

GOTCHA!

Miners reply in the Sun

by Mike Power, NGA

FRIDAY 13th JANUARY was an unlucky day for the editorial cheats at the Sun. That was the day the miners' union won the right of reply over a phoney ballot paper printed by the Sun a few days earlier and designed to interfere with the union's overtime ban.

NUM president Arthur Scargill was given not only the right of reply but the same space and prominence as the original offending item to put his union's view.

And it was obtained for him by members of the National Graphical Association at the Sun.

This represents a real breakthrough in the struggle the CPBF has been waging for several years. Both the NUM and the NGA are affiliated nationally to the Campaign.

The initiative to get the right of reply came from the Sun's NGA composing chapel. It is significant that NGA members — who have been preoccupied recently with events at Warrington and are accused of only acting against press bias when it affects themselves — stepped in to help another group of workers.

On Tuesday 10th January the Sun had decided to print a so-called 'ballot form' on the overtime ban for miners to fill in. Obviously the results of any such ballot would be false — readers of other newspapers could not take part and there were no safeguards to stop anyone from pretending to be a miner and 'voting'.

"We were outraged at this gross interference in the affairs of the NUM," said Tony Crichton-Smith, the NGA Imperial FOC. "The chapel wanted the whole thing out from the start. It had no credence as a genuine ballot and no relevance to the NUM," he pointed out.

But the editor and management would not withdraw the 'ballot'. Instead they threatened to leave a blank space in the paper, and continue doing so all week if the NGA members refused to handle the work.

The imagined that the printers

would be frightened off at the accusation of 'censorship'.

But, as John Brown, Deputy Imperial FOC told us, "at that time we were so angry and the argument was at such a pitch that we would have let it go blank rather than see that appalling 'ballot' go through."

Sun editor Kelvin McKenzie had clearly overreached himself. Thereafter, while insisting on his editorial integrity he agreed to the chapel having a disclaimer at the bottom of the so-called 'ballot paper'. He also agreed to the miners' union being given the right of reply.

McKenzie was clearly worried. His boss, Rupert Murdoch, had been prowling round the office the previous day and McKenzie seemed to think he might be next through the revolving door — following Derek Jameson, his opposite number on Murdoch's News of the World.

By a strange coincidence, as the argument was raging in the Sun editor's office, the announcement of Jameson's departure was being made.

Jameson had recently agreed to give NGA members a reply to an article by Woodrow Wyatt about the Messenger Group dispute.

But in the event time did not allow for the reply to Wyatt, and the News of the World had appeared with a blank space where Wyatt's attack on the NGA should have been.

Rumour has it that this might have had something to do with Jameson's sudden departure.

It is a sweet irony that the 'paper that makes up stories about our boys' should be the first in Fleet Street to go beyond the usual offer of a reader's letter or a small, insignificant paragraph, well tucked away, when a reply is requested.

This whole episode is another solid response, similar to that organised by the CPBF around the health service workers' dispute in the summer of 1982.

In the longer run it shows again the need for more newspapers representing a greater variety of

MINERS! TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

THE Sun Ballot Form

Do you wish to continue with the Mineworkers Union ban on overtime?

Send this to The Sun, ...

★ CALL IN miners! ballot that Ar won't give you The Sun its own ballot week - old

THEY AIM TO BUTCHER US!

By Arthur Scargill

OVER the past ten years, miners have met and honoured all conditions laid down in the plan for coal to which this Government like the one before it is committed.

We have achieved impressive gains in productivity, which over the last three years alone, has risen by 22 per cent on the coal face. Yet today our industry, Coal "butcher", as Government plans to close 70 pits and see 15,000 jobs go into oblivion.

Since March 1983 — 15,000 miners have been asked to have the same time, basic wage have dropped from first position down to last for a substantial claim increase. In reply, day shift contracts to other industries who are offering their workers a 10% rise.

Loss

The more pits close the more jobs are lost. The NUM has a policy with this respect. The National Executive Committee is the only body that should be consulted to do.

Policy

Despite intense pressure from the Government to try to force a normal 8-hour day, in carrying out NUM policy, our members are making a sacrifice and are already suffering from their own industry's policy.

Attention of Government has not been paid to the fact that the NUM is a union of workers who are not only employed in the coal industry but also in other sectors of the economy.

We need at least 25,000 more workers to meet the demand for the coal and gas industry.

At a special debate on 21st October, the NUM was instructed to carry out a programme of further negotiations.

● Pick the NCB Government but miners' programme.

● Ban from overtime carry-over.

● This resolution was carried unanimously.

● The NUM has a policy of no overtime for more than 48 hours a week and this production of a 'd' is not the result of a 24-hour shift in 1981.

Who's holding hand with whom?

by Geoff Dixon

THE MOST DISGRACEFUL example of manufactured distortion of news appeared in *The Standard* on 20 December. Headlined "CND holding hands with IRA", the front page splash clearly implied collaboration between CND and the IRA.

The quote comes from "a police inspector" who was upset that at short notice, two demonstrations by CND required 200 police officers to be taken off 'the watch for terrorist bombers.'

A short quote late in the piece by a named CND organiser (compared with a long quote from the anonymous inspector), was buried in the seventh paragraph.

There is no story in this at all. Why not say that football crowds are holding hands with the IRA? or that Christmas shoppers cause traffic congestion? These need extra police cover too. Indeed why not blame the Ministry of Defence for "holding hands with the IRA" for being so stupid as to road test the trucks for Cruise missiles that day?

Imagine the headline.

"Heseltine holds hands with the IRA" — "Police chiefs today slammed the MOD decision to test Cruise trucks as insensitive at a time when terrorists are bombing London. A police inspector said "Michael Heseltine is not helping the governments case at a time like this. It's simply inviting demonstrations, and that means hard-pressed police resources have to be re-directed to look after concerned people exercising their democratic rights, instead of looking for bombs". "Michael Heseltine is simply holding hands with the bombers".

If you think that sounds stupid ask yourself why is it any less valid than the *Standard* story?

One CPBF executive member complained to Bob Graham, the journalist who wrote the story. "I didn't write the headline, 'I'm as upset as you are'" said the journalist. When asked if he could speak to the author of the headline, our colleague was told "I'm afraid he won't talk to anyone".

I shouldn't think he had the guts to speak to anyone after writing such a fairy tale. Headlines using quotes expressing opinion ought to be illegal.

News is about facts. It is not fact to say that CND is holding hands with the IRA.

STOP PRESS

TV Video Magazine

THE TRADES UNIONS could soon have a regular video news magazine following the formation of a TV trade union steering committee at the Darlington Media Group's conference in November.

A group of people from the North and the Midlands set up the ad-hoc group to look at the use of video in improving links with union memberships.

One idea which has been suggested is producing a monthly video for members which could be mailed to subscribing unions, and made available to members at their workplaces. The group thinks that the use of video news magazines could reverse the decreasing amount of contact that trades unions have with their members.

It is proposed that the videos would be produced by a full-time unit with their own presenter, interviewer and video crew. Two unions — NUPE and the NUM — have been approached to test their reaction.

Two of the people involved in the project — Rich Grassick and Dave Rushton — are already experienced in producing videos for trade unions. Dave Rushton works for the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre which produced the *Put People First* video for the NALGO campaign against the cuts. Rich Grassick has just completed a video for the NUM about pit closures.

For further information: Dave Rushton — 021-622-8323; Rich Grassick — 0325-54621.

Labour Movement Media Conference

A CONFERENCE ON the Mass Media and the Labour Movement designed to bring together journalists, printworkers, peace activists and the Labour Movement, is being organised by the Institute for Workers Control.

The Conference which will be covering new technology, ownership of media and the reporting of Labour affairs is being backed by the CPBF.

Speakers will include Tony Benn, James Curran, Michael Meacher, Stuart Holland and the Campaign's secretary John Jennings.

Being held at Nottingham University on 7/8 July, tickets are £5 per delegate, plus £1 for tea and biscuits.

Divided views on Labour daily

THERE WERE EQUALLY divided views at Chester Trades Council in December when members discussed the formation of a Labour daily. Their debate followed a talk on the CPBF and a viewing of the Campaign video — *Why Their News is Bad News*.

Twelve people showed interest in joining the Campaign and they called for the formation of a branch in the North West. On the issue of the Labour daily, one member

Guardian Press ethics diminish

THE CPBF HAS criticised the *Guardian* for handing over to the courts a copy of the secret memo on Cruise missiles leaked to the paper. This followed the High Court order by Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson that the document should be returned in order to reveal the civil servant who leaked the papers.

Mike Power, Chairperson of the Campaign said "It is disastrous for the cause of press freedom in this country and the document should never have been handed back. Unless people have faith in journalists to protect at all costs the anonymity of their sources, then disclosures which are genuinely in the interests of the public will not be made. The handing back of the documents will irreparably damage public confidence in press ethics and society as a whole would be the loser. The result would be that information should be disclosed in the interests of democracy would remain secret."

said that the labour movement would find it hard to run a paper which, on occasions, would have to criticise its own members. Others said that the possible demise of the *Daily Mirror* as a supporter of the Labour party made it even more important to get an alternative off the ground.

Job figures distortion

EVER SINCE 1981, 'The Recovery' has been the constant theme of economic journalists who want to believe the Government philosophy that current policies will eventually pay off. Earlier this year, during the Election campaign, the fact that the rate of increase in unemployment was falling was constantly cited by the government and its supporters as evidence that things were getting better. More recently, the first small fall in the absolute level of the seasonally adjusted unemployment total since 1979 has been heralded with hyperbole and — inevitably — distortion.

First prize goes to *The Times* of 2nd December, in reporting November's fall of 4100 in the adjusted total. This drop of 0.1% could hardly be called a breakthrough for the unemployed — but the *Times* managed to present it as such. On its front page it presented a graph which contrived to show a rapid and steady fall in the number of jobless.

In doing so, it managed to employ no less than three clever techniques to mislead the reader. The first was to show only the 'tip of the

please turn to back page

A new labour daily?

Media Alternatives in 1984

CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

Sunday
26th February
10.00 a.m.
County Hall
London



Among those taking part

Alex Kitson, Bill Keys SOGAT, George Jerrom, NGA, Jill Tweedie, Brian Sedgemore MP, John Foster and Jake Ecclestone NUJ, Denis MacShane, Tom Baistow, James Curran, Polly Toynbee, Giles Oakley, Vincent Hannah, Brian Wilson, Sandra Horne ACTT, members of Spare Rib Collective, Black Media Workers Association and shop stewards from all sections of the trade union and labour movement.

A new technology deal for a new paper

by John Abraham

THERE IS ONE solution to the monster problem of raising the cash to pay for a national daily newspaper — new technology. But it's not as simple as it sounds, particularly when trade union rights are at stake.

It is possible now to produce a newspaper without hot metal techniques — the molten process of casting type which still operates throughout Fleet Street. It is even possible to produce a newspaper without the cut-and-paste and sticky fingers of photo typesetting and paste-up, which is how most local papers are put together.

Full page make-up on screens with direct input from journalists and advertising staff (cutting out the need for typesetters) is now feasible. Improved computer systems are being brought onto the market which means that a new newspaper could be produced at a fraction of the price it costs to publish a national newspaper now.

Gone would be the need for costly mechanical maintenance, gone also the need for typesetting staff, compositors and many of the people who scan copy for mistakes — the readers.

Computer screens on editorial and advertising floors, deep-pile carpets, air-conditioning and controlled temperatures (to keep the computers dust free and operating smoothly) — these are characteristics of the publishing rooms of 1984 and

beyond. Or so we are told.

To the printing trade unions much of this is a heresy. Over the years the unions have fought hard to protect their members' jobs. They have built up strong organisation in the industry.

New technology introduced on the employers' terms — increased profits, swinging cuts in the workforce and the destruction of union organisation along the way

Our last issue carried Moss Evans' article on why we need a new Labour newspaper. This will be a major theme of our conference. We also print here other discussion papers for the conference in media alternatives.

— would be bad news for all printworkers.

It is easy to understand why chapels and branches are quick to block a technological revolution that is built on the simple promise of redundancies on a massive scale.

But tricky questions have to be asked as well.

If it is reasonable to stifle the destructive ambitions of Murdoch, Matthews and Maxwell, can it be justified to squeeze out a project in the workforce's favour — like a national labour daily — at the same time?

Must the possibility of producing a real democratic alternative newspaper be sacrificed to keep the Fleet Street predators at bay?

It might be argued that the introduction of new technology

offers tremendous scope for establishing *our own terms* for the use of new techniques.

It would be possible, perhaps, to negotiate staffing agreements which allow for training workers to make the transition from old techniques to new. A set of agreements outlining new job definitions, training programmes, union closed shop arrangements is badly needed

on a national labour daily project

A flexible and sophisticated response to management demands would be needed. The unions could, perhaps, evolve different kinds of agreements for different types of employers — rewarding our friends but making our enemies pay dearly for any concessions.

And an important element in securing agreement should be guarantees of editorial commitment to certain basic principles, including support for free trade unions, for a democratic society, for the welfare state and for ethical standards in journalism in line with the NUJ code of conduct.

Frankly, this may not seem a good time for the debate. After the Warrington, Park Royal and Dimpleby disputes the NGA,

SOGAT and NUJ are all nursing wounds suffered in direct confrontation with laws designed to break the trade union movement.

It is no surprise that the printing trade with its traditions of union power in the workplace is the battleground chosen by employers, the government and the courts. Proposals to introduce new technology can be seen as an integral part of a confrontation which is likely to sharpen over the next few years.

But in that confrontation all trade unions, and the print unions in particular, will need an alternative voice to make sure that their arguments are being heard. The distortion of the Fleet Street pack will increase as pressure on the union intensifies.

Trade unions and their members must be brought closer together if the present political battle is to be fought and won. The need for a national labour daily becomes greater than ever before.

The need, too, for the printing unions to ask searching questions about how they can defeat the employers' new technology ambitions and throw a lifeline to an idea which could collapse in the face of financial difficulties is equally pressing.

Perhaps it is not such a bad time to raise the debate after all.

BROADCASTING: REDRESSING THE BALANCE

THE CONCEPT OF 'balance' has long been central to broadcasting, and it has wide popular currency far beyond the official doctrine defining the broadcasters' obligations to remain 'impartial'.

Whenever there is controversy about virtually any programme, whether news, documentary or drama, it is almost certain to be the question of balance that comes up. Here is a typical example taken at random from the letters column of *Radio Times* last December:

"Jasper Carrott's so called Saturday-night entertainment (*Carrott's Lib* BBC-1) has rapidly developed into a left-wing propaganda programme on behalf of the Labour Party. No pretence is made to obtain political balance, with the consequence that the Thatcher Government, the USA and any non-left-wing view is subject to often very crude satire."

It was that writer's view that 'where political satire is used it should be balanced'. Politicians wanting to put pressure on broadcasting authorities often do so in similar terms. When *The Day After*, the American TV movie about the impact of a nuclear war was scheduled last December by ITV, Michael Heseltine wrote to complain

that the film's "content and political direction provide an unbalanced portrait of nuclear weapons in defence." He demanded, and got, an immediate on-screen opportunity to redress the balance.

The quoted complaints about lack of balance happen to come from the political right but could be replicated many times over from the left. Apart from impressively

BY Giles Oakley

detailed documentation of researchers like the Glasgow Media Group, some of the BBC's own research has shown that among the sizeable and growing minority who question TV News' claims to impartiality, a majority think the bias is against the left.

However, on the specific issue of balance as such, there remain unresolved contradictions and confusions on the left. At the same time as attacks are made on television for lack of balance, others are seriously questioning the concept itself.

On the one hand, for example, when news coverage is demonstrably



Jill Tweedie



Alex Kitson TGWU

unbalanced in the conventional sense, such as an industrial dispute being reported but with the views of strikers themselves largely excluded, then the coverage is rightly denounced as unbalanced.

Meanwhile, lying uneasily alongside routine complaints of that kind — and let there be no doubt about the need for continual vigilance — there are also important objections to the very idea of balance.

At its simplest it is argued that public debate shouldn't be reduced to opposing views that crudely cancel each other out, as some broadcasters recognise. Given the complexities of opinion on most major issues the attempt should be made to give 'due weight' to the spectrum as a whole.

A more important objection to 'balance' is that the notion gives the impression that there is a fulcrum or point of balance somewhere in the 'middle', between contending 'extremes', and that is where 'common sense' is to be found. Again, this much has been conceded, though defended by broadcasters themselves.

"It is, if you like," the Managing Director BBC Radio, Dick Francis, has said, "the logic of balance that there is a gravitation towards the centre, not in terms of political parties, as such, but in terms of values."

This gravitation does have significant implications of course for parties like the SDP and Liberals. The 'centre' isn't rigidly fixed but adjusts as the contending power blocks in society seek to shape consensus of the day. What the broadcasters do is claim to speak in the name of shifting middle-ground and reflect the views of ordinary people. When he was Director of News and Current Affairs Dick Francis described where he thought the point of balance lay:

"The fulcrum sits with the man (sic) on the top deck of the Clapham omnibus and our journalists are to some extent conditioned to see life from this viewpoint."

Veiled by folksy imagery like this, broadcasters assume a god-like overview of the world, presenting themselves as above the fray,

opinion-free and neutral, as though the centre is not itself a political position.

Any programme openly declaring some other perspective is promptly labelled 'committed and subjective', in other words 'unbalanced', and risks not being shown at all, as with Ken Loach's series *A Question of Leadership*. The very concept of balance itself can thus be used to impede the free communication of ideas, rather than protect it. Some points of view get excluded altogether or get only marginal air-time; how many Marxist programmes can you recall? (I well remember the reaction of the producer of a series presented by Ralph Dahrendorf when I remarked that the Marxist Tom Nairn would have made a good alternative: "Good God No," he exclaimed, "the man's a Red!")

Channel 4 with its brief to provide 'minority' viewpoints has improved the situation markedly, but it remains true that too often radical ideas can only get on screen when filtered through the assumptions of this mythical 'man on the Clapham omnibus', who seems to believe that the opposite of 'left-wing' is 'moderate'.

Given the way balance is operated in favour of the status quo, there is clearly a pressing need to maintain an effective challenge to the assumptions that underpin it. But, as we have seen, the speed with which the public itself turns to the concept of balance when attacking the media shows how deeply it has penetrated the popular imagination. There is a strong sense of 'fair-play' involved, at its best a genuine feeling that no one view should prevail, and that it is unjust if people or ideas are attacked without some chance of replying.

Everybody trying to broaden the range of voices given air-time should take account of these feelings, as part of a broader re-think of Public Service Broadcasting. The stifling effect of 'balance' must be scrutinised and exposed, but without losing sight of the importance people attach to the idea of fairness. Recognition of that will strengthen, not weaken the case.

Giles Oakley is a member of BBC TV's *Open Space* team and on the CPBF's National Committee.



Brian Sedgewick MP



Bill Keys SOGAT

Will the boom in broadcasting give community opportunities

by John Foster

WE HAVE, OVER the last few years, seen a rapid expansion of broadcasting. The duopoly of BBC and IBA has expanded, as is shown by the examples of Channel Four, BBC Local Radio, Independent Local Radio, and S4C.

In addition to this, we are about to see the beginning of satellite and cable broadcasting which could give community access to television, if it is not simply dominated by the demands of finance and a quick return on capital investment.

The advent of cable in Britain will challenge and change the existing broadcasting organisations. There will be a limited legislative framework, with the present Government's timid adherence to market forces being given full rein. There are many doubts being expressed about the ability of the City to provide the long term investment to establish the system. For the purposes of this article, the question to be considered is that of control and access.

The establishment of a cable network will bring the opportunity for multi-channelled television into homes which have access to the system. The Government has laid down in its bill minimal requirements relating to programming. The cable companies will, obviously, want to present the cheapest and most profitable programmes on their systems. Cable, with its multi-channel choice, could provide a basis for community involvement and programme making. If this is to be even a possibility, then the present legislation going through parliament has got to be radically changed, and the Government's

present philosophy challenged. The philosophy of the market place in television will not add to the viewer's real choice or lead to access by the community, either in the form of individuals or particular groups. We have only to look at the freedom of the press to see an example of the freedom of the market place being applied within the media.

Local Radio

The realities of local radio, either BBC or ILR, have not led to the expected or hoped for involvement of the individual communities. What we have seen is under-financed local radio, both ILR and BBC, and hard-pressed staff unable to give adequate coverage to even the minimal aspirations of either the Authority or the Corporation. Part of the reason for this is the secret and authoritarian structures of broadcasting in Britain. Under the facade of local consultation with communities, we have decision making in the Board of Governors and Authority, which is not open to public scrutiny or even to members of the staff or the unions representing them.

We have seen the rise of the 'phone-in' programmes which are cheap broadcasting and act as a token public involvement in the station's output. Minority groups are sometimes able to gain access to the broadcasting facilities of local radio stations, but with very limited resources or technical expertise to assist them in producing any programme or items. Once again, BBC, ILR and the Authority are merely paying lip-service to these groups and to public involvement in

Broadcasting and the community

The advocates of community broadcasting often receive a wary reception from the broadcasting unions. The unions negotiate minimum terms and conditions for their members who are earning their living from broadcasting. These minimum wages are often very low and the hours are very long. One of the ways in which the community argument is used to undermine even the existing conditions, is by the employers who are producing programmes on very low budgets, using members of the community to broadcast and paying them nothing. This runs against the interests of the Unions and their members.

If community broadcasting is to become a reality and a real part of the community, then it has got to be of a high standard with sufficient funds available.

While addressing ourselves to the questions of community broadcasting we tend to avoid the issue of the interaction of broadcasting and the community. There is a need to de-mystify broadcasting, and make the public aware of their own abilities to challenge existing concepts, and if we have a public service broadcasting framework, then the public have a right to know how it works and why it works, and to be involved in the service. We need to stimulate the general debate about the structure and control of broadcasting, particularly with the advent of cable and satellite broadcasting.

The expansion of outlets does not bring with it any guarantees about control, access, or community involvement. In fact, what we are likely to see under the present Government's philosophy, is simply the privatisation arguments undermining even the present limited concepts of public service broadcasting.

In all the areas of broadcasting it is important to recognise that community access must be accompanied by professional back-up, unless it is to degenerate simply into citizens' band radio.

John Foster is the NUJ's broadcasting officer.

the output of the station. The programmes themselves, suffering from poor facilities, under-funding and lack of professional expertise, are then all too often scheduled for broadcasting at hours when the listening public is at its smallest because of alternatives such as evening television.

Channel Four and Access

Channel Four was created partly to act as a stimulus to news current affairs coverage. Many people on the left, and in the trade union movement and in the NUJ welcomed this new concept. Many of the initial ideas, however, have been watered down as a result of the pressure and criticism levelled at the Channel in its initial stages. Have the newspapers and advertisers created these pressures? It is worth remembering that the main criticism came from the newspapers which attempted, with some degree of success, to change the radical stance of Channel Four.

The demise of the *Friday Alternative* and the cancellation of Ken Loach's programme *The Question of Leadership* could indicate a failure of nerve on the part of the Channel Four Board.

The BBC's *Open Door* programme is an important and interesting attempt to give individual groups access to television. However, it does highlight the need for technical expertise in producing reasonable programmes, which enable views to be expressed in a coherent, informative, and presentable manner. Without these important ingredients, the programmes will not be watched, the objectives of the group — the putting across of their points of view, will therefore fail.

In all the areas of broadcasting it is important to recognise that community access must be accompanied by professional back-up, unless it is to degenerate simply into citizens' band radio.

Join the Campaign

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

Below 1,000: £10
1,000 to 10,000: £15
10,000 to 50,000: £25
50,000 to 100,000: £50
100,000 and over: £100

*I/We would like to join the CPBF and enclose £.....

Name (or Secretary's Name)
(if different from above)

Organisation if (if applicable)

Address

Send to: CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG

CONFERENCE Well It's Better Than Bingo

"YOU'RE ON A losing wicket, I'm afraid," I was told at a recent meeting of trade unionists discussing their union paper. "Let's face it, people don't buy the *Sun* or the *Mirror* for news. They buy them for Page Three, sport and bingo. They want entertainment and escapism and they don't get that from their union journal so it ends up in the waste bin."

There in a nutshell are the problems faced by union newspapers and magazines trying to get across to the average member who may be turned off by a staple diet of industrial disputes, factory closures, branch reports — and arguments for an Alternative Economic Strategy.

At a time when unions have few successes to trumpet from the pages of their press and when traditional political loyalties are breaking down, it's no easy task.

Add to that the problem of trying to perform a balancing act between grabbing the attention of the average member and providing information and argument for activists, and you have some idea of the difficulties faced by trade union journalists.

However it's not all doom and gloom. The trade union press has a combined potential readership of over ten million — a formidable alternative press that we should make more of.

Union publications come in all shapes and sizes from the traditional quarterly old-style journal full of branch and officials reports to monthly and weekly well-presented tabloids and magazines.

The best of the bunch employ either full-time journalists or freelance journalists and designers and this is reflected in the vast improvement in the quality of the union press over the last ten years.

Unfortunately not all unions

employ National Union of Journalists members to edit their papers. Even in some large unions the task is entrusted to union officials who are not journalists.

These unions would do well to put a higher priority on improving both their public face and communication with their own

by Mitch Howard

members by employing professionals to do the job. Smaller unions, who perhaps publish a slim quarterly magazine, could have good, lively publications if they'd employ freelancers to put them together. Those who do have found that the cost is not prohibitive and that their publications improve.

Slowly unions are getting more publicity conscious. Many employ press officers to feed stories to the national, local and trade media, while some have made videos to use at campaign meetings. The British Telecom unions' campaign against privatisation and NALGO's £1 million anti-cuts campaign have shown that unions are realising the need to use the media professionally to their own advantage.

It's no use bleating about bias in the media — they've always been against us. The point is to do something about it. What better place is there to start than by unions putting their own houses in order and making their papers and publicity more professional?

If we don't believe that in the end we can get our ideas across — despite the forces in society that discourage reasoned argument and debate — we might as well shut up shop.

What union papers can reasonably hope to do is present what they

have to say in as clear and lively a way as possible, to provide information and opinion that is of use to their readers as trade unionists and provide members with a forum where they can air their views. And that means getting feedback from the members, encouraging them to send in stories as they happen — not weeks afterwards by which time they are dead —, to write letters and to write articles.

So next time your own union paper arrives don't just moan and groan. Get on the phone to the Editor or put pen to paper. For all their limitations and shortcomings union papers and magazines are the mainstay of our democratic and popular press. In the end they are answerable to the members, through the varied structures of individual unions, which is something that no commercial paper is.

Union papers can provide a unique service to the members who, after all, pay for them. Just the other day I had a phone call about an article on holiday negotiations that someone vaguely remembered appearing in *TASS News and Journal*. It turned out to be nearly four years ago but we found it and duly despatched it to someone who wanted the information for use on a recruitment drive at a factory where holidays are an issue.

This may seem a small example but it shows how a union paper can serve its readers in a practical way. If trade unionists see their papers doing a job for them, they are likely to value their union rag far higher than bingo.

Mitch Howard is Secretary of NUJ Trade Union Journalists Section and Editor of *TASS News and Journal*.

PROBLEMS OF SOME ETHNIC NEWSPAPERS

by H O Nazareth

AFRICAN AND ASIAN papers are published in English. Asian papers are also published in a variety of Asian languages.

Most of them — English and other languages — are run by small entrepreneurs who are as representative of the communities they pretend to speak for as the NPA is representative of its readership.

Many of them are trying to make a living from subsidies on the pretext of being 'minority' newspapers, or from government and public institution ads for jobs, etc.

They have few skills, low funds, and a diminishing readership, and they are in it for their own profit.

They usually represent the older generation of 'immigrants'. They coincide with the careerists and opportunists of the race relations industry in their aims and objectives.

The Asian language papers particularly are being used by the older generation as a way to gain support for cultural conservatism and reaction. And the Asian communities are different from each other culturally, linguistically and sometimes by religion.

The younger generation are not interested in language papers, hence the diminishing sales. The young often see the papers as communal and divisive.

Some of these newspaper's proprietors are unfortunately also rip-off merchants. They reproduce copy from other papers without acknowledgement or payment to the writers. The same occurs, with even more regularity, to photographers, as the experience of Ramesh Sharma shows. And they also pay very badly.

There are not enough skills, finance and opportunities for the younger Asians and Caribbeans to get their papers together — as community papers — with more accountability. Both for the Asian or the Caribbean communities, the papers would have to be in English.

If the Campaign is concerned with this problem, and wish to find a solution, they had better sort out someone to research it, taking care that the person appointed is not part of the race relations industry or blinkered by a narrow and over-simplistic view of the problems of racism.

LETTERS

Free Press Attacked

I support the right of Mr John Jennings to make an ass of himself in the columns of *Free Press* (so-called), as long as the editor is prepared to carry the can.

Honest argument, at which Mr Jennings appears to be a very young left-wing apprentice, necessitates digesting, and reporting, inconvenient facts. These facts do not appear in the editorially carefully 'managed' columns of *Free Press*.

Immigration, for example. "We cannot solve the problems of this planet by importing them ad infinitum. Why are the problems never discussed in these columns? The problems are: housing, jobs, education, social welfare, social and cultural. The problems are there, and they don't go away."

The loony left, humbugs to a man, pretend they don't exist. Working class people, and people of all classes, know the problems but are scared to mention them for fear of being labelled 'racist' or 'fascist' by intellectual midgets such as John Jennings.

Middle class lady hacks, 'liberal', trendy, skate glassy-eyed around the problems on fairy foot. The very worst examples of xenophobia (I prefer the correct term to the catchall bigotry of 'racism') occur among young working class blacks and whites. There are very good reasons for this but they will not be discussed in *Free Press*, nor even alluded to.

Let's give the problems an airing, then maybe we can work out solutions.

Mr Jennings makes great play of two quotes from *Free Nation*, October 1983, builds a great case from thirty words out of nearly two thousand. Gutter journalism!

Regarding the scurrilous final paragraph of Kamikaze pilot Jennings, on top of everything else (as if he hasn't enough self-imposed problems), he is now obliged to explain, in these columns, exactly how his statement applies to me, and others, who support the Freedom Association.

Peter Abrahams (ex-NATSOPA/SOGAT '82) Hampstead, London NW3.

John Jennings, CPBF secretary, writes:

The article Mr Abrahams is complaining about was one in which I condemned the right-wing Freedom Association over views expressed in their paper *The Free Nation*.

Brian Crozier, a regular contributor and member of their editorial board, had described Chile's military dictator General Pinochet as "a statesman on the model of General Franco". Pinochet was conducting a "most interesting economic and constitutional experiment", said Crozier.

Peter Abrahams omits to mention whether he agrees with these views or not (a mere oversight, no doubt, for someone so concerned about freedom of expression). Instead he

resorts to petty insults.

But there are no hard feelings on my part — all the insults are more than compensated for by his flattering description of me as "young"!

Right of reply marches on

I am happy to report that Max Madeen, MP for Bradford West has agreed to take over the Right of Reply in the Media bill, which I tried three times to introduce in the House of Commons.

Max is a long standing member of the NUJ and an ideal person to press this measure.

I am also happy to tell CPBF supporters that the Spanish government is considering a bill to give statutory right of reply.

The Spanish embassy in London tell me that it provides for an obligatory correction by the media within three days when there has been misinformation. If the press, radio or television undertaking concerned does not publish the reply, then a special action in the courts will be available within seven days.

It will not require a lawyer to present the matter in the courts. Judgement will be summary. This is similar to laws already in operation for many years in West Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark and other countries.

The right of reply, of course, is backed by the TUC, the Labour Party and the CPBF.

Frank Allaun Manchester 21.

Selling hardship to the people

To persuade people to accept the hardships caused by this government's policies, the Tory press has used a clever macho argument which goes something like this: "Only weaklings require a welfare state; tough guys like you can manage without if need be".

Who can resist the implied flattery of "tough guys like you"? The old, the young, the sick and disabled, yes, they need the welfare state, but tough, self-reliant, solve-any-problem me?

And, for example, it is more self-reliant for parents to raise money for their local school if it cannot get enough from the education authority. The trouble is, schools in 'good' areas get more money from parents than schools on council estates. Though maybe parents won't find too much time to worry about that, as their self-reliance increases with each jumble sale. Anyway, the press will be there to flatter and praise and, hopefully, make them forget why the local authority didn't have enough money to give to the schools in the first place.

Isn't it noble of the government to hand the welfare state back to the people? And how helpful of the press to suggest flag days so we can raise money for our hospitals — just like the thirties. You can be sure those flag day collectors will

come in for a lot of praise from the newspapers for their initiative and realism. "Well, how else can hospitals raise money?" the newspapers will ask as they round on those churlish enough to wonder why flag days should be necessary.

I see a bright future for wealthy editors who will praise those lower down the social ladder for their toughness, ability to endure hardship etc. It all brings back memories of the way London's East Enders were praised for their fortitude during the war by prominent people who usually visited *The Day After* the bombing raid — rarely, *The Evening during* — which produced headlines like *The East End can take it*.

The working-class areas that usually surround targets like factories and docks came in for a lot of bombing; that's why you never got headlines like *Mayfair can take it*.

Arthur Murray
Shirrell Heath
Southampton
Hants SO3 2JN

Media Freedom for the environmental movement

I feel that the CPBF should be more widely known in the environmental movement, in the animal rights movement and the peace movement.

The interests of each of these campaigning groups are seriously threatened by the press and media and therefore I urge CPBF members to pass on their copies of *Free Press* to these groups.

David Carr
Chairman
Southend Animal Aid

Editor's note: Hopefully all CPBF members will pass on their copies of *Free Press* to other interested people at work or at local groups. But don't forget, that 50% discounts on the cost of *Free Press* are available for bulk orders. Better still, get your local group to affiliate to the Campaign.

COMING EVENTS

CPBF Social Evening Friday 10 February 1984 at the Ludgate Cellars, Apothecary Street, London EC4 from 8.30 pm. Disco, buffet, surprise guests and bar extension to 1.00 am.

One day conference on the Role of Community Newspapers. Saturday 25 February, Hull. Details Hull Community Press Association (0482) 210580.

CPBF One day conference on the Labour Movement Daily and Media Alternatives. Sunday 26 February at County Hall, London SE1.

CPBF Conference and AGM Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 April at County Hall, London SE1.

REGIONS

THE CAMPAIGN IS continuing to grow in the regions, with at least two more local groups likely to start up this Spring. Members from the *North West* and the *East Midlands* responded to the appeal in the last edition and plans are underway to launch local groups. Members in the *North-West* are being invited to attend a planning meeting in Manchester on 21 January, and it is hoped that the local campaign can be launched by Easter.

In the *East Midlands* interested members should contact Marjorie Brown (address below) who is organising a public meeting to be held in Nottingham. She is particularly interested in contacting working journalists and media studies students who may be able to offer time and expertise to the local campaign. The continuing dispute between the National Union of Journalists and local printers, T Bailey Forman, should provide an added impetus.

Meanwhile, it is also hoped to get a branch underway in *Yorkshire and Humberside*. Interested members should contact the CPBF Head Office. A conference is being held in Hull on 25 February to look at the role of community newspapers. It is being organised by the Hull Community Press Association (0482-210580) who are currently publishing *The Post*, Hull's Independent newspaper. It is a 16 page monthly paper, along the lines of well known alternative publications like *RAP* and *Durham Street Press*.

In the *North-East*, work done by the Darlington Media Group is being featured in the first edition of *Print Out* — a new photo-magazine, funded by Northern Arts. The Media Group are currently engaged in an analysis of the photographic coverage of the Darlington by-election, held amidst much publicity in spring last year.

Members in the *West Midlands* will be electing a new committee to plan events for 1984. The local campaign will be hosting a conference soon on the way that the Labour Party deals with the media. The list of invited MPs and journalists has still to be finalised, but more details can be gleaned from secretary Rob Burkitt.

In *Wales*, the local CPBF hope that the publication of their Media Guide will act as a spur to their activities. All help and ideas will be gratefully received.

Contacts:
North-West — Granville Williams 061-226-4170.
East Midlands — Marjorie Brown, 19 Clinton Court, Nottingham, NG1 4DS.
North East CPBF — 0325-484374.
West Midlands CPBF — Rob Burkitt 021-359-5545.
Wales CPBF — 0222-482742.
South-East London CPBF — Jad Adams, 116 Stanstead Rd, SE23.

Like to contribute to *Free Press*? Then send your letter, news or article to *Free Press*, 4 Old Mill Road, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire.

A STRATEGY FOR TELEVISION NEWS?

by Anthony Easthope

AS A MEMBER of CPBF living outside London and not actively in touch I welcomed the Campaign's decision in 1982 to take on broadcasting as well. But reading *Free Press* I have not felt CPBF has had a clear strategy for television news. Despite their statutory obligation to be impartial, ITN and BBC news show persistent bias against the Labour movement.

Mrs Whitehouse's Television Viewers' and Listeners' Association, although no larger than the Campaign, has had a real impact on broadcasting. CPBF should be able to do at least as well. It should direct a constant stream of informed criticism at television news and make its criticisms public. I think three aspects of television news should be given priority.

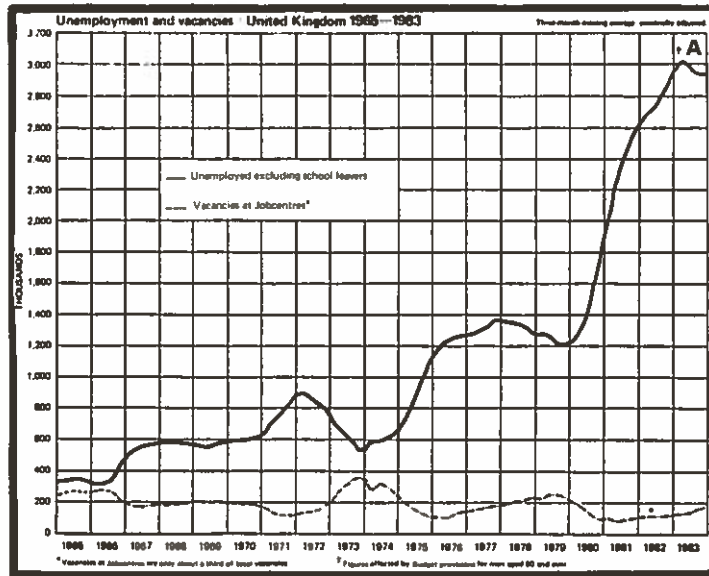
1. Weasel Words. Though claiming merely to reflect what happens, television news invariably misrepresents trade union action. But the Glasgow Media Unit has not made much progress on this front because the question of what is really happening is always controversial. I think a better tactic is to criticise what is actually said in a transmission and give a briefer, more impartial alternative.

To take some examples out of a hat. Why should Frances Coverdale, reporting the TUC Day of Action for BBC news on 14 May 1980 be allowed to ask, "And the verdict on the Day? Bad, but not as bad as expected?" Or Martin Adeny end the same broadcast by saying the Day of Action "was conceived in the dark days of winter" when we know nothing good could ever be conceived like that? Or Ian Smith on *Newsnight* (8 June 1981) refer to "another day of bitch and counter-bitch in the Labour party" rather than "a day of disagreement?" Or the BBC 5.40 p.m. news on 29 November 1983 name "the *Stockport Messenger* crisis" as "the union crisis"?

Such examples of bias are demonstrable. CPBF should monitor them, and complain to IBA and the Director-General. And tell the press it's complaining.

2. BBC hierarchy. As far as I've been able to find out — it's not a topic the BBC publishes a fact sheet on — the BBC works like this: the Queen in Council appoints 12 Governors. The Chairman is appointed on the advice of the Home Office. The Governors appoint the Director-General, the General Advisory Council, the Board of Management and the top 30 management positions (the Board of Management does all the others).

Anti-union bias at the BBC is rooted in this hierarchy. It ensures that no one gets promoted unless they happen to have the right



views — which they will then put forward quite sincerely in *Sixty Minutes* and *Newsnight*. CPBF should keep on publicising this undemocratic structure, though it's also a matter for the BBC's own unions.

3. 'Duncan'. The Director News and Current Affairs Committee (DNCA) of the BBC is said to meet every Thursday in room 7082 at Shepherd's Bush. It discusses news matters in a general and academic tone — how the Metropolitan police or the CIA feel about recent coverage, who is given a 'hard' interview (Benn) and who is given a 'soft' one (Hattersley). The Minutes find their way into news studios throughout the Corporation. They rarely order or prohibit, but they make perfectly clear to any ambitious reporter what the current 'line' is to be.

Because it's kept secret the effect of DNCA on news is hardly ever mentioned in the press. But some Minutes from the time of the Falklands war did reach Geoffrey Cannon. The headline of his report in the *Sunday Times* on 30 January 1983 said it all: "BBC toed the official line on Falklands". CPBF could challenge publicly the work of this committee and demand either that it be abolished or its Minutes regularly released to the press.

The Campaign's approach to television news needs to be discussed. I put these forward as three areas in which our limited resources could now have most effect.

Anthony Easthope is a lecturer in English and Cultural studies at Manchester Polytechnic.

From page 3

iceberg', on a scale with a ridiculously enlarged vertical axis. This can be seen by comparing the *Times* graph with the graph used by the Department of Employment in the press release from which the figures were taken. Only Section A was shown in the *Times*. Looked at another way, if the *Times* had shown enough of the 'iceberg' to include the 1979 unemployment level, the graph would have taken up its whole front page!

A second distortion was to gear the shading of the graph to the point that was being made. Only the fall is shaded, not the previous rise, so that to the casual observer the fact the current level is still higher than it was a year ago is not apparent.

But the most inexcusable distortion is that the bulk of the fall shown by the graph is fictitious! The steep decline in April, May and June (B) was due entirely to a change in the rules for signing on, under which men over 60 no longer need to sign to be entitled to their pensions — a change fully explained by the Department of Employment in their statistical press releases. So only the relatively mild fall since July (C) actually represents any real reduction in unemployment levels. As Neil Kinnock recently pointed out to the Prime Minister in the Commons, even at the rate of the best monthly fall of 10,000, it will be 1999 before unemployment reaches its 1979 total. (*Hansard*, 4/11/83).

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