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Editors oppose right of reply

Tony Worthington's Right of Reply Bill was talked out of time at its third reading on 21 April after fierce opposition from the government and the press.

National newspaper editors were clearly very worried about the proposal and the strong public support which exists for such a measure. A number of them spoke out in public against the Bill and rumour has it that the Newspaper Publishers Association engaged a PR company to lobby against it.

Max Hastings, editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, speaking on the Today programme on Radio 4, described the right of reply as a threat to press freedom. Last September, following Brian Gould's speech to the CPBF 'Ownership and Control' conference, Hastings said what worried him about Labour's proposals (which included right of reply) was that 'most of the public' would probably support them.

Hypocrisy

Donald Treford, editor of the *Observer*, has also spoken against the Bill recently. He used the occasion of the TUC media conference on 16 March — where he was one of the keynote speakers — to criticise right of reply.

Some may feel that Treford's defence of editorial freedom smacked just a little of hypocrisy. Recently he used his position as editor of the *Observer* to reply to allegations made about his relationship with Pamela Bordes.

Treford also spoke at the TUC conference about proprietorial interference — making particular reference to Murdoch. On 30 March the *Observer* published its special issue on the House of Fraser report — probably the single most obvious recent case of a proprietor using the pages of his newspaper to further a commercial interest. Would the *Observer* have published details of the report if they had represented a damning indictment of Lohro?

Also actively opposing the Bill has been Louis Blom-Cooper, Chair of the Press Council. He met with Home Office Minister Tim Ranton about the measure. The Government says it wants to give the Press Council more time to work out a system of voluntary restraint.

See next issue for a fuller report.

White Paper attracts mounting opposition

The White Paper on Broadcasting, says the CPBF in its submission to the Home Office, represents a major threat to quality, standards, balance and consumer choice.

The CPBF argues that both the basic philosophy and the economic assumptions on which the proposals are based are fundamentally flawed. It goes on to accuse the Government of a deliberate attempt to mislead the public as to the real intentions behind the White Paper with rhetoric about 'choice' and 'quality' not sustained by the proposals themselves.

The Campaign's submission is closely based on the briefing for MPs on the White Paper, extracts of which appeared in *Free Press* 50 (p. 4 & 5). It argues that the 'lighter touch' Independent Television Commission (ITC) combined with increased commercial pressures will spell the end for ITV as we know it.

The document also argues that if Channel 4 sells its own advertising it will not be able to sustain its current range of programming and that subscription for the BBC would reduce the corporation to a minority channel providing a skeleton public broadcasting service which many won't be able to afford.

Most of the 'safeguards' on quality, the submission says, including the Broadcasting Standards Council (BSC), are censorious rather than positive. They are about stopping abuses rather than about enabling good programmes to be made.

In addition the lack of adequate restrictions on cross-ownership will mean increased monopoly control.

Recommendations

The submission contains a series of recommendations based on an approach which puts quality and the viewer first. Those recommendations include:

- The new ITC should have broadly the same powers that the Independent Broadcasting Authority presently has and the BSC should be abolished.
- Franchises for Channel 3 should be awarded on the basis of applicants' programme proposals and track records not by auction.
- The members of the various authorities, including the BBC Board of Governors should be made more accountable to the public.
- No company should control more than one TV company and cross-media ownership by newspaper proprietors should be restricted.
- The BBC licence fee should be retained.

The Government has now received more than 3000 responses to the White Paper, most of them opposed to the proposals. Many of the criticisms have come from the trade unions, voluntary sector and community groups and the Churches.

During the last two months the CPBF — in conjunction with the television unions ACTT and BETA — has been organising a series of public meetings around the country in a bid to raise awareness of the issues. The unions are now in the process of recruiting someone for six months to build on the work so far.

The White Paper on Broadcasting . . . what you can do:

- **Contact CPBF for a copy of our submission to the Home Office (please enclose £2.00 to cover photocopying and postage).**
- **Write to your local MP expressing concern at the Government's plans for Broadcasting.**
- **Get local union branches, political organisations and community groups to contact MPs about the proposals.**
- **Publicise the activities of local groups through the press and radio.**

Censorship in South Africa moves in new directions

Individual bans stifle free speech

Hundreds of individual activists and former detainees in South Africa have in the past few weeks been served with Emergency restriction orders that place severe and arbitrary controls on, among other things, their right to speak to the media.

The Emergency restriction order, issued under the Public Safety Act, is a refined and more severe version of the older Internal Security Act banning order, which had fallen out of use by the mid-1980s. Since the national State of Emergency was introduced in June 1986, this new form of harsh individual restriction has been used with increasing frequency. In particular in the last few weeks the euphoria of large-scale releases

of long-term detainees has masked the fact that up to 90% of these people are being served with extremely restrictive orders that will curtail their personal, social and working activities.

According to official figures, 135 ex-detainees were served with restrictions last year. The Detainees' Aid Centre reports that of about 140 people known to have been released during the last two weeks, at least 130 have been placed under restriction.

Restrictions vary from individual to individual, preventing the recipient from doing some or all of the following:

- Leaving their homes between dawn and dusk or their magisterial districts at any time;

Two community papers closed

Two of South Africa's 'alternative' publications — the Cape Town based community newspaper *Grassroots* and its sister magazine *New Era* — were banned on 17 February for three months under the Emergency Media Regulations.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha, in a letter to the two publications said they were guilty of promoting revolution by 'stirring up hatred of the security forces' and promoting the esteem of unlawful organisations (i.e. the United Democratic Front, ANC and SA Communist Party).

The actions of the Minister have led the alternative press to coin a

new word 'stuffed', meaning to be silenced by the state.

The suspension of these two titles brings to five the total number that have been banned under the regulations introduced in August 1987. The other three are *New Nation*, *South* and *Weekly Mail* — all closed during 1988.

New Nation was suspended for two months, *Weekly Mail* for one month and *South* for three.

Letters of protest should be sent to: JCG Botha, Minister of Home Affairs, Private Bag X3102, Cape Town 3000, South Africa.

Truth the first casualty of Namibian struggle?

Much of the recent reporting on Namibia has been disturbing, not only for its content of mounting casualties and dead. As the news broke on 1 April, South Africa had the advantage and journalists had little to hand but their version: reporting in the *Sunday Times* and *Observer* made this clear, though the *Observer* said there was "no rational explanation for SWAPO's action" — a theme soon to be picked up by others — without drawing the obvious conclusion that that might be because the South African version was wrong.

Some broadcasts including ITN stated the "incursions" were after the ceasefire (Saturday morning) while CEEFAX and the ITN newsdesk already knew the allegations of border-crossings were from the previous night at the least.

By Monday, it was possible to check South Africa's version with SWAPO, against published UN documents and to seek eyewitness accounts, yet reporting

remained skewed in several important ways.

As late as Saturday 8 April, newspaper reports normally led with South Africa's version — often on the front page — with SWAPO only recorded in response, frequently on inside pages or in the last 3-5 lines, if at all.

This was coupled with an acceptance that the South African/UK/US version of the UN Plan was correct while SWAPO's — a party to the agreement — was not: thus Margaret Thatcher's repeated assertion that there was no provision in the UN plan for SWAPO bases inside Namibia was not balanced by anyone reporting the relevant text of the UN plan, though invited to do so by SWAPO, who had given chapter and verse, as had the Namibia Support Committee and Anti-Apartheid Movement.

The *Independent's* Monday front article reported South African police bitter at "SWAPO's betrayal of the independence

- Attending a meeting of more than 10 people or a gathering where government policies are "attacked, criticised or protested against";

- Taking part in the activities of specified (legal) organisations;

- Giving press interviews or assisting in any way with the publication of any matter.

Usually, an order also forces the person to report to a specified police station once or twice a day.

In signing such an order, the Minister is not obliged to give any reasons for imposing such severe restrictions. In a startling addition to the Emergency restrictions last year, the Minister was given the power to restrict individuals without even serving orders on them; all he has to do is to publish the person's name in a Government Gazette.

The order has a dual effect: the person's personal life is badly hampered, often to the point where he or she cannot work and has hardly any social life; and the person's political activity has to come to an end. It forces people to police themselves, since they are often closely watched for contraventions of this order and are then subject to a sentence of up to 10 years or a fine of R20 000.

It is believed that police use this form of control because it is cheaper than imprisonment and tends to cause less of a public outcry.

However, it remains an arbitrary and serious attack on, among other things, freedom of speech and is being used with increasing frequency.

Source: *Index on Censorship*.

accord" and asserted that the South Africans had kept their part of the bargain. SWAPO's denial is 5 lines at the end and on inside pages. *The Daily Telegraph* accepts SWAPO appeared to have launched a massive concerted campaign against the South African forces and takes some time to get to SWAPO's version, reported at much shorter length than the SA claims. The *Times* states SWAPO defied 435. Almost alone, the *Financial Times* pointed out what South Africa had to gain by its version of events.

Much of the press continued in similar form for the rest of the week — later citing the Geneva protocol (see below) — and were backed up by broadcasts. Thus Newsnight's opening background piece asserted that "under the independence accord the SWAPO guerrillas were meant to be 150 miles north of Namibia . . ." — accepting the SA/UK/US version of this;

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Media watchdog for Ireland

Irish journalists, academics and radical Christians have launched a new organisation to monitor political bias and censorship in the Irish media. Their first task will be to analyse media coverage of the forthcoming European elections in Ireland.

The Dublin-based Mediawatch group will examine patterns of ownership and control in broadcasting and the press, and initiate research into home and international news coverage, as well as promoting journalistic ethics.

Mediawatch grew out of the 'Media for Justice' conference last November organised by the Christian magazine *Resource*, and is modelled on the CPBF. National Council member Mike Jempson explained the history of the CPBF and the issues it has taken up at the Mediawatch launch conference in Trinity College, Dublin.

Two members of the *Resource* editorial board, Ann McLoskey and Marja Lyndqvist spoke of their concern about the way the Irish economy is handled by the media, the lack of attention to the problems facing those who have emigrated in search of work, and poor coverage of Third World issues.

Niall Meehan of Dublin's National Institute of Higher Education and the Repeal Section 31 Committee, said that Ireland faced a media revolution with big business and the likes of Robert Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch moving in to flood the airwaves with advertising and distorted versions of events.

"Despite the diversity that new technology could bring, we will be treated to an even narrower view of the world if they gain control in Ireland," he said.

Several speakers expressed disquiet about the consequences of the use of Section 31 of the Irish Broadcasting Act to

monitor Republican views, including the recent adoption of similar measures by the British Government. Mediawatch plans to work closely with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom on such issues, and to make links with its members in Belfast and Derry.

A group of media watchers who had travelled up from Cork for the launch were particularly concerned about the "scandalous lack of information in the media about the human consequences" of military occupation and civil strife in the Six Counties.

Christóir de Baróid, secretary of the Between project which provides holidays for Catholic and Protestant families from the Six Counties, said that he learned more from Between's clientele than the media ever reported.

The launch conference was covered by RTE and Irish national newspapers, and attracted a wide range of interest. Among those who attended were James Downey, editor of *New Nation*, author and *Irish Times* journalist Michael Farrell, and academics Raymond Crotty and Anthony Coughlin.

□ The Home Secretary's ban on broadcast interviews with Sinn Fein has come under increasing strain recently, according to a report in the latest issue of the *Journalist*.

The BBC in Northern Ireland recently met with Sinn Fein Councillors Alex Maskey and Sean Keenan to discuss the issue of coverage of what amounts locally to a major political party.

The Sinn Fein councillors are concerned that political opponents have enjoyed an unfair advantage as a result of the ban which has now been lifted for the elections.

Lambeth challenges Section 28

Lambeth's new Education Plan sets out a commitment to counteract prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the education services, despite Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 which attempts to curtail the influence that a Council can have in this area.

With Councils set to take over educational services from ILEA in April 1990, Lambeth will be consulting the lesbian and gay community, lesbian and gay workers in education, the Council's Lesbian and Gay Working Party, lesbian and gay teenage groups, further education groups and youth workers.

Governing bodies, head-teachers and principals will then be advised on

anti-discriminatory policies and practices with regard to lesbian and gay men. Governors and parents will also be encouraged to include lesbian and gay issues within the curriculum in a way that does not promote ignorance and prejudice.

The guidelines issued by the Council will be discussed with the Association of London Authorities (ALA) Lesbian and Gay Committee.

Co-Chair of Lambeth's Lesbian and Gay Working Party, Councillor Graham Nicholas said: "We will be working with the ALA to ensure that when ILEA is abolished, lesbian and gay issues are tackled with determination on a London-wide basis".

Protest over bookseller's arrest

On Saturday 18 March a 12-strong delegation visited prisoners at Long Kesh (Maze) prison as part of a campaign to win the right of Pathfinder Press, an international socialist publishing house, to freely sell its publications in Northern Ireland.

Participants in the delegation included Tony Banks, Labour MP for Newham North-West; Andy de la Tour, writer and chairperson of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign; Brenda Procter from Women Against Pit Closures; and Pathfinder representative Peter Clifford.

The delegation was organised in response to the arrest and detention of Clifford on 8 November, last year. He was held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act following a visit to a prisoner in Long Kesh prison who purchases Pathfinder titles. Clifford was grilled about his sales activities, the publishing plans of Pathfinder, and alleges that he was subject to abuse and threats. After 24 hours he was released without charges.

Campus radio death threat

The life of the General Secretary of the Students' Union at the University of Kent at Canterbury has been threatened, following the publication of an article in *The Irish Post*, where it was announced that a recording of a speech, made by Sinn Fein member Micheal MacGoilla Ghunna at the university in January, is to be broadcast on UKC Radio.

The broadcast has the full support of the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Although the government's new regulations regarding the broadcasting of speeches by or interviews with members of the IRA or Sinn Fein are ambiguous, both the NCCL and UKCSU are confident that the legislation does not apply to campus-based radio stations, which can only be received in a certain area and are independent of the broadcasting authorities.

The hand-written death threat, sent from Wigan in Lancashire, reads: "You would be well advised to drop this hare-brained idea, or you may not see any Graduation Day! Are you an IRA lover, or just a dupe — I suspect the latter. You would have given a hearing to Goebbels and Hitler."

There are three recurrent terms in the White Paper: market forces (or disciplines as they're sometimes quaintly called); consumer choice and advertising. Of these I think the last is in the short term, actually the most important. For while the others are forms of ideological camouflage, advertising is to become the concrete way in which the future of television is to be determined.

Market forces, we are daily lectured, involve supply and demand which affect the production and price of goods and services. But in the case of television, the consumer does not directly pay, so the price to them is not at issue. What is at issue, as the White Paper makes clear in numerous passages which might have been and probably were written by Saatchi and Saatchi, is the price of advertising to the advertiser.

The argument goes that under the present system the supply of television advertising is artificially restricted by regulation. Its price is consequently inflated. Increasing the number of outlets will bring the price of advertising down.

That's why, in one of the most revealing paragraphs in the White Paper, the government suggests that the 'minutage' of adverts on what is to become Channel Three might need to be varied, i.e. increased *and* that the decision about this should be made directly by the government and *not* by the Independent Television Commission. And it is also this logic which leads the White Paper to 'encourage' future channel owners to consider seriously the prospect of programme sponsorship. This has all kinds of possibilities: what about 'Neighbours' brought to you by suppliers of cavity wall insulation; 'Bob's Full House' by the British Printing and Communications Corporation; and would the *Sun* sponsor Rupert Bear?

Ridicule should have its place in our offensive. But more seriously we really do have to attack this idea that the principal function of television in our society should be to provide outlets for advertising. That is a patently inadequate formulation of the purposes of broadcasting in a free society.

It's not an easy argument, since advertisers have a sophisticated rationale for what they are doing and its effects. They will point out that the increased 'targeting' of markets means that minority audiences are attractive to advertisers, that partly as a consequence it is advertising which sustains the quality press, and that audiences appear to find television adverts entertaining. We must not be sidetracked by such argument but go back to the fundamentals and repeat the point: is an advertising-led television service what broadcasting should be about?

That is precisely the argument for regulation. The attempt is made to present regulation as somehow interfering with consumer choice. But the biggest interference with consumer

choice is the requirement that any channel or any individual programme should be viable only to the extent that it delivers to advertisers an audience which they will pay to reach.

Regulation is an interference with the market forces of advertising precisely because some of us at least have a wider vision of the purposes of television than advertising will ever deliver.

There are innumerable other areas to attack in the White Paper, which other people have discussed. I personally still want to take issue with some of the basic tenets of Tory philosophy which occur on almost every page. The idea, for example, that the only thing which does or should motivate human activity is money, or that the only guarantee of efficiency is economic competition.

It is these assumptions which link the future of television to almost every other issue of government policy, from the National Health Service through water privatisation to food poisoning — not to mention the future, if there is one, of Higher Education.

'... the debate about television needs some alternative vision of the future to sustain it'

It is perhaps worth stressing that what is going on here — indeed what has been going on throughout the ten years of Thatcherism — is the Americanisation of Britain. We know from the annual survey of British Social Attitudes that America is the country which has the most positive image in the minds of the British public.

This image is presumably derived largely from television; perhaps I am alone in finding extraordinary the proposition that what we see of and from America on television can provide an image of the society and its members we most aspire to be like.

Nevertheless this identification with America is clearly crucial to the project of Thatcherism. We are trained to look automatically to the United States for the solution to our problems. It is thus assumed, without argument and as beyond dispute, that the Americans have a better system of health care and a superior education system than Britain. That this is not evident to anyone who has been ill or educated in both countries is conveniently ignored.

An alternative approach to broadcasting policy

We need our own vision of human endeavour as an alternative philosophy.

Just as the discussion of the health service needs arguments about health as a basic human right, so too the debate about television needs some alternative vision of the future to sustain it. What terms are available to construct such a vision? I fear they are few and difficult.

If you read the White Paper for its assumptions, rather than just for its proposals, it is fairly obvious what the dominant ideas are. These may be simply condensed into the proposition that the mass media are commodities, to be organised according to the principles of market forces and made available to be 'chosen' by consumers. I want, very briefly, to suggest that it is these three conceptualisations of the media — COMMODITIES, MARKET FORCES, and CONSUMERISM which need to be challenged if we are ever to move from a defensive to an offensive strategy.

But to do that, we need some terms which embody alternative but recognisable ideals. Why I said earlier that these are few and difficult is that we may have to resort to some very ambiguous and highly abstract terms. Those which come to mind are the ideals of DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP and, most complex of all, CULTURE.

A vision of democratic processes is what most clearly contradicts the model of market forces. If, as Tony Benn once foolishly said, broadcasting is too important to be left to the broadcasters, it is certainly too important to be left to capitalist entrepreneurs and those who invest in their enterprises.

Of course, we must attack Murdoch, Maxwell and even WH Smith, for their track records in the media and their responsibility for the lamentable state of our daily press. But we must also attack what they stand for. Any society which prides itself on being democratic ought to recognise that an informed electorate is a necessary precondition for the exercise of democracy.

Therefore a question we should ask of this or any other White Paper is: what does it contribute to enriching the process of democracy? That's what I meant about going on the offensive.

We must 'defend' the present system at the level of specific policies but we must also introduce into the argument a term which puts our opponents on the defensive. We must put them in a position of justifying their proposals in terms of democracy.

What happens in practice is that any comprehensive vision of democracy is reduced to the narrow democracy of the market place. People choose what to watch from whatever is made available. They 'vote' in the market place and the outcome is the majority view. Thus democracy is realised through the act of consumption.

This view, has, of course implications beyond broadcasting and is fundamental to this government's view of almost any issue of policy. We really do need to counterpose the idea of the citizen to this image of the consumer. The consumer has purchasing power; the citizen has rights. The consumer behaves with individual economic self-interest; the citizen acts with common political altruism. It is no accident that recently the government has tried to pinch this ideal of citizenship so that becoming a school governor, joining a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme or doing good charitable works are offered as ways of tempering the self-interest of consumption.

This attempted appropriation of the concept is a sign of the sophistication of Tory ideology but also a sign of weakness; it knows a good argument when it sees one. Difficult though it is, we have to offer an alternative image of our relationship to society, and thus

ultimately to each other, than the powerful but ultimately limited image of the consumer.

Even more difficult to find terms for, is the alternative to the image of the media, or anything else from water to education to health, as in the end a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market. Such is the hegemony of the market that

'Any society which prides itself on being democratic ought to recognise that an informed electorate is a necessary precondition for the exercise of democracy'

we are once again forced into a defensive position, of wanting to draw the line somewhere.

'Gas and electricity are one thing but I draw the line at water' or 'the market works for housing but not for education'. When we look at broadcasting or the arts, and I would even say sport, we have to find some other version of human practice from that of the production and consumption of commodities. I think that has to lie in some notion of culture.

'Culture' is one of the most value-laden and ambiguous words in the English

language. It's not a word which appears in the White Paper, the only tangential reference being a disparaging comment about how market forces would prevent Channel Four becoming 'precious' or 'self-indulgent'.

Others have shown more interest in the idea or ideal of culture than the authors of the White Paper. Many books have been written on the subject. Raymond Williams devoted his intellectual life to unravelling its complexity and attempting to establish its relevance for contemporary politics. The results are difficult but important.

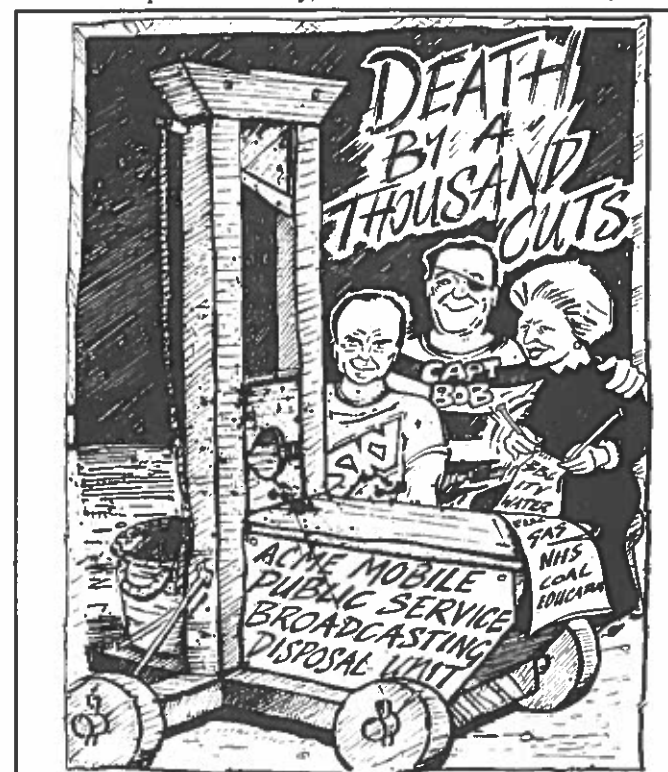
In its broadest sense, culture is what differentiates us from the animal kingdom, what helps to define us as humans. It is our generation and recognition of symbols which realise our identity.

Put that way, a soap opera may be as valid a way as any of confirming our sense of the human. But, as the work of Williams and others has shown, culture also refers to the realm of the possible; of that which is not yet but could come to be. It embodies, not only who we are now, but who we might come to be.

In terms of public debate, 'culture' is a more difficult concept to mobilise than either 'democracy' or 'citizenship'. But in the long run it may prove just as essential if we are to realise what I am suggesting is a vital part of the debate: to oppose not just the perniciousness of the proposals in the White Paper, but the very terms in which they are cast.

For what is at stake here is the language, the terms of reference, the human ideals in which we debate the nature of society.

This article is based on Chas Criche's talk at a CPBF public meeting on the Broadcasting White Paper in Sheffield. Chas is a media lecturer at Sheffield Polytechnic.



CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

The CPBF requires a full-time Campaign Coordinator for its national office. The post holder will be the paid representative of the Campaign in London. Duties will include: basic office administration including the accounts, fundraising, contact with the public and the media and servicing the membership.

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Freedom to innovate and criticise

By Debbie Christie

I'm quite surprised to find myself these days defending the status quo . . . defending the existing structure of broadcasting.

But the industry has some high spots and my concern is that the White Paper on broadcasting might, inadvertently or deliberately, wipe out the few high spots.

There are two areas I particularly want to focus on. The first is television's power to innovate.

Dramas like *The Edge of Darkness* and *Pennies from Heaven* were experiments in style and content, which challenged artistic traditions and captured the imagination. Programmes like that are made in a climate where talented people are encouraged to take risks.

The way forward described by the White Paper will, I fear change that. Drama, particularly expensive drama, will be funded in future by getting other people to put the money up front, before it's made. The problem is, those financial backers will also want a say in how the product is made.

Thames Television recently planned a drama series with new young actors and actresses, and interesting locations in

London. They decided, anticipating a new climate, that they would get their money up front before they made it.

There was no problem finding American backers to put money in, but they wanted to change the production a little. They didn't really want new talent — could they instead have Michael Caine, that lovable stereotype of a cockney, whom American audiences would know.

And could they also change the locations a little — maybe Tower Bridge in a few shots, and a few settings which would better reflect the US financiers idea of olde worlde England.

New talent and an indigenous film industry, the room to experiment and innovate, will disappear if, in order to fund drama programmes, makers have to look for US money and comply with the demand for 'stars'.

The second high spot of British television is its ability just sometimes to criticise, challenge, question and provoke the powerful.

Programmes as diverse as *Spitting Image* and documentaries like Thames' *Death on the Rock*, have each — in their own way — invited audiences to doubt for

a moment what they are being told.

These programmes, like innovative drama, may be the first to die in a new climate. They'll die because they're expensive. They'll die because they are of peculiar interest to Britain and won't sell abroad.

A taste of what is to come can be found in Rupert Murdoch's new Sky news channel. Sky's budget for news coverage is typical of what we will see more and more of. It's cheap.

So what does his news offer. Well a big story on the first day. Myra Hindley — who it was pointed out 'exclusively' was now a brunette, not a peroxide blonde any more — has gone for a second check up for cancer.

Well, bad news for Myra Hindley, some curiosity value for the audience perhaps. But it is essentially pseudo-news.

It does not give people facts and opinions on which to make their own judgements and form their own views about the society they live in.

I believe that if some of the proposals in the White Paper go forward, that sort of journalism, along with some of the more innovative aspects of television will be under threat.

Debbie Christie is a producer with World in Action.

News from the South West

Film students at Bristol University plan to make a 60-second commercial for the CPBF as an entry for a competition financed by Lloyds Bank. The film will be available for use by the Campaign nationwide.

Community video projects in the South West also hope that some of their client groups will be interested in making their own film about how the media treats minority groups.

These were just two of the initiatives discussed at the March meeting of the SW CPBF in Bristol. Members also plan to build up a stock of educational material for use in day schools and workshops, particularly for young people.

The meeting heard that membership of the Campaign has doubled over the last 18 months. Recent events in Bristol have included showings of *Mother Ireland*, with local author Margaret Ward talking about her studies of women in Irish history, and a well-attended day conference on the Broadcasting White Paper organised in conjunction with the media unions ACTT and BETA.

The SW CPBF can be contacted via Box 3, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston Street BS1 5BB or phone 0272 652341

In Brief

The Women's Film, Television and Video Network's central office will be closing at the end of March, due to funding cuts.

Groups of women working in, or interested in film, television and video will however, continue to meet around the country. Information on these groups, a twice-yearly news-sheet, and WFTVN-type information on a much smaller scale can be obtained from: Vera Productions, PO Box HP5, Leeds LS6 2ED.

Vera Productions will be maintaining WFTVN's present resources, including the database of women working in film, television and video.

□ Circles, the women's film and video distributors, recently announced the release of two new productions.

The first, *Running out of Patience* follows the recent 50 day strike by nurses in Victoria, Australia who went out because of disputes over regrading in the NHS.

The second, *The Electronic Sweatshop* questions the effects new technology and office automation have had on women workers.

For further details contact Karen or Jenny on 01-981-6828.

□ 'Testament', Black Audio Film Collective's feature film about African exile and dispossession has been awarded prizes at the San Francisco International Film Festival and the 11th FESPACO Film Festival in Burkina Faso.

The San Francisco International Film Festival awarded an 'Honourable

Mention' to 'Testament' (March 8th 1989) in the New Visions category. The award is conferred on a film that "explores an expressive and aesthetic dimension of the medium in a manner that is fresh, innovative and thought provoking".

The second prize; "Special Mention, for music and the use of archive material" was awarded at the 11th FESPACO Film Festival (March 1989).

These prizes make a total of three that have been awarded to 'Testament', including the 'Grand Prize' at the Riminicinema International Film Festival in Italy (September 1988).

□ The twelfth of Northern Newsreel's half-hour videotapes includes:

Who Cares? . . . For women and their children seeking refuge from domestic violence and for homeless young people . . . What do the Government's board and lodgings proposals mean?

Coffee Coloured Children . . . In a short extract from her award winning film Ngozi Onwurah depicts her experiences of growing up in the North East as a child of mixed race.

Taking The Strain . . . In our regular look at union issues Northern Newsreel examines 'Stress at Work'.

Banned . . . Northern Newsreel takes another look at programmes which have been censored from our screens, this time focusing on 'Mother Ireland' from Derry Film & Video Workshop.

News From The Frontline . . . More success stories and gains which have been made by the trade union movement.

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Book Review

The Windlesham Rampton Report on Death on the Rock, Faber and Faber, £3.99.

Thames TV's Board of Directors commissioned Lord Windlesham and Richard Rampton QC to inquire into the This Week programme, *Death on the Rock* following governmental attempts to stop its screening, and further attacks on those concerned with it.

What Windlesham and Rampton have come out with is a detailed consideration of the making of the programme, and conclusions drawn from it which have wide-reaching implications. It is a fascinating report, set out succinctly in numbered paragraphs, and including a transcript of the programme itself.

Windlesham and Rampton have taken a conservative lawyer's approach. There is examination of exactly which regulations constrain broadcasting journalists, and comparison with their counterparts in the press. Programme-making methods are described and assessed, and financial arrangements scrutinised.

It is hard to think of a better public relations exercise for Thames TV than to have published this considered and informed report, a marked contrast to the government's hysterical bombast about the programme (and, to their continuing discredit, about the report when it came out).

The NUJ worried that commissioning this inquiry was "a retrograde step for journalism in this country", but the praise which Chris Oxley and his team receive in this report will give serious TV journalists a boost at a time when they sorely need it.

Teresa Stratford

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir

I was surprised to see that, following my review of Anne Karpf's book, *Doctoring the Media*, the author wrote in to *Free Press* with a lengthy attack on the review.

When I wrote the review, I lent the book to several colleagues, in various clinical jobs, in the hospital where I work, and drew on their comments, as well as my own reactions. We were interested to see that someone had attempted an analysis of media representations of ourselves and our working lives. I ingeniously thought that a media sociologist would be interested to get some feedback from those of us who actually do the clinical work.

We seldom get access to the media ourselves, and are naturally always interested to see what is written and broadcast about us. One of the complaints you hear in my hospital is that media people are not really interested in what we have to relate, only in their own stories. This is probably fine if you are making your living from writing doctor/nurse romances, but if you are attempting a more serious work, I would have thought that information from clinical staff should be given a little consideration.

Yours faithfully
Teresa Stratford

Dear Sir

I am currently researching for a book about the political impact and the implications for civil liberties of the Hurd broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein, the UDA and nine proscribed Irish organisations, which was introduced last October.

The book will also cover censorship in the Republic of Ireland under Section 31 of the Irish Broadcasting Act.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who can supply verifiable information about instances where they have been directly affected by the ban, e.g. refused access to phone-ins or TV talk-shows; interviews cancelled or not broadcast; publicity for events refused;

or even record requests rejected!

I am particularly keen to hear from broadcasters and independent film producers about how political censorship has affected their work, e.g. their ability to report events; editorial decision-making about how and what contemporary and historical Irish issues are now covered; self-censorship etc.

Confidentiality will of course be respected, where requested, and information should be sent to me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,
Mike Jempson
c/o Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom.

Dear Sir

I appreciate that articles submitted to *Free Press* may need to be cut through lack of space. But unfortunately the cuts in my alternative view of pornography (February) made it almost incoherent - especially the omission at the start of the third printed column.

The essential point was that feminist critiques of pornography as sexist would persuade many more men if coupled with active promotion of non-sexist erotica. But that would presuppose prior open debate about when sexual representations are or are not sexist, and which ones do or do not really express or encourage exploitative attitudes and practices.

This debate would have to take seriously male denials of the assumptions feminists so often make about their sexual motives, interpretations of what images mean to them, and alleged misogynistic tendencies.

It would also have to face up to the fact that male readiness to consume sexist porn reflects both the virtual absence of non-sexist erotica at present and the mythical nature of sexual liberation as it is supposed to exist within our culture.

Yours sincerely
Ian Vine

Truth the first casualty?

Continued from page 2

however the same programme did contain an interview with Shapua Kaukunga of SWAPO.

On 5 April Newsnight interviewed Sam Nujoma, President of SWAPO, and mid-interview the interviewer asserts: "But no camps within Namibia are provided for in the UN plan"; Nujoma tells the interviewer to read the plan and that point is left hanging.

Contrast this with the interview which follows, with Pik Botha: the interviewer asks "about SWAPO's claim (sic) that under UN Resolution 435 they have a right to be in Namibia". Pik Botha also tells him he can check for himself — but the effect is different. It is impossible not to notice that the interviewer treats Pik Botha with more respect than Nujoma; it is interesting to speculate on the effect if Botha had been faced with the assertion that "But the UN Plan says SWAPO has a

right to be confined to base in Namibia" or some such.

Botha continues by citing the Geneva accord and asserts it is binding on SWAPO. This is not questioned by the interviewer.

When not stating that SWAPO defied the UN plan, much of the media asserted they had somehow "misunderstood" the plan they were party to. Thus the *Guardian* headline on the 4th is "Error led to Namibian clashes" — phrases such as "inexplicable breach" and "motives impossible to fathom" litter various articles.

It took until Thursday the 6th for Beresford to publish a detailed analysis showing that the Geneva protocols were NOT part of the UN plan, nor were they agreed to by SWAPO. Since the UN plan only operated from the ceasefire on 1 April, no crossings before that date breached it.

The media concentrated so much on the agenda set for them — the row as to where SWAPO was allowed to be — that the significance of South Africa's breaches of 435 were largely ignored, if mentioned at all.

The breaches range from turning back of a legal demo on Saturday, failure to properly demobilise the terror unit 'Koevoet' (well documented by the *Guardian* previously), to the fact that the 'police' were heavily armed.

A striking example of the emphasis given came in the *Guardian* on Tuesday 4th (only striking because the *Guardian* did document the South African breaches). The headline is "Error led to Namibian clashes" — having read the Editorial you are left wondering why the headline wasn't "SA breaches of 435 led to carnage": if there were a formal breach of 435 by peaceful crossings, then there was still no excuse for South Africa to open fire nor to continue the slaughter.

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM

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

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CABARET EVENING

CPBF Women's Group have organised a cabaret evening with Spare Tyre, Julie Felix and other acts to help raise funds for the Campaign. The event will take place at The Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7 on Tuesday, 30 May at 8.00 pm. (Nearest tube Finsbury Park.)

Admission: £3.50 waged, £2.50 unwaged. For access details please phone the Red Rose Club on 01 263 7365. All welcome (mixed), bar till 12.00.

NEW CATALOGUE

A new CPBF literature and video catalogue will shortly be available offering an expanded range of titles on the media. All of the books included in the new catalogue have been positively reviewed by CPBF members. The new

list not only includes some important recent titles but this year the Campaign has sought to ensure the inclusion of standard texts for media students. All CPBF members are entitled to a 15% discount on books listed in the catalogue.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Chris Searle book on racism in the *Sun* mentioned in the last issue will be published by CPBF at the end of May. Pauline Illsley's study of the Cleveland child abuse cases, also being published by the Campaign, will be available in June. Both books will be included in the new literature catalogue.

TOM O'MALLEY LEAVING

Tom O'Malley, National Organiser for the CPBF based in London, will be leaving the Campaign later this year after more than four years with the organisation. Tom has announced his intention to leave early so as to give the Campaign time to get a replacement in post before he goes. It is hoped that a handover period, possibly of a few months, will not only help maintain continuity but will also provide the extra capacity needed to clear the backlog of administrative work.

During Tom's period with the Campaign his job has expanded greatly. Recent months have seen him closely involved in campaigning and policy work.

Tom has indicated that while he wishes to leave the post of National Organiser he does not intend to desert the CPBF. He will remain an active member.

NW REORGANISATION

The Manchester office has also recently undergone a reorganisation in order to improve the quality of service provided to the public and to CPBF members. Ian Bushel has taken over the new post of North West office administrator. Granville Williams will now act as development officer concentrating on out reach work to make sure the CPBF continues to build wide support.

NW MEETINGS

Two meetings held in the North West in March attracted good support. On

Tuesday 21 March the Salman Rushdie debate 'Blasphemy versus Freedom of Speech' included amongst the speakers Dr Shabbir Akhtar from the Bradford Council of Mosques, and the Bishop of Manchester.

At the second meeting, Steve Dorril, co-author of *Honey Trap*, spoke on 'Lays, Leaks and Lies: The Significance of the Profumo Affair for Today' on 23 March.

The NW Group AGM on Thursday 13 April was also well attended. The guest speaker was Mike Shaft of Manchester Sunset Radio, an applicant for one of the new community radio franchises.

MEDIA COURSE

'Britain's Press and Broadcasting: What Future?' — a six week course beginning Wednesday 26 April 7.30 to 9.30. Guest speakers include Louise Nandy, editor of Granada Reports, and Gerry Northan, of BBC File on Four. A joint CPBF/Manchester University Extra Mural Department event.

Fee £9.00. Phone Bryan Luchan on 061 275 3290 to reserve a place.

FREE PRESS MOVES

As from this issue *Free Press* is moving to a new typesetter and printer — Uniprint in Oxford. This move will allow us to reduce costs and, we hope, to provide readers with a better service. Recent issues of the newsletter have contained a number of typographical errors and we have had problems with issues coming out late, for which we apologise.

The new arrangements should help us combat these problems.

Edited for the National Committee by SIMON COLLINGS. Copy for FP53 should arrive at the office by 18 May 1989.

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