

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM

incorporating the Campaign Against Racism in the Media & the Television Users Group

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JULIENNE LEAVES

As a further consequence of the funding difficulties being experienced by the Campaign Julianne Dickey was made redundant in July. Julianne joined the CPBF two years ago as a three day a week researcher. Her employment was increased last year to four days a week.

During her time with the Campaign Julianne has made an invaluable contribution and her presence will be sorely missed. We wish her every success in her new job.

ACTT SUPPORT

The ACTT Annual Conference this year reaffirmed its commitment to the CPBF and instructed the General Council to support the Campaign's work around the Media Manifesto.

The motion also asserted the right of access to information, news and opinion and to the printed word and the airways so long as such rights are not used to incite violence, racial hatred or sexual discrimination.

Publications . . .

Bending Reality—The State of the Media, edited by James Curran, Jake Ecclestone, Giles Oakley and Alan Richardson, Pluto Press in association with the CPBF, £5.95 pbk.

Women in Focus—Guidelines for eliminating media sexism, by Julienne Dickey and CPBF London Women's Group, £1.50.

Altered Images—Media, myths and misunderstanding, Links No. 28 published by Third World First, £1.95

Buy all three for just £8.40 and save £1.00

Special offer

MEDIA RESEARCH TRUST

A leaflet designed to raise funds for the Media Research Trust will be launched in mid-September. The Trust, which has charitable status, was set up last year, its objectives being to advance public education about and promote research into media ownership and control, and media bias and means of gaining redress.

PAY ROLL GIVING

Under the new tax regulations which took effect in April this year it is now possible for employees to give up to £120 tax free to charity each year. The money is deducted at source by the employer and transferred to one of the collecting agencies recognised by the Government. The agency then distributes donations to the designated charity.

If pay roll deduction is being operated by your employer you might think about a tax free contribution to the Media Research Trust. If no scheme exists why not get one going.

SUN RACISM

Also worth looking out for is the latest issue of *Race & Class* (Vol. XXIX, Summer 1987) which includes a useful article entitled 'Your Daily Dose: Racism and the Sun' by Chris Searle.

Copies of *Race & Class*, price £2.50, are available from The Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leek Street, Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9HS. Tel. 01 837 0041.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Arrangements for fringe meetings at the major political conferences this year are as follows:

TUC—Wed. 9 September, 12.45-2.00 in the Windsor Bar, Winter Gardens, Blackpool.

Liberal Party—Wed. 16 September, lunchtime in the Majestic Hotel, Harrogate.

Labour Party—Wed. 30 September, lunchtime. Venue to be confirmed.

The theme of all three meetings will be 'The Future of Broadcasting'.

MODEL RESOLUTIONS

The Campaign is keen to promote the policies outlined in the Media Manifesto amongst labour movement organisations during the coming year. Model resolutions are available from the office in London and supporters who are able to table motions for adoption by local Labour Parties or Trade Union Branches are urged to do so.

Also, union branches or local Labour Parties wanting extra copies of Free Press to circulate to members can obtain discount of a third off for bulk orders.

Contact Tom O'Malley on 01 437 2795 for further details.

Edited for the National Council by SIMON COLLINGS.

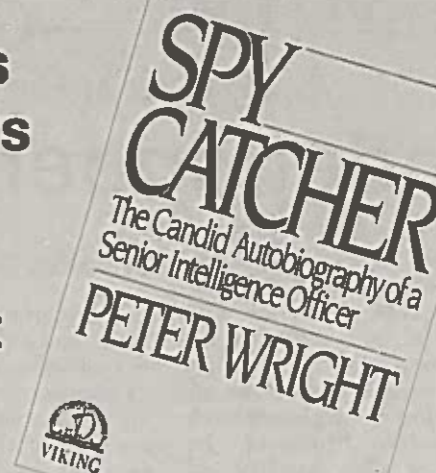
FREE PRESS

30p

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM
No. 42 August 1987

What future for radio—
Green Paper responses
see p.3

The ins and outs of the Peter Wright affair



Plus the text of
Benn's Hyde Park Speech
(see centre pages)

A strategy for the Tories' third term

With Murdoch's recent acquisition of *Today* and the announcement by the *Telegraph* of its intention to move from Fleet Street, there is a sense in which an episode in newspaper history has come full circle.

The last few years have been a time of dramatic change in the industry. Two years ago critics on the left and the right were hailing new technology as the key which would unlock the restricted patterns of ownership in both national and provincial newspapers.

In fact new technology has been used as a stalking horse by the media giants to break union strength and reduce unit costs in preparation for further mergers and takeovers.

The shake out in the newspaper industry was in part a preparation for the tough competitive battles which will follow in another field of communications - broadcasting.

Technological developments in satellite and cable and a re-elected Conservative Government committed to radical 'privatisation' policies make changes in the structure of broadcasting inevitable.

With new radio and TV channels soon coming on air and with a slackening of regulatory controls there are rich pickings to be had by the Murdochs and Maxwells.

Between now and the end of the century these changes could radically transform the kind of broadcasting system we have in this country with wide ranging consequences for numerous groups within the population.

A Green Paper on Radio was published earlier this year but television still poses unresolved dilemmas for

the Home Secretary. Expectations as to the timetable for change are that an omnibus Broadcasting Bill covering both radio and TV will be published late in 1988.

The aim of the CPBF will be to try to hang on to as much public service broadcasting as possible. That will be the key struggle in the media over the next two years.

To achieve this aim it will be necessary to build as broad a public movement as possible amongst concerned and affected individuals and organisations. The CPBF believes it has a major role to play in coordinating such a campaign.

Over the coming months we will be canvassing a wide range of organisations with the proposal for a coordinated and planned campaign.

Through such a campaign we will be setting out our own vision of what broadcasting and the press could and should be. The programme of the Media Manifesto is still a valid one. We need to hang on to our own perception of what FREEDOM really means.

APPEAL FOR FUNDS

The response from supporters to the CPBF's current financial appeal has been generous with nearly £3000 having been raised so far. But we are still desperately short of funds. Please help by sending donations to CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

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JOIN CPBF HERE

FILL IN & SEND OFF TO CPBF, 9, Poland Street London W1V 3DG

ALSO INSIDE: Media Manifesto Conference p.2, Secret Society p.6

Report of the Media Manifesto Conference held on 4 April

Independents emerge as issue

By any standards the turnout for the conference was disappointingly small, though this could be put down to an unfortunate combination of atrocious weather and a number of competing events elsewhere in London. However, in terms of the quality of debate and the range of discussion this must have been one of the most stimulating and successful events ever organised by the campaign.

Originally it had been planned to open the conference with contributions from two consecutive panels of invited speakers. This was then to be followed by a number of workshops on specific subjects from which participants could make their own choice.

In the event, however, the guest speakers largely made their contributions from the floor and the individual workshop topics were discussed by the conference as a whole, which increasingly took

by Julian Petley

on the appearance of a large, lively and extremely well informed seminar.

Foremost among the morning's contributions were a concise exposition by James Curran on the need for anti-monopoly legislation in the newspaper industry, a first hand account of the struggle for press freedom in South Africa by a black South African delegate, and an impressively wide ranging look at the various issues raised by the Media Manifesto by Shadow arts spokesperson Mark Fisher.

James Curran's suggestion that we should look at other European countries' models of press regulation was endorsed by Mark Fisher and is being taken up by the Media Trust, and his remarks about the dangers of press monopoly have recently assumed an even greater urgency with Mur-

doch's grabbing of *Today*.

Mark Fisher's speech was also distinguished by a virulent attack on Gerald Howarth's private member's Bill to tighten up the Obscene Publications Act and to bring broadcasting within its ambit.

This kind of censorship was not addressed adequately by the Media Manifesto, but since the Tories are clearly absolutely determined to bring in new legislation on this issue it is something that the Campaign must now tackle head on and as quickly as possible.

The workshop topic which clearly dominated the latter part of the conference was the question of access by independent producers to the BBC and ITV. Again, this is a subject which has become considerably more pressing in the intervening months, with the Home Office putting considerable pressure on both the BBC and ITV to take a quota of 25% of independent production within the next four years.

This might not at first sight seem an issue that need concern the Campaign to any great extent but as the debate between Alan Sapper (ACTT), John Ellis (Independent Producer), Giles Oakley (BBC Producer), Tony Lennon (BETA) and Martin Spence (Northern Newsreel) clearly demonstrated it is one which raises issues of fundamental importance to anyone concerned with the future of public service broadcasting in this country.

The critics of independent access argue that it is a significant step towards the deregulation of the broadcasting system that will open the way to the Murdochs, Maxwells and Berlusconi of this world and lead to considerable job losses amongst permanent staff in the major broadcasting institutions.

To back up their argument they point to the Government's avowed deregulatory intentions and obvious anti-union stance, the multinational media conglomerates' clear desire to get their hands on a slice of British broadcasting (if not the whole lot), and to the cost of the whole operation

which they see as putting an intolerable strain on the existing institutions, thus weakening them just at the time they will be facing stiff competition from cable and satellite.

The independents on the other hand argue that they are neither Government stooge nor Trojan horse and that their intervention will actually strengthen public service broadcasting in the hour of its greatest need. They claim that at the moment the BBC and the ITCA companies are in no fit financial state to face up to the challenges soon to be posed by cable and satellite.

These developments are absolutely inevitable whether we like them or not and will indeed pose a threat to broadcasting as we know it. What the independents can offer the BBC and ITV in this situation is, they argue, public service programming relatively cheaply and extremely efficiently, thus enabling them to remain competitive in a radically changed broadcasting ecology.

To back up their claims they point to their record with Channel 4 where they have produced innovative public service broadcasting and shown themselves keen to work in close co-operation with ACTT.

This argument is likely to come even more to the fore in the near future and it is important that CPBF members keep abreast of it. It's not an easy one. It is undeniable that with the advent of the multi national media mercenaries our broadcasting system is going to face competition from those who care not a fig for any notion of the public service ethos.

It is also a fact that the present Government does want to deregulate the system, and makes an uneasy bedfellow for the independent producers, most (though by no means all) of whom realise that the public service broadcasting system exists only through regulation and protection. In this situation it's clear that no change is simply no option.

What we need to put our minds to now is neither deregulation nor leaving things as they are but as both Ellis and Fisher suggested, re-regulation.

Books

How Women authors get a bad deal

Reviewing the Reviews, written and edited by Women in Publishing, Journeyman, £4.50.

Those who have suspected for some time that female authors and reviewers get a bad deal from our national newspapers will welcome the publication of this book. Here at last is the hard evidence to prove it.

Reviewing the Reviews is the result of research carried out by Women in Publishing into sex bias on the book

pages of some of our best known magazines and newspapers. Their findings make interesting, if not altogether surprising, reading.

The research study covered 28 publications including the national press, literary and political journals and women's magazines. It included publications of widely differing shades of political opinion from Spare Rib and Marxism Today to The Spectator and Mail on Sunday.

A total of 5018 reviews were examined for sex of author reviewed, sex of reviewer, length, position on page and subject area (fiction or non-fiction). The statistical analysis was then backed up by a study of some of the factors shaping the pattern which emerges from the data.

The most obvious of the findings is the division between those publications aimed at women and those publications

aimed at a general readership. The former show a strong preference for female authors whilst the latter show an even more marked preference for male authors.

How far does this reflect the percentage of male/female authors published? Examination of a sample from the 52,994 titles published in Britain in 1985 indicates that 18 percent of books are authored by women and 51 per cent by men, the rest being by multiple authors or anonymous. This may partly explain the bias towards men. However, the crucial data is the proportion of male to female authors sent for review—this we unfortunately don't have. Evidence of sexism here is inconclusive then. The study is on firmer ground when examining what happens to the books once they have been selected for review. Here an unmistakable pattern of sex bias emerges.

So what can be done? Women in Publishing suggest three things. Those of us who work in the book trade can try to get more female non-fiction authors reviewed, readers can write to literary editors and protest, and more women could be encouraged to come forward as reviewers.

Why not begin by looking at the publications you read regularly?

Challenging the Churches and the media in South Africa

The Churches and Racism, By Zolile Mbale. SCM £9.50

The media accused the World Council of Churches of funding terrorism when it announced donations of \$200,000 to 19 liberation movements in 1970, as part of its Programme to Combat Racism.

The minuscule amount involved emphasized the symbolic nature of this gesture, as did the relevant WCC minute: "There can be no justice in our world without a transfer of economic resources to undergird the redistribution of political power and to make cultural determination meaningful".

The motivations of the media and the churches, both white, western-dominated, are scrutinised by Zolile Mbale, a Black South African Anglican priest exiled to England because he married a white woman.

His is an important book whether or not you are a Christian or work in the media. I say this not because he and his family are old and dear friends, but because it offers a rare critique of white western intellectual and political traditions (including opposition to apartheid) from the viewpoint of the oppressed.

Uniquely placed to communicate the experiences of black Christians under apartheid to members elsewhere in the world, why did the churches surrender their message of solidarity to the secular media, whose structures give more credence to unsubstantiated disinformation imparted in a hotel bar than to the voices of black rural parishioners?

Did they hope to blame the media for misrepresentation when some white Christians found their forthright anti-racism unpalatable?

Writing of his own experiences and

beliefs, Zolile challenges the methods of churches and the media, and asks uncomfortable questions of everyone.

Unfortunately the £9.50 price-tag may restrict circulation of this paperback to a committed few, but it deserves to be studied by anyone willing to come to terms with a black perspective on racism.

Mike Jempson

Media Guide

Learning the Media: An Introduction to Media Teaching, By Manuel Alvarado, Robin Gutch & Tania Wolten. Macmillan (price not known)

The CPBF gets a good press in "Learning the media", a study of the development, in theory and practice, of media studies in Britain.

Having galloped through early theories about if and how the media should be studied in schools and colleges, and glanced at the structure of media institutions, the three authors then look in more detail at the issues raised.

There are chapters on gender, race, age and audiences, and the text is riddled with exercises and examples to set classes thinking.

It should be in every media studies teacher's classroom, and should open a few eyes among media practitioners. They may be surprised to learn what other people are saying and thinking about their work.

Check that it is available in your local library.

Mike Jempson

Charities worried over TV and radio plans

A NEW report, *Broadcasting and Social Action*, published by the Volunteer Centre UK, an advisory body to the voluntary sector, warns that charities could lose out from Government plans for broadcasting.

Within the framework of the 'public service' ethos fruitful links have developed between broadcasters and the voluntary sector providing charities with numerous opportunities to get their message over to the public.

The reshaping of broadcasting along tougher commercial lines could have a number of serious consequences for the voluntary sector. In particular the report says:

- current affairs coverage could become relegated to one channel or to unpopular viewing times
- services for groups with particular needs such as the deaf could become too expensive for many to afford
- community radio when it arrives could end up serving commercial interest and not the community
- local radio could become less 'local' and the many opportunities which exist for charities at present could be reduced.

There is also a concern that 'cowboy' organisations could misuse the opportunities presented by TV and thereby get charities in general a bad name.

'If we have a single anxiety,' the report concludes, describing the relationship which exists between broadcasters and the voluntary sector, 'it is that this partnership with all its achievements might be damaged by breaking up the existing regulatory system. If it is we believe society will be the poorer.'

Copies of *Broadcasting and Voluntary Action* are available from the Volunteer Centre UK, 29 Lower Kings Rd, Berkhamstead, Herts HP4 2AD.

Noticeboard

Darkroom access

CAMERAWORK is a photographic resource center in the East end of London and basically comprises of a gallery, extensive darkrooms and workshop facilities. They have recently designed a darkroom catering specifically for people with disabilities.

The working space is easily accessible and is large enough to accommodate two wheelchairs at one time. The darkroom equipment has similarly been adapted and to date this equipment consists of a Beseler enlarger which can be adapted to variable heights, as can the developing surfaces, and the two sinks are also at a level suitable for wheelchairs.

On 19 September Camerawork are holding a day of talks and events, and, early in 1988 an exhibition centering around disability. They hope that this exhibition will not only highlight the need for facilities of the type they are offering, but will also help draw attention to how people with disabilities are represented in the media.

So far the darkroom facilities have been underused and Camerawork are trying to encourage more disabled people to come and use it.

Contact: Jacqui Duckworth, Camerawork, 121 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0QN. Tel 01 980 6256.

Britain's secret society

Over 40 people gathered in the Cornerhouse, Manchester, to hear BBC Secret Society Producer Brian Barr and Independent court correspondent Heather Mills discuss the problems journalists face as Britain drifts towards even greater secrecy.

"The NUJ has signally failed to encourage the right kind of journalism," said Brian Barr. Britain, he said, had some of the worst press in the world and he criticised both the NUJ and the Press Council for not taking a stronger line. Journalists must put more effort into looking for a critical angle, the alternative point of view and the difficult question.

"Everything that has happened since we started filming has validated the idea that Britain is a secret society." Journalists should take seriously their role as investigators. And when someone does so, other journalists should cheer more loudly.

In the USA, said the BBC Producer, there is a Freedom of Information Act—In Britain we have the Official Secrets Act. It was "absolutely impossible" to handle the necessary information without being in breach of Section Two.

Heather Mills of the Independent spoke more generally on the growing

tendency of secrecy in the courts. "High Court decisions affecting millions are held in secret," she said. And journalists have no right to challenge the judges decision.

She spoke of Winston Silcott who was out on bail at the time he killed again and had a long record. His bail application was held in secret. Nobody knew why or what the judge had been told. "That's a good example of why bail applications should not be held in secret."

Ninety-nine per cent of family division cases were held in secret. It was difficult to tell if there was any consistency between judges. One girl in care was ordered to have an abortion and to go on the pill against her parents' wishes. We don't know why.

A lot of the miners' strike actions and those relating to the Wapping dispute were held in secret.

During questions from the public, Brian Barr added: "Journalists have to make up their own mind what is a real secret and what is not. They shouldn't have to." He and Duncan Campbell had spent valuable time researching to ensure they would offer no real threat to national security. "Protheroe was told a load of rubbish and seemed to believe it."

On the Peter Wright allegations, Mills said: "Half the problem is that

You've read the book... now buy the record!

Ballad of a Spycatcher

Ballad of a Spycatcher – as performed at the CPBF public meeting in Conway Hall on 10 August

Written and performed by Leon Rossleson with Billy Bragg and the Oyster Band.

Price £2 + 50p p&p from CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London.

people like MI5 are left to decide for themselves what national security is." An investigation, she said, and permanent supervision were needed. "Judges," said Mills, "use the contempt of court act willy nilly and quite illegally."

Good news from the North West

1986-87 was a very busy year for the North-West CPBF and thanks to continued financial support from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, we have been able to strengthen our presence in Manchester. Here, NANCY JAEGER, the Campaign's full-time worker in the North-West reports on the past year's activities.

There has been a distinct growth in our Right of Reply work during the year with a wide range of individuals and organisations requesting our advice.

Notably, we have helped the Viraj Mendis Campaign to take out complaints through the NUJ Ethics Council and the Director of Public Prosecutions against various newspapers for racist reporting.

We have also given assistance to Manchester City Council, The Green Party, Manchester Community Relations Council, CND, NGA, and a number of Constituency Labour Parties, and a number of individuals.

Granada's "This is Your Right" programme did a special on the Right of Reply with the

NW-CPBF, the Press Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

This brought in a number of people seeking advice, who may not have heard of the Campaign otherwise. We have also done programmes for BBC Radio Manchester and Piccadilly Radio during the year.

We have sold 120 Right of Reply Packs to people all over the North West, the pack now includes a poster with NW information and a Media Access card for the major local Radio, TV and Press outlets here.

We have held "How To Use The Media" events for the following groups: ASTMS, Labour Party, Action Line, Cornerhouse (twice), War on Want, Womens Health Team in North Manchester Health Authority,

and the Anti-Apartheid Group.

The short-lived hopes of many potential community radio stations were dashed when the government reneged on its commitment to establish deregulated community radio stations for an experimental period. Many local groups put in a lot of time, trouble and money into their applications for one of the North-West franchises. The NW-CPBF organised a meeting for all the applicants to discuss a co-ordinated approach and their plans of action in response to this blow.

Mike Jempson of the National CPBF came up to discuss the Media Manifesto with us, and during the year we have publicised it amongst our members, at meetings and have sent a few thousand copies to members of other organisations.

In the interests of letting the boys come out and play, we changed the Womens Group into the Equality Research Group. We then embarked

upon an ambitious project of analysing the different ways women and men are portrayed in newspaper photographs.

We consulted Dr Tony Manstead at the Dept of Psychology at Manchester University to ensure that our analysis had empirical credibility.

However, we obviously bit off more than we could chew and found it very difficult to co-ordinate the data collection and analysis, we have now whittled down our survey and are in the process of finishing the last stages.

The report will be published in the next couple of months.

We have recently established a new Lesbian and Gay group and nine people came to the first meeting in April, and we are finally getting a Black group off the ground in consultation with black journalists in Manchester.

The NW membership is slowly growing, we have gained approximately 50 new affiliates throughout the year.

This report is an edited version of the North-West Campaign Annual Report for 1986-87.

Green Paper confused and weak says NUJ

The National Union of Journalists has criticised the Government's Green Paper on Radio for its failure to respond to the opportunities offered by technology of extending radio's public service role. Instead it finds the Green Paper 'confused in its purpose, weak on evidence and lacking in knowledge of the industry.'

The NUJ accuses the Government of a narrow doctrinaire approach and of failing to give adequate attention to research which shows that listeners place great store by radio's public service function.

One major area of concern is the future of BBC radio, currently funded from the TV licence. The Green Paper is vague about future revenue, envisioning the BBC carrying most of the responsibility for public service programming but with fewer and fewer resources and against growing competition.

The uncertainty over the BBC's future is already having its impact on morale and standards with a steady haemorrhaging of expertise from all levels of the corporation.

Keep licence fee Hurd told

The replacement of the licence fee by subscription could exclude half of the viewing population from access to television a new report published on 9 July concludes.

The report, by the consultants Communications Studies and Planning International, was commissioned by the Home Office in October last year. CSP were asked to look at the economic and technical implications of the Peacock Report's proposals.

CSP argue that the demand for pay TV is high enough to support the introduction of services by existing broadcasting organisations. They recommend three possible approaches.

The preferred option would be the creation of an entirely new channel in addition to the existing four which would be entirely given over to subscription. Failing this the report suggests using the currently unused hours on BBC2 and Channel 4 to 'offload' new films and

The Green Paper's proposals for the funding of new commercial networks from advertising the NUJ describes as a 'pipe dream'. Both Independent Local Radio and Cable TV have failed to provide evidence of a pool of advertising waiting to be mopped up.

On the contrary many local stations are struggling because of falling advertising revenues and have been cutting staff and news services.

The NUJ also warn that market forces alone cannot guarantee the maintenance of high standards and are in fact a recipe for 'lowest common denominator' broadcasting. The supervisory structures proposed will be too weak to prevent increasing monopoly ownership which, the NUJ says, will almost certainly be the consequence of the unfettered operation of market forces.

At the level of community radio, groups with a genuine community interest are likely to be squeezed out by entrepreneurs concerned principally with radio as an advertising medium.

other 'premium items' onto domestic video recorders.

This second approach they argue would, however, be unlikely to totally satisfy demand so a third option would be to give over some of BBC2's existing air time to subscription.

Recognising the 'non-measurable' value of the BBC's public service role the report opposes the wholesale introduction of subscription to BBC2. The ideal solution would be to raise the licence fee to allow additional programmes to be made available to all consumers, the report says.

Pay-TV is expected to attract subscribers from around 30% of households.

The CSP report advises a gradual approach to the introduction of subscription TV and recommends retaining existing sources of revenue. The Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, has described the report as 'likely to stimulate a lively debate.'

Subscription Television is published by HMSO, price £9.50.

'There is little hope for many of the hopeful community stations that applied for licences under the Government's original community radio scheme,' the NUJ warns.

The conditions laid down by the Green Paper mean that many smaller audiences within Britain are unlikely to be served by radio or have access to air time.

This situation will be reinforced by the proposed exclusion from the airwaves of community stations funded either in whole or in part by local authorities, trades unions or other 'pressure groups'. The Green Paper does not consider the possibility that commercial organisations could have 'political interests' of their own.

This means in effect that the Government will offer licenses to its most likely allies and censor its most likely critics.

The NUJ say in conclusion: 'There is a strong possibility that by... 1996, many of the BBC's broadcasting functions will have been dispersed to the private sector, and that 'independent' radio will be in the hands of a small number of private companies, many of which will also control other aspects of the broadcast and printed media.'

Other views...

The Association of Independent Radio Contractors (AIRC) have come out against any form of national commercial radio reflecting the fears of smaller stations that increased competition could threaten their survival when times are already hard.

The AIRC argue instead for a softly, softly approach with ILR stations being allowed to benefit from an easing of regulation first followed by the controlled introduction of other stations over a period of time.

The Cable Authority, which the Green Paper proposes should be given responsibility for supervising commercial radio, supports the call for less regulation. The Authority also suggests abandoning restrictions on cross-media ownership.

The Community Radio Association (CRA) criticises the Government for its failure to distinguish between commercial radio and genuine community radio.

The ins and outs of the Wright affair

As *Spycatcher* tops the best sellers list in the US and as newspapers in Britain find ways around the injunction, the Government's attempts to stifle the former MI5 agent's memoirs appear more absurd by the day.

The entire British media is now united against the Government. The BBC gives out South African style announcements about news of the Wright affair being prepared under censorship and the Sunday Times has called the lawlords' injunction 'one of the most serious threats to press freedom in Britain in peace time'.

But what is the brouhaha, as Jonathan Aitken and others have called it, all about?

The Government's attempts to suppress the publication of the book in Britain are nothing to do with any threat that the content might pose to national security. Most of Wright's book concerns his conviction that Roger Hollis, head of MI5 from 1956 to 1965 was a Soviet spy. The bulk of the evidence is already in the public domain as has been demonstrated by newspapers quoting from Chapman Pincher, Nigel West and a Granada TV programme broadcast in 1984.

The 14 August edition of Peace News includes a special supplement on the Wright affair in which are published extracts from *Spycatcher* in defiance of the Lord's injunction.

The Peace News collective decided to deliberately breach the injunction because they believe it is necessary to 'assert our basic freedom to communicate'. The Law Lord's ruling, they say, 'is a totally unacceptable infringement of that freedom.'

The argument about Hollis advanced by Wright is no more conclusive than these previous claims and Wright himself admits as much. All we have in the end to fall back on is Wright's 'instinct' for such matters, the result of years of work in the security service.

Hollis died in 1973 and it is almost certainly too late now to discover the truth. We will probably never know whether the suspected mole in MI5 ever existed.

'It must be seriously doubted that the content of the book ever raised issues of national security.'

Wright spent a good part of his working life in MI5 mole hunting. He is not a man to expose genuine national security to risk. There is nothing in the book which touches on the period after 1975 and nothing which would compromise the legitimate activities of the service today.

Indeed, it is no doubt partly because there is no issue of security involved that the national press finds this an easy cause to champion.

So if it is not national security, could it be the 'principle', that MI5 officers owe a lifetime of loyalty, which the Government is still seeking to establish?

Again it is difficult to see how this argument holds. The prosecution of the issue so far has provided *Spycatcher* with the best possible sales promotion

its author could have hoped for. It is very hard to see why a system of vetting memoirs, as in the US, could not operate here.

The most interesting parts of *Spycatcher* are those which are incidental to the main argument about Hollis. Wright has given us a valuable glimpse of security from the mid-fifties to the mid-seventies from the 'inside'. In so doing he draws a disturbing picture of illegal activities against other countries, both friendly and hostile, and against the civilian population in Britain.

Wright makes no apologies for these actions, indeed he clearly relished them.

Undoubtedly the most serious allegation made in the book concerns the plot to destabilise the Labour Government

in 1974. Allegations about a plot were made by Wilson at the time. Wright confirms these claims and adds disturbing evidence of the scale of the conspiracy.

'The content of Spycatcher is quite irrelevant'

But even the revelations in these sections of the book fail to provide a rationale for the Government's actions. The reason for this is that in a very real sense the content of *Spycatcher* is quite irrelevant.

In 1979 soon after coming to office the Thatcher Government introduced the Protection of Official Information Bill designed to tighten up on secrecy. Amongst other things the Bill proposed new categories of protected information

relating to security and intelligence. Any unauthorized publication would be an offence, regardless of whether or not it would cause serious injury to national security and regardless of whether the information had already been published elsewhere.

In the event, the Bill was abandoned before its second reading because, with the unmasking of Anthony Blunt, MP's and journalists woke up to the implications of what was being proposed. But the thinking behind the bill remains the guiding light of Government actions in this area.

The prosecutions of Tisdall and Poynting, widespread misuse of the Contempt of Court Act, the new restrictions on what Councils can and can't say, the intimidation of the BBC, the banning of Zircon, police seizures of film and the

hounding of individual journalists are all of a piece.

With new secrecy legislation promised, a remodelled version of the 1979 Bill is likely soon to appear before us again. But this time there may not be a Blunt to stop it in its tracks.

A limited number of copies of *Spycatcher* are available through the CPBF office price £25 inclusive of postage and packing.

Report on News on Sunday held over to next issue

'Time to make a stand' says Benn

On 2 August at the CPBF's invitation, Mr Tony Benn MP read extracts from *Spycatcher* at Speakers Corner as a challenge to the Government's attempts to suppress the book. While the national media carried pictures of Mr Benn reading, none reported the main content of his speech. To do so contravenes the Law Lords injunction. The CPBF has decided to publish the text of the speech in the same spirit in which Mr Benn made it, as an act in the defence of freedom of the press in Britain.

"It was here in Hyde Park, that free speech was established over a hundred years ago, and we are meeting today in an attempt to prevent Ministers and the Judges from destroying our inherent, inalienable and ancient democratic rights.

"Mr Peter Wright has alleged in his book *Spycatcher* that certain public servants, working for the security services, have broken the law many times, and have even attempted to subvert an elected government, in which I, along with others, served as a Cabinet minister.

"But instead of investigating these allegations the Attorney-General has applied for, and won from the Judges, injunctions to prevent these reports of alleged illegalities from being published at all, and even the House of Commons has been inhibited from debating the issues on the grounds that they were sub judice.

"Let me quote now from the book

itself. On page 31 Hollis alleges: 'We did have fun. For five years we bugged and burgled our way across London at the State's behest, while pompous bowler-hatted civil servants in Whitehall pretended to look the other way.'

"On page 160 Hollis alleges: 'At the beginning of the Suez crisis, MI6 developed a plan, through the London Station to assassinate Nasser using nerve gas. Eden initially gave his approval to this operation...'

"On page 274 Hollis alleges that James Angleton of the American Central Intelligence Agency told him: 'We're going to have a beefed-up CIA London station, and half those officers are going to work directly inside MI5. We'll have access to everything'.

"Wright comments on this, on page 275, as follows: 'Angleton's ambitions were obvious: he wanted to swallow MI5 up whole, and use it as an Agency outpost.'

"On page 360 Mr Wright alleges: 'We had always been able to get material from the National Insurance records if we really wanted it. We had a couple of undercover officers posted up there who could be contacted for our files. But establishing a direct computer link was something completely different.'

"On page 364 Mr Wright reports: 'After Harold Wilson became Prime Minister in 1964, Angleton made a special trip to England to see FJ, who was then director of counter-espionage. Angleton came to offer us some very secret information from a source he would not name. This source alleged, according to Angleton, that Wilson was a Soviet agent.'

"And on page 366, he alleges that: 'once the Conservative Government came to power they began to take a great interest in the material as well. Victor (Lord Rothschild) often used to

complain about the quality of the intelligence reports No 10 received from F Branch. 'They pull their punches all the time' he would say. 'can't you give us something better?'

"And writing of the end of the Heath Government Mr Wright alleges: 'As events moved to their political climax in early 1974, with the election of the minority Labour Government, MI5 was sitting on information, which if leaked, would undoubtedly have caused a political scandal of incalculable consequences. The news that the Prime Minister himself was being investigated would at the least have led to his resignation. The point was not lost on some MI5 officers'.

"And on page 369 Mr Wright, dealing with the period after Labour was elected in 1974, spelled out his allegations in these words: 'The plan was simple. In the run-up to the election which, given the level of instability in Parliament, must be due within a matter of months, MI5 would arrange for selective details of the intelligence about leading Labour Party figures, but especially Wilson, to be leaked to sympathetic pressmen.'

'Using our contacts in the press and among union officials, word of the material contained in MI5 files, and the fact that Wilson was considered a security risk would be passed around. Soundings had already been taken, and up to thirty officers had given their approval to the scheme. Facsimile copies of some files were to be made and distributed to overseas newspapers, and the matter was to be raised in Parliament for maximum effect. It was a carbon copy of the Zinoviev letter, which had done so much to destroy the first Ramsay MacDonald Government in 1928. (sic) 'We'll have him out' said one of them, 'this time we'll have him out'.

"And on page 372 Mr Wright comments: 'Shortly afterwards Wilson re-

signed. As we always used to say in the office 'Politicians may come and go, but the security service goes on forever.'

"Those then are just a few of the quotations from Mr Wright's book, in which he makes a large number of very serious allegations.

"If any of them are true MI5 officers were incited to break the law, have broken the law, did attempt, with CIA help, to destroy an elected government, and any responsible Prime Minister should have instructed the police to investigate, with a view to prosecution, and the Courts should have convicted and sentenced those found guilty.

"The charge which the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Law Officers, the Police, have to face is that they have all betrayed their public trust, and the Judges who have upheld them are in clear breach of Article One of the Bill of Rights of 1689.

"For if ministers can arbitrarily suspend the law, and claim that issues of confidentiality, or national security, justify a ban on publication; and if the Judges issue an injunction, there could be no limit to the suppression of any information which might embarrass any government.

"I have come here today, first as a citizen, but also as an elected member of parliament, a privy councillor and a member of the committee of privileges of the House of Commons to warn that we cannot, and should not, accept this restriction of our liberty.

"All the democratic rights, which we enjoy in Britain, including the right to worship as we wish, and to free speech, were won by popular struggle, often by those who defied the law on conscientious grounds, and were punished for their actions.

"The time has come when those who believe in Freedom, Democracy and Justice must make a stand."