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## 10 years of campaigning for media freedom

This year's AGM on 20/30 April marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of CPBF. In celebration of the achievements of the Campaign to date a special conference has been organised for the Saturday. A range of speakers will look ahead to the 1990s and during the afternoon there will be a session on the Right of Reply.

In the evening there will be a fundraising social.

For AGM details see back page.

## Right of Reply Bill clears initial hurdle

Tony Worthington's Private Member's Bill on the Right of Reply cleared its second reading on 3 February unopposed. One hundred and twenty MPs turned up to approve the measures proposed in the Bill thanks to last minute lobbying by CPBF members.

Home Office Minister, Timothy Renton, told the House that the Government was not seeking to block the Bill at this stage. He went on to make a speech against the proposal saying that he believed Mr Louis Blom Cooper, the new Chair of the Press Council, should be given a chance at reviving voluntary restraint before legislation was considered.

The Bill is now in committee and is expected to get its third reading towards the middle of March. The committee, which has to consider amendments to the Bill, includes Ann Clwyd, whose own Right of Reply Bill was unsuccessful last year.

The CPBF plans a series of activities to support the Bill through its remaining stages in the House of Commons. The support of Conservative backbenchers is seen as particularly crucial and a wide range of organisations and individuals will be approached and asked to lobby MPs on the Bill. A series of press articles and TV and radio interviews are also planned.

CPBF organiser Tom O'Malley said: 'This is the furthest a Right of Reply Bill has ever got and there is a good chance now of it succeeding. Critical to that success is MPs voting on the day.'

CPBF members are urged to write to their MPs asking them to support the Bill. Copies of the Bill itself and briefing materials are available from the office. Please let the Campaign know of any responses you receive from MPs.

## Murdoch monopoly under scrutiny

At the same time as Sky TV was ushering in the long awaited revolution in broadcasting (at least according to the *Sunday Times*) the *Guardian* announced that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission were to investigate the Murdoch Empire.

Labour's Brian Gould, who spelled out his party's commitment to controlling monopoly in the media at a CPBF Conference last Summer, was the prime instigator of the enquiry, the story claimed.

A press officer at the Department of Trade and Industry had a different version of events. He said nothing special was happening, only the usual 'keeping an eye' on developments. Asked how one submitted evidence to the DTI he said

we could not. But, he said, he was sure Sir Gordon Borie, Director General of Fair Trading, would welcome a letter.

A number of organisations have recently expressed concern at Murdoch's holdings in press and television. BSB, Sky's main rival, is reportedly compiling a dossier on coverage of the satellite 'war' in the Murdoch press.

The International Federation of Journalists has also been doing work on Murdoch's holdings worldwide. The results of their study were presented at a conference in Sydney in February.

The CPBF is pressing the DTI to give serious consideration to the issues.



**Murdoch: empire is under investigation.**

## Sisulu — released but not free

Zwelakhe Sisulu, editor of the South African newspaper *New Nation* was released from prison on 2 December, 1988, after 2 years continuous detention without charge or trial.

The news is to be welcomed, yet Sisulu's release brings with it a host of harsh restrictions to the editor's personal liberty.

The restrictions are spelled out in a notice from the Minister of Law and Order, Adrian Vlok. Under the Security Emergency Regulations 1988 Sisulu is:

- Not permitted to attend any meeting of ten or more persons for 'the purpose of discussing some or other matter'.
- Not permitted to travel outside the district of Johannesburg.
- Not permitted to venture outside his Soweto home between the hours of

18h00 and 6h00.

- Prohibited from taking part in any of the activities of ten named organisations.
- Prohibited from undertaking any journalistic activities.
- Prohibited from giving any interviews.
- Prohibited from venturing onto the premises of any educational institution.
- Prohibited from attending any gathering at which policies of the government or the system of local government is criticised.
- Required to report each morning and afternoon to the Orlando police station.

The sum total of these restrictions amount to the fact that Zwelakhe Sisulu has not been released. Denied funda-

mental individual liberties, and the opportunity to exercise his profession, Sisulu remains a prisoner in his Soweto home.

The restrictions are so severe that Amnesty International is continuing to regard Sisulu as a prisoner of conscience. Those wishing to lodge protests against these restrictions should address their letters to:

Adriaan Vlok  
Minister of Law and Order  
Private Bag X463  
Pretoria 0001 South Africa

□ The international human rights organisation Article 19 has published a short booklet about Sisulu entitled *An Editor in Prison*. Sisulu is a member of the board of Article 19. *An Editor in Prison* is available from: 90 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LL.

## Outwrite closes

*Outwrite*, the pioneering women's newspaper, has closed after seven years. The publishing collective blame 'lack of funds and the impossibility of sustaining monthly publication on a voluntary basis,' yet for several years after its launch, *Outwrite* came out weekly: a remarkable achievement.

*Outwrite* was interesting because its view of the news was woman-orientated, and its reporters succeeded in covering news from all over the world.

*Outwrite* always had distribution problems. Supporters had to take copies round possible outlets themselves, and the paper never gained a foothold in the big newsagent chains.

The question is: with distribution arrangements designed to assist the publications rather than the distributing companies, would a paper like *Outwrite* have survived?

In France, publications reaching a certain number have the right to be distributed. This allows many less profitable publications to get started in the mainstream shops.

The demise of *Outwrite*, after years of good quality reporting, underlines the need for a similar law here.

Teresa Stratford

## Join Press Council call

Delegates attending this year's NUJ annual conference in April will consider whether or not the Union should seek to rejoin the Press Council. Motion 119, which has been tabled by Docklands branch, says it is time that the National Executive opened negotiations with the Press Council.

Those negotiations, the motion says, should include recognition of the NUJ Code of Conduct and a role for the NUJ Ethics Council which currently deals with complaints from the public about journalistic standards.

Docklands branch is made up of journalists working on the *Sun*, *News of the World*, *Times* and *Sunday Times* plus the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*.

Since the NUJ withdrew from the Press Council in 1980 attempts to get Murdoch newspapers to respect the Code of Conduct have met with the same sort of abuse that the pronouncements of the toothless Press Council get from the *Sun*.

Are we now to believe that if only the NUJ and Press Council were to join forces the hacks would sit up and listen?

## NUJ Women's Conference

by Wendy Moore

Seventy years ago the first women delegate to the annual conference of the National Union of Journalists outlined a vision.

Alice Chalmers-Lawford told the union's newspaper *The Journalist* back in 1917: 'I hope that in future there will be no annual conference without a woman delegate. I hope before many years women will enter the charmed circle of the executive.'

And she even ventured: 'To be frank I have even dreamed of the days in the dim and distant future when delegates will rise and address Mrs President.'

This year at the union's annual conference delegates will address not just one but two women presidents — Barbara Gunnell and Scarlett MccGwire, in the union's first jobshared presidency and only the second and third time a woman has held the NUJ's

top elected post.

Opening the NUJ's women's conference this month both celebrated the achievements of women NUJ members over the decades. But they lamented the fact that women were still absent from key union posts.

That meant issues on the agenda of the women's conference — such as childcare — were rarely on the agenda of the NEC. Women had to encourage each other to stand for those important jobs, they said.

Jobsharing had made the presidency a more manageable and less isolated task, Barbara Gunnell said. There was always someone to share the responsibility of decision-making. She recalled her spell several years ago as the sole woman on the union's NEC — overawed by the formality and pomposity of her male colleagues.

As their year as joint presidents comes to an end and the post is set to revert once again to a man, the message was clear. Women must stand for key positions throughout the union.

# An even worse year for press freedom

A year ago NORMAN BUCHAN, MP, and TRICIA SUMNER wrote a report on broadcasting and the press called '1987 — A Bad Year For Freedom?'. An edited version of that report was published in *Free Press*. They argue here that 1988 has been even more dominated by government attempts to control and direct the media.

The year began on a sombre and prophetic note. On 15 January a Private Member's Bill to reform the Official Secrets Act was defeated by a massive Tory majority. The majority was achieved because, for the first time ever, the Government openly imposed a three line whip on a Private Member's Bill — a bill that was being proposed, surprisingly, by one of its more right wing backbench supporters, Richard Shepherd.

His Bill would have ensured that anyone prosecuted for disclosing public information could defend himself on the grounds that it was in the public interest. It was for this reason that Ponting had been found not guilty by a jury, despite the judge, and rightly so.

The year ended with another three line whip on the Government's own reform of the Official Secrets Act which makes such disclosures a criminal offence, however justified in the national interest. Ponting would have been automatically gaoled as would anyone who had blown the whistle on, say, Anthony Blunt. This so called 'reform' has made matters infinitely worse.

### A Hack

Throughout the year the media came under continuous attack. Unlike the earlier Tebbit assault this time it was specific legal measures. The most damaging to free and open broadcasting was the government-imposed ban on the direct broadcasting of Sinn Fein representatives (and other named groups). Because the extent of the ban is unclear it forces broadcasters to err on the side of caution; it strengthens therefore the existing pressure towards self-censorship.

Presented by Government as a minor infringement of liberty for a few 'terrorists', it is in fact a serious denial of freedom to the British people, who should have unimpeded access to all available information. It is we, not Sinn Fein, who are being censored. It is not a defeat but a victory for Sinn Fein — 'Ireland's revenge' as one M.P. was heard to remark.

If that was the most damaging intervention, the most sinister was the

Government's response to the Thames TV programme 'Death on the Rock', a programme analysing the events leading up to and including the SAS shooting of three IRA members in Gibraltar. The Government attempted to arm-twist both Thames and the IBA into withdrawing the programme.

Thwarted in this (and once again 'incandescent with anger' as the Select Committee described her at the time of the Westland scandal), the Prime Minister established a behind-the-scenes Cabinet sub-committee to rubbish both the programme and the witnesses involved in it. Nevertheless, Thames was forced to establish a committee of enquiry into the accuracy of the programme.

No such committee of enquiry was established either into the government's misleading and contradictory initial statements or into the mass press campaign pulled in to do the Government's rubbishing for it.

### Spycatcher

For most of the year the Government continued with its relentless censoring, yet farcical, campaign against Spycatcher. Finally, on 13 October, after two long expensively fought years, the Lords' judgement allowed the British press to report and comment on the contents of the book.

In their judgement the Lords rejected the Government's argument that for civil servants the duty of confidentiality and silence was lifelong and absolute. They also recognised that there is a duty of public interest greater than a duty to any particular government. Douglas Hurd chose to ignore this advice and his Secrecy Bill has made absolute the duty of confidentiality.

The Spycatcher case had also drawn public attention to the unsupervised, undemocratic nature of the operations of MI5. The Government had a chance to rectify this in their Security Service Bill but, not surprisingly for a government so wed to secrecy, instead chose that MI5 supervision should be retained in the hands of government ministers, who

themselves are bound by secrecy.

But censorship is not only direct and does not only come from government. In our report last year we referred to the increasing monopoly ownership of the press by, most notably, Maxwell and Murdoch, and warned of their buying in to satellite television. Now satellite broadcasting is no longer just a distant possibility but is actually here — and largely under the control of these same two men.

There is no comfort, either, in the Government's White Paper on Broadcasting. On the contrary it is worse than we feared. Commercial television will be sold off to the highest bidder, irrespective of the quality of services offered. There will no longer be an obligation to 'inform, educate and entertain' nor to ensure diversity of opinion.

Even the BBC comes under pressure. They will lose frequencies and the licence fee will be phased out to be replaced by subscription funding. It will be an end, therefore, to open access to all programmes for everyone. Choice will exist only if you can pay.

There is perhaps only one slight gleam of light against the dark picture as we enter 1989. Yet another quality newspaper — *The Scotsman* — has joined the *Guardian* and the *Independent* in withdrawing from the distorting news manipulation of the Lobby system as operated by Mrs Thatcher and Bernard Ingham. *The Scotsman* has struck a minor blow for truth and freedom.

### Eroded

We should be aware that our liberties and our freedom to express our liberties are being increasingly eroded. At each point justification is made for the removal of a particular liberty. But as we become accustomed to the loss of each freedom, it becomes more difficult to resist the next step. We become complacent in our acceptance and fail to comprehend the total effect.

We repeat the call we made in our article a year ago: 'We cannot win our political and industrial aims without first winning the battle of ideas'. The freedom of the word is the key. We have moaned too long about Tory domination of the press. It is time that the whole trade union and labour movement put the battle of ideas at the forefront of our campaigning.'

Norman Buchan, MP, and Tricia Sumner are co-editors of a book on censorship called *Glasnost in Britain?* to be published shortly by Macmillan.

## Church calls for public service TV

The General Synod of the Church of England, following a debate on 2 February, gave its backing to the report, *A Matter of Respect: Reflections on Government Broadcasting Policy* produced by the Church of England Committee for Communications (CECC).

The Synod went on to ask the CECC to prepare a response to the Home Office on the Broadcasting White Paper and to pass the following motion:

'That this Synod, welcoming Government proposals to accommodate new technologies and the competition for better programming that could ensue, urges the Government to:

(i) maintain public service broadcasting obligations for all existing radio and television stations;

(ii) instruct the relevant authorities to allocate licences on the basis of their ability to broadcast as a service to the public;

(iii) ensure that the financial arrangements for the BBC and Independent licensees are such as will enable them to continue to provide programmes of good quality.'

*A Matter of Respect* is highly critical of the government's proposals for broadcasting which, it says, 'while promising a greater choice and quality of programming, is likely to deliver much less.'

## Inquiry vindicates Thames

Following the announcement that Lord Windlesham had been appointed to head the enquiry into *Death on the Rock*, we commented in *Free Press*: 'Thames need a credible public figure to clear their name. Lord Windlesham... may prove a good choice.'

The report, published on 26 January, is unequivocal. Thames and its journalists could hardly have hoped for a more forthright vindication of their position. Unfortunately, neither the government nor commentators like *Sunday Times* supremo Andrew Neil, appear to care a fig.

They are apparently not interested in impartial and considered judgements but only in having their own view of the matter prevail.

The CPBF believes that the Windlesham report underlines the need to defend independent investigative reporting. The report was initiated because of attacks on Thames from the government and sections of the media whose

In a debate on the Broadcasting White Paper which took place in the House of Commons on 8 February, the Home Secretary indicated that monopoly ownership is something the Government is seriously concerned about. What he proposed, however, falls far short of an adequate safeguard in this area.

He said: 'We should regard it as quite unacceptable if British broadcasting were to be dominated by a handful of tycoons of international conglomerates.'

He went on to say: 'We shall consider suggestions to tighten the present proposals in the White Paper that one person could control two, but not more than two, regional Channel 3 franchises. For example there may be a case for a rule that would prevent anyone from controlling two large such franchises.'

These statements don't go nearly far enough. Under such a rule it would still be perfectly possible for say Murdoch to control two Channel 3 franchises provided they weren't both big ones. This cannot be acceptable.

Account must also be taken of the international dimension. It is not just a question of whether the owners of national newspapers should control TV franchises. It is no more acceptable that those franchises should fall into the

standards of reporting showed little of the scrupulousness and independence of the Thames team.

The campaign deplores the role of the *Sunday Times* in particular, in seeking to discredit the programme and is calling for an independent inquiry into the *Sunday Times*' reporting of the Gibraltar killings and of the *Death on the Rock* controversy.

MP Norman Buchan has taken up these issues in Parliament tabling two motions. The first calls for an independent inquiry into the government's handling of information about the Gibraltar incident and the second for an inquiry into the *Sunday Times*, similar to that proposed by the CPBF.

Despite disquiet amongst *Sunday Times* journalists, Neil has so far resisted calls for an enquiry into his newspaper's reporting.

The *Windlesham/Rampton report on Death on the Rock* is published by Faber & Faber, price £3.99.

# White Paper attracts critical responses

hands of European tycoons like Bertelsman or Berlusconi.

Given the government's record over monopoly ownership in the newspaper industry and its apparent lack of concern over the launch of Sky, there is nothing in what the Home Secretary has said to encourage hope.

In the same debate Mr Hurd reiterated the Government's commitment to subscription for the BBC while asserting that no date had been fixed for the replacement of the licence fee. He praised the BBC for its muted reaction to the White Paper.

The White Paper actually says that after 1991 the licence fee will decrease in real terms. A proposition which Prof. Peacock, who chaired the committee which originally recommended subscription, has criticised. In an article in the *Times* he said: 'To the members of the Peacock Committee, this seems to be acting in undue haste, for the major purpose we saw behind the move to subscription was to prepare the BBC for the day when it would compete on equal terms with the present independent sector.'

'This would require continuation of the licence fee, linked to the retail price index, for another seven years or so, instead of three as the Government proposes...'

Some observers believe that subscription will never come because it simply wouldn't work. Such an impression is reinforced by the fact that the BBC appears to feel that, at least in the short term, with funding secure and all the advantages of two channels under its control, the future isn't that bleak.

A third area where the Home Secretary appears to be allowing himself room to manoeuvre is that of the 'quality threshold' which those bidding for Channel 3 franchises would have to clear. During the debate on 8 February the Home Secretary was at pains to stress the importance of the quality test.

He said: 'I know that the new chairman of the IBA, Mr George Russell, is looking carefully at the interaction of the two concepts of the quality hurdle and the competitive tender. We believe that both are essential — this is an important point — but the exact way we ask the ITC to operate them is a matter on which we shall listen carefully to the advice that he and many others may give.'

This may well be an area for those concerned about regulation to press their

arguments. Even with some movement here, however, the absence of a body to supervise franchise holders and monitor compliance with stated programme aims will render even a strong 'test' a weak safeguard of quality.

A fourth area where the Government is apparently rethinking is on the privatisation of transmitters. Some telling points have been made about the unviability of some of the regional systems in pure commercial terms. Grampian, for example, transmits via 8 main transmitters and 68 relay transmitters. This can be sustained only through cross subsidies provided by the IBA. The Government has commissioned Price Waterhouse to do further research on this area.

Meanwhile the Broadcasting Standards Council is emerging as a far more interesting creature than could have been suspected when it was first created with Rees Mogg as its chairperson.

The code on sex and violence which it has just published follows fairly closely the existing policies of the BBC and IBA while extending to a concern about the portrayals of women, especially in advertising.

Back in December, at a conference in London, Colin Shaw, the Director of the BSC, said he saw a much wider role for the Council than a narrow preoccupation with 'decency'. Acknowledging the widespread concern about what might happen to quality if the White Paper becomes law, he said: 'I think we have to try to ensure that the range of quality or programmes continues to grow and to be expanded...'

Asked by CPBF organiser Tom O'Malley how the BSC would do this given its lack of sanctions, Colin Shaw said: 'I think there are bound to be some difficulties of opinion and I wouldn't disagree with you that it is extremely difficult in an area like this to survive by moral authority alone, but I don't despair that moral authority can actually work if the body is given the right kind of respect.'

While Colin Shaw's efforts are to be welcomed it has to be stressed that the BSC cannot conceivably substitute for a properly constituted and resourced regulatory body. Moral authority will not be enough. The danger is that in rendering the BSC more palatable than it might otherwise have been, Colin Shae may appear to strengthen the Government's claim that it has provided safeguards of quality.

# Government panics over Secrets Bill

The government's decision to guillotine the committee stage of the Official Secrets Bill and rush its passage through the House is a measure of the degree to which Ministers have been unnerved by the growing opposition within Tory ranks.

Speaking at a meeting organised by CPBF and the Oxford NUJ Branch, Maurice Frankel, the Director of Campaign for Freedom of Information, said Conservative backbenchers who turned up to witness debates on the Bill had been appalled by the Government's misleading statements and arguments.

For example, at one stage the Home Secretary argued that a public interest defence had no precedent in English law. When it was pointed out that the Obscene Publications Act provided for just such a defence, Mr Hurd said that didn't count because it was not a good piece of legislation.

Ironically, a matter of days later, the

Home Secretary was announcing that in future the Obscene Publications Act would apply to broadcasting as well.

Dismayed at witnessing this kind of inflexibility, more and more MPs were being swayed to join the opposition. So deeply were some MPs angered by the guillotine that debate on the Report stage had to be suspended on 22 February, to allow the leader of the House, John Wakeham, to reorganise the order of debate.

The row, which began over a procedural issue, developed into a general expression of frustration at the Government's handling of the Bill. A number of Tory backbenchers were amongst those opposing the measure.

□ The National Union of Journalists has been given leave to seek judicial review of the Home Secretary's ban on broadcast interviews with named Irish organisations. The review is expected to take place before Easter.

## News from the Regions

### Media Training Days

The North West CPBF, in association with the Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool, ran a successful day on 'Using the Media' on Saturday 21 January. Christine Ruth (Granada) and Sue Hesk (Liverpool City Council Press Officer) took the group through writing press releases and being interviewed by the media.

### For Better or Worse?

The first round of public meetings on the government White Paper, *Broadcasting in the '90s*, was held in the North West in early February.

The meetings in Liverpool and Manchester were well attended and the audiences went away with a clear sense of a need to campaign against the government proposals. Media union speakers Alan Sapper and Tony Hearn were on platforms with *World in Action* researcher, Dorothy Byrne and producer, Debbie Christie. Tony Lennon represented the CPBF.

The Preston meeting got strong support from the Lancashire Polytechnic School of Journalism, and another event on the White Paper is being discussed. Roy Lockett, ACTT, Vincent Feiner, BETA, and Luise Nandy, editor *Granada Reports*,

were the speakers at the meeting, chaired by Lancashire Polytechnic director, Eric Robinson.

### Irish meeting

Over 150 people packed into the Mechanics' Institute, Manchester, to watch the film C4 will not show, *Mother Ireland*.

The event was arranged jointly by the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the North West CPBF.

### Oxford Group

Members of the CPBF living in the Oxford area are hoping to establish a local group following two meetings in the city; one on Freedom of Information (organised with the local NUJ Branch) and one on the future of broadcasting.

The broadcasting meeting was part of the series of meetings which CPBF has been organising around the UK on the White Paper. Anthony Smith, formerly at the BFI and now President of Magdalen College, opened the day with Jean Seaton, co-author (with James Curran) of *Power Without Responsibility*.

Further details about an Oxford Group from Simon Collings (0865) 251454 (evenings).

IAN VINE contributes to the debate on pornography with . . .

## An alternative view

Feminist activists appear largely united in outright and angry opposition to 'pornography' and 'sexism' in the media. As Wendy Moore's recent article indicates (*FP*, August 1988) there is much less consensus about how to discourage offending materials. Civil libertarians are uneasy about methods of suppression which can be called 'censorship'; and there is a more widespread worry about being seen in an unholy alliance with the puritanical right, as well as relying upon a patriarchal and often reactionary system for the drafting, interpretation, and enforcement of legislation.

Dissenting male viewpoints have been virtually excluded from these feminist debates. For all their evident open-mindedness and concern to present a wide spectrum of views, the editors of the CPBF's *Feminism & Censorship* (Gail Chester & Julianne Dickey) are only preoccupied with what women have to say on the topic.

At least in the left press, the anti-porn feminist lobby now has virtual hegemony over the debate. In its emotionally charged intellectual environment, men who seek to enter the fray invite hostility, ostracism, or worse — especially if

they do not keep entirely silent about finding welcome sexual stimulation in any of the imagery that appears in print or on the large and small screens.

Yet if there is any truth in what the closet-critics feel, this exclusion could do a serious disservice to women's causes. If there are flawed assumptions and reasoning within the dominant feminist analyses, then the goals of women's empowerment, equality in sexual relations, and undistorted representation of women and their bodies in the media, might be set back rather than served by short-sighted solutions.

A dismissive and condemnatory attitude to the salient fact that there is a large male demand for erotic imagery may enhance feminists' identity and solidarity in the short run. But if they really do not have the political power to win in an outright, inter-group, sexual struggle, then myopic analyses and strategies will be counter-productive.

The danger of the kind of emphasis on capitalist profiteering, in the exploitation of sex, that surfaces in Teresa Stratford's article (*FP*, August 1988) is that it reinforces the failure to take male consumer-demand seriously. If feminists start to believe that the very desire for sexual fantasy has been fabricated from nowhere by the soft and hard-core porn-barons, then their strategies will go badly wrong.

The error is as great as that which so misunderstands male sexual psychology as to assume that every 'page three' viewer, as well as every consumer of bondage magazines, is a potential rapist.

Research on the uses and effects of fantasy suggests just how deeply wrong and paternalistic is the assumption of passive media audiences, unable to distinguish fantasy from reality or to resist acting out their dreams. Another conspicuous blind-spot is the failure to see that many and perhaps most men who seek surrogate sexual stimulation do not thereby become oversexed.

On the contrary, it may be sought out mostly by men whose sexual responsiveness and capacity for fantasy satisfaction need boosting up to normal levels.

Yet there is one potentially positive and conciliatory point in Wendy Moore's article — although it barely surfaces amongst Chester & Dickey's contributors. She, and ironically the misnamed Campaign against Pornography and Censorship (Appendix III), do couple their opposition to 'sexist porn' with acceptance of 'erotica' which can be explicit but premised on equality. Some feminist writers vehemently reject such distinctions, at least in

practice.

While heated debate would continue, reasonable feminists would see the advantage in scoring substantial if incomplete victories. The arguments for suppressing child sex, bestiality, and sexual violence from media imagery would generate little dissent, so long as critical documentary and serious artistic treatments of such themes were not categorically ruled out.

The case for the 'Shelve It' approach to gutter-press sexual exploitation would be strengthened, as would that for giving legal redress to women who could claim sexual harassment through involuntary exposure to objectionable imagery.

Frustrating though it must be for women, the cultural erosion of male sexism is certain to be a slow process, even with widespread male support instead of empty words and obstructionism. Yet some of the worst excesses of the sex industry could quite readily be discouraged, if they could be demonstrably contrasted with examples of unashamed erotica that feminists are not afraid to promote, as expressions of a truly liberated acceptance and celebration of physical sensuality and equal sexual relationships.

So long as the feminist anti-porn movement appears to men to be offering nothing more than restriction of their freedoms and pleasures, its appeal is bound to be very limited, and based on little more than guilt. But guilt alone will never mobilise more than a small minority into actively promoting any cause.

Feminists thus face a straightforward dilemma. Either they can gamble on quick victories bought at the cost of allying with the Whitehouse lobby, whose real aim is simple sexual repression and a more authoritarian and paternalistic control of all the media.

Or they can join in a common cause with the millions of men who, at least covertly, enjoy the stimulation that the sight of anonymous female bodies can provide, and who will readily support an equal freedom for women to regard men's bodies as sex-objects for their own fantasies.

We already have massive sexual censorship in Britain — mostly of entirely the wrong kinds, as every gay person knows all too well. Meanwhile, sexual violence continues to increase. We surely must find a new approach around which both feminists and caring men can unite as a single group.

*The author is a social psychology lecturer, and member of the Campaign against Censorship.*

## Book Reviews

**Looking beyond the frame — racism, representation and resistance**, edited by Michelle Reeves and Jenny Hammond, Links, price £3.50.

The issues which this publication sets out to address — namely the role of development charities and the media in shaping perceptions of the Third World — are of undoubted importance. During the last few years, there has been much debate within the charitable sector about 'images', with a parallel growth of materials on the media coming from development educationalists.

It has to be said, however, that this book is a disappointing contribution to that debate — doubly so as I have a lot of time for the publishers, Third World First.

Though the opening articles were apparently based on research carried out from 1986-88 there is no reference to evidence (and only one example) which might back up the claims made by the authors.

The thesis of both writers is that charities are a block to political solutions to world poverty because they obscure its causes and channel concern into philanthropy.

The work the agencies do overseas is dismissed as 'administering pain-killers', 'difficult to assess' and 'limited'. Aid agencies would be the first to admit that their efforts are modest compared to the scale of need. This doesn't make their work worthless nor would the millions who have benefitted from it say it was. This inconvenient fact isn't dealt with by the authors.

The view that some agencies at least see themselves as empowering people both overseas and in the UK is acknowledged but again dismissed without serious debate. Oxfam's *Hungry for Change* movement is referred to, for example, but no assessment is provided.

Live Aid, a very complex phenomenon, is accused of 'reaffirming Western cultural values at the expense of Third World people' and then lumped in with 'a plethora' of 'similar' events including Comic Relief and Jamaica Smiles.

No distinctions are made between these events. Comic Relief was an attempt to convey a more complex message about longer-term development needs. No evaluation is provided of this. Jamaica Smiles was organised by Black people in the UK. No evaluation is made of the success or otherwise of that venture.

Adrian Hart, the author of the second of the articles, makes perhaps the most exaggerated claims. At one point he says: 'Charities in the West have considerable effect; their images and

messages serve to diffuse and reconcile the stirrings of public anger and protest.'

In other words, if it wasn't for the existence of organisations like Oxfam, Christian Aid and Waron Want, we would be witnessing a mass popular movement of solidarity with liberation struggles around the world.

The reality is that, if it wasn't for the ceaseless efforts of these organisations and their constant badgering of the media, few people would know anything about causes of Third World poverty.

The subject is far more complex, dynamic and ambiguous than either

author admits. A series study of these issues needs to be written but this isn't it.

Other aspects of the book are useful, particularly the article 'Imaging Black Sexuality', the essay on Black filmmaking and the interview with A. Shivanadan of the Institute of Race Relations.

Shivanadan makes some perceptive comments about the failure of 'racism awareness training' as an anti-racist strategy, arguing that the problem is not reducible to the attitudes of white people in positions of power. The solutions also have to do with structured racism.

This is a theoretical viewpoint that other authors of this volume might have paid more attention to.

Simon Collings

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Teresa Stratford's review of my book, *Doctoring the Media: The Reporting of Health and Medicine* (Routledge) which appeared in your December 1988 issue was riddled with inaccuracies and misrepresentation.

Simply as a point of information, I think a reviewer should make it clear when her review is reprinted from another publication: this review appeared originally in *The Health Services Journal*.

Stratford claims that I omit coverage of psychiatric health but don't explain why. There are 13 references to mental health in the book, and on page 2 I explain why there aren't more.

Among my 'curious omissions', she highlights my failure to mention 'ER'. This was an American comedy import which showed on British TV for just two seasons and, though it did contain some novel features, was in no sense either typical or path-breaking. If 'ER' had been my benchmark for inclusion, I'd have produced an unreadably elephantine book. As it was, I covered British and American medical drama extensively in two chapters. It would have been far more apt to criticise me for trying to include too much.

But most astonishing is Stratford's claim that the book lacks 'political and historical background'. There are reasons why the '30s and '80s have both seen

an increase in programmes telling people that health is their responsibility, and they lie in the Tory idea of financial priorities'.

It is simply astounding that she could have read the book without encountering again and again an analysis of the social, economic, and political reasons for the revival of the look-after-yourself ideology, and my comments (based on original, hitherto unpublished material from the BBC Archives) on the similarities between its prevalence today and in the 1930s. To have failed to notice this in the book is like watching *Dynasty* and not noticing the shoulder-pads.

Finally, she asserts that 'Anne Karpf, like most medical sociologists, puts her focus onto the roles in which we are placed by the media'. Most medical sociologists never even consider the media: I've been waging a campaign to encourage them to do so. I'm also a journalist and critic, and far from focussing on the roles in which we're placed by the media, I argue throughout that the media reinforce and amplify ideologies current in the wider culture but rarely originate them.

Authors expect criticism, but as a supporter of the Campaign's attempts to raise standards in journalism, I was disappointed to find such a sloppy piece of writing in its own journal.

Yours,  
Anne Karpf

## Lessons of Rushdie affair

In a letter published in the *Independent* on 21 February, the CPBF, along with eight other organisations, says that the Salman Rushdie affair 'holds lessons close to home'.

The letter, which condemns the death threat against the author of the *Satanic Verses*, goes on to warn 'Freedom of expression is under threat here, with powerful voices raised against those who hold unpopular or offensive views.'

The *Star* believes the lesson lies elsewhere. It commented:

'Luckily Mr Rushdie lives in Britain where we're proud to insist that, whether we disagree or not with what people say, we will defend to the death their right to say it.'

Can the *Star's* leader writers have forgotten already the Home Secretary's Broadcasting Ban or the furore over *Death on the Rock* (to name just two recent incidents)?

## 8. CAMPAIGN NEWS

### CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM

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

Office Tel: 01 437 2795 (24 hours)

CHAIR - TONY LENNON  
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### TRADE UNION NEWS

Both the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside regions of the TUC have now established media groups, with the active involvement of the CPBF in them.

The North West group, established in 1988, has published a briefing on the White Paper on Broadcasting which is being circulated widely.

Contact: Alan Manning, Baird House, 41 Merton Road, BOOTLE, Merseyside, L20 7AP. 051 933 6067.

The Yorkshire & Humberside group, concerned with the media and arts, held a launch meeting on 31st January.

Contact: Paul Jagger, Leeds Trades Council Club, Savile Mount, LEEDS, LS7 3HU. 0532 622872.

Recent bulk orders for the leaflet, *Is this the Media We Really Deserve?* which is for wide distribution amongst trades unionists, include: NALGO North East (5000); NALGO Doncaster (2500).

Your union can order the leaflet free. You have to cover only the cost of the postage. Send orders to: North West CPBF, 244 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, MANCHESTER, M4 3BQ.

### CAMPAIGN AGM

This year's AGM will be held on Sunday 30 April at the University of London Student's Union, Malet Street, London WC1 7HY, starting at 10.00 am.

Motions for the AGM must arrive at the office not later than 17 March. Nominations for the National Council should arrive by 14 April. The AGM is open to all individual members of the Campaign and to delegates from affiliated organisations.

### ANTI-RACISM PACK

Volunteers are wanted to help with the preparation of a teaching pack on media racism being prepared by a sub-committee of the campaign. The pack will look at four particular ethnic groups and their treatment by the media: Irish, Jewish, Afro-Caribbean and Asian. The pack is intended for use with school children.

Anyone interested should contact Evelyn Reid or Gail Chester via the office.

### NEW BOOKS

Two new titles will shortly be available from the CPBF. The first is a report on the coverage of the Cleveland child abuse 'scandal' written by Pauline Ilisley and funded by SCOSAC. The second is on Racism in the *Sun* and is by Chris Serle.

Also worth getting hold of is *Racism and the Press in Thatcher's Britain* available from the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leek Street, London WC1 9HS, price £1.50.

# TUC

### The Role of the Media in a Democracy

Thursday, March 16, 1989

10 am-5 pm

Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1

A one-day TUC conference on the changes taking place in print and broadcasting, and their implications for media workers and consumers.

#### Morning: Ownership and Regulation

Keynote speaker: Michael Grade, Channel 4.  
Panellists: Bryan Gould MP, Melvyn Bragg, Aidan White, Brenda Dean and Alan Sapper.

#### Afternoon: Freedom of Information and Right to Reply

Panellists: Jonathan Aitken MP, Beverly Anderson, Ann Chwyd MP, Wendy Moore, Harry Conroy and Tony Dubbins.  
Moderator: Geoffrey Robertson QC.

Fees: £15 for union delegates; £25 for delegates from other organisations — includes refreshments and buffet lunch.

Tickets from TUC Press Office, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

### MOTHER IRELAND

CPBF Women's Group have organised a screening of *Mother Ireland* at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London on 14 March at 8.00 pm. The film, banned from Channel Four as a result of the Home Secretary's prohibitions on interviews with named Irish groups, will be introduced by Sinn Fein councillor Dodie McGuinness and NUJ Co-President Scarlet McGwire.

Edited for the National Committee by SIMON COLLINGS with assistance from KIRSTI CORBETT. Copy for FP52 should arrive at the office by 30 March 1989.

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