE.

Obituary: Bishop Colin Winter

Mike Jempson & Jonathan Lloyd

COLIN Winter, who died last November on the 13th anniversary of his consecration as Anglican Bishop of Namibia, was a man of passion.

He had an immense capacity for work and the development of personal relationships. For him neither was complete without the other.

As a sponsor of the Campaign for Press Freedom he displayed all these powerful attributes. When he addressed our public meeting in the Central Hall, Westminster, in 1980, he shook everyone with a piercing attack on the myth of Western Press freedom.

There was none of the delicacy of those anxious to preserve a vested interest, nor the measured scholarship of the academic, nor the easy rhetoric of the Left.

He condemned out of hand the power and irresponsibility of a Press controlled by multinational business and political interests, and linked the fight for a truly free Press with the liberation of oppressed people everywhere.

It was his unequivocal support for black Africans in their struggle against colonialism and apartheid which won him both friends and enemies as Bishop of Namibia. When he defended black workers striking against exploitation through the contract labour system, and spoke out against torture by the South African regime, he was deported. Such was his popularity that he was twice re-elected as Bishop in Exile, until earlier this year when he resigned in favour of a Namibian, James Kauluma.

In exile, and virtually ignored by the established Church of England, he ran the Namibian Peace Centre in the heart of Stepney in East London. Here black African refugees found a home and help. It was a practical example of his unpopular challenge to the Church that Christians must stand either on the side of the oppressed or be seen to take the part of the oppressor.

Colin, as he preferred to be known, wrote four books about his experiences in southern Africa, and two books of his poetry have been published. Born in Stoke on Trent in 1928, he grew up a convinced pacifist. In 1959 he went to South Africa as a parish priest in Simonstown, with his wife Mary and their five children. By 1964 he was in Windhoek, Namibia, and four years later succeeded the then Bishop Robert Mize when he was deported.

After his own deportation he committed himself to continuing the struggle for freedom in Namibia. He requested that he should be cremated and his ashes be returned to the black township of Latatura in Namibia only after the country had freed itself from the yoke of South Africa.

As a stern critic of hypocrisy and a staunch supporter of personal and political liberation he had a special interest in Press and media freedom. He was an early supporter of the East End News and wrote in its pilot issue of the



Bishop Colin Winter at the Namibia/Angola border

great need to celebrate the variety and richness of Britain's multi-cultural society. Those who met him will recall his extraordinary vision, warmth and willingness to be vulnerable. In appreciation of his contribution to our struggle, the National Committee of the CPF have made a small donation to the Peace Centre to help it carry on his work.

Join the Campaign for Press Freedom

- 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.
- 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.
- To encourage the creation of alternative newspapers of all kinds including a newspaper or newspapers sympathetic to the labour movement.
- To encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper, broadcasting and television industries.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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East End News to go monthly?

THE East End News, the most adventurous alternative newspaper undertaking of recent years, was forced to suspend publication with its 40th issue which appeared on Christmas Eve.

by Aidan White

The decision to stop weekly publication was taken after an appeal for £8,000 to help keep the paper going at least up to the Co-op's annual meeting on January 16 had netted only £1,000.

This coupled with the news that the Co-op bank was unable to support a capital expansion scheme and that the Greater London Council was cautious about further support for the venture meant that the suspension was inevitable. Debts had been piling up over the past three months and despite improvements in advertising and circulation, the Management Committee was forced to act in the face of imminent insolvency.

The annual meeting will be asked to consider a plan to turn the newspaper into a monthly, rather than weekly, as one way of keeping the venture going.

Since its inception more than two years ago, the East End News Co-op has forced open the discussion on alternative forms of newspapers. Rather than concentrate on the idea of a national daily newspaper, EEN supporters have argued for local initiatives.

With a carefully worked out co-operative and management structure, the newspaper raised almost £20,000 from individuals and trade unions and other community organisations.

It launched on March 13 with a staff of 5. But within two months it was clear that the rigours of a weekly production schedule meant that more staff had to be taken on.

The paper was immediately successful. The first couple of issues sold out and more local people and organisations throughout East London joined the Co-op. When the paper launched the Co-op had 600 members, barely six months later that number had more than doubled.

Although circulation fell back because of lack of funds to promote the paper, the Management Committee agreed an expansion plan which included an ambitious classified advertising scheme: this paid dividends almost immediately. Within weeks

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the circulation was rising at a steady 1,000 a month, and by suspension was nearing 8,000 a week.

Advertising was also improving. In the three weeks prior to the last issue the revenue from classified and display advertising was around £2,000 a week — higher than at any time before.

But the cost of maintaining the structure to keep the paper coming out in the form that the co-op had always demanded — a well-produced local paper which could compete on the news stands with other locals — meant that costs were rising at an unacceptable rate.

In terms of providing a genuine alternative, the paper showed that the traditional values of the newspaper world can be successfully challenged: a regular women's column and the formation of a women's group around the paper gave a different

perspective to how women should be perceived by the media; a weekly kids' page produced by children themselves opened up new areas of journalism which are never seen in other weeklies (and, of course, it upset some people); and "Black Voices" a page written by and produced for ethnic minority groups showed that local journalism could and should relate to diverse cultures in the community.

Although its supporters will be bitterly disappointed at the suspension of publication, the East End News has shown that a genuine alternative Press can, and should, exist alongside the traditional local Press. The problem is, of course, that co-operative and radical ventures do not have reserves of capital strength to call upon when times get rough like other papers which are linked to big groups of newspapers.

The question raised by the EEN suspension is a relatively simple one: if a paper can be produced and bought, and advertisers will use it, how do we provide a bulwark to take it through the rough patches and into economic viability? It is a question worth answering if the East End News is to leave a lasting impression on the campaign for a free media in this country.

Reviving the radical Press

by Graham Smith

WHY is it so difficult for radical newspapers and magazines to succeed, or even to survive?

Although there has never been any shortage of 'alternative' publications, few have survived very long or been able to reach the mass circulation figures of the Fleet Street 'popular' newspapers.

It seems that too often, radical publishers concentrate on the ideas and politics of their publications, while tending to neglect the 'business side': finance, advertising, distribution and so on.

The Minority Press Group is holding a special one-day conference this month to examine some of the problems which confront radical publishers, and hopefully come up with some practical solutions. Although no-one expects the conference to produce an unarguable blue-print for success, there is now a wealth of experience in radical publishing and hopefully we can learn from our mistakes.

The conference, at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham, on Saturday January 16, intends to examine six crucial areas of concern:

FINANCE

The problems of attracting advertising revenue. Is any advertising to be rejected on the grounds that it breeds dependency? If so, what are the alternatives? Attracting more than "solidarity greetings" adverts. Raising risk capital. What organisations already exist to provide funds, and what could the labour movement do?

DISTRIBUTION

The problems of competing for space on newstands with the capitalist "mass" media, and ways of developing alternative methods.

BUSINESS FIRST?

"Open collectives," workers' and readers' co-operatives. Internal democracy and efficiency.

RELATIONS WITH THE "OFFICIAL" LABOUR MOVEMENT

Many radical publishers have found difficulty in working with the "official" trade union and labour movement. Mutual suspicion can be healthy or destructive: how can these problems be overcome?

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN RADICAL PUBLISHERS

What practical measures might be taken for syndicating features and articles? Is it possible, or desirable, to set up a "flying squad" of helpers to relieve production pressures when deadlines are close and the publication still needs copy and lay-out?

Is it possible to establish an advertising agency specifically to service radical publications?

STYLE

How best to develop a style of publication which is genuinely radical, but which is not peppered with slogans and jargon? Where to find a balance between in-depth academic analysis and popular journalism?

There will be workshops at the conference on each of these topics, supplemented by discussion papers, and the Minority Press Group hope to publish a report of the day's proceedings later in the year.

Representatives from more than 30 radical publications and organisations have been invited to participate; let's hope they find the day worthwhile.