

NUJ Conference Supports Right of Reply

By John Jennings

IN TWO KEY decisions the National Union of Journalists has reaffirmed its support for the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and rejected moves to rejoin the Press Council.

And the 350 delegates to the NUJ's national conference, held in April in Dundee, voted overwhelmingly to support "in particular the Campaign's efforts to ensure a right of reply".

Echoes of the row over the *Sun* 'treason' editorial, during which their leader writer Mr Ronald Spark was charged by the NUJ with unprofessional conduct, were still reverberating through the union as delegates grappled with the problem of how to uphold ethical standards.

Opposing a motion on the Press Council, Duncan Campbell of London Magazine Branch reminded delegates why the NUJ had pulled out of that organisation three years ago. It was "dominated by employers' representatives and employers' ideas", he said, and nothing had fundamentally changed.

Ron Knowles, former editor of the union's paper, the *Journalist*, said he was proud to have had a Press Council adjudication against him. "It was like being savaged by a goldfish," he said, "and that is what most editors and proprietors feel — they don't give a damn."

Not all delegates saw support for the CPBF and rejoining the Press Council as mutually exclusive alternatives, however. The main motion, although overturned by an amendment, had argued that in view of the negotiations between the TUC and the Press Council the union's NEC should draw up practical alternative proposals or recommend rejoining.

Moving the motion, Tim Beaumont of Press and public Relations Branch had argued that this was now becoming urgent. We did need an alternative. So far the argument had revolved round the union's own Rule 18, which enabled complaints to be laid against members in breach of the code of professional conduct.

But it had not worked, he said. They were reluctant to use the rule-

book punitively against members, and the public still looked to the Press Council.



Jake Ecclestone

This line of reasoning was backed up by Francis Beckett, for the National Executive. Why did people like Ken Livingstone, Peter Tatchell and various trade union leaders go to the Press Council with their complaints, he asked?

The reason was that there was no alternative. Since the NUJ had left the council they had been saying they would set up an alternative, but had failed to do so.

But moving the successful amendment to reject the TUC invitation to rejoin the Press Council and instead to produce practical alternative proposals, Ron Knowles said there was not a "great head of steam" in the TUC to get them back in. Jake Ecclestone and he had spoken to Moss Evans about it at last year's Congress, and this had been made clear.

Peter McIntyre said an alternative to the Press Council was needed, but the Rule 18 'Spark case' had been a most important event. What was seen to be happening was a trade union trying to put its house in order, and that had a significant effect. The TUC's attitude was "a form of cowardice", he argued.

Denis McShane, a past president of the union, said "The Press Council is not better than nothing — it is nothing!"

The amendment reaffirming support for the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and our right of reply campaign was moved

by Steve Pinder of London Magazine Branch. A report on the Press Council was due to be published in two months time which showed that even those people and organisations whose complaints had been supported by the Council were dissatisfied with the outcome, he pointed out.

And adding that the report had been commissioned by the CPBF he urged members to make sure they bought copies (see separate item in this issue).

Scarlet McGwire of London Radio, announcing herself as a member of the CPBF national committee, reminded conference of the positive achievements of the right of reply campaign.

SOGAT and NGA action had given support to the health service workers, she said, Frank Allaun's private member's bill had provided an opportunity for an important Parliamentary debate, and the Labour Party was now committed to legislation on the right of reply.

"This is the way forward — not through the Press Council," she concluded.

Government concedes over Police Bill seizures

JOURNALISTS HAVE WON the fight not to have their notebooks seized under the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill.

Members of the NUJ, Newspaper Society, Guild of Newspaper Editors and others met the Home Office Junior Minister, Patrick Mayhew QCMP and expressed their concern.

The right of seizure under the Police Bill has been dropped and journalists can now attend a court hearing if Police wish to apply for production of documents. The judge has also to be satisfied that it is in the public interest that the material is produced to the police, in relation to its confidential nature.

An NUJ statement said "The NUJ will naturally wish to examine in detail the terms of the amendments put forward by the Government at report stage, and it remains to be seen how the new legislation will in practice be interpreted by the judiciary and the police."

In some cases — under the Theft Act and the Official Secrets Act — journalists can already have their material seized, but the proposals had much wider scope.

Press Council Report

A REPORT WHICH will be influential in determining the direction of the debate on the Press Council is due to be published in June — and the CPBF is negotiating a special deal to obtain copies cheaply. We hope to be able to offer it to our members at near half-price.

The book, *People Against the Press*, by Geoffrey Robertson, is the result of over two years work. It is an independent examination of newspaper ethics and the remedies available against inaccuracy and bias.

In particular it examines the objectives, operations and structure of the Press Council. And it gives the results of the first-ever 'consumer survey' of the Press Council's customers — the people and organisations who have complained to the Council, both successfully and unsuccessfully.

The enquiry was in fact initiated by the CPBF, who set up a commit-

tee to examine the Press Council. Members were Sarah Boston, Geoffrey Drain, Jacob Ecclestone, Geoffrey Goodman, Richard Hoggart, Russel Proffitt, Phillip Whitehead, Katharine Whitehorn and Muriel Turner.

Geoffrey Robertson, who chaired the enquiry, is author of the book, which is now to be published by Quartet at £7.95.

The work has been carried out entirely independently of the CPBF. Members of the enquiry were not bound by our constitution or objectives, and we do not necessarily share all the conclusions.

But it is important enough for us to want to secure the maximum impact for the report. Every member should buy a copy — and make sure it is widely read, discussed and reviewed.

Watch this space for details of our special offer!

MoD establishes Media War Plan

Loretta Loach

IT IS A year since the House of Commons erupted over the 'treasonous' *Panorama* programme in which dissident views of the Falklands War appeared on the air. The Ministry of Defence and the media had been in unhappy wedlock since the conflict began when the Deputy Chief of Public Relations at the Ministry announced that no reporters would be allowed to accompany the Task force.

The quarrel was ostensibly over the control of information with the credibility of the broadcasting institutions at stake. After all, if the BBC was seen to be the obedient servant of the Government it would have lost face as the custodian of the country's national interest. In essence, the eloquent attacks by the media establishment were confined to the incompetence of the MoD. The Government had no central plan or strategy for handling information during the Falklands conflict" said Michael Cockerell, the reporter on the

I would have been the happiest man in the world".

The Ministry of Defence intends to learn a few lessons from its Falklands experience. This became evident in a plan that was revealed last month in which British journalists would be appointed as official war correspondents under military control. The plan would come into effect during a period of 'tension' involving Nato forces. It would establish an elite group of correspondents who would have privileged access to information and locations forbidden to other journalists and they would be expected to take part in military training each year.

The lesson we must draw is that versions of this plan have been in operation for quite some time. Since the army's involvement in Northern Ireland it has built up an information service which is, in the words of the Assistant Director General of the BBC, 'experienced, practical and credible'. There are numerous

previously posted in Northern Ireland.

Improving relations between the Government and the media in times of crisis usually means consolidating the media's dependency on the Army or Ministry of Defence for their information. *Guardian* journalist Simon Hoggart pointed to this danger in the context of news coverage of Northern Ireland. "Most journalists working in Northern Ireland are almost completely dependent on this [army] information service [and the smaller one run by the police], simply because there is no other source for news of day-to-day violence. This means that the army has the immense advantage of getting in the first word, and it is left up to the integrity of the journalist to check that word. Some do, some don't. Most only check when there is time or the incident looks like becoming controversial and a few hardly bother at all. When the British press prints an account of an incident as if it were an established fact, and it is clear that the reporter himself (sic) is not on the spot, it is 99% certainty that it is the army's version that is being given".

We must be aware of such dangers not only in past or future conflicts but in those taking place on our doorsteps.

TUC Women attack media

The following composite motion on the portrayal of women by the media was carried by the TUC Women's Conference at Scarborough in March:

Portrayal of women
Conference condemns the portrayal of women through sections of the press, television, films and general publications as sexual objects and the effect which pornography and the gratuitous portrayal of violence against women have on women at work and in society in general.

Conference recognises that the media is a powerful instrument for shaping public opinion and attitudes, and deplores a society in which the portrayal of women in the media distorts and misrepresents women thus perpetuating myths and sexual stereotypes. Conference further condemns the persistent depiction of women in traditional and passive roles.

Conference believes that this presentation of women may not only encourage violence against women but is a barrier to the achievement of full and equal rights for women.

Accordingly Conference resolves to:

- ensure that no sexist material is used within trade union journals;
- campaign against sexist materials used in trade journals and promotion materials relating to the trades of members;
- campaign actively against the degrading presentation of women, and to demand of relevant bodies that women are portrayed in a fair, equal and positive way;
- support those sections of the media which are concerned to portray women in a positive way;
- explore the implications of stereotyping in the media and, therefore, in society in general, and
- prepare a report on this issue for distribution to affiliated unions within the next year.

Moved by: Transport and General Workers Union
 Seconded by: British Actors' Equity Association
 Supported by: Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians



"... AND TONIGHT ON 'NATIONWIDE', AS IAN DECLARES WAR ON CHINA, AND UNEMPLOYMENT REACHES FOUR MILLION, WE ASK, WHAT ABOUT THAT ROYAL BABY?"

CPBF offers help to Tribune

THE CPBF HAS offered to mediate in the 'board room battle' for control of *Tribune*, the left wing Labour weekly.

John Jennings, secretary of the CPBF, wrote to the parties in the dispute — John Silkin MP, Lord Bruce, *Tribune* chairman Michael Meacher MP, and editor Chris Mullin — offering the services of the Campaign "as conciliators, arbitrators, or in any other way which would be mutually acceptable".

A furious battle for control of the paper had erupted between John Silkin and Lord Bruce on the one hand, who controlled a majority of the existing share, and the editorial and staff on the other, who had secured a degree of workers' control on the paper and wished to turn it into a friendly society.

Part of the argument is political. But, says John Jennings, the CPBF are not concerned with this aspect, "since our membership and affiliations are drawn from a wide spectrum of opinion and would hold differing opinions."

We are, however, concerned with the freedom and diversity of the press, with maximum access, involvement and accountability.

"The closure of *Tribune* would be a tragic loss," he says, "whatever different individuals may feel about its present political position or editorial content."

Therefore the Campaign wanted to help resolve the problem by conciliation and agreement rather than by a continuing and damaging confrontation. Both sides had agreed in April to meet representatives of the CPBF and talks were being held at the end of the month.

SOGAT add their support

THE FOLLOWING MOTIONS on press freedom and the right of reply are on the Agenda of SOGAT's Policy Conference in May:

Press Freedom

"This Policy Conference recognises the important role of the Morning Star, *Tribune* and *Labour Weekly* as correctly reflecting, reporting and commenting on the great issues of the day.

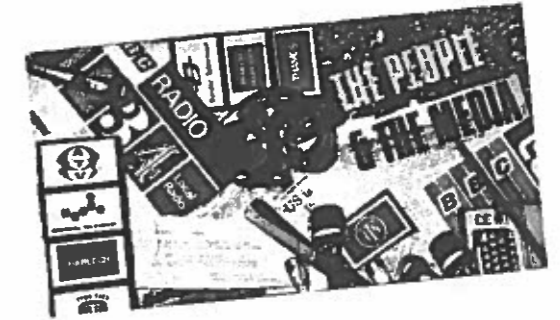
On the campaigns for peace, against unemployment, the fight for higher wages etc. at a time of open hostility by the establishment through the millionaire press and biased media. The above mentioned papers need increasing readership and financial support and share purchasing where applicable. As part of this campaign for Press Freedom, such papers should be given more Government advertising."

Glasgow & West of Scotland

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What will Labour do about the press?

by Michael Meacher MP



THE LABOUR PARTY'S Campaign Document *New Hope for Britain* contains six bright ideas and one glaring omission.

It proposes to encourage diversity by (i) setting up a launch fund to assist new publications, (ii) ensuring that all major wholesalers accept any lawful publication and arrange for its proper supply and display subject to a handling charge, (iii) preventing the acquisition of further newspapers by large press chains, (iv) protecting freedom of expression by prohibiting joint control of press, commercial radio and television, (v) breaking up major concentrations of press ownership by setting an upper limit for the number of major publications in the hands of a single proprietor or press group and (vi) replacing the Press Council by a stronger and more representative body.

This is fine as far as it goes, though a number of the details need specific clarification. It is certainly much more precise than the equivalent sections of the Party Manifestos of 1974 or 1979. But after experience of the pigeon-holing of the Party's last major document on this subject, *The People and the Media*, published opportunely a few weeks after Labour came to power in 1974, and also after the almost total ignoring of the McGregor Royal Commission Report on the Press in 1977, the real question remains: will it all be done? For there is little point haggling over getting all the details precisely right if there's no really serious determination to implement these measures.

The glaring omission is: who will do it? For at the moment responsibility for press matters lies, in so far as it exists at all in Whitehall, with — incredibly enough — the Department of Trade (because of its sponsorship of company law). Production matters (eg support for the Scottish Daily News in 1974) lies with the Department of Industry, while the Home Office is responsible for broadcasting. Two things immediately stand out here. One is that responsibility for the media is diffused throughout Whitehall (because of course Treasury, Cabinet Office, Scottish and Welsh Offices, Employment, etc all have an interest), which means that, under present arrangements, implementation of any major change of policy will be extremely difficult. And secondly, nowhere in Government does direct responsibility exist for the press — only as a peripheral appendage of a Department dealing

primarily with exports, civil aviation and shipping!

If, therefore, there is to be any hope of carrying through these radical measures in the campaign document, there must be a Minister appointed with specific responsibility for all media matters. This is not, of course, to suggest that a Minister intervenes, or has power to intervene, in the running of individual newspapers — any more than the Secretary of State for Industry can or does intervene in the running of ICI. It's simply that if aid is to be granted for launching new papers, a Minister must be responsible to Parliament for the distribution of the funds. If major concentrations of press ownership are to be broken up, or joint control is to be split, this process — and the assistance of co-operatives to buy them out, as I would advocate — has to be legally enforced and supervised and only Ministerial intervention can achieve that. And soon.

Nevertheless, there are those who think that a Ministry of Communications, as surely would have unwelcome Orwellian overtones. I take their point. I would, therefore, propose ACE: a new Ministry for the Arts, Communications and Entertainment. And on the communications side it wouldn't

be simply a matter of regulating the press — that would be a minor part of its role; it would bring together press, radio and TV, but more importantly it would offer a framework of public accountability for cable, direct broadcasting by satellite (after 1986) and the whole explosive expansion of information technology.

I believe that unless this is done, there is a very real risk that the whole of the rest of this earnest programme will simply fall by the wayside.

But this still leaves other points. A statutory right of reply must be established in both press and radio and television. I also believe a redistribution of advertising revenue is crucial when the maldistribution of this major source of funding could destroy the *Daily Herald* when its circulation was still four times that of *The Times* or *Guardian* to-day. I would like to see, not just a 'stronger and more representative Press Council' but a Press Ombudsman with real powers. And if information is not to be propaganda, why shouldn't political commentators who've held political positions or played a role in political parties, be required to disclose this fact — like MPs? At least then we'd all know better what to make of some of their diatribes.



".. and tell the viewers, Mr X, when did you stop sleeping on the night shift?"

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MAX HASTINGS leads the way...

THE FIRST MAN INTO STANLEY

PoW total is 14,800

Our day of victory...

Hastings — special treatment

controversial *Panorama* programme. And in spite of the vitriolic outbursts from Tory MPs about the unpatriotic BBC, one cannot help thinking that there was not very much to worry about. As Henry Kissinger said at the time that "if we could have got the support for our Vietnam policy [from the American media] that the prime minister has for her Falklands policy,

occasions when several senior or 'elite' journalists attend media study days at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. During the Falklands War Max Hastings from the London Standard was given privileged access to SAS communications facilities. Indeed Sir Frank Cooper who was in charge of handling information during the Falklands War had been

Channel 4 battles on despite heavy criticism

Alan Richardson

THE ATTACKS ON Channel 4 referred to by Alan Sapper ranged (or should we say deranged) from right-wing Tory MPs and Mary Whitehouse to most of the popular press.

The *Daily Mail* devoted its front page to the fulminations of Tory MP John Carlisle that the new channel was to show *One in five*, an hour-long programme for gays. The *Daily Express* managed to find a majority of viewers who thought it was "worse than the rest;" and Mary Whitehouse logged no fewer than 173 expletives in one week.



In the Commons' debate on the Hunt Report, Tory MP John Gorst lambasted a "fourth channel that is composed of bad language, political bias and many other undesirable qualities." This remark, along with the Home Secretary's reply that he had written to the IBA about the widespread concern felt at C4's programming was widely echoed by most of the press. At the end of the debate 20 Tory MPs tabled a motion describing many of C4's programmes as "deeply offensive to the British people".

However, writing in the March/April issue of *New Socialist*, Philip Schlesinger, Richard Paterson and Mairede Thomas pointed out that Labour's response was almost non-existent. "No Labour MPs tabled a motion in defence of innovative and experimental programming."

The *New Socialist* article criticised the Labour Party for not defending the new channel from these attacks. "The party needs to produce continuing and considered defences if this newly-opened pluralistic space is to be sustained and perhaps even further extended."

Criticism of C4 was not confined to the tabloids, which included the *Daily Star's* carping about making programmes for "obscure minorities" (blacks, women, workers, film



buffs). The more upmarket detractors included the *Financial Times* whose TV critic Chris Dunkley, accused C4 of "benign fascism" on the grounds that programmes such as *Black on Black* and *Eastern Eye* discriminated between viewers on the basis of race, forcing minorities even further into their ghettos. That black people and other ethnic minorities wanted such expressions of identification seems to have escaped him.

The *Daily Telegraph* commented that Channel 4 "need not be watched unless one is a woman's liberationist, homosexual or member of an ethnic minority", it further accused the channel of "portraying left-wing views to the exclusion of others in a stated attempt to put across opinions not heard elsewhere."

Another source of criticism, and pressure to conform to the existing model of commercial broadcasting has been C4's relatively low audience levels. However, at over four per cent this compares very favourably with BBC 2's ten per cent. As Brian Wenham, Director of Television at the BBC and formerly Controller of BBC 2 has remarked in *The Guardian*, "taking the historical view, Channel 4's holding of some five per cent of the



weekly viewing is nothing to be sneezed at. Eighteen and a half years into the mission, ten per cent is, by and large, all that BBC 2 can rely on, snooker and Wimbledon apart. Somewhere between five and ten per cent seems to be roughly what alternative television — that is to say, television not expressly seeking majority audiences most of the time — can expect, not only here but around the world, the United States included."

A week before we went to press, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Channel 4's share of the television audience had increased from four to six per cent. The same report revealed that the ITV companies were said to be considering asking the IBA to close C4 until the dispute over payments to actors in commercials on the network had been settled. A Channel 4 official said "Taking us off the air would not necessarily get the dispute settled any sooner, nor would it

help the future of Channel 4." One major difficulty is that C4 is not involved with negotiations in the dispute, which is between Equity and the IPA.

A second report in the *Telegraph* the following day, said that the closure threat was "a frightener to break the deadlock" in the dispute. An unnamed television official had argued that the closure suggestion had probably been put around deliberately to put the wind up the IPA and Equity over the dispute.

Earlier in the report, Mr Edmund Dell, chairman of Channel 4 and Mr Paul Fox, chairman of the Independent Television Companies Association Council said that reports that the independent TV companies were asking for the shut down till the dispute was settled, were "completely without foundation."



Channel 4 — Not ITV 2

Simon Blanchard



JUST OVER 20 years ago, in June 1962 the British Government published a report on the future of broadcasting which had the unusual honour of being burnt in effigy at a garden party. This warm reception was organised by Peter Cadbury, the major share-holder in the now defunct Westward Independent (ie commercial) TV company. His symbolic protest was caused by what he felt were the report's 'unfair' conclusions about the ITV system. What was it about the Pilkington committee's report (named after the Sir Harry who chaired it) which made him so enraged?

By ending the BBC's monopoly right to broadcast TV programmes in 1955 — when the Independent TV Authority began its advertising-financed service — the Conservative Party had started a see-saw contest for power between the two systems, politely known as 'the benefits of competition'. The Pilkington committee's main task had been to review the first few years of

the televisual mixed economy and recommend who, if anyone, should get the next TV channel. Cadbury was irate because the committee recommended that the BBC should have the next network and, worse still, said that the ITV system had not come up to scratch.

Despite the garden party and hurt editorials in *TV Times* the Conservatives were not eager for more accusations of trespass in the fields of broadcasting, a terrain which, in English political mythology, was sign-posted 'out of bounds'. The rows over starting ITV had been bad enough. It was now the BBC's turn. BBC 2 was

duly allowed to start transmission in April 1964. The see-saw did not, of course, come to rest there. For despite its criticisms of ITV, the Pilkington committee had expressed the view that, after a thorough re-organisation, 'it has proved its capacity to realise the purposes of broadcasting, it should be authorised to provide a second programme. We hope that it will be possible to authorise this within five years.'

The committee's time-table proved as optimistic as its plans for reform. Still un-restructured, and having acquired a commercial radio system and a new name in 1972, the Independent Broadcasting Authority began transmitting its 'second programme' at 4.45pm on Tuesday 2 November — ironically enough the same day that the BBC launched the world's first public TV service from Alexandra Palace in 1936. Why then did it take another nineteen years to resolve the competing claims for use of a fourth network? The short answer

is that successive Labour and Tory Governments never made allocation of the fourth channel a sufficiently high priority to get the policy questions decided and legislation passed.

In the Queen's speech in May 1979 the Thatcher Government announced its intention to place the fourth service under the Independent Broadcasting Authority, subject to 'strict safeguards'. So, has the see-saw finally tilted back in ITV's favour? Have they 'got even' for BBC 2?

The answer to this question is 'No — not yet, anyway.' Under the terms of the Broadcasting Act 1981 the IBA's new service is called 'Channel 4, not 'ITV 2', for a number of good reasons:

The organisation providing the



programmes — Channel 4 Television Company Ltd — is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the IBA. It is not a franchise holder with a contract, as are the separate private companies making up the regional ITV network.

Unlike the ITV companies and the BBC, Channel 4 does not make its own programmes. It buys or commissions them from outside sources. These include overseas TV companies, film distributors and the ITV companies. But most importantly, the Broadcasting Act requires Channel 4 to obtain a 'substantial proportion of its material from independent producers and film-makers other than the ITV contractors.'

The Act also requires the new channel to 'appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV'; to ensure 'that a suitable proportion of the programmes are of an educational nature'; and 'to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes.'

The Channel 4 company is divided into two parts: a Board of Directors, and a commissioning-cum-administrative structure. The Board members have all been directly appointed by the IBA, and they in turn appointed the three senior executives — Jeremy Isaacs (Chief Executive), Paul Bonner (Channel Controller), and Justin Dukes



(Managing Director). Isaacs and Dukes have seats on the Board. Isaacs was responsible for all subsequent appointments on the commissioning and administrative side. Channel 4's duty to innovate led Isaacs to appoint commissioning editors whose job is to arrange programming for specific audience constituencies variously categorised as 'youth', 'multi-cultural', 'independent film and video', 'consumers', 'basketball fans, jazz enthusiasts and so on.'

The financial theory behind this was a hope that enough of these particular audiences would watch 'their' programmes to convince advertising agencies that some of their client's money would be spent more cost effectively on Channel 4 than in specialist magazines. Whether this strategy would work was always an open question, and one that's likely to stay that way for some time. Isaacs has admitted that the Channel will be doing very well to get its projected ten per cent share of the viewing audience within two years, as they hope to do. It took BBC 2 eleven years and an ITV strike to get this size of audience on a regular basis.

From *In Dublin* magazine.

In support of Channel 4

IT DOES SEEM strange that the main proponents of unregulated cable TV in this country, are also taking the first opportunity of knocking Channel 4. All congratulations should go to Jeremy Isaacs, who has confirmed that, despite these attacks and the expected initial low audience figures, there will be no structural changes.

Jeremy Isaacs said he wanted to give his potential audience time to get adjusted to the new Channel. He correctly paralleled Channel 4's experience with that of BBC 2, which took up to two years to build up its audience.

We don't believe that it is in the country's or the industry's interest that Channel 4 should be destroyed by those barbarians who believe that the new service should never have been created or that it should have merely become ITV-2.

Those of us who have had some opportunity of watching Channel 4 scheduling can only congratulate the people responsible for an exciting mix of programmes appealing to a wide variety of interests in our community."

Alan Sapper, General Secretary ACTT writing in the ACTT Journal, January 1983.

Toryspeak

Arthur Murray

HOW DO YOU make your writing slant to the right? A good way is to read the Tory tabloids. Let's start with an example. Toryspeak calls student grants 'student hand-outs'. Now the word 'grant' has a nice sound to it. A sort of "okay, we know you're having a hard time so we're giving you some money to ease it" sound. It somehow recognises the dignity of the recipient.

But a "hand-out"? Hand-outs are given to dirty unstable persons who shuffle shiftily up to the giver from a never-ending queue of similar people. There's the implication that they'll probably spend it all on booze so it's a pure waste of time giving it to them anyway.

What a difference a word makes!

Try it yourself: try analysing the meaning conveyed by the word "grab" as in "Labour land grab", where it means "to take into public ownership".

Toryspeak also has the problem of concealing the profit motive.

It does this by using euphemisms to distract us. See the table below.

Why be so mealy-mouthed about it? Why this reserve about admitting that most of us are in it for the money? And: have we become more coy over the years? Remember in its early days how we often called ITV 'commercial television'? Finally, an example of Toryspeak logic. We all somehow know that both of these statements are true:

1. the trouble with the Civil Service is that it's ruining the country.
2. the trouble with the Civil Service is that it mops up all the best graduates in the country and leaves industry short of talent.

But, just a minute, if the country is being ruined by a Civil Service containing the best brains Britain can produce, wouldn't the ruination be even worse if it gave up some of its brains to private (sorry — profit-making) industry and employed lesser ones to replace them?

Toryspeak word	as in:	real meaning:
independent private	Independent Television private school, private medicine, private sector	profit-making profit-making
public school turn commission	public school jobber's turn agent's commission	profit-making profit profit

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Individual Membership £5 per annum Organisations affiliate according to membership:

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1,000 to 10,000 : £15
10,000 to 50,000 : £25
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Anti-Labour Bias in the Provincial Press

Mark Hollingsworth reports on how the Bristol Evening Post and the Western Daily Press cover the Labour Party and Trade Union affairs.

PERHAPS THE ISSUE that best reflects the anti-Socialist prejudice of the provincial press in trade unionism, particularly the closed shop. During the NUJ dispute in 1980 the Bristol TUC passed a resolution that only NUJ members could attend their meetings.

Jonathan Shorney, a Western Daily Press reporter (the Bristol Evening Post's sister paper), was a blackleg during the strike and so was barred from TUC meetings. Eric Price, then Editor of the WDP, then issued an edict that no WDP journalists at all should attend any Bristol TUC meetings. Mr Price defended his decision which is still WDP policy:

"We decide which reporters go to meetings. I happen to believe that no-one should be forced to join a Union. That is freedom of the individual and democracy."

Mr Shorney has still refused to join the NUJ and was recently escorted out of the annual Tribune rally in Bristol. His reporting has so angered Labour Party members that many refuse to talk to him and Shorney has to ask other journalists to interview Party representatives for his own stories.

Trade Union leader Ernie Bristow, Chairman of the TGWU Docks Committee, has also refused to talk to journalists because of local press bias.

The day before the County Council elections the Evening Post published a letter on its front page from an individual dockworker which criticised the decision to turn away the cruise liner Canberra, because the ship was diverted from Southampton where fellow dockers were in dispute. Mr Bristow refused to speak to the Post:

"... because of the neurotic anti-Union attitude of your Editor. If that was not done as a political move on the eve of the election, I will eat my hat."

Mr Price replied that the "dockers are crushed into silence by the fear of their Union."

However the Evening Post has redeemed itself to a certain extent by a surprisingly consistent and fair right of reply both through the news columns and the Postbag. A survey of the letters' page by Sylvia McCallum, Public Relations Officer for Bristol West, revealed a reasonable political parity between Tory and Labour, although it does seem that virtually any letter will be published as one incident revealed:

When the Post criticised the relaxation of school uniform rules at Bristol's Ashton Park comprehensive a prominent party member wrote a spoof letter to the Postbag:

"I applaud your remarks on school uniforms. I well remember that in May 1917 the Russian Provisional government under Prime

Minister Kerensky passed a law abolishing school uniforms. In October of that year the Bolsheviks seized power. A coincidence? I think not."

It was signed 'Professor Yaroslav Durak! Durak means 'fool' in Russian!! The right of reply must be commended but that scarcely justifies the regular political bias as documented in this article. But who is to blame? The reporters or the editors? Maybe neither of them.

Journalists and sub-editors who used to work on the Evening Post and the Western Daily Press have no doubt. They allege that copy is slanted on a political basis by inserting or replacing paragraphs or key words. Pictures have been distorted and reporters are often told by news editors "We don't want to take sides on this" or "our readers don't want to read this", particularly relating to industrial disputes.

However journalists also know that if they argue about rewriting they will lose their jobs and so they resign themselves to the fact once the story is written it is no longer their responsibility.

The rewriting also makes it difficult for reporters to go back to their sources and so it results in professional as well as ethical problems. One journalist has decided not to keep his old material because of the political changes from his original copy.

When asked about this issue Eric Price declined to comment except to say: "My job as Editor is to be in the office running the newspaper not attending functions."

Yet political rewriting by editors is certainly not the unanimous view. One former Post sub-editor said that one reason for bias is that a lot of the reporters don't really understand what they're writing about, particularly on the Labour Party. Former MP Ron Thomas commented that:

"Far too often reporters hide behind their editors. If there is so much rewriting then no-one with any integrity would work in journalism."

It would be wrong to suggest, as one reporter did, that right-wing bias is inevitable because the Evening Post and Western Daily Press is owned by big business (in fact Bristol United Press is relatively independent with Associated Press having only 23.8% of the shares — not a controlling interest).

However there is no competition for the Evening Post in Bristol and once a paper has secured a monopoly then it has a tendency to avoid minority interests and seek to preserve the socio-economic consensus (hence the Post's opposition to the increase in rates in Avon). This results in emphasising con-

servative values like property and the family.

The pressure of advertising on news-space (about 55%) is also significant as a strong dependence on advertisers will ensure a Conservative political outlook from the paper.

Individual journalists are also less likely to be critical politically simply because they are in almost daily contact with local councillors, businessmen and readers.

No-one can dispute that the Evening Post is intensely hostile to the Labour movement, but the real issues remain — 1) are the Press wholly to blame and 2) if so, can Labour Party members be mobilised effectively to win the political propaganda war against such overwhelming odds?

Tony Foehler, Constituency Secretary for Bristol West, believes there is too much petty carping about media distortion and not enough positive action by party members to combat the bias. He argues that just as the right-wing manipulate the press through anonymous documents so the left can adopt a more

• Use the letters' page not as a way of replying to allegations but to initiate issues and hence be on the political offensive. This could be achieved by co-operating with Labour Councillors.

• Get to know the reporters and find out how the media works.

The Militant Tendency's Press Officer, Patrick Edlin, has also realised that the press war can be won if activists and representatives learn how to deal with the media. Militant Parliamentary candidates have been groomed to issue more effective press releases and cope with hostile questioning.

One of the many reasons for the conspicuous absence of 'Tory Party in Crisis' stories is that Conservatives don't deliberately feed newspapers with information about their internal Party affairs (although it was also due to the inherent anti-democratic nature of the Tory Party).

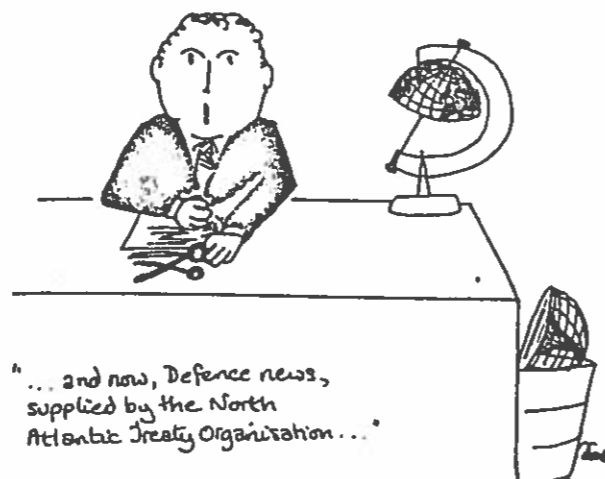
The right-wing — Labour and SDP — also get a better press because they have less scruples about attacking personalities and have a better understanding of what is newsworthy for popular papers.



professional approach. Tony suggests:

• Organising the unemployed and pensioners to use phone-in radio programmes as a way of putting across Labour views. Fact-cards could be distributed.

Ron Thomas told me that he has "no intention of using the capitalist press to attack colleagues. I will only debate policies." Unfortunately newspapers are not interested in policies, and social democrats know this only too well.



Reading between the headlines

Alan Richardson



WHAT'S IN A headline? More than meets the eye — or the credibility for that matter. Headlines are more than fitting teasers for the articles they accompany — they are an art-form in their own right. As Denis McShane observes in his book *Using the Media*, "Well written stories may sell newspapers, but it is the well-written headline that sells the story."

The headlines here, which all appeared in *The Sunday Times* recently, certainly fit McShane's analysis — they are brisk, seemingly unambiguous and attention-catching. They are also biased, manipulative distortions of the truth.

"The workers' friend" has a cosy almost glib ring, but it is still effective as an attention-focusing device. Having duly caught the reader's attention, interest soon gives way to incredulity when the 'friend' turns out to be Mrs Thatcher.

Had the headline appeared in *The Guardian*, and the journalist was other than a Thatcher apologist, the first reaction would have been one of a cynical satire set in the mythical islands of San Seriffe. However, having finally convinced oneself that both headline and article are to be taken seriously, one grits one's teeth and soldiers on.

Passing over Mr Butt's less-than-accurate prediction that the SDP would win Darlington, he goes on to claim that Mrs Thatcher needs to win the support of trade unionists. Having hoodwinked them in 1979, Mr Butt is anxious that she should be able to do the same at the next general election.

To do this, apparently, she must present herself as the workers' saviour and friend! This tricky task is to be achieved by the establishment of works' councils based on the West German model. Mr Butt asks plaintively: 'If one of the world's most successful free market economies, with a negligible public sector, can legislate for works' councils, with rights of consultation and participation, to be elected by all workers, irrespective of whether or not they are trade unionists, why cannot we?'

Mr Butt ignores the inconvenient fact that Germany's trade unions were abolished by Nazi legislation in May 1933. For West German-style works' councils to be effective in this country the existing trade union movement would similarly have to be abolished or dismantled. A prospect not a million miles removed from the intentions of Norman Tebbit.

Mr Butt brings his Orwellian vision to a close by claiming that Mrs Thatcher has secured the support of the majority (sic) for the cure of inflation and for building a more efficient society. Although he does admit that workers have paid a high price, and even concedes that many have lost their jobs (as a result). This state of affairs notwithstanding, Mrs Thatcher "now has need to establish herself as the workers' friend in a much more positive way." With friends like Mrs Thatcher no-one need be short of enemies.

'The workers' friend' headline falls neatly into the re-writing history category which would not be out of place in George Orwell's *1984*. The other two misleading headlines shown above are of the scaremongering variety.

'Labour plans raid on savings', complete with *exclusive* strap, appeared on page 1 of *The Sunday Times*, over an article on how the next Labour Government plans a "state raid" on peoples savings to finance its programme for economic recovery. According to the page 2 run-on the plans have already been carried out!

In fairness to *The Sunday Times* the intro does point out that this

so-called state raid is to be carried out by agreement and by borrowing; hardly the terminology of sinister bureaucratic appropriation of the peoples' piggy-banks conjured up by the headlines.

A quotation from Arnold Bennett sums-up the situation: 'Journalists say a thing that they know isn't true, in the hope that if they keep on saying it long enough it will be true'.

The campaign for press and broadcasting freedom aims to:

• 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.

• Challenge the myth that only private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access.

• Challenges the myth that the present forms of ownership and regulation of broadcasting guarantee editorial independence, democratic accountability or high programme standards.

• 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.

• Encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper and broadcasting industries.

• 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.

• 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.

• 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.

• 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.

• Campaign for the legal right of access for publications to the distribution system, and a guarantee right of display.

Right of Reply

"That this 1983 Policy Biennial Delegate Council adopts a firm policy on the issue of 'The Right of Reply' in the media — National and Local — and to this end direct the NEC to (a) campaign for this principle both inside and outside the Union, and (b) give full support to Branches and Chapels who seek to obtain the right of reply in line with the policy."

London Machine

Addendum:

After "with the policy" add new sentences "Furthermore, Conference deplores the fact that insufficient MPs attended the introduction in the House of Commons of the Allain Private Members Bill on the Right of Reply. As a result of this insufficient attendance the Bill fell. We urge members to put pressure on their MPs to endeavour to bring about legislation for the Right of Reply".

Greater Manchester & District

We would like to know of other motions on press freedom, right of reply, media bias, the portrayal of women and blacks, passed (or rejected!) at national union conferences and Branch meetings. Send motions, and reports of debates if possible to:

Alan Richardson, Free Press, CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

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REGIONS

West Midlands

AT THE LAST Meeting of the West Midlands Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom the potential of genuine Community Radio was contrasted sharply with the 'pop, prattle and phone-ins' approach of the majority of local radio broadcasting by Dr Tony Wright of Birmingham University.

Also speaking was BRMB Radio's programme controller Bob Hopton who 'defended' their 'policy' against what was in general positive criticism from Tony Wright and floor speakers. Hopton and his colleagues from other West Midlands ILR stations seemed genuinely hurt that anyone could suggest that their formula for local radio be even slightly tampered with in order to reflect a broader spectrum of the West Midland's opinions, cultures and tastes, and seemingly unaware of their role in setting the agenda for local news and comment and creating their own 'consensual' view of life in the West Midlands.

They said as broadcasters (a word to which grave reverence was paid) their responsibility (another important word) was to secure (that great Benthamite excuse) the greatest happiness of the greatest number; what a theatre manager would call "bums on seats" and is the life blood of the advertising executive.

The meeting will we hope have served to create a greater interest in our attitude as a regional campaign to the issue of local radio broadcasting and to step up our efforts to put pressure on BRMB to listen to our suggestions when its franchise comes up for renewal later this year.

John Carmichael

CABLE TV — THE ISSUES

This important booklet, published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, examines the issues surrounding the Hunt Report on Cable TV. It also looks at the experience of other countries and suggests a strategy for the labour movement.

£1.95

Orders to: CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG.

It ain't half racist, mum

'Many black people imagine prejudice when it doesn't really exist,' said the TV producer. 'I don't actually know any black people,' he confided, 'but I do know some Polish immigrants.'

'It ain't half racist, mum' takes on the press, radio, and television. Twenty-one media workers contribute their experience and observations of the way black people are dealt with — in news and documentary, drama and comedy. Internationally, the coverage of southern Africa and Idi Amin comes under scrutiny.

The black community is advancing its own media: radio programmes for and by blacks in Liverpool and London are discussed.

'It ain't half racist, mum' is part of the fightback: how the Black Media Workers' Association is countering job discrimination; what the labour movement is (and should be) doing; the response of the journalists' union. It concludes with a step-by-step guide to taking up your own complaints.



Price £2.50
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London W1