

FREE PRESS

PUBLICATIONS

- Labour Daily?** Ins and outs of a new Labour daily and other media alternatives. CPBF £1.50.
Lively and informative essays prompted by the CPBF conference in early 1984. 2-10 copies £1.25 each; 11-25 copies £1 each; over 50 copies 75p each.
- Shut Up and Listen** Women and local radio: a view from the inside. Comedia/CPBF £1.95.
Includes a guide on how to make use of your local radio station.
- Ireland: The Propaganda War** The British Media and the Battle for Hearts and Minds. by Liz Curtis. Pluto Press £5.50.
A vivid account of British media manipulation of the news from the north of Ireland. Special offer for Free Press readers: £4.25.
- **Press, Radio and TV** — an introduction. £1.80. CPBF price £1.30
- **People Against the Press.** £7.95. CPBF price £3.95.
- **It Ain't Half Racist.** Mumf2.50.

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN

Individual membership: £6 a year
 Affiliation by organisations:
 Less than 1,000 members : £10
 1,000 — 10,000 members : £20
 10,000 — 50,000 members : £50
 50,000 — 100,000 members : £100
 Over 100,000 members : £250

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

Name/s:
 Organisation:
 (if applicable)
 Secretary:
 (if different from above)
 Address:

Tel:
 Fill in & send off with your cheque or P/O to:
 CPBF, 9 Poland St, London W1 3DG

CAMPAIGN NEWS

North West gets full-time worker

Greater Manchester Council has supported the North West group's application for funding, and a campaign organiser will be appointed, hopefully, by early October.

Plans include the production of a Media Directory for the Greater Manchester area, as well as presenting educational and practical sessions on 'Using the Media'. Most importantly the person employed will be able to strengthen the influence of the Campaign in an important centre for the press and broadcasting.

Future events include: JIM ALLEN, the playwright, author of *Days of Hope*, *The Scroungers*, *The Big Flame*, on Censorship and Bias in the Media, Saturday 20th October, 12 noon, Black Bull, corner of Blackfriars Street, Manchester.

On November 17th the Campaign in the North West is jointly sponsoring with Manchester Trades Council a conference on *Images of Women*. Speakers include Brenda Dean (Sogat '82) and Loretta Loach (CPBF National Organiser and *Spare Rib*).

Press Freedom in Wales

The WCPBF is collecting information on the media coverage of the N.U.M. strike from both miners and journalists and conducting an analysis of the Cardiff and London-produced television news.

In conjunction with Everyday Printers of Cardiff we hope to publish a detailed report and a Guidebook to the Media in Wales.

With Moving Left In Wales the Campaign is holding a one day conference called The Left and Media Democracy at the Students Union, Park Place, Cardiff on Saturday 20th October. The main speakers will be Dafydd Elis Thomas, Plaid Cymru MP, Mike Power of the CPBF, workers from the Welsh media and representatives from local black and women's groups. See listings.

The Campaign hopes to be holding a fringe meeting at the Plaid Cymru conference in October and to establish a regular bi-lingual newsletter for Welsh members. We also hope to have a series of meetings on Sianel Pedwar Cymru and would like to hear from anyone willing to help, especially Welsh speakers and people from North and West Wales.

● Contact address is WCPBF, 14 Conway Rd, Canton, Cardiff, South Glamorgan.

DIARY EVENTS

Fri 12 Oct 7 pm
CND 8 WHAT THE PAPERS DON'T SAY
 Joan Ruddock, Jean Stead, Jake Ecclestone, Derek Lloyd, Mike Power
 St Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, EC4.

Thurs 18 Oct 7.30 pm
North London CPBF Meeting
 Camden Labour Centre, 8 Camden Rd, NW1.

Sat 20 Oct 10 am
FACT AND FICTION:
The Left & Media Democracy
 One day conference organised by Welsh CPBF & Moving Left in Wales. Speakers & workshops.
 Students' Union, Park Place, Cardiff
 Tickets £1 waged, 50p unwaged from 14 Conway Rd, Canton, Cardiff.

Wed 17 Nov
IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA
 Brenda Dean, Manchester.

Wed 21 Nov 7.30 pm
South West London CPBF Meeting
 Room 119, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, SW2

Sat 15 Dec
CPBF Day Conference
"The Right of Reply in Broadcasting"
 County Hall, London SE1. With leading figures from BBC and Independent News and current affairs.

Sat 2 March 1985
CPBF AGM

CPBF London Women's Group

The group continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month. Phone CPBF office (01 437 0189) for details of venues.

A Code of Conduct on Sexism is being drafted and will be circulated to CPBF members for comment, with a view to its adoption by trades unions, and a conference is planned on the issue for 1985.

The group also plans to circulate media unions with a questionnaire about the number and roles of women employed in the media.

Members of the group are always willing to assist others who want to start similar groups in the Regions.

Don't let the Campaign die!

Become a donor to the cause of media freedom and enable the C.P.B.F. to keep alive the vital issues of media freedom and the Right of Reply. Hurry, there is no time to lose.
 I/We wish to make a donation towards the £20,000 target

Name/s:

Address:

Amount: £

Cheques & P/Os to CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG

FREE PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

No. 25 SEPT - OCT 1984 20p

TUC applauds Campaign and backs Right of Reply

'MAKE IT LEGAL'

By Alan Richardson

The myth of press freedom was given a hammering again at Brighton in September. The TUC unanimously passed a motion of criticism and censure on the British media.

However, this year, for the first time, the motion clearly spelled out the need and the importance of a legal right of reply, and took the first step along the road to its achievement: "The General Council is to seek an assurance from the Labour Party that they will, upon return to Government, introduce the necessary legislation to ensure a legal 'right of reply' to any person or group of persons who believe that their views have been misrepresented by the media."

Moving the motion, NGA president Bryn Griffiths spoke of the media's potential as a source of power, and why those who hold political and economic power always want to keep their hands on the media, to win the hearts and minds of the people. "Economic power, political power and media power are inter-related," he said.

Referring to the "arrogant, blatant and crude attacks" on trade unionists and to the miners suffering "scurrilous journalism at its worst", Mr Griffiths said the time had come to establish a more representative media. The only real redress for abuses of media power at present is through the industrial action by printworkers in the national press, to secure the right of reply.



BRENDA DEAN (SOGAT) speaking at the Campaign Fringe meeting in Brighton.

Later in the debate, Jack Taylor, Yorkshire NUM president thanked SOGAT and the NGA for securing the right of reply for the NUM. Of the media's personalisation of industrial disputes he said: "This dispute is not about Arthur, it's about fighting for our jobs." His national president had been vilified on every occasion.

"That is something leaders have to live with. But our members believe they have the right to be trade unionists. People speak and write about picket lines and talk about the way pickets act. They have no right to criticise my members as pickets unless they have stood beside them and gone through the experience they have gone through day after day."

The motion was seconded by Aidan White, NUJ National Treasurer and CPBF National Committee member, who said that while criticism of journalists was understandable, it was quite wrong to make them the scapegoats of media abuse. "In ever-increasing numbers they are supporting this movement's demands for a fair hearing."

It is the structure of the existing media which should be the target. Three national newspaper proprietors owned 80 per cent of the national

press, and all had their snouts in the political trough.

The monopoly of the three Ms, Murdoch, Matthews and Maxwell was to blame. Murdoch had debased the standard of journalism and turned the *Sun* into a spiteful newspaper, Lord Matthews was a Tory cheerleader and Robert Maxwell, a so-called Labour supporter, had used Tory legislation against the print unions. "The last thing we need is a 'born again' Beaverbrook," he said.

Mr White paid tribute to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, which had done more for the cause of press freedom in five years than that "apology for a watchdog the Press Council" had done in 30.

CPBF Chairperson Mike Power, NGA, said the Press Council was not an independent body and had nothing to do with press freedom. The Press Council did not want the power to enforce its own judgements and it was time for the TUC to completely boycott it.

On behalf of the General Council, Alan Sapper, general secretary of ACTT, said that a communications council was also needed to ensure a fair hearing in broadcasting. The General Council, he said, fully supported the motion, and the TUC would talk to the Labour Party to seek assurances that the next Labour Government would promote a legal right of reply.

Help! We need £20,000

BINGO!

No, we're not offering you a million, though we do want to increase our circulation.

In fact, we're asking you for money to help keep alive the issue of media freedom and the Right of Reply.

Thanks to Government legislation our G.L.C. funding may well be stopped. So we need your support to keep our vital Campaign going. We've got £3,000 already, but that's not enough. We need the lot by March, so please rush your donation to us now. Use the donor card on the back page.



NEWSPOINTS

Frank Branwell: injury lingers on

By Dave Shepherd (CPSA)

CPBF National Committee

At the end of May an agency photographer snapped what he thought was a saleable scene outside Markham colliery in Derbyshire, which appeared to corroborate Fleet Street's preferred opinion that the miners' strike was collapsing.

The lone "strike breaker" pictured passing along the ranks of police on the picket line, was miner Frank Branwell. He did not go into work, but spent the day on the picket line.

But the photographer had already filed his version of the event, which appeared in the Guardian, Sun, Express, Times and Standard on May 22.

Presumably because his picture and caption reinforced

the prejudices of these "opinion formers", they did not bother to check their "trustworthy" informant's source.

I made my own enquiries about how these august journals planned to right the wrong they had done. Some claimed to check all stories unless confident of their validity. Several denied that they would exercise different standards if handling a story embarrassing to those better able to afford a libel action. Initially not one offered an apology.

The Guardian did print a correction about its offending front page story, the next day — at the bottom of page 2. The Sun and Telegraph printed

corrections by the following Thursday.

The Times ignored my first "advise receipt" letter, but Deputy Executive Editor David Flynn did acknowledge another on June 20, saying "the matter is being investigated as speedily as possible". He told me that he was attempting to contact Mr Branwell via the National Coal Board (!) and said he would have sued if someone had taken away his good name, without correction for several months.

He suggested that other papers might have published corrections without checking, simply to avoid hassle. The Times eventually printed a correction to its front page

Apologies for the late arrival of Free Press 25. Much promised copy failed to arrive, and production had to be rescheduled. Apologies for so little copy by or about women in the media. Help us to rectify this for the next issue.

This edition of Free Press has been edited by Mike Jempson, with help from Jake Ecclestone, Julian Petley and Aidan White.

Copy for the last issue in 1984 should be sent to the CPBF Office by October 31.

LIBEL ACTION

A libel action brought by the Freedom Association against former CPBF Secretary John Jennings is to go ahead.

As this issue of Free Press was being put to bed, solicitors for the two sides were preparing to go to court on October 2, for directions as to how the case will be tried. This is a procedural step.

The writ was issued on behalf of the FA in December 1983, alleging libel in respect of an article written by John Jennings and published in Free Press.

As reported at the 1984 AGM, the CPBF National Committee, of which John is a member, is supporting him in the legal action, but the writ was issued against him and not against the CPBF.

If the FA win their case John Jennings will be personally liable for his share of what could be substantial costs and damages.

A John Jennings Defence Fund has been set up to help cover legal costs and all donations will be gratefully received.

The Sun does it again

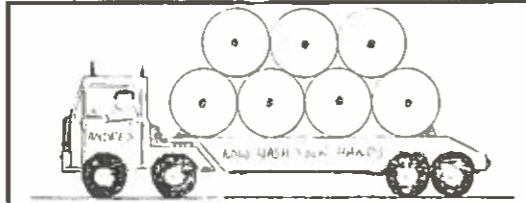
On August 3 the Sun ran a "fun" feature on what sundry celebrities would do "if the last thing on earth that's likely to happen" (sic) happened. While waiting for the bomb to drop, we learned, these characters would get up to all the obvious things — comic and sentimental — but what else would you expect if you ask Bob Monkhouse, Les Dawson and Bernard Manning.

On the same day the Sun's leader column had a few last words of its own for CND supporters in Wanstead and Woodford.

As a way of drawing attention to the inadequacies of government plans in the event of a nuclear attack, the local CND delivered black plastic bags through doors — the sort recommended for the disposal of bodies according to the government's own advice.

The Sun considered such behaviour the callous work of "self-serving hypocrites".

• One leading abortion agency recently reported an enquiry from the Sun about whether they had had an upsurge in custom from miners' wives. The Sun seemed to think that a long strike would bring about a lot of unwanted pregnancies in the mining communities.



ANOTHER PAPER DELIVERY FOR THE SUN

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE LAST 4 MINUTES?

IT IS the last thing on earth that's likely to happen, but just suppose a nuclear missile was heading your way and you had—no military experts warn—only four minutes left to live? The Sun asked some famous people how they would fill their last precious moments. Some of their answers were out of this world...

Hypocrites!
THE CND movement at Wanstead and Woodford have delivered black plastic bags marked for the disposal of bodies to homes in their neighbourhood. They told horrified householders that this is what would happen in a nuclear war. If that a sick stunt. The CND protesters are supposed to be concerned for humanity. Their callousness in alarming and upsetting people who, for all they know, might have been old or ill suggests they are a pack of self-serving hypocrites.

Tricks
Magician Paul Daniels: "I suppose I'd do one or two tricks. I'd pull any tricks I can. I'd be serious. I'd think back on what a marvelous life I've had."
Cricketer Ian Botham: "I'd abandon the cricket, pick up the head of the pin and be happy. I'd be with the people I love."
Comedian Bernard Manning: "I'd make a quick phone call to Arthur Scargill and tell him about the new kind of union. I'd give him the head and six inside for people who are dead and in the next life."

Final cuddle
PAGE THREE girl Samantha Fox would like to spend her last minutes with her mum and sister. "I'd like to depart from the life having a cuddle with them," she says. The impressionist Faith Brown says: "I'd like to be tucked into space with my old man Les and to see Danielo."
TV presenter Paula Yates says: "I'd just like to see the babies on the telly and hope I was a survivor. I'd hate to take the world along."

Comedian Les Dawson: "I'd have an egg on three minutes and eat it in four."
Radio One DJ Steve Wright: "I'd hope my Rover 500s was around and make that passionate love to her."
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INTERNATIONAL

SOUTH AFRICA



Black voices that we never hear

The lack of media coverage in Britain of black opposition in South Africa, particularly to repression in the "homelands", is partly due to the failure of Fleet Street news editors to accept material unless it comes from established, white correspondents.

This is one of the findings of a report on press coverage of events in the Transkei and

The South African press and broadcasting system is probably among the most political in the world — one of many paradoxes in a repressive state.

The daily press — roughly comparable to the national dailies in Britain — is split along both political and language lines. The English-language papers, with one notorious exception, oppose the ruling National Party; the Afrikaans papers support it. The exception is *The Citizen*, a morning paper started by the Government, using secret funds, to try to kill the *Rand Daily Mail* — at the time the most vociferous opponent of apartheid. The *Citizen* is now owned by a staunchly pro-Government Afrikaans group.

The four main newspaper companies — the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN), *Argus*, *Nasionale Pers* and *Perskor* — all carry loss-making papers out of the profits of their more lucrative divisions. This is done for political reasons.

Most of the English-language papers admit a significant black readership. The *Rand Daily Mail* has been particularly squeamish over the fact that, until recently, 70 per cent of its readers were black. This did not encourage advertisers. The paper has effectively betrayed black interests in order to woo white readers. The proportions are now 50/50.

The *Argus* group owns the *Sowetan*, which is black in the sense that it is staffed by black journalists and aimed solely at a black readership. Its predecessors — the *World and Post* — both edited by Percy Qoboza, were closed down by the government.

Until May this year the country could also boast a tradition of independent black journalism. A wealthy eccentric, Jim Bailey, owned a monthly magazine called *Drum* which at one time published throughout Africa. *Drum* exposed corruption, police brutality, prison abuse and served black readers well. Many of its journalists are internationally known — such as the late Can Themba, Nat Nakassa and the photographer, Peter Magubane.

Bailey also owned a weekly paper called *City Press* which stridently opposed the government. But Bailey ran out of money.

Despite the fact that Bailey's family trust owns a stake in SAAN, and that Bailey is on the board, neither SAAN nor *Argus* would take over his ailing publishing group. In May *Nasionale Pers* — the most pro-government of all newspaper groups — bought *Drum* and *City Press*. The only independent black journalism is now owned by a "government" company.

Ciskei sent to the CPBF office. The report says that this failure "is not because the work of independent black press agencies lacks quality, but because of the difficulty of penetrating the 'old boy' type, closed world of the media".

The report rejects or "alternative" publications as the solution to the invisibility of black people. "What is needed is access to the mainstream media to ensure that South African issues of importance form part of the general, rather than the peripheral, consciousness."

In South Africa itself, says the report, the English-language media — with the exception of a "small but vigorously growing" community press — has been colonised by a liberal, and mostly white, professional elite

which lacks interest in the struggles or achievements of ordinary black people.

Noting that there is a "substantial number of very competent and outspoken black journalists", the author of the report (whose identity has been protected for safety reasons) says that they are denied full access to the commercial media.

The report deals with the failure of the media to report on the struggles of black resistance movements away from the main urban centres, especially in the homelands and around East London.

Foreign correspondents rarely, if ever, visit such areas, preferring to rely on reports from local papers. But journalists on the East London Dispatch commented that "the advisability of publishing material is often checked with the security police."

"No stories spiked by the Dispatch get sent out on the line to any of the other dailies."

The report goes on: "One seldom travels a homeland road without going through at least one roadblock manned by machine-gun toting soldiers and police. This works to inhibit newsgathering activities, both through journalists being vulnerable to the authorities and the general unwillingness of people to talk to strangers — particularly if they are asking questions."

Quoting Martin Luther King's remark that "riots are the voice of the unheard", the report says that in the homelands, as elsewhere, "the voice of the people never gets heard as much as they never get seen".

IRELAND

What Papal plot?

By Mike Jempson

The Irish current affairs magazine, *Magill*, has exposed a media conspiracy to link an innocent woman with an alleged CIA plot to kill the Pope.

In 1980 Marie McCarthy unwittingly made friends with a couple of wanted gun runners and arms dealers when she was working in a Beirut hotel. Three years later she was lured back to Ireland from London by author Gordon Thomas and Paul Loughlin and Eleanor Donovan of RTE's "Today Tonight" tv programme, with spurious claims that the Irish Special Branch, Scotland Yard and the CIA were after her. She was bamboozled into staying overnight at Thomas' home and photographed as she left the next day.

A couple of days later "Today Tonight" ran its sensational story, which the Sunday Press picked up and ran for two weekends under the banner "What Has A Car Crash In Wexford To Do With A Plot To Kill The Pope?"

What indeed? In January, 1983, Marie McCarthy and her boyfriend visited her sick mother in a car left with them by the wife of Frank Terpil, the fugitive she had known by a different name in Beirut. The car was damaged when it hit a bridge, and they left it behind for repairs. The police discovered its owner and went looking for its occupants.

That was about the strength of it. Gordon Thomas somehow deduced that Terpil had been in the CIA when they allegedly trained the unsuccessful Papal assassin Ali Agca. There was no evidence to support his thesis, and when the Sunday Independent published Marie McCarthy's denials, he described it as "the kind of reporting of the story that gets journalists a bad name".

Colm Toibin's fascinating account in *Magill* provides a lesson in how easily enthusiastic journalists can be duped into believing their own interpretation of events and then fitting together a story that will sell. It also serves as a reminder to conspiracy theorists, that media manipulation is one of the most intractable conspiracies going.

WATCHING TELEVISION

Tubular vision is bad for us

by Patrick Hughes

Broadcast coverage of the miners' strike has been predominantly through an "Establishment" viewpoint about "uneconomic" pits, the "rights" of scabs, and the "Rule of Law". This dominance is ensured by political and economic pressures brought to bear on the BBC and the IBA, e.g. threats to the BBC's licence fee, removal of accessibility of government ministers and officials to news workers, Ministerial criticisms of coverage of the Falklands War, etc. Newswriters transform those pressures into self-censorship which smothers their curiosity with a blanket of silence embroidered "There is no alternative".

There are alternatives which should be represented in news and current affairs programmes; the military and commercial pressure to substitute nuclear power for coal-based power, the contrast between so called

uneconomic pits and the £50m subsidy automatically handed out to UK dairy farmers when the EEC milk quota was cut; the political and economic reasons for this government's run-down of traditional industries, such as textiles, steel, ship-building, coal-mining.

In challenging broadcast coverage, we should concentrate on the viewpoint from which it was produced; highlight the interests served by seeing issues from that one viewpoint; and press for a diversity of viewpoints to be represented in the coverage of an issue.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom has been justifiably cautious about raising the demand for a Right of Reply in broadcasting. In this country, broadcasting organisations are under a statutory duty to be balanced and impartial in representing issues: the BBC is bound by clauses in

its Royal Charter, and the commercial stations are bound — through the IBA by clauses in the Broadcasting Acts.

This duty is, however, only a statement of principle, not a set of instructions on how to interpret terms like "impartial", "balanced" and "objective". In this situation, challenges to the broadcasters' claims of impartiality often become bogged down in futile arguments over "which side had more/better coverage" and political analysis is reduced to swapping statistics.

Tapes produced by ACTT members which offer an alternative view of the miners' strike are an example to others wishing to present issues in their own ways, and means that the right of reply can be demanded in broadcasting without entering false arguments about "bias". We should ask the BBC and ITN news to include the

tapes as part of a normal transmission. This would give miners the right of Reply not just to individual inaccuracies, but to the "Establishment" explanation of the strike, and give audiences the opportunity to decide which makes most sense for them.

If such tapes are to be transmitted it will only be because of repeated and forceful demands from an alliance of broadcasters and tv audiences. News and current affairs programmes on radio and television should become "publishing houses" in their own right and stop operating as a state PR Dept.

In other words, we should stop agonising over how best to use the media, and start working out what sort of media we want. People have for years tried to use the media; the point, however, is to change it!

Sharks in Warrington

Staff at the Warrington Guardian have been threatened with disciplinary action unless copy is checked, withheld or omitted where it might "impinge" on advertisers' interests.

This flagrant interference with editorial independence has been rejected by the NUJ chapel.

A less predictable response has come from Mr S.J. "Eddie" Shah of the Warrington Messenger Series, who has written to the CPBF complaining about the local council's declared intention to restrict advance press access to committee agendas and reports.

Quoting the rival "Guardian" memo, Mr Shah suggests that "it is even more important that there should be at least one impartial watchdog in the community".

"In view of the potential impact on the rights of thousands of people we thought it proper to advise you of the circumstances", "I would hope that as you are a self-administered (sic) watchdog for broadcasting and the press you will take some action on this matter."

Mr Shah appears to have forgotten the NGA, and SOGAT 82 who have played a leading role in ensuring the Right of Reply for those injured by the greed and bias of the press.

INTERNAL MEMO

From: Managing Director
To: All Editors
c.c. Assistant Editors, Warrington Guardian
Date: July 16, 1983
Features Editor
News Editor
Reporter-in-charge, District Advertiser

IMPORTANT
Commercial Policy

In confirmation of what I told you at our meeting on July 11, this memo is to record that for the good of the company your complete co-operation is required in future on all editorial items which impinge, or may impinge, upon advertisers. In the case of any doubt you should either consult, withhold until resolved, or omit. Ready consultation will normally be given over the telephone from one or more of the following:

Group Senior Editor
Myself
General Manager
Assistant General Manager (Advertisement Manager)

I shall expect this instruction to be conveyed to all editorial staff who, even occasionally, are responsible for any sub-editing or final decision-making about items appearing in all our 16 newspapers, paid-for and free.

I repeat the warning which I had to make at the meeting, that I shall regard any breach of this instruction as a very serious matter for immediate investigation by me. If I then found a breach to be a blatant disregard of my instructions, or that as a result of a breach there had been or were likely to be serious commercial implications for the Company, then disciplinary measures would be the immediate consequence, in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedures as outlined in Section 6 of the Company Personnel Policy Document with particular reference to Company Rules 20 and 21.

The offensive memo — rejected by NUJ members

Fighting for the Right of Reply Nationwide

BY LESLEY WOOD

More and more people are demanding their Right of Reply.

The CPBF Right of Reply office has been directly involved in many recent successes. We are sure that others are also challenging media distortion, and we are keen to hear about them for a new edition of our Right of Reply pamphlets.

Top of our own list remain the struggles to get a fair deal for the miners. On July 1 the News of the World gave Arthur Scargill a whole page in which to reply to Ian McGregor. More recently Sunday Times Editor Andrew Neil invited the NUM to reply to an article by Peter Walker MP published on September 2. In both cases the facility has been negotiated with management by the print workers, through the NGA and SOGAT 82 respectively.

Provincial printworkers and journalists have begun to follow the lead given by their colleagues in Fleet Street. Statements in support of the miners and their right to reply have appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times, the Dover Express and the Yorkshire Evening Post.

The Daily Mail has been under seige from several groups who have won space for their point of view without help from the print unions.

Hilary Lipkin of Teachers for Peace was given the chance to defend her organisation against consistent distortion by the Mail, after months of hard work.

The Mail has also been forced to concede a right of reply to the Association for the Improvement of Maternity Services, and to a single parent family group in Hackney.

The Ashfield Valley Tenants Association challenged Thames TV to broadcast their criticisms of a TV Eye programme which had presented a distorted and sensational account of their council estate. And they are seeking financial recompense for the damage done to their community development work by the report.

The Right of Reply Unit is assisting the efforts of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, an affiliated CPBF group, to win the right of reply to a heavily biased BBC radio phone-in programme.

The Unit can certainly claim greater success than the Press Council's new 'fast track' procedure. Introduced in February in response to public criticism of length of time normal adjudications take, little was heard about its impact.

When the CPBF asked Press Council Director Ken Morgan how the new procedure was going, in July, he seemed unconcerned. The relevant committee, he told us, had not been convened thus far, and only three people had tried to use the new procedure.

Television in the Middle of Nowhere

"Can the Centre hold?" That was the central question of this year's Edinburgh T.V. Festival. After the Festival's centrepiece media-event — The Miners and the Media — it became clear that 'Should the centre hold?' would have been more to the point . . .

From the moment Arthur Scargill entered to rousing applause there could be little doubt whose side the majority of this audience of broadcasters was on and by the end it was equally clear who'd won the debate.

You'd never think so, however, from television's 'balanced' coverage of the event. As if to prove Scargill's points, television painted a picture barely recognisable to many of those who were there. Scarcely a mention of the leaden silence that followed Alastair Hetherington's lame and often snide attempts to 'prove', by means of crude and antiquated headcounting methods, that television had treated the miners fairly.

And even less of Martin Adeney's bizarre 'defence' of TV news coverage of the strike by showing, to hoots of laughter, a clip of mounted police charging stationary miners while the commentary intoned "... and the pickets charged".

Stranger than this though, seemed the attitude of sympathy for the miners' case struck by the audience. How to you reconcile this audience with the programmes which it is partly responsible for producing? Programmes which, many argue, give the NUM a far from fair deal?

The wretched Martin Adeney only too clearly demonstrated that many of these people do actually believe that they're giving both sides a fair deal. It is here rather than in conscious

How Arthur Scargill knocked the broadcasters off balance by JULIAN PETLEY

bias and politicking that the problem lies. All the talk of the 'Centre' holding is itself, in fact, an acute symptom of this problem.

The only participant to really grasp this point, and who got away from fruitless batting back and forth of example and counter-example, was Channel 4 commissioning editor Alan Fountain. He shifted the terms of the debate and argued that the much-debated notion of 'balance' is no less than 'a rhetoric which masks a political position'.

'Balance', in effect, means trying to hold the 'middle ground', but what the supporters of 'balance' constantly fail to realise is that the middle is itself a political position.

If there is no politically 'neutral' middle ground then every attempt to address or manufacture a mythical 'consensus' is bound to marginalise those who challenge the status quo.

From this perspective, then, television's failure to do justice to the miners' cause is the result less of deliberate, conscious bias than of unconscious, structural effect.

The rather cosy, media-professional's view of the world is utterly different to that of the miner and his family, and so if presently marginalised groups such as strikers (or black people, or gays) are to achieve any real fairness and really make their own voices heard, then those in power in broadcasting will have to stop speaking 'for' them and cede a degree of their jealously guarded power to those whose views they claim, at present, to represent.

Now that really would test the good faith of all those who applauded Scargill with such verve at Edinburgh. Would they gladly cede to his request that 'if you want to cleanse your souls and become born-again journalists, give the NUM 15 minutes a week in peak time to present our case in our own way to the British people' or would they, like one indignant delegate near me, regard this eminently reasonable suggestion as 'bloody cheek'?



And now an award to a great bunch of Chief Constables for their ongoing role in the great My men are a faultless body of individuals constantly under attack from the barbaric hordes of communist militants and subversives who are on the very brink of destroying the fabric of democracy soap opera.

LETTERS

Free Press has been a bit thin on letters in the past.

With the campaign growing, regional organisations setting up, and control of the press and media becoming increasingly centralised through monopoly ownership, it is especially important to share views and debate issues in the columns of our own journal.

SO PLEASE WRITE IN — BUT KEEP YOUR LETTERS SHORT AND TO THE POINT.

*Women's role in Labour Daily**

As a member of the workshop on 'Women's Media' at the CPBF Conference in February, I would like to bring to your attention some of the issues raised.

Firstly, we wished it to be understood — that women are NOT a minority group. In the world, in this country, in unions like NALGO, they are the MAJORITY. Yet, even in matters like the allocation of accommodation and platform speakers at your Conference, they are regarded as a minority.

Secondly, women interested in the production of a 'New Labour Daily' would therefore want, or possible demand, that the staff at all stages of production from Editorial staff to Printers would include a minimum of 51% women and that they would be involved in decision and policy making as distinct from the usual supportive tea-making role in Socialist politics.

Thirdly, women will not want a 'ghetto-ised' paper with Women's Page but will want all news — including Sports News — to take their interests and attitudes into account. Photographers and reporters, 51% of whom should also be women, could easily echo these interests and attitudes, and would have their work named.

Fourthly, I welcome Moss Evans' mention that 'sexual exploitation would be out' by which I presume he would agree with the first three demands, above.

Fifthly, in the matter of marketing, it seems that if the New Labour Daily in fact followed all this advice, there would be a ready-made market of over half the reading population (it has long been a statistical fact that women are earlier, better and more frequent readers than men who need 'comics' or sexual titillation to ginger their interest in reading).

This letter is written as an individual's view, not as a spokesperson's for the workshop or any other Women's group, but I have no doubt that there

would be much support for the ideas expressed.

Marjorie Lee
87 Haydn Ave, Purley,
Surrey CR2 4AJ

● Apologies for the late publication of this letter.

Not the (present) Press Council

John Foster has rightly pointed out that "we have not been able to persuade even the labour and trades union movement of the validity of withdrawal of either membership or recognition from the Press Council." (Alternatives to the Press Council 1, FP.24).

Worse than that, we have yet to persuade Arthur Scargill, to say nothing of such public figures as Harold Evans, Shirley Williams or Toby Jessell MP, all of whom have taken cases to the Press Council in recent months.

In assessing the alternatives we need to take into account the reasons why such people, left, right and centre, continue to use the Press Council.

I would suggest that there is a genuine desire for a fair and impartial body to adjudicate in cases of complaint. We may have repeatedly demonstrated to ourselves the wholesale inadequacies of the Press Council, but this should not distract us from realising that we have a long way to go to win over many others.

Nor should the undoubted success of the Right of Reply campaign distract us from our stated aim of campaigning for a "reconstituted" Press Council to promote basic standards of fairness and access to the press".

That surely means a genuinely independent body, beholden to no vested interest within the industry. As they used to say, "Accept no substitute".

Giles Oakley
Vice-Chair CPBF

FP comment: The second in our series on alternatives to the Press Council appears on page 6.



The Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI) is now eight months old, and 1984 has disappeared from the title, as an indication of our determination to continue the fight till we win.

In this first report to members of the CPBF (we are most grateful for your support) I want to briefly explain our legislative strategy:

Although we have a full FOI Bill, repealing the Official Secrets Act and replacing it with a statutory Right to Know with exemptions, we see this as a discussion document and have no intention of pressing it this year. There are two reasons for this: we need a full input from everybody on the Bill, and your views are welcome; there is simply no chance of having it passed at this time.

Therefore, we are promoting a number of Bills this autumn, at least one of which we hope will be taken up by an MP who comes high in the Private members' Ballot. These have been selected because they tackle secrecy as it affects the individual, are likely to be popular measures, and to have all-party support.

One of the Bills is the Access to Personal Files Bill, being furthered in the House of Commons by Chris Smith MP, which would create for individuals the right to inspect and correct their own files.

A second is a local government Bill which would statutorily open up sub-committee meetings, and introduce a number of other laws designed to make local authorities even more open.

A third would repeal that section of the 1983 Water Act which enables water authorities to operate in secret. A fourth would tackle environmental secrecy.

If you can encourage an MP to contact the campaign if he or she comes high in the ballot, and take up one of the Bills, we would be grateful.

Finally, we are cooperating with the NCCL and sponsoring a campaign and defence fund for Clive Ponting and would welcome all the assistance we can get.



DES WILSON

CFOI membership costs £7.50 p.a. More details and copies of the CFOI newspaper "Secrets" (50p) are available from: 2 Northdown Street, London N1 9BG

Cuts

I must express the regret that you chose to cut by about half the letter I submitted for the July/August issue, somewhat distorting its substance and even its sense.

Surely FREE PRESS of all papers, has a duty to clear editorial amendments to contributions with their authors first — given its special commitment to opposing media misrepresentation!

At the very least you should indicate where letter are abbreviated, and make clear your editorial policy on this matter.

Ian Vine
36 Duckworth Grove
Bradford, Yorks.

FP replies: Point taken, and letters will be marked with an asterisk (*) if they have to be cut. It may not always be possible, of course, to check with authors first. Space is limited, so please keep letters short and to the point.

Cuttings

I am researching press coverage of aspects of the Falklands/Malvinas War since the end of the fighting. I have access to national papers but would appreciate any tit bits from the regional press or any other non-newspaper printed media that CPBF members or Free Press readers may have come across — the only condition is that publication has been post-war (anything even vaguely connected will be gratefully received).

Simon Kirk,
Centre for Mass Communication
Research,
104 Regent Road, Leicester LE1 7LT

Labour Daily? Whatever next!

Clive Thornton, who chaired Mirror Group Newspapers until Robert Maxwell bought the lot in July, had been thinking of launching a new "left of centre" paper.

Maxwell dismissed the idea the moment he walked in the door, dousing what remained of the hope raised when the TUC commissioned Lord McCarthy to report on the prospects for a Labour daily. His report, published in 1983, estimated start-up costs of £6.7 million for a new daily with a projected circulation of 300,000.

Realistic or not, that sum was not forthcoming from the unions.

"Labour Daily?" examines many of the issues raised by the idea of a new daily rooted in the labour movement, and considers the prospects for other media alternatives, from local freesheets to cable TV.

Tom Baistow, who worked on the Daily Herald, cautions against a 'noticeboard for the faithful'. Alex Kitson, TGWU deputy general secretary, observes: 'Piles of (union) journals are left in union offices while people who need the information go wanting.'

Sandra Horne, of the TV technicians union, adds that the will to produce a daily isn't there 'because we have no confidence in our own track record in producing papers'. NGA official George Jerrom wants a Labour government 'to grasp the nettle of its own policy' by enabling an expanded labour movement media to compete on an equal basis.

Whatever else the TUC's feasibility study may have achieved, it has certainly stirred discussion, ranging in *Labour Daily?* from the media treatment and participation of women and blacks, to the future of TV and the pros and cons of alternative local papers.

With ever more Fleet Street editors bought and paid for, and an ever-widening clamour for the right to reply, the labour movement will not wait for ever to tap out its own messages. *Labour Daily?* sounds the tocsin.

● 'Labour Daily? Ins and outs of a new Labour daily, and other media alternatives' £1.50.

Up to 10 copies, £1.25 each. 11-50 copies, £1. Over 50 copies, 75p.

All post free from: CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Tel. 01-437 2795.

ALTERNATIVES

A North American experiment could show us how to survive without the Press Council.
JAKE ECCLESTONE reports.

An ombudsman for the press?

IN the United States and Canada some newspapers appoint one person whose job is to deal with complaints from members of the public. This system, similar to the Scandinavian principle of appointing an ombudsman, is worth examining in the context of the British Press. Would it work over here?

The idea of appointing an experienced journalist to act as an ombudsman was pioneered some years ago by, I believe, the Washington Post. So far, about 35 American and Canadian newspapers have taken up the idea, with varying degrees of success and in varying ways.

I should stress that there is no magic formula for such appointments and even in America there is a good deal of discussion among thinking journalists as to their value.

One of the first things to be said is that journalists will tend to respond to pressure from their peers, particularly in regard to allegations of unprofessional conduct or shoddy work. This, in a way, is the true value of the internal ombudsman. Normally such a person would write a column once a week responding to public criticism and taking an "independent" view.

One of the strongest objections by some American newspaper managers, however, was the cost. A senior journalist has to be found to take on the job, and senior journalists tend to come expensive than. Also there is the question as to whether a senior journalist can be spared from other work.

I believe it is not a good thing for a newspaper to merely appoint one of its own staff since anyone so appointed would already have developed relationships — either cordial or hostile — with colleagues. It would be difficult for such a person to be as neutral as is desirable.

Another problem is that of accountability: who appoints the ombudsman and to whom is that person responsible? It is my view that an ombudsman merely appointed by the editor is unlikely to do anything too critical or to write anything too critical of that particular editor. If a newspaper is to appoint an ombudsman, then that person must be given genuine independence to report critically, freely, frankly and fairly for a given period. An ombudsman should have a fixed term contract of, say, two years and at the end of that period someone else should be appointed. But how to persuade newspapers to give a weekly column and an office and full powers of investigation to an "outsider" for a fixed term.

Certainly, the paper concerned would be seen by the public to be taking questions of professionalism, taste, competence, accuracy, etc. seriously.



Peter Preston: The Guardian prefers the Press Council

We have to ask ourselves whether David English or Larry Lamb or Kelvin Mackenzie or, even Charlie Douglas-Home, would see the point of such a scheme. Sadly Peter Preston of The Guardian apparently does not believe that an ombudsman should be appointed in his paper. He preferred to put his trust, as he put it, in the Press Council.

East End News revisited

IN a study entitled "Does Anyone Want a Radical Press?" Mark Lloyd, a former advertising salesperson with the East End News, has queried the viability of any left of centre popular newspaper.

He cites "the failure of the East End News" as evidence and, drawing heavily on James Curran's analysis of the British press, argues that newspapers attempting to survive within a free market economy must inevitably opt for a sellable product and abandon efforts to reflect non-establishment views of society.

In its own terms, he says, the East End News failed. Set up as a workers' and readers' co-operative in 1981, with support from the CPBF, the TUC and many individual unions and community groups, the EEN was intended to be a popular weekly paper for East London with publically declared social and political aims. It was under-financed, lacked the range of management skills needed to survive in the marketplace, and was ill-equipped to combat the machinations of its competitors, he explains.

The EEN won acclaim for its style and professional approach, but after a year it had to lay off all staff and went monthly. One group split off to form the very successful, national black weekly "Voice". EEN is still appearing, but is now run entirely by volunteers with little journalistic experience and has a much reduced circulation.

Turnaround Distribution

The collapse of the distribution co-operative PDC, set up in the early Seventies to handle radical and alternative publications, put several titles at risk and closed off an important avenue for the dissemination of non-establishment views.

Out of the ashes has come Turnaround Distribution, another co-operative with similar aims but a more sophisticated approach to meeting the needs of minority interest publications and booksellers. Launched in May with an investment package worth £35,000 from the Greater London Enterprise Board, the GLC's industrial funding body, Turnaround hopes to reopen distribution channels and expand the range of titles and outlets it can service.

Turnaround will be operating in London, Southern England and South Wales, and has strong links with Scottish and Northern Book Distribution Co-op which also grew out of PDC.

The GLEB has also put money into Letterbox Library, a children's book club for non-sexist and non-racist books; Sheba, the feminist publishers; the expansion of Lithosphere, a highly successful printing co-op; and the rescue of fifty SOGAT 82 jobs at a 200 year old case binding company Leighton Straker, now called Standard Bookbinding.

The GLEB is developing an analysis of the growth potential of 'cultural industries' including video, publishing, record distribution and production, and is considering the creation of an independent Cultural Industries Board to handle investment in London's media.

The CPBF have been invited to play an active part in ensuring that the GLEB's strategy will promote the principles of access, the right of reply and greater varieties of social ownership in the media industries.

Turnaround Distribution: 27 Horsell Road, London N5. 01-609 7836.