

# FREE PRESS

## Health dispute video

Making News is a new campaign video sponsored by NUPE, Nalco and Cohse — all unions involved in the 1982 health workers dispute — shows just how NHS workers had to deal with media bias during the dispute.

The video, an invaluable guide to dealing with the media in a

dispute, was produced by Triple Vision and Jeanette Mitchell.

It is available with the campaign's other video — Why Their News in Bad News — from our office at 9 Poland Street, London W1 and costs £35 including VAT. Both are also available for hire.

# A fiasco in Fleet Street

## THE OBSERVER

**MILLIONAIRES** Robert Maxwell and Tiny Rowland polished off a rich breakfast at Claridges last month while they idly chatted about the fate of The Observer.

The spectacle of these two flamboyant barons of the business world — Maxwell owns a magazine and book publishing firm and Rowland heads a multinational business with extensive mining interests — haggling over a suitable price for a national newspaper shows just how absurd is the notion of freedom of the British press.

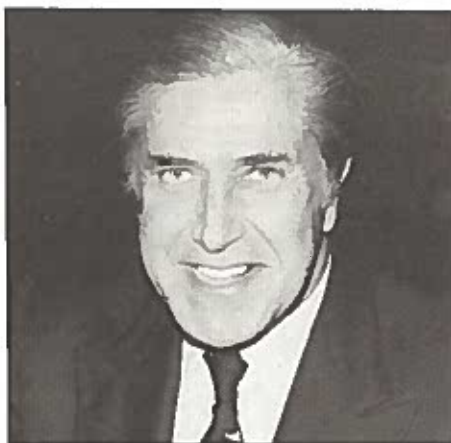
Maxwell eventually pulled out of the deal claiming that there was too much delay in reaching a bargain. He is not a man to be kept waiting. He made a bid for Manchester United football club recently — he already owns Oxford United — and quickly withdrew when his offer was not immediately taken up.

The row at the Observer blew up when Editor Donald Treford wrote an article about massacres in the Zimbabwe province of Matebeleland after a flying visit to the country.

His proprietor is Mr Rowland who has extensive business links with Zimbabwe. Rowland immediately launched a ferocious attack on Treford claiming the report was sensational.

Treford decided to reply in kind and called in the "independent" directors appointed at the time of the Lonrho takeover to back him. They did.

Rowland promptly resorted to another tactic: he withdrew Lonrho advertising from the Observer and demanded that the paper, which has been in the red over recent months, should make cutbacks in order to become profitable. He also snidely pointed out that, under Treford, the Observer's circulation had fallen. The



● The boss: Tiny Rowland

effect of Rowland's action which spiked the guns of Treford independent directors, could have been to threaten jobs and might put the future of the paper at risk.

Meanwhile, Rowland has made it clear to everyone prepared to listen that he wants to get shot of the paper as soon as possible. The paper's new owner, he says, should have a "killer instinct" in order to deal with the troublesome Treford.

Eventually, however, Treford and Rowland appeared to publicly settle their differences. "It was a lover's tiff" was the inconspicuous message from both editor and proprietor as their public battle was settled and letters of goodwill were exchanged. Meanwhile the private battle is expected to continue.

When the Maxwell/Rowland Treford circus was in full swing the Campaign for the Press and Broadcasting Freedom, launched a full scale attack on the structure of the press that could allow such a melodrama to unfold. In a lengthy letter to the *Guardian*, CPBF chairperson Mike Power wrote:

"The editor and proprietor of the Observer are more in agreement than may

appear from the public squabbles taking place over the Zimbabwe atrocity story.

"They agree, for instance, that the present system of ownership and structure of the press in Great Britain is the best possible. Neither are concerned at the growing monopoly control of the press. At present five organisations control almost all the 18 million Sunday and 15 million daily papers that we read.

"The same companies have widespread interests in the regional press, press distribution, commercial television and radio, book and magazine publishing and leisure activities such as cinema and records. They are also currently planning to asset strip for a £1 billion bonanza the news gathering organisation Reuters.

"They appear unconcerned that the effect of this "free market-free press" is to create a political complexion for our national newspapers stretching from the right of Jim Callaghan to about as far right as it is possible to go. Only the minuscule 15,000 daily circulation of the Morning Star is an exception to this. Nobody, not even the Labour movement, can match the kind of resources needed to launch an alternative daily paper.

"Treford and Rowland also staunchly defend the irrelevant, worthless and discredited Press Council.

"The Press Council has no power. As a result nothing gets done about cheque-book journalism the bingo/jingo circulation war, the blatant intrusion on individual privacy, or the distortion of people's lives and beliefs through racist, sexist and sensational coverage of Ireland, the peace movement and so on. The violent reaction to journalists and cameramen by the picketing miners reflects the frustration of powerlessness felt by many people in face of media bias."

Power went on to explain just how the alliance of business interests and editors views could be broken down:

"We need a new all-embracing Press Law, and its main function must be to break down the monopolies, perhaps in the first instance, by trimming Mr Murdoch's hold on four national papers.

"The £2 billion advertising subsidy must be spread more evenly. A launch fund, newsprint subsidy and a National Printing corporation are needed to create resources for new publications."

# FREE PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

NO: 23, MAY 1984 20p

## Campaign programme for 1984 and beyond

IN this bumper issue of Free Press extensive coverage is given to discussion, debate and decisions taken at two important recent conferences of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. One dealt with the issue of a Labour daily newspaper and the second was the campaign's two-day conference and annual meeting last month. Inside in a special four-page report back we give details of the campaign's strategy for the coming year and thereafter.

# Tisdall: victim of complacency

By Aidan White

**THE case of Sarah Tisdall, imprisoned for giving information to a newspaper, signals the stepping up of repression by the state against the people's right to know. And it is ironic that the *Guardian*, a newspaper which has most cherished the traditional freedoms of a democratic society, should be implicated in sending her to jail.**

This shocking and callous treatment — Sarah Tisdall did not even receive the courtesy of appeal against her six-month sentence — has forced journalists and readers to think again about freedoms that everyone had assumed were unassailable.

The protection of confidential sources of information, an article of faith among journalists, was set aside by the *Guardian* in its decision to hand over a document which led Government investigators straight to Sarah Tisdall.

Because the *Guardian* gave in to the Government's obsession with secrecy, a young woman was sent to jail for acting according to her moral conscience. The information she gave was of no use to an enemy but it gave the British people an insight into the Government's manoeuvring over the arrival of cruise missiles. By publishing the information the *Guardian* itself broke, the law, but clearly the Government was not confident enough to tackle a major national newspaper in



● Sarah Tisdall

the courts.

The tragedy of the Sarah Tisdall case is not just the personal hardship which she must suffer, nor the loss of the *Guardian's* hitherto unsoiled journalistic reputation, but that the government should get away with the prosecution in the first place.

The *Guardian* will recover; its journalists are taking action to ensure that sensitive documents are destroyed and that never again will a source be revealed.

Even Sarah Tisdall, we must hope, will have the reserves of courage to rebuild her life, with or without the assistance of the *Guardian*.

More worrying is the possible permanent damage that has been done to media freedom. The government has

successfully put journalism in the dock in its crusade against dissent.

By banning civil service unions at GCHQ, by its programme of anti-union laws, by its prohibition of miners' rights to travel, by the use of the Contempt Act to muzzle journalists, by its plans to give the police more power, and by wheeling out the discredited Official Secrets Act Section Two against Sarah Tisdall the government has provided evidence enough of its intentions.

Sarah Tisdall became a victim of this trend because of the appalling complacency which has greeted these assaults on democratic freedoms. Only complacency could have allowed the *Guardian* to act in such a ham-fisted way as the drama unfolded. And only complacency can explain the muted response of Labour's parliamentary leaders during the affair.

Sarah Tisdall went into court with hardly any words of protest being uttered before she was sentenced. Much of that must be put down to the legal advice she accepted, which suggested that she keep a very low public profile. But had she had the sort of campaign and high level of protest which surrounded the prosecution of journalists Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell and ex-soldier John Berry in 1977 — they were accused of even more serious charges under the Official Secrets Act — then she, like them, may have walked free from the court.

Aidan White is NUJ FoC at The Guardian

INSIDE: The Sun and Tony Benn ● Video bill horror ● The Observer fiasco



## Newspoint

By Patrick Hughes

REED International's announcement at the end of 1983 that it proposed to sell Mirror Group Newspapers — (MGN), one of its subsidiary companies, is a key issue for the CPBF.

Reed expects to receive at least £100m for MGN, which employs 8,000 staff and publishes the London-based *Daily Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Sunday People*, and *Sporting Life*, and the Glasgow-based *Sunday Mail* and *Daily Record*.

Of additional interest to CPBF members, however, is the range of suggestions about the future pattern of ownership and control of MGN after it is sold, which have appeared in the past few months. Many of them have come from Clive Thornton, chairperson since December 1983 of MGN, and former Chief Executive of the Abbey National Building Society.

His ideas include: giving away shares as prizes in the Mirror's "Bingo" competition; offering readers "Mirror Bonds" for £50-£100; and inviting trade unions — especially those with members in MGN — to subscribe to blocks of shares. The aim in all this has been to ensure that no one interest can gain a majority holding of the new company.

Accompanying the proposals for shareholdings is a plan to introduce a form of industrial democracy into the structure of the post-sale MGN Board. A scheme made public in January this year proposed a Holding Company Board with two Management Boards under it, one for England and one for Scotland. Such a 2-tier structure is common in the rest of Europe, but represents an innovation in Britain's commercial world, where a single board with executive and non-executive directors is the norm.

In the MGN scheme, directors from the holding company board would sit on the management company boards, together with directors from the company's workforce.

# Mirror sale and promises of democracy



● Mirror chief Clive Thornton

If the proposal for Board changes goes through — and it is meeting opposition from unions in MGN at present — it will be an example of the sort of development in industrial democracy and information-disclosure which the EEC Commission has proposed.

Keen observers of the events surrounding the MGN sale have included Labour Party and trade union leaders, fearful of the fate of the *Daily Mirror* (circulation 3.5m), the only national daily newspaper in the post-war period to be more-or-less supportive of Labour.

Perhaps their fears will be allayed by the announcement on 15 April that MGN plans to launch a new daily title after the sale by Reed in June. The new paper would be part of an expansion package from Clive Thornton. CPBF member Joy Johnson examines the idea below. Thornton also wants to establish a new £50m MGN

printing works in Manchester to replace the Vithy Grove plant on which are printed the northern editions of MGN newspapers, which its owners — Thomson International (former owners of the *Times* and *Sunday Times*) intend to close, with the loss of 2,800 jobs.

What should be the CPBF's attitude to a new MGN based on a broad-based share structure, and to a new newspaper which may be more-or-less favourably inclined to the labour movement?

First, we welcome any increase in diversity of media ownership, and any diversity in the content of the press. Secondly, however, the proposals for MGN offer a chance to defend and, indeed, increase jobs in the press. So we would expect the proposals to ensure that the threatened 2,800 jobs in Manchester are preserved, and are increased to take account of any new titles. Finally, diversity in content won't just appear in a newspaper; we would want to see specific proposals for ensuring that any new title had editorial independence of the other titles in the Mirror group.

The future of the proposal for a 2-tier board at MGN is likely to depend on Reed International's assessment of the likely effect on the attractiveness of MGN to prospective buyers. CPBF, however, can take this opportunity to examine the relevance of those EEC Commission proposals, and of the MGN scheme, to our aim of encouraging industrial democracy in the media. A small group exists of CPBF members interested on working on this subject; any readers of this article who wish to find out more, should contact: at 9 Poland Street, W1.

welfare issues has nevertheless aligned itself with the Right wing of the Labour Party

The Mirror in its editorials has supported nuclear deterrence. The Mirror has also said the miners cannot win their battle against pit closures. On the day after the NUM executive to Mirror was still parroting the alleged need for a national ballot.

The *Morning Star*, alone among national dailies, has supported unstintingly the miners and the struggle of

the organised working class. Because it is supported by the people who read it, and because it is not controlled by the profit motive, only the *Morning Star* can resist compromise.

As a member of the Labour Party I recognise that my interests are best served by the survival of the *Star*. The Left should stop dissipating its energies and ensure its survival.

Joy Johnson  
London NW2



Dear CPBF, On the surface it would seem that the Clive Thornton plan to publish a new national daily for the labour movement, once the Mirror's Group's shares have been floated, is the answer to the cry for a Labour Daily. But is it?

It will be a Left paper run on capitalist lines with the need to attract large scale advertising. It will be a paper which will have to compete with widespread cheque book journalism. It will be a paper which will have to sell itself in a market accustomed to tabloid sensationalism. It will inevitably have to compromise — just as its sister paper the *Daily Mirror* has had to compromise.

The Mirror while pursuing a policy of campaigning journalism on

## Newspoint

## Hattersley flays the bias of Fleet Street

LABOUR'S deputy leader Roy Hattersley launched a scathing attack on the media last month and explained why, in the Chesterfield by-election, Labour had abandoned daily press conferences.

He told the annual conference of the Guild of British Newspaper Editors in Harrogate: "The day has gone when you can excoriate an MP one day and hope for his cooperation with a human interest story on the next."

"All of us have grown tired of the correspondent who tells us that we have

his support and sympathy, but that his honest reporting never gets into the paper."

Mr Hattersley's attack was specifically directed at traditional enemies in the Fleet Street press, notably Mr Rupert Murdoch's *Sun*.

Whereas 20 years ago it was worthwhile trying to persuade political writers on hostile papers that Labour might be right on specific issues, Mr Hattersley now felt that it was pointless with the *Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and the two *Telegraphs*.

"If I were to ascend to Heaven in a fiery chariot, the *Mail* on Sunday would

say that I was trying to avoid the cost of the air fare and the *Sunday Express* would write that I was running away from Tony Benn."

The Tory Party chairman Mr John Gummer, replied later by accusing Labour of a fresh threat to press freedom in the forms of a party "blacklist" of hostile journalists to whom its MPs might not speak.

Mr Gummer took the speech of Roy Hattersley complaining about the preponderant Tory bias in the press as further proof that the Opposition was now "positively paranoid" on the subject.



● Roy Hattersley

**The Sun fights back ...**

**WORLD IN ACTION WHOPPER**

**BENN ON THE COUCH**

**We nail the lies told on Granada TV**

TWO weeks ago, on the evening of the Chesterfield by-election, the *Sun* published an article headed *Benn On The Couch* which was a psychological study of the Labour candidate, Tony Benn.

It was based on a detailed investigation by a distinguished American psychiatrist, Dr David Hubbard, who was not aware of the subject's identity. We believed that the venture was entirely proper in the public interest and included by the wider range of opinions held on Mr Benn's character, ranging from realistic to sarcastic.

Five days after that article appeared the Granada TV news programme *World In Action* presented a study of the Labour candidate, Tony Benn.

In the programme, part of an interview with Dr Hubbard — which had been taped in advance — was shown in which he was asked to say if he had been lied to and on a short conditional tape.

The article was, in fact, a psychological study of the candidate.

That he had been lied to was not stated.

● Left Tony Benn and, above, the Sun's attack on Granada Television

# Sun's loony smear fails to stop Benn

By Jane Martin

The Sun's immediate reaction was to ask their lawyers to send a demand for a televised apology to *World in Action*. If this didn't happen, the lawyers threatened legal action. No apology was shown by Granada.

Ten days after the programme, the Sun devoted page 2 to an attack on *World in Action*. They described the article as "entirely proper in the public interest and justified by the wide range of opinions held on Mr Benn's character, ranging from eccentric onwards."

The paper then went on to attack the psychiatrist who only a few days earlier they had described as "distinguished". The paper said "We do not know how or why Dr Hubbard came to change his story for the benefit of Granada TV. Maybe he simply suffers from the classic intellectual syndrome of a bad memory. Maybe he would make a good study himself for a fellow shrink."

The article warned Granada — "The Sun is prepared to go to law to set the record straight." At the time of going to press, no such action has been taken.

The whole episode illustrates the media-

created view of Tony Benn. Over the last ten years the *Daily Mail* has described him variously as "dotty, a loony, a wrecker, a bogeyman, a liar, a red menace, a fanatic, a dangerman, dracula, mad, a hypocrite, a monster, an outlaw and a vampire."

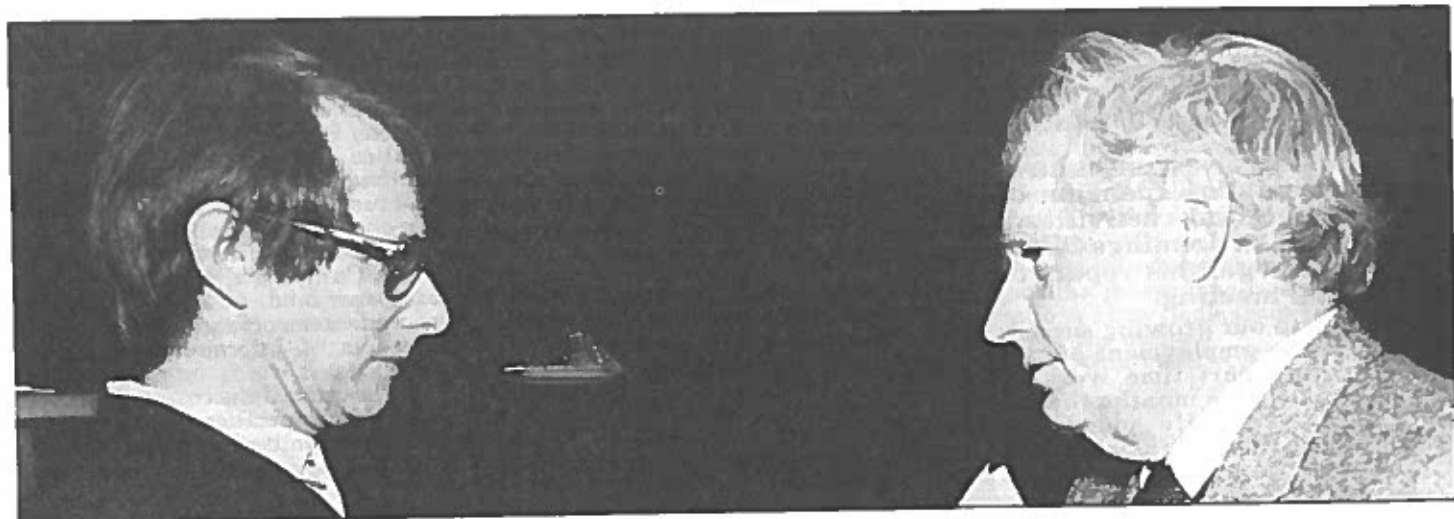
Over the same period, the Sun has described him as "phoney, cranky, a menace, the mad mullah, a mediaeval torturer and a kami-kazi pilot".

The interesting thing about Chesterfield was that national newspapers actually wanted Tony Benn back on Westminster. He was much more use to their needs as an MP; so overall they had been extremely reticent about attacking him. It could have been one of the most understated by-elections in history if the Sun could have resisted sinking to its usual depths.

Apart from that, there may have been another reason for improved media coverage. The Labour Party has now realised that the media is not an uncritical friend, there were fewer press conferences, more photo calls and Benn refused to get drawn on controversial issues outside the constituency. It is not likely to attract the purists, who believe that Labour must not hide its policies on wider, maybe controversial issues. But it does stop the media from distorting the real points of a campaign.

**REPORT BACK:** Four pages of Conference news, views and decisions

# Confrontation



A confrontation between radical film-maker Ken Loach and former Labour minister and former Chairman of Channel 4 Edmund Dell was a highlight of the Campaign's debate session at the alternative media conference in February.

The debate, according to former New Socialist editor, James Curran was "electrifying". The theme of the discussion was the broadcasting philosophy of 'balance' and it was chaired by Giles Oakley (BBC/ABS) and Jenny Rathbone (Granada/ACTT).

The session was an exploration of the troubled history of Ken Loach's series for Channel 4, *Questions of Leadership*. Although scheduled for transmission in April last year, none of the four original films has yet been shown. Channel 4 now say two of the films will be broadcast, but only when two extra 'balancing' films have been completed by Central TV to accompany them.

The series is based on the views of rank-and-file union members on how unions should respond to unemployment, taking specific events and issues such as the decline of the BL shop stewards movement. Some well-known Right-wing union leaders like Frank Chapple of the electricians union, the EETPU, came in for severe criticism. Chapple himself walked out in the middle of being interviewed for the film. All those criticised in the series either had a chance to reply, or have continued to decline to appear.

Edmund Dell has said publicly in the past that the refusal to appear would not confer a right to veto on the series. Jeremy Isaacs, C4's, Chief Executive, has taken the same line saying, "censorship by non-appearance is not acceptable", and yet that appears to be what has happened and is happening.

The quietly-spoken Loach described

a "web of deception and manipulation" inside C4 leading to the effective suppression of the series. His words carried enormous weight coming from one of the outstanding talents in British television (his celebrated partnership with Tony Garnett on such projects as *Big Flame*, *Days of Hope* and *Kes* was said to make them the *Torvill and Dean* of radical film-making).

Loach was anxious not to trumpet the qualities of *Questions of Leadership* as such, but to raise questions about the controllers who police our broadcasting institutions and in whose interest their decisions are made. He was strongly supported by C4 Commissioning Editor, Paul Madden, who saw the whole episode as an

## 'Electrifying' debate over Channel 4

ominous watershed in the history of Channel 4.

Madden said that as a direct result of the series the commissioning procedures were being tightened up and there were growing fears that the range of voices given space on the new channel would in future be far more restricted.

After warmly thanking the CPBF for giving him an opportunity to reply publicly to Ken Loach — amazingly the two men had never met before — Edmund Dell defended Channel 4's decision to postpone *Questions of Leadership*. He said it was the Board's decision that parts of the series should eventually be broadcast "provided counter-balancing material is shown as well".

Having been questioned on his own Right-wing Labour/SDP sympathies (effectively the position under fire in *Questions of Leadership*) he simply stated that Channel 4 "doesn't have a

● Ken Loach, Left, and Edmund Dell: an argument over TV 'balance'. Picture by Andrew Wiard (Report).

political view". "Members of the hierarchy, of course, have their own views" he said, "but Channel 4 doesn't".

One the question of balance — "a tedious subject" — he said that, like the philosopher proving the existence of a tree by kicking it, "as soon as you see an unbalanced programme you know it's out of balance." He denied that Channel 4's obligation to cater for minorities not covered elsewhere meant it had to balance the rest of television. The Channel had the same requirement to ensure overall balance and impartiality as ITV and BBC, but it was nonetheless still providing "many new voices a chance to speak".

He favoured more personal "view-point" programmes, saying not all individual programmes had to be balanced as such, but that even in these "the highest standards of journalism should be sought". It was by these standards that Ken Loach's series was flawed.

Contributions from the floor soon made it clear that many present were unconvinced by Mr Dell's defence of C4. He faced some sharp questioning but remained unruffled by suggestions that he was being bland and evasive. As the discussion came to end a waspish young film student exploded in frustration at Mr Dell, calling him a "slimy and complacent slug", saying there was "no point in discussing issues with a man like that".

Several other people had expressed concern that Channel 4 seemed to be drifting to the Right politically, to the detriment of other points of view, as evidenced by the fate of *Questions of Leadership*.

A more general reaction was that the CPBF had made an important contribution to public debate on the direction in which Channel 4 was headed.

# Survival test for a labour paper

By Alan  
Richardson

HOW feasible is a labour daily? How will it be run? Who will have editorial control? And will it have to make a profit out of advertising to survive?

In an effort to answer these and other questions, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, in conjunction with ACTT and the Labour Press Campaign, held a one-day conference in London at the end of February.

The conference was organised to take up the challenge offered by the McCarthy report to the TUC. Perhaps more importantly it examined the growing public concern about the media, and what can be done to get alternative opinions publicised.



● Sandra Horne: a cable alternative?  
Picture by Andrew Wiard

A series of workshops covered broadcasting; trade union journals; womens media; a labour daily; and black media.

In the opening session, Guardian journalist and former foreign editor of the News Chronicle, Tom Baistow said he did not think that the new labour daily envisaged by the McCarthy report would be much more than a token solution to the problem of Fleet Street's right-wing bias. "It is," he said "too narrow a concept in relation to the vast nature of the problem of bias."

With a launch figure of £6.75 million the McCarthy report was "optimistically unrealistic". As a labour daily was not the answer, Mr Baistow believed that the solution lay in changing the "bizarre, unstable economic structure of the newspaper industry."

Other speakers in the morning session were T&GWU Assistant General Secretary Alex Kitson, and NGA National Officer George Jerrom, who both called for a more representative media.

Earlier Tom Baistow had admonished the unions about the "outrageously high" production costs, particularly the "inflated wage bill". George Jerrom replied that high rates of pay were the deliberate policy of management.

There is a report of the exchange between Ken Loach and the Chairman of Channel 4, former Labour Cabinet Minister Edmund Dell on Page 5.

The closing session featured James Curran, Brian Sedgemore, MP, and ACTT Equality Officer Sandra Horne. James Curran said that there was a conviction on the part of many labour leaders to the effect — "We've got the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror* and that's all we need". Challenging this myopic view, he said "We've got to think big". He pointed to the break up of press ownership in France and the need to exploit the electronic media.

Brian Sedgemore identified the basic censorship in the media as self-censorship. While in terms of impact radio and TV might be more important than the press, it was the press which set the agenda for them all. He said that the broadcasting authorities should be charged with presenting an alternative view of reality. "We ought to scrap the obligation of balance".

Sandra Horne suggested that "maybe we should be looking at a labour 'cable' rather than a labour daily. We are moving into a different sort of technology. A labour daily might be the only 'paper' as the media goes completely electronic".

## CONFERENCE DATES

### LONDON:

### *Racism in the media*

A conference to look at how the media covers Black, Irish, Third World and working class affairs will be held on Sunday 3 June in County Hall, London SE1.

It is being organised by the Media Working Group of the GLC Anti-Racist Year Sub-Committee Programme.

Speakers in the morning session will discuss the development of the control of information from the colonial period to the present day, and how and why information is manipulated and distorted.

In the main afternoon session, discussion will focus on recent successes and difficulties, and on concrete ideas of strengthening and co-ordinating pressure for

change.

Further details from the Media Workers Group, at the GLC, County Hall, London SE1.

### BIRMINGHAM:

### *Images of the young*

The Birmingham Film and Video Workshop has organised two conferences on TV images of young people.

The first, on May 19 examines images of young people through TV and the second on June 9 deals with access to broadcast.

They will both be held at The Triangle Cinema, Holt St., Aston, Birmingham, from 10.30am to 5.30pm.

These two day events will be of special interest to educationalists, youth workers, community video workers, film makers, students of the media. TV practitioners, and, of course, young people. Further information from (021) 359 5545.



**Secretary's Report:**

# £20,000 needed to maintain expansion

"THE past twelve months have seen a dramatic expansion of our campaigning activities," was how John Jennings CPBF Secretary began his report to the annual meeting.

The key to our growing success has been the employment of two full and one part time workers over the past five months thanks to a GLC grant. He added, "to consolidate that work when the grant runs out next year we must raise £20,000 in a special drive before 1984 ends."

The Secretary's report detailed the encouraging news of the Campaign's development. A great deal of work is now taking place in London, with new groups being launched such as that in South East London. Regionally we have well established groups in the West Midlands, North East and Wales and new groups are being set up in the North West, East Midlands and East Anglia.

Pamphlets, books and videos have been produced and sold in increasing numbers. Free Press continued to appear regularly and needs greater resources and a wider circulation over the next year.

Campaigning for the right of reply remains central to the work of the CPBF, we are setting up a Right of Reply Unit to assist individuals and organisations. At the same time our efforts to expose the Press Council have continued with the added impetus of the publication of People Against The Press by Geoffrey Robertson.

Our conferences, fringe meetings and contact with other media groups have meant a qualitative and quantitative improvement. This has resulted in a stable level of affiliations to the Campaign and excellent responses to our conferences such as that on the Labour Movement Daily. The Campaign against Racism in the Media decided to merge its work with the CPBF thus giving the Campaign an important new responsibility.

"With this welcome consolidation of our work and the developing maturity of the Campaign, which has been reflected in our excellent National Committee, we can look forward with confidence," John Jennings concluded.

# Secrecy debate a 'triumph' for the campaign

THIS year's conference and annual meeting was held over the weekend of April 14 and 15 at County Hall in London. The theme "Media Freedom and the State" was intended to invoke thoughts of "1984" without stealing the NCCL's thunder. In the event the Guardian/Tisdall scandal neatly brought together the issues.

The whole weekend "was attended by a serious, thoughtful and very committed group of people" said one who introduced the workshop on video nasties. A delegate from the Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS) described the weekend as "an absolute triumph for the Campaign". He had accepted the ABS delegate's brief somewhat half-heartedly, but in reality the "high level of discussion, information and involvement" had made him realise the importance of a widespread interest organisation in the media such as the CPBF.

Opening the Conference on Saturday morning on the theme of Freedom of Information, Peter Hennessy, a Times

leaderwriter made a scathing attack on the lobby system. In what was later described as a brilliant speech, Hennessy called on the press to leave the lobby system. Reporters and specialists should do the job they are trained for and not rely on leaks, whispers and official handouts. Much of the language of the lobby is so predetermined that with slight alteration any new information could be slotted in and an item of news could be written while asleep or drunk or both.

Peter Hennessy has co-authored a book entitled Sources Close to the Prime Minister which will be published in June and made available to CPBF members at a reduced rate.

Ron Bailey, representing the "1984 FOI Campaign" spoke about the excessive and obsessive secrecy that pervades our society on behalf of the 1984 Freedom of Information Campaign in secret.

He welcomed the co-operation between our two organisations and pointed to the way that members could assist to open the books. People must demand information

that should be statutorily available of their local authorities and where it is refused, or unavailable, expose it through political and community groups and the media.

Jacob Ecclestone, deputy general secretary of the NUJ, who had just returned from his union conference, dealt with the betrayal of Sarah Tisdall and normal journalistic and ethical standards of the Guardian. He told the conference of the decision of the NUJ by an overwhelming vote to stay outside the Press Council.

In the brief discussion that followed Peter Hennessy was asked if he would approach the production workers for assistance in his campaign to ensure freer access to the press and the right of reply. He replied that he would not and that it would undermine journalistic credibility to do so.

The immediate and sharp responses caused by this answer were discussed at length in the "Unions Communications and the Law" workshop that followed by George Jerrom of the NGA, John

Foster, NUJ and Giles Oakley, ABS.

Throughout the day delegates talked over aspects of the media and the state. On Ireland Liz Curtis, author of Ireland — the Propaganda War; Ian Stottard who made The Troubles and David Beresford of the Guardian tackled the very serious problem of how news about Ireland is curtailed.

The issue of peace coverage and what to do about it was examined by Alison Whyte of the CND press office, some women campers from Greenham and Hilary Lipkin of Teachers for Peace. A session on Freedom of Information was introduced by Jake Ecclestone and Andrew Nichol, a barrister, especially interested in civil liberties.

A lot of interest was shown in the session on video nasties where the very serious and immediate threats to media freedom emanating from the Video Recordings Bill were discussed. Julian Petley, who has written elsewhere in this issue on the topic, and Sean Cubitt of City Limits contributed to the session.

Party Political broadcasts was the

subject of a workshop chaired by Jean Lambert of the Ecology Party. Speakers included Nick Grant, press officer of the Labour Party and David Glencross of the IBA. The BBC having suggested that all political parties should be invited did not attend. The Conservative Party declined and the Scottish Nationalists preferred to spend the cost of the air fare to London on a ten-minute radio broadcast. The SDP, Liberals and Communists did not respond.

Conference closing session was used to introduce the new video commissioned by the Campaign called Making News. The 40-minute film deals with the media and the Health workers dispute of 1982.

Jeanette Mitchell and Loretta Loach who introduced the video pointed out that the programme is more than a reiteration of how badly trade unions are treated by the media.

It fell to Aidan White, NUJ FOC at the Guardian to close the session with a detailed description of how that liberal, fair-minded news-sheet fell foul of the law by listening to lawyers instead of its conscience.

## Your guide to the campaign's policies for the coming year

A number of important resolutions were agreed at the annual meeting. In this issue of Free Press we reproduce them as a permanent, working record.

Freedom of Information had been the theme of the weekend, it was therefore appropriate that the meeting passed the following strongly committed resolution, moved by Jake Ecclestone and amended by Martin Smith:

"This AGM welcomes the launch of the 1984 Campaign for Freedom of Information and urges the national committee to work as closely as possible with its officers. Following the judgement of the Court in the Tisdall case, the AGM reaffirms policies previously adopted by the CPBF in relation to official secrets. Specifically it calls for:

a. the immediate repeal of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

b. the introduction of wide-ranging freedom of information legislation.

Such legislation would place a burden upon public authorities to justify the withholding of official information, and would provide for independent evaluation of the public interest in given cases of disputed disclosure."

Free Press was given a high priority for development over the coming year. Aidan White called for a strong collective to be built around the journal and for it to spearhead the Campaign's work:

"This conference calls on the national committee to give greater priority to the use of Free Press in promoting the campaign.

In particular conference asks the national committee to examine the possibility of monthly publication and to examine ways of obtaining more income from appropriate forms of advertising."

Press Council resolution moved by John Jennings ensured that the subject would remain central to the campaign's concerns during the forthcoming year:

"This AGM believes that the Press Council, as presently constituted, is incapable of reform and advises all members and affiliates not to recognise or support the Council.

"The AGM endorses the decision of the national committee to boycott the Council, and calls on the incoming committee to campaign for a reconstituted Press Council — along the lines of the Communications Council suggested by the TUC — which would be

# THE WAY FORWARD IN 1984

more representative, efficient, accountable, and be armed with the statutory power to enforce rights of reply and the prominent display of adjudications.

"The AGM agrees to amend our aims accordingly."

Affiliation Fees are generally up after the unanimous support given to Geoff Sheridan who put this motion to the delegates, "It will be essential to win the understanding of our affiliates to maintain the level of income to expand our work", he pointed out:

"The AGM agrees to raise the affiliation fees to the following:

Individual members	from £5 to	£6
Affiliates less than 1000	remains at	£10
Affil. of 1000 to 10,000	from £15 to	£20
Affil. of 10,000 to 50,000	from £25 to	£50
Aff. of 50,000 to 100,000	from £50 to	£100
Affiliates over 100,000	from £100 to	£250

The unwaged rate would remain at £2

This is to keep in line with inflation. It will bring in some £2,783 additional income mainly from the individual members and above 100,000 members' affiliates."

London Activities are the major concern of Lesley Wood the CPBF's information officer who moved this motion to help to clarify the role of those currently employed by the GLC grant:

"This AGM welcomes the opportunity to develop the work of the CPBF in London provided by the appointment of one part time and two full time workers funded by grant aid from the GLC, and affirms its support for the following areas of work:

1. The setting up of more regional CPBF groups in London such as the group currently based in South East London.

2. The setting up of CPBF groups in specific sections of the national media based in London eg. Fleet Street, Broadcasting.

3. Improving our links with, and undertaking work in collaboration with other London-based media groups.

4. Consolidating our links with media trade unionists in London with a view to extending the influence of the CPBF's policies on issues such as the Right of Reply, and industrial democracy.

5. Working to establish a London-based Right of Reply Unit to provide an information and advice service for groups or individuals wishing to challenge media distortion or bias.

6. Researching media coverage of the GLC, and how this coverage is perceived both by GLC councillors, and by the electors of London."

Fundraising is the main task of Davy Jones the Campaign's Assistant Organiser. He stressed the importance of the £20,000 appeal and hoped that the guarantee that all the income would be used entirely for the continued employment of our staff would gain wide support despite the increased affiliation fees:

"This AGM welcomes the launch of the second stage of our £50,000 fundraising campaign. It further notes the progress made over the last years in establishing the financial and administrative infrastructure of the campaign, particularly:

a. the acquisition of rent free premises in 9 Poland Street owned by the Rowntree Trust.

b. the receipt of a GLC grant for £36,000 for salaries for two full time and one part-time campaign workers for London-based projects.

This AGM agrees to put major efforts into raising £20,000 by the end of March 1985 to secure the long term future of the campaign, and in particular to guarantee the continued employment of our paid staff after the expiry of the GLC grant.

The AGM therefore calls on all individual members and supporters of the campaign to give generously to this appeal, and on all affiliated organisations and trade union bodies to seriously discuss the possibility of giving a substantial donation to the campaign appeal. A special deposit account will be opened for receipt of all monies received for this appeal."

Reuters planned flotation was somewhat belatedly condemned in the National Committee motion presented by Mike Power. The wording was subsequently adapted into a press release to make our stand clear:

"This AGM condemns the flotation of Reuters. We believe that the motive of the trustees to be selfish and concerned only with the maximisation of their financial "windfall" estimated to be between £1-1½bn.

The campaign believes that the trustees' recent proposals for a restructured ownership, 'to preserve the integrity of the international news agency', which appear to include enforceable rights under civil law and a protected 'founder share' are a cynical manoeuvre to ensure private and personal gain. Such gain cannot be considered to be in the spirit of the responsibilities placed in the original trustees in 1941.

The CPBF believes that some income from Reuters should be used to ensure a more diverse media. We call upon the trustees to establish a launch fund for new media projects which should contain no less than 10% of Reuters income."

Labour Movement Daily has been discussed at great length at our special conference and in Free Press. It is therefore an important issue for the CPBF to take further, in urging support for this motion John Jennings reported that a new pamphlet emerging from our one day conference is well under way:

"This AGM supports the principle of a labour movement daily newspapers and welcomes both the TUC feasibility study and the McCarthy Report as serious contributions to the discussion on this subject. The CPBF recognises that there are certain important weaknesses and omissions in the report but believes the debate must be continued and these problems seriously examined and clarified rather than being ignored or evaded.

This AGM instructs the national committee to consult with our affiliates, especially the trade unions in the communications industry, to obtain their views on how best to advance the campaign for a national daily newspaper for the labour movement."

Two resolutions on community radio that were moved by Hampstead and Highgate CLP were defeated. The appeal for them to be referred to the new National Committee had been rejected by the mover. This followed a lively and interesting debate where sincerely held but contrary views that were held were exchanged. In finality and despite the rejection of the motions it was agreed that the issue be a subject for a future national committee.

**National Committee for 1984-1985:**

**Individual members:** Rob Burkitt, John Jennings, Jenny Rathbone, Charles Tremayne, Richard Gates, Mike Jempson

**Members of NUJ:** Jacob Ecclestone, Aidan White, John Foster, Kate Holman.

**Members of printing trades:** George Jerrom, John Beck, Mike Power, Geoff Dixon.

**Members in Broadcasting:** Giles Oakley, Joanne Gooding, Harold Brookstone, Simon Higman.

**Members in other unions:** Malcolm Howarth, Arthur Stevenson (both Notts NUM); Dave Shepherd (CPSA); Terry Law (NALGO).

**Members in other organisations:** Geoffrey Sheridan (New Socialist); I Jameson (Solihull, Labour Party); Nik Oakley (SW Herts Labour Party); Brian Jarman (Wales CPBF); Alan Richardson (Hornsey Labour Party); Loretta Loach (Spare Rib).

The Chair, elected at the first meeting of the new committee in April, is Mike Power. Giles Oakley is Vice Chair and the secretary's work will be shared by Jacob Ecclestone and John Foster.

Reports by Mike Power



A law intended to curb video 'nasties' may turn out to be a Frankenstein monster threatening all sorts of freedoms. JULIAN PETLY reports

## Video Bill full of horrors

WHAT has recently been described by a former member of the Williams Committee on censorship as 'an elaborate, clandestine and unaccountable system of state censorship?'

What is Daily Mail film critic Alexander Walker referring to when he speaks of 'one of the most misconceived, restrictive and unnecessary bills ever presented to parliament?'

The answer is the Video Recordings Bill soon to become a fully fledged Act of Parliament. One of the most disturbing things about this Bill is the widespread public and industry-wide ignorance of its likely effects.

Of course such ignorance is hardly surprising. The same press that ignited the "video Nasties" moral panic is hardly likely to criticise the offspring of that campaign.

It needs to be said from the outset in that to oppose the Video Recordings Bill is not to argue that "video nasties" are not a problem. What does need to be made clear, however, is that state censorship is not the answer, especially with the state in its present mood of repression.

The bitter irony of the whole affair is that the "nasties" which gave rise to the furore and led to the Bill coming before Parliament have already disappeared — exiled by the Obscene Publications Act which proved to be more than a match for them.

So what are the effects of this new Bill likely to be? Here one has to distinguish between the consequences of ill-thought out, rushed legislation and the effects of the Bill's hijacking by arch supporter of Mary Whitehouse Sir Bernard Braine during its passage through the Commons.

First, the censoring and classification of videos will be carried out by the British Board of Film Censors, basically an unofficial, trade-based organisation. But in its role as video censor the Board will have legal powers. Two new vice-presidents will be appointed by the Home Secretary and all new examiners will have to pass Home Office Scrutiny. In other words, the Board will become a big, expensive quango, accountable only to the Secretary of State.

For the first time ever this country will have, then, state censorship of the moving image (and, moreover, moving images watched in private and at home). And all at a cost of £4 a minute, to be paid for by the



● A nasty: I spit on your grave

hapless victims. Imagine the financial burden — not to people like Thorn EMI but to the CPBF and other small, independent groups.

Yes, the videos of this campaign will come within the ambit of the Bill too — videos like the new cassette from the campaign, Making News which deals with media coverage of the recent health workers dispute as reported in this issue of Free Press. The Bill's range is utterly vast. British Medical Association videos are exempt providing they are used by

registered general practitioners for teaching purposes, but independent videos about sex education, contraception and so on obviously fall within the terms of the bill.

And now Sir Bernard Braine has included an amendment attempting to ban "anything which offends against good taste or decency, or is likely to incite to crime, or lead to disorder, or to be offensive to public feeling". One might reasonably ask just what will be allowed?

One way or another the inexorable logic of this bill is that children have such easy access to video that nothing above a U certificated film should be allowed on video. That may not have been the aim, but that is beside the point.

Then there are the knock-on effects. First those from the Board of Censors recent mauling by the DPP in its actions over videos of films which were given 18 certificates when shown in the cinema. This will undoubtedly lead to an increase in film censorship.

Second, TV programmes recycled in cassette form are not exempt from classification and this will mean that BBC and ITV will have constantly to bear the Board of Censors standards in mind when making programmes.

Third, the Bill threatens jobs by encouraging piracy and black marketeering and by generally reducing the number of cassettes made and the number of retail outlets.

Fourth, the Bill threatens to impose its rigid standards on videos across all forms of the moving image because of the increasing practice of multi-media exploitation of products and producers obvious desire not to produce different versions of the same product for different media.

Finally, the Bill threatens even worse to come. This victory for the forces of repression, and in particular Mrs Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association, will gear them up for future excesses — namely an attempt to bring all forms of television under the Obscene Publications Act and, after that, reform of the obscene Publications Act itself, at whose hands Mrs Whitehouse has already suffered a number of humiliating defeats.

When the full effects of this dangerous Bill begin to be felt we will see how we stand to lose a lot more than a few second rate, exploitative videos which had already been taken care off. Don't say you haven't been warned.

## Ecology Party debate

ONE third of the delegates at the Ecology Party Conference in Southport at the end of March attended a workshop on the media presented by CPBF.

"The event is hopefully the beginning of a long and mutually beneficial

relationship", said one of the Party participants.

The workshop had before it the media working group's eight-point discussion document. The wide-ranging paper pin-pointed broadcasting and printed media, the arts and information technology, the problems of balance, commerce versus public service, consumer involvement and wider ownership patterns, the replacement of advertising revenue which should decline in an ecological system and the immediate highlight — Radio, TV,

newspapers and periodicals.

The main concern of the Ecology Party at present is to get more expertise in dealing with the media to obtain greater impact, and to break the monopoly of the major parties in political broadcasting. Local representatives described a depressingly familiar series of examples of bias, distortion, or plain 'blank-out' of any coverage. This was handled by offering specific advice that is now being produced by the Campaign's Right of Reply Unit.

ECO affiliated to the

CPBF earlier this year and joined Plaid Cymru as a national political affiliate. The Campaign also has in membership nearly 120 Labour Party constituencies and is presently attempting to set up a Liberal media group.

John Jennings, CPBF outgoing secretary, said in his report to the annual meeting, in April: "We welcome the Ecology Party into membership of the Campaign as an expression of our sincere attempts to build a politically broad-based campaign."

# New unit to aid right of reply battle

By Lesley Wood

ALMOST everyone has heard of the right of reply, a concept now popularly accepted largely due to the work of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

The right of reply campaign is vital for two reasons. First, it will help people to overcome the sense of powerlessness which they often feel when faced with the prospect of taking on the media. And second, it will encourage media workers to actively support right of reply demands. This is, we say, a legitimate area for union intervention.

Developing this important link between people who work in the media and those who are misrepresented by the press and television is an essential part of the process of making the media more accountable.

The next stage of our campaign is the setting up of a Right of Reply Unit at the campaign's headquarters — 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Anyone wishing to challenge biased, inaccurate or distorted coverage will be given advice on how to go about it. In the first instance we will concentrate on publicising this unit among our members and affiliate organisations particularly within the London area.

We will provide a guide-to-action pack containing the following information:

- Examples of how and where the right of reply has been won

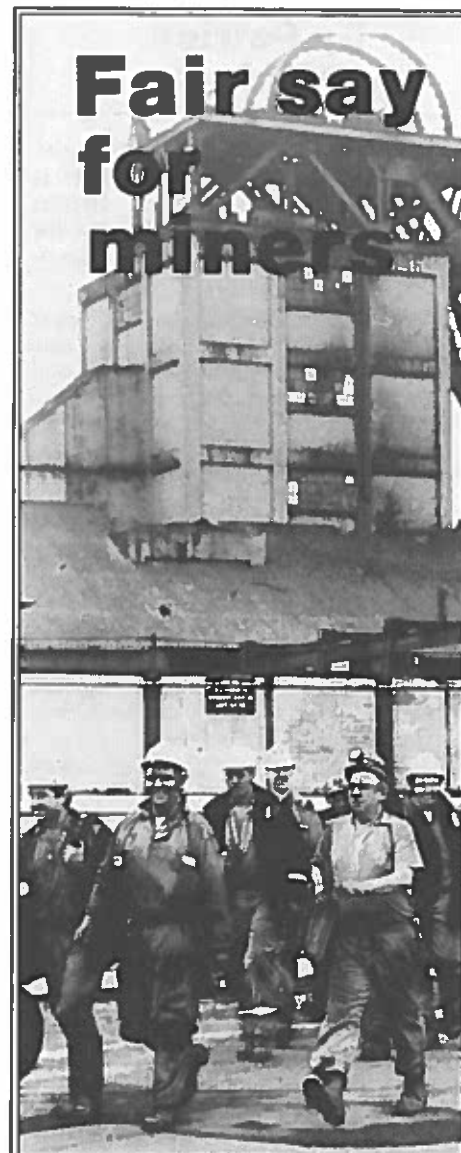
## Gays fight media bias

CPBF has begun collaboration with the NUJ lesbian and gay group to take up media bias against gay people.

Lesbians and gay people are constantly misrepresented in the media. The national newspaper tabloids never miss a chance of treating them as sick, or evil.

To fight this prejudice a London meeting was set up jointly between the NUJ lesbian and gay group and the CPBF. It examined the links between the media's treatment of gays and of trade unionists, peace campaigners, and women in general. It also suggested ways of fighting back with the trade union movement, especially the NUJ and other media unions.

A full report will be published in the next issue of Free Press.



● Kent miners — out since March 11

A PACKED meeting of National Graphical Association (NGA) Fleet Street FoC's (shop stewards) pledged to raise money and to back miners demanding the of reply for misreporting of their dispute.

The CPBF jointly sponsored the meeting with three London NGA sections. The London Region of the union also gave the meeting its endorsement.

Fred James of Kent NUM told the meeting of the problems that they were facing on a subsistence allowance of £3 a day. He coupled his appeal for financial support to keep the fight for jobs with one for fair media coverage.

On behalf of the CPBF, Mike Power, who is also an NGA FoC at the Daily Mail, pointed to the growing links between media production workers and others like the miners who are in dispute, to obtain a fair hearing. Speakers told of how NGA and SOGAT officials had taken groups of miners around Fleet Street to meet individuals and chapels.

I am willing to help people who want a right of reply

Name .....

Address (Home) .....

.....

Address (Work) .....

.....

Telephone (h) .....

(w) .....

Job .....

Trade Union

## Bias against women: an invitation to fight back

BY LORETTA LOACH

THE media for the most part fail to seriously portray women as participants in the important events which affect us.

They also fail to provide information that accurately reflects women's lives and is relevant to our needs in making decisions and exercising control over our lives.

The CPBF has so far paid insufficient attention to the specific issues which affect women in the media. We want to do more.

First, we need to involve more women in the Campaign's activities. We are therefore inviting all women interested to attend a meeting on Tuesday, 12th June 6.30pm at 9 Poland Street.

We also want to discuss a plan of activities that will make the campaign more meaningful to women as well as making an impact on the way in which women are seen by the media.

## JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN

Individual Membership £6 per annum  
Organisations affiliate according to membership:

Below 1,000: £10  
1,000 to 10,000: £20  
10,000 to 50,000: £50  
50,000 to 100,000: £100  
over 100,000: £250

\*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

## Mass rally in Manchester for N. West launch

THE NORTH West group of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom was launched on Saturday 5th May with a mass rally at County Hall in Manchester. The former Labour MP, Frank Allaun agreed to be chairman of the group, and speakers included Barbara Castle MEP, Michael Meacher MP, John Tocher of AUEW and Janet Whyatt of the NUJ and Piccadilly Radio.

Meanwhile, plans are afoot to find funding for a full time worker in the North West, and to produce a local media directory.

The West Midlands group are also looking for funding for a full time worker. This follows their highly successful day school at the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre in February. After an introductory session on why the media should be used, 30 trade union delegates were given a taste of the action by journalists from newspapers, radio and television. First they were asked to write a press release, then they were interviewed on tape, and finally they were put in front of a video camera and given a professional interview in front of the lights. The sessions were described as "nerve-wracking, but useful".

In Wales, the local CPBF is profiled in a new radical magazine launched by the Welsh TUC. "New Direction" is a monthly glossy magazine, not unlike

the defunct Rebecca, and is now in its third edition.

The Welsh group hope to have their Media Directory on sale soon. They will distribute it among trade unionists, community groups and other parties to help them get their message across to newsdesks. Later in the year, the Wales CPBF will be speaking at conferences throughout the region.

Members in the East Midlands — which takes in Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester and Derby — were meeting to plan the launch of a local group on May 12. It is hoped to attract people who have been active in media studies, including the Leicester Centre for Mass Communications.

There may also be a new group starting in East Anglia soon. Norwich Trades Council are behind the initiative, and they would be pleased to hear from any one who wants to help.

### CONTACTS:

North West: Phil Turner, 061 428 6446  
Brian Machin, Open Eye, 051 709 9460

North East: Malcolm Wright, 0325 484374

West Midlands: Rob Burkitt, 021 359 5545

Wales: 0633 857653

East Anglia: Brian Morrey, 0603 612872

East Midlands: Derek Cox, 0602 56101 ext 2714.

## PUBLICATIONS

□ People Against the Press: the devastating report of an independent inquiry into the Press Council. Selling price £7.95 — Our price £3.95

□ Press, Radio and TV and introduction: the simple guide to a complex media. Selling price £1.80 — our price £1.50

□ Rejoice: media and the Falklands — 80p

□ Are You in the Picture? — 50p

□ Hunt and Cable: "TV Chaos or Coherence?" Selling price £1.95 — Our price £1.50 Plus postcards like the new Gotcha card, pictured left. ALL from our office at 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG.



## Anti-racist campaign joins CPBF

The Campaign Against Racism in the Media has merged with CPBF.

CARM's film *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum* — exposing TV racism — continues to be widely shown, and the more recent book of the same title has sold more than 2,000 copies. CPBF has undertaken to promote the film and the book

from which an annual revenue of £1,000 is anticipated. We will also be considering a follow-up project, and recommending speakers on media racism.

*'It Ain't Half Racist, Mum'* film/video can be hired from the Other Cinema, tel 01-734 8508-9. Copies can be purchased from CPBF. The *'It Ain't Half Racist, Mum'* book, co-published with Comedia, is available price £2.50 from CPBF.

AN important new book — Ireland — The Propaganda War by Liz Curtis — provides a vivid account of the process of news manipulation by the British media.

To quote directly from the book's introduction:

"The level of awareness in Britain about the situation on the North of Ireland is of major political importance. The Westminster government rules the North in the name of the British people and using their money. The British people have the ultimate veto on their government's presence in the North and its policies there. Successive administrations have demonstrated that they are well aware that one way of keeping the people acquiescent is to keep them in ignorance".

*The Propaganda War*, published by Pluto Press, focuses on certain major characteristics of the British media's Irish coverage. It describes in detail the activities of various interested parties — the army and the police in media coverage of Ireland.

One major characteristic is that media coverage of the conflict reaches the people of the North and the people of Britain very differently. The population of the North is daily inundated with news. Local papers, hourly radio bulletins, regular local TV news broadcasts supplemented by the early evening magazine programmes all put out a stream of information about bombings and shootings, arrests and trials, the manoeuvrings of political groups.

By contrast the people in Britain receive only a trickle of news except when a crisis hijacks the headlines. The people of England, Scotland and Wales are almost entirely dependent on the mass media for news and interpretations of events in Ireland.

In certain respects this may be unremarkable. However, the media's acceptance at face-value of any version of events as expounded by the army and police, coupled with internal self-censorship when faced with a conflicting account, makes the clear waters of understanding very murky indeed.

The book opens in 1971 — the year when internment without trial was introduced — and gives an account of the early battles over Irish coverage. The outcome of these battles determined the present shape and tenor of press and broadcasting reportage and presentation. Sadly, the winners were not champions of independent journalism.

A central theme of the book describes the development of the internal controls in broadcasting — the 'reference upwards' system. A system of self-policing 'checks and balances' which became as effective, if not more so than direct or state censorship — which the authorities perceived as being counter-productive in their propaganda war for British hearts and minds.

# THE IRISH NEWS THAT NEVER MAKES HEADLINES

By Alan Richardson



● Soldier and resident in Belfast's New Lodge district: a familiar story, but not for the rest of Britain.

While this may be infuriating catalogue of news manipulation, misinformation, distortion and downright lies perpetrated by those representing the Establishment viewpoint, the conclusion is optimistic.

Admittedly considerable efforts have been made to prevent journalists, dramatists and film-makers from exploring the situation from a dissenting angle, and Britain's activities in the North have been kept in the shadows. However, some disconcerting questions about Britain's role in Ireland have been raised on television and in the press.

According to the book's own conclusion "The 'system' is not yet monolithic and protest can produce results." While the broadcasting chiefs and 'quality' newspaper editors may respond more readily to establishment pressure, they are not impervious to criticism from their own employees or their wider audience — the public.

*The Propaganda War* certainly deals with a sensitive political subject, and no doubt we will be criticised for entering this area. However, the book also deals with fundamental issues affecting the freedom of information. Issues on which the CPBF holds, or should hold strong views; the question of balance and right of reply, to name but two.

*The Propaganda War — The British Media and the Battle for Hearts and Minds* costs £5.50, but is available at a special offer price of £4.25 from the CPBF office at 9 Poland Street, London W1.

## Your place in the campaign

THE following trades unions are affiliated to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. They represent people from every section of Britain's working life: —

ABS, ACTT, AGSRO, ASLEF, ASTMS, BF&AW COHSE, CSU, NATFHE, FTAT, FBU, GMBATU, MN&AOA, NALGO, NATTKE, NGA'82, NUJ, NSMM, NUHKW, NUM, NUPE, NUSEAMEN, POEU, SOGAT'82, SCPS, STE, TWU, T&GWU, UCW, USDAW.

The Campaign, therefore, is recognised as an important part of the Labour movement's response to continuing media distortion. Your union branch should be affiliated and should invite the campaign to help you challenge unfair coverage. Write to: CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1.