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Name/s:

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(if applicable)

Secretary:
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9 Poland St, London W1 3DG

CAMPAIGN DIARY



● Beverley Anderson, who chaired the opening session of the CPBF Right of Reply in Broadcasting conference, raises the issue of Access television at a workshop. Conference reports, p.4

Campaigning in the North West

The appointment of a full-time worker, Ms Nancy Jaeger, to the North-West Campaign has dramatically increased the amount of work we are able to undertake. The appointment has been achieved through a 6-month grant from the Greater Manchester Council, which has also enabled us to establish an office. (See below)

Nancy is currently writing a guide to using the media for trades unions, community and women's groups and black organisations in the North-West. Information about local papers, radio and TV will cover the area between Chester and Barrow-in-Furness, and will be available early in 1985.

We are also planning a major public meeting on 'The Miners and the Media' for Saturday 23 February, with speakers from the NUM, local TV and Press news editors, the NUJ and the CPBF National Committee. Hopefully, we shall have a stimulating debate on whether or not the media has dealt impartially with the strike!

Another project in the pipeline is a working party on Racism in the Media. Since the CPBF have taken over responsibility for CARM, it is important that this work continues. To this end we need a concrete policy for the Campaign and guidelines for journalists and the media unions which flesh out pious rhetoric about Equal Opportunities into some real action.

The NW Campaign supported the "Images of Women in the Media" conference. We will be organising a media monitoring group as a practical exercise in tackling the epidemic of sexism women are being subjected to.

Members of the NW Campaign are welcome to visit the office or make suggestions about the work we should be concentrating on, and will be kept in touch with developments through a regular newsletter.

NANCY JAEGER
North West Campaign,
136 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch,
Manchester M4 3BN Tel: 061 - 832 6991

Regional get-together

The National Committee will hold its February meeting in Manchester and representatives from all regional CPBF groups are invited to come along.

The meeting will last from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday 16 February with an open agenda so that Campaign activists can get together and discuss issues of concern to the regions.

A number of items have already been identified — co-ordination of regional activities, how to start a local group, funding paid workers and local groups, and the Code of Practice on Sexism.

There may be time for specific workshops, and time will be made for a good lunch.

The meeting will be held in the Reception Suite, Greater Manchester County Hall, Piccadilly Gardens (5 minute walk from Manchester Piccadilly station, or bus from Manchester Victoria).

● Further details from Nancy Jaeger
061 - 832 6991

Become a CPBF donor!

Help to keep alive the vital issues of media freedom and the Right of Reply.
There is no time to lose

I/We wish to make a donation towards the £20,000 campaign target.

Name/s:

Address:

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

FREE PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR
PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

No.27 JAN - FEB 1985 20P

Secret memo reveals all

'No need for Right of Reply' — BBC

The public has no need for a Right of Reply to the British Broadcasting Corporation, according to its own Board of Management.

This message is spelled out in an internal policy document, prepared by News and Current Affairs chief Alan Protheroe, in 1981, which has come into the Campaign's hands.

His report was endorsed by BBC managers and was quoted at length by Larry Hodgson, Editor of BBC Radio News, during the recent CPBF Right of Reply in Broadcasting conference.

According to BBC executives, their "traditional standards of objectivity, accuracy and 'fairness'" are applied when determining whether an aggrieved viewer or listener should have an "opportunity to reply".

They admit "a moral obligation upon all broadcasters to own up to error", but place great emphasis on "self-regulation" in news and current affairs programmes.

The report accepts that the Right of Reply issue applies to "the entire spectrum of programmes" and involves the BBC in a "continuing debate". And while the BBC must "recognise far more freely that no issue is ever closed", there is little tolerance of "complaints masquerading under the guise of pressure or propaganda."

Five types of complaint are identified: those where someone wants to let off steam, conflicts of opinion, conflicts of fact,

For services rendered

. . . past and future. Mrs Thatcher has honoured the (Right) media throughout her career at No. 10. And the media has done her proud.

Among those ennobled in 1980 were Lord Matthews, Proprietor, Express Newspapers; Sir Larry Lamb, Editor, The Sun; and Sir Ian Trethowan, Director General, BBC.

In 1981 it was the turn of Lord Swan, Chairman, BBC; Sir Robin Day, BBC presenter; Lord Marsh, Chairman, Newspaper Publishers Association and Sir William Rees Mogg, Former Editor, Sunday Times.

Sir David English, Editor, Daily Mail, got his in 1982. In 1983 it was the turn of Lord Howard, Chairman, BBC and Sir Francis Neill, Chairman of the Press Council. And in 1984 Sir Alastair Burnett won his knighthood.

As we entered 1985 there were OBEs for George Macauley, London Editor of anti-union D.C. Thompson's Dundee Courier and Robert Farmer, General Secretary of the Institute of Journalists, ("the strike-breaking association that lives off the coat-tails of the NUJ and provides fodder for anti-union managements" as one NUJ member put it.)

So much for the impartiality of the media.
Happy reading in 1985.



By MIKE JEMPSON



● Alan Protheroe MBE, TD

allegations of malpractice, and conflicts over major public issues.

"All complaints *must* be dealt with swiftly, efficiently and effectively," the Report goes on. The first two categories merit a letter, or coverage in "feedback" programmes. Conflicts of opinion may require legal checks before correcting "properly substantiated" complaints.

Conflicts of fact should be corrected in the offending programme.

The BBC seems most concerned about "a rare phenomenon in our broadcasting" namely conflicts "of fact or opinions in a controversial issue of public importance". Stringent tests must be applied before "a separate programme of rebuttal or explanation" is allowed.

Throughout the BBC is to be judge, and efforts must be made to avoid being called to account by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

The idea of an Ombudsman is dismissed out of hand, the role being "adequately fulfilled by the existing command structures" within the BBC.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this remarkably frank and patronising document is its language. The BBC comes across as a tightly-disciplined army, aloof from its consumers and dedicated to the

defence of objective truths and the British way.

"Regrettably, there is evidence that the BBC is held to be an arrogant and dismissive organisation, holding itself above serious criticism," the Report says.

As a contribution to dispelling this unfortunate slur, FREE PRESS has devoted a supplement to publication of the Report in full.

● Conference Report p.4
● BBC Memo in full — SUPPLEMENT

INSIDE: AGM details p.2 Plus SECRET SUPPLEMENT

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

'Strengthening the Campaign'

All members will have received the notification of the AGM with the last mailing. The National Committee hopes that members will make an effort and participate.

The CPBF is coming to the end of a very successful year but will be confronting some major problems in 1985.

If the Campaign loses its GLC funding, then urgent and possibly unpleasant decisions will have to be taken, against a background of growing possibilities for the expansion of the Campaign's work.

Hard-headed discussions and decisions will have to take place around the reports and resolutions and in the workshops.

Please ensure that nominations for the new National Committee are in by 16th February and that delegates names and addresses are submitted to: CPBF, 9 Poland St., London W1.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

10 AM - 5 PM
Saturday
March 2nd
1985

CONWAY HALL
Red Lion Square
London WC1

'Strengthening the Campaign'

AGENDA

- Guest speakers
- Reports
- Elections
- Workshops
- Resolutions

Topics for discussion: extending the Campaign's aims to cover racism and sexism in the media — activities of regional groups — Campaign finances — News on Sunday — alternatives to the Press Council — Right of Reply in Broadcasting — Code of Conduct on Sexism — Campaign Organization and Finance — Freedom of Information.

CPBF National Committee 1984-85

Individuals: Rob Burkitt, Richard Gates, Mike Jempson, John Jennings, Jenny Rathbone, Charles Tremayne.

NUJ: Jacob Ecclestone, John Foster (*Joint Secretaries*) Kate Holman, Aidan White.

Print Unions: John Beck, Geoff Dixon, George Jerrom, Mike Power (*Chairperson*)

Broadcasting: Harold Brooking, Joanne Gooding, Simon Higman, Giles Oakley (*Vice-Chair*)

Other Unions: Malcolm Howard (NUM), Terry Law (NALGO), Dave Shepherd (CPSA), Arthur Stevenson (NUM).

Other bodies: I Jameson (Solihull L.P.), Brian Jarman (Wales CPBF), Loretta Loach (Spare Rib), Nik Oakley (SW Herts L.P.), Alan Richardson (Hornsey L.P.), Geoff Sheridan (New Socialist).

Nominations

Nominations for the National committee should arrive at the Campaign Office by Saturday 16 February.

There is room for 28 on the Committee, and nominations should

clearly indicate which section members are to be considered for:

Individuals — 6 seats	Broadcasting workers — 4 seats
NUJ members — 4 seats	Other Trades Unions — 4 seats
Print and allied trades — 4 seats	Other organizations — 6 seats.

Motions and Amendments

Motions should have been received by January 19. Amendments must be submitted in Writing by Saturday 16 February. Copies of resolutions are being sent to members.

If you have any queries, please contact the Campaign Office.

Delegates

Voting rights are allocated according to the size of the organization:

Membership	Voting delegates
Under 1,000	1
1-10,000	2
10-50,000	3
50-100,000	5
100,000 plus	10

Affiliated organizations should send written authorization of delegates to the Campaign office in advance of the AGM.

VOLUNTEER AD. REP. WANTED

Rich, retired or just plain willing — to sell space in FREE PRESS and help boost sales

CONTACT the Campaign Office.

- The future of Free Press will be under discussion at the AGM — and practical ideas and help to get the Campaign's message to a wider audience (current circulation 9,000 per issue.)

Freedom Association v. John Jennings

Last year's AGM heard that the Freedom Association was suing National Committee member John Jennings, alleging libel in an article published in Free Press. The case has yet to be heard in court, and a John Jennings Defence Fund has been set up.

Please send your donation (cheques payable to John Jennings Defence Fund) c/o CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

CRECHE PLACES

As usual arrangements are being made to look after members' children during the AGM.

In order to cater for them properly we need to know numbers and ages in advance. If you need creche facilities, please let us know as soon as possible.

Delegates should indicate their creche needs when applying for credentials.

ACCOMMODATION

Members coming to the AGM who need a place to stay on the Friday and/or Saturday night, should let the Campaign office know as soon as possible.

Would members living in the London area who can offer accommodation, please let the office have details of how many people they can put up.

To avoid confusion it would help to match requests with offers in advance of the event. CPBF Office: 01 437 2795
9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG

LETTERS

Keep your letters coming.

Try to be brief, but don't

hold back if you think

the Campaign is ignoring

important issues.

Media Monitoring

Reacting to individual examples of media bias and distortion is time wasting and largely futile. Much better to have a PERMANENT monitoring system UPDATED EVERY DAY on the media and the journalists, editors, etc., who work in it.

Recent advances in electronics have, fortunately, made this very much easier and we would like members of the Campaign to help us set this up. We will contribute computer time to the project if other members who regularly read the newspapers and watch television programmes, etc., supply us the material. Full attribution will be given.

Advantages of a permanent MEDIA MONITOR include:

Printed simultaneously on paper and distributed on Viewdata systems the "MEDIA INDEX" would be widely distributed to political organisations, public libraries, schools, etc.

Once stored in the central computer it would only be necessary for a journalist's name to be key-boarded in order to produce a printed file automatically of his/her work over a long period of time.

Merely the existence of the monitor will exercise a healthy influence on even the most corrupt of journalists.

Information from the monitor would be of interest to Labour politicians when allocating radio and TV station franchises, placing advertising, hiring journalists and PR staff and so on.

For further information kindly contact us.

David Macmillan
Creative Data UK Ltd
Strand House, Great West Road,
Brentford, Mddx.
Tel: 01 847 1918

NUJ v. NUM?

Our reaction as a union to the miners' strike has been put high on the agenda by the visit to the London Freelance Branch of two women from the Fitzwilliam & Kingsley Miners' Wives Support Group. A debate was started which there was insufficient time at the December branch meeting to fully develop. The question arose as to what NUJ members can do in defence of their fellow trade unionists in the NUM.

One sub-editor said he was tending down the more virulent proscab propaganda, but were there any other suggestions as to what he might do? Another member suggested that we should support the call for a general strike.

What we need is some action we can take as trade unionists rather than just concerned individuals which is both effective and achievable.

It seems to me that this is the ideal moment to get our already existing demand for the right to reply into a higher gear; preferably into warp drive.

If NUJ members were to boycott all copy which is biased against the majority of the NUM who are on strike, and to demand that equal (or, to be fair, greater) prominence be given to the views and experiences of the striking majority, this would be a small step in the right direction for the trade union movement.

To be really effective, this action would require full official support from the leadership, but anyone

who was confident of the support of other NUJ members and other media-workers such as the NGA in their particular workplace could usefully take a lead.

Sophie Grillet
London Freelance NUJ Member
London N5

A Dog's Life?

One of the biggest problems faced by us in the animal rights movement is media indifference, except when violence or the threat of violence from our people is involved.

There is, therefore, a strong disincentive to organise and participate in large, peaceful, imaginative demos, like the one a few months back in Trafalgar Square where we had 8,000 people demonstrating in the form of mass street theatre.

It was against the government's White Paper to update the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act (taking away the minimal protection laboratory animals have at present, if one can call it protection).

This demo was totally ignored by the media, even though a TV crew was there along with radio and press journalists.

Presumably we got no publicity because we supplied no violence. Certainly we were not squeezed out by more important events, since the big story that day was the birthday of the sextuplets.

And the powers that be have the gall to criticise the illegal and sensational actions of the Animal Liberation Front.

David Carr
Chairman, Southend Animal Aid
Shannon Close
Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

REVIEWS

Shut up and Listen

This is the book of the radio show, and would probably make an interesting film. The show was made by women specially trained at CBC radio station in Cardiff, with funding from the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Its aim seems to have been to prove that women could produce meaningful and enjoyable radio for women with a minimum of professional interference.

Unfortunately, the book does not describe the show or the women who made it in detail. So there is little on the positive side to balance its essentially negative message, or make women believe that they can ever challenge the male domination of radio programming.

The theme running through the book is one of frustration. It's a battle against the DJ's and the advertisers' image of women — the dumb housewife dubbed 'Doreen' by the people who use radio to sell their products to this fictional Mrs Average.

Hostility towards the project is apparent amongst the rest of the station's staff. They are all under pressure because of poor audience figures, falling revenue and a tense relationship between business and community interests in this unique hybrid commercial/access radio station.

Because CBC is, or rather was, a special case in independent local radio, it's probably true to say that this experimental women's show was less likely to succeed there than elsewhere. A station that is profitable and confident can afford the luxury of Good Works, like access and community programmes. But as the book points out, these can result in ghetto slots and rarely do anything to change overall policy or practice.

I do not share the pessimism of 'Shut Up and Listen'.

I feel it is a useful ear-opener for men and women who have never challenged the drivel which many radio stations direct at women. But as a handbook for campaigners it tends to repeat the conclusions already drawn by Local Radio Workshop and others, and leaves much unsaid.

by JANET WYATT
Mother of NUJ Chapel
Piccadilly Radio

Shut Up and Listen: women in independent broadcasting
Comedia CPBF £1.95
Available from the Campaign office.

REVIEW

Do-it-yourself media management

Poor old Dennis MacShane. His standard work on 'Using the Media' doesn't even get a mention in 'Get It On', the latest Pluto Handbook about how to get airtime on radio and television.

Jane Drinkwater and the GLC-funded London Media Project have produced a comprehensive guide to London regional radio and tv programmes and their makers. Their painstaking work has far wider applications, however, and every campaigning or amenity organization should rush out and buy a copy.

Not satisfied with explaining step by step, and name by name, how everything from Black on Black to Women's Hour and the Robbie Vincent Telephone Programme is put together, Ms Drinkwater assails us with all manner of useful names, addresses and organizations which might come in handy.

Heads of Departments and Boards of Governors are listed, alongside the CPBF and the Black Londoners' Action Committee. Mystery-

ously the Television Users Group is listed twice on the same page.

And if that's not enough, there are chapters on 'Identifying your publicity needs' and 'How to use the media' with sections on writing, sending and following up press releases.

For once this is a practical guide that lives up to expectations. No doubt some will quibble that rapid turnover in staff and schedules will render so detailed a guide out of date quite soon, but 'Get It On' is exegesis not the Bible! My only quibble is that FREE PRESS is priced wrong in Appendix C! Ah well, the Campaign is getting its own back by offering the book at a cut price.

by MIKE JEMPSON

'Get It On — radio and television'

by Jane Drinkwater
Pluto Press £3.95
Special offer for Free Press readers £3.25

Continuing our series on alternatives to the Press Council, LESLEY WOOD asks

What about the consumers?

The press currently defames, distorts, trivialises or ignores large numbers of different groups and individuals. Pressure from these 'consumers' is, potentially, one of the most powerful forces for change. The Press Council acts as a means for the newspaper industry to marginalise and contain such popular pressure.

Our alternative to the Press Council should be designed to increase the power and influence of those who consider it futile or beyond their rights to challenge the press. Groups such as the poor, the unemployed, women, and black people, who are subject to consistent media stereotyping which reinforces their oppression and apparent powerlessness. This means increasing consciousness of the right to expect fair treatment from the press.

The Right of Reply is invaluable as a straightforward, fair and democratic demand. The Right of Reply Unit acts as a conduit for those with grievances to gain access to those with responsibility, breaking down the carefully-preserved isolation of editors, journalists (and even printworkers) from those who consume their product. Organised printworkers have given a lead to those seeking the Right of Reply. And pressure from disaffected groups or individuals provides support for media workers who wish to

challenge the process of news production from within.

The most important aspects of our Right of Reply work are giving confidence to groups or individuals that they are right to demand fair treatment, and encouraging them that, with determination and persistence, they can achieve results. We should also be encouraging organised groups to treat the role of the media as an integral part of their work, by publicising media treatment of specific groups, organising meetings and conferences and giving advice on how to challenge bias, how the media work and how to relate to the media more successfully.

In the longer term democratisation of the press can only be expected to take place in conjunction with other democratic changes. The undemocratic nature of our press substantially reflects the undemocratic nature of our society. What would be the role of consumers within a truly democratic press? This discussion is likely to throw up new tactical demands, as well as presenting a positive approach, rather than always appearing negative and critical.

Previous contributors have already touched on some of the likely demands: the appointment or election of trustees attached to newspaper managements; industrial democracy; structures for accountability like editorial 'surgeries' at which editors could be confronted by their consumers; regular space on TV and radio and in newspapers for Right of

Reply statements or the presentation of alternative views on specific issues.

RIGHT TO REPORT

One demand which has seldom been explored, but which could generate similar popular appeal as the Right to Reply has done, is the Right to Report.

It is a straightforward, campaigning demand which links the consumers' right to know with the journalists' right, and responsibility, to inform, whether on Ireland, the Stock Exchange, the nuclear issue, or medical matters.

It allows journalists to challenge the constraints placed on them on the basis of their professional responsibilities.

For the consumer this would be a welcome change from the use of professional status as a means of dodging issues.

The Right to Report has a special significance during the current miners' strike. Many journalists are acutely aware of their inability to influence the judgements of editors, or proprietors, about what is 'newsworthy'.

The public has a right to know more about police tactics, violence and harassment, and there is valid human interest in the courage, solidarity and hardship of miners' families and communities.

The Right to Report is an antidote to self-censorship and the imposition of commercial or state interference in what news should be reported (or spiked).

It is a campaign the CPBF should take up with journalists in the press and broadcasting as well as with the consumers who pay their money but are offered no choice and no redress.

Yet another video club

A new mail order video club has been launched by Eric Walker, of Concord Films, in association with Comedia and the New Socialist.

The Exchange Value Video Club offers members a selection of "well chosen" contemporary and classic features and documentaries.

As well as new releases, alternative comedy, rock, opera and new wave music tapes, the club will supply campaigning, educational and special interest videos, for an all-inclusive price of £4 per night.

Exchange Value hopes to build a catalogue of new, independent films and innovative television material.

"We'd like to become the video equivalent of the old Left Book Club," says Eric Walker, "With members meeting at each other's homes to watch, discuss and take action on the issues covered by our titles."

Members will also receive regular special offers to purchase tapes of major films.

• Exchange Value can be contacted on 0473 79300, Nacton, Ipswich, IP10 0JZ

Have you persuaded your organisation to affiliate to the Campaign yet?

The issue of media freedom is important to everyone. The Campaign Office has a speakers list of members willing to address local meetings, on a wide range of media topics.

Why not send for a copy, and help to get people interested in your area. The Campaign needs new members, and we all need to keep a watchful eye on the media.

Among the unions, representing people from all walks of life, which have affiliated are:

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

Contact the Campaign Office NOW and help to build the C.P.B.F. in your area.

BRITISH MEDIA PROMOTE RACISM

The Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM) has been absorbed into the CPBF, and the columns of FREE PRESS are open to those wishing to draw attention to the way in which the media bolster the deep-rooted racism to be found throughout Britain.

The magazine SEARCHLIGHT has been monitoring the activities of racist and fascist organisations for many years. What follows is a distillation of their recent coverage of 1984 — declared Anti-Racist Year by the Greater London Council.

The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism Media Project has found that the press in general has been more determined to safeguard the so-called 'British way of life' than to acknowledge the existence of racism in Britain, during 1984.

Racist attacks have been largely ignored by the press, or described misleadingly as robberies, vendettas or instances of 'gang warfare'. On rare occasions when cases have been

brought to public view, the perpetrators tended to be presented as isolated 'bad apples' in an otherwise sound barrel.

Racial stereotypes have been mobilised by the press in cartoons, news and feature articles. Local London papers especially have dwelt obsessively on the theme of the black mugger and rapist and, like the SUN, abused and misrepresented unreliable crime statistics to 'prove' that black people are the terror of the streets.

The GLC's announcement of an Anti-Racist Year in 1984 was met by loud cries from the so-called popular press that the 'looney' left was at it again, using black people for its own dangerous ends — a view which was not reflected in any of the Afro-Caribbean or Asian publications which serve those at the sharp end of British racism.

The 'quality' papers tended to treat the idea as a curiosity, not worthy of much serious attention. Ridicule was the main weapon employed to discredit the notion that action should be

taken to combat racism — and the DAILY MAIL suggested that whites should fight against anti-racism to protect their jobs, houses and schools and to safeguard their way of life.

Even when the crocodile tears began to flow for the starving people of Ethiopia, little heed was paid to the fact that evidence and predictions about the consequences of drought had been around for several years, and that western governments had been more anxious to deflect Ethiopia from its pro-Soviet policies than to distribute their own artificially created food mountains.

And compare the press treatment of Colonel Ghaddafi to the way in which the media handle the effrontery shown by South Africa to legendary British justice when it came to the trial of its own nationals for alleged arms offences against the demands of anti-apartheid campaigners taking shelter in British embassy property. Or look at the way

Zola Budd was used both to legitimise the South African regime and to establish the efficiency of Britain's racist immigration procedures.

The year ended with the East London Branch of the NUJ referring a report in the East London Advertiser to the Union's NEC for contravention of the NUJ Code of Conduct on the grounds of racism. Just one hopeful sign that there are ways and means of challenging the conscious or unconscious racism with which much of the coverage of 'non-white' affairs is imbued.

The CPBF can only be strengthened by the active participation of members from ethnic minority communities in Britain. FREE PRESS will give space to contributions which identify both the shortcomings of the British media in this respect and the ways in which the needs, news and interests of the black community can best be covered.

Media Images of women

by CAROLINE GRIST

The launch of the North-West CPBF has coincided with the start of an exciting new venture which aims to combat sexism in the media.

This new initiative — a women's media monitoring group — has arisen out of a highly successful conference held in Manchester last November.

"Images of Inequality: the Portrayal of Women in the Media" was organised by the North-West CPBF, Manchester Women's NUJ, and Manchester Trades Council's Positive Action Committee.

About 70 women — there were only two men present — packed into the Town Hall to see Manchester NUJ chair Janet Whyatt use video and radio to demonstrate some of the worst excesses of sexism in newspapers, television and magazines. There were also effective speeches from Lorretta Loach of Spare Rib, Brenda Dean of SOGAT, representatives from Rape Crisis, the popular nationals, and the advertising world.

Margaret Watts (ACTT) used a video camera to demonstrate how easy it is for women interviewees to be patronised, and Lesley Stephenson (NUJ) brought along her radio equipment to show how radio interviews can be cut to distort the truth.

Determined that the conference will not just be another talking shop, the organisers are setting up a series of women's media monitoring groups round the North-West. The first one met in Manchester on January 23rd. Women in other areas are being encouraged to do the same. Strategies for monitoring local and national media will be discussed, along with methods of making complaints.

One conference delegate admitted, "I just didn't know you could complain!"

Here in the North West we now know you can — and it's our turn to dent the images of women concocted by the media for their own dubious purposes.

• For more information contact: N.W. CPBF office on 061 - 832 6991

David Owen in court

A High Court judgement could have profound implications for political news coverage on television.

Dr. David Owen has sought a ruling on the validity of the refusal by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission to consider a complaint from the SDP leader.

Dr. Owen had originally objected to discrepancies between the amount of prime newstime given to the Alliance (6%) compared with Labour (22%) and the Tories (72%) in the early part of 1984. He argued that the share of votes at the last election, and a recent by-election (Alliance 36%, Tories 32% and Labour 29%) justified a more even share.

The BCC may invoke a provision of the Act that set them up, allowing them to ignore complaints if they deem it "inappropriate", should the High Court, which cannot rule on the actual complaint, find against them.

This issue of FREE PRESS edited by Mike Jempson.

Copy for FP28 should be sent to the CPBF office by March 1st 1985.

Contributions should be typed with double spacing, and please give details of who you are, including address and telephone number.

RIGHT OF REPLY IN BROADCASTING CONFERENCE

Intergalactic blob meets the BBC

The Editor of BBC Radio News, Larry Hodgson (pictured right) described the Campaign's conference leaflet as "outrageously warped".

He discounted suggestions that the BBC might project consistent bias. "We're not against the miners or the government," he said. Mr Hodgson claimed that the BBC is the "most peculiar broadcasting organization in

the world - no-one knows its command structure."

It is neither monolithic nor "like a newspaper with one powerful editor pushing a moral or political stance."

Working to dozens of news editors, BBC journalists are not clones, he insisted.

Their driving force is fair, honest, objective and accurate reporting. His bluff and often humorous contribution included reference to the BBC's confiden-

tial policy paper on the inappropriateness of a right of reply in broadcasting.

And he told the conference that the BBC's sense of fair play and newsworthiness meant that "If an intergalactic blob arrived in London this afternoon, we would broadcast its opinions this evening." Sandra Horne of ACTT retorted that an intergalactic blob appeared to warrant better treatment than many humans. She doubted that the blob's views would be broadcast if it supported the miners - unless, of course, another intergalactic visitor arrived with the opposite opinion.



Broadcasting chiefs display uniform views

Radio and television news chiefs at the conference came up with similar attitudes to the Right of Reply.

Commercial and public broadcasting bodies apparently believe that their audiences should not need to fight for such a right, because sufficient complaints procedures already exist and broadcasters have no bias.

Paul McKie, Deputy Chief Executive, ITN, pointed out that broadcasters, unlike the press, operate within a statutory framework.

He said the independent companies, the IBA, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, the courts, and slots like the Video Box between them provide sufficient opportunities for ventilation of viewers' grievances.

John Perkins, Managing Editor of LBC, said that machinery already exists to counter errors of fact in the many hours of news and current affairs, from the 'phone-in to statutory watchdog bodies. He denied bias in radio broadcasting, saying that editorial "paranoia about balance" meant the opposite was more likely to be the case (sic).

Philip Whitehead (NUJ), who opened the main session, said he had been converted to the need for a Right of Reply in broadcasting, and favoured an ombudsman figure able to react quickly to evidence of inaccuracy and bias.

Sandra Horne (ACTT) poured scorn on the complacency of broadcasting chiefs, and drew attention to the class origins of senior executives, itself sufficient cause for questioning the



● Philip Whitehead (right) shares a joke with Sandra Horne (ACTT) and Paul McKie, Deputy Chief Executive at ITN. (ERNE GREENWOOD)

values behind their notion of "fairness, objectivity and balance."

Despite the inevitable polarisation of views, the conference was conducted in a friendly and constructive fashion, at the insistence of Beverley Anderson who chaired the opening session.

Almost 200 people registered for the conference, which marked the starting point rather than a conclusion of the Campaign's efforts to establish a Right of Reply in Broadcasting.

A pamphlet developing views expressed at the conference is planned.



Sadhana Ghose (left) of the Black Media Workers' Association addressed delegates on the chemical leak in her home town of Bhopal. International communications meant she knew more about the tragedy, and sooner, than her mother who still lives there.

She said that less secrecy by the American company about earlier accidents, and greater press freedom in India would have averted the massacre.

(ERNE GREENWOOD)

Greg Lanning (right) of the Television History Workshop leads a discussion group.

(ERNE GREENWOOD)



Gerald Hartup of the Freedom Association listens intently to CPBF Chairperson Mike Power.

Printers' Action

Mike Power led a workshop on the Fleet Street experience of the Right of Reply.

The 'SUN' did not appear for three days last June and five days in September. John Brown, ('SUN' NGA Imperial FOC) explained that management decided to close down rather than concede to requests from production workers for a right of reply, a disclaimer or even a letter of protest about the content of the paper.

When the Newspaper Publishers Association asked the print unions to accept a resurrection of the 1927 agreement of no 'interference' in editorial content by printworkers, during the current wage talks, the unions rejected it. This was clearly the NPA's response to the growing success of the right of reply campaign in Fleet Street.

Hilary Lipkin told of the appalling treatment that Teachers for Peace and her family had had at the hands of the 'DAILY MAIL'. Valuable experience was gained in the long wait for her letter to be published; and Teachers for Peace discovered that the Press Council was useless.

The right of reply is now a widely accepted idea after a vigilant campaign combining theory and practice. It has become the declared policy of key labour movement organisations and gained large rank and file commitment. Long term advances include agreements at some papers where Chapels have the right to have statements published dissociating them from material with which they disagree. These actions represent an important stage in workers taking responsibility for the end product of their labour.



RIGHT OF REPLY

Paul Foot, whose column is one of the few good things in the Daily Mirror, has got it wrong on the right of reply, writes FRANK ALLAUN.

First, he fears that small papers challenging society would suffer most from such a law.

Not at all. Journals of opinion whether of the Right, such as the Spectator, or of the Left, like Free Press or Tribune, would be immune. Only newspapers would be affected.

Paul might argue that the Mail or Express could then reprint distortion from the small journals. If so they would then be subject to the new law.

Next he refers to the libel legislation which does not grant legal aid, as I believe it should. That apart, the law of libel, a veritable jungle, would remain as it is.

His most serious objection is that there would have to be some judicial process, some independent body, to decide. In most cases an offending newspaper (or TV or radio programme) would make the



● Frank Allaun, M.P., and NUIJ life-member, retired from Parliament in 1983, having tried three times to get the Right of Reply on the statute book.

correction within three days. It is only if the paper refused and appealed that the tribunal would decide. My own feeling is that there should be a union representative, an employers' representative and a High Court judge. I'm not enthusiastic about judges in the light of recent decisions, but if fines are to be imposed I don't see how they can be avoided. In any case the Right of Reply has been successfully in operation for many years in West Germany, France, Denmark and most European countries without this objection obtruding.

Paul might have mentioned two other difficulties. Geoffrey Robertson got it wrong when he said that the fine would be £40,000. My Bill said a fine of up to £40,000 could be imposed. That is the exact maximum in the French legislation. Robertson also says

Wrong Foot!

Leading members respond to Paul Foot's criticisms of the Right of Reply Campaign

that I would require the reply to be of equal length to the original article or report.

Not so. I have made it clear that it would only be of the same length and given the same prominence as the offending part of the offending article.

I am delighted that the Labour Party included the Right of Reply in its last election manifesto and will doubtless do so in its next. It is a limited but precise and definite step in the right direction. However, although supported by a few independently minded M.P.s from other parties, it was clear from a meeting I had with the minister responsible, that the present Conservative government would never accept it. Meanwhile people working by hand and brain are faced with a mass circulation press virtually owned by four hostile magnates. That is why I wholeheartedly support the industrial right of reply backed by the CPBF. It is horrifying that newspaper workers are used daily to attack their fellow workers. It warms the cockles of my heart when I see them using their strength to insist on a reply being printed. Over the miners' strike, the NGA, GCHQ, CND and other vital issues they have succeeded. Good luck to 'em.

Paul Foot has missed the real objection to both the legal and industrial rights of reply. Most misrepresentation and most misleading of the reader is achieved not by telling lies but by selecting the news. And it is much harder to require that proprietors and editors publish a reply to something which hasn't appeared. Whilst the Right of Reply is useful, it is no panacea.

I'd very much like to hear how Paul Foot would correct the present situation of the press versus the people - or how other readers would go about it.

What are we to do about Paul Foot? asks MIKE POWER.

He discovers the long running campaign for the right of reply and promptly rubbishes it in his weekly column in Socialist Worker, ignoring the debate and experiences of those involved in the struggle over the past five years and longer.

By claiming that we consider a legal right of reply as "the best way to deal with the abuse of trade unionists" in the media, he dismisses the ten aims of the CPBF and the policy and campaigns of the wide range of organisations that support the right of reply.

He says that the Labour Party conference dealt badly with the question "what are we to do about the Media?", keeping safe from attack by not even trying to answer it himself. Instead he stands on the sidelines shouting "class divisions", presumably to maintain his class credentials intact. For good measure he side-swipes the 'Left' who favour the legal right of reply.

The CPBF does not necessarily consider the legal right of reply to be the 'best' solution to the media abuse of trade unionists, or anyone else. We view the struggle for a more accessible and diverse Media as complicated and difficult, with the right of reply central to the overall campaign.

The CPBF set up an inquiry into the Press Council in 1981. In its report 'People Against the Press' such issues as investigative journalism and the libel laws are taken up. Last year we published a series of articles, and held two national conferences on the right of reply. And we are still discussing the consequences of our policy and actions around the right of reply. Paul Foot ought to have known this, but failed to give it a mention.

Media workers are aware of media bias. Our aim is to raise that level of consciousness, to create an atmosphere where it becomes routine for them to object to bias, distortion and vilification, and respond positively to readers and viewers complaints.

Progress has been achieved through our involvement with all the media trade unions.

The role of the CPBF is to extend their concerns and trade union solidarity to cover all those people who see distorted images of their lives reflected in the media. This work involves us politically, socially and industrially. We are not a passive parliamentary lobby nor do we assume that the struggle will end in parliament, even if our efforts bring about legal enactments.

Seeking to achieve the right of reply, by whatever means, highlights the need for a fairer press distribution system, for an advertisement levy to fund the launch of new publications, for national and local printing corporations, for freedom of information, new forms



● Mike Power, chair of the CPBF National Cttee and NGA FOC at the Daily Mail. (ANDREW WIARD/REPORT)

of ownership and an end to monopoly control.

Paul Foot's main point is that the campaign for a legal right of reply attempts to create a balance in a class divided society where none can possibly exist. That hopeless position can be applied to any effort to change or introduce new laws. If laws are passed in parliament as a result of struggles based on understanding, unity and vigilance from wide sections of society then the fight reaches a new stage. Then we fight from a position of strength to ensure that laws are implemented in the interests of those who campaigned for them.

The class bias of the judges and press barons is well known. Not many of us expect it to be a simple clunk-click struggle! Least of all those of us who are up to our necks in the right of reply campaign and who want to resolve the resulting contradictions in favour of the people.

and what is cosmetic in the way people resort to the tactic of complaint. We must be willing to let viewers and listeners let off steam.

16. For guidance, therefore, we shall institute a system of tiered response. Complaints — and it is a very broad term indeed — can be roughly divided into five categories:

(A) **THE STEAM COMPLAINT**, in which the listener or viewer wishes to make himself heard, although taking the time and trouble to write to tell us we are idiots/communists/fascists/whatever, or that he's not getting value for his licence money: the area in which the viewer is irritated by something he sees or hears, and wants to shout about it.

(B) **CONFLICT OF OPINION**, in which the listener or viewer puts forward, in a serious and reasoned letter, a view that is contrary to that expressed in a programme, or by a contributor.

(C) **CONFLICT OF FACT**, in which the listener or viewer puts forward, in a serious and reasoned letter, with supporting information, evidence of a mis-statement of fact which, to maintain standards of grammatical accuracy merits correction.

(D) **ALLEGATIONS OF MALPRACTICE**, in which the complainant provides evidence of, for example, mis-editing of a contribution to a point where there is positive distortion; or where a complainant adduces evidence that he was misled to a serious degree about the intention of a programme and his contribution thereto.

(E) **CONFLICT OF FACT AND OPINION IN A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**, in which expert evidence is adduced of a programme's inadequate, inaccurate and unfair exposition of a topic.

17. This categorisation is not exhaustive. In category (E) there is the phrase 'controversial issue of public importance'. That is a sound test of the validity, relevance and magnitude of a complaint, and, it will be realised, extremely few complaints are of this importance and scale. It is only in relation to such a rare complaint that we shall even consider the mounting of a 'special' programme of rebuttal. The most careful consideration will continue to be given before deciding to mount such a programme: complaints of that magnitude will be as rare as the programme response.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

18. All complaints *must* be dealt with swiftly, efficiently and effectively. The various categories of complaint should be responded to as follows:

(i) Complaints in Category A and B should be responded to either in correspondence, or within 'postbag' sections of existing programmes.

(ii) Where there is a sufficient volume of similar Category A and B complaints to demonstrate an obvious concern, they may be the subject of a 'one-issue' edition of a 'correspondence programme' (e.g. Feedback, Points of View) or the major portion of an edition of 'Did you See?'

(iii) Category C complaints will, after legal reference, be appropriately corrected within the offending programme, or at a suitable programme junction, if the complaint is properly substantiated;

(iv) Category D complaints will be redressed within the offending programmes, if the complaint is substantiated, as part of an overall corrective system, and as recognition that no debate is ever 'closed'.

(v) In the case of Category E complaints, the test of 'Conflict over a Controversial Issue of Public Impor-

ance' will be most stringently applied; a separate programme of rebuttal or further explanation will continue to be a rare phenomenon in our broadcasting.

19. With the breadth of output of the BBC, no single individual can hope to adjudicate adequately, evenly, consistently or constructively. The disciplining of language, methods and techniques is a departmental and directorate responsibility within the BBC: it must remain so, and, if anything, encouraged to be more vigorous. The chain of command within the BBC is clear. It is only at the most serious level of complaints that the most senior staff of the Corporation require to be involved.

Complaints in Category D and Category E must be referred to the Director General through Managing Directors or Directors.

20. Finally, this guidance note, seeking to devise a more systematic provision of the opportunity to reply, must not be interpreted as the BBC 'losing its nerve', 'shirking its responsibility', 'reducing the scope of its programme making', or 'warning off' programme makers. The BBC's integrity and dynamic are most decidedly not at stake!



Alan Protheroe
Now Assistant Director-General
BBC



'It's the final test before they become a newsreader. They have to maintain a superior smirk while announcing that black is actually white and white is actually black.'

CONFIDENTIAL!

A FREE PRESS scoop from the in-trays of the BBC



BBC

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**BBC MEMO FROM;
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS
4 December 1981**

THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPLY

Earlier this year, the Director General asked me to consider whether there could, or should, be a prescriptive 'right of reply' for complainants against the BBC's programmes. A full report was produced for Board of Management. The report was endorsed by DG, the Managing Directors of Television, Radio and External Services, DNCA and his fellow Directors.

This abbreviated version of my report to DG has also been endorsed by Board of Management. It is intended to be, with effect from 1 January 1982, the guideline for dealing with complaints. It is circulated to you now in final draft form for discussion at the News and Current Affairs meeting on Tuesday 15 December 1981 when I shall value your comments before publication.

You will note that I have rejected outright the concept of a 'right' of reply. But I am equally sure we can profitably revise our attitudes to ensure a greater 'opportunity' for reply when there is a proper and justifiable case for doing so.




FROM: Assistant Director News & Current Affairs ALAN PROTHEROE

FINAL AMENDED VERSION OF BOARD OF MANAGEMENT PAPER

BACKGROUND

1. Let us get our terminology clear: this document rejects the concept that there is a prescriptive 'right' of reply. The report is concerned throughout with the OPPORTUNITY to reply: within our own terms, however, that opportunity is actually a 'right to reply' for the complainant, if it is decided that he has a case. We determine the 'right' of reply. We must consider how, in the recognition of that 'right' (and we apply our traditional standards of objectivity, accuracy, and 'fairness' in so determining) we can best create the *opportunity to reply*.

2. The BBC has always been aware, not only because of the terms of its charter but equally because of our determination to maintain our established doctrines, of the need to redress grievances, of a responsibility to ensure that all sides of an argument are properly and adequately presented, and maintain a 'balance' of views and attitude. All our programmes, and the items therein should theoretically be so constructed, that the need to reply is

eliminated. Each programme would be meticulously balanced, each argument and counter-argument so arranged and presented that all sides would be astonished by the Olympian detachment and dispassion of our programme makers, agog at the purity of motive and the deftness of intellect we would constantly demonstrate. Life, however, is not like that. There is misunderstanding and misconception, misinterpretation and (occasionally) malpractice: despite the efforts and the motivation of programme makers, people may be left with the feeling of (at best) being misrepresented or (at worst) tendentiously traduced.

3. If the complainant finds himself at loggerheads with the broadcaster, if he fails to achieve any kind of adequate redress, the complainant may now turn to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission established under the Broadcasting Act 1980. There is no doubt that, whether we like it or not, the BCC will formulate a body of case law and establish its own precedents in its handling of disputes. Inevitably, such quasi-legal decisions will, if

only by a process of seepage over a long time, condition responses. It is, therefore, substantially in our interest to ensure the BCC is a court of last resort: equally, nothing could be more destructive to our position if our awareness of the need for an opportunity to reply becomes merely a cosmetic device; that would redound to our discredit.

4. The opportunity to reply must be considered (simultaneously) in several contexts. We have to consider how it will be regarded by the programme makers and the public; who should determine which complainants have a right, and should therefore be given the opportunity to reply; we shall have to establish clear but generous principles on how we ourselves adjudicate on complaints; we must consider to what extent we need to take into account difference of opinion, as opposed to conflict of fact, in any method of redress we may devise.

5. To consider that an opportunity to reply is valid only in respect of news and current affairs programming is a dan-

FREE PRESS would like to hear Campaign members' comments on this memo

gerous misconception: it would be quite wrong to single out one sector of broadcast output as being especially vulnerable. Drama, light entertainment, music, sport, documentaries, the entire spectrum of programmes must be included.

6. Above all else, the BBC must preserve its independence and its integrity, use it and be proud of it. It must also be prepared to have its performance questioned and examined: it must be seen to be ready to listen as well as ever ready to speak.

7. Regrettably, there is evidence that the BBC is held to be an arrogant and dismissive organisation, holding itself above serious criticism. Part of that public perception may derive from our remoteness from our audience: most people will have had the experience of resolving difficulties and complaints in a face-to-face meeting. Even the most 'proper' letter can be interpreted as being high-handed and arrogant because of the distance between the writer and the recipient: the electronic gulf between broadcaster and viewer does nothing to enhance communication: it's 'those out there' and 'them on (or in) the box.'

8. It is understandable that a broadcaster who receives a complaint tends to become defensive: it is proper that his response inclines towards the combative, for each day there are 'try-ons' by PR men, threats by Messrs Sue, Grabbitt and Runne, and demands for 'corrections' based on mishearings or language usage. Editors and programme producers are reluctant to use the programme time for public confession, but there is no doubt that we gain credibility by admitting an error and being seen to correct it. It does not follow that we need to be abject in that correction: there are ways of correcting errors, and of admitting failure, which are clear, precise, honest and, not least, elegant.

MAKING THE JUDGMENTS

9. It is important to differentiate between letters to the BBC which contain complaints concerning mis-statement of fact, and those in which the writer merely wishes to let off steam, or express a counter-opinion. Most programme makers are perfectly able to distinguish between them: but there is a point where letters apparently letting off steam arrive in such numbers that, together, they represent a body of opinion, a view by our listeners and watchers, which we ignore at our peril.

10. There has been careful consideration of who should determine the provision of the opportunity to reply.

11. In the United States, there has emerged the journalistic Ombudsman. Spurred by a new mood of self-criticism, a

growing number of newspapers are running corrections under standing headlines and adopting the practice of allowing in-house Ombudsmen to report to readers the transgressions of their own newspapers. The phenomenon of a newsman chastising his own paper in print is

becoming a familiar one to US newspaper readers.

12. An increasing number of newspapers have appointed a Readers' Advocate, someone who would be seen to be 'neutral'

The Campaign replies ...

“ Something must have shifted in the BBC in 1981.

Beneath the evasions, pomposities and gusts of bombast in Alan Protheroe's report on the Right of Reply there are clear signs of tactical adjustments being made at senior levels of the BBC.

Although the concept of a 'right' of reply is flatly rejected the proposed 'opportunity to reply' is still a major concession. The fact that the question has been investigated at all should also be seen as an important advance for the CPBF and the media unions.

Those people long exasperated by the BBC's apparent imperviousness to serious criticism should not underestimate the significance of Alan Protheroe's cautious admission that 'we can profitably revise our attitudes to ensure a greater "opportunity" for reply when there is a proper and justifiable case for doing so.'

Astonishing as it may seem, that in itself is something of a triumph for supporters of a Right to Reply.

That's the good news: what about the bad?

Sadly the Report never seriously engages with the fundamental issues underlying the BBC's need to review its policy. For over a decade detailed academic analysis of BBC and ITN news coverage from highly respected sources like the Glasgow Media Group, (to say nothing of the CPBF's own *Open Door* 'Why Their News is Bad News') have convincingly demonstrated that in face of the charge that the news is 'biased' there is, at the very least, a case to answer.

If ten years of specific evidence was not enough to unsettle the BBC perhaps the fact that enraged pickets in the Coal Industry dispute have been attacking film crews will be. With Arthur Scargill calling for 15 minutes a week 'Right of Reply' to correct TV bias, it is surely time the BBC acknowledged it has a crisis of legitimacy on its hands. How close to home this crisis has become was signalled by the near-unanimous vote condemning TV news coverage of the miner's strike at the 1984 conference of the main BBC Union, the Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS).

None of these sorts of problems are acknowledged or discussed in the Protheroe Report, suggesting that large sections of opinion are ignored or pushed to the margins. There seems to be an inability or unwillingness to grasp the main complaints about broadcasting: it is not so much about disputed 'facts' as about the way a consistently partial view of the world is constructed, and the way the agenda is set for our understanding of it.

Symptomatic of that limited world view is the repeated assumption in the text of the Report that complainants to the BBC are *men* (at least 9 times); given the years of criticism of the male dominance of the media that is really quite breathtaking in its insensitivity.

The Right of Reply is only part of the answer to any of these problems, but it does remain an important lever towards getting a wider range of views and experiences on the airwaves — and it is just beginning to work. ”

“ It would appear, from its own admissions in this document, that the BBC is indeed a world of men.

Women are neither listeners and viewers, nor programme-makers, according to Protheroe. Unsurprisingly they don't appear to complain either, in his experience.

Nor is there a hint that whole sections of the community might resent what they see as bias and distortion by broadcasters. Complainants are expected to be upstanding, reasonable people or experts in the BBC's terms, if they are to be taken seriously.

The militaristic imagery employed to describe BBC procedures, the determination to duck out from the grasp of the BCC, and the arbitrary dismissal of the Ombudsman notion complete the picture of the unaccountable British bulldog.

The stern but affectionate 'Aunty' that is regularly paraded before us turns out to be, as we already knew, a status-conscious, arrogant and narrow-minded embodiment of male chauvinism. ”

“ The question of the Right of Reply in broadcasting raises many issues, and challenges accepted doctrines or myths within the BBC. The BBC and its staff at all levels are aware of the need for 'balance' in the news and current affairs output.

Alan Protheroe touches on many of the problems faced on a day to day basis by those working within the BBC in news and current affairs, but the argument is always developed within the context of BBC precepts. It is this frame-work, with the ever present 'refer upwards if in doubt' rule, which sets the agenda for news/current affairs coverage, in which many people, particularly those in the trade union and Labour movements perceive an anti-

union bias. Mr Protheroe is complacent about the BBC's ability to police the 'balance' and to be judge and jury on the issue raised.

Clearly the Right of Reply touches the Corporation on a sensitive spot, challenging the private world which is today shaken by the Tory government's reaction to the licence fee campaign. It remains as true today as in 1969 that: 'The powers of the Government over the BBC are theoretically absolute . . . The most important of these powers is the direct control the government possesses over the amount of the licence fee.' (Estimates Committee). The existence of this control must influence the way in which the BBC functions and its coverage of events. It is this fact which governs the agenda set, and the private world of the BBC.

The concept of the Right of Reply Campaign cannot simply be transferred from newspapers to broadcasting. Perhaps the concept of an Ombudsman would be a better way of implementing the policy in this area. What cannot be denied is that many individuals and groups in society feel a need for a Right of Reply.

Public service broadcasting is an advance on the type of private ownership seen in newspapers. The arguments raised by the Right of Reply in Broadcasting are part of the general debate about the future of the media in Britain. We need to continue to campaign on the issues of freedom and democratic control, and access to decision-making organisations, which should be answerable to the public. ”

“ Protheroe's doctrinaire approach to resolving the democratic issues raised by the Right of Reply, and his extraordinary belief that the BBC is different from the rest of the public, strengthens the need for an independent system of redress in broadcasting.

The BBC should be its own judge and jury, he implies, with complainants going into the dock too.

His arguments are similar to those put forward by police chiefs when confronted by demands for greater accountability and independent complaints procedures.

The BBC should tell its public, licence holders and taxpayers, what its current policy is, and regularly publish its terms of reference for dealing with complaints in the Radio Times.

Would they consider viewers justified in withholding their licence fee because they feel the BBC ignores their point of view? ”

and a link between the community and the newspaper. But there is a growing feeling that installing an Ombudsman is an overly defensive posture.

13. There is no requirement for a BBC Ombudsman. The role played by the US

Ombudsmen is cosmetic and interventionist to an improper degree. The role of the Ombudsman, as used in the US newspaper industry is more than adequately fulfilled by the existing command structures within the BBC departments and within the BBC as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE ACTION

14. There is no doubt about the feeling, among large segments of the public that we are reluctant to admit error, that we can be seen to be excessively defensive, and that although we have no intention of appearing excessively arrogant, our stance is too often perceived to be just that. We need a change in attitude. We should not rush to apologise on flimsy evidence: we must be vigorous in our own defence when we are wrongly accused; we must be equally generous in recognising and correcting errors. There must be an increased and enhanced commitment by programme makers to responding to error. And above all else, there needs to be a fresh recognition of our standards of journalism, and our standards of programme making. The BBC must never be seen to be inhibited by the threat or risk of criticism. We must not be emasculated by the fear of what 'they' might say. It is part of the BBC's function to be bold, forthright and adventurous in all its output. But in its journalism, in particular, there is a fundamental obligation to be fair, honest, objective — and above all, accurate. It is the accuracy of the journalism that embraces the other concepts of fairness, honesty and objectivity. To put it bluntly, there have been recent occasions when the tabloid maxim 'never to let the facts spoil a good story' appear to have been accepted. There have been occasions where the balance has not been right, where the accuracy has not been 100 per cent. None of that actually has anything to do with the 'opportunity to reply': but it has everything to do with basic attitudes, premises, obligations, and professionalism.

15. There is great danger in formulating draconian rules concerning the treatment of complaints. But there is great merit in self-regulation, most particularly by news and daily current affairs programmes. Because of the nature of their rolling output, it is possible for them to resolve complaints far more rapidly and easily than any other area of output. Many complaints are cheerfully and quietly resolved.

There is, self-evidently, a moral obligation upon all broadcasters to own up to error: a greater degree of candour creates respect, not contempt. The difficulties emerge in considering programmes which do not have the 'capacity for immediate response'. In fact, taking a broad view across the months and years, there is surprisingly little 'debatable grievance'. Of great importance is the recognition by us that we are involved in a continuing debate rather than facing a specific problem of the 'right' to reply. We have to recognise far more freely that no issue is ever closed, that we seek to keep all debate open. We must be entirely clear, too, about complaints masquerading under the guise of pressure and propaganda: we must sharpen our perception of what is genuine