

FREE PRESS

Bulletin of the Campaign for Press Freedom

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SINKING TO NEW DEPTHS

ONE FACT the *Sun* newspaper omitted from its sensational report about "malingering" on the railways was that it paid £300 each to the two assistant train drivers who provided this "exclusive". The going rate for such juicy information seems to have fallen somewhat from the days when people were prepared to pay 30 pieces of silver.

One of the men who made the allegation himself faced charges of falsifying his worksheet, driving a car while disqualified and criminally damaging six light bulbs at a railway depot. The *Sun* somehow neglected to mention this.

Angry ASLEF members at King's Cross responded by refusing to handle copies of the *Sun*, despite the newspaper's legal moves to get the blacking lifted. "It's a rubbish newspaper," said one official. "Newspaper isn't the right word for it."



The two media heroes who created this story were later rewarded by British Rail - by being sacked for falsifying worksheets!

'Censorship threat' to New Socialist?

THE QUESTION of editorial freedom in Party newspapers was raised last month by an attack on *Labour Weekly* by one of the Party's MPs.

Gwynneth Dunwoody, the MP for Crewe, made angry criticisms of the newspaper's editorial line at a meeting of the Party's press and publications committee.

She singled out a contribution by Hilary Wainwright, co-author of "Beyond the Fragments", who was commission-

ed by *Labour Weekly* to write an article about the newly-formed Socialist Society which previously the paper had scarcely bothered to mention. Mrs Dunwoody said that people like Ms Wainwright, who were not members of the Party, should not be allowed to write for its newspapers.

Mrs Dunwoody also objected to the paper's choice of Vladimir Derer, of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, as a reviewer of the recent book "The Struggle for the Labour Party" by David and Maurice Kogan. She then turned her attention to the more independent *New Socialist* magazine, whose editor James Curran was at the meeting.

Mrs Dunwoody complained both about an advertisement for the Socialist Society carried in *New Socialist*, and about what she saw as the magazine's editorial support for the new group. She asked for an undertaking that *New Socialist* would give neither advertising nor editorial support to the Society in future.

Mr Curran replied that he would give no such undertaking, and pointed out that the advertisement had been properly paid for. The Socialist Society includes many Labour Party members among its ranks.



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We're going up market a little. Sensationalism is out - distortion is in.

LAW LORDS GAG COURT REPORTS

THE LAW LORDS have once again demonstrated their remarkable talent for turning a blind eye to commonsense and justice by ruling that, under some circumstances, the reporting of documents read out in open court can be illegal.

By three to two, the Lords ruled that the legal officer for the National Council for Civil Liberties, Harriet Harman, was wrong to show "embarrassing" documents to former Guardian reporter David Leigh—even though the documents had been read out in open court as evidence.

The £25,000 costs of defending the action could bankrupt the National Council for Civil Liberties, who are making an appeal to the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

A delegation of Labour MPs were planning to urge the Home Secretary to change the law, and over-ride the decision, as Free Press goes to press.

"Our appeal to the European Commission is crucial to the freedom of the Press in Great Britain," said Ms Harman. "I am very bitter and very angry that the Home Office has taken this action against a small and not very powerful organisation — and forced us to pay the massive costs."

The NCCL is appealing for funds to help take the case to Strasbourg: donations should be sent to the Contempt Fund, NCCL, 21 Tabbard Street, London SE1.

This is not the first time the European Human Rights Commission has been involved in Press "freedom" in the UK: The Sunday Times was forced to take its case to Strasbourg in order to lift a Law Lords ruling that outlawed a full report of the thalidomide scandal in the 1970s. "The thing is the Sunday Times has plenty of money," said Ms Harman. "It'll be touch and go for us whether we can survive."

The "embarrassing" documents revealed major blunders and incompetence at the Home Office concerning the establishment of controversial "control units" at Wakefield prison. Mr Leigh, who now works for The Observer, copied the documents and wrote a feature article exposing how Home Office "hardliners" had got their way over prison administration.

Mr Leigh would have been perfectly entitled to have made a note of the documents as they were read out, or to have purchased a

rt case—brought by a civil rights group and the Home Office after its blunder in setting up in secrecy.



The Guardian story which caused the fuss. The Guardian was not prosecuted.

transcript of the court proceedings. "It's significant that the Home Office didn't try to prosecute me or the newspaper," he said, "but instead has persecuted the most vulnerable party in an extremely cruel and vindictive way."

The Home Office says it brought the action to "clarify" the law on contempt, but is persisting in forcing the NCCL to pay costs. Attorney-General Sir Michael Havers, whose permission is not needed for such an action to be taken and who was not consulted about the case, said Ms Harman could not possibly be in contempt.

In the ruling, Lord Diplock said Ms Harman's actions would not have been contempt if she had shown the documents to a law reporter rather than to a reporter like Mr Leigh who had written an article criticising the Home Office! Lord Diplock's love of openness in court proceedings even led him to abolish juries in Northern Ireland for trials concerning alleged terrorist offences.

In a dissenting judgment, Lord Scarman admitted the majority-ruling probably contravened European Convention on Human Rights.

NUJ TO DEBATE PRESS FREEDOM

THE National Union of Journalists hold its Annual Delegate meeting this month amid much speculation about the type of policies needed to clean up the gutter Press and improve professional and ethical standards in Fleet Street.

The NUJ already has a Code of Conduct which, if followed, would radically improve news presentation. The problem is that the Code is routinely ignored by many journalists, and attempts to enforce it under the NUJ's rules have so far failed to make much headway.

More than 30 resolutions to this year's conference aim to tighten the union's control over its wayward members, and many of them have been provoked by the particularly vicious racism which accompanied last year's



Riots on Saturday, Reports on Sunday, re-writes and distortion on Monday...

reporting of the inner city riots. A resolution from the Book branch "condemns those sections of the media — the Daily Mail,

Daily Express and The Sun in particular — which have exacerbated prejudices and social tension by their sensational and insensitive treatment of racial issues."

One front page headline in the Mail announced "Black war on police" as rioting broke out in Liverpool 8, a few days after there had been serious disturbances in Southall. The Mail's story was supplanted by several "I told you so," stories from Right-wing Tory MPs, calling for "re-patriation" of black people (re-patriate to where?). At the end of the story the Mail did make it clear that the rioters were both black and white — in fact, the Times headline of the same day said: "White mob stone police!"

Protests by the Mail's own

NUJ chapel in Manchester at the time came to no avail: when a union official complained that the headline misrepresented the facts he was told: "We don't care what the story is — that's the headline anyway."

The NUJ conference will also examine proposals for special reporting guidelines for journalists working in Northern Ireland, spelling out that reporters must have free access to all relevant sources of information.

The "Bingo war" in Fleet Street is also criticised in some resolutions as a threat to Press freedom, and "cheque-book" journalism is also deplored. A resolution from Brussels instructs NUJ members not to handle stories arising out of the payment to people convicted in the courts.

SOME 'OPEN DOORS' ARE MORE OPEN THAN OTHERS

SENIOR BBC executives have banned the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland from making a programme for the BBC2 access slot, Open Door, over-riding the views of the Open Door selection committee. Two of the public observers on the Open Door committee have complained to the BBC about the decision.

The Campaign applied to Open Door in September 1979, and in November that year the programme's selection committee, which includes the independent observers representing the public, approved the application by a large majority. It was not until late 1981, after a voluminous internal correspondence, that BBC executives — Director of News and Current Affairs, Managing Director of Television and Controller BBC2 — formally decided to veto the Campaign's application. The Campaign has only just been told about the decision.

The BBC's explanation is that 'on all matters regarding Northern Ireland the BBC is prepared to relinquish editorial control only in exceptional circumstances, and in the case of the Campaign for Free

Speech on Ireland these circumstances do not exist.'

Two of the public observers on the Open Door selection committee, Chris Elphick and Neville Cheetham, have written to Alasdair Milne, the managing director of BBC TV and designate director general, complaining about the decision and the delay in making it. In his letter, Chris Elphick writes, 'I have no hesitation in stating that the programme was fairly and justly chosen with, indeed, greater than average scrutiny.'

Referring to the official reason given by the BBC for their decision, he writes, 'As a public observer to the selection process I am not aware that we should be treating the offer of programmes to groups in Northern Ireland in a different manner to the rest of the UK. Indeed, had I been aware that that was the situation it is unlikely that I would have agreed to act as a public observer.'

Growing concern about the British media's coverage of the troubles led to the formation of the Campaign in 1977, when it held a public meeting intended by a number of journalists and with Jonathan

Dimbleby and Anna Raeburn among the speakers. The Campaign subsequently produced a booklet, The British Media and Ireland: Truth the First Casualty (pub. Information on Ireland 1979), which drew together evidence from a number of leading journalists and programme-makers about the difficulties they experienced when reporting Northern Ireland and the incidence of censorship.

It included a list of 28 TV programmes which had been banned, censored or delayed. (The list has now grown to approaching 40.) The booklet has sold nearly 13,000 copies and has become a standard reference work for media studies courses in colleges and universities.

A new series of Open Door has just started, and is advertised as 'when members of the public use resources and staff at the BBC to make programmes under their own editorial control. Anyone can apply, and you can make a programme on anything you like: animals, art, comedy, science, fictions, documentaries, anything at all that you'd like to see on the screen. Well, almost anything.'

THE TIMES

THE "freedom of the Press" is supposed to be an important element in our democracy, and the latest tribulations of Times Newspapers under the leadership of Rupert Murdoch deserve a little examination.

by Bruce Page

In February 1981, Mr Murdoch gained control of The Times and the Sunday Times after delivering himself of some lofty promises about preserving the editorial independence of the two papers. They were conceded in exchange for dropping a lawsuit which the journalists of the Sunday Times had launched, and which was aimed — with good prospects of success — at forcing the British Government to obey its own laws, and refer the Murdoch takeover to the Monopolies Commission.

Once, the Sunday Times had two deputy-editors: a situation created by Murdoch himself, and not an absurd one for a big, sectionalised newspaper. One, Mr Ron Hall — also the executive in charge of the colour magazine — was abruptly fired in January.

The other, Mr Hugo Young — the paper's political editor — has been demoted in favour of a transfer from the daily Times, Brian MacArthur.

Of course, the notion of 'editorial independence' could

hardly mean that newspaper executives ought to have tenure, as academics enjoy. But last year certain principles were identified which 'Mr Murdoch subscribes to and undertakes to preserve', and one said that the editors of The Times and the Sunday Times would "continue to make all appointments to the journalistic staff, subject to the constraints of the editorial budget."

Only someone who was both a swine and a buffoon would willingly dump two vital executives who also happen to be close personal colleagues of exceptionally long standing. (Not even token complaints have been lodged against either victim's professional performance.) Nobody who knows Frank Giles, editor of the Sunday Times, thinks he is a swine. Apparently he must pretend to be one, for fear of joining the long list of Murdoch's ex-editors.

Murdoch's beef against the

MURDOCH MURDERS HISTORY

Sunday Times is that it has grown 'boring'. This is perfectly his own fault, because he removed (to The Times) its highly-regarded editor, Harold Evans. The hasty replacement was Evan's long-standing deputy, Giles: an elderly Dr Watson manifestly unable to turn himself into Sherlock Holmes.

Now we have Murdoch's announcement that without large-scale redundancies, the two papers together could lose £15 million in the year to June 30, 1982. None of the unions involved doubts that the position is serious.

To return to the question of undertakings, Murdoch originally promised that editorial independence would be firmly placed within a financial context. "The board of Times Newspapers Ltd is to be responsible, after consultation with the editors, for fixing an annual budget for editorial space and expenditure." Within these agreed parameters, it was promised, the editors would be

free to operate without interference. But nearly twelve months later, no recognisable editorial budget has been set for the Sunday Times, and the paper's operations are controlled — if the word does not imply too much rationality — by intermittent ukases, usually composed by Gerald Long, Times Newspapers managing director. A recent one deserves to be quoted in full: "All executives of the company are reminded that written authorisation is required for any proposed action, of whatever nature."

There is no exception to this rule. Verbal authorisation can never be accepted. All executives must make themselves familiar with the channels for seeking authorisation for any proposal and must follow them invariably." — Gerald Long.

Obviously no great 'independence' of editorial judgment — or executive judgment of any kind — can survive in a business conducted on such bizarre lines.

FLEET STREET DISCOVERS RAPE

More kill than cure

Knockdown cowboy job men

by JOHN DESBOROUGH

curb "cowboy" traders are on consumer Affairs Minister Sally Meade yesterday backed a Bill giving all in some cash

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Ann, the new Mae West

AMERICAN actress Ann Jillian has landed the role of Mae West in a TV film about the busty Hollywood sex symbol.

Ann has been in showbusiness since she was 10, when she made her film debut as Little Bo Peep in Walt Disney's *Babes in Toyland*.

She stopped the show when she made her Broadway debut in the revue *Sunset*.

Plea by doctor in storm over trial that was dropped

Spare rape victims their court ordeal

DAILY MIRROR, Saturday, January 23, 1982

ALL rape victims should be spared court ordeals, a psychiatrist said yesterday.

Dr Raymond Antebi, the man at the centre of the Glasgow rape controversy, urged a change in the law. He said that one possibility was for the woman to be questioned in private before the trial.

This could be done in the presence of a judge "and a very small number of other people."

Her evidence could then be presented to the jury in writing.

Dr. Antebi is the psychiatrist who said that a 29-year-old Glasgow mother of two was likely to suffer permanent mental damage if asked to relive her rape ordeal from the witness box.

He had been asked to interview her and prepare a report.

Dragged

But he emphasised: "At no time did I say there should be no prosecution. All I can do is make an assessment and leave it up to the lawyers."

"It would be ludicrous for psychiatrists to tell lawyers what to do."

The woman was dragged into a derelict hut in Glasgow by four youths.

By RONALD RICKETTS

A private prosecution may yet be brought.

The woman's solicitor, Adrian Tonner, said: "That option remains open."

One of the youths in the case, aged 14 to 17, is alleged to have made a full and voluntary confession to the police.

In it he named another of the youths.

A second boy admitted to police that he had sex with the woman but denied slashing her with a razor.

The third youth admitted he had sex.

The fourth youth would also have been called as a prosecution witness if he had gone to court.

Naked

He denied having sex with the woman.



Phew! Anyone would think rape was something new!

EARLY this year, for the first time ever, rape was the leading story in the entire national and local Press, broadcasting and magazines.

At one point the main three news items concerned rape stories, displacing even Erica Roe's big tits, and vying for space with Mark Thatcher's Sahara adventure.

The nationals have a reputation for following each other around news items like a herd of sheep, and this bonanza of rape stories could be interpreted as another example of the "gang-mentality", brought on because the snow had disappeared. But should we be so cynical? Why was rape suddenly taken seriously and women treated with relative sympathy? Have Press attitudes about sexual violence towards women undergone any permanent shifts? Let us analyse some of January's coverage and see what lessons we can draw.

The phenomenon first appeared on January 7th, when the Press reported 'furious attacks' on the judge who fined a rapist £2,000, followed by Jack Ashley's call for a change in the law, and legal rebukes by Hailsham and Lord Lane.

The "Police" TV grilling of a rape victim, and the conviction of the 'Tottenham rapist' breathed new life into the subject. Margaret Thatcher spoke against 'this odious crime'; Nicolas Fairbairn resigned over the Glasgow 'razor victim' case. Prominence was given to a larger number of rape stories.

Coverage thinned after Fairbairn's resignation on January 22. A successor was chosen, the law wasn't changed, and the victim of televised police questioning was sent to mental hospital. The papers ended with a slightly upbeat story in early February about rape victims counselling jailed offenders.

In addition to news stories, a spate of features wrote about the 'reality of rape'. Media treatment was more willing than usual to take the woman's point of view. It questioned the idea that women were 'asking for it' and criticised police practices.

On the other hand, male columnists poked the usual corny 'jokes', and in papers like the *Sun*, coverage was hard to distinguish from the daily fare of shock horror sex stories.

Rape crisis centres and women's groups were deluged with media attention for the first time, and received relatively good treatment. "We had six weeks of everyone wanting to talk to us and film us," said a woman from Birmingham rape crisis centre. "It did increase people's awareness. But that (hitchhiking) case is like hundreds of others we hear about every day."

Women also complained that the Press treated the subject "like any other news item; picked up and then dropped", and that

attention was focussed on individual cases rather than the general issue.

Why were women's groups taken more seriously, however? Why did coverage come with that first case, at that time? Groups like Women against Violence against Women (WAVAW) began to get serious Press coverage when protests converged over anti-women thrillers and the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper, one to two years ago.

Kate, from London WAVAW, felt that better Press links have been created by the hard work of these groups and the rape crisis centres to get the subject taken seriously.

"The comments of the judge were so blatant," commented Kate. "The Press had to condemn him just to get back to a state of normality, which is bad enough anyway. But if the judge was blamed, men were let off the hook."

CAUSE AND EFFECT. The Mirror's coverage was generally sympathetic towards rape victims, but the contradictions posed by setting the story next to the photograph were clearly not recognised.



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 SS7 2DE.

Why I say union journal editors should be elected

by Tim Gopsill

I DON'T SUPPOSE it's wilful, but John Jennings has seriously misunderstood the proposals to make the editorships of trade union journals elective and organised within the NUJ.

The principle of electing union officials is familiar enough, and those who are against it are against it. But for journal editors it is particularly important; the removal of editorial control from general secretaries is required for the democratisation of any union.

One of John's arguments against is linked to the NUJ question: that members wouldn't know how good an editor a journalist from outside the union's ranks would be and couldn't vote for him/her.

This is not a problem, because there's no need for a good editor to be a professional journalist from outside the union. The NUJ has a post-entry closed shop policy, which means that any editor, wherever from,

can join, once in office.

And as far as journalistic skills are concerned, these are not so hard to acquire; I don't see why the TUC shouldn't, together with the NUJ, run courses, as they do in other areas of union organisation - including dealing with the Press! (I recently taught on one such course).

It is indeed my understanding that John Jennings himself came into the NUJ by such a route. And the bigger unions, of course, which employ journalists on their journals, could continue to employ NUJ members, as they do now, but under an editor answerable to the membership of the union and to the NUJ's Code of Conduct.

Many journal editors are of course already in the NUJ; but however good their journals,

most will admit that they operate under conditions of proprietorial control that no journalist would accept from a private owner.

What it really comes down to is the question: are union journals "different" from commercial papers, simply by virtue of being published by the labour movement? It's my belief they aren't. They have the same power over the readers (though it must be admitted they use it much less effectively); the difference, to me, is that they have the potential of being democratically run and contributing positively to workers' lives.

With a combined circulation of over five million, they could make up an immensely powerful voice for political change. They certainly won't as presently run.

While the CPF dithers between proposals for an impossible national Left labour movement daily and for more little radical local papers, it

misses this potential. Perhaps seizing it would be a bit too close to home for some of the CPF's leading lights.

At any rate, whatever the best way of doing it, let's open up a proper debate - not just within the theoretical hothouse of the CPF but within the ranks of all our unions.

Persuasive argument

I was delighted to see the article on trade union journals in the current issue of *Free Press*. Being a member of a union which produces a journal I know exactly what Ron Knowles is writing about. My own view on the POEU Journal is that the emphasis is on persuasion rather than information. As in the popular press.

Terry Whitney,
(Post Office Engineering Union, Bromley, Kent.)

Campaign launches £50,000 fundraising drive

THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS FREEDOM HAS APPOINTED LORETTA LOACH AS FUNDRAISER. HERE SHE OUTLINES HER PLAN TO RAISE THE CASH NEEDED TO SECURE THE CAMPAIGN'S FUTURE:



THE PRESENT financial situation of the Campaign limits its scope and makes for an uncertain future. It is for this reason that the Campaign is launching a major fund-raising effort in the next few months and it is my task to help in this.

Our target is to raise £50,000, the minimum required to establish a firm basis for the campaign, so we can extend our activities and pursue our aims more energetically.

We also need sufficient resources to publicise our work and attract new members and affiliates. At the very least we need to employ one full-time organiser and establish a national office for the campaign to function more effectively.

Our fund-raising methods will be based on an assessment of the sources from which we expect the money may most easily be raised. Essentially these are: Individual contacts in agreement with the aims of the campaign. We shall be lobbying them for help in a number of different ways.

Secondly, sympathetic groups and organisations shall be approached for help in circulating our publicity and/or donating money.

Thirdly, our present members and affiliates can help by increasing their levels

of contribution through taking out covenants and bankers orders.

It is our intention that the appeal, whilst securing funds, will simultaneously promote the growth of the campaign and ensure our stability.

The next issue of *Free Press* will contain more details of the exciting launch of our appeal and news of the support we have gained so far.

As this edition goes to press, NATFHE has announced its decision to affiliate to the Campaign for Press Freedom.

Banking on the future

OUTWRITE CHALLENGE TO BEING IGNORED

OUTWRITE, the first national women's newspaper, will be launched on International Women's Day, 8th March, 1982. *Outwrite* is being produced by a collective of black and white feminists who believe that the existing media has ignored or distorted the experience of women, especially black and 'Third World' women.

The *Outwrite* collective wants to produce a newspaper by and for women, about our lives. We want the paper to promote and serve the interests of a truly internationalist movement for the liberation of women.

Towards this aim, *Outwrite* will not only present news but will help women to organise. A way in which the newspaper will differ from other papers is that it will not only provide news but will give information to enable women to organise in their workplaces and around housing, childcare and other issues affecting them.

News is not something which should be passively consumed but should lead to action. *Outwrite* will stimulate existing campaigns and help others to get started by providing a space where women can talk about

by Paula McDiarmid

their struggles and the support they need. For the first time there will be a space where black and 'Third World' women can write about their struggles and outline clearly the kind of support they expect and need from white sisters.

Outwrite believes that news does not exist in isolation, however much the existing media likes to categorise it. News exists in a political context which we must take into account in order to understand the reasons why things happen and what our relationship to them is. Therefore we want to use news and information to make connections and distinctions between the lives and experiences of women in all parts of the world.

Outwrite will be a space where women, especially black, 'Third World' and working class women, can express their views about world events and also write about aspects of their lives deemed 'irrelevant' or 'unnewsworthy' by the existing media.

We hope that *Outwrite* will be accessible to all women. We are intending to distribute *Outwrite*

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 SS7 2DE.

through commercial distributors after September. In the meantime, in addition to the usual alternative outlets, women throughout the country will be selling the paper on the streets, in workplaces and health centres - wherever women work and live. We will start out as a monthly newspaper, then going fortnightly, and hopefully weekly within six months. More details from *Outwrite*, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2.

RIGHT OF REPLY

AS *Free Press* goes to the printers this month, campaign activity is focussing on the right of reply, and media freedom, at a special conference in London.

More than 100 individuals have registered for the conference as we go to press, and many more are expected to do so by March 6. The conference is at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1, and has been sponsored by a number of trade unions.

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, most recently, the outrageous media attack on the railmen who took

industrial action in support of their claim to be paid an agreed three per cent pay award.

Participants at the conference include Frank Allaun, who has successfully re-introduced a private member's Bill into the House of Commons designed to give statutory backing to the right of reply. Sarah Boston, Tony Benn, Anna Coote, James Curran, Jacob Ecclestone and Patricia Hewitt are also taking part.

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

A full report of the day's proceedings will appear in the next issue of *Free Press*.

Join the Campaign for Press Freedom

- 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.

Join

INDIVIDUALS can become members for £5.00 p.a.

ORGANISATIONS can affiliate for an annual fee depending on size of membership (see box).

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

NAME (or Secretary's name) _____

ORGANISATION (if applicable) _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

Send to Campaign for Press Freedom
274-288 London Road Hadleigh Essex SS7 2DE

AFFILIATION FEES	
Below 1,000	£10
1,000 to 10,000	£15
10,000 to 50,000	£15
50,000 to 100,000	£50
100,000 & over	£100

NEW RADICAL WEEKLY FOR BIRMINGHAM

by Graham Smith

SOME PEOPLE never give up. Despite the failure of the *Manchester Flash*, the *East End News*, *Hull News*, *Dundee Standard* and the growing crisis at the *Nottingham News*, a group of radical journalists in the Midlands are trying to raise £86,000 to launch the *Birmingham Inquirer*, as a weekly newspaper, in September.

The *Inquirer* aims to have a circulation of 30,000 and a full-time staff of about 12, organised as a registered workers' co-op. Its supporters claim their optimism is justified by a feasibility study which shows that the *Inquirer* should be profitable after nine months. West Midlands County Council has been asked to give the project financial backing.

The *Inquirer* is the latest of several experiments in radical publishing which have sought to break out of the "ghetto" of small circulation community newspapers and magazines and into the marketplace of serious competition.

The recent Campaign-sponsored conference of more than 40 radical publishers, tired of talking only to the converted, went some way towards making sure that stupid mistakes on the "business side" would not be repeated by those brave enough to have another try.

West Highland Free Press, for example, is now in its tenth year as a "radical socialist weekly local newspaper." It has a circulation of 8,000 and pulled more than £94,000 in advertising revenue last year.

The *Free Press* puts its success down to the fact that it was one of the first newspapers to venture into a remote area, and is able to combine newspaper publishing with commercial printing to offset losses.

East End News, now monthly, with only volunteer staff, ran for nine months as a commercial weekly. The importance of advertising and promoting distribution were not recognised until it was too late, yet at the close of weekly production the *News* was selling more than 5,000 copies, and circulation was rising. The reluctance of advertisers to pay their bills on time provoked a



Rebecca, the radical news magazine based in Cardiff, competes for circulation and advertising sales. There is strong emphasis on making the 'business' work.

crippling cash-flow crisis; the *News* believes that with a higher launch capital it could have survived.

Dundee Standard and *Hull News* also sold several thousand weekly copies, more than enough to be viable, but enjoyed only very short lives because of highly unprofessional management, severe under-capitalisation and conflicts between the (volunteer) staff and the trade unions which were publishing the papers.

The *Nottingham News*, set up in the wake of a lost industrial dispute at the *Nottingham Evening Post*, and with staff wages still paid by the National Union of Journalists, is in severe difficulties after losing several key staff to a local free-sheet publishers. *Nottingham News* began life by supporting the labour movement and also secured a competitive circulation, but eventually lost its credibility with the Left by continuing to publish sexist advertisements and news reports.

The most recent failure is the *Manchester Flash*, launched in a blaze of publicity a few months ago on £85,000 of government grants and loans and with 36 full-time staff. Within weeks circulation had fallen from 40,000 to 10,000, and management succeeded in losing the confidence of most of the staff by seeking to impose a 25 per cent cut in salaries.

Local newsagents were upset when issue one came out a

day late, and production estimates were lost to the winds when management decided to print on a high quality gloss paper, rather than the standard quality for which they had budgeted.

The news staff also complained that many of their more radical, investigative stories were needlessly being spiked, and some of them are now trying to set up their own monthly magazine.

"The real tragedy of the *Flash*," said one of the journalists who worked on it, "is that the government may now use it as an excuse for not giving money to other ventures. It could have worked if they'd got their sums right. Advertisers don't care that much about politics - all they want is a good deal for their money."

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

WHERE is the other news? It is five or six years now, since this question was asked, and slowly some of the answers are beginning to emerge.

Ever since the days of *OZ*, *IT*, *Red Mole*, *Black Dwarf*, *Seven Days* etc, there has continued to exist, against all odds, a thriving, assorted, radical alternative, underground Press. Underground in the sense that unless you know where to look for them, they are very difficult to find. Why? Because the problem has been to sell them to a monopolistic, moralistic, politically biased wholesale distribution system, without which, full national availability through the newstrade is impossible.

The good news is that the Big Two, W. H. Smith and John Menzies, with 75 per cent of wholesale distribution between them are beginning to open up; *Spare Rib* (30,000), *Marxism Today* (14,000), *New Socialist* (35,000), *Gay News* (now you see it, now you don't) are getting

'Labour daily' plan

THE TUC hopes to present a report of its investigation into the possibility of launching a national daily labour-movement newspaper to Congress next year.

The £27,000 feasibility study into the project is expected to get under way within a matter of weeks.

"We've no idea what the study will come up with, it's far too early to say," say the TUC. "It might suggest that a national daily newspaper is feasible, but that it couldn't be financed by the trade unions. We just don't know at this stage."

The members of the committee set up to conduct the 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 chair of Mirror Group Newspapers) — all serving in a personal capacity, together with TUC representatives.

by Liz Cooper

to the newsagents through the wholesale trade, and the *Leveller* are currently 'in discussion' with Smiths.

The Committee for Press Distribution and the Minority Press Group, with the help of the Campaign for Press Freedom, have been putting on the pressure, and now the Labour Party Media Group have taken up the cause and have managed to bring Smiths and Menzies to the 'negotiating table'. The aim is to achieve the right of all publications to the distribution system (as in France), but meanwhile to persuade Smiths and Menzies of their obligations as monopoly wholesalers.

The Publications Distribution Cooperative was set up in 1976 to distribute radical publications and made the first concerted attack on the wholesalers. PDC is still with us, and so, to date, are Smiths and Menzies. Watch this space.

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