

**CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM**

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

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**NANCY JAEGER BACK**

Nancy Jaeger, CPBF North-West Organiser, is now back at work after an unexpected absence of two months due to sickness. Now that she has returned to the office events in the area will begin to pick up again.

Nancy leaves the Campaign on 15 January next year. Applications for the vacancy closed on 23 November. An announcement of a successor will be made in due course.

**PUBLIC MEETING**

The public meeting on the Concentration of Power and Control of the Media delayed by Nancy's absence will now take place on 15 December at 8.00 pm in the Cornerhouse, central Manchester. The speakers will be Mark Fisher MP, Shadow Minister for the Arts, Bill Nutting, Editor of News on Sunday at the time of its closure and

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Martin Spence from Trade Films in Newcastle and a member of the ACTT Bias in the Media Group.

**MEDIA RESEARCH TRUST**

Members who have a pay roll giving scheme operating at their place of work are reminded that the CPBF's Media Research Trust is a registered charity and as such is eligible to receive funds under the scheme.

Members whose employers do not yet provide facilities for pay roll giving should try to get one established. Under the arrangements which came into force earlier this year employees can give up to £120 tax free to a named charity. Details of how the scheme works can be obtained from the office.

**NEW BOOK PLANNED**

The National Council at its last meeting agreed to press ahead with plans for the joint publication with The Russell Press of a book by Frank Allaun on media reform. The book will look at specific measures which might be taken to encourage greater diversity and accountability in press and broadcasting.

A new pamphlet on broadcasting policy is also nearing completion and is likely to be published by the Campaign early next year.

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**WOMENS GROUP BENEFIT**

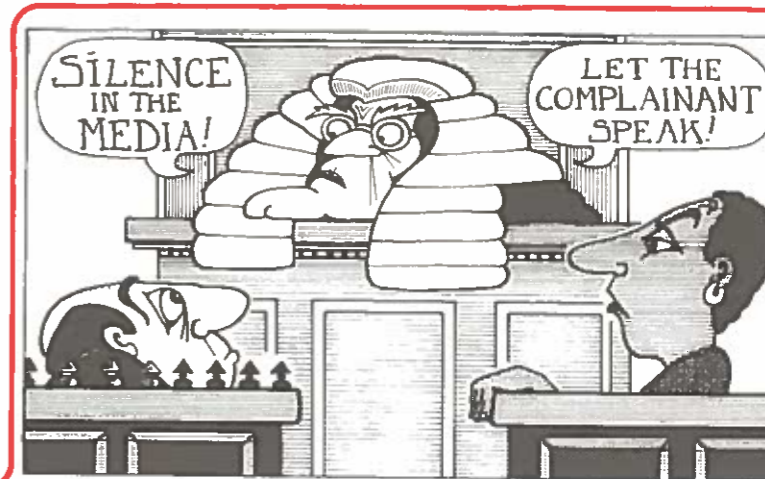
The Women's Group of CPBF has organised a benefit for 15 January at Chats Palace, Homerton High Street, E8 (Tel. 01 986 6714). The event will start at 8.00 pm and will feature Spare Tyre, Kate Portal and acapella artist Edwina Samson. Prices of tickets are: £3.50 waged, £2.50 unwaged.

**Edited for the National Council by SIMON COLLINGS.**  
 Copy for Free Press 45 should reach the Campaign office by 10 January.

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JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

No. 44 December 1987



**Right of reply could be law**

**Ann Clwyd's Private Member's Bill on Unfair Reporting and the Right of Reply gets its second reading on 5 February and CPBF is mounting a major campaign to build cross party support for the proposed legislation.**

The Bill will give members of the public the right to reply to allegations made against them or to misreporting or misrepresentations about them in the press or in broadcasting. It also extends, for the first time, legal aid to actions for defamation.

Key to the proposed legislation is the establishment of a Media Complaints Commission which will draw its membership from as broad and representative a sample of the population as possible.

The Media Complaints Commission

will be an independent body funded by the tax payer. It will be empowered to require newspapers and the broadcast media to provide space for a right of reply where this is deemed to be warranted. The Council will receive complaints from the public in the same way that the Press Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission do currently.

Ann Clwyd is drafting the section of the Bill dealing with libel law while CPBF has taken on responsibility for drawing up detailed proposals for the Media Complaints Commission. In drafting this section the National Council will be looking at the experiences of other countries as well as at other bodies in the UK such as the Advertising Standards Authority.

The final version of the Bill will be published on 20 January and the

press launch will be followed by a public meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square in central London. A Green Paper based on the Bill is being issued on 10 December.

Letters have already gone out to MPs outlining the proposals in the Bill and seeking their support. CPBF members can help by lobbying their local MP and by making sure their union is contacting sponsored MPs or MPs who are union members.

CPBF has also put out a standard letter to local newspapers, from Ann Clwyd, asking for members of the public to contact her with their experiences of misreporting where a right of reply would have been appropriate.

Again CPBF supporters can help by gathering examples and sending them to Ann Clwyd.

*Continued p.3*

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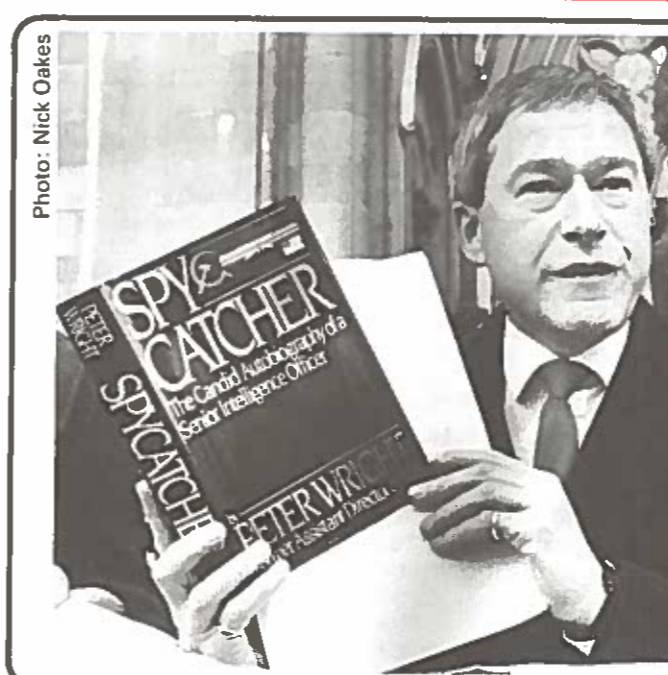


Photo: Nick Oakes

**Spy book protest as trial opens**

Tony Banks MP joined a number of CPBF supporters in a protest outside the High Court in the Strand as the Guardian and Observer Spycatcher trial opened on 23 November. The demonstration involved the reading of extracts from the book and the distribution of leaflets protesting at the book's ban.

As well as challenging the Government's actions over Spycatcher the leaflet also referred to another case at the Old Bailey where the Observer, Independent, Mail on Sunday, ITN, Thames Television and a number of freelance photographers were contesting an application by the Police Complaints Authority for the release of unpublished film of events at Wapping on 24 January 1987.

CPBF Chair Tony Lennon said: 'Both cases underline the total lack of regard which the present Government has for the principles of independence in the media.'

This year's Festival was entitled **Television Fights Back**, and if ever there was an appropriate title this was it.

Things started well enough with a stimulating MacTaggart lecture from Philip Whitehead who stated that the broadcasting system has never been under such sustained attack as at present, whether from 'the hidden hand of the market, the mailed fist of the government', or the latter's vociferous allies in the press.

He singled out for special opprobrium those proprietors who used their papers to further their own considerable broadcasting interests.

Behind the press leitmotif that television is elitist, out of touch, marooned in the Sixties, 'peopled by poseurs in sharp suits and pointy headed perverts and pinkoes' Whitehead discerned 'the brute strength of the argument of consumer sovereignty', the idea that television's only business should be the maximising of audiences even if this means wall-to-wall Dallas.

He warned against the temptation to give in, to turn programme into product, and to self-censor in the face of government pressure and press-inspired moral panics. Instead it was time to go back to the 'copybook headings', to engage in dispassionate enquiry along the Annan lines and to examine how regulated diversity can best be fostered and protected.

### Press

The first debate gave the press — in the shape of David Montgomery (Today), John Lees

# Fight back fails to materialise

by Julian Petley

(the Standard) and Bruce Anderson (Sunday Telegraph) — the chance to have a go at television.

The gist of Montgomery's and Lee's complaints was that television doesn't give viewers enough choice, that the system is monopolistic, and generally exhibits the paranoid characteristics of a dinosaur that knows its days are numbered. Perhaps surprisingly, Anderson exhibited a nostalgia for the Reith era and pronounced the free market a regrettable necessity, but even he ended by accusing the BBC of a lack of sharp thinking and intellectual rigour, and of a tendency to whinge and whine.

What followed, however, was not whingeing and whining but a lack of any kind of counter attack from anyone in the upper echelons of any of the broadcasting organisations. Not un-naturally their underlings kept pretty quiet too, and this set the pattern for most of the rest of the Festival.

Only Michael Kustow of Channel 4 really made any impact in the press debate, lambasting the trio on stage for accusing television of being biased and monopolistic when

in fact Fleet Street is far more guilty on both counts, and arguing that it is not television but the press that is, in reality, completely out of touch with large sections of opinion.

### Thatcher

The following debate was devoted to the Thatcher Years, and featured Tory MP's Roger Gale, Gerald Howarth and Richard Holt. Of these Gale was the most thoughtful and discussed possible ways of funding the BBC in the future. Howarth returned to the theme that broadcasters were unaccountable, arrogant and out of touch.

They had a duty to the nation and were not fulfilling it: in particular there was too much violence on the news and too much adult material before the 9 o'clock watershed.

Richard Holt, one of the few Tory MPs from the North of England, was concerned with what he alleged was the broadcasters' anti-Tory bias, which seemed to include everything from Bruce Kent on the Wogan show to the use of words such as 'gay'.

Faced with the likes of Howarth and Holt the debate

should have been a walkover for the broadcasters. But not a bit of it — Greg Dyke had to be virtually dragged to his feet and made a very low key reply, although he did reaffirm that television's role is to question and attacked what he saw as the present government's increasing attempts to destabilise television — for example in the Real Lives affair, or Tebbit's complaint about the absence of positive trade figures on the news.

### Subdued

Birt's defence of traditional BBC values and its independence from government was even more subdued, and it was really left to Mark Fisher and Norman Buchan to warn that we must prepare ourselves now for the Broadcasting Bill and get our retaliation ready in advance. It's important to convince people that deregulation will mean less, not more, choice, and to point out that the armed frontier between government and broadcasters is being pushed further back by the day.

Unfortunately this sense of urgency seemed almost entirely absent from those who should have been the most concerned. Even the expected fireworks in the debate about bias in drama between Ken Todd and Ian Curteis failed to materialise, and everyone settled down in the end to agree that what we all readily need is 'good drama', whatever that may be.

But I can tell you one thing — it certainly wasn't to be found at this year's tv festival, the provocative rubric notwithstanding.

felt to be a rather negative analysis of the position for women as writers and Deborah for some of the comments she made about the rather unusual positions different characters had taken in her books.

We discussed the place of fantasy and romance in our lives — and whether Mills and Boon was damaging as 'literature' or readily available harmless escapism.

The question of what we want out of fiction (or non fiction) was raised — some women felt they looked for affirmation of their own experience, while others felt literature had made a real difference to their lives and they had learnt a great deal through the books they had read, it had changed them.

The counter argument to this was that it took far more than a book to bring about change in oneself or in life in general.

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some of the biggest newspapers led the stampede by the "Independent" publications to do the government's bidding and to crawl when asked only to bend. The numerous working journalists who went to jail during the Emergency found no big publishers there for company.

A further problem of the "privately-owned" vs. "state-controlled" non-debate is that of censorship. We believe that censorship is an issue of critical importance to the media and precisely for this reason, seek to discuss it shorn of the familiar shibboleths that so impede its understanding. For instance, while the state has time and again resorted to censorship, we do not believe that censorship is solely a weapon

## Chinese people find a voice

*Publishing ventures outside of the mainstream don't have to lead to failure as is demonstrated by SiYu. Based in Manchester's thriving Chinatown and published in both English and Chinese SiYu (Silk Words) has grown since its inception in 1984 from a mimeographed A5 booklet available free around the North West, to a full size nationally distributed magazine.*

*All this has been accomplished on a shoestring budget, by a minimal part-time staff (five Chinese, four White), only one of whom has had previous journalistic experience. The magazine's range of enquiry is wide, encompassing events in Hong Kong and mainland China as well as reflecting Chinese life in Britain.*

*Issue No. 19 of SiYu reports on racism and immigration cases, as well as carrying a wealth of material on contemporary Chinese cultural activity.*

## Notices

### FILMS DE FEMMES

The International Women Directors' Film Festival will celebrate its tenth anniversary in Créteil (in the suburbs of Paris) between 12 and 20 March 1988.

The organisers say they intend to make this an exceptionally wide-ranging event and want to take the opportunity to illustrate the extraordinary development of the rôle of women in our societies by paying tribute to their increasingly important body of work in film art.

The Festival's programme will contain 3 sections:

□ The Competition, made up of 15 full-length fiction films (2 prizes); 15 full-length documentaries (2 prizes); and 30 short films (2 prizes).

□ The Retrospective of an important modern soviet woman director, Kira Muratova.

of the state. *It is as much — often more — the privilege of the proprietor.* The maximum amount of censorship transpires long before the government comes into the picture — in the news-rooms.

To develop into a forum for working journalists constitutes the raison d'être of CounterMedia, and we appeal to fellow professionals to actively participate, to contribute articles, letters and suggestions, to help make this bulletin a broader forum of their own. We prefer to avoid taking any advertisements, and for this reason, appeal to

## Street fighting men

Were the streets of Wapping used as a testing ground for a new generation of para-military police tactics? It certainly felt like it during the News International dispute — but it's a question likely to remain unanswered by the authorities.

In 'A Case to Answer' the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers present the evidence of pickets, protestors and passersby on the night of 24 January 1987, when the first anniversary of the dispute became a police riot.

Succinct and heavily illustrated, it paints an horrendous picture of gratuitous violence and military style manoeuvres. Press photographers were amongst the first to feel the full weight of the Metropolitan Riot Police — the Morning Star's Earnie Greenwood ended up in hospital with a broken arm after being trampled by a charging horse. Even the local residents march got a hammering.

Trade Union calls for a public enquiry have fallen on deaf ears. This report strengthens the case for a full investigation. Can we expect anything more

fellow mediapersons to assist this venture through subscriptions, donations and other material help.

There are numerous professionals actively involved in building CounterMedia. Given the state of freedom in some of the organisations they work for, these journalists cannot openly associate with even a bulletin of their own profession, and cannot, therefore, be named here. They are, however, very much a part of CounterMedia.'

For further details write to the Editor, P. Sainath, 24/26 Bomanji Lane, off Gunbow St. Fort, Bombay 400-001, India.

than an anodyne whitewash from the Police Complaints Authority? It's unlikely — so read the evidence yourselves.

Mike Jempson

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□ The Self-portrait of a French actress.

For further details write to: Festival International de Créteil, Maison des Arts, Place Salvador Allende, 94000 Créteil, France.

### COMMUNITY RADIO TRAINING

Issue 19 of the community radio magazine, Relay, is 8 pages of printed news, reviews and listings accompanied by a supplement on tape. Short features on developments in Ireland, the Third World Conference of Community Broadcasters in Nicaragua in 1988 and radio news services for women's material in the US and Australia are included in the printed pages.

Featured on the tape is an illustrated talk on radio resources for training. Issues about training and the accessibility of radio skills are looked at and tape extracts are taken from five training tapes just released by Relay Media Training. Areas

covered include interviewing, editing, scripting and presentation.

For further details contact Kenne Williamson on 01 274 4000 ext 312.

### NEW VIDEOS

Being White produced by Albany Video in association with the Federation of Community Work Training Groups looks at what it means to be white as a way in to anti-racism. Details from: Albany Video Distribution, The Albany, Douglas Way, London SE8 4AG.

Hotel London, Home and Dry? and Talking to a Brick Wall are three new videos on homelessness from the Board and Lodging Information Programme. For details contact Albany Video who are handling distribution.

Le Videographe is a video production and distribution centre based in Montreal, Canada. For a catalogue and other informants contact Le Videographe Inc., 4500 rue Garnier, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2J 3S6.

## Women writers' evening

by Pauline Illsley

GAIL CHESTER, a well known face around CPBF and co-editor of "In Other Words" introduced the seminar and the three women writers invited to speak.

Jo Stanley worked as a journalist on the "Morning Star" and is now involved in a women's writing group and is working on a play. She focussed on the problems women have being writers; especially their lack of confidence in themselves, in their work and in pushing their work forward for publication.

Gillian Slovo is a 'feminist' crime writer and is best known for her novels "Death by Analysis" and "Morbid Symptoms". Gillian described the

rocky road to being published and spoke of how she tried to create a female detective working within the context of a supportive network of friends, only to find that the friends kept getting in the way of the plot.

Deborah Moggach is a well established writer with seven books to her credit, she has also written for television. Deborah talked of the hazards of being a writer and a mother, although she emphasised that the demands of motherhood and the distractions of working at home could be turned to good effect by focussing your effort and broadening your experience.

Each of the speakers were challenged in different ways by women in the group; particularly Jo for what was

## Debate opens on the limits and dangers of legislation

# Civil rights or censorship?

by Julian Petley

### Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

I wish to express my concern regarding the prospect of a period of draconian television/cinema censorship. It seems that, after many years of campaigning, those who seek austere controls over the dramatic arts, in Britain, the European country which already has the heaviest censorship outside of the Eastern Bloc, are being taken seriously by those in power.

In the aftermath of the Hungerford Massacre, we all have a right to feel repulsed. However, predictably, this has brought back into the popular consciousness the simplistic violent film + unstable mind = killer assumptions, most loudly trumpeted in newspaper headlines.

Are these terrible events now going to serve as a cue for British TV companies and film censors to nervously capitulate to the wishes of our self-appointed moral majority?

The government attitudes to the censorship lobby appears, at the very least to be overwhelmingly favourable. Gerald Howarth's bill to put television under the power of the Obscene Publications Act looks likely to become law, albeit amended in an attempt to make its vague, inconsistent framework seem practical. Mr. Howarth has said, I believe, that his bill has a mandate from the British public. As he should know, his party has won the last couple of elections on a small number of very specific issues, probably the greatest being the prospect of tax cuts for the higher paid. The legendary person in the street may claim to be concerned about violence and sex on the television when confronted with an opinion poll and loaded questions. However, when those same people consider the implications of this Bill, many will realise how condescendingly they are being treated, albeit probably too late.

Of course it is possible to eradicate all violence from all drama in this country, thereby making much of it lame and toothless, lacking in the conflict that it needs as a central pivot. But in doing so, you will not succeed in eradicating violence from human nature at all. That, in itself, may be an impossibility. Paul Woods, London E17

The desirability of legislation banning topless models from the daily press was the subject of a recently initiated debate at a CPBF National Council meeting. A number of different points were raised by the participants and these clearly need to be discussed at much greater length.

The debate was kicked off by Kathy Itzin, a member of the NCCL Women's Rights Committee and Women's Rights Officer for Brent Council. Acknowledging a debt to Andrea Dworkin's 'Men Possessing Women' and Susan Griffin's 'Pornography and Silence' she argued that there is a continuum from advertisements which exploit women to hard core pornography.

She then went on to attempt to disengage legislation against exploitative images of women from the context of debates about obscenity, putting them instead in the context of sex discrimination and civil rights legislation.

From this point of view pornography and other forms of exploitative and degrading imagery became a matter of the violation of women's civil rights. According to Itzin the attraction of this approach lies in its by-passing of the obscenity issue, and thus making it more difficult for the Right to hi-jack and recuperate feminist arguments against pornography.

She concluded by pointing out that Andrea Dworkin has already drafted legislation along these lines in the States, and the debate which this has engendered is shortly to be published by Everywoman in this country.

Clare Short, who has already tried to bring in an anti-Page Three Bill, talked of the enormous amount of support she had received, particularly after the behaviour of the 'juvenile, distorted, unhealthy males' on the Tory benches who defeated it.

She agreed with Kathy Itzin that the Right cynically uses feminist arguments in its various censorious crusades, but also felt that the question of exploitative imagery could not be dealt with entirely by legislation.

In particular, she felt that it was very important to disentangle the

Page Three issue from 'the wider, Right-inspired censorship issues', such as the Tory determination to bring TV under the Obscene Publications Act. If this wasn't done she feared that many women might support dangerous Right-inspired censorship proposals simply because they were so fed up with degrading images littered across the press.

Mandy Merck from the Society for Education in Film and Television vehemently disagreed that legislation on the Dworkin model could not be hi-jacked by the Right, and pointed out that in the States it was actually supported by some groups on the Right and opposed by some on the Left.

Stuart Marshall then pointed out that it is gay people who are usually at the sharp end of any kind of censorship legislation, and are thus wary of supporting any measures of this kind. To these arguments Clare Short replied that the Left seems to be unable to address the rage that many women now feel when they look at the images around them.

This leaves them vulnerable to siren voices from the Right, who disguise their repressive intentions behind feminist-sounding rhetoric. According to Clare Short the Left needs to re-think the whole notion of obscenity legislation, and to stop the Right setting the agenda in this area.

Simon Watney, from the Terence Higgins Trust, then returned to Dworkin whom he termed 'marginal and sinister'. He suggested that the word 'pornography' had outlived its usefulness and should be dropped altogether. Instead we need to be far better informed about images and the way in which they work in the context of power, class and sexuality.

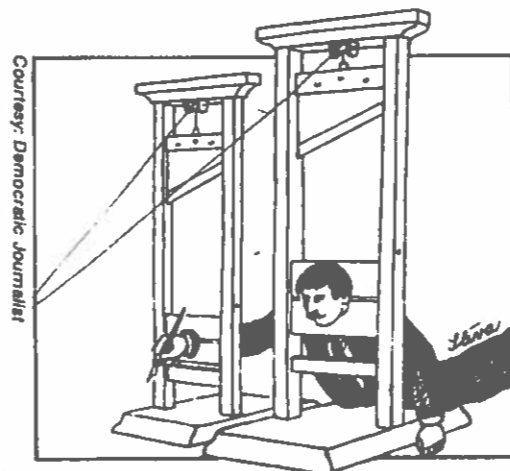
To talk about a continuum between advertisements and hard core pornography was nonsense, and it was worrying that those who criticised Dworkin found themselves pilloried.

The National Council has now agreed to set up a sub-committee to explore this area further and to draw up proposals for legislative possibilities for future debate. Readers views would be welcome on this subject. Put your thoughts on paper and send them to the Campaign Office in London.

## New media campaign in India

A group of journalists in India have come together to produce a new, radical media magazine, Countermedia, with the aim of challenging some of the myths about their national media. What follows is a shortened version of the Editorial published in their first issue.

'CounterMedia is a bimonthly bulletin on journalist brought out by journalists. The proliferation of media that India has witnessed since the late 1970s, and the many alarming trends accompanying this uneven growth necessitate the careful study of our



Courtesy: Democratic Journalist

profession and its social impact from within. Such study will be a purpose central to our existence.

CounterMedia will address itself to the emerging culture of the Indian media and its problems, as these originated, as they exist now. We do not presume to posture as "leaders" or as "educators" of other mediapersons. What we would like to do is to interpret our journalistic experience in the company of fellow professionals, within an independent Indian context.

CounterMedia proceeds on the understanding that the dominant sections of the Indian media, still steeped in a colonial culture, are incapable of tackling these problems with an approach

that is at once both scientific and honest. We believe that the thrust towards transforming a narrow, decadent Indian media culture into a vigorous one alive to the experience and aspirations of the Indian people, cannot come from proprietors concerned more with profits than with people, or from advertisers willing to generate the worst ethics to boost their products. We believe that such a thrust can only come from the working journalists of this country.

CounterMedia's own, limited ambition within this process, however, is to establish that independent and alternative approaches to the pressing media problems of our time do exist and can be implemented; that communal bias and other chauvinisms can and must be exposed.

CounterMedia is openly and unequivocally committed to the ideal of a New Information Order, not only internationally, but very much within India as well. Even while our major emphasis will be on developments and problems

within the Indian media — and information — scene, an integrated national-international focus becomes inescapable given the extent of the Indian media's domination by the transnational media.

Too often, even our media's concepts of "ethics" consists of standard clichés from Western media personalities, hastily borrowed, half digested. The idea that something constitutes an ethic because Lord Beaverbrook thought it did in 1928, or because the American Society of Newspaper Editors thinks it does today, is typical of this phenomenon.

Media mythology is many-faced and often contradictory. It manages, for instance, to combine the notion of 'hard-hitting' and 'fearless' journalism with the myths of neutral and 'value-free journalism'. Perhaps the most enduring of all these myths is the equation of 'free' and 'independent' and 'quality' media with privately-owned media.

Taken further, this myth implies that the bigger and more powerful the privately-owned organisation, the more independent and fearless it will be. What is the Indian experience? During the political Emergency of 1975-77,

Continued p.7

## US newsletter launched

FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) — CPBF's sister organisation in the States — has begun producing a monthly newsletter. The first issue of the new publication, called Extra!, appeared in June.

The newsletter provides a critique of US media bias, questioning the 'objectivity' of mainstream news sources through analysis of current news coverage, as well as exposing the links between news organisations, rightwing groups and the security establishment.

The August/September issue includes extensive material on the Iran/Contra affair, Nicaragua and the Arias Peace Plan. It also includes articles on the Unification Church — whose media assets include the Washington Times (Reagan reads it every day), on the strike by members of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET) at NBC and an advertisers' boycott of TV in Florida in protest at state taxes.

The back page carries a brief profile of 97 year old George Seldes whose

memoirs, *Witness to a Century*, have just been published by Ballantine Books. Described by the American journalist I.F. Stone as 'the dean and granddaddy of us investigative reporters' Seldes, amongst many others things, edited an early forerunner of Extra!

This weekly newsletter, In Fact, was started in 1940 and described itself as the 'first regular publication in the world devoted to press criticism'. During its ten year life, circulation rose to over 175,000 before the publication was red baited to death, as Postal Service employees warned subscribers that the FBI was compiling their names.

A UK subscription to Extra! costs \$36. Cheques should be made payable to FAIR and sent to 666 Broadway, Suite 400, New York, NY 10012, USA.

FAIR was set up in 1986 by a group of US journalists to provide a counterweight to the rightwing organisation Accuracy in Media (AIM) — see Free Press 39.

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This is the third attempt to introduce legislation since 1983. The last time round Austin Mitchell's Ten Minute Right of Reply Bill was defeated by only two votes at its second reading. Supporters of the Clwyd Bill hope that this time enough support can be generated to get the Bill into Committee stage.

A bank account has been opened for donations in support of the Bill. Cheques should be made out to 'Right of Reply Campaign' and sent to Ann Clwyd at the House of Commons. Funds are needed desperately to pay for the campaigning and lobbying activities being undertaken around the Bill.

# New moves to gag local authorities

When Part II of the Local Government Bill 1986 was being debated in the House of Lords, the Government suffered two defeats — on the definition of political publicity and on the Code of Practice on publicity.

When the Bill returned to the House of Commons in March 1986 the Government declared their intention to reverse both these defeats at a later date. Clause 26 of the 1987 Bill, which is currently being debated, now seeks to do just this.

## Publicity

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 states:

"(1) A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

(2) In determining whether material falls within the prohibition

(a) regard shall be had to whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party, and

(b) where material is published as part of a campaign, regard shall be had to the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve.

(3) A local authority shall not give financial or other assistance to a person for the publication of material which the authority are prohibited by this section from publishing themselves."

As it stands this section means that a local authority cannot give a grant to a voluntary organisation to pay for publicity material which is designed to affect support for a political party. Clause 26(1) in Part IV of the 1987 Bill aims to clarify this definition in three important respects.

However, in each case the amendments relate to sub-section (2) of the 1986 Act rather than to the main prohibition on political publicity which remains unaltered in sub-section (1). DoE officials argue that the basic test of what constitutes political publicity remains the same as that in the Local Government Act 1986 — that is the test of 'apparent design'. They said that what the 1987 Bill sets out to do is to clarify the factors to be taken into account when applying that test.

The revised sub-section (2) of the 1986 Act proposed by Clause 26 (1) of the 1987 Bill is as follows:—

"(2) In determining whether material falls within the prohibition, regard shall be had to the content and style of the material, the time and other circumstances of publication and the likely effect on those to whom it is directed and, in particular, to the following matters:

(a) whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another;

(b) where the material is part of a campaign, the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve."

The three passages in italics are the amendments to the 1986 Act.

The whole of the new sub-section (2) is intended to represent a 'checklist' of the factors which a local authority should take into account in deciding whether publicity material falls within the prohibition.

DoE officials say that the purpose of the 'checklist' is to clarify the prohibition rather than to strengthen it. Nor is the checklist meant to set down ab-

solute criteria for determining what constitutes political publicity.

For example, the fact that publicity material refers to a political party does not, per se, mean the material falls within the prohibition. What it does mean is that in these circumstances the local authority needs to be particularly careful to ensure that the material is not "designed to affect support" for that particular party.

## Code of practice

When the 1986 Act was debated in the House of Lords the status of the Code of Practice which is to be issued by the DoE to local authorities was changed from being mandatory to being only advisory. Clause 26 (2) of the 1987 Bill reverses this decision by stating that the words "for the guidance" in Section 4 of the Act are to be replaced by "and local authorities shall have regard to the provisions of any such code in coming to any decision on publicity."

The significance of this change very much depends on what the Code says. The latest draft issued by DoE has one particularly disturbing paragraph (8) which explicitly rules out 'controversial' publicity material. This, coupled with the changes outlined above, is likely to make local authorities extremely cautious about funding any publicity material which touches on policy matters or current issues of debate.

## Implications

When the 1986 Act was being debated in the House of Commons Committee in December 1985, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Mrs Angela Rumbold, said: "the bill is not designed to impose new restrictions on the activities of voluntary organisations from putting their views on issues of political controversy, or from campaigning on them. We seek only to prevent ratepayers' money being used by voluntary organisations for purposes that the authority itself will be prohibited from doing under Clause 2(1)".

It is hard to read Clause 26 of the 1987 Bill and still feel confident about Mrs Rumbold's assurances. CPBF shares the concern of NCVO that the amendments will be used by over-cautious or unsympathetic local authorities as a reason for not funding any publicity material issued by voluntary organisations. For example, a considerable amount of such material does "promote or oppose a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another."

DoE officials acknowledge this but point out that this does not make such material illegal — it simply means that voluntary organisations need to be careful what they say on any questions of political controversy.

Source: National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

# Local heroes

Fourteen NUJ members at the Finchley Advertiser are on official and indefinite strike after an act of blatant victimisation by their management. The journalists are fighting to preserve local news content in the paper which is part of the Advertiser North London Group owned by Morgan Grampian Local Newspapers.

The dispute started when six of the NUJ members were 'made redundant' at a meeting called to resolve a previous victimisation.

The management claim that the 'redundancies' are due to economic reasons. The union says this claim is nonsense. The company is indisputably highly profitable. It simply objects to the chapel defending editorial standards.

The Father of the Chapel, Andrew Wilson, has written to the Prime Minister, who opened the Advertiser office two years ago, in an attempt to generate some debate in the Commons.

The Advertiser North London Group also publishes titles in Barnet, Hendon, Edgware, Hampstead, Enfield and Haringey. These titles have all been affected by increased use of syndicated copy to the detriment of local coverage.

The strikers are inviting residents in these areas to ring Mr Steeden, Editor of the Advertiser group, to tell him what they think of his non-newspapers. The number is 01 449 5577.

# Star condemns film

"A Prayer for the Dying", the opening film in the 31st London Film Festival, which started on 11 November, has been condemned by its leading actor Micky Rourke, and its producer Mike Hodges.

They claim that the film has been edited to give a distorted and stereotyped view of the situation in Northern Ireland and the Irish nationalist cause.

Rourke said: 'Director Mike Hodges and I have publicly disassociated ourselves from the film "A Prayer for the Dying". It is not the film I had agreed to make or wanted to make.

I believe the politics of the subject matter intimidated the producer, Sam Goldwyn, who removed the footage of my character that contained state-



● Ken Livingstone MP joins pickets with the CPBF banner outside the Advertiser Group offices.

Dear Prime Minister,

You may recall that two years ago you opened the offices of the Advertiser North London Group which publishes the Finchley Advertiser in your constituency as well as six titles in neighbouring districts.

You were quoted then as saying that community newspapers were 'about lots of local news and then lots of good news features', and at the time the management evidently agreed.

This is no longer the case, however, since in early November, six of its journalists were sacked in a particularly brutal manner. They were given two hours to get off the premises.

Management have stated that their redundancies will be followed by the

publication of a different sort of editorial product, not filled with 'lots of local news' but with general interest syndicated features which have no particular local angle. Advertising in local papers, as on TV and radio, sponsors a valuable public amenity. There are institutions to protect broadcasting standards from commercial pressure but none for newspapers. We are currently defending those standards and have been sacked for doing so.

We urge you to put pressure on the Advertiser management and their parent company United Newspapers to reinstate the sacked journalists and honour their obligation to provide a public amenity in return for their profitable business activity in the area.

## 1987 STAFF APPEAL

The Campaign desperately needs another £7,000 to sustain its expanding workload over the coming year. Without the resources to employ staff the range of our activities will be seriously curtailed. If you are in work — why not make a monthly donation to assist the Campaign. Every little helps.

## BANKERS STANDING ORDER FORM

To the Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Bank (yours)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your account name \_\_\_\_\_

A/c \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay the Co-operative Bank plc, 1, Islington High Street, London N1 9TR (Code 08-09-33) for the account of The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (A/c No 50508701/50) the sum of: £ \_\_\_\_\_ (amount in figures) \_\_\_\_\_ (amount in words) on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of each month, from \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ month 1987, until countermanded by me.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to CPBF, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG

# Photographers under attack

The Police Complaints Authority is seeking a court order for the release of unpublished film of events outside News International's Wapping plant on 24 January 1987. The Authority claims that the material is needed by officers in the Northampton force who are investigating more than 100 complaints about Metropolitan Police behaviour on the night in question — the one year anniversary of the start of the Wapping dispute.

The court order, which is being sort under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, is being contested by the news organisations and by individual photographers involved.

They argue that giving the police access to unpublished film will compromise the independence of photographers and place them at greater risk when covering violent conflicts.

The CPBF National Council meeting in Bristol on 21 November condemned the police action. Bristol was the first place that a court order was granted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.