

**CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS
& BROADCASTING
FREEDOM**
*incorporating the Campaign
Against Racism in the Media &
the Television Users Group*

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AUTUMN COURSE

SW CPBF is putting on a ten week course called *Media Matters* at the Folk House Adult Education Institute in the centre of Bristol on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm. The course starts on 28 Sept. Participants will be encouraged to develop their interests in different aspects of the media by engaging in research and monitoring, and will consider issues such as sexism, racism, homophobia, disability and the media, and the implications of the Media Manifesto. There will be guest speakers from the press and broadcasting industries.

The course is free and open to all comers, but donations will be encouraged to pay for room hire and materials.

For more information write c/o Box 51, 37 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3PY or phone 0272 652341.

MEDIA STUDIES

A conference to be held at the Kelvin Conference Centre, Glasgow, from 23-25 September will address the major changes taking place in the institutional and academic circumstances of media, film, TV and communications studies in higher education.

'Redefinitions for the 1990s: Studying the Media in Higher Education', has been organised by BFI Education and is supported by the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, The John Logie Baird Centre and the Scottish Film Centre.

Conference and accommodation costs are £105, with ten places available at a reduced rate of £75 for students. For further details contact: Redefinitions Conference Secretary, BFI Education, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL.

YORKSHIRE/HUMBERSIDE GROUP

The new 'Sheffield' group whose formation was reported in the last Free Press should more properly have been referred to as the Yorkshire/Humberside regional CPBF group. The group is based in Sheffield but draws its support from a much wider area. It was set up following the 'Opening up or closing down - TV in the 1990s' conference held at Sheffield City Town Hall. For more information about the groups activities contact: Paula Moore, 16 Wigfull Road, Sheffield 11.

IRISH GROUP

A branch of the CPBF has now been established in Ireland. The officers are: Chair, Gerard Maclaughlin, an independent video maker and playwright; Secretary, Fiona Barber, an academic who teaches at the University of Ulster; and Treasurer, Gerard Duffy, who is a traditional Irish musician and civil servant.

The group plan to carry out research into media coverage of recent events in Northern Ireland.

HOME OFFICE MEETING

Ann Clwyd MP, CPBF Chair Tony Lennon and National Secretary Wendy Moore, met Home Office Minister Timothy Renton on 5 July to discuss the provisions of the 'Unfair Reporting and Right of Reply Bill'. As well as outlining the intentions of the Bill the delegation presented Mr Renton with a briefing paper on Right of Reply. The meeting provided a useful opportunity to familiarise the Minister with the CPBF and its policies.

SECTION 28

SW-CPBF have been playing an active role in supporting the broad based campaign against Section 28 of the Local Government Bill, which attacks the public standing of gay men and lesbians.

The Campaign prepared a Media Guide for activists who attended a regional Stop the Section conference at Bristol Poly, and contributed to a weekend 'Clause & Effect' event at the Watershed Media Centre.

Edited for the National Committee by SIMON COLLINGS with help from KIRSTI CORBETT. Copy for Free Press 48 should arrive at the office by 30 September 1988.

Feminism and Censorship: the Current Debate

A book edited by Gail Chester and Julienne Dickey, and published by Prism Press £6.95
Available from CPBF.

FREE 30p
PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR
PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

No. 48

AUGUST 1988

New Bill on ownership and control

Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists will be keynote speaker at a special conference on ownership and control in the media organised by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom on 24 September 1988, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, from 10.00-5.30pm.

The conferences which will be aimed at trade unionists, members of the Labour movement community groups and Campaign supporters, will give information on ownership and control, and move towards developing a strategy for dealing with the growing concentration of ownership across the media.

The Campaign will be launching a specially prepared model Bill on ownership and control in the media at the conference.

The scale of the problem is illustrated by the fact that in 1987 three publishers, Robert Maxwell, Rupert Murdoch, and David Stevens, together controlled 73% of national daily and 82% of national Sunday circulation.

Wendy Moore, CPBF National Secretary said: "This conference will be the first step in a vigorous campaign to alert the public to the dangers and to develop a strategy combining education and the promotion of diversity through legislation."

Other speakers at the conference include: James Curran, Media Lecturer, Goldsmiths College London; Mark Fisher M.P., Shadow Media spokesperson; Bryan Gould M.P., Shadow Trade spokesperson; Barbara Gunnell, Joint President NUJ and Alan Sapper, General Secretary A.C.T.T.

Costs of the Conference will be: delegates from organisations, £5 each, individuals £2.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged.

For further details contact Tom O'Malley, CPBF, 01-437-2795.

Pornography and censorship

What can be done about pornography? Can the law provide answers or does it raise more problems than it solves? How does one respond to the charge of censorship? What policy should the campaign adopt? In this issue of Free Press two contributors present personal views about pornography. Turn to centre pages.

Secrets 'reform' will tighten gag

The Home Secretary's proposed 'reform' of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act has been presented as a liberalising measure. In fact it is quite the opposite.

Should the changes outlined in the White Paper become law, they will ensure that the embarrassment experienced over the Ponting acquittal and during the Wright saga never have to be faced by the government again. Next time the prosecutions will be made to stick.

While the Home Secretary proposes to limit the categories of information covered by the new legislation, it does not follow that more information will be made public. Many types of information will remain covered by other legislation and civil servants who leak material embarrassing to the government will simply be quietly sacked rather than prosecuted.

For those categories of information covered by the act - security and intelligence, information from other governments and telephone tapping - the protection given is such that the state will not have to satisfy a jury that any harm has actually been done. It will be enough to show that the alleged offence relates to one of these areas.

Moreover, defendants will no longer be able to argue that they were acting in the 'public interest'.

Spycatcher

The 'reform' proposals are also designed to close another legal 'loophole'. Newspapers prosecuted for repeating the *Spycatcher* allegations were able to argue that since the book was already widely available any possible damage to national security had long since been done.

Commenting on this line of defence the White Paper says: 'in certain circumstances a second or subsequent disclosure may be more harmful.' What then if a European newspaper publishes a leaked EEC document which is embarrassing to the UK government. Could a British newspaper be prosecuted to repeating the allegation?

What if the allegations were repeated in Parliament? Could the BBC be prosecuted for reporting an MP's comments?

The last attempt at reform of the Official Secrets Act in 1979 foundered because of almost universal press hostility. This time the proposals - though in some respects worse - look like getting an easy ride.

You can help change that by obtaining a copy of the White Paper and writing to the Home Secretary, copy to your MP, protesting at this further attack on the public's right to know.

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9, Poland Street
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Regional threat to NUJ

A serious and cynical attack on NUJ organisation is being mounted in this country following the introduction of computer technology to the newspaper industry.

It is happening with the connivance, active or by default, of editors and many working journalists.

One of the groups in the vanguard of this attack is Thomson Regional Newspapers, who own a series of weekly and daily newspapers throughout the British Isles, and in recent months have started acting in a way that denies journalists basic trade union rights.

In effect journalists working for TRN have been told that if they do not toe the company line their future career prospects are nil.

It has been done in an underhand way. Journalists are still allowed to be members of the NUJ, or even the IOJ or no organisation at all.

But since last year TRN have been bullying and bribing their journalists into signing individual contracts that deny them the right to union-negotiated pay increases and leave pay

'reviews' to the discretion of editors. They also give managements much more control over journalists' working lives.

The experience of one group of weekly newspapers in the north of England is typical of the way TRN have started operating.

In 1986, as computer technology was introduced — NUJ branches around the country were accepting offers up to £30 a week extra to make the changeover.

The going rate dwindled as managements started to apply pressure on weaker branches. At one such centre the initial offer was rejected by the journalists.

In 1987 with the switch to computer setting imminent a new management team took over and tried to pressurise the local branch into accepting an even smaller offer.

This united the journalists in disgust at their tactics, so management generously upped their offer — to the original one — at the end of 1987. They also said there would be extra money payable in the 1988 pay round if the branch agreed

to the deal.

Few people had the stomach for a fight so the journalists accepted these terms and signed. Computers were installed and training began.

But at the 1988 pay negotiations the journalists were told the extra money promised was conditional on their signing new contracts.

The NUJ nationally instructed members not to sign. TRN refused to talk to the NUJ. A pleasant working environment grew decidedly less so.

Silence ensued, broken only by the sound of journalists falling over one another to sign the new contracts and pocket the extra cash — a measly fiver a week in most cases.

The situation remains unresolved, which suits TRN nicely. More and more journalists are giving up hope of any compromise and signing the contracts. Some are even leaving the union as the NUJ looks on impotently in the face of this attack.

As journalists move from TRN centres to new jobs they are replaced by part-timers who are not offered

contracts or by full-timers who are obliged to sign the new ones.

The few who are still refusing to sign know they can expect no more pay rises except 'on merit' — i.e. at the whim of departmental heads all of whom are safely in the company's pocket.

They see less able but more amenable colleagues being promoted above them; they see newcomers who have signed contracts doing the same work as experienced members of staff who have not — and being paid more.

All a storm in a teacup, you may think. Everyone knows that our much-vaunted freedom of the press consists of the freedom of newspaper proprietors to publish, or suppress, or distort news as they see fit.

Yet the haste with which so many journalists have sold what little say they had in safeguarding standards in the provincial press has varied from the indecent to the obscene.

And for some reason the national press seems reluctant to report the issue. Why could that be?

Campaign for more Black journalists

Bristol NUJ Branch have launched an initiative to improve employment opportunities in the media for Black people. Local newspaper, radio and television editors were written to encouraging them to consider positive action and telling them about the George Viner Awards run by the NUJ to help train Black journalists. The Branch is hoping to meet with those editors who have taken an interest.

Meanwhile the Branch has contacted about 100 local organisations representing Bristol's varied Black and ethnic minority communities and there has been an enthusiastic response, particularly about the George Viner Award. In Bristol it is thought that only 3 of the 300 plus NUJ members are black compared with 4% of the local population.

SOGAT talks warn of distribution monopoly

An emergency motion, which the SOGAT conference carried overwhelmingly in May, expressed alarm at the ending of rail distribution of newspapers and journals 'and its concentration on road transport under the control of private monopolies connected with major publishers, Murdoch and Maxwell.'

'This constitutes a serious threat to the distribution of all independently owned newspapers and journals with smaller circulation and to the wholesalers who handle them,' it said. 'It is therefore a threat to the freedom of the press.'

The motion called on the SOGAT executive, the Labour Party and the TUC to 'campaign for the retention and development of an independently operated means of distribution of newspapers and journals.'

A Labour government should also introduce legislation obliging wholesalers and retailers to accept any lawful publication and arrange newspaper supply and display, subject to a reasonable handling charge.

Explaining the background to the motion SOGAT National Officer Ted Chard said distribution of national newspapers had moved from rail to road transport. Murdoch had set up his TNT network and Maxwell followed with Newsflow, which distributed the various Mirror group newspapers.

Other newspaper companies, the Mail, the Express, and possibly the Guardian and Financial Times will be going over to Newsflow. They are insisting on a franchise system so they have some influence on decisions.

'Nevertheless, there is going to be a situation where two transport companies will have total control of the distribution of our titles,' he said.

Provincial newsagents are still not fully aware of all the details, but a condition of handling the titles from Newsflow is that they give priority to Mirror Group newspapers.

News International have set up 182 franchises, 34 of which went to TNT, and have said exactly the same — their titles must have priority.

Book Reviews

Feminist Review, Special Issue No. 28 Spring 1988, Family Secrets — Child Sexual Abuse.

The sexual abuse of children has received much publicity recently, largely in response to the formation of Esther Rantzen's Childline and the controversy that erupted in Cleveland.

Feminist Review has responded by devoting a special issue to an analysis of child sexual abuse — both theoretical and practical. It covers family theory, ideologies of childhood, the law, activities of various women's groups around the issue, education and the manner in which the press handled events in Cleveland.

They have attempted to define what constitutes sexual abuse more closely by taking into consideration what women, and girls, have had to say about their abuse, thereby broadening the scope of what has traditionally been the definition of sexual abuse of children.

The book does not flinch from challenging society and the media's reluctance to name the abuser and confront him with his crime. Different writers criticise the tendency of current theory to blame the mother — her ignorance or silence being seen as a form of collusion and a failure to inhibit male sexuality.

The book concludes with a chapter by Jane Cousins Mills who reviews many

of the books available for children about the subject. She claims that just teaching children to say 'No' is not enough; that ignorance coupled with a compliant, obedient demeanour makes a child more vulnerable. An educated, well informed child is under far less risk.

This book is a thought provoking and challenging work; it is also a useful source book, reference book and positive statement on the feminist position on the sexual abuse of children.

Pauline Illsley

Enemy Within — The Freedom Association, the Conservative Party and the Far Right, by John Jennings, price £1.50, available from CPBF.

Five years ago when John Jennings was the Editor of *Free Press* he published an article about the activities of the Freedom Association which resulted in an action for libel. Three years later, in November 1986, the Freedom Association withdrew the action having received neither an apology nor an assurance as to future conduct.

While waiting for the case to come to trial, John amassed a wealth of material for his defence. He has now made that evidence available as a pamphlet, *Enemy Within*, inviting the public to judge for itself whether or not the

New ways with old notions

Yet another new women's magazine is on the shelves, this time from Rupert Murdoch. *New Woman* joins the competition for the young (25-35), white, middle-class purse, along with *Company* and *Cosmopolitan*, both of which it resembles in format. It consists of a number of contributions from freelance writers, stuck together into magazine form by a small team of in-house sub-editors and assistants: Murdoch's usual appalling employment style.

Some of these writers are well-known. Fay Weldon and Ruth Rendell (to my disillusionment) have contributed short stories; Sophie Grigson (of the *Evening Standard*) writes the cookery pages; Patric Walker (also of the *Standard*) does the horoscopes; Dr Gillian Rice (of pretty much anything) answers medical questions.

Correction

In the last issue of *Free Press* 'Death on the Rock' was mistakenly identified as a BBC documentary. It was of course made by Thames TV.

It needs little imagination to fill in the gaps in the contents page: fashion, 'beauty', famous people (Sue Lawley and Sarah Miles), articles on travel (a gem here from Douglas Kennedy — he'll never last), work, personal qualities (this month, confidence and selfishness) and, of course, relationships.

'A *New Woman* is fun to be with' and she puts 'the quality of her relationships before everything else'. No this is not Edwina Currie on *Woman's Role*, or Cecil advertising for his next secretary, but Frankie McGowan in her editorial. (There is an increasing vogue for famous name editors — will this one be as terrible as Emma Soames at *Tatler*?)

My reaction to this magazine was exasperated resentment that, yet again, I was being sold the old de-politicising line: never mind about the outside world, better concentrate on getting yourself a man. Coming from Rupert Murdoch, who has been publicly degrading women to sell his political beliefs since 1970, the advice felt like an insult which no amount of glossy presentation could soften.

Teresa Stratford

original article was justified.

The new pamphlet exposes the so-called 'libertarian' Freedom Association as an organisation which includes strongly authoritarian elements. John Jennings argues that:

- The authoritarians have supported the Pinochet regime in Chile as 'one of the most interesting experiments in the world today'.

- They appear willing to condone murder, torture, abolition of democratic rights and the overthrow of elected governments in pursuit of 'freedom'.

- Influential Freedom Association member Brian Crozier believes the Queen should have refused to call Michael Foot to become Prime Minister, had he been elected.

- Crozier favours military rule in Britain as being under certain circumstances preferable to an elected government.

- Leading Conservative MPs, including some Government Ministers, are nevertheless supporters of the Freedom Association and Margaret Thatcher has sent them a goodwill message.

The pamphlet argues that the Conservative leadership should be aware of and must take ultimate responsibility for these far-right authoritarian attitudes and activities.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

In your June issue you reported on the Foreign Office 'smear' document purporting to describe the international contacts of the IRA, parts of which were reproduced unattributed in the Daily Telegraph on 3 May.

Since then the Treasury Solicitor, acting for the Foreign Office, has written to Amsterdam-based journalist Michael Quilligan and myself, offering to obliterate inaccuracies about us from the document.

We informed the Daily Telegraph about this, and on 12 July they at last published our letters correcting the inaccuracies about us in their May article.

Our dispute with the Foreign Office is not yet over. Along with several other people and organisations, we are demanding the withdrawal of the document and, at the least, the removal of our names from it. The document is totally misleading, since 85 per cent of it contains no mention of the IRA but lists an assortment of people who have criticised different aspects of British rule in the North of Ireland.

The document is also riddled with inaccuracies and misrepresentations. If the Foreign Office insists on distributing it, they should be fair to journalists by appending a health warning: 'This material could seriously damage your credibility.'

Best wishes
Liz Curtis
Information on Ireland

Danger of self-censorship

by Patrick Kelly

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 is probably the most well known, not to say notorious, legal clause for many a long year. The ban on 'intentional promotion' of homosexuality rightly caused a public outcry and grabbed the attention of civil liberties campaigners.

But while the media spotlight was focussed on this section of the Act, its equally nasty next-door neighbour, Section 27, slunk into the statute book almost unnoticed. This clause places further restrictions on local authority publicity — restrictions which are deeply disturbing to those who believe in free and open debate on controversial issues like poll tax, housing and privatisation.

Now the whole argument over council publicity, or 'political propaganda on the rates', as some would have it, flared up with the GLC's much praised 'Say No to No Say' campaign. Many of you may have thought that the demise of that council meant the end of the argument.

Well, not quite. The government, badly stung by the success of the GLC's imaginative anti-abolition campaign, passed the Local Government Act of 1986 to ensure that Mr Livingstone *et al* would not be giving any repeat performances.

That Act banned local authorities from indulging in party political publicity, or, in the words of the parliamentary draftspersons, anything which 'appears to be designed to affect support for a political party'. It also ushered in a 'Code of Practice' which enjoins councils to watch their step when publishing stuff which isn't 'party political'.

Everyone thought that was that. But 18 months later, along comes the government with a new, tighter definition of 'party political' publicity and beefed up legal status for the Code of Practice. Together these new measures have become known as Section 27.

What this section will mean is that the courts, in deciding whether or not a particular piece of publicity is 'party political' will have to look at its content and style, its effect on those to whom it is addressed, and, here's the crunch, whether it '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'. What's more, public relations and other council officers will now have to have regard to the Code of Practice when they publish material.

Now it would be easy to exaggerate the impact that these new rules and regulations will have. During the Parliamentary debate on the clause, Ministers fell over backwards to demonstrate that they were not strengthening the 1986 Act. They admitted for instance, that much of the controversial publicity would still be within the law.

But that does not mean that the government has been wasting its time. The 1988 Act, like its bigger brother of 1986, was designed more as a threat than a cast iron legal sanction. Its real purpose is to create a climate of fear which will immobilise independent minded councils.

Already reports are coming in of panic reactions in some councils. In Glasgow,

councillors are told to cut out a reference to the loss of government grants in the annual rate demand statement. In Essex, a district council is warned that the phrase 'poll tax' should be dropped from a leaflet because it is 'politically loaded'.

In London, one press officer is ordered to excise the name of a Cabinet minister from a press release, while another is forced to delete a mayoral quote which was less than fulsome in its praise of a new housing bill.

The implications for press freedom are indeed worrying. Political debate at local as well as national level involves argument, sometimes fierce argument, with strong views forcefully put. If local councils are not allowed to take part in that debate, whose views will we hear on the poll tax, the break up of public housing, the opting out of schools, the selling off of swimming pools and sports centres?

How will local newspapers, whose good health depends on a lively local debate, fare on a diet of anodyne press releases and bland political statements?

In spite of the restrictions placed by this new measure, there is still room for alternative views, as long as the paralysis of self censorship is not allowed to take root. Councillors need to be reminded that the chains of Section 27 are loose and still give plenty of room for manoeuvre. With cool heads, an imaginative strategy and sound legal advice, local government can use that space to continue representing their communities — despite the obstacles.

Israeli press crackdown

'Being a Palestinian journalist in Israel is to be under constant threat of administrative or house arrest, harassment and intimidation' note Lionel Morrison, former president of the NUJ, Harry Conroy, General Secretary, and Scarlett MccGuire current president, in their report of a visit to the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip from 4-8 February.

The main purpose of their visit was to meet members of the West Bank Arab Journalists' Association and to learn about the harsh treatment Arab journalists are facing as a result of the oppressive Israeli military occupation.

The delegation found that not only were the journalists under constant threat of detention and harassment, but also that to publish entailed extreme difficulties;

from the moment a newspaper is given 'permission' to open, to the actual publishing, and being able to distribute the paper, if one has been lucky enough to reach that stage.

At the time of the delegation's visit, 6 periodicals in the West Bank had been banned from circulation, and in the past 4 years, 3 newspapers and 2 magazines had been closed completely. Furthermore, 2 press offices had been closed down. It was noted that this number of publications affected represented half the total number of Palestinian publications and press services.

If a publication is lucky enough to escape the above measures, it will almost never escape the military

editor. Scarlett MccGuire was shocked to learn that the *Al-Fajr* newspaper had '328 items censored in a period of 7 days'.

Since their return, the position of the Palestinian press has worsened. As a result the NUJ, in conjunction with the International Federation of Journalists have launched a worldwide petition to protest the repressive measures carried out by the Israeli military authorities against Palestinian journalists and the arbitrary censorship and closures of Palestinian publications.

Copies of the report and petition are available from the NUJ, 314 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1X 8DP.

Muna Tarazi

Four Israeli journalists from the leftwing newspaper *Derech Hanitzotz*, whose trial opens in September, face possible sentences of forty years for alleged contact with 'terrorist' organisations. All four deny the charges.

Yacov Ben Efrat, Michal Schwartz, Roni Ben Efrat and Asaf Adiv were detained at various dates during April and May. All were denied access to lawyers for several days after their arrests and all have complained of mistreatment while being detained. The paper itself was banned on 18 February.

Contributions towards the journalists' defence costs can be paid into Account 262247, The Fund for Freedom of Press, Bank Hapoalim, Branch No. 532 (King Shaul), Tel Aviv, Israel.

Local radio day of protest

More than 700 NUJ and BETA members took part in a 24-hr strike on 13 July in protest at swinging cuts in BBC local radio. CPBF members in several parts of the country joined the strikers in their campaign to safeguard local output.

During the day of action, strikers travelled to London to lobby MPs at the House of Commons. Roy Hattersley, Labour's Deputy Leader, told a packed Grand Committee room that local radio was the victim of a 'calculated campaign'. He said he wanted to see local radio become more local.

Scarlett McGwire, NUJ joint vice-president, warned that the cuts meant a real reduction in local news output as deregulated commercial stations would not fill the gap.

The BBC says the 10% cutback has been forced on it by Government restrictions on the licence fee.



● Striking NUJ and BETA members lobby BBC heads at Broadcasting House over cuts in local radio.

Broadcasters boycott Bristol book launch

Senior executives from BBC (West) Radio and TV, HTV (West) and GWR, chose to ignore the Bristol launch of *Switching Channels*. Tom O'Malley explained the Campaign's concern about falling standards as the government presses for a 'free market' approach to broadcasting, but were prevented from hearing what local media bosses are planning for the South West region.

Advance copies of the book had been sent to John Shearer, BBC SW regional TV controller, and Derek Woodcock, head of BBC Radio (S&W), to HTV Managing Director Patrick Dromgoole and Programme Controller Ron Evans, and to Ralph Barnard, Managing Director of GWR, a former member of the NUJ's Broadcasting Industrial Council. Despite expressing early interest, none of them deigned to show up and face criticism from a local audience.

Merger inquiry 'prejudiced'

The NUJ's submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on restrictive practices in the film and television industries puts up a spirited defence of public service broadcasting while questioning the impartiality of the current investigation given comments by the PM.

Copies of the report, compiled by former Free Press Editor Mike Jempson, are available from the NUJ, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP.

SW-CPBF co-ordinator Mike Jempson said that their behaviour 'betrayed either contempt for their audiences or a desperate fear of expressing opinions at a time when the Government wants major changes made.'

Those attending the event expressed surprise that the CPBF appeared to be calling for support for the BBC and existing commercial broadcasters, and said they weren't satisfied with the lack of diversity and imagination in current programming.

Tom O'Malley urged people to express those opinions to local broadcasting chiefs, and said that rapid developments in technology and government broadcasting policy meant that we need to put up a defence for what currently passes as 'public service broadcasting' if we are to ensure that free marketeers do not drag standards further down hill.

The meeting chaired by Susan Boyd-Bowman, a film & TV lecturer from Bristol University, also heard from local NUJ and ACTT representatives about the impact of the 10% cuts in BBC local radio and the likely repercussions of the Monopolies & Mergers investigation into restrictive practices in the film & TV industries.

'One reason for defending public service broadcasting is to protect jobs,' explained an ACTT member from HTV.

Community radio activist Caroline Mitchell, a CPBF member, told the meeting that a temporary license had been won by VOX POP radio to broadcast home-made programmes at a forthcoming community festival.

Reject them all IBA told

The Independent Broadcasting Authority should refuse to award the franchise for a commercial radio station for the Oxford and Banbury areas to any of the seven consortia who put in bids, says the Oxford Branch of the NUJ.

The branch has protested that newsroom levels on the planned radio station are hopelessly low and that there is no commitment from any of the groups to serve a population containing more than 500,000 adults.

A report from the branch, *Skating on Thin Air*, says: 'The consortia want to play the records already being played, repeat the news already being reported and reach the audience other media already reach, only more so.'

The branch has protested about a demonstration tape made by one of the competing groups which used concocted interviews and managed to use voice pieces from seven different reporters in one 15 minute slot, when the bid proposes an editorial department of six for the whole station.

The franchise is one of the most sought after in the country, and has attracted bids from seven consortia, all of which have connections with other commercial stations. Three also have links with local newspaper groups.

The NUJ Oxford branch has expressed concern about the independence of the new service, in the light of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill, which allows employers to use newspaper copy for radio broadcast without the permission of the journalist who wrote it.

Is censorship justified?

With this issue of *Free Press* we open a debate about pornography and censorship. WENDY MOORE makes the case for legislation while TERESA STRATFORD explains the link with capitalism. The views expressed are the personal opinions of the authors. Campaign members with a different perspective are invited to respond.

Demands for legislation which would curb pornography and other degrading material are being voiced by increasing numbers of women. They are being met by an equally forceful lobby protesting that using the law to fight sexism in the media must amount to censorship. Where should the CPBF stand?

Legal restrictions on the British press are already extensive. Some, such as the Official Secrets Act are clearly oppressive and unnecessary, while others such as the Contempt of Court laws are misused to protect state secrecy.

Few, however would criticise the laws which prevent journalists printing the names of women who have been raped or of children who appear in court. Neither would most of us urge the repeal of the Race Relations Act which, for all its ineffectuality, deters the printing of overtly racist material.

Legislation is certainly no new phenomena to the media. And in general it is not used as censorship. To then attack requests for a new law with the worthy aim of protecting women from the offence and potential harm the media causes seems absurd.

In Indianapolis moves to bring in laws to curb pornography were opposed as censorship by the pornographers. They argued — successfully — that such laws would infringe their right to free speech. But we cannot accept such a definition of free speech. We would not support the right of neo-Nazis to publish calls for repatriating black people. Neither can we offer 'free speech' to pornographers who threaten women's freedom to walk the streets in safety.

To simply write off laws to restrict media sexism as 'censorship' is a distortion of the argument which sidetracks us from the real debate. The principle of legislation which protects women's right to positive portrayal in the press must be fair. However, before rushing headlong into supporting the nearest private members bill, it is essential to consider carefully all the implications of

such legislation. That is the real debate.

We have to consider in detail whether such legislation could actually work in practice. We must also of course be on guard to ensure such legislation could not be misused — to attack, for example, lesbian erotica. If that happened we could quite rightly complain of censorship.

The questions of legislation must firstly be set into the context of the structure of the media. No radical change will be achieved until the ownership of the press is wrested from the hands of a few rich, powerful pro-establishment white men. A whole package of reforms — as outlined in the CPBF media manifesto — is needed to bring about real improvement. But specific legislation to tackle the problems of sexism in the media may be part of that total solution. To assess its potential success it is important to set down clear and strict basic principles which campaigners for freedom of the media can accept as a yard stick.

It would quite clearly be naive and foolish to ally with the Right with its own quite distinct principles. Our aims would include the rights to express choice of sexuality; for unrepressed portrayal of non threatening equal sex and for frank explicit sex education. The Right's philosophy is entirely at odds with that, as has been made brutally clear by the government's introduction of Clause 29 in the Local Government Act and its plan to set up a Broadcasting Standards Council with the express aim of censoring television.

Home Office minister Timothy Renton left us with no doubts on this issue when the CPBF met him recently. He was clear that the quick glimpse of sexual intercourse in the serial the Singing Detective would have been banned had the BSC existed at the time.

We also have to be aware that any legislation will be controlled by the pro-establishment, male dominated legal profession. So any proposed law must be

measured against criteria which would ensure it spelt out its definition of pornography and sexist material unambiguously; which would ensure equal and free access to the courts and which allowed as far as possible fair representation and accountability in the decision-making process. The Media Commission which the Campaign has pressed for to monitor media standards, may well be one option for implementing such a law.

Finally, it is important to have realistic expectations. Even the most perfect legislation could not alone improve the portrayal of women overnight. But it may be one element in a longer term solution.

Wendy Moore

Dossier delivered to PM



Photo: Andrew Ward

Juliet Gosling (right) and Pauline Lee of Shelve it! deliver a dossier on *Sunday Sport* to 10 Downing Street as part of a campaign to have the paper confined to the top shelf in newsagents as a 'men's' magazine. Shelve it! was set up last autumn by the NUJ and CPBF.

Pornography would seem to sit very uneasily in the Tory schema of the traditional family. Women are supposed to be virtuous and hard-working while children are supposed to need protecting from images of 'sex and violence'. How do the Conservatives reconcile their publicly stern morals with the vast sums of money being made from pornography by their friends and supporters?

They do it partly by smearing any challenge. This was the treatment given to Clare Short the first time she introduced her Page 3 Bill. But in order to ridicule challenge, you have to show that what you are defending is so reasonable and normal, anyone attacking it must be extraordinary indeed. For this, you use categorisation.

It has become acceptable for a man to look at the *Sunday Sport* on a crowded tube train because it is classed differently from *Fiesta* or *Penthouse*, or any of the other magazines on the top shelf of the newsagents'. A distinction is made between 'pornography', which is supposed to be consumed by men in private, and 'soft-porn', designed to boost the sales of publications bought by both men and women. The distinction gives each category its acceptable place.

Of course it is a false distinction: just because less of a woman's anatomy is visible in the *Sun* than in *Playboy*, it should not make one image 'clean' and the other one 'dirty' — but this is what popular association has done, to the benefit of both types of publication. The Shelve It! campaign is disturbing to this status quo, demanding as it does that one of the tabloids, the *Sunday Sport*, be moved from the 'clean' category to the 'dirty'.

The hypocrisy of the Conservative moral position on this is epitomised by Lord Stevens, who has a seat in the House of Lords, supports Thatcher's 'clean up sex and violence' campaign, and owns the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express* and the *Star*. He declines to enter any kind of moral argument, stating 'I am a businessman, not a moralist. Porn is in the eye of the beholder.'

It was no coincidence that shortly after he bought United Newspapers in 1985, Stevens sacked 30% of the workforce. The pornography industry is closely associated with highly exploitative work conditions, and this applies to 'soft-porn' too. Most young women who model for 'glamour' pictures have no control over their photographs and can lose their agency contracts at very short notice — if they gain weight, or become pregnant, for example.

One of the worst employers in publishing is Richard Desmond, who owns Northern and Shell, the publishers of *Penthouse*, along with several other titles, including *International Musician*. Hours are long and wages are low (NUJ rates are not recognised) at his Isle of Dogs offices. David Sullivan uses freelance labour for most of the work on

the *Sunday Sport*.

Convincing men on the left that pornography is to be taken seriously has proved to be one of the hardest tasks for feminists over the past few years. Their refusal to engage with the problem is often due to embarrassment and guilt, but it lends a bitter truth to Andrea Dworkin's statement, 'Pornography is the graveyard where the Left has gone to die.'

Just as white people need to take responsibility for racism, men need to take responsibility for sexism — including pornography. In the context of the persisting inequalities and bad labour conditions of the industry, men's guilt seems an indulgence, their embarrassment a screen. For pornography is not just about pictures of women looking available for men. It is intimately connected with the forces of capitalism: through its manipulation of the consumer, its exploitative employment arrangements, and through its portrayal of women as items for further consumption. It is no accident that Page 3 'girls' are frequently described in terms of edibles: 'luscious Linda Lusardi' 'tasty Tracey Elvik'. There to be consumed,

they are also selling us the paper and its politics.

Capitalism depends on the ever-increasing sales of things; as advertising executives say, they don't sell a product, they create the need for one. The aim is to keep the profits high and your friends in government. The pornography industry fulfils these criteria in an exemplary manner and, moreover, has gained widespread acceptance amongst the public, many of whom are persuaded that it would be unfashionable to criticise.

Teresa Stratford

WOMEN, FREEDOM & CENSORSHIP

A conference on 1 October 1988, 10.0am-4.30pm at the London Women's Centre, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, off Kingsway, London WC2

- Wheelchair accessible
 - Creche, bookstalls, Caribbean food
 - £5.0 waged, £3.0 unwaged
 - Women only
- More info from the office.

INTERNATIONAL

Reprieve for SA news agencies

The South African government has 'temporarily' dropped new regulations governing the registration of 'news agencies' in the face of widespread public protest.

The new register of 'news agencies' — defined widely enough to encompass hundreds of individual journalists, agencies and possibly even newspapers — was one of a number of new media restrictions that accompanied the declaration of a third national Emergency in June.

Most of the previous Emergency measures remain in force, but a number have been significantly expanded. The most important was the clampdown on 'news agencies' — which represented a significant increase in the level of government control over the media.

A register would allow the government a final say in who may practice as a journalist — one of the most direct forms of media control.

The latest attack on 'news agencies' signals a new focus on those who provide much of the information published in international newspapers and the local 'alternative press'. Not satisfied with attacking those who publish the news, the government is now trying to ensure the news does not reach them.

The notion of a register of journal-

ists, first introduced by the Steyn Commission of inquiry into the media in 1982, has always been opposed by a wide range of media organisations, both left-wing and right-wing.

The Commission recommended the drawing up of a register which would exclude journalists convicted of security offences and those who broke a statutory code of conduct.

Parliament then passed an amendment to the Newspaper and Imprint Registration Act incorporating these recommendations.

However, the outcry was so widespread and so vehement that the government accepted as a compromise the formation of a voluntary Media Council and the new Bill was never promulgated.

The latest round of proposals have met with equally vehement opposition.

Iranian journalist wins asylum

An Iranian journalist Shahriar Saeed-vasa has won the right to political asylum after a campaign by Nalگو's south east district and Amnesty International.

Shahriar, a photojournalist, was sentenced to death in Iran for spying. He escaped to Britain via Turkey.

Home Office Minister Tim Renton has now confirmed that he can stay 'on an exceptional basis for an initial period of one year.'