

## Bulletin of the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom

Thousands dead and maimed, several £ million damage

# OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR!



"It will be a bold man," wrote Max Hastings in London's *The Standard* on June 15, "at home in England amongst the Tribune Group or the Belsize Park Trotskyite league or whoever, who dares to suggest that the outcome has not been worth the purchase."

In one paragraph, the man whose name disgraced a hundred by-lines sums up the media's view of the Falkland's war.

More than a thousand people were killed. Thousands more were horribly maimed. Millions of pounds damage has been caused and still a permanent "solution" to the political and diplomatic problems of the islands' "sovereignty" has yet to be found.

Thousands of people took to the streets in Britain to protest against the war. "Daring to suggest that the outcome has not been worth the purchase" seems reasonably legitimate, even if at the end of the day the suggestion may be withdrawn.

But that was what was wrong with most of the media. They suggested nothing. Most newspapers and broadcasts did not question the government's decision to send the Task Force—they yelled and screamed and demanded that the government must send the Task Force.

The *Sun* newspaper not only encouraged readers to sponsor missiles, it accused the *Daily Mirror*, the *Guardian* and the BBC of "treason" for not sharing in its blood lust.

And once the Task Force re-invaded the islands, the integrity of our informers diminished still further.

There were three particularly serious incidents during the war which were not properly reported.

The first was the sinking of the Argentine destroyer, General Belgrano. The ship was sunk outside the so-called "exclusion zone" while steaming away from the Task Force (according to John Nott in the House of Commons), by a British submarine, with the loss of several hundred lives. This incident may well come to be seen as the start of the war.

The second was the sinking of HMS Sheffield. Was the vessel carrying nuclear depth-charges? The speed with which she was scuttled takes some explaining. But the media has not yet shown any interest in finding out.

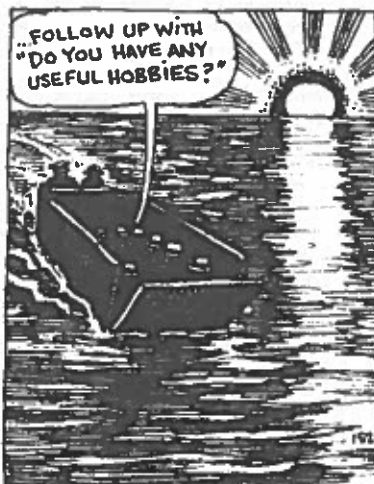
The third was the "battle" of Goose Green, which led to suggestions that British troops had massacred 200 Argentine conscript soldiers in cold blood. It is hard to believe. But hard facts about exactly what did happen have been few and far between – and so rumours will inevitably grow and equally inevitably be denied... where was the media?

There was one other almost comical report: that of the taking of a Falklands town by the "brilliant" means of telephoning ahead and asking if there were any "Argies" around. The "50 pence victory" story was pushed remorselessly by all sections of the media – a tribute to British cunning and ingenuity.

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Steve Bell begins a new series of cartoons in this edition of Free Press.

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IT HAS BEEN said that the Falklands/Malvinas war has been the worst reported since the Crimean.

This is very unfair. The Crimean war was comparatively well reported. The *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell was largely responsible for bringing home to Britain the facts of criminal mismanagement and inefficiency in the army. This brought down the Aberdeen government and made Florence Nightingale's name.

Russell was writing at a time when government restrictions on the Press had largely collapsed under public pressure, and the new means of controlling the Press had not been developed as they so evidently are now.

Alexander Haig told us at the beginning of the Falklands/Malvinas war to wait until the body bags started coming home; then, he said, there would be a change in British public attitudes. He should know. He has been responsible for sending back enough body bags himself.

But the government has learned a lesson from the American experience in Vietnam — the body bags weren't going to be sent back, they would be buried with little ceremony in the bogs of the islands. The government also learned

# Thatcher's lesson from Vietnam

by Jad Adams

from America the strength of feeling moving pictures can generate when bombings and maimings are broadcast nightly into the homes of millions of people.

Consequently there was no TV film of the Falklands/Malvinas war, and the dearth of even still photographs is demonstrated by the number of boys-comic-type drawings in newspapers showing combat troops doing their bit in suitably heroic poses.

When the *Sun* prints three of these in one edition it begins to look more like the *Illustrated London News* in the middle of the last century than a modern newspaper.

The main home source of war news, the Press circus at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, is treated to the exercise of a civil servant reading reports very slowly in words of one syllable — while the politicians whose diplomatic and



military ineptitude led us into the war are nowhere to be seen.

Far from being prepared to themselves announce the most important events, government leaders have restricted themselves to complaining that the BBC was not biased enough and urging the Corporation to brush up on its sycophancy.

It must have been a surprise for all the purple nosed or blue rinsed Tories in the Home Counties to discover that the BBC wasn't, as they thought, packed with Commies but was actually filled to bursting with fascist Argentine sympathisers!

In general, the Press, while praising Pope John Paul for his message of peace and condemning Tony Benn for the same message, have played the government's game. They seem to have been delivered a complete kit of war office euphemisms — helicopters are "downed," ships are "taken out," there are reports of "further loss of life" which one must mentally translate into the phrase "more deaths".

Not that the Press cares much. It happened to be in a Fleet Street newsroom when the Task Force was nearing the islands in question and a message was received from Our Man on board one of the ships. He said the MoD had told hacks no hard news could be reported unless it had already been broadcast on the BBC World Service; i.e. forget reporters, just listen to the Foreign Office radio reports.

I asked why, therefore, did we have reporters out there in the first place when we could listen to the radio as well as they could. "We can write what we like," a news editor said, "and put their byline on it."

General Galtieri and a team of media surgeons headed by Paul Johnson, who has become the Godfrey Wynne of the Thatcherites.

In a *Daily Mail* article, Johnson movingly explained the burden on Mrs T at her 'lonely' desk (did she share the desk prior to the Falklands?). 'Mrs Thatcher,' he wrote, 'is facing the greatest test of courage... which can befall a man, let alone a woman.' All is well, however: the article was headed 'Still the best man in the Cabinet'.

In one sense (as a result of the Falklands), normal service has been resumed as far as Mrs T is concerned; men are Men, women are family women and she is unique. The occasional voice of truth has broken through — such as Mrs Bickers, or the pilot who admitted after his first 'kill' he felt sick or the lieutenant-commander who praised his wife at home ('who has a household to run') — but their image has been smudged and overpowered just at a time when a sense of proportion says we need them most.

Chauvinism is inevitably the putty of the war machine. It holds it together — and it makes good copy. That doesn't mean it has to be something we accept. But we have — by our silence.

The author is a Fleet Street journalist.

This article is reproduced from *Time Out*, May 21 1982.

## Without comment

When news of the sinking of HMS Coventry reached Mercia Sound, the city's ILR station, commercials were cut from the schedule for several hours as "inappropriate to the seriousness of the occasion."

# Widows & mothers must weep...

THE WAR propaganda machine still demands that men go off to fight and kill for defenceless women at home. Yvonne Roberts argues that press coverage of the Falklands fandango has set the women's movement back to 1939.

Vivacious, auburn-haired Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward, Surbiton's loquacious lovely, had a recruit under his command described as 'a petite brunette' — and it wasn't Prince Andrew. Linda Kitson had been appointed war artist. One of the reasons why she was selected was because she has no emotional ties (not a 'real' woman after all). But even that didn't save her from the fate of every female bar one who was caught up in the Falklands fandango.

Linda Kitson, like everybody else in the task force, works — but because she is also female, she is decorated with adjectives. Not only is she a 'petite brunette' (*Daily Mail*), she is also described by *The Guardian*, which claims to know better, as being in possession of 'a small gamin figure'; useful presumably should she need to camouflage herself among the penguins.

Over the last few months, the nonsensical claim of a bias in the press towards Argentina has been much discussed, as has jingoism and patriotism; sexism, equally virulent, has escaped notice with hardly a murmur of discontent. It is, after all, one of the perks, one of the essential accessories of war.

You can modify your jingoism but if you modify your sexism, you take away the reason why 'the boys' (as Mrs Thatcher chooses to call them) need to fight. Principles are for politicians, heroes prefer de-

fenceless women and home territory as a justification for killing.

At this point in the stage management of the altogether unreal production which the Falklands has become, we run into some technical difficulties. No national threat exists and the majority of women left behind have already proven their independence. The 1980s is not World War II, when females were allowed a crash course in emancipation — until the men came home.

## Male ritual

Women can cope but the Falklands is part of a long-established male ritual. At the same time, because there is so little immediate factual information, the story desperately needs its daily dose of stereotypes: heroes and cardboard cuties from the 1940s and '50s; sweethearts, mothers, fiancées, wives, sisters and cheese-cake pin-ups. 'Lovers' are out: that sounds too much like equal billing. Common-law wives are also unwanted because as far as the navy's concerned they don't exist, at least not in naval accommodation.

So amid the cartoon drawings of Kirk Douglas Action Men catapulting ashore, the newspapers, tabloid and broadsheet, have created one-dimensional women dressed in 'Up Your Junta' T-shirts or treated to free knickers, while their personalities are garbled into lifelessness with 'a garter for the tartars'.

In short, patriotism for women is interpreted as acting as a male appendage. 'Governor's girl to wed,' reads one headline. 'My extraordinary son,' begins an interview with Madge Woodward. Women have been and are being portrayed

as newly-weds, mothers-to-be and, sadly, widows-in-grief.

The *Sunday Times*, too, has gone for the cliché. 'The QE2 is edging away' from Southampton quay,' read one of the captions, 'the women both fearful and proud wave goodbye.' Judging by the ambivalence some women have expressed towards the Falklands, the caption could equally well have read 'angry and worried'. Or 'defeated and bemused'.

The result of this particular emphasis in war propaganda is that very little has been written about how these same 'one-dimensional' women run families and homes and jobs. Doreen Bickers, 34, has given a clue. Her husband is with the task force, she looks after six children and works in a factory. 'I hardly have time to worry,' she said honestly, although it's not the stuff of which *Sun* headlines are written, 'but I just want him back in one piece.'

Again, very little has been said about how these women reacted to the recently announced pay rises for the forces — 10p for an 18-year-old, a couple of pounds more for those slightly older. Or what rights they have or what conditions they live in when the men are away or if they never come back. We prefer instead to treat them as ciphers.

The same distortion also means the emotions of the men left behind have been almost totally ignored. Where were the pictures of fathers, sons, brothers and — come to that — lovers waving goodbye?

The only novel aspect in this otherwise traditional display of sexism has been the treatment accorded Mrs Thatcher. After a three-year wait, her final elevation to manhood has been completed. In charge of the final operation was

# How YOU can help the Campaign clean up the media

**Rule 18 (a):**  
"If the NEC is of the opinion that a member has been guilty of conduct which is detrimental to the interests of the Union or of the profession of journalism, it may after due inquiry in accordance with the procedure laid down by this rule impose on that member a fine not exceeding £1,000, suspend that member subject to the provisions of clause (m) of this rule for a period not exceeding 12 months, express its censure in such terms as it deems appropriate (or impose more than one of these penalties) or expel him/her from the Union."

**Rule 18 (b):**  
"Proceedings under this rule may be instituted directly by the NEC, or by a member making a complaint against another member alleging a professional or trade union grievance. It shall be open to a member to make a complaint under this rule on behalf of a party or parties outside the Union with a grievance about media coverage which is alleged to be in breach of the Code of Conduct..."

**Rule 18 (1):**  
"Conduct detrimental to the interests of the Union shall be deemed to include... any breach of the Rules of the Union or of the principles laid down in the Union's Code of Professional Conduct..."

The 1982 Annual Delegates' Meeting of the National Union of Journalists passed this resolution, instructing the NEC, "as a matter of urgency, to amend Rule 18 to give effect to the principle that:

(a) when a member wishes to make a complaint under any Union rule about an article which is not bylined or which carries a house byline, the FoC or MoC (shop steward) of the chapel to which members in the publication concerned belong, shall, upon request, inform the branch in which the complaint originated of the identity of the member or members responsible for the article published.

(b) when a complaint is laid against a member or members alleging a breach of any Union rule and the member or members concerned advance as a defence that their material was altered by other members, the FoC or MoC of the members complained against shall, upon request, inform the branch in which the complaint originated of the identity of the member or members responsible or, satisfy the branch that he/she has made adequate attempts to discover that identity but failed."

## Code of Conduct

1. A journalist has a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards.
2. A journalist shall at all times defend the principle of the freedom of the Press and other media in relation to the collection of information and the expression of comment and criticism. He/she shall strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship.
3. A journalist shall strive to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is fair and accurate, avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact and falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation.
4. A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticised when the issue is of sufficient importance.
5. A journalist shall obtain information, photographs and illustrations only by straightforward means. The use of other means can be justified only by over-riding considerations of the public interest. The journalist is entitled to exercise a personal conscientious objection to the use of such means.
6. Subject to the justification by over-riding considerations of the public interest, a journalist shall do nothing which entails intrusion into private grief and distress.
7. A journalist shall protect confidential sources of information.
8. A journalist shall not accept bribes nor shall he/she allow other inducements to influence the performance of his/her professional duties.
9. A journalist shall not lend himself/herself to the distortion or suppression of the truth because of advertising or other considerations.
10. A journalist shall neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.
11. A journalist shall not take private advantage of information gained in the course of his/her duties, before the information is public knowledge.
12. A journalist shall not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of his/her own work or of the medium by which he/she is employed.

# THESE RULES WERE NOT MADE TO BE BROKEN

By Graham Smith

THE CAMPAIGN is calling on all its members and supporters to take action against bias and distortion in the media by using a "Code of Conduct" enshrined in the rules of the National Union of Journalists.

Hundreds of NUJ members routinely ignore the Code. In doing so they risk:

- A fine of up to £1,000
- suspension from the Union for up to one year
- expulsion from the Union

Any journalist who loses his or her NUJ card as a result of the disciplinary measures outlined in the NUJ's own rule book could be in serious trouble. The NUJ has a "closed-shop" policy covering many publications and broadcasting organisations.

It is not necessary to know the name of the individual journalist responsible for writing or handling the offending article. And complaints can be brought by anyone — you don't have to be a NUJ member yourself provided someone who is a NUJ member will prosecute the complaint on your behalf.

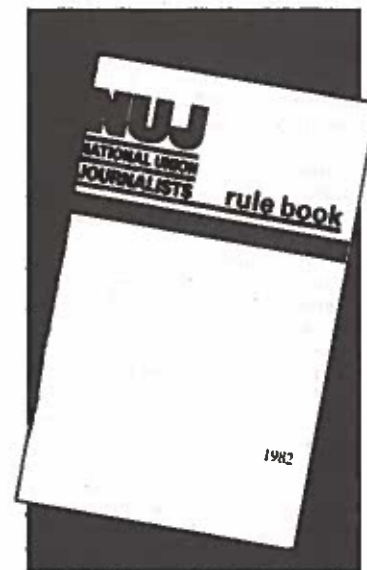
You should start by writing to the secretary of your own (or nearest) NUJ branch. You can get his or her name and address from the General Secretary, the National Union of Journalists, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

The Campaign's secretary, John Jennings, and several other members of the Campaign's National Committee, are using the Code against *Sun* journalist Ron Spark, who wrote an editorial accusing the *Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and BBC of "treason" over their coverage of the Falkland Islands war.

We publish John Jennings's letter to give you an idea of how YOU might use the NUJ's Rules and Code of Conduct:

"I wish to lay a complaint under NUJ Rule 18 against a Mr Ron Spark, a member of Central London Branch, who I am informed was the author of an editorial in the *Sun* on May 7 1982.

"This editorial accused Peter Snow of the BBC, together with the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*, of treason. There are legitimate differences of view about the Falklands crisis and media coverage of events in the South Atlantic. Whatever these differences, it appears quite clear to me that the BBC, the *Guardian* and



the *Mirror* were simply carrying out their normal responsibilities to report and comment on events."

"This accusation of treason levelled against fellow journalists attempting to do a professional job is a disgrace. It is also, I believe, a flagrant breach of Rule 18, clearly constituting conduct detrimental to the interests of the union or the profession of journalism. The rule states that conduct detrimental to the interests of the union may be deemed to include any breach of the Code of Conduct and Code of Working Practices.

"I believe Mr Spark's allegations breach both of these Codes, particularly clauses 1 and 2 of the Code of Conduct and clause 11 of the Code of Working Practices. Not only is he not abiding by the Code of Conduct himself, he is attempting to launch a campaign of intimidation against fellow members who are.

"I enclose a copy of the offending editorial, headed 'Dare call it treason'. I would be obliged if you would forward copies of this letter, together with the editorial to Mr Spark and to the secretary of Central London Branch. Would you please also keep me informed of the progress of the complaint."

Jennings sent this letter to the secretary of his own NUJ branch, *Magazine*. Similar complaints have been sent to other NUJ branches, one of them lodged by NUJ Deputy General Secretary Jake Ecclestone, a former member of the Campaign's National Committee.

# ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS

by Jane Pickard

IN WHICH YEAR were 385 people drowned in floods in China, Mersey dockers warned of another 1,500 redundancies and three prisoners killed in a cell fire in Manchester during an over-crowding protest?

The news buffs will no doubt immediately answer "1982". But as each of these stories warranted only six paragraphs or less on the inside pages of our greatest newspaper of record, *The Times*, it is quite possible that ordinary mortals will have failed to notice them.

The reason, of course, is that the stories in question — and dozens of others like them — have been squeezed out of the headlines by the Falklands crisis.

Many stories got no mention at all in the "Pops" and very cursory treatment in the "serious" papers. *The Guardian* gave seven paragraphs in its company briefing column to the docks' jobs story which came on April 5, the day of Lord Carrington's resignation. The redundancy threat was mentioned in the last paragraph of an otherwise purely financial report. Perhaps this is unsurprising in a 26-page paper which devoted six pages to the Falklands crisis.

The cell deaths on Friday, May 7, at Strangeways Prison, got one paragraph in *The Times* on the following Monday although the *Guardian* gave it six paragraphs on page four and the *Mirror* made it the lead — on page 15.

A clash between youths and police in Notting Hill on April 20, when 22 people were arrested and several people injured, got no mention the following day in either the *Mirror* or the *Telegraph* and seven paragraphs on page two of the *Times*.

Major issues have been reduced to rubble by lack of publicity. James Prior has seen his grand plan for Northern Ireland virtually sink beneath South Atlantic waves.

A thundercloud of industrial action by a host of public service unions is building up on the horizon with hardly a whisper of criticism from a Press which would normally have revelled in prophesying our doom. What a contrast to 1979!

Other running stories which were relegated included British Rail's conflict with the unions, the death throes of De Lorean and reaction to the Tebbit Bill.

Sir Peter Parker himself was driven to comment on the extraordinary absence of BR news during April. He told the Guild of British Newspaper Editors' conference that they were wrong to think the strike issues were settled, an impression inevitably given by their silence on the subject.

And up to 350,000 families are likely to be taken by surprise this summer holiday when they discover

that Mr. Tebbit has quietly decided to withdraw child benefit for parents of school leavers who get a job or YOP placement before September. Again, the *Times* gave this one paragraph and the *Mirror* nothing.

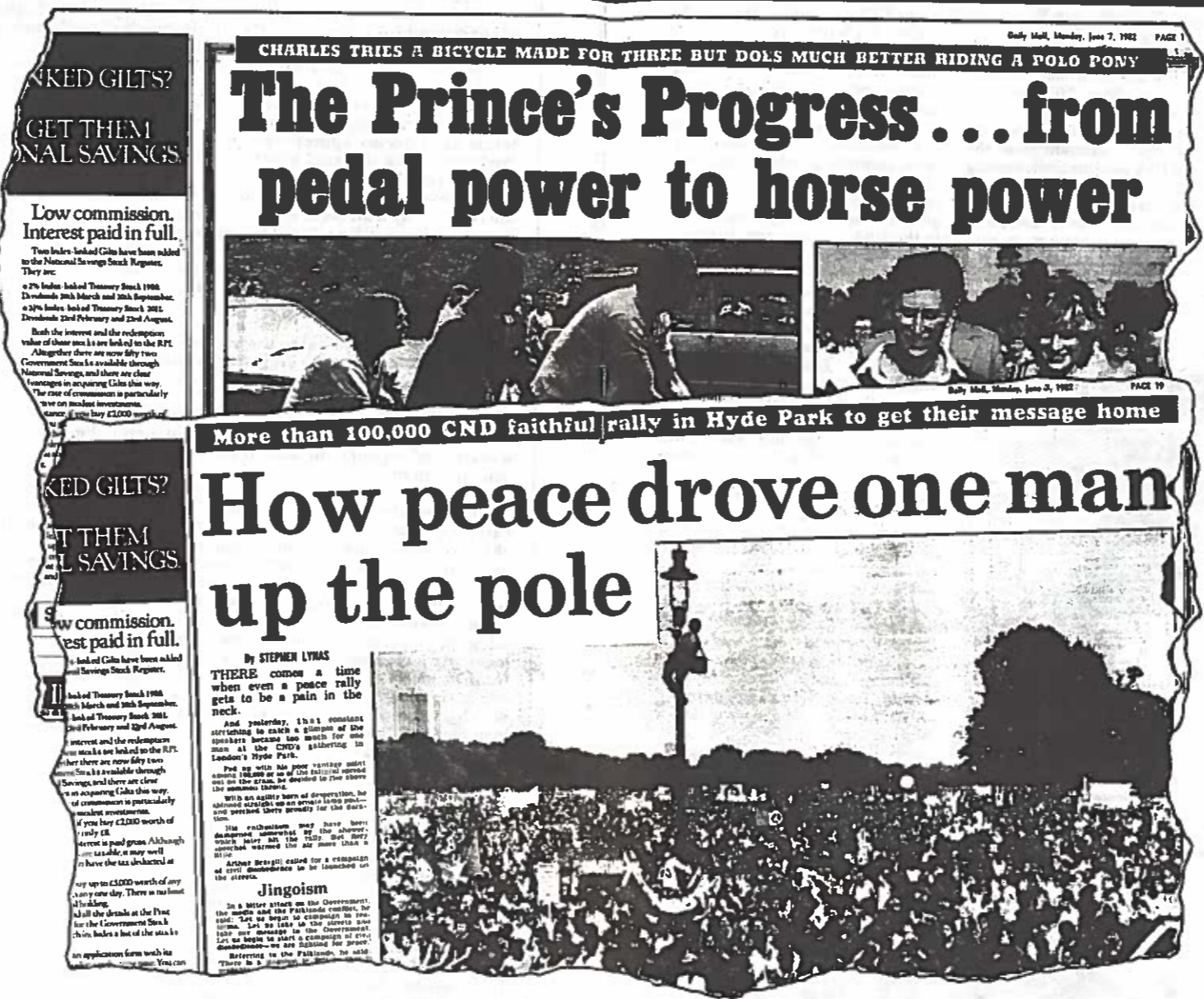
In the rest of the world, the Israeli envoy to Lebanon was shot dead in Paris and made page three of the *Times* on April 5, the Neil Aggett inquest was adjourned suddenly in South Africa after torture allegations, 13 people were killed and around 200 injured in election riots in Jakarta, an air crash killed 112 in China and floods killed more than 400 and made 60,000 homeless in Nicaragua, which duly appealed for international aid.

According to the Nicaraguan embassy in London losses run to 200 million dollars. So far they have got £25,000 from the overseas development fund and some more from charities such as Oxfam and War on Want. But the response of the British public has hardly been overwhelming since so few know about it.

At home, other news you may have missed included Sir Keith Joseph's decision to introduce a 17-plus exam for non-academic teenagers, the beginning, middle and end of the Wandsworth' dustmen's strike in London, the defection of nine Czechs in Scotland, a hunger strike and sit-down protest by remand prisoners at Strangeways which may or may not be connected to the cell deaths (the media has yet to find out), and a multi-million pound deal between the Talbot car company and Iran which has saved hundreds of Midland jobs.

One more teaser, for those who have been envious into reading nothing but Falklands, Pope and Middle East stories for the past two months — where is Harare?

# Oh dear! What happened to the Mail on Monday?!



Both of these centre-page spreads were published in the Daily Mail on the Monday following a massive CND demonstration in London. The first edition carried a write-up of the demo... but by the time the third edition came off the Press, the story had been replaced by one about Prince Charles learning to ride a bike! Ruth Sabey of CND's "Mediawatch" has complained to "Sir" David English (Mail editor).

# Media reform in Labour's Programme '82

Radical proposals advocated by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom have now been incorporated in the Labour Party's *Programme 82*.

These include a legal right of reply for victims of misrepresentation in the media, and an obligation on newspaper and magazine wholesalers and retailers to accept and distribute all lawful publications.

The Labour Party also proposes to "free newspapers from control by large corporations with other economic and media interests". This will be done by strengthening present anti-monopoly legislation and "breaking up major concentrations of press ownership."

The broadcasting structure will also be overhauled and reformed "to promote a more wide-ranging and genuine pluralism."

by John Jennings

Labour's new programme says "the next Labour Government will, as a matter of priority, introduce a legal right of reply." A daily newspaper, for example, will be required to print a reply free of charge, of equal length and in the same position as the offending statement within three days.

Failure to do so will mean legal enforcement, through "the courts or a specially created tribunal."

On newspaper distribution the Labour Party has also taken up the CPBF's proposals.

It says it will provide "a legal obligation on wholesalers and retailers to accept any lawful publication and arrange for its proper supply

and display, subject to a reasonable handling charge." And the Press Council will be replaced by a stronger, more representative body.

These and other proposals are included in the media section of Labour's *Programme 82*. They were drawn up by the Party's media study group and endorsed by its executive in June. They will now go to the Party conference in October.

Several members of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom are also members of the media study group.

The CPBF launched the Right of Reply Campaign in 1981 and published a pamphlet on the subject. This argued for action through trade union channels, including industrial action as a last resort, to secure the right of reply for victims of media bias and misrepresentation.



# BROADCASTING: Campaign calls cable conference

By Patrick Hughes & Simon Partridge

A STRUGGLE for control of UK communications policy is taking place between the Department of Industry and the Home Office.

A Home Office victory would mean the maintenance of some notion of "public service" and "the public interest" in the information technology industry.

But if the Department of Industry retains its current initiative the way will be open for a takeover of this sector of UK industry to the US-based multinational companies, to the exclusion of any real notion of "public service".

The ideological commitment of the government against public accountability has been shaped by executives in the UK "infotech" industry. Technological advances around optical fibres as a data-transmission medium, and the political and industrial importance of data-transmission, were described in a booklet, "Cable Systems", written by the Information Technology Advisory Panel (ITAP) to the Cabinet, in February 1982.

The ITAP Report concerns the future of the cable systems presently owned and operated by companies such as Visionhire, Rediffusion, etc. It says the continued use of these systems to merely relay BBC/IBA material "... has in general no commercial future," and it proposes the government should announce in mid-1982 that it will "... license new systems ... without the present restrictions on programming..." and that, "The government should urge cable operators and programme providers to set up effective means of self-regulation, after the manner of the advertising and newspaper industries."

This clone of the Advertising Standards Authority and the Press Council would oversee the growth of a UK infotech industry in which "... the main role of cable systems will be the delivery of many information, financial and other services to the home and the joining of businesses and homes by high capacity data links ... The consumer electronics industry would benefit greatly, as would optical fibre interests. The indirect effects would include a large stimulus to the office technology industry."

Not a single mention of "the public interests"; round one to the Department of Industry.

On April 7, the (Hunt) Inquiry into Cable Expansion and Broadcasting Policy invited submissions

from the public — by May 31! It was established by Home Secretary Whitelaw "... to consider an expansion of cable systems ... consistent with the wider public interest, in particular the safeguarding of public service broadcasting ... and to make recommendations by September 30 1982."

Some eighty submissions have so far been received, including those from the TUC, British Telecoms, the BBC and IBA, as well as numerous submissions from communications companies here and in the USA, and several industrial associations.

The Inquiry's secretary, Jon Davey, has indicated a certain willingness to be flexible over the closing date of May 31; the Home Office seems to be intent on grasping all opportunities to reinforce the "high ground" of public service against the incursions of the information technology companies, but its success will depend on mobilising sectors of opinion other than finance- and technological capital.

A new consortium — Merseyside Cablevision — is carrying out a £200,000 feasibility study to decide whether a cable system freed from the requirement to carry BBC/IBA material would be viable. The Hunt Inquiry is already being outflanked.

In the light of all this, the CPBF National Committee has authorised the broadcasting sub-committee to organise a major day-conference in November (timed so that it can hopefully influence Government policy) on the theme of the implications of the expansion of cable TV for public service broadcasting and telecommunications. The initiative has already been endorsed by the major broadcasting unions, and it is hoped to involve the Post Office Engineering Union, the consumer movement through the National Consumer Council or Consumers' Association; and, if possible, Lord Hunt himself and others.

The broadcasting sub-committee would be delighted to make contact with other members of the campaign who feel they can contribute to the conference in any way.

Among others, both the TUC and the Post Office Engineering Union have submitted evidence to Hunt. The former is available from the TUC Press Office, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS; and the latter called *The Cabling of Britain* from Greystoke House, 150 Brunwick Road, London W5 — price £2.00.

# REALLY BAD NEWS

A MINISTRY of Defence official, commenting on journalists' complaints about their treatment of the Falklands, remarked: "It's important that the attitudes of journalists are re-educated to operational controls" (*Observer*, June 13 1982).

There are presumably rules that journalists lacking experience in a war zone have forgotten, or perhaps never learned, although there has been precious little in the Falklands coverage to suggest it. The trouble is that the same rules seem to apply to most of TV's news and current affairs output: coverage of the Falklands war was perhaps not that much worse than it is of everything else.

The achievement of the Glasgow University Media Group is that it has had the stamina to scrutinise television output over the past half dozen years; and more, that its deciphering of the codes of bias now comes with a basic interpretation of the economic facts and political avenues the codes are designed to obscure.

*Really Bad News\**, the latest in the group's "bad" series, reviews some old ground and examines some fresh, concluding with chapters on the general features of media in a class society, and suggesting demands to put the "mass" in media by providing us all with access to TV.

The main new critique is of coverage of the Labour Party during the Left's battle for party democracy and accountability.

The analysis reveals numerous "operational controls" at work, from the way in which "threats" always seem to come from the Left, never from the Right; the counterposition between socialists and "realists"; the questions which never get put, such as:

"Mr Healey, can you deny that your calls for unity are no more than an attempt to avoid criticism of the last government?"

When the group re-treads previous ground, such as the coverage of the Glasgow dustcart drivers' strike in 1975, it is framed in a broader political context. Thus we had a number of our friendly neutral newscasters and reporters vigorously upholding the Labour government's incomes' policy.

Their devices included monitoring pay claims for their "acceptability", dropping comparisons of wage and price rises when the latter got too steep, and describing various government moves as "reinforcing its determination to stand firm in the face of mounting pay claims" without a hint of other interpretations or options. TV economics was reduced to: wage demands = inflation = unemployment.

If for a moment Mr Callaghan had entertained the idea of letting up on his policy of reducing living standards the screen mandarins

were always there to insist he did not do such thing.

The Glasgow group's books bite, as evidenced by the fraught discussions held by top-level BBC personnel (and could the secret minutes of their meetings please be published in the *Radio Times*, so that the licence payers can find out what they're really paying for).

The group's analysis aids the handful of dissidents cautiously at work in the newsrooms. And not least it arms us, since even the most alert and radical viewers will otherwise certainly miss a trick or three.

\**Really Bad News*, by members of the Glasgow University Media Group. Writers and Readers, £2.95 p/bk.

Geoffrey Sheridan



NOT THE BBC/IBA, 80 pages, is available from radical bookshops or Comedia Publishing Group, 9 Poland Street, London W1V3DG — price £1.95.

## The case for community radio

COMMUNITY RADIO has finally emerged as a live political issue. After several years of lobbying and increasing radio piracy, the Home Secretary announced last Summer that he was giving "further consideration to the matter."

Community radio is a new sector of radio, different from the BBC and IBA local stations, serving smaller communities and special interests; there is an emphasis on encouraging community and non-professional participation in programme-making and running the stations; it is under local democratic control through listener/producer co-ops or non-profit public trusts.

My just published book *NOT the BBC/IBA* examines the case for community radio. It argues that community radio can give a voice to those excluded from existing broadcasting, and traces the history of the idea back to the Beveridge Report on Broadcasting of 1951. The idea has periodically resurfaced ever since, particularly under the influence of the community politics/media movements of the '70s. The book gives examples of community radio in the USA, Sweden and Australia, and looks at several experimental projects in the UK.

Part One ends by giving an up-to-the-minute account of where the campaign for community radio has got to, and the present attitudes of the Home Office Broadcasting Department. It suggests that if the Home Secretary does not soon sanction some community radio pilot schemes, he must expect the development of widespread radio piracy.

Part Two provides a series of "how-to-do-it", guides covering: getting a station off the ground; a possible joint listener/producer co-op structure; and technical specifications for studios and transmitters. There are also lists of radio workshops and projects, and useful publications and organisations.

Appendices cover a glossary, community radio supporters' proposals for frequencies, licensing procedures for pilot stations and a bibliography.

Simon Partridge

## Cowboy Capers!

By Beulah Ainley



A Royal welcome for the President and Mrs Reagan—Page 3

How the Daily Mail welcomed Reagan.

THE PRESS, radio and television have, as expected, covered with glee the visit of Ronnie Reagan. Reading and listening to all the stories, from Reagan's hobnobbing with the Queen to his speech in Parliament, one would imagine that every man, woman and child in Britain, or for that matter Europe, was pleased to see the cowboy President.

What the media failed to report was that thousands of people, including some MPs objected to Reagan's visit. The day before the President arrived, nearly a quarter of a million people marched under the CND banner. They received little coverage, but Reagan, the upholder of the nuclear faith, did.

What is ironic is that in his speech to Parliament the President tried to hoodwink us all by pretending that he is a disciple of peace. The media in its wisdom seems to believe this and reported likewise. Take the *Sun* for instance, in its editorial for June 9th: "Behind every word that he uttered there was passion, sincerity and conviction." There may have been passion behind the speech, but the sincerity and conviction was not for peace as Reagan wants us to believe.

Reagan's sincerity should have been questioned by the Press after his handling, or mishandling, of the Falklands at the United Nations. Did the USA support Britain in its war or not? Those in the media who supported the war seemed to have forgotten the incident very quickly, when it should have been used to analyse Reagan's credibility in general.

## Healthy activity for the Right of Reply

by Mike Power and Loretta Loach

THE ACTIONS of the TUC Health Industry Committee on June 4 and 8 were preceeded by detailed media preparations. Bearing in mind the appalling coverage during the 'winter of discontent' specific efforts were made to lay the ground for any necessary right of reply.

NUPE in particular began to receive the old treatment when it passed an indefinite strike decision at its conference; editorials appeared saying: "Risking lives" — *The Sun*; "Shameful Mr Fisher" — *The Express*; "This wicked plan" — *The Daily Mirror*; and so on.

However, public sympathy, solidarity action and the two to one decision by the Royal College of Nurses to reject the 6.4 per cent pay offer has led to an overall cautious attitude in the media.

NUPE, who bore the brunt last time, wrote to every editor in Fleet Street. They outlined their case, asked for responsible coverage, requested a meeting with the editors and for the right of reply if they felt aggrieved. On the first day of action, some union officers and strikers were available in Fleet Street to meet editors. Perhaps surprisingly, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Observer*, *Sunday Times* and *Express*

responded and met the deputation. Every opportunity was provided for the editors to meet the people involved in the dispute. A copy of the letter they received together with a covering note was also sent to every union chapel of each paper in order to secure their support in the event of a right of reply request.

On June 4 the *Daily Mail* carried a feature by Isabel Walker which contained inaccuracies and was abusive to the General Secretary of COHSE, Albert Spanswick. The strikers and officials visited the *Mail* and were refused a meeting with the news desk.

However, with the assistance of NUJ and NATSOPA clerical chapels the COHSE press office managed to submit a short reply to the news room by 4pm that day. Nothing appeared.

The following day the NGA Imperial chapel unanimously called for a reply. COHSE wrote to the editor protesting at his refusal to print the reply and suggesting a feature with interviewed nurses.

Through this experience valuable

links were made between workers in the media unions and other trade unionists. This helped promote an awareness in the former, on their responsibility for what they are producing and in the latter, on the ways in which they can get better access to the media. This was expressed at a meeting organised at the end of the week by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Harry Barker NUPE London Organiser, addressing the meeting said: "It provided the opportunity for us to develop ways of using the media". He also said attention must be drawn to the fact that the dispute is not just over pay but over "the very existence of the health service."

Jeanette Mitchell, a reporter on health issues for the *Times* explained how the given notion of 'news value' that operates in the media, was affecting the coverage of this dispute. She emphasised the importance of the health workers taking the initiative with the media in order to balance the material they received from the DHSS.

John Jennings, secretary of the campaign, said in his closing remarks, that the meeting marked a significant change in direction in relation to unions and the media.

The Campaign wants to extend and develop this sort of initiative with trade unionists and other organisations. The Campaign has a valuable role to play in assisting trade unionists, and other labour movement activities in intervening more effectively in the media.

## SOGAT call up

THE BIGGEST print union, SOGAT, is calling on all media workers to join in a major campaign to challenge the present system of media ownership and control.

The union's conference carried unanimously a motion calling on the labour and trade union movement to develop the fight "against present ownership and control of various aspects of the media and for the right to reply."

Moving the motion, George Wiloughby, secretary of London Central Branch of SOGAT, said the British public have the democratic right to be informed. But a "kept Press", dominated by a few millionaires and multinationals, was one of democracy's greatest enemies.

The motion instructed the SOGAT executive to initiate a discussion conference with all other media workers inside the TUC to prepare for a major campaign.

SOGAT is affiliated to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

### Oops!

Apologies to "The Journalist" and to Andrew Wiard of Report, who should both have been credited for their coverage of the Campaign's Right of Reply Conference published in the May/June edition of *Free Press*.

## Campaign briefing

### West Midlands News

CAMPAIGN MEMBERS in the West Midlands have launched a five pronged attack against bias in the local media.

The initiative follows the inaugural meeting of the West Midlands Campaign when nearly 200 people at Digbeth Civil Hall heard speeches from Anna Coote, Michael Meacher MP and others.

Nearly 50 people attended the follow up meeting in June when the five-point strategy for action was adopted.

The Campaign set up groups to co-ordinate action on the following fronts:

**Monitoring**  
This group plans a detailed survey of how the local media cover certain events and issues. The results will be drawn up for publication.

**Complaints**  
This group will act as a "clearing house" for complaints from trade unions and individuals. It will decide the best way to seek the 'right of reply' and co-ordinate picketing where necessary.

**Spreading the word**  
This group plans to organise public meetings on specific issues, seek ways of getting the Campaign's view over in the media, organise library displays and other educational work.

**Media unions**  
This group will aim the Campaign's message specifically at members of media unions.

**Local Radio franchises**  
This group will explore the value of organising competition for local radio franchises for BRMB, Beacon Radio and Mercia Sound.

The West Midlands Campaign has decided to make sure that each group undertakes to fight sexism in the media. The Campaign voted to ensure significant representation for women on the organising committee by ruling that no less than 40 per cent of either sex must have places.

Those interested in any of the groups or seeking further details, contact Rob Burkitt, Secretary, c/o Birmingham Film Workshop, Arts Lab Cinema, Holt Street, Gosta Green, Birmingham B7. Telephone: 021-359 4193 (work), 021-444 0356 (home).

BILLERICAY Branch Labour Party has affiliated to the Campaign. The decision to affiliate followed a debate led by guest speaker Geoff Dixon, a member of the Campaign's National Committee.

### The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom adopted this statement at April's AGM:

The objects of the Campaign are to:

- (1) Challenge the myths of 'impartiality' and 'balance' in broadcasting and 'objectivity' in newspapers by campaigning for the genuine presentation of the diversity and plurality of society.
- (2) Challenge the myth that only private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access.
- (3) Challenge the myth that the present forms of ownership and regulation of broadcasting guarantee editorial independence, democratic accountability or high programme standards.
- (4) Carry out research and generate debate on alternative forms of ownership and control of newspapers and broadcasting in order to guarantee freedom from either state control or domination by business conglomerates and encourage the creation of alternative media including those sympathetic to the labour movement.
- (5) Encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper and broadcasting industries.

(6) Encourage debate on the implications of technological advances in the media to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded and that commercial interests do not override public accountability.

(7) Campaign on the general principles in the Minority Report of the 1977 Royal Commission on the Press, including proposals for National Printing Corporation to provide a competitive public sector in the industry and a launch fund to assist new publications.

(8) Campaign for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council to promote basic standards of fairness and access to the press on behalf of the public. The right of reply is fundamental to redressing the imbalance in press bias.

(9) Campaign for a reduction in legal restrictions on freedom of publication and increased access to information through a Freedom of Information Bill and reform of the Official Secrets Act and similar restrictive legislation.

(10) Campaign for the legal right of access for publications to the distribution system, and a guaranteed right of display.

The Campaign has set up a working group to advise and support the production of FREE PRESS. Meetings are open to all members of the Campaign; details from 9 Poland Street, London W1.

# How the MoD kept the media guessing

"I DON'T know if their briefings are confusing the enemy," a weary defence correspondent told the *Sunday Times* on May 30, "but they're sure as hell confusing me."

The defence correspondent (not named in the *Sunday Times*) was referring to the news briefings given by the Ministry of Defence. According to the *Sunday Times' Insight* team, two reporters had been given contradictory information from the same MoD source within a few hours. The *Insight* report speaks for itself:

"Disinformation is an inevitable consequence of war. But, if too much is peddled, then confidence in the government's version of events can be drastically undermined.

"Over the weekend several false lines had been pushed out first, that the invasion itself had been preceded by firm assurances that only a series of 'hit and run' raids was planned; then word was given that the cabinet had urged the capture of Stanley 'in days not weeks'; then this was changed to an assurance that the task force commander would dictate his own pace.

"Other disinformation recently has included Nott's suggestion to the Weekend World TV programme that a long blockade of the Falklands was a serious option; the claim that Britain would not attack Argentinian planes on the Stanley runway 'if they were sitting there doing no harm'; the continued suggestion that defence chiefs want to bomb the mainland air bases when in fact it has long been realised that this is tactically impossible; the guidance from a variety of Whitehall sources that the invasion was timed

**OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR!**  
*Continued from page 1*

The truth is that all telephone calls on the Falklands are directed through the Port Stanley exchange. So the Argentinians would have been able to stop the call. That is, they would; except for the fact that the Falkland Islands don't have 'phone boxes. Nor do these non-existent 'phone boxes take 50 pences on islands where the old ten-bob note is still in currency.

Never allow the facts to get in the way of a good story.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's views on the media are probably well known to you, but the scale of the bias and distortion has shocked even the most cynical of our members.

The media has thrived on gung-ho jingoistic reports from the Falklands for three months; now we have media gushing with nationalist fervour over the World Cup and a new Royal mouth to feed...

The Campaign plans to publish a detailed report of the media's coverage of the Falklands' war later this year. We need YOUR support now. If you are not already an active member of the Campaign, please write to us at: 9 Poland Street, London W1.

## The Falkland Islands

## The Facts



George Orwell warned of a possible "Ministry of Truth" in 1984...

for the Tuesday or Wednesday — two or three days earlier than it actually happened.

"The technique for disseminating this kind of disinformation is subtle. There are general MoD briefings for reporters; specialised briefings for defence correspon-

dents; background briefings for editors; and some 'solo' briefings for the apparently favoured few.

"None of these groups can be certain that what they are being told is accurate."

(Source: *Sunday Times*, May 30 1982, page 19)

## Fundraising Latest

NEARLY £900 has been raised in our request for sponsorship of our fundraising appeal. Two further names to add to the list published in the last issue of *Free Press* are Julie Christie, and Monty Python's Terry Jones.

Another aspect of our fundraising plan takes us to our nationally affiliated trade unions. We are approaching them for assistance. We have met the General Secretaries of several unions, and the response has been one of overall interest and willingness to help in making the campaign more effective.

Preparation is also underway of our special fund-raising publicity that will properly launch the appeal

in the autumn. Our intention is not only to raise money with this, but also promote interest and awareness of the issues of Press and Broadcasting Freedom and specifically, what the Campaign intends to do about it.

Meanwhile things are settling nicely in Poland Street and anyone wishing to give a helping hand or find out more about the Campaign should drop in, or telephone 01-437 2795. The office is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each week, 10am till 6pm. Office equipment/material/furniture would be a valuable way of contributing to the campaign, so please contact us if you have any to offer!

*Free Press* is published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 9 Poland Street, London W1. Telephone: 01-437 2795. The views expressed in *Free Press* are not necessarily those of the Campaign. This edition was edited and produced by Graham Smith, 34 Bennett House, Headlam Road, London SW4. Tel: 01-674 6362. Typeset by Redesign, 01-533 2631; Printed by Spider Web, 01-272 9141.

## KNOCKING ON TVs DOOR

A SERIES of television documentaries investigating the media could be on the way if the Campaign is successful with an application to Channel 4.

Channel 4 is the new independent TV station due to commence broadcasting later this year. The Campaign is currently preparing an outline for six programmes on the media:

● **Ownership and control** — who owns what, and where; how this affects media freedom and the implications of new technology.

● **Censorship** — a study of direct government intervention to prevent "undesirable" broadcasts, e.g. on Northern Ireland and nuclear weapons; self-censorship and "group-think".

● **Stereotyping** — how the media regards women, blacks, trades unionists and other "minorities" (!)

● **Alternatives** — the radical Press, community radio etc.

● **Freedom of information** — the in-built restrictions on the dissemination of facts, such as the monopoly-control of distribution by W.H. Smith and Menzies, libel, contempt of court, official secrets etc.

● **The Sun** — a critical history of the fall and fall of the *Daily Herald*, the only "workers' paper" which became the *Sun* phenomenon of today: how did it happen; why was it allowed to happen?!

At the moment the plan is to aim for a half-hour documentary on each of these aspects of media "freedom." At the end of the day, though, the decision on whether or not to commission the series, or any individual programme, will rest with Channel 4.

The package is being co-ordinated by National Committee member Graham Smith. If you have ideas on things to be included in the application to Channel 4, write to him at 34 Bennett House, Headlam Road, London SW4.

**WHAT should we call *Free Press*? It may sound strange, but the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom is considering changing the name of *Free Press* and wants suggestions from members.**

Critics of the name say "Free Press" implies the actual bulletin is free (without cost) and that it does not take into account the Campaign's concern over broadcasting.

Supporters of the name argue that "Free Press" is well established, and that as the bulletin is an ink-and-paper publication there is nothing wrong with calling it a "Press."

Confused? If you have any suggestions, please send them to the Campaign at 9 Poland Street, London W1.