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All change for CPBF

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The media goes to war

Media coverage of the Gulf crisis has greased the slide towards war and highlighted how the concentration of ownership and control in the press and broadcasting, especially in times of acute national crisis, inhibits the proper flow of information and analysis to the public.

This disturbing conclusion emerges from an initial analysis of print and TV coverage to early September by **Tom O'Malley**, CPBF National Secretary. Systematic studies will no doubt follow, but *Free Press* hopes his comments will prompt debate on the role of the media now.

In broad terms the conflict has been presented as a moral crusade against a brutal Iraqi regime which breached international law when it invaded Kuwait. But whether the invasion explains the enormous US led military mobilisation is another matter.

'There are debatable issues...'

The US backed Iraq in its war against Iran, downplaying its appalling human rights record and chemical weapons attacks on Iran and its own Kurdish population. As Fred Halliday, Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics, pointed out in *The Guardian* (13 August) 'had it not been for US and more broadly Western support it is unlikely Saddam would be in power at all'.

For many people who live in the region, US involvement is part of a tradition dating back over fifty years in which the Western Powers have claimed the right to intervene and shape the politics of this oil rich area. Operation Desert Shield itself is the offspring of US military plans to seize the Gulf oil fields drawn up at the time of the first OPEC crisis in 1974.

US motivations and ambitions and who, if anyone, occupies the moral high ground in the Gulf crisis are, therefore, debatable issues. But in spite of the danger to world peace posed by a conflict which could involve the use of chemical and even nuclear weapons, the national news media has, overwhelmingly, endorsed the position of the US and British governments. None have carried *regular* reports critical of the US intervention, and no national paper, TV or radio station has *integrated a critical perspective* of the US led intervention into its routine news reporting.

Jimmy Burns writing in the *Financial Times* (1 September) commented on the 'representatives of the "tabloid press", who with their predictable mix of jingoism and xenophobia have taken to the Gulf crisis like ducks to water'. *The Sun*, Burns went on to point out, 'set the tone on August 4 with its "expose" of Saddam Hussein as a "power crazed tyrant... a Fuhrer freak who models himself on Hitler"'. Headlines like 'Our Boys Go In' (*The Sun*), and 'Hitler Hussein' (*Today*) and 'Saddamned' (*Daily Mirror*) are commonplace.

Habitual uncritical support for the government and strident nationalism have provided millions of tabloid readers with a

dangerous caricature of the situation which helps whip up war fever. But the frequently bellicose editorials of the broadsheets and the style of their 'factual' reporting, despite the occasional critical feature article, have been equally governed by a keen support for the US led intervention.

'...the best strategy is to insist absolutely on President Saddam's withdrawal from Kuwait, to offer him no fig leaves; if need be, to fight him, and to leave the rest to his own people.' (*Independent* leader, 29 August).

'...Japan cannot and should not be expected to make a significant military contribution to the Gulf...Japan's contribution must be in the realms of finance and non-military expertise.' (*Financial Times* leader, 30 August).

'The UN secretary-general has thus a special duty to speak frankly, even brutally in Amman...reminding Iraq that if sanctions fail, article 42 of the UN Charter provides for fullscale military enforcement of security council resolutions. Before it is too late, he must convince Baghdad that by stalling, Iraq courts unthinkable disaster.' (*The Times* leader, 29 August).

'The object of the exercise remains absolutely clear. It is to uphold the authority of the United Nations; and to see the Iraqi invaders return shamefaced home...Douglas Hurd, the very soul of consensus, has to see that consensus as the underpinning of UN action' (*The Guardian* leader, 31 August).

These assumptions - that war against Iraq is morally correct, that the world community should fund the American military build up in Saudi Arabia, that the UN is acting as an independent agent and not at the behest of the US, and that Douglas Hurd, a loyal servant of Margaret Thatcher and promoter of stringent secrecy legislation and the broadcasting ban, is the 'soul of consensus' - are the very claims an independent press should be scrutinising.

'A disturbing consensus...'

In fact part of the explanation of this disturbing consensus must lie in the nature of the relationship between all newspapers and big business. Interlocking ownership, dependence on city finance and reliance on advertising make UK papers an integral part of the Western business world which now feels under threat in the Gulf. A free market in print is unlikely to deliver a free range of opinion in these circumstances.

Broadcasting has fared little better. On a typical day, 4 September, the *BBC Nine O'Clock News* and *ITN's News at Ten* both carried detailed accounts of the hostages journey from Kuwait to Baghdad as their main item and reports on the humanitarian problems posed by the growing numbers of refugees on the Iraq/Jordan border. Both also carried uncritically statements by the US on the crisis. There was no

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October 19 is Time to Know Day

by Tim Gopsill
Editor, The Journalist

A young reporter on a local radio station was doing a routine story about a housing development. His report included 17 seconds of the local MP expressing some reservations about the development. Bread and butter journalism informing the community. But those 17 seconds were banned from being broadcast by the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Why? Because the MP, Gerry Adams, represents Sinn Féin, a legal political party, whose representatives are stopped from being heard on TV or radio under an order made by the Home Secretary on October 19 1988. He is the only MP in the world to be banned from the national airwaves.

Britain prides itself on its free press and broadcasting. In reality, the broadcast ban is an example of a creeping censorship.

TV reporting on the war in Northern Ireland, for instance, is subject to continuous restriction by the BBC and IBA; more than 60 programmes were censored between 1970 and the introduction of the ban; since then number affected is countless.

Then there is the new Official Secrets Act, that puts whole areas of state activity out of bounds for reporting, and, even more seriously, robs "whistle-blowers" in government service of the ability to tell the press when they believe something is going badly wrong. It allows no defence that such leaking was done in the "public interest"; they go straight to jail. There is a sickening hypocrisy in this - for the government persistently invoked the "public interest" as its justification for the new law.



In Britain there is no legal right of access to official information. A Freedom of Information Act, to guarantee the right to inspect government documents not just to journalists but to all citizens, has been a popular demand for a long time, but no government has come near promoting one.

Even the Soviet Union has just introduced one. All the former communist countries are shedding state censorship. Britain is going in the opposite direction.

Real press freedom is not about the right of journalists to say what they like; it is about the public's right to be informed. The Time to Know campaign was initiated by the National Union of Journalists to fight censorship and restrictions on free reporting and free expression. It is supported by all the major media unions, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and a wide range of civil liberties groups.

Every year October 19 will be national Anti-Censorship Day. Full details of this year's march, rally, film show and conference are on the back page. Support these events and strike a blow against secrecy and censorship. We want to know, and it's time we did!

The media goes to war

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attempt to contextualise the crisis in the Gulf or present items critical of US and British government policy.

On the *Nine O'Clock News* a reporter gave 'the view of the Foreign Office' on the hostage crisis which amounted to the claim that their detention was an Iraqi tactic designed to distract attention from the invasion of Kuwait. This interpretation went unchallenged. Yet in the same bulletin a reporter made reference to the 'continuing propaganda' effort of the Iraqis.

'No critical framework exists...'

The cosy assumptions lying behind this are that UK reporting is not 'propaganda' and our media is not censored. But the difficulties faced by reporters in gaining access to UK forces in the Gulf, reported by *The Late Show* (4 September), is but one small example of government attempts to control media coverage. And the very absence within TV news bulletins of an alternative critical framework for assessing the Gulf crisis is a form of self-censorship tantamount to propagandising on behalf of the government.

That there are serious questions to be asked about the US build up has been touched on, occasionally on *Newsnight*, *Fifth Column* (BBC 25 September) and on Channel 4's *The World This Week* (1 September), when commentators were given an opportunity to point out the complexity of the issue from an Arab standpoint.

But the mass audience news bulletins, like the tabloids, have concentrated on the manifestations of the crisis - whether hostages were getting out, the scale of humanitarian problems

in Jordan, how many troops, guns, tanks and planes are in the Gulf. The accepted framework has been US and British government policy and domestic and Arab criticism is either absent or outside a coherent framework.

Broadcasters are under an obligations to balance their reporting. Nowadays this rarely goes beyond a narrow reading of the balance of opinion between the parliamentary leadership of the two main parties. Where they have been in harmony, as they have in the Gulf crisis to date, then the BBC and ITN appear to conclude there is no 'other side' to the argument which merits the same degree of sustained attention. Thus the views of critics of government policy - CND, the Greens, dissident Labour M.P.s - have been largely ignored.

Attacks on broadcasting in the 1980s seem to have taken their toll. Changes in senior personnel in the wake of government pressure and fear of antagonising the Conservative Party prior to the forthcoming review of its Charter - which expires in 1996 - has produced a siege mentality in the upper echelons of the BBC. Faced with de-regulation when the Broadcasting Bill becomes law, ITV companies are equally cautious. Neither are prepared to act independently of the political establishment on highly controversial issues.

The words of John Reith, first Director General of the BBC, written during the 1926 General Strike have come back to haunt us: the cabinet 'want to be able to say that they did not commandeer us, but they know they can trust us not to be really impartial'.

The Gulf crisis has further demonstrated that after eleven years of Thatcherism the need for radical reform of the ownership and control of the media is more acute than ever.

Let Scargill reply

'The meanest sort of chequebook journalism' is how *The Daily Mirror's* top columnist, Paul Foot, has described his own paper's campaign against miners' leaders Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield. At September's Trades Union Congress, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom circulated an open letter to *The Mirror* Ombudsman, Peter Archer M.P., calling on the paper to give the miners' leaders the right to reply to its repeated allegations against them concerning union finances. Mick Gosling reports.

The open letter, which argued that *The Mirror* had breached the national newspaper editors own code of conduct concerning the use of straightforward means, correction of mistakes and opportunity to reply, won broad support amongst delegates and visitors to the TUC.

The Mirror has never told its readers that it paid its two 'star' witnesses, Roger Windsor and Jim Parker, at least £100,000 for their stories. Nor has it questioned the credibility of its two corroborative witnesses - Altaf Abbasi, a convicted terrorist, and Abdul Ghani who was jailed for fraud in 1987.

In a powerful speech to a packed CPBF fringe meeting, Dave Douglas, a working miner and Hatfield Main NUM delegate, recalled the hardships of the 1984-5 strike and denounced recent media coverage as an attempt not just to destroy the leaders of the NUM but, by implication, the value of militant trade unionism itself.

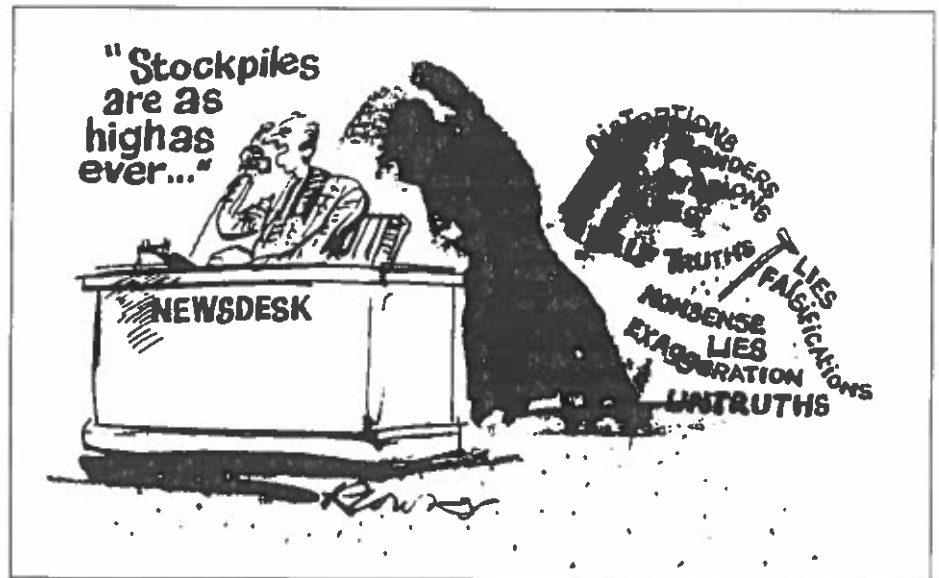
It was also an attempt to rewrite history, denigrating the selfless courage of those involved in the strike and turning them into the blind dupes of corrupt leaders. 'Those who have chosen to believe the stories about Arthur Scargill do so because it reinforces their own prejudices that everyone is as motivated by greed as they are,' he said.

Dave recalled how the NUM went on providing millions of pounds worth of services to members and their families throughout the dispute despite receivership and sequestration. 'Twelve thousand miners were arrested during the strike and fines had to be paid. There was a colossal bill for clothes, food and hardship funds. Where the hell do people think the money came from?'

'I've no doubt Scargill and Heathfield defied the law and therefore broke it - so did the miners, their women and their children and we're proud of it,' Dave declared to applause.

Using secret bank accounts to avoid receivership and sequestration in order to sustain the strike and the NUM, and subsequently using these accounts to repay loans to other trade unions, are at the heart of the 'breaches of trust' that exercised Gavin Lightman QC in his report for the NUM executive.

But *The Mirror's* original and most damaging allegation on 5 March was that 'Miner's leader Arthur Scargill got £163,000 in strike support from Libya - and used a large part of it to pay off



personal debts'. Lightman came to no conclusion as to the source of the money but was highly critical of Roger Windsor's account of events.

He concluded that 'Mr. Windsor's allegation that the cash he had brought in was used to repay Mr. Scargill's mortgage is entirely untrue' (p83). Yet *The Mirror* claimed (5 July) that the Lightman Report 'PROVES that most of our sensational disclosures about secret cash dealings during the 1984-5 strike were true'.

When an editorial in *Tribune* criticised *The Mirror's* selective use of Lightman and Rober Maxwell's personal involvement it touched a raw nerve. Editor Phil Kelly told the CPBF meeting how he was rapidly confronted with a letter from *The Mirror's* solicitors, acting

'The Mirror has never told its readers it paid its two 'star' witnesses £100,000'

on behalf of editor Roy Greenslade, asking for a withdrawal and apology because 'my client was not influenced in his editorial judgement by Mr. Robert Maxwell in any shape or form. Mr. Maxwell played no part in the editorial content of the revelations in *The Daily*

Mirror about Mr. Scargill'.

However, Maxwell has boasted of his hostility to Arthur Scargill in the same breath as saying that his ownership of papers 'gives me power to raise issues effectively. In simple terms, it's a megaphone' (*Guardian* 5 March). On the very same day he signed *The Mirror* editorial 'Scargill's Waterloo' which was the opening salvo in the paper's campaign. This raises basic questions about editorial independence and the ownership and control of the press.

Fire Brigades Union general secretary, Ken Cameron, has also fallen foul of the *The Mirror's* campaign. Under the headline 'Union leaders reveal Scargill money deals' (8 March), *Mirror* journalists had invented quotes and put them in his mouth. Despite an immediate denial of the quotes attributed to him and the issuing of a photocopy of the NUM receipt for the FBU loan - which was repaid - no correction was printed.

In appealing to *The Mirror* Ombudsman Peter Archer to seek adequate space for Scargill and Heathfield to reply to the serious allegations made against them, the CPBF has pointed out that at no time in the paper's original seven-month 'investigation' were allegations put to them in such a way that they could be properly considered and answered. Since then *The Mirror* has offered neither official an opportunity to reply, nor given fair coverage to their rebuttal of Lightman's criticisms. A right of reply is long overdue.

The Calcutt Inquiry was announced by the government as part of a 'last chance' package for the press. Previous last chances for voluntary self-regulation occurred in the 1940s and 1970s. Each time a judicious combination of proprietorial lobbying and government compliance with the industry's wishes led to nothing being achieved. The Calcutt Report, published in June 1990, for all its dangerous recommendations, promises a repeat performance.

Calcutt rejected a statutory right of reply to factual inaccuracies. Instead it proposes three new criminal offences related to privacy, which could harm genuine investigative reporting, and the establishment of a Press Complaints Commission funded by the industry and operating voluntary regulation. This will replace the Press Council - which is funded by the industry and is meant to operate a system of voluntary regulation!

The PCC is to be appointed secretly by an Appointments Commission established by the Lord Chancellor. The Report recommends that the new PCC be established by July 1991. Failing this, or if there is not sufficient compliance from the industry, the PCC is to be given some statutory powers.

In the event of the industry flouting the statutory PCC that body will be replaced by a Press Complaints Tribunal (PCT), appointed by the Lord Chancellor's office and required to enforce a Code of Conduct which will be enshrined in statute.

The Calcutt Committee was appointed secretly, without wide consultation. Its members included Simon Jenkins, then a senior writer for Murdoch's *Sunday Times* who was shortly afterwards appointed editor of *The Times*.

It set an impossibly short timetable for the submission of evidence - from mid-July to 31 August 1989. This guaranteed that only those institutions with large resources, like the national press, could marshal detailed evidence.

In the event 260 submissions were received, 160 or 62% of which were from members of the public. Calcutt claims it then 'invited individuals and organisations covering a wide range of interests and view points' (para 1.11) to give oral evidence.

In reality this amounted to 30 organisations and individuals, fifteen or 50% of which were connected to the industry and known to be critical or hostile to a statutory right of reply. These included News International, Maxwell Communications, Express Newspapers and *The Daily Telegraph*. With the exception of one identifiable

Calcutt and the Right of Reply

The Calcutt Inquiry into Privacy and Related Matters was established to defuse public and parliamentary support for Right of Reply legislation and attempts to promote a Privacy Bill. Mick Gosling and Tom O'Malley casts a critical eye over its final report.

case, there is no evidence of ordinary members of the public being invited to give evidence.

Thus the Committee was born in secrecy, grew up in obscurity and displayed an exaggerated regard for the opinions of the very industry whose misdemeanours it had been set up to remedy.

In spite of acknowledging the widespread support for a statutory right of reply (para 4.7), and that France had operated one since 1881 as an 'accepted part of the legal landscape' (5.15), Calcutt rejected it. In its brief consideration of the subject it did not cite the CPBF's evidence, nor the copious material from House of Commons debates available in Hansard, but it did place great weight on the criticisms of right of reply made by the press.

The main grounds for rejection were as follows: 'We are not persuaded that whether or not a story contained a factual inaccuracy could always be ascertained under a speedy and informal procedure.' (para 11.15)

cases, and many other kinds of complaint, however, a quick decision (by the PCT) could possibly be arrived at without delay.' (para 16.20)

No evidence is provided in support of the assumption that privacy cases could be dealt with more swiftly than right of reply ones, so why did the Committee reject a statutory right of reply primarily on the grounds of speed of procedure? In reality right of reply is rejected on grounds which do not bear close examination and are inconsistent with other propositions in the report.

The definition of right of reply rejected by Calcutt was the one put forward by the CPBF in the Ann Clywd (1987) and Tony Worthington (1988) Bills, namely the right to obtain correction of *factual* inaccuracies. In Calcutt's Code of Practice this is expanded to 'a proportionate and reasonable opportunity to reply to criticism or alleged inaccuracies' (Appendix Q para 2). This Code, it is proposed, would have statutory force and be implemented by the Tribunal.

'The Committee was born in secrecy and grew up in obscurity...'

The basic arguments put by the CPBF and others that legislation would discourage wilful inaccuracies, otherwise known as lies, that a Media Commission's job would be to promote swift compromise between complainant and newspaper, and that only in the last resort would a more elaborate procedure be invoked, were completely overlooked.

Yet Calcutt's final option, the Press Complaints Tribunal, would have to deal with complaints about the breach of a statutory Code of Conduct which includes separate provisions relating to both accuracy and right of reply. The Committee believed that 'in privacy



£40,000 BINGO! Today's lucky numbers on Page 1

All parties to the debate accept that a right of reply to *criticism* is potentially unworkable, generating lengthy disputes between complainant and paper. Again the question is posed: why did the Committee reject a simpler definition on grounds of speed and yet later advocate a potentially unworkable one?

To explain this inconsistency is to return to the starting point: Calcutt was designed primarily to defuse, not to promote change. By killing off the right of reply to factual inaccuracies, for this parliament at least, it has

'Calcutt was designed to defuse, not to promote change...'

removed a real threat to the newspaper proprietors. Given their support, consistency is hardly necessary.

In spite of arguments put by the CPBF, Calcutt failed to examine the links between the concentration of ownership and control in the media and the practices it was set up to investigate. While ditching effective short term remedies like the right to reply, it proposes a series of measures which, if implemented, would seriously infringe press freedom.

On privacy, Calcutt proposes a range of legislation which would criminalise certain forms of journalism and allow for civil injunctions to prevent publication. This puts more power

over the press into the hands of the police and courts and those rich people able to use legal proceedings.

The idea of a Press Complaints Tribunal, appointed by judges and empowered to fine and enforce a code of conduct extending far beyond right of reply and privacy is positively dangerous. It allows for unwarranted pre-publication censorship, without proper safeguards, and for the gradual growth of case law which allows the courts to define and build on the meaning of the code of conduct.

Many of these measures are legal and political dynamite and would take up a substantial amount of parliamentary time if the government tried to implement them. The Committee's own timetable, allowing a year for the setting up of the Press Complaints Commission, means that nothing could conceivably be done before the next election.

In reality, the main recommendation of Calcutt, and the one which will be implemented, is the extension of the system of voluntary self-regulation which has so manifestly failed to date: the Press Council is dead, long live the

Press Complaints Commission!

The measures on privacy may be waved in front of the press in the future if it goes too far, but current political realities suggest that Calcutt was meant to take the heat off the press in the run up to the election, and that it has done. And no Conservative government, re-elected with the loyal support of the national press, will be inclined to bite the hand that feeds it.

In its conduct and conclusions Calcutt produced a poor and evasive report. The underlying issue of concentration of ownership in the media, the root cause of many of the worst press practices, was deliberately ignored. The simple remedy of a right of reply to factual inaccuracies was dismissed. A report was produced whose real outcome is to bolster the status quo by resurrecting voluntary regulation of the press, funded by the press.

It is up to the Campaign to continue to argue the case for public redress for media inaccuracies and for the radical reform of press ownership to promote a more democratic and balanced national media.



SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Unlike Calcutt, the Scottish TUC is undertaking a broad survey to find out what action is necessary to establish a free and diverse press. We print below the resolution passed at this year's Scottish TUC which echoes many points of CPBF policy.

'That this Congress affirms that a free press is a basic prerequisite of a democratic society. Congress further affirms that only a radical restructure of the economics of the newspaper industry, which breaks the monopolistic control of the existing proprietors, will lead to a diverse and genuinely free press in our society.

Congress also views with alarm the ending of distribution of newspapers and journals by independent contractors and the concentration of control into monopolies connected with major publishers, such as Murdoch and Maxwell. This constitutes a serious threat to the distribution of all independently owned newspapers and journals with small circulation and to the wholesalers who handle them and their ability to exist in the job of handling all publications.

Congress calls upon the General

Council to identify the action necessary to establish a genuinely free and diverse press in this country.

The General Council should give consideration to the following:

(a) the continued concentration of the newspaper industry - in this context Congress reaffirms its continuing support for newspapers with a limited circulation, such as the Morning Star and Tribune;

(b) a restriction on the number of national, regional and local newspapers which can be owned by one individual or corporation;

(c) the introduction of an advertising levy to ensure that the reporting of facts and the expression of opinion is not affected by the ability to raise advertising revenue;

(d) a legal obligation on wholesalers and retailers to accept any lawful publication and arrange for its proper supply and display, subject to a reasonable handling charge;

(e) the establishment of a new publicly-owned newspaper origination printing and distribution facility, available for hire to groups within our society;

(f) the periodical and trade press which is similarly subject to monopoly control and contributes to the trivialising of important social issues;

(g) the minority report by David Basnett and Geoffrey Goodman to the 1974-77 McGregor Royal Commissions on the Press.

Congress calls upon the General Council to report its findings to the next Congress.'

Members of all The Sun production chapels refused to handle the Arthur Scargill picture and major headline on our lead story. The Sun has decided, reluctantly, to print the paper without either.

Sam's assets insured for £1m

Time Warner's global empire

Edinburgh's 1989 Television Festival was dominated by the impact of Rupert Murdoch's opening McTaggart Lecture. The 1990 Festival had its controversial moments, especially the future of the BBC after the end of the Charter in 1996. But one session provided a disturbing vision of the philosophy and plans behind the operations of the global media conglomerate, Time Warner Inc. *Granville Williams reports.*

Time Warner Inc., the result of the merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications in January 1990, is the world's largest media and entertainment company. Its operations literally span the world. It has six major divisions:

The Time Inc. Magazine Company. Key titles are *Time*, *Money*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fortune*. Owns all or part of 25 magazines, corners 20% of all US magazine advertising revenue. *Time* and *Fortune* published in international editions and distributed worldwide.

Time Warners Filmed Entertainment. Warner Bros., Warner Bros. TV, Lorimar TV, Warner Home Video, DC Comics and Licensing Corp of America.

Warner Bros. operates in 44 countries (1989 releases include *Batman*, *Lethal Weapon 2*; 1990 releases include *Gremlins 2* and *Presumed Innocent*). Warner Home Video operates in 43 countries and is a worldwide producer and distributor of video cassettes.

Warner Bros. International Television Distribution licensed 20,000 hours of programming to more than 110 countries in 1989.

The Warner Music Group. Warner Bros. Records, Atlantic Records, Elektra Entertainment, WEA Corporation, WEA Manufacturing and Warner/Chappell Music. Half the group sales generated outside USA and WEA International operates in 51 countries.

The Time Warner Cable Group. Operates cable systems in 35 US states and consists of 82% owned American Television and Communications Corporation (ATC) and wholly owned Warner Cable.

Home Box Office, Inc. - is the pay-TV programming and marketing subsidiary of Time Warner Inc. Two 24 hour pay TV services, HBO and Cinemax have separate monthly programming and in November 1989 launched the Comedy Channel.

The Time Inc. Book Company. This includes Book of the Month Club, the largest mail order book club and Time-Life Books.

Time Warner Inc. generated revenues of \$10.8 bn in 1989, and its pre-eminence is in part due to the fact that it has control of all forms of its product around the world. 40% of revenue generated came from outside the USA.

Steven J Ross, 62, Chairman of Time Warner Inc., in 1989 received \$34.2m in salary, bonus and stock appreciation rights. His presence, to deliver the Worldview Lecture at the Festival, accompanied by an assemblage of Time Warner executives arriving in a fleet of limousines, was testimony to the corporate clout the company deploys.

His opening remarks had a simple and seductive impact. He conjured up the image of the Earth seen by astronauts on Christmas Eve 22 years ago and quoted from Archibald McLeish's essay:

'We see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loneliness in the unending night - brothers who see now they are truly brothers.'

'Can communications both serve social needs and make profits...'

For Ross, this world, with the termination of the Cold War, stands 'on the brink of a magnificent opportunity for global unity and cooperation'. By harnessing the power of communications, problems of drugs, the environment, AIDS and illiteracy could be abolished.

And Ross was clear about the means to achieve this. The global reach of media juggernauts, freed from government regulations and restrictions, would draw the far-flung areas of the world into the international media community. Yet it was never spelt out how communications could be both harnessed to social needs and generate profits for his company.

Indeed, he argued strongly against

any restrictions on the global mission he plans for his company. 'We find ourselves confronting a series of inhibitors, in the form of legislative barriers, legislations and controls... We intend to continue championing the free flow of ideas, products and technologies in the spirit of free competition.'

Attempts by governments and the European Community to lay down legal quotas of programming to encourage or protect indigenous film and TV production were obstacles to this strategy, he argued.

Steven J Ross's plans for the globalisation of his corporation, and to spread Time Warner products in a world hungry for US culture also include joint ventures, partnerships and co-productions. Time Warner Inc. is already a major player in Britain's media, and the prospect of deregulated broadcasting has and will continue to open up the spaces for Time Warner to move into.

However, it would be wrong to single out Time Warner from the media conglomerates on the world scene. The philosophy behind its operation is the same as any other multinational, whether it is in the communications industry or making cars. The key question is whether the broadcasting media should be judged only in terms of satisfying consumer demand, or have placed on it other requirements.

The CPBF has rightly focused in the past on issues of ownership and control of the media within a national frame. The award of an extensive number of cable franchises to Canadian and American companies, and the imminent Broadcasting Act, will lead to significant investment from outside the UK in British media. The present Cable Authority will disappear into the new Independent Television Commission, and with it any regulatory function. What that means in practice is something we should follow closely both in terms of the quality and content of programmes, and the impact on this country's broadcasting industry.

Section 28 revisited

Section 28: A Practical Guide to the Law and its Implications by Madeleine Colvin and Jane Hawksley (Liberty). Available from CPBF £5 inc p&p

It's over two years since Section 28, the prohibition of lesbian and gay 'promotion' by local authorities, came onto the statute book. The active political opposition of the time has died down, giving way to a more cautious approach by some local authorities in handling lesbian and gay issues.

However, we may be about to see the first test case under the Section as Young Conservatives in Waltham Forest take on the council over its policy of encouraging lesbians and gay men to come forward as potential foster parents. In this instance, the council is confident the law hasn't been breached, but how can authorities resist the self-censorship intended by the Section, through fear of

court action?

This book from Liberty (NCCL) gives advice on how to act in the face of any legal challenge in a clear question and answer format with good examples. It gives the legal background to the Section as a laughably worded piece of legislation (what is a 'pretend' family?) that nevertheless adds to intolerance and legitimises prejudice against lesbians and gays.

What is remarkable is how little effect the Section has on equal opportunities policies. For example, any challengers to a council funding a gay pride celebration would have to prove that the organisers were trying to 'convert' heterosexuals!

In education, previous legislation ensures that the welfare and development of all children is paramount, so the discussion of sexuality and any counselling wanted by young lesbians and gays remains unaffected. A local

education authority (although not teachers) could be put under scrutiny if printed material encouraged young people to experiment sexually or showed lesbian and gay relationships to be 'the norm' (the likes of "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin" is the clear target here).

If you are unsure of the legal position and feel your council or LEA is being over-cautious then this book is essential reading. The government may have appeased its right wing by acting against lesbians and gays in local authorities, but we may still see the Section backfiring on it.

Steven Gray

May Day video

This year's Tyneside May Day was its centenary. The marches and rally were especially large, colourful, noisy and enjoyable - and it was all captured on film by members of the ACTT (the Film Technician's Union) and others. Now you can experience the continuing vitality of this strong Tyneside tradition and support its continuation by buying the souvenir video. Cheques or postal orders made payable to 'Tyneside May Day Committee' for £12 should be sent c/o Northern Newsreel, 35 Bottle Bank, Gateshead NE28 2AR. All proceeds go towards the production of future May Day events.

Letter to the Editor Baird's bearded

Following our report in Free Press 59 that *International Labour Reports* was being sued for libel by the UK multinational, William Baird, we received the following letter from a UK worker:

Dear Editor,

After reading of William Baird's reluctance to pay the compulsory wage increases to its workers in the Philippines (Free Press No. 59) I must say that low wages and poor conditions of service are not confined to the company's Third World employees.

As a sewing machinists at a Baird Textiles Factory in Yorkshire I work 39 hours for £91 per week, rising to £117 if I can reach the ridiculously high production targets.

As well as low wages we don't get any pay at all for the

first 3 days absence due to illness and we are under threat of loss of pay and/or dismissal if holidays are taken on dates other than those designated by the company. Also workers receive no holiday pay during their first year of service (yet they can't qualify for Income Support at these times) and the missing National Insurance contributions adversely affects their future entitlement to National Insurance benefits.

William Baird PLC was unusual amongst UK textiles companies in actually seeing a rise in profits last year. After working on a range of trousers retailing at £70 each at a famous High Street store I can understand why.

Name and address withheld by the Editor.

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CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

The CPBF will be holding a number of fringe meetings to develop a programme for media reform in the 1990s.

Black and Blue: Black People, the Police and the Media
Sunday 30 September 3pm
New Clifton Hotel, Promenade/
Talbot Square.

Chair: Tony Lennon (CPBF)
Speakers include: Broadwater Farm Defence Committee, Bernie Grant M.P., Martha Osamor (Tottenham Law Centre), Marc Wadworth (TV journalist/NUJ).

Freedom from Pornography: The next steps
Wednesday 3 October 1pm
Charnlea Hotel, 40 Charnley Road.
Chair: Teresa Stratford (CPBF)
Speakers include: Dawn Primarolo M.P., Clare Short M.P., Ann Gibson (MSF)

October 19 - Time to Know Day

ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 19 Time to Know will be holding events all round the country to draw attention to increasing censorship in Britain. October 19 is the anniversary of the government's broadcasting ban - an unprecedented restriction on free reporting. These are the main events in London:

DEMONSTRATION - Move off 12 noon from the BBC, Portland Place, London W1. Past ITN and Channel 4 to the Dominion Theatre.

RALLY - 1pm, Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, London W1.

CENSORED FILM SHOW - 3pm, National Film Theatre, South Bank, London SE1. Showing of three banned films on Ireland, including *Sixteen Dead* and *Behind the Mask*.

EVENING CABARET - 8pm, Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London SW1. Skint Video and other top acts. Tickets £10.

AND ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 20, an all-day conference on censorship, also at the ICA. Union and party branch delegates welcome.

For more details on all events, contact Time to Know at the NUJ, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Telephone: 071-278 7916

Changing the News: The Media in the Nineties

Thursday 4 October 12.45pm
New Clifton Hotel, Promenade/
Talbot Square

Chair: Tony Lennon (CPBF)
Speakers include: Brenda Dean (Gen. Sec. Society of Graphical and Allied Trades), Alf Parrish (Nat. Sec. National Graphical Association), Mark Fisher M.P. (Labour Arts spokesperson), Tony Benn M.P.

Bookings £6 and £4 (conc.). Phone 0532 462453

NORTH WEST CPBF PUBLIC MEETING

European Media: The Walls Come Down

Thursday 25 October, 8pm
The Cornerhouse, Manchester
Speakers: Max Easterman, BBC Reporter, *Europhile* and Philip Crookes, European Institute for the Media.
Tickets: £2 and £1 (conc.)
Bookings 061 228 2463

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Day school organised by CPBF
Edward R. Murrow: American Broadcaster His Times and Ours
Saturday 13 October 10am-5pm
Henry Moore Lecture Theatre, Leeds Art Gallery

'Bio-pic' of Ed Murrow's life directed by Jack Gold with Daniel J Travanti as Murrow; background talk by Granville Williams; and a debate *Reporting the '90s* with Ray Fitzwalter (Granada TV), Grant McKee (Yorkshire TV) and Roger Bolton (Thames TV).

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JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR
PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM

No. 61

Nov/December 1990

An urgent message to our supporters

The CPBF is currently facing a shortfall on our 1990 Appeal of £7500. In 1991 we will need to raise another £20,000.

To secure the Campaign's future we are asking all our supporters to take out a monthly standing order. With a regular source of income guaranteed we will be able to plan future activities with greater confidence.

If a standing order is not possible, a donation would be greatly appreciated. Please do all you can to help. (Standing order forms available from the CPBF office, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG.)

Murdoch shows ownership laws to be a mockery

The 2 November announcement of the Sky/BSB merger within 24 hours of the Broadcasting Act reaching the statute book was an act of breathtaking cynicism. Rupert Murdoch has made a mockery of its timid limitations on media monopoly.

Government plans to de-regulate commercial broadcasting were sold to parliament and public alike on the promise of competition, choice and quality. The free market was the mechanism which would deliver this. To offset concerns about cross-media ownership, restrictions were placed on the ownership of British-based stations, including satellite.

The Broadcasting Act says a non-EC national cannot control a British Direct Broadcast by Satellite system, such as BSB. Owners of 'non-domestic' satellite services, such as Sky, are also excluded from owning British DBS systems.

Secondary legislation, first promised in May 1989, was expected in the new session of parliament to limit newspaper owners to a 20 per cent stake in any British-based station, whether Channel 3, Channel 5 or BSB.

US Citizen Murdoch now owns 50 per cent of five channels of a British DBS system and 35 per cent of the national press. If the Sky/BSB deal is challenged he will simply transmit its merged channels from the Luxembourg-based Astra satellite.

The Government created the 'non-

domestic' loophole to accommodate Murdoch's Sky. Parliament was also assured that Sky would face competition from BSB and other satellite channels! At the report stage of the Broadcasting Bill, both Norman Tebbit and Johnathan Aitken argued that there would be so many satellite services in coming years that ownership restrictions applicable to the limited number of terrestrial TV channels were unnecessary.

In reality the Government has no desire whatsoever to curb the growth of monopoly in the media. In any clash between market forces and public regulation, it will choose the former every time.

Speaking in the wake of the Sky/BSB merger, David Mellor, the Arts Minister, said: 'These are commercial activities and however much we in Parliament like to think we call the shots we don't: the market calls the shots.'

Protests by the IBA, even critical reports from the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will count for nothing in this climate. The Government will turn its back and Murdoch will extend two fingers and say 'you shut up or I'll shut up'.

During the 1980s, the media moguls have had a free hand to build their empires. Four transnational corporations now control over 80 per cent of the national and local press. Two companies control 70 per cent of national newspaper distribution.

Only 50 or so wholesalers are left compared to 500 pre-Wapping. A web of cross-media ownership connects these companies. The Sky/BSB merger is a graphic demonstration that de-regulation, market forces by another name, will deliver broadcasting into the same hands.

Continued on p.2



"'The Sun' I think knows how to speak to the common man and woman"
Rupert Murdoch

Ownership laws a mockery

Continued from p.1

These are not just national but world trends. Steven Ross, Chair of Time Warner Inc., predicted at this year's Edinburgh Television Festival that just six global companies would control the world's media operations by the year 2000 (see *Free Press* 60).

This remorseless concentration of ownership is as big a threat to media freedom as direct Government interference, narrowing the range of information and opinion available to the public and excluding the vast majority from any access to the media.

Yet the question of ownership was studiously avoided by the Calcutt enquiry into media standards and will no doubt be side-stepped when the Sadler enquiry reports on cross-media promotion — after all, the Government set their terms of reference.

Choice, freedom and diversity can only be realised by laws which enable participation in the media and strictly limit the number of media outlets which any one company can own or have a stake in.

Given the ease with which powerful transnational corporations can brush aside national regulations, international agreements would have to be sought. But neither this, nor the complex difficulties relating to definitions of ownership and the handling of divestments, should lead to this issue being ducked.

The Sky/BSB merger has highlighted a stark choice: allow market forces to concentrate media power in fewer and fewer private hands, or establish democratic systems of public regulation which encourage the free flow of information and access for all.

Mick Gosling

Exit one lame duck - enter another

Fears are growing that the Press Complaints Commission, due to supersede the Press Council on 1 January 1991 as part of the Calcutt Committee's recommendations, will be even more feeble than its predecessor.

The composition of the PCC will be determined by Lord McGregor, Harry Roche and Lord Colnbrook. McGregor formerly headed the Advertising Standards Authority and is chairman designate of the new Commission. Harry Roche is chair of the Press Standards Board of Finance (PressBof), which will administer the funding of the PCC. Lord Colnbrook is the former Northern Ireland Secretary and Conservative MP Humphrey Atkins.

A spokesperson for PressBof confirmed the appointments panel shared Calcutt's and the industry's view that a majority of the 16 member Commission should be newspaper editors.

There will be no such self-selection for the 'public' members of the Commission. 'The appointments commission will have a free hand to select them', confirmed the spokesperson. There seems little prospect here of dog eating dog.

Worse is to come. *Independent* editor, Andreas Whittam Smith, told an editors' conference in mid-October that it was a 'very good rule' that only people personally injured by a newspaper should be able to complain. This would cut in half the number of complaints presently received by the Press Council.

A PressBof spokesman confirmed that this represented the majority view of editors, the same editors who will hold a majority of seats on the PCC, which, in turn, will have a free hand to determine its own rules and procedures.

In a curt response to a letter from CPBF supporters Terry Sanderson and Keith Wood, Whittam Smith confirmed he was 'in favour of limiting the Press Complaints Commission work to complaints made by those directly affected, using a liberal or generous interpretation of "directly affected".'

He failed to explain what would happen where a class or group of people was the subject of unjustified injury by a newspaper — an area in which the Press Council has often upheld complaints from individuals not directly affected. Would a complainant have to prove that s/he was black, female or homosexual (as appropriate), or would no such complaints be admitted?

Challenging Whittam Smith, Keith Wood said: 'Many of the victims of press abuse do not have the knowledge, confidence or facilities to make and sustain complaints. The Press Council's procedures were so bureaucratic it took an average of more than ten letters to reach adjudication.'

'Many complaints were not made or did not reach adjudication because of this difficulty. Even with simplified procedures I believe that many justified complaints will not be made to the Commission unless those not directly affected are allowed to complain.'

The areas which Whittam Smith's proposal could rule out — the generalised expression of racism, sexism, homophobia and union bashing — are the very areas in which gutter journalism and tabloid excesses have been most marked and affected most people.

In contrast with the apparent reluctance to tackle these areas of press abuse, Calcutt's strictures on privacy have been taken to heart. The PCC will be operating a 21 hours a day, seven days a week, 'privacy hot-line' to alert editors to complaints from persons who believe a newspaper is invading their privacy.

Within this lies the danger of pre-publication censorship and a possible mechanism for the rich and powerful to get genuine investigative journalists off their backs.

The CPBF has maintained that the real purpose of Calcutt was to defuse calls for specific changes to improve press standards — such as the introduction of a statutory right of reply to media lies and limitations of media monopoly — while allowing a system of ineffective self-regulation to continue. Even before it is born, it would seem this is to be the Press Complaints Commission's role in life.

Mick Gosling

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Mirror and Maxwell divided over Pergamon dispute

Being in dispute with a litigious multi-millionaire media mogul can lead to some very strange coverage indeed. At last year's Labour Party Conference calls for the expulsion of Robert Maxwell over his sacking of 23 NUJ members at Pergamon Press, and a mass picket of his cocktail party made a splash in most national daily and Sunday newspapers — except of course the *Mirror*.

This year, despite condemnation of Maxwell being debated and a resolution passed by an overwhelming majority, the coverage was in general far more low key, the only exception being, again, the *Mirror*, which covered the debate in a clear and objective article under the title 'Sacked workers backed'.

One of the explanations for this strange about turn is that five national newspapers are still being sued by Mr Maxwell for what they wrote last year. And though it is to their credit that they did not simply give in and grovel as so often happens, there is no doubt that they approach all 'Maxwell stories' with great caution nowadays.

'We don't cover Maxwell media stories,' the correspondent for the *Journalist* was told by a *Today* reporter at Labour Party Conference. 'We're still being sued from last time.'

Not so the *Daily Telegraph* — the sixth paper to have received a writ for its coverage of last year's conference and the only one that apologised. This is how they reported the picket of Maxwell's cocktail party this year: 'Meanwhile, a Labour captain of industry was having a less enjoyable time. As *Mirror* publisher Robert Maxwell poured the usual goodies down delegates' throats last night, the first real incident of the week took place. Outside the ex-Labour MP's hotel, ex-employees of his Pergamon Press demonstrated loudly against their alleged treatment.'

Not exactly a model piece of journalism! Who were these ex-employees, and what was the alleged treatment they were complaining about? The answer of course is that they are 23 NUJ members who were sacked for a one-day strike over union recognition. But the *Telegraph* dares

not go into detail for fear of Maxwell's lawyers. It is this same fear that lies behind a directive to the staff on the *Oxford Mail* that they are not to use the term sacked in connection with the Pergamon NUJ chapel, but must instead say that the 23 'lost their jobs'.

As far as the Pergamon dispute is concerned, self censorship is clearly operating across the board. How ironic, then, that it is left to the *Mirror* to break its 17 months reporting embargo on the dispute with the headline 'Sacked workers backed'. We cannot be sure of the factors that lay behind the decision during the Labour Party Conference to reveal the existence of the Pergamon dispute to the readers of the *Mirror*, but the chances are that while Maxwell was almost certainly 100% opposed to it, he was also probably partly to blame.

'The piece appeared...bearing all the hallmarks of one of those paid adverts taken out by despotic regimes to improve their image abroad.'

Though no reports on the dispute had previously featured in the pages of his newspaper, three weeks prior to the Labour Party Conference he had chosen to use the pages of the *Mirror* (which he once referred to as a megaphone) to respond to a petition that had been sent to him from around 500 delegates at the TUC conference.

The piece appeared on page 2 of the 7 September edition bearing all the hallmarks of one of those paid adverts taken out by despotic governments to try to improve their image abroad. It was clearly separated from the editorial part of the paper by a thick black line, and was set in a typesize well above what is conventionally used in the main part of the paper.

Most significant, however, was the fact that the text of the petition was printed in full and Maxwell's comment on it was published as a 'statement from Mr Maxwell', thus

clearly indicating that the comment came from Maxwell and not from the *Mirror*. This was in sharp contrast, for instance, to his comments on Scargill which have frequently been carried in the form of signed editorials.

Maxwell's response to the TUC petition contained lies, distortions and innuendo. Under the title 'Lies about Pergamon' it alleged that the 23 had not been sacked for going on strike — an assertion later contradicted by the *Mirror* article on the Labour Party Conference.

It went on to allege that Ron Todd had supported Maxwell's July offer to the sacked staff of £100,000. The truth of the matter is that Ron Todd had helped set up negotiations back in March and had played no further role since that time.

No attempt was made by the *Mirror* to contact Todd to verify Maxwell's allegations. Mr Maxwell finished by accusing the former NUJ General Secretary Harry Conroy of breaking his word regarding the £100,000 offer — again, no attempt had been made to get a comment from Harry Conroy.

Maxwell's use of the *Mirror* to further his own interests should come as a surprise to nobody, but that does not make it any more acceptable. Both the NUJ and the Pergamon Press chapel wrote to the *Mirror's* editor Roy Greenslade demanding a right of reply. The response they received was predictable: the *Mirror* had printed the text of the petition and had given Maxwell the right to reply to it: we should not expect to come back yet again. The NUJ is, of course, not allowing the issue to rest there, but is continue to take it up with Mr Greenslade and with the *Mirror* ombudsman, Peter Archer MP.

Having said that, however, the form in which the 'Lies About Pergamon' article appeared bore all the hallmarks of a forced compromise between Maxwell, who wanted the piece in, and Greenslade, who didn't, presumably believing it to be degrading for a paper now reputed to be Britain's best seller to be so obviously ruled by the whims of its owner.

Continued on p.6

Shadow boxing with impartiality

Much has been made in the media of the infamous 'impartiality' amendment dreamt up by Lord Woodrow Wyatt of Wexford and his reactionary cronies in Number 10 and on the Tory backbenches.

It has all been a waste of energy. Wyatt's witch-hunt has been directed solely at allegedly left-wing influences in editorial suites. His amendments stood little chance of getting onto the Statute Book. Indeed it is questionable whether that was even his intention.

The notion of impartiality did not need to be introduced — the requirement is already there, and has been for many years. Wyatt was acting as a stalking horse in the Tebbit school of rough riding.

By hyping the issue the media scared itself to death, and we can expect less and less fearless investigative reporting (which is not saying much), and more and more sensitivity about who is employed or allowed to say what.

By side-stepping Wyatt's full-frontal assault, Mellor has emerged as a fair-minded liberal, a technique he perfected at the Commons Committee stage where he boosted his standing in the media and his career prospects by happily slapping down the more rabid demands of Tory backbenchers.

He can now insist that the regulators take note of Government views about what impartiality might mean, happy in the knowledge that a shaken broadcasting establishment will make damn sure they don't ruffle any more feathers by 'overstepping the mark' and bringing down the fury of the Government in the future.

Meanwhile the Bill became an Act, and behind all the froth of recent weeks it remains what it set out to be — the means by which the vested interests of the 'free market' gain access to a largely captive audience.

The citizens of Britain must now fall prey to an era of electronic entertainment which owes more to the needs of international capital than to cultural traditions established over the last 40 years. How's that for impartiality?

Mike Jempson

The Broadcasting Act bites back

With the new broadcasting framework now approved by Parliament, MIKE JEMPSON reviews the Act in its final form and speculates on what the future holds...

Now the fuss is over the sackings will begin.

With the Broadcasting Act 1990 embedded in the Statute Book, commercial broadcasters will speed up their slimming regime. Staff will be shed, budgets will be tightened and bank balances will be fattened up in preparation for a dirty war.

The first objective will be to win back their franchises; the second to develop strategies that will woo audiences and advertisers at minimal cost in a ratings war that will make the days of Fleet Street Bingo look like a car boot sale.

There is plenty of evidence of the validity of CPBF warnings that the Act would reduce real choice and allow commerce to reign. Already half the 'incremental' so-called 'community radio' stations that came on air in the last year have been swallowed up by larger companies.

Budget cuts and restructuring in the commercial sector of both radio and TV have massively reduced permanent staffing levels. More will follow.

The BBC, officially untouched by most of the Broadcasting Act, has been quick to follow suit. Its managers may have been loathe to speak out about the implications of the Act for the Corporation, but their actions have spoken for them — massive budget and staff cuts, and the introduction of short-term staff contracts.

The BBC knows it has five years to become a broadcaster the Tories can be proud of before its Charter is renewed in 1996. With the commercial sector dealt with it will be open season on the BBC, and we can expect more and more political hype about the licence fee as we move through 1991.

In its final form the Act is little different to the Bill originally published in December 1989. It is longer, and more convoluted in parts, but essentially the Tories have got what they wanted, thanks to the shrewd dealings of David Mellor and their thumping Commons majority.

Commercial TV stations, including a revamped regional Channel 3, a new national fifth channel and those operating British based satellite services, will make cash bids for 10 year licences.

The quality of their programme schedules may be a deciding factor, but

the 'quality threshold' requirements increase rather than decrease the likelihood that the higher bid will always win.

Expect one, maybe two, of the existing TV companies to fail in their bid (just to prove that the ITC means business).

Satellite services based abroad and cable services (which can be non-EEC owned) simply apply for their 10 year licences on a fee basis.

ALL broadcasting licences granted under the Act are automatically renewable unless the company seriously transgresses the new rules governing what is permissible.

Three national commercial radio 8-year licences will be granted on the highest bid system, along with innumerable local radio licences where commercial viability seems possible.

To ensure that BBC Radio is put under comprehensive competitive pressure, only one of the national stations may broadcast 'pop' music; the others must take on either Radio 3, 4 or 5. Expect BBC local radio to dwindle or die.

'Expect one, maybe two, of the existing TV companies to fail in their bid (just to prove that the ITC means business).'

Ownership of new broadcasting companies is restricted — trades unions and local authorities need not apply. There is a limit on how much control those with a dominant interest in a medium competing for the same category of advertising revenue may hold in another. A national or local paper, for instance, may only hold a 20% stake in a national or local TV or radio station, and 5% in another.

The scene is set for a new generation of complex cross media holdings which will make the present web look like a string vest. The Stock Exchange will feature more and more prominently in determining the broadcasting we receive.

To ensure an initial period of stability, takeovers are forbidden from the time a licence is awarded until the end of the first year of broadcasting under the new system.



Expect some frantic buying over the next twelve months, with European money to the fore. Some major players may stay their hand until the dust has settled before moving in to take charge of licences that could last forever.

Underlying all this is the Government's belief that broadcasting should be a lubricant to the economy. Quite how that squares with the damage that falling advertising revenue is currently doing to the commercial TV and radio sector is unclear.

Presumably there is similar logic in the Government's White Paper claim that viewers and listeners should determine the future of broadcasting. They can, now — providing they become shareholders. Certainly there is no evidence of any other mechanism, apart from the ON/OFF button, by which viewers and listeners can influence what they see and hear.

We are guaranteed some news and current affairs, and some children's, schools and religious programming. The rest is down to the 'market'.

One small gain achieved in the Lords was a requirement that educational, social action and documentary programmes should be broadcast.

This did not even meet favour from the

Campaign for Quality Television who agreed with Mellor that programme content should be left to 'illustrative guidelines' drawn up by the regulatory bodies (and therefore negotiable). The requirement was dropped when the Bill returned to the Commons.

Broadcasters will be expected to keep to their self-devised programme schedules, unless they can convince the Independent TV Commission or the Radio Authority (which replace the IBA and the Cable Authority) that it is financially inconvenient to do so. To protect their viability, the regulatory authorities will look sympathetically on modifications to the terms of licences rather than have to fine companies for non-compliance.

Meanwhile Lord Rees Mogg and his Broadcasting Standards Council will intervene on our behalf if we fail to draw his attention to sex and violence. And the police will seek backing from the courts to seize material and prosecute if they think broadcasters have overstepped the boundaries marked out by the Obscene Publications, Public Order or Defamation Acts.

While commercial broadcasters work themselves up into a state of panic in search of profit, and the independent sector girds its loins for expansion (e.g.

finds ways of making cheap programmes) with the promise of 25% of all airtime, the CPBF must begin to outline the changes it wants to see in the new broadcasting environment.

Any programme of reform advocated by opposition parties likely to gain power or take the balance of power after the next election should include the following:

- An end to competitive tendering, with licences awarded, periodically, on merit after extensive public consultation;
- Protection of the principles of public service broadcasting including universality of reception;
- Guarantees of access to the airwaves for minority interests, and diversity in programming;
- The development of more democratic structures in the regulation of broadcasting, including empowerment of viewers and listeners through the BBC licencing system;
- A reduction in the opportunities for cross-media ownership and control;
- Strengthening of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission to make it a genuine 'consumer-driven' system for gaining redress, and abolition of the Broadcasting Standards Council.

A true fighter for press freedom

Frank Allaun, a Parliamentary colleague for many years, remembers Norman Buchan

All his life Norman Buchan, M.P., who died in October at 67, was obsessed with press and broadcasting freedom. Janey, his wife for 45 years, told me: 'He believed in the freedom of broadcasters to make their own programmes. He would have been jumping mad over the 'amalgamation' of Murdoch's Sky and BSB satellite TV.'

I knew that Norman had been bitterly angry for years that three millionaires owned and controlled nine out of ten dailies and Sundays in our country. To allow, in addition, one of them to take over BSB would have been too much.

Ironically he died in the week that the Lords debated imposing so-called impartiality on the ITV companies at the behest of Lord Wyatt of Wexford, the News of the World's weekly pundit.

It was over the issue of a free media that Norman Buchan, as the Shadow Arts Minister, got himself sacked in 1987. He wanted an independent Minister for the Media, not one who was subordinate to a Home Secretary, who has a hundred other matters to deal with. His was a policy which had been accepted by the Party's annual conference.

Subservience to the Home Office would mean that press, radio and TV would be controlled by bureaucrats, right wing top civil servants, whereas Norman believed in the freedom of broadcasters to make their own programmes. It was part of his tolerant, kindly, nature that his dismissal never soured him.

For Norman was a magnificent Parliamentary comrade, with unchallengeable and generally acknowledged integrity. Unlike some other originally sincere young men and

women who enter the Commons with the best intentions, he was never corrupted by the dangerous and beguiling itch for office — the belief that by keeping quiet they can one day do good things for their country and Party.

He was friendly even with those he strongly disagreed with, such as Donald Dewar and (Lord) Willie Ross. 'He was friendly with everyone — everyone except the arse-lickers', said Janey Buchan, M.E.P., a plain speaker if ever there was one.

I vividly remember this bespectacled, small, lean, figure always helpful and nearly always smiling. He had a marvellous sense of humour and a self-deprecating wit.

After leaving Glasgow University Norman Buchan was increasingly influenced by the millions unemployed; the struggle to defend the Spanish government against General Franco; and the growth of Hitler's fascism in Germany and of Mosley in Britain. He joined the Communist Party. During the 1939 war he drove tanks in the bloody battles in the North African and Italian campaigns. In 1957, shocked by Stalin's tanks in Hungary, he left the CP and joined the Labour Party.

Buchan told Labour Party members it was drifting to the right, but he realised that this was the mass party of the British working class. He refused to accept that the Opposition benches were Labour's natural habitat, believing that it was the duty and right for convinced socialists to work within it.

He was elected to Parliament for West Renfrew in 1974, which, after sweeping boundary changes became Paisley South

with a huge Labour majority. Despite his background, Wilson appointed him Under Secretary for the Scottish Office and then Minister of State for Agriculture. When Labour was defeated he became Shadow Minister for the Arts, for which job he was eminently suited.

All his life Norman devoured books, magazines, pamphlets and newspapers. He read seven papers a day. He had 8,000 volumes in his home. He understood, however, that literature and art went far beyond the printed page, loving music and the theatre.

Along with Ewan McColl he was a founding member of the great folk song revival. He was erudite in its origins. Songs, in his view, were oral literature. His book *101 Scottish songs* sold 50,000 copies. His poems and songs, popular throughout his home country, encouraged a whole generation of writers, musicians and singers.

Some indication of his grassroots and top level support was given by the 2,000 men and women who attended his funeral in the Glasgow crematorium.

I not only liked Norman Buchan, I strongly agreed with him — especially with his hatred of war and his struggle for unilateralism, CND and the CPBF. He remained the eternal optimist — and it's optimists who get things done.

Like Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner, Jack Jones and Ewan McColl, Norman never wavered in his support for the underdog. He never trimmed. He stayed the course.

Sincere condolences and good wishes to his wife and son.

Testimonial Fund - see page 8



Continued from p.3

Maxwell won, of course, but at the price of having his statement firmly quarantined from the 'real' content of the paper which left it bearing a vague resemblance to the Moroccan state's response to a recent Amnesty International report.

Who can tell if Maxwell's abuse of the *Mirror* to 'respond' to the TUC petition was not partly responsible for Greenslade's decision to end the moratorium of coverage of the Pergamon dispute with the article on the Labour Party resolution? Whatever the truth it seems to have resulted in Maxwell's own paper being one of the few that openly dares to state that the 23 were sacked for a one-day strike.

Meanwhile, Maxwell has not been slow to wreak his revenge. The Saturday following the 'Sacked Workers backed' article, his faithful lackey Joe Haines had this to say in his column. 'The leaflet circulated by my union, the NUJ, at Labour Party Conference was lies from beginning to end.' The NUJ is writing to Mr Greenslade...

The Pergamon dispute is a very expensive one and the chapel is in need of regular financial assistance. Please send any donations to: NUJ Pergamon Press Chapel, 60 Cricket Rd, Oxford OX4 3DQ. Cheques should be made payable to NUJ Pergamon Press Chapel. Standing order forms for regular donations are also available from the chapel (tel 0865 60762).

New socialist tabloid planned

by Davy Jones

Readers of *Free Press* don't need reminding about the ever increasing concentration in ownership of the media — papers, TV and radio. Less publicised in the parallel decline in alternative media, especially those explicitly of the Left.

There has not only been a decline in the number and sales of left wing newspapers: alternative publishers and bookshops have also been hit. While mainstream publishers, bookshops and papers have attempted to move in on this market with alternative booklists and shop sections, and wider news coverage, the overall effect has been a decline in real choice, and a decline in the representativeness of the media.

All this makes the launch of a serious

new non-sectarian left tabloid particularly welcome. The fortnightly, provisionally titled simply *socialist*, appears in a pilot issue in November and has a launch date of March 1991.

The paper has been launched by the Socialist Movement, which first emerged in 1987 with a huge conference in Tony Benn's Chesterfield constituency to 'relaunch the Left' after the Tories' 3rd election victory. Pledged to put socialism back on the agenda redefined as embracing feminism, ecosocialism and antiracism, it has held a series of national events and built local supporters groups across the country, especially in Scotland and Wales with left nationalists.

Socialist will aim to inform, organise and amuse a wide range of people who are not attracted to the existing left wing papers but who retain a broad socialist

perspective. It is aimed at socialist activists (and ex-activists) in the unions, in national and local campaigns, in the Left of the Labour, Green and nationalist parties.

It aims to be different by concentrating on news and information, rather than preaching; by being a platform for real people in everyday struggles in their communities and campaigns; by highlighting the importance of leisure, culture and living; by being readable, useful and fun.

If you would like more information about the project, or can help in any way — with journalistic, financial or other skills — please write to: Davy Jones, 13 Morland Mews, London N1 1HN. (Davy Jones was a former fulltime worker for the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom).

Independent media call for fair treatment

A wide range of independent newspaper and magazine publishers have formed a new Independent Publishers' Group, convened by *Everywoman* magazine 'to draw attention to the rich diversity of independent publications in this country, and to safeguard our future in the face of an increasing concentration of media ownership'.

The group — which includes feminist, environmental, political, lesbian and gay, and listings magazines — is particularly concerned about the difficulty being experienced by potential readers in obtaining copies of their publications. The number of newsagents displaying independent titles — especially those with a different point of view to the mass-circulation ones — is now only a minority. 'The overall effect is that the general public has a diminishing choice of titles and points of view', says the Group in its first joint statement since it was started a few months ago.

The news trade is asked to:

- stop cutting out small independent titles from their systems;
- honour all orders for individual copies (or stop pretending that such a service exists); and
- provide display space for publications offering different ideas and points of view 'as a real service to their customers — and an essential element in a free and democratic society.'

(This article originally appeared in *Everywoman*.)

Misleading signals

'The Propaganda War' was the title of a gripping session in a Royal Television Society Symposium, *TV Journalism in the Nineties*, held at Granada, Manchester on 9-11 November. Chaired by Francine Stock of BBC Newsnight, the panel included Nik Gowing, Foreign Diplomatic Editor, C4 News; David Feingold, London Bureau Chief CNN; and Nick Jennings, Foreign Editor, Sky.

A filmed commentary by Nik Gowing introduced the session. After the invasion of Kuwait we saw 'TV images of a highly geared, efficient US military machine moving into position', he said. It was bluff, however, part of the US military's use of broadcasting for disinformation to halt Saddam Hussein's military advance. The real situation was near chaos with a computerised logistic support system unable to locate military spares.

Television is used as a means of disinformation and for the conduct of diplomacy over the airwaves. As the 'world sleepwalks into war' a clear overall picture of the situation in the Gulf isn't presented. Nik Gowing highlighted the dilemma for journalists, pointing out that when Edward Heath and others intervened to get hostages out, they revealed that Saddam Hussein's key source of information was through CNN's global television news service.

If journalists present the real situation, with accurate reports on the forces deployed in the Saudi Arabian desert, their morale and state of equipment, this will be to the benefit of Hussein and the Iraqi military.

In fact journalists covering Desert Shield are under the clear control of the military. They are given a detailed list of what can and cannot be reported; the

first violation is a warning, and the second is bags packed and home.

Also journalists have to give full co-operation in return for access to pictures of military training, so a media circus, 'the fourth estate travelling from site to site in convoys of buses' exists. David Feingold for CNN put it bluntly: 'The rules are there and the military run the operation,' he said. The ironic aspect of the situation is that satellite technology beams pictures, the same pictures throughout the world, but 'when war comes, the technology giving instant access will be shut down,' Nik Gowing stated.

The speculation on the 'the inevitability of war' in Nick Jennings' phrase was partly due to the dearth of information available. Commentators were 'making it up, getting close to speculating and predicting an imminent offensive' or following up newspaper stories and embellishing them.

The key question, raised in discussion, was: 'Have we, through our broadcasts, been pulling the nation towards war?' Chris Cramer, Managing Editor, BBC News, thought that terms like 'Desert Rats' and the images of the 7th Armoured Brigade being deployed, suggested 'preparations for war as a jolly wheeze.'

If, as CNN's David Feingold asserted, 'we are used as conduits of information and disinformation', the implications are serious. Audiences rely on TV news for what they believe is accurate, unbiased information. What in fact emerged from this excellent discussion was of a highly selective and massaged message being transmitted on the world media.

Granville Williams

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IRISH FILMS ON SHOW

October saw the launch of the first of a series of screenings of films and videos on and around Ireland organised by the CPBF and the Connolly Association.

Film maker Kenneth Griffith was present to introduce and discuss his film 'Hang Out Your Brightest Colours'. The film, made in 1972, deals with the life and times of Michael Collins, leader of the IRA in the 20s. Although commissioned by ATV, it was promptly banned, and copies were unavailable even to the film maker.

The screening offered a rare chance to view the documentary and was extremely well attended, with people being turned away due to lack of space.

The screenings will continue on a monthly basis at the Unity Club, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG. The next screening on 27 November, is of 'The Dawn', a War of Independence film and

NEW FROM CPBF UNION VIEWS

Videos from the Labour Movement

In the last ten years video has become a direct and effective method of communication throughout the Labour Movement. Produced by the CPBF with the assistance of the TUC, this comprehensive catalogue lists over 300 videos produced or commissioned by trade unions. The tapes cover a wide range of material including international issues, historical documentaries and educational material on racial and sexual discrimination and is a unique and invaluable resource.

Available from the CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG. Price £6.00 including p&p.

the first Irish feature film with sound. Anyone wishing to attend or receive details of future events should contact the CPBF office.

The event, organised by the North West CPBF, was enthusiastically welcomed by staff and students, and they hope it can become an annual event.

NEW WORKER

Angela Kelly has been appointed as the new Information and Administrative worker at the National Office. Her work includes the servicing of the Women and Lesbian and Gay sub-groups and inquiries in these areas should be directed to her.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE NORTH WEST

Over 100 students from Stockport Colleges attended a Day School on TV called *Opening the Box* on Friday 16 November.

Sessions covered key issues affecting Television in the 90s, an analysis of What is TV News? and workshops examining Sport on TV, Soaps, Music and Comedy, run by people working in Television. A session, What's NOT on the Box, also attracted a good audience.

NORMAN BUCHAN TESTIMONIAL FUND

Janey Buchan informs us that it was Norman's wish that he be remembered through a purchase for Glasgow's Peoples' Palace, the museum of local history. Donations payable to the Norman Buchan Testimonial Fund should be sent to Johann Lamont, 5 Mansion House Road, Glasgow G41 3DN

Edited for the National Council by
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JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR
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No. 62 Price 40p Jan/Feb 1991

Free Press 62 has been delayed to allow us to concentrate on fundamental issues of media freedom raised by the Gulf War. Our full time workers, volunteers and National Council members are working flat out to monitor media coverage, expose the suppression of news and challenge censorship. This is putting enormous pressure on both people and money.

YOU CAN HELP

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The Great British Silence

Behind the sanitised media-speak are dead bodies,
writes JOHN PILGER.

In 1972 I watched American B52s bombing southern Vietnam, near the ashes of a town called An Loc. From a distance of two miles, I could see three ladders of bombs that curved in the sky; and, as each rung reached the ground there was a plume of fire and a sound that quaked the ground beneath me.

This was operation Arc Light, described by the Pentagon as "high performance denial interdiction, with minimised collateral damage": jargon that echoes today. The B52s were unseen above the clouds; between them they dropped 70 tons of explosives in a "long-box" pattern that extended several miles. Almost everything that moved inside the box was deemed "redundant".

On inspection, a road that connected two villages had been replaced by craters, one of them almost a quarter of a mile wide. Houses had vanished. There was no life; cooking pots lay strewn in a ditch, no doubt dropped in haste. People a hundred yards from the point of contact had not left even their scorched shadows, which the dead had left at Hiroshima. Visitors to Indochina are today shocked by the moonscape of craters in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, where people lived.

The B52s now operating over Iraq are the same type of 30-year-old aircraft. We are told they are bombing Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard, and the "outskirts of Baghdad". Before the introduction in Vietnam of military euphemisms designed to make palatable to Congress new hi-tech "anti-people" weapons, the term used was carpet bombing. This was vivid and accurate, for these aircraft lay carpets of death, killing and destroying comprehensively and indiscriminately. This is what they were built to do; and that is what they are no doubt doing in a country where most people have neither shelters, nor are 'dug in'.

The other night, on television, a senior ex-RAF officer included the current B52s raids in his description of "pinpoint strikes... part of the extraordinary precision work of the Allies". John Major and Tom King constantly refer to this "remarkable precision" and, by clear implication, the equally remarkable humanitarian benefits this brings to the innocent people of Iraq, although further information about these benefits is curiously unforthcoming. The British media amplify this.

Indeed, so zealously have the London-based "media response teams" spread the authorised word that the Controllers of Information in Whitehall have had to rein them in, rather like the Soccerer and his apprentice. George Bush has wagged his finger. Come on guys, lets not be "overly euphoric". John Major's autocue has said as much.

Beware, wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, of "your sham impartialists, wolves in sheep's clothing, simpering honestly as they suppress".

The first authorised version of the war was, of course, the Euphoria Version, put out by Bush himself and the autocue here. This has now been replaced by the It Won't Be Easy Version. According to the Controllers of Information, the "phenomenal surgery" of Allied technology, alas, failed to "take out" most of the Iraqi Air Force and the Scud missiles. The echoes from Vietnam grow louder. The fabled "tunnel" has returned. Wait now for the "light".

Protesting far too much, Bush says comparisons with the Vietnam war are inappropriate. Listen carefully to General Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and himself a product of the Vietnam



war, and the vocabulary and mentality are the same. The principal weapons used against Iraq, such as the tomahawk cruise missile, have a "circular error probability". This means that they are targeted to fall within a circle, like a dart landing on a dart board. They do not have to hit, or even damage, the bullseye to be considered "effective" or "successful". Some have hit the bullseye - the Tomahawk that demolished the Ministry of Defence in Baghdad is the most famous - but many, if not most, clearly have not. What else have they hit? What else is within the circle? People maybe? The autocues say nothing. The collusion of silence in the media is almost total.

General Powell has also referred to "minimised collateral damage". Like "circular error probability", this term was invented in Vietnam. It means dead civilians: men, women and children. Their number is "minimised", of course, although we are not told against what benchmark this is measured. Of course the Iraqis have no wish to admit they are bleeding badly, preferring to exaggerate the numbers of enemy planes brought down - exactly as the British did during the Battle of Britain.

The common feature of the Euphoria Version and the It Won't Be Easy Version is
Continued on p.2

Media freedom and the Gulf crisis

The following statement, endorsed by the National Council of the CPBF, was issued on the eve of the war.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom believes media coverage of the Gulf crisis has failed to provide the public with the comprehensive information and range of views necessary to allow individuals to come to a fully informed view of the crisis.

It has highlighted how the concentration of ownership in the press and the lack of proper democratic accountability in broadcasting, especially in times of acute national and international crisis, inhibits the proper flow of information and analysis to the public.

The CPBF takes no position on the question of how the Gulf crisis should be resolved. But we are profoundly disturbed that, editorially, all twenty one national newspapers have endorsed the use of force - and the overwhelming majority have backed war sooner rather than later.

This has coloured analysis of the historical origins, nature and possible resolutions of the

crisis, and the potential consequences of war. With rare exceptions, it has meant little space has been given to the range of informed opinions critical of the official position.

Broadcasting organisations have interpreted their obligation to be impartial extremely narrowly, focusing on the opinions of the government and the leaders of the main parliamentary opposition parties. Because these parties share a common perspective on the issue, broadcast coverage has remained within a narrow framework bounded by the official interpretation of the crisis. The views of many people deeply critical of government and opposition policy have received no regular exposure on mass audience news bulletins.

The government's plans to further restrict news coverage in the event of hostilities should be openly resisted by both the press and broadcasting organisations in the interests of the public's right to have full information on which to base its judgement of the conflict.

The guidelines put forward by the Ministry of Defence are so blanket it would be almost

impossible to report a war with them. The unprecedented prospect of triple vetting by the British, American and Saudi military censors in forward areas, when the access of the media has already been strictly limited, is unacceptable.

For the past decade the CPBF has consistently challenged 'the myth that only the private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access'. We have also challenged 'the myth that the present forms of ownership and regulation of broadcasting guarantee editorial independence, democratic accountability or high programme standards' (CPBF Aims and Objectives).

Coverage of the Gulf crisis is the most glaring example of the need for major reforms in the ownership and control of the media.

Just as the CPBF campaigned against government attempts to suppress the Real Lives and Zircon programmes, against the Spycatcher ban and the 1988 Broadcasting Ban, so we will campaign against the distortion of the issues surrounding the Gulf crisis and against government manipulation and censorship of the media.

We will continue to campaign for reformed media characterised by plurality of ownership, diversity of views and genuine forms of public accountability.

15 January 1991

The Great British Silence

Continued from p.1

manipulation. What is distinctive about this war, compared with even the Falklands war is that media scepticism has been surrendered without a whimper. There have been rare exceptions, notably in the *Guardian*. Lies dished out are lies swallowed whole. Video-game pictures are believed by intelligent people; no suspicions are raised, no context is called for. That journalists have a duty to overcome the bureaucracy of deception and not to serve it, is apparently not on anyone's agenda.

During many years reporting wars and coping with propaganda, I have never known such manipulation in a self-proclaimed free society. Thought control in democracies is normally a subtle process, but these days the manipulation, in some respects, is not unlike that in totalitarian states.

Witness the advertisements for war and products of death that cover editorial pages. John Major's congratulatory message to the BBC was affirmation of the media's role.

Myths linger, of course. In the old eastern European regimes, most people were in little doubt about the state's ability to lie and distort, and so they developed a cynicism that allowed them to read between the lines. We need to acquire this skill urgently.

Television's satellite and video game wizardry merely reinforces our illusions. The system of "sound-bites", perfected by CNN, means that if truth intrudes, it is quickly rendered obsolete. Genuine, informed analysis is out of the question. There are few salient facts and no blood. An emotional screen is erected between us and reality, and our sensibilities are manipulated accordingly. Pilots are represented as heroic, as heirs of "the few" who faced the Luftwaffe

Truth is turned on its head. No one doubts the pilots' courage; but the original "few" were up against equals, not those of a third world country - regardless of the current propaganda about the "massive Iraqi machine". Equally, the Israelis are described as showing "extraordinary courage" in the face of "this outrageous attack" on them, while the people of Iraq are devoid of human form, let alone courage. Unlike the Vietnamese, they are not even stick figures allowed to flit like phantoms across the screen, bit players in an American "tragedy".

The manipulation began long before the war started. In order to prepare them, the British people were denied an understanding of the complexity of reasons behind the crisis in the Gulf. It was not mentioned that Britain invented Iraq and divested it of Kuwait in order to divide and rule the region, laying the roots of this war. That the Americans had helped to put Saddam Hussein in power, providing him with a hit list of his opponents, was suppressed. That Britain, America and other "allies" sustained his murderous regime was relegated to the letters page.

Remember the United Nations? The UN role is now hardly mentioned; as an instrument of US policy it has served its propaganda purpose. Once the countdown to 15 January had begun, sanctions, the fraudulence of the American deadline and the legal shakiness of Resolution 678, in relation to the UN Charter, were obsolete issues.

Beware, wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, of "your sham impartialists, wolves in sheep's clothing, simpering honestly as they suppress".

This article first appeared in New Statesman and Society, 25 January 1991. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of John Pilger.



One of the most sickening aspects of media coverage of the Gulf war has been the journalist as story. Baghdad blitzed - John Simpson cracks his ribs. Kate Adie in army fatigues in the Saudi Desert when for all she knew she might as well have been on Blackpool beach.

According to *Music and Media* (9.2.91) Spain had its own local hero in Eric Frattini (you can recognise him above) "who kept the country's largest radio network, 235-station Cadena SER, enthralled with live broadcasts from Tel Aviv. Frattini got to within 10 kilometres of where an Iraqi missile hit the city, detailing the mayhem of the attack." Makes a Scud missile look accurate.

Truth and the casualties

Not content with minimising news of Iraqi casualties, the government is planning a disinformation campaign on the NHS and British casualties.

The Department of Health has been accused by the CPBF of preparing a disinformation campaign to mislead the media and public about the ability of the NHS to cope with casualties arising from the Gulf War.

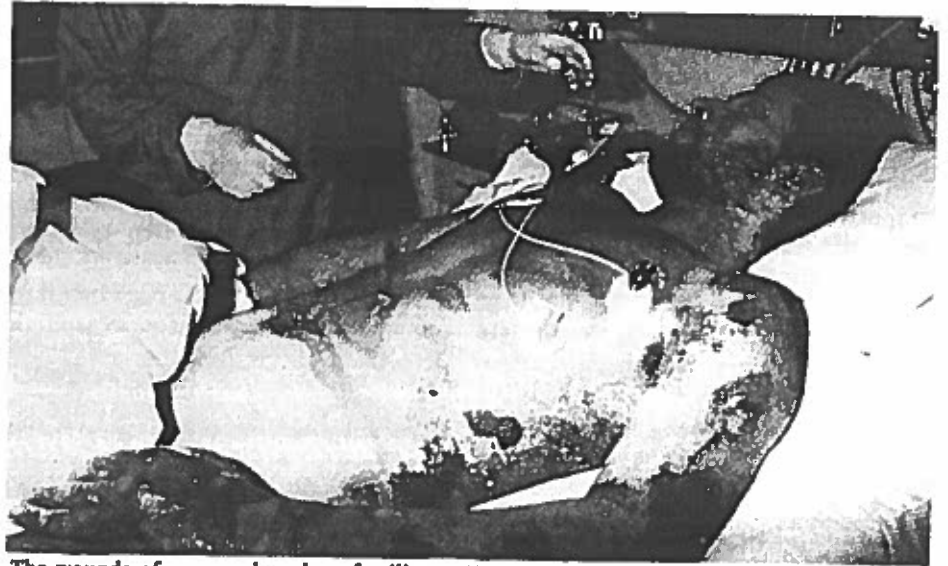
The Department's own secret contingency planning reveals that very heavy casualties are expected from the Gulf which will cause massive disruption to the NHS and civilian patients. Specialist units, such as burns units, will be under severe pressure, and inadequate medical knowledge exists for dealing with the victims of chemical warfare. However, this will be denied by regional health authority and district press officers working to guidelines, *Gulf Contingency Planning, Dealing with the Media*, issued by the Department of Health's Information Division.

In the media guidelines, NHS press officers have been provided with model answers to twenty five possible questions. Question 4 asks: "How much knowledge does the NHS have for dealing with chemical/biological injuries?" The suggested answer is: "NHS staff and hospitals have plenty of experience of dealing with the effects of toxic chemicals and with infection. We are confident that we can cope with such cases if arising as a result of attacks in war.... Full clinical guidance has been made available to NHS clinicians."

According to the Department of Health's own confidential *Guidance for Clinical and Administrative Medical Staff* this is simply not true. The conclusion of Appendix Six which deals with chemical warfare casualties states: "The management of C.W. casualties will present new problems for doctors in the UK... The compounds likely to be used in CW differ from those encountered in ordinary clinical toxicological practice..."

Only limited clinical guidance is available. The same appendix lists seven types of chemical weapons but clinical information is only given for nerve agents, mustard gas and lewisite. The confidential advice admits doctors may not know what they are dealing with. It says of nerve agents, "experience in the management of severe organophosphorous insecticide poisoning is of course extensive but the precise details of how nerve agent poisoning may differ from OP insecticidal poisoning are imperfectly known."

Media and public alike could also be misled about the prospects of casualties



The wounds of war are largely unfamiliar to NHS staff.

recovering. In answer to the question "What are the chances of recovery from chemical injuries or biological infection?", NHS press officers are advised to say: "Medical advice provided by our clinical advisers is that persons initially surviving attacks from chemical / biological weapons have a good chance of recovery."

The secret advice to senior medical officers is far more cautious. It warns that, "experience of insecticide poisoning has shown that after apparently successful initial treatment patients may deteriorate at any time during the first two or so weeks post poisoning".

Indeed, concern is expressed over the delayed effects of "a range of (non-chemical) compounds including various smokes still used on battlefields. Pulmonary oedema produced by such compounds may be of delayed onset and may still present a problem when casualties arrive in the UK. The transport of such casualties in aircraft at reduced cabin pressures (and therefore at reduced PO₂ levels) may also produce problems."

The confidential advice also expects "heavy pressure on burns, intensive care and neurosurgery units. Such pressures may arise, in part, from staff shortages, particularly of nurses and technicians."

However, if journalists ask whether casualties will overwhelm the NHS, they will be told, "the available facilities will more than meet the number of casualties which could be referred to us in the worst case scenario".

Analysis of the *NHS Plan and Procedure Guide* for Gulf support has already revealed that this involves planning for a possible 18,500 casualties - over 50% of British forces in the Gulf. 11,000 beds are

being prepared in military hospitals and a further 7,500 in the NHS.

Nevertheless, if asked "How many beds are the NHS providing to deal with Gulf casualties?", NHS press officers are being advised to say: "No request for specific numbers of beds have yet been made by the Ministry of Defence." In fact, there has even been secret planning to deal with the eventuality of having to hold casualties at civilian airports. The DoH's confidential advice reveals that: "Facilities for transferring and if necessary holding casualties at civil airports which may be used have been scrutinised, through a joint initiative involving the Department of Health, the Department of Transport and the RAF."

Speaking at a House of Commons press conference held by the CPBF and the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, CPBF National Organiser Mick Gosling said: "The media's guidelines amount to a systematic attempt to downplay the number of casualties expected, minimise the impact these will have on the NHS and civilian patients, and disguise the new problems medical staff will face if they have to deal with chemical warfare injuries."

"There is no justification for such a disinformation campaign. It has nothing to do with the security of Allied forces in the Gulf and everything to do with reassuring nervous public opinion. Already the military censors in the Gulf control all the news we receive of the war. Now the virus of secrecy and disinformation appears to be spreading to the Department of Health. It would be a disgrace if the casualties of war became victims of the propaganda war."

As Allied planes dropped the equivalent of a Hiroshima bomb on Iraq in the early hours of Thursday 17 January, the British media scrambled to establish hot air supremacy.

"100% success" screamed the banner headline of the London *Evening Standard*, outblitzing its tabloid rivals. At first the men from the Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon let this line run. After all, to win a real war you have to win the propaganda war. Nothing beefs up domestic support like early success and the promise of a quick, bloodless (for our boys) victory.

Operation Desert Fog continued with public opinion being acclimatised to military reality. The gung-ho journos, whose knowledge of combat is limited to fighting their way to the bar at El Vino's in Fleet St, had to be reined back. There could be no quick victory against Iraq's military machine.

Television audiences which had been encouraged to view this war as some kind of hi-tech video game, to marvel at the weapons of death rather than see their deadly consequences, had to be disabused. Hence the astonishing spectacle of a military briefing where the top brass tell journalists... "this is not a video game". *Who suggested it was!*

Finally, one week and 10,000 bombing missions later, the circle was completed. We were told Iraq's military forces are largely intact. The air force is buried underground in hardened bunkers. Runways can be repaired in 24 hours. Even *that* spectacularly exploding air ministry in Baghdad had a command bunker underneath built to withstand a nuclear bomb blast.

The military also confessed that 80% of missions "effective" does not mean 80% of targets destroyed. It is simply a claim that 80% of planes have reached their targets and dropped their bombs. One wonders about the other 20%. While B52s can apparently rain bombs with an accuracy never demonstrated in Vietnam, the world is asked to believe that cloud cover has hampered reconnaissance which would show just what has been flattened on the ground.

According to Victorian Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics. But even he would have paled in the face of military briefings.

Lies, Damned Lies and Military Briefings

Mick Gosling looks at the role of the media in the propaganda war.

The only real images of war we saw in the first week were on the streets of Tel Aviv and on the faces of captured air crews.

In the middle of the night of 24 January, and ITN correspondent in Saudi Arabia lets slip the truth: "The hard information available to the public is so slight that it is impossible to make any hard judgement on the progress of the war."

"Our people do not expect that kind of information and we are not used to giving it. You are not going to get in Britain the kind of information you get from hard-hitting questions in America. You will not get a climate in Britain for this type of thing."

Brigadier Farrah-Hockley, former NATO Commander-in-Chief

All we knew was that we were one week into a war where all sides are promising carnage - and one week into the propaganda war aimed at getting public opinion to accept it. Having been carpet bombed with non-news, the cycle started again. President Bush announced that operation Desert Storm was "right on schedule"...

The second week saw similar Allied claims of military success. Our "surgical" strikes were contrasted with the indiscriminate Scud missiles of Saddam. Whereas Scuds have killed a handful of civilians no comment has been made of the fact that just one civilian death for each allied bombing raid would mean 40,000 Iraqis dead.

Instead there is talk of "collateral damage".

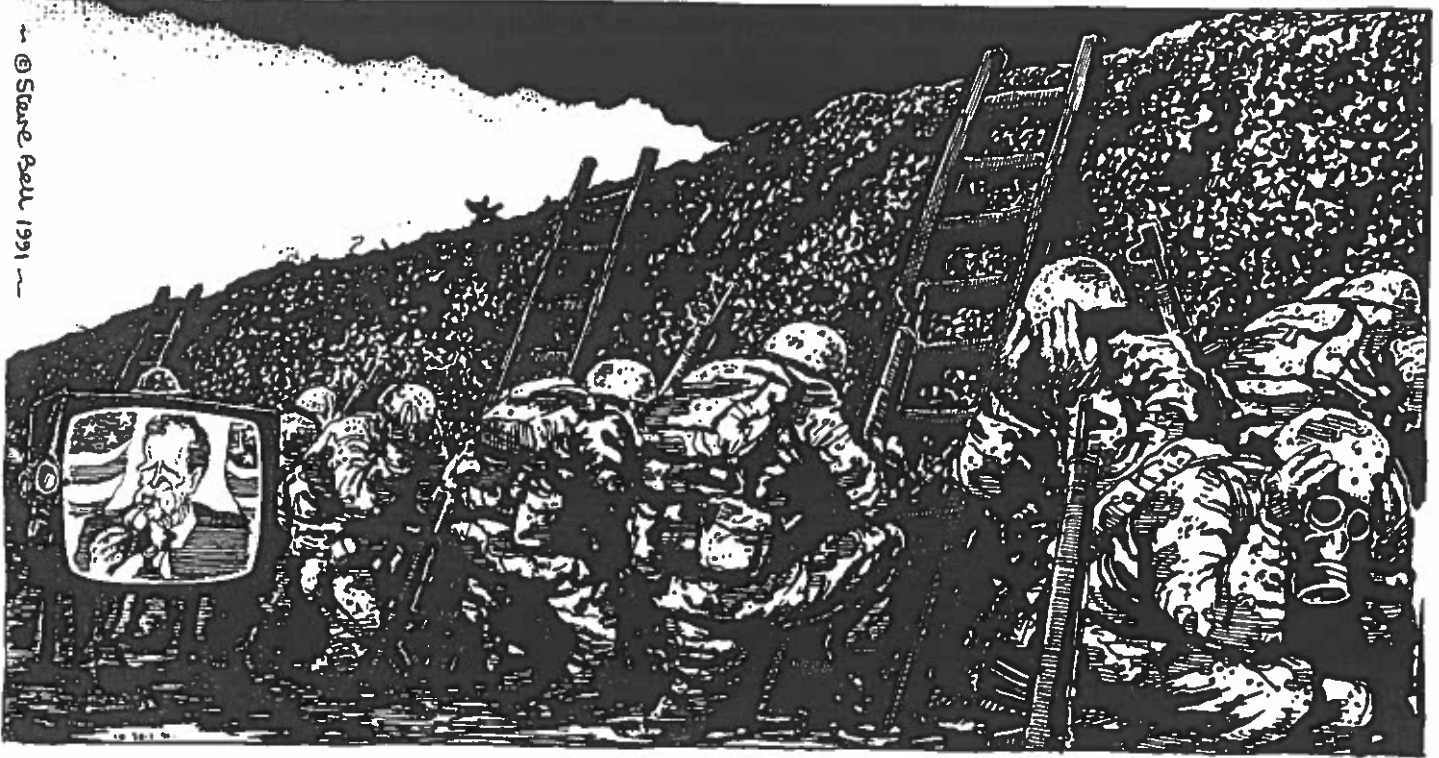
Compare the airtime and acres of print coverage devoted to the flooding of the Gulf with oil, all those heartrendering pictures of dying birds, with the absence of coverage of Iraqi civilian deaths. Indeed, the peace campaigners who were derided for warning that war would bring environmental disaster, now find their arguments hi-jacked as justification for continuing the war.

The carpet bombing of Iraqi ground forces is termed "degradation". The comment of a retired US paratroop commander that Iraqi troops would "melt like butter off toast" was reported once at night and then suppressed. By contrast Saddam Hussein is demonised for all his works. The war is becoming a crusade and US and British aims are changing. The mendacity of ministers on both sides of the Atlantic, who imply UN Resolution 678 calling for stability in the Middle East encompasses the overthrow of Saddam, has not been subject to serious scrutiny in news bulletins and most of the press. The media machine has slid along behind the war machine.

Why has this saturation news coverage produced so few hard facts and so little informed analysis? When journalists and broadcasters speak portentously of "the fog of war", they present tautology as explanation. There is nothing foggy about the grip the military exercises over the media in the Gulf. It is total, and backed by (that dirty word) sanctions. And it began the moment the Allied forces set foot in the Saudi desert.

Strict Media Ground Rules, covering fourteen categories of "not releasable information", were laid down by the Allied Joint Information Bureau and policed by military minders. Journalists could only report what the military allowed them to see.

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Point 3 of the Rules stated: "You MUST remain with your military escort at all times, until released, and follow their instructions regarding your activities." This is followed by the classic newspeak that "these instructions are not intended to hinder your reporting", a fig-leaf dispensed with since the war started. Journalists subservience to the military was underlined in Point 6: "If you are not sure whether an action you will take will violate a ground rule, consult your escort officer PRIOR TO TAKING THAT ACTION."

The weapon of control is access. Any reporters or crews freelancing or wandering away from their military escorts are warned. Do it again and they might as well pack their bags as their military escorts will be withdrawn.

David Feingold, London Bureau Chief of Cable News Network, puts it bluntly: "the rules are there and the military run the operation. We are used as conduits of information and disinformation." (See *Free Press* 61)

Many journalists have been more than willing to participate in this charade. But an even greater shame is that of the newspaper and television editors who have perpetuated it. Until the eve of the war they gave little or no publicity to the censorship operating, yet alone challenged it.

The representatives of our 'free' media loyally trooped off to carefully vetted meetings with the Ministry of Defence on the 3rd and 7th January, to be briefed on how the MoD/Allied

"The final political decision rests with the people. And the people, so that they may make up their minds, must be given the facts, even in wartime, or perhaps especially in wartime."

Paul Scott Mower, editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, during World War Two

forces would organise media coverage in the event of war. The prospect of triple vetting by British, American and Saudi censors hardly raised an eyebrow.

On the ground in the Gulf only two British "Media Response Teams" have been allowed forward with the 4th and 7th armoured divisions, comprising one television crew, one radio reporter, two print journalists and one photographer.

Their material is pooled through a forward transmission unit where it is censored by the military before it is transmitted to London. The other source of information is military briefings. To ensure the home front stays firm, the MoD has issued 'guidance' to editors on the release of information.

When the BBC bridled, not against the ground rules but against this guidance, the MoD promptly deployed its access weapon. A

Graphic reproduced by kind permission of Steve Bell

Ministry spokesman was quoted in the *Evening Standard* (14 January) saying: "We would have to think hard about allowing any reporters to accompany our troops if their editor was carrying reports which jeopardised security." The BBC promptly issued its own guidance which is equally restrictive.

The consequence is that we are witnessing the most censored war in recent history. There are 32 areas on which information cannot be published without the approval of the MoD.

These include progress of battles, munitions supplies and equipment short-comings, specific ship or aircraft losses and rules of engagement - of particular interest as the Allied commanders have been careful to avoid ruling out the use of nuclear weapons. Even the consequences of terrorist attacks would be censored.

These restrictions are more concerned with maintaining domestic morale than protecting Allied forces in the Gulf. By accepting them the media is failing in its duty to supply people with both the information and the range of opinions they need to form their own views of the war.

"The final political decision rests with the people," wrote Paul Scott Mower, editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, during the Second World War. "And the people, so that they may make up their minds, must be given the facts, even in wartime, or perhaps especially in wartime."

Media unions oppose censorship

Media unions and civil liberties groups are united in their opposition to government censorship of the Gulf War. The National Union of Journalists' Executive meeting on 3 February voted 23 to 1 to condemn censorship of the media, call for an immediate end to the war and support the activities of Media Workers Against the War and Liberty (National Council for Civil Liberties).

The ACTT and BETA, who are currently merging to form the Broadcasting Entertainment and Cinematograph Trades Union, have taken similar positions. The ACTT's General Council of 27 January authorised "an investigation into reporting restrictions on the Gulf War with a view to initiating an industry-wide campaign for the fullest information to be made available to the British people." The ACTT is also seeking through the Welsh and Scottish Trade Union Congresses and the Scottish Labour Party Conference to affirm that "full and accurate media coverage of the conduct and consequences of the war is both proper and necessary in a democracy and a precondition for informed public debate." It is calling for a campaign in support of organisation's and individuals whose objective is "the responsible discharge of the media's obligations".

The All Industry Censorship Group - which involves media unions and employer's organisations, the British Film Institute, the CPBF and anti-censorship groups like Index and Article 19 - have expressed their growing concern. In the words of ACTT's Roy Lockett, there is an "underlying suspicion that the restrictions are indicative of an attitude which does not regard the media as independent conduits of factual information but as potential propaganda arms of the state."

In instructions to all chapels on the eve of war, the National Union of Journalists reminded members that they are bound by the Union's Code of Conduct to "strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship". The NUJ is asking for the labelling of material subject to explicit censorship, a demand agreed at the *Guardian*. The NUJ's principles and guidelines for reporting emphasise that "journalists in the field are not there as public relations officers of the British Army. They are not on 'our side'; their duty is to report truthfully."

No CPBF, No Comment?

Ever wished you were better informed about being disinformed? With the CPBF you can be. For only £2.50 and a large SAE we will send you copies of the **Ministry of Defence** and **BBC guide-lines** on reporting the war plus a copy of **Rejoice: Media Freedom and the Falklands**, the CPBF pamphlet that tells you how it was done last time.

We can also supply bulk copies of *Free Press* at 25p each, post free. Order both from CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG.

The union also urges journalists, including editors, not to succumb to self-censorship and to use established news criteria and their own judgement in deciding what stories to publish, not "rules or restrictions imposed by the military or politicians".

While supporting all anti-censorship activities within the media, the CPBF is also backing Liberty's (NCCL) campaign to defend civil liberties in time of war. Freedom of information is a central demand in this. Liberty also highlights the right to a fair trial. In a statement the organisation says: "Iraqis and Palestinians are being arrested, detained and deported for reasons of so-called national security. They have no right to representation, to details of the reason for their detention and no access to a fair and open appeals system." Liberty wants fair treatment and natural justice for all detainees. It is also concerned that all Iraqi nationals, regardless of circumstances, have been denied entry to Britain since 18 January, and at the rise of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in Britain.

OWN GOALS

The role of the western arms manufacturers in equipping the Iraqi military is a sensitive, censored subject. The BBC has twice cancelled a *Panorama* special on the role of British companies in the Iraqi "supergun" saga. Less well known is that Allied forces could, quite literally, be blown up by their own weaponry. According to *Jane's Defence Weekly* (2.2.91), "Iraq's most modern self-propelled artillery system is the French GIAT Industries GCT 155mm system of which 85 were delivered. Prior to hostilities, Saudi Arabia had loaned Iraq some of its 51 GCT's and it is assumed that these were returned."

SHORTAGES

Munitions and equipment shortages are not something the MoD, and therefore the media, want to talk about. Ground rules etc. News reaches *Free Press* however, that at least one Territorial Army regiment has been seriously "degraded" a few thousand miles out of range of Iraqi artillery. The Royal Yeomanry TA regiment has had the engines removed from its Fox and Saracen reconnaissance vehicles for shipment to the Gulf.

PORNOGRAPHY OF WAR

Those American pilots who returned from their first bombing raid over Baghdad saying it was the best 4th of July show they had ever seen and just like *Top Gun* might well have thought they were still at the movies. According to the *Washington Post* many of them had been watching porn films before flying. The story was sat on by the Pentagon.

Meanwhile British tabloids have been filled with lurid flights of fancy about the likely sexual fate of one captured US woman soldier. "Beauty in the butcher's lair" was the headline on a *Sunday Mirror* "exclusive" (3.2.91). Editors for War are currently working on a fast breaking story that the beastly Boche raped their way across Belgium in 1914.

Fighting Media Bias

If you don't think you're getting the facts and only half the arguments in media coverage of the Gulf crisis do something about it.

Get on the phone-ins, send letters to editors and complain to the broadcasters.

The BBC and ITV have to keep a record of your complaint if you ask for it to be logged. Complaints are passed on to editorial committees. SO PUT THE PRESSURE ON.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Register your complaint by telephone.
2. Ring the relevant number below and ask to speak to the Duty Officer.
3. Say you want your complaint logged - they can't refuse to accept it.
4. Make your complaint brief and precise.
5. Check it will be passed on.

If you see a particularly good item or programme ring in with congratulations. This can defend programmes which are attacked as insensitive, undermining morale etc. and create pressure for more diverse coverage.

BBC News & Current Affairs 081 743 8000

ITN & Channel 4

071 833 3000

TV-AM News 071 267 4300

BBC Radio News and Current Affairs 071 580 4468

BBC World Service News 071 240 3456

Independent Radio News 071 333 0011

The money behind the war lobby

Funding for a multi-million dollar campaign to support US military policy in the Persian Gulf came from unknown sources - but the affiliations of its leaders point to Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification church, the Kuwaiti government-in-exile and the US far right.

The coalition for America at Risk, a Virginia-based organisation, placed more than 700 TV ads in an effort to "defeat the liberal Democrats who think the president is stepping on congressional prerogatives." (Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, *Washington Post*, 9.12.90) The group also took out full-page ads in major papers and established a network of 50 speakers.

One co-chair of the campaign was Sam Zakhem, who served as ambassador to Bahrain under Reagan and Bush. Zakhem also served on the board of CAUSA International, the unification Church's main political organ, and attended the founding conference of CAUSA North America in 1983 (*City Paper*, 18.8.89).

In an interview in 1987 with the *Middle East Times*, a paper owned and controlled by Unification Church members, he described the outlook shared by both the US and Arabs as "Godism", which is a word Moon uses to describe his theology. Zakhem went on to denounce Israel: "They have a communist party in Israel and they are highly socialistic in Israel. The Israeli system is really a communist system. The only system that is [more] communist is that of communist China." (Zakhem later claimed he had been misquoted about Israel...)

The headquarters for America at Risk was the public relations firm Keene, Shirley and Associates. Keene, Shirley is also known for its PR work with the American Freedom Coalition, a Moon-led

right-wing umbrella group. America at Risk also worked with direct-mail expert Richard Viguerie, a former officer in the Freedom Coalition and a Moon ally since the '60s.

Another right-wing activist connected with America at Risk was William Kennedy, described by the *Wall Street Journal* (30.11.90) as "a registered Kuwaiti agent trying to profit by managing Kuwaiti flight capital". Kennedy explained his political approach to the *Journal*: "When George Bush makes a decision, I support him." America at Risk distributed material provided by Citizens for a Free Kuwait, a Kuwaiti-funded public relations effort.

A third co-chair was Scott Stanley Jr., who edited *Conservative Digest* when it was published by William Kennedy, and also served as editor for the John Birch Society publication *New American*.

Given the connections of the America at Risk leadership, it is disquieting that the *Washington Post* (30.11.90) seemed to have accepted the group's claim to be funded "entirely by private citizens." The Iran-contra affair might have taught the *Post* to be sceptical of well-funded "private" endeavours in support of US foreign policy.

Research: **Fred Clarkson**. This article originally appeared in the Jan/Feb edition of *Extra!*, the journal of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting), a US based national media watch group. It offers criticism in an effort to correct bias and imbalance and to focus public awareness on the narrow corporate ownership of the press.

Media workers up in arms

It was standing room only when 800 journalists, printers and broadcasters packed into London's Conway Hall on Monday 28 January to launch Media Workers Against the War. Newspapers and television were savaged for censored and biased coverage of the Gulf conflict.

Adverts, pop songs, and dozens of programmes have been pulled from the schedules as the broadcasting authorities have demonstrated their "sensitivity" to the government's propaganda machine. The disappearance of Cher's *Bang Bang* or Phil Collin's *Something In The Air Tonight* from BBC playlists is laughable. Removing John Lennon's *Imagine* and *Give Peace A Chance* is clearly politically inspired.

While the public is asked to accept Iraq being bombed back into the Stone Age, programmes dealing with the causes and consequences of war are stopped. Foremost amongst these is a *Panorama* programme on the role of British arms manufacturers in supplying Iraq with its "supergun", twice pulled from the schedules by BBC chiefs. Not to be outdone, Channel 4 pulled a documentary on the experience of life under air bombardment in World War Two based on the letters of a German mother to her children in England.

Anger and frustration at this media manipulation spilled over in the MWAU meet-

ing. *Guardian* columnist Edward Pearce said he was reminded of the First World War when Horatio Bottomly used *John Bull's Weekly* to promote gung-ho patriotism and persecute conscientious objectors. He attacked the war-mongering editors of the tabloid press who "stand at the gates of hell and usher other people in... They are unwilling to make the leap from their screaming headlines to the body bags coming back from the Gulf."

Attacking journalists and broadcasters who failed to take their professional and ethical responsibilities seriously, Pearce said there was a culture of servility and deference to authority in news organisations which was all pervasive and insidious. It permeated down from the highest editorial level to the lowliest hacks.

Daily Mirror columnist Paul Foot attacked the military's ground rules and MoD's guidance for Gulf reporting. "What kind of people are these that can't stand the truth. If this is a good fight, we can surely talk and write about it."

Anit-Vietnam veteran Tariq Ali proposed a radical solution to news management "Let's do away with the illusion that we are getting news. We might as well hand over the BBC and ITV news to the MoD and put a General on to read it. At least then we'd know where we stand."

Media Workers Against the War.
Further details from 071 737 3741

WAR REPORT

War Report has been launched by a group of independent journalists. It aims to be a quality tabloid newspaper reporting the stories on the war in the Gulf not covered in the mainstream media and opinions which have been ignored or downgraded.

War Report will challenge the overall style and content of the media's coverage and will seek to stimulate a wider and fuller public debate in Britain about the war.

The first issue (price 50p) led on a story that the US is planning to use napalm or possibly even more deadly fuel-air explosives against Iraqi troops.

War Report needs help with stories, production and distribution.

**Contact 52 South Park Rd,
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Notice of CPBF Annual General Meeting

Sun 28 April 1991 9.30 - 4.30

**University of London Union,
Malet St, London WC1**

(BR Euston, Tubes: Russell Sq., Goodge St)

The 1991 AGM of the CPBF will take place on Sunday 28 April.
All individual members are eligible to attend and vote.

Affiliated organisations can send voting delegates on the following basis:
below 1,000 members, 1 delegate; 1,000 - 10,000 members, 2 delegates;
10,000 - 50,000 members 3 delegates; 50,000 - 100,000 members, 5 delegates;
100,000 members and over, 10 delegates.

MOTIONS from individual members or affiliated organisations must reach the national office not later than **MONDAY 25 MARCH.**

NOMINATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, which meets monthly in London, are invited in the following categories: individual members, 6 seats; members of the NUJ, 4 seats; workers in print, 4 seats; workers in broadcasting, 4 seats; other trade unions, 4 seats; other organisations, 6 seats; CPBF regional groups, 2 seats each; CPBF sections/sub-groups, 2 seats each. The deadline for nominations is **MONDAY 15 APRIL.**

REGISTRATION. Individual members and delegates are urged to register in advance to allow the national office to plan conference packs and refreshments. We are asking individuals to make a contribution of £2 each, and organisations a contribution of £5 per delegate, to cover the cost of these items and child care.

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS. Members or delegates requiring child care facilities are asked to contact the national office not later than **MONDAY 15 APRIL.** We need details of names and ages of children and any dietary or medical requirements in order to plan proper arrangements.

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No. 63 Price 40p May 1991



~ Steve Bell 1991 ~

TV's war: doublestandards and double-think

'We did use the word censored. We tried to be as accurate as we could in what we said in front of the reports.'

'In Iraq, in Baghdad we said reports were subject to Iraqi censorship. You notice that phrase. That is not to say every report was censored, in fact some reports were not censored. But they were all subject to Iraqi censorship and we thought it right, even when they were not censored, to let the viewers know we were working under those particular conditions. In Israel where reports were censored, we said they were censored.'

'In Saudi Arabia where we had to leave out certain details for operational reasons, we said just that - we had to leave these details out for operational reasons. If you can't understand that that's your problem.'

David Mannion, ITN Editor, responsible for all of ITN's programmes on ITV.

Also inside: Spin control at the Pentagon p. 3 Phillip Knightley on patriotic censorship pp. 4 & 5, and more.

The sound and the fury

'Who could have thought television could be so thrilling?' These were the immortal, not to say downright immoral, words with which Sheena MacDonald, presenter of Channel 4's *This Week*, introduced a recent British Film Institute retrospective on television coverage of the Gulf war.

Thrilling, perhaps, in the overheated atmosphere of television newsrooms. But for television viewers, smart communications technology, smart weapons, and above all, smart news management produced a wealth of images and a dearth of news.

'We got carried away by the impact of military technology and our own technology,' admitted Tim Orchard, editor of BBC TV's *One O'Clock News*. 'We were using ground stations in Kuwait which for us were the equivalent of the first moon landing.' 'I share the concern that it looked like little boys' computer games,' said Liz Howells, managing editor of Sky News.

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Ann Pointon, Linda Quinn,
Granville Williams.

Nik Gowing, diplomatic editor of Channel 4 News, added his own *mea culpa*: 'How many people were really killed....Only seven per cent of ordnance dropped was laser guided. The rest of the bombs were free fall and only 25 per cent hit their target. We are suffering the fog of war.' The fog of war or necessary illusions? Throughout the war media editors were the willing accomplices of the military censors and the government news managers.

In a democratic society, in which the public is entitled to comprehensive information and a plurality of opinion, it should not be like this. Within days of the Gulf war ending, television news showed it does not have to be like this. It was the harrowing reports in the major news bulletins on the plight of the Kurds, and the exposure of the

hostile Arab public opinion, and the increased burden the war imposed on tens of millions of people in the countries of the South, were subjects marginalised or excluded from the major news bulletins.

Doublestandards and double-think were conscious editorial policy. It was not the Ministry of Defence, but John Wilson, Controller of Editorial Policy at the BBC who laid down the Corporation's line on the eve of war: 'Programmes should make it known in general terms that some information will be held back for military reasons and that reports out of Iraq are rigorously censored' (*War Considerations*, January 1991).

Not to be outdone, David Mannion, responsible for all ITN's programmes on ITV, could not understand the derision which greeted his comment at



hypocrisy and duplicity behind U.S. and British government policy, which forced Bush and Major to act.

That action may well prove cosmetic, but here was clear evidence of the ability of television news to mould public perception of a crisis - and mobilise public opinion.

Throughout the Gulf crisis there was no such systematic questioning of the sordid history of diplomatic manoeuvrings by the U.S. and Britain in the Middle East, or of the stated aims of operation Desert Shield, which was meant to protect Saudi Arabia, or of how it metamorphosed into a Desert Storm to 'free Kuwait'. When war itself broke out, the beneficiaries of the military's and media's mutual technological obsessions were the respective governments of the United States and Britain.

War was sanitised while critical analysis of U.S. and British policy, dissident domestic voices, largely

the BFI retrospective that 'the information was controlled, but you were not controlled in how you reported it'. Challenged on the language used by ITN to describe military censorship he produced the specious nonsense printed on our front page.

Richard Blystone, CNN's London correspondent, appeared to blame the viewers. 'TV exists in a defined period of time in a little square box. It is an emotionally loaded symbol. If you go to TV for your only news, then your lazy. If you go to TV for the truth, then your a looney.'

But if future war coverage, to paraphrase Macbeth, is to be more than 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing', we must reject such cynicism and continue to fight for democratic and accountable control of broadcasting.

Mick Gosling

Spin control at the Pentagon

Throughout the Gulf war the Ministry of Defence played second fiddle to the Pentagon when managing the news. There were even complaints that the MoD withheld information already released in the U.S. Coupled with CNN's 24 hour coverage, in which no White House, Pentagon or military briefing was missed, this may have created the illusion that the US administration was more open in its dealings with the media and U.S. war reporting was itself less censored. But as the U.S. media watch group, *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, relates, nothing would be further from the truth.

The extent to which war reporting was controlled by the Bush administration was seldom detailed by the press and hence widely misunderstood by the public, which largely bought the argument that restrictions were necessary for some vaguely defined 'security' reasons. Such arguments were belied by the Pentagon's arbitrary ban on coverage of coffins returning to the Dover Air Force Base, and by the '48-hour news blackout' at the beginning of the ground war that was abandoned as soon as the news turned out to be good for the Pentagon.

Nor were the pools formed because there would otherwise be too many reporters for the military to safely manage: the Pentagon actually flew in, at its own expense, 450 local U.S. reporters to cover their 'hometown troops'. Meanwhile, foreign and alternative reporters who would not produce such predictably favourable coverage were almost entirely excluded from the pools.

The restrictions were aimed not at protecting lives, but at protecting the Bush administration's popularity by keeping unpalatable images away from the U.S. public.

'I've never seen anything that can compare to it, in the degree of surveillance and control the military has over the correspondents,' stated *New York Times* war correspondent Malcolm Browne (*Newsday* 31/1/91). 'When the entire environment is controlled, a journalist ceases to be a reporter in the American or Anglo-Saxon tradition. He works a lot like the PK (Propagandakompanien, the Nazi propaganda corps).'

The policy had its roots not only in the Pentagon's successful efforts to control the flow of information during the invasions of Panama and Grenada, but in the sophisticated techniques of spin control developed by the Reagan and Bush administrations, techniques whose finest flowering was in the 1988 Presidential election campaign. The key principle used by both is that if you can control where and when journalists (particularly TV journalists) can report, you can control the imagery and its emotional impact on the public. Michael Deaver, Reagan's minister of photo opportunities, marvelled at the Pentagon's media mastery: 'If you were going to hire a public relations firm to do the media relations for an international event, it couldn't be done any better than this is being done.'

'You asshole,' NBC correspondent Brad Willis told Robert Fisk. 'You'll prevent us from working. You're not allowed here. Get out. Go back to Dhahran.'

The prime function of the pool reporting concept was to limit the imagery available to TV cameras. Thus we saw much mock heroic imagery of missiles rocketing into the wild blue yonder; images of soldiers killed or wounded by 'friendly fire' or 'non-combat related accidents' were not considered suitable photo opportunities. As Howard Stringer, president of the CBS Broadcast Group reported (*New York Times* 4/3/91): 'There are more people routinely killed across the spectrum of American television in a given night than you saw in any of the coverage of the war.'

Since so much of U.S. action was in the air, where reporters are naturally excluded, the Pentagon provided its own visuals: the video-game footage from laser-guided 'smart bombs' hitting seemingly uninhabited buildings, always dead on target. That the military selects the best examples of its handiwork for their show and tells is obvious, but that didn't stop TV from rerunning the footage endlessly,

or pundits from citing it as evidence of how well expensive high-tech weaponry works.

While some journalists abandoned the pools and set off on their own in search of more independent reporting, others seemed to prefer the comforts and privileges of being a kept press. When Robert Fisk of the *Independent* tried to report without official permission on the battle of Khafji, NBC correspondent Brad Willis reported him to the Marines (*Independent* 6/2/91; Jack Anderson 3/3/91). 'You asshole,' the reporter told Fisk. 'You'll prevent us from working. You're not allowed here. Get out. Go back to Dhahran.'

Reporters who tried to cover the war outside the Pentagon's press pools were sometimes detained and threatened by US soldiers. Marines held a wire service photographer for six hours, threatening to shoot him if he left his car - 'We have orders from above to make this pool system work,' they told him. A French TV crew was forced at gunpoint to turn over to Marines footage of soldiers wounded at the battle of Khafji.

The power to control where pool reporters go - and to remove unco-operative reporters from the pool, as was done to the *L.A. Times'* Douglas Jehl - was not enough to satisfy Pentagon information managers. Journalists were also accompanied by military escorts who intervened in reporting, blocking interviews on sensitive subjects like the practice of religion by US soldiers in fundamentalist Saudi Arabia. Military officials had right of approval over the final copy and footage (although the benign verb 'cleared' was usually used in place of the more ominous 'censored').

The response of the mainstream media to being censored by their government was strikingly muted, considering that in the case of Nicaragua the media often considered wartime censorship as a plausible justification for overthrowing the government. They could have legally challenged the Pentagon restrictions; the Center for Constitutional Rights, on behalf of a number of journalists and liberal and progressive publications, filed a lawsuit seeking the abolition of the restrictions on the grounds that there is no wartime exception to the First Amendment. But not only did mainstream media not join the lawsuit, they hardly even reported it.

Here is the Patriotically Censored News

Information manipulation has progressed since the Crimea and reached deadly sophistication in the Gulf, writes Phillip Knightley

The war in the Gulf marked a major change in censorship. Although the Alliance gave 'military security' as its ostensible reasons for the rules it imposed on correspondents - the excuse used ever since the British invented military censorship in 1856 - there was a covert expansion of aims. In the Gulf War, the Alliance goal was much more ambitious - to manage the news to its own advantage.

News management in the Gulf had three main purposes: to deny information to the enemy; to create and maintain support for the war; and to change public perception of the nature of war itself. Of these the third is by far the most important and the most sinister. How did we get to this alarming state of affairs?

The Crimea

After the failure of the Allied attack on Sevastopol in June 1855, sentiment in Britain swung against *The Times* and its correspondent, William Howard Russell, the pioneer of modern war reporting whose critical dispatches from the Crimea had helped bring down the government. Prince Albert called Russell 'that miserable scribbler', one MP suggested that the army should lynch him, and there were suggestions that the behaviour of *The Times* and Russell was little short of treason.

This made it easier for the new Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Codrington, to acquire government support for some sort of restraint on the press. The government favoured putting the reporters on their honour not to report anything that might endanger victory, but Codrington, whose opinion of journalists was not very high, went further. On 25 February 1856, he issued a general order that must rank as the origin of military censorship. It forbade the publication of anything the authorities considered could be of value to the enemy.

1914-1918

Britain has been involved in no major war since then in which some degree of censorship has not been imposed. And as early as the First World War, the government had expanded the aims of censorship to include point number two from above - create and maintain support for the war.

In 1914-18 the military allowed only six correspondents to report from the front. It put them in military uniform, provided them with orderlies, lorries, cars, conducting officers and censors. The censors lived with them, ate with them, read their dispatches, and opened their private letters.

'We identified ourselves absolutely with the Army in the field.... There was no need of censorship of our dispatches. We were our own censors.'

First World War correspondent Sir Philip Gibbs, 1923.

The correspondents drew lots to see who would cover a particular attack and then shared the report with their colleagues, an early form of the modern 'pool' arrangement. Each then submitted his story to the censor and what was left was sent by military dispatch rider to Signals where it was telephoned to the War Office and then sent by hand to the various newspaper offices.

The aims were to provide the public with colourful stories of heroism and glory so as to sustain enthusiasm for the war, to cover any mistakes the high command might make, preserve it from criticism in its conduct of the

war, and to safeguard the reputations of the generals.

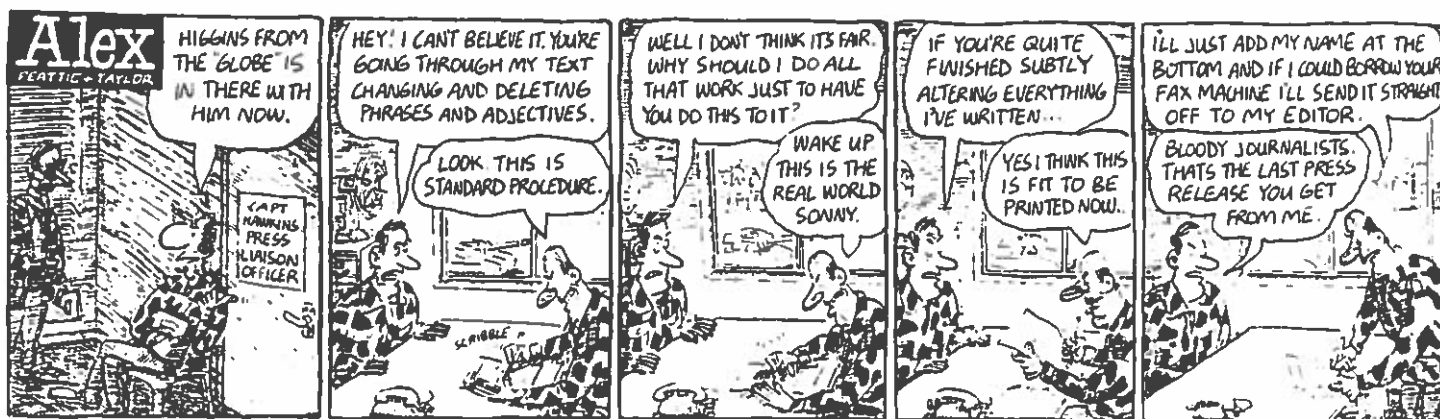
The correspondents went along with all this. One of them, Sir Philip Gibbs, wrote in 1923: 'We identified ourselves absolutely with the Army in the field... There was no need of censorship of our dispatches. We were our own censors'. *The Times* approved: 'They felt that their task was to sustain the morale of the nation in mortal combat; therefore they praised victories no less highly than they deserved; in stalemates they found elements of advantage; and defeats they minimised, excused, or ignored.'

The effect of this distortion was immense. The average British citizen, now a soldier, had been accepting all along that if something was printed in the newspapers, then it was true. Now, in the biggest event of his life, he was able to check what the press said against what he knew to be the truth. He felt that he had found the press out, and as a result he lost confidence in his newspapers, a confidence to this day never entirely recovered.

1939-1945

By 1939, the government had come to regard the war correspondent as a part of the armed forces - 'an integral and essential part of our fighting activities on land, on the sea and in the air' - who, for the most part, again went along with what the censors said. This was understandable because the war was one of national survival in which the wickedness of the enemy did not have to be invented.

But it did produce worrying after effects - when censorship was finally lifted many correspondents were bewildered. One spoke for them all when he said: 'But where will we go now to have our stories cleared?' A Canadian, Charles Lynch, summed up: 'It's humiliating to look back at what we wrote during the war. We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders.'



Vietnam

Vietnam upset the status quo. Censorship has always been a problem in the United States because the first amendment to the Constitution guaranteed freedom of expression, and prior restraint (censorship) could only be justified in a national emergency. There was no declaration of war against Vietnam and therefore no censorship. Correspondents were free to travel where they wished and write what they liked. The military confined itself to trying to persuade them to 'get on side' and to using its political clout in Washington to influence editors.

It did not succeed. At first correspondents supported the war, but when they saw that government policy was not working they said so. Graphic television coverage brought home to Americans the nature of the war itself, its bloody brutality, and the suffering of Vietnamese civilians. That, and increasing American casualties, sapped public support for the war and the United States pulled out.

The lesson were noted. On 13 October 1970, a Royal United Service Institution seminar in London discussed television coverage of the Vietnam war. The Director of Defence

Operations, Plans and Supplies at the Ministry of Defence, Brigadier F.J. Caldwell, said that if Britain ever went to war again, 'we would have to start saying to ourselves, are we going to let the television camera loose on the battlefield?'

Falklands/Malvinas

The answer was no. By the time the Falklands campaign had started, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had in place its plans to manage the news. The MoD started with one major advantage - it, and only it, controlled access to the war. So no one was let loose on the battlefield unless he had first agreed, as a condition of being allowed to accompany the task force, to accept censorship at source. And, to give the correspondents an idea of their duty, they were issued with a booklet which told them that they would be expected to 'help in leading and steadying public opinion in times of national stress or crisis'.

The MoD succeeded in managing the news brilliantly - censoring, suppressing, and delaying dangerous news, releasing bad news in dribs and drabs so as to nullify its impact, and projecting its own image as the only real source of accurate information about what was happening. Those stories it suppressed until the war was over gave an indication of a trend that was developing in the culture of censorship.

After the war, correspondents back from the front rushed into print with the 'untold story', incidents that the MoD had refused to pass at the time. The intriguing thing is that most of these stories would have been of no value to Argentina whatsoever. What they did was to paint too vivid a picture of the face of battle.

Gulf War

So by the time the Gulf War had started, censorship's additional aim was to convince the public that the new technology of war had removed a lot of war's horrors from early on: the

emphasis was on the 'surgical' nature of air strikes; the cancer would be removed but the living flesh around it would be left untouched. Bombs dropped with 'pinpoint accuracy' would 'take out' only military targets; there would be little or no 'collateral damage' (dead civilians). Iraq's military machine would be destroyed from the air so that there might even be no need for soldiers to kill soldiers in a ground war of attrition.

The picture that this news management has painted is of a war almost without death, a sanitised version of what has gone before. It was weeks before any bodies were shown on television, and then British television chiefs voluntarily cut the more horrific scenes. A new language was brought into being to soften the reality of war. Bombing military targets in the heart of cities was called 'denying the enemy an infrastructure'. People were 'soft targets'. Saturation bombing was 'laying down a carpet'.

The idea was to suggest that hardly any people were involved in modern warfare, only machines. This explains the emphasis at Alliance press briefings on the damage 'our' machines have caused to 'their' machines, and the reluctance of the briefing officers to discuss casualties - on either side.

So the Gulf War is an important one in the history of censorship. It marks a deliberate attempt by the authorities to alter public perception of the nature of war itself, particularly the fact that civilians die in war. The rationale, as yet unproven, is that the public will no longer support any war in which large numbers of civilians are killed, especially by Western high technology armaments. Whether the new censorship succeeds or not remains to be seen.

Reprinted with the kind permission of Index on Censorship & Phillip Knightley. The IoC Gulf Special, £3, and Phillip Knightley's definitive history of war censorship, *The First Casualty* £7.50, are available from CPBF. Add 10% p&p. CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG



Vietnam revisited

The role of the American media during the Vietnam War is still hotly debated. In this article, **Daniel Hallin**, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of California argues that one of the most persistent myths about Vietnam is the idea that saturation coverage on television turned the public against the war, and by extension that any televised war will lose public support.

The truth is that television was very far from showing the 'true horror of the war' in Vietnam, although it wasn't military restrictions that limited what we saw. The limits were mainly self-imposed - or to be more generous, were imposed by television's relation to its audience, to its government and military sources, and to the soldiers who were the principal characters in the 'living room war'. These factors affected what we saw in the Gulf as well, far more than military restrictions, tight as these may have been.

The main story for television in the early years of the 'living room war' was the 'American boys in action'. The networks assumed, probably correctly, that this kind of 'up close and personal' reporting would appeal most strongly to the public. The morale of American troops was very good when the war began, and most television coverage was filled with vignettes of brave soldiers and their powerful weaponry which of course made wonderful visuals for TV. The 'big picture' was filled in by military planners. The networks' own policies, meanwhile, limited graphical portrayals of casualties. 'Producers and editors must exercise great caution before permitting pictures of casualties to be shown,' said one CBS directive.

'Shots can be selected that are not grisly, the purpose being not to avoid showing the ugly side of war, but rather to avoid offending families of war victims.' This policy however well-intentioned, had the effect of sanitising television's image of war.

Television coverage did not become substantially more sober until the public, Washington officials and the soldiers in the field had already lost confidence that the war could be won. Television, in other words, was more a



GULF WAR WORD QUIZ

MATCH SANITIZED PHRASE AT LEFT WITH CORRECT MEANING AT RIGHT

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Pounding positions | A. KILLING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Softening up | B. KILLING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Collateral damage | C. KILLING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Saturation strikes | D. KILLING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Carpet bombing | E. KILLING |

WASSERMAN
© 1991 BOSTON GLOBE
DANIEL HALLIN

follower than a leader of public opinion.

Much of the public seems also to assume that the media in Vietnam were a threat to military security, judging from polls that show support for tight restrictions on journalists in the Gulf. But this is also incorrect. Several examinations of the voluntary guidelines used in Vietnam, which were far looser than the restrictions in the Gulf, found that these guidelines worked well. This was the conclusion reached by a Twentieth Century Fund task force on the military and the

media, as well as a study by William M Hammond of the Army's Office of Military History.

Today's living room war was not so different from that of 1965. Images of technology still fascinate, although far glitzier 'smart bomb' videos have replaced the old bomb-sight films of Vietnam. The media's military analyses, presented in a language drained of any sense of the political meaning or human cost of war, echoed the earlier reporting.

Reprinted from Extra! (Gulf May '91).

TV: The more you watch the less you know

Many television news editors have dismissed criticism of TV coverage of the Gulf crisis by pointing to opinion polls showing roughly twice as many people believe what they watch on the television news as opposed to what they read in the newspapers.

This has not been put to the test in Britain. However, a recent study conducted by the University of Massachusetts' Centre for Studies in Communication, found that the more people watched TV during the Gulf crisis, the less they knew about the underlying issues and the more likely they were to support the war.

When the research team tested public knowledge of basic facts about the region, U.S. policy and events leading up to the war, they discovered 'the most striking gaps in people's knowledge involved information that might reflect badly upon the administration's policy'.

Only 13 per cent knew the U.S. responded to Iraq's threat to use force against Kuwait last July by saying it would take no action; 65 per cent falsely believed that the U.S. responded by saying it would support Kuwait militarily.

Less than a third were aware that either Israel or coalition partner Syria were occupying foreign territory in the Middle East. Only 14 per cent knew that the U.S. was part of a tiny minority in the UN that voted against a political settlement of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

By contrast, 81 per cent of the sample could identify the missiles used to shoot down Iraqi Scuds as a Patriot. That viewers knew facts relating to apparently successful U.S. weapons but not about inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy, the researchers argued, 'suggests that the public are not generally ignorant - rather they are selectively misinformed'.

The study concludes: 'the Pentagon or the Bush administration cannot be blamed for only presenting those facts that lend support for their case - it isn't their job, after all, to provide the public with a balanced view. Culpability for this rests clearly on the shoulders of the news media, particularly television, who have a duty to present the public with all the relevant facts.'

Information from Extra! (May '91). Journal of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

Two cheers for Channel 4?

Channel 4's *Banned!* season was eagerly awaited in the aftermath of the Gulf War - not least for the programmes that Channel 4 itself had 'delayed' screening.

Notwithstanding that, a season of films committed to freedom of expression and the public's right to know was welcome. Duncan Campbell's *Cabinet* found a welcome slot. So did goldfish in *WR - Mysteries of the Organism*, an easy laugh against the Independent Television Commission's prudery regarding male genitalia.

But, the preamble to the screening of *Mother Ireland* on April 11, made one wonder whether C for Channel 4 and H for hypocrisy should have been added to the *A-Z of Censorship* which accompanied the season.

It was claimed the film 'was never acquired by Channel 4 from the Derry Video workshop'. The fact that Channel 4 had paid for the film to be made and had the first option to screen it was omitted and the film which followed was one already cut at the request of Channel 4 in 1988.

Mother Ireland included an interview with Mairead Farrell, one of three IRA members shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar on March 6, 1988. But it was not banned, as Channel 4 suggested, because of the Government broadcasting ban on live speech by members of Sinn Féin and 10 other Irish organisations, announced by Douglas Hurd on 19th October 1988.

The film had been delivered to Channel 4 on March 2, 1988. Even after the Gibraltar shootings Channel 4's legal department concluded in a three-page report that nothing needed to be cut from the programme and recommended that it be shown.

It was Channel 4 that requested changes, reluctantly agreed to by the Derry Film and Video Workshop. Out went rare archive footage of Emma Groves being blinded by a rubber bullet in 1972; out went film of women marching on a British army post; out went a song by Christy Moore called *Unfinished Revolution* and out went Italian TV footage of women sitting in a room with weapons.

While detracting from the power of the film, some of these cuts are now clearly ridiculous. The Emma Groves shooting has since been shown as part of a Ken Loach film for BBC2's *Split Screen*, and the Italian footage was screened on Channel 4 itself in *Ireland: Silent Voices*.

It was this cut version of *Mother Ireland*, which was sent to the

Independent Broadcasting Authority in mid-May 1988. It was neither banned nor given the go-ahead. It was sat on. Finally on 19th October 1988, Channel 4 said it would broadcast the film if Mairead Farrell was cut from the programme. However, the same day the whole exercise became academic. Hurd announced the broadcasting ban, affecting five of the 11 interviews in the programme.

One is left asking whether Channel 4, leave alone the IBA, really wanted to show *Mother Ireland* at that time. The furore over Thames TV's *Death on the Rock* was running. Deregulation of commercial TV was on the way. Anything controversial from Ireland must have been an unwelcome hot potato.

The current tragedy is that Channel 4 never attempted to restore the cuts and sought to disguise its own role in the original censorship of *Mother Ireland*. So long as self-censorship prevails, there is little chance of challenging the heavier hand of official secrecy and government censorship.

Mick Gosling



MOTHER IRELAND

Right to Reply? Tackling the media

Which national newspaper proprietor openly describes himself as being on the political right? When is a drift back to work a long way from the truth?

The answers to these and many more related questions are in the new video from Northern Newsreel, *Right to Reply*. The tape focuses on three main themes: the media moguls, TV coverage of the 1984-5 coal dispute and videos from trade unions and is supported by a very useful set of supporting notes.

The first section on the media moguls looks at concentration of ownership in the press, how it influences the content of newspapers, and how the problems we now associate with the press are spreading into broadcasting in the wake of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Pointing out that Murdoch, Maxwell and Stevens control 73% of the national press, it shows the threat to media freedom this poses, using eye-catching graphics, a humorous voice-over and Granville Williams of the CPBF.

Tony Lennon, President of the newly merged broadcasting union, BECTU, and CPBF Chair, draws out the implications of the 1990 Act for jobs, quality, and freedom of expression in the industry. He also points to the increasing problem of cross ownership between broadcasting and the press.

The Glasgow media group provide a sharp analysis of the way TV news misrepresented the 'drift back to work' during the 1984 coal dispute. It shows how the ordering of items and selection of language in one news bulletin gave the clear, and untruthful, impression that there was a 'drift back to work'. By reordering the same information and changing the language, the Glasgow group show how the bulletin could have presented the issue in a way which did not favour the propaganda interests of the government and the NCB.

Add to these items the one on trade union videos, and you have an excellent tape. It is ideal for use in trade union, campaigning or public meetings and in building support for media reform.

Tom O'Malley

Right to Reply? Tackling the media. 37 mins. Price £40 to regional and national trade unions, local authorities and institutions. Special price £20 to local trade union branches, Trades Councils and community groups. Available from Northern Newsreel, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 2AR. Cheques payable to 'Trade Films Ltd'.

THE FOG OF WAR

Media Censorship & the Gulf

As part of the Brighton Festival Media Programme, the CPBF presents an afternoon of film and discussion about media coverage of the Gulf War. Including screenings of

Hell No, We Won't Go and The Gulf Between Us

These two films, shown on Channel 4, challenged the media consensus and are currently the subject of court action by the right wing Freedom Association. Plus a new film

A Tin Can With a Silencer

This is your chance to discuss how we organise against the abuse of media power, whether in war or peace.

The discussion will be led by

Tony Lennon

Chair CPBF, President BECTU

Frances D'Souza

Director, Article 19.

Professor John Eldridge

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Iraqi Democratic Opposition.

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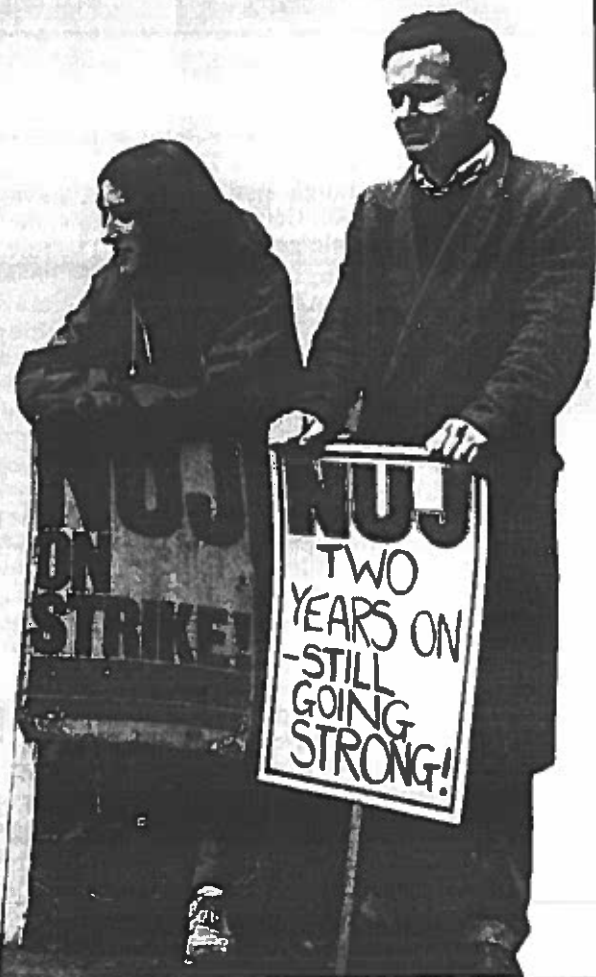
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TONY BENN MP
STEVE TURNER (NUJ GEN SEC)
MARY HUFFORD (NUT DEP GEN SEC)
MIKE GRINDLEY (GCHQ)
ANDREW SMITH (OXFORD EAST MP)
STAN TAYLOR (OXFORD EAST CLP)

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BRING YOUR BANNERS



Free Press 63 should have appeared in Mar/Apr. This issue replaces it. Free Press 64 will appear in June. The July/August issue will be a special covering all aspects of the CPBF's policy for media reform in the 1990's and will appear in August. Free Press is edited by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the National Council.

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The Mirror and the Miners

The British Press Award of Reporter of the Year to three *Daily Mirror* journalists for 'the story of Arthur Scargill and the missing miners' cash' reflects the depths to which press standards and accountability have sunk. For the last nine months the CPBF has attempted to get serious complaints about this story investigated by the self-appointed regulators of the press. We have met with delay, prevarication and refusal.

The conduct of the *Mirror's* investigation flouted the national newspaper editors' own code of conduct in its failure to use straightforward means to obtain stories, promptly correct mistakes and offer a fair opportunity to reply. It makes nonsense of the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice.

The *Mirror* never told its readers that its star witnesses, Roger Windsor and Jim Parker, were paid at least £100,000 for their stories — payments which would have raised questions about their motivation and credibility. When Iris Knight, another *Mirror* source, received a hate letter, the paper was 'happy to point out that Mrs Knight did not seek cash and was not paid a penny'. (*Mirror* 30 July 1990) Quite correctly the paper thought this gave her story greater credibility with readers. So why the double standards?

Having paid Windsor the *Mirror* tried to make him credible despite the fact that, on his own admission, he had gone off to France owing the National Union of Mineworkers £29,500. But why had it taken him four and a half years to become 'shattered and disillusioned' by the alleged Libyan cash deal. (*Mirror* 6 March 1990) Windsor's

THE FACTS

resignation letter to NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield, dated 28 July 1989, told a different story: 'the dropping of the unilateral disarmament policy by Kinnock was the final blow.' On 23 August 1990 the *Guardian* reported this, the *Mirror* did not.

Jim Parker was also paid by the *Mirror*, having taken generous redundancy terms, personally negotiated by Arthur Scargill, when he resigned voluntarily in 1989. The *Mirror* never mentioned this nor questioned the credibility of its two corroborative witnesses — Altaf Abbasi and Abdul Ghani.

Altaf Abbasi was introduced to the *Mirror's* readers as 'a Pakistani corner-shopkeeper in Doncaster'. (5 March 1990) It was not till 7 March 1990, in a side article on its centrespread, that the *Mirror* revealed that Abbasi had been arrested in Pakistan and jailed for 25 years for his part in planned bomb attack on a mosque. It didn't mention that this was in 1980.

Yet four years later Abbasi and the *Mirror* would have us believe that this was the man who on three occasions 'coolly moved through Customs at Heathrow' with a suitcase stuffed full of Libyan cash for the miners. This at a time, as *Guardian* journalist Richard Norton Taylor reported, 'all the (NUM's) telephone lines, down to branch secretaries were tapped by GCHQ.' (*Leeds Other Paper* 21 September 1991) And, as we now know, 'British and United States intelligence services used a Europe-wide telephone tapping system to

track funds being channelled to and from the NUM during the 1984-5 strike and for some years afterwards.' (*Guardian* and Channel 4's *Dispatches* 22 May 1991) Altaf Abbasi was honoured by Colonel Gaddafi in 1989 and believed by the *Mirror* in 1990.

Abdul Ghani, was modestly introduced to *Mirror* readers on the 7 March 1990 as the 'builder' who claimed to have witnessed the handing over to Windsor of two sums of £50,000. Following a nine week trial in 1987, Ghani was jailed for fraud for running a massive housing improvement grant rip-off. What does this make of his credibility? Is this why this information was withheld from *Mirror* readers, or are we to believe that three journalists who spent seven months preparing the *Mirror's* allegations were too incompetent to find this out?

This cast constituted the *Mirror's* 'scoop' witnesses. The *Mirror's* original and damning allegation — repeated by the then 20 per cent Maxwell-owned Central TV's *Cook Report* — was that 'Miner's leader Arthur Scargill got 163,000 in strike support from Libya and used a large part of it to pay off personal debts'. (*Mirror* 5 March 1990) In response to the allegations of personal corruption, Scargill and Heathfield called for the Lightman inquiry and revealed details of the 17 overseas bank accounts which were set up in the course of the 1984/5 strike to avoid sequestration and receivership. This was done on the basis of instructions given at a secret NUM Executive meeting held on 8 March 1984. The monies in these accounts were used to sustain the strike and maintain the fabric of the union, but they were not NUM accounts.

The Lightman Report was highly critical of Roger Windsor's *Mirror* account of his trip to Libya in 1984. A very different version had been relayed by him to Peter McNestry, the national secretary of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers.

Cont. p.3

Code of Practice

The following are extracts from the code of practice framed by members of the newspaper and periodical industry, which the Press Complaints Commission is charged to enforce:

1. Accuracy

- i Newspapers and periodicals should take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material.
- ii Whenever it is recognised that a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distorted report has been published, it should be corrected promptly and with due prominence.
- iii An apology should be published whenever appropriate.
- iv A newspaper or periodical should always report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation in which it has been a party.

2. Opportunity to reply

A fair opportunity to reply to inaccuracies should be given to individuals or organisations when reasonably called for.

3. Comment, conjecture and fact

Newspapers, while free to be partisan, should distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.

4. Privacy

Intrusions and enquiries into an individual's private life without his or her consent are not generally acceptable and publication can only be justified when in the public interest. This would include:

- i Detecting or exposing crime or serious misdemeanour.
- ii Detecting or exposing seriously anti-social conduct.
- iii Protecting the public health and safety.
- iv Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of that individual.

Similar considerations apply to the obtaining of information through journalists misrepresenting themselves (clause 6), intimidation and harassment (clause 7), and payment for information to criminals, their associates or witnesses in criminal proceedings (clause 8).

12. Children in sex cases

The Press should not, even where the law does not prohibit it, identify children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, whether as witnesses or defendants.

13. Victims of crime

The Press should not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless, by law, they are free to do so.

14. Discrimination

i The Press should avoid prejudicial or perjorative reference to a person's race, colour, religion, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

ii It should avoid publishing details of a person's race, colour, religion, sex or sexual orientation, unless these are directly relevant to the story.

The full code is available from the PCC,
1 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8AE.
Tel 071 353 1248

Poachers turned gamekeepers

Self-regulation of a press dominated by a handful of media barons never has and never will work. The CPBF's attempts to get complaints against the *Mirror* coverage of the 'Scargill affair' investigated is bitter proof of this.

A long ago as 13 September 1990 the CPBF with over 220 delegates to the 1990 TUC submitted a complaint to then *Mirror* ombudsman Peter Archer MP, QC. As well as raising the issues of straightforward means and the correction of mistakes, we raised other fundamental issues of press standards.

At no time during the *Mirror*'s original seven month 'investigation' were detailed allegations put to Scargill and Heathfield in such a way that they could be properly considered and answered. The *Mirror* has never offered either official an opportunity to reply, nor did it give fair coverage to their rebuttal of Lightman's criticisms.

As for editorial independence, *Mirror* proprietor Robert Maxwell makes no secret of the power his papers give him or his hostility to Arthur Scargill. Lawyers acting for the *Mirror* claim he 'played no part in the editorial content of the revelations in the *Daily Mirror* about Mr Scargill'.

However, on the opening day of the paper's campaign Maxwell signed the editorial 'Scargill's Waterloo'. (*Mirror* 5 March 1990) On the same day, interviewed in the *Guardian*, he boasted that his ownership of papers 'gives me the power to raise issues effectively. In simple terms, it's a megaphone.' The first example he gave was of Arthur Scargill and the *Mirror*'s role in the defeat of the 1984 miner's strike.

These points were made when representatives of the CPBF finally met and made a lengthy submission to Peter Archer on 9 January 1991. The next we heard from him was a letter dated 12 March 1991 (received 22 March) advising us that he would not be able to adjudicate on our complaint because Robert Maxwell had dispensed with his services 'in order to offer the Press Complaints Commission an opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness'.

On 18 April we duly submitted our complaint to the PCC who deliberated for over six weeks before refusing to consider it because 'the Commission cannot at this stage take over a general third party complaint stemming from matters which took place well before the Committee was founded'. When challenged, PCC Director Kenneth Morgan has now told us that 'in most cases (the PCC) will not accept a third party complaint'.

Mr Morgan appears to be suffering from serious loss of memory. As Director of the

Press Council, which the PCC replaced on 1 January 1991, he would have been aware that in its final comments on Calcutt the Council wrote: 'Despite their cost in time, money and the irritation of editors such third party complaints should not lightly be ruled out as now seems likely. They have defended from newspaper attack or injury vulnerable individuals and groups who are unable or ill equipped to defend themselves. They have played a valuable part in raising or defending ethical standards, and sometimes in mending newspaper manners. A good example is their role over the last six years in concentrating editors' minds on how newspapers should treat race and colour.' (2 November 1990)

Given that the anti-union bias, racism, sexism and homophobia which is still prevalent in the tabloid press is normally challenged by third party complaints, the chances of any improvement in standards in these areas seems more remote than ever.

This is no surprise given the composition of the PCC, the result of a very successful lobbying campaign by the newspaper industry. Funded by the Press Board of Finance, its members were selected in secrecy with nine out of 16 places going to representatives of the press, including Patsy Chapman, editor of the *News of the World*. Despite nearly 750 complaints its clear up rate is painfully slow. It deals informally with editors and has published adjudications in only 15 cases.

Cynics might conclude that ombudspersons were put in position as the proprietors representatives to newspaper readers and that the PCC serves not as a body of self-regulation of the press but one of self-protection.

Nevertheless the PCC must be pressured to allow all third party complaints and operate the limited provisions of its own Code of Practice on groups of people as well as individuals and organisations. The points which cover accuracy, opportunity to reply, distinguishing comment and fact, avoiding discriminatory references and maintaining ethical standards of journalism should be used to hoist newspapers on their own petard.

The CPBF is sceptical that the PCC will take any meaningful steps to redress press abuses. Its refusal to consider our detailed complaints about what has become one of the most discredited news stories of recent years is evidence of this.

Such monstrous abuse of press power will only end when libel law ceases to be a smokescreen for the rich and powerful to hide behind and is made available to all through legal aid, and a speedy mechanism for right to reply is entrenched in law.



Continued from page 1.

shortly after it happened, Windsor had told McNestry he had gone to Libya to address a trade union meeting. Afterwards, and unexpectedly, he was taken to meet Colonel Gaddafi for which he was 'totally unprepared'. 'Mr Windsor did not tell Mr McNestry that he had asked Colonel Gaddafi for financial support, but said he had asked for "trade union support".' (Lightman Report pp64-65)

Lightman reached no conclusion on the source of the money Roger Windsor had taken into NUM headquarters but insisted that 'Mr. Windsor's allegations that the cash he had brought in was used to repay Mr. Scargill's mortgage is entirely untrue'. (p83) 'Mr. Heathfield never had a home loan until much later, and Mr. Scargill had some time before repaid his home loan out of his own monies.' (p124) As for the £29,500 owed by Roger Windsor, Lightman proposed testing his 'good faith' by discharging the debt to the Miners Solidarity Fund. (p132) The Mirror's star witness has to date failed this test.

The Mirror was at liberty to boycott Lightman, to dismiss the findings it did not like and use the pieces it did. But having made extremely serious allegations of personal corruption, it was the paper's duty to report fully and accurately what Lightman said on these points. Instead the Mirror claimed the Lightman report 'PROVES most of our sensational disclosures about Scargill's secret cash dealings during and after the 1984-5 pit strike were true'. (5 July) In fact the report rebutted the Mirror's central allegation, and the other 'disclosures' were not some feat of investigative journalism but based on documentation voluntarily submitted by Scargill to the NUM Executive on 10 March 1990 and the Lightman enquiry. On 3 April 1990 when a Mirror editorial spelled out the paper's refusal to participate in the Lightman enquiry, the only allegation referred to was the Libyan money.

After Lightman the Libyan angle died a death until an extraordinary front page story headlined 'Gaddafi: I will sue Scargill'. (Mirror 6 August) This was based on a Sunday Times story. Since then not a word has appeared about this in either paper. This is not surprising. On 13 August the Guardian reported that the official Libyan news agency 'had no knowledge of any such plans'. The Mirror never retracted a story it had run over three pages.

The Mirror's campaign about the 'missing' Russian miners' money did not begin in earnest until 13 June 1990. But who were its 'angry Soviet miners' leaders' chasing up to £3.6 million donated in strike aid? On 22 June Tribune revealed that the Mirror's Sergei Massolovich and Nikolai Terokin 'aren't leaders of anything... They are members of an extremist right-wing organisation, the NTS or Popular Labour Alliance formed in the Thirties, whose members were so anti-Soviet that they collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. Since then NTS has been an intelligence playground.' The Mirror did not tell its readers this and the story only resurfaced with the publication of the Lightman report (4 July) which insisted that money intended to relieve hardship from Soviet miners had been misapplied to a Miners Trade Union International account. The MTUI was superseded by the International Miners Organisation.

The Mirror, with its legendary respect for accuracy, got to work. On 5 July the amount was £3.6 million; 'as much as £1.8 million' (11 July); £1.4 million (20 July); £1 million (4 and 10 July) and £2 million including food (12 July). The IMO, with over 40 affiliates and 6.5 million members and recognised by the United Nations, International Labour Organisation and European Community, was described as 'shadowy' (10, 11 and 23 July) as 'the mysterious Scargill founded IMO' (23 July) and 'Scargill's IMO' (10 October). On 10 July the Mirror started its campaign for the fraud squad to be sent in with the attacks on Scargill becoming even more personalised and concentrating on his home.

On 20 July the Mirror reported the NUM executive's decision to sue for the return of the 'Russian cash' without pointing out that this was on the insistence of lawyers who had instructed other executive members that they themselves would be in 'breach of trust' if they did so. On 26 July the Mirror headlined 'Fraud squad cops go in' and was 'happy' to provide 'all the help the police may require'. But who was Mirror's mysterious unnamed Soviet miner who had also requested an investigation? None other than Sergei Massolovich. The Mirror must have known he had sworn his complaint during his June visit, but news of it was suppressed until late July to help keep the pot boiling.

Scargill had immediately rebutted Lightman's claim that Soviet miners had donated directly to the striking miners and produced evidence to support this. The Mirror chose not to report this. But when the NUM executive — having been pushed into litigation which eventually cost the NUM £350,000 and as a result of its own investigation — accepted this and reached an agreement with the IMO, this was headlined 'Arthur off the hook as NUM gets its £1m'. (Mirror 11 September) The article underneath was a travesty of the truth. It did not mention the crucial documentary evidence produced in Paris the previous day by IMO general secretary Alain Simon. 'It was a Soviet transfer document instructing Mr Simon to pay the money into (an international) solidarity fund. The transfer was made on February 12, 1985.' (Guardian 14 September)

Subsequently the Guardian and Channel 4's Dispatches revealed 'it was the Soviet authorities, not the NUM, which ordered money to be sent to a solidarity fund, now controlled by the IMO. The aim was to protect Mikhail Gorbachev's relations with the British government.' (Guardian 22 May 1991) On 11 October 1990, the decision of the NUM Conference to support the executive's position, reject Lightman's account of the Russian money and approve Scargill and Heathfield's handling of finances, received just six inches on page 5 of the Mirror. On 8 December 1990, in a tiny article on page two under the headline 'Scargill trial date fixed', the Mirror reported 'the police have decided not to carry on with their fraud probe'. As for the action of the certification officer referred to, that collapsed in court in June 1991.

All that is left of the Mirror story is that Scargill and Heathfield have nice homes and the inference that these have been acquired by corrupt means.

For this 'classic of serious popular journalism', 'a difficult target investigated thoroughly, vigorously and tirelessly', with the results presented with 'panache', Terry Pattinson's Mirror team have been made Reporters of the Year. In doing so the judges of the British Press Awards have disgraced themselves, serious investigative journalism and any pretence that the truth should be allowed to get in the way of a good story and an easy target.

Mick Gosling

ITC: Licenced to sell...

The bids are in. The consultation period is over. And from now till the end of October the Independent Television Commission will be considering the applicants for the 15 ITV regional franchises.

This is a very bald version of the reality which will deliver commercial television to the tender mercies of the market. When the tomes of franchise applications were delivered to the ITC's headquarters in Brompton Road on 15 May, the most important document was missing—the sealed cash bid. This will only be seen by the most senior ITC personnel.

Subject to applicants meeting the ITC's programming requirements or 'quality threshold' — and a detailed enough prospectus was sent out — the 1990 Broadcasting Act stipulates that the ITC is required to accept the highest bid in all but the most 'exceptional circumstances'. Too wide an interpretation of that clause is likely to generate a lot of work for corporate lawyers.

Public consultation? If it is the size of the bid that is going to count, why bother? So the ITC didn't. A member of the public who wanted to see the franchise applications had to trudge off to one of 275 public libraries around the country or regional ITC offices and submit her comments to the ITC by 26 June. The only public meetings to discuss the respective merits of franchise bids were those organised by the British Film Institute in conjunction with the *Guardian*. A number of companies boycotted these.

There may be a lot of sweating going on in the corporate boardrooms of the franchise applicants but this will not be out of concern for the discretionary powers of the ITC which is recognised as a glorified auctioneer. It will be caused by the fear of having underbid or massively overbid a rival. The only guaranteed beneficiary will be the Treasury which could net a windfall in excess of £250 million.

The losers are already apparent — the workers in the industry. Whoever wins the franchises — the incumbent 'publisher-broadcasters' with their in-house facilities, or their 'publisher-contractor' challengers, who will farm out programme making to independent companies — jobs will go. If the latter sweep the board, the cuts will be a slaughter. Union recognition and agreements will be harder to maintain as

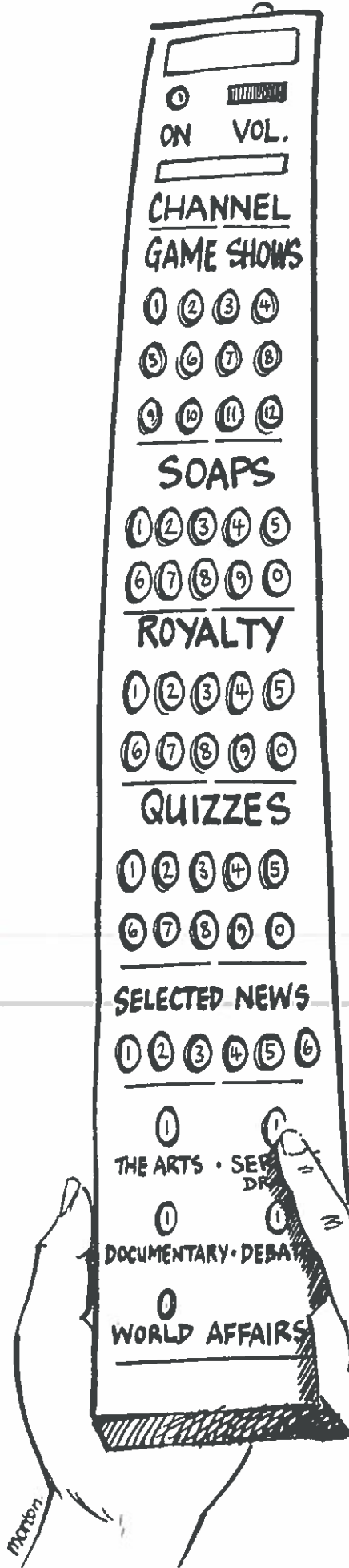
will the monitoring of equal opportunities policies. Not just that. In-house facilities provide the best base for the concentration of trained talent across a full range of skills necessary to guarantee the provision of diverse quality programming.

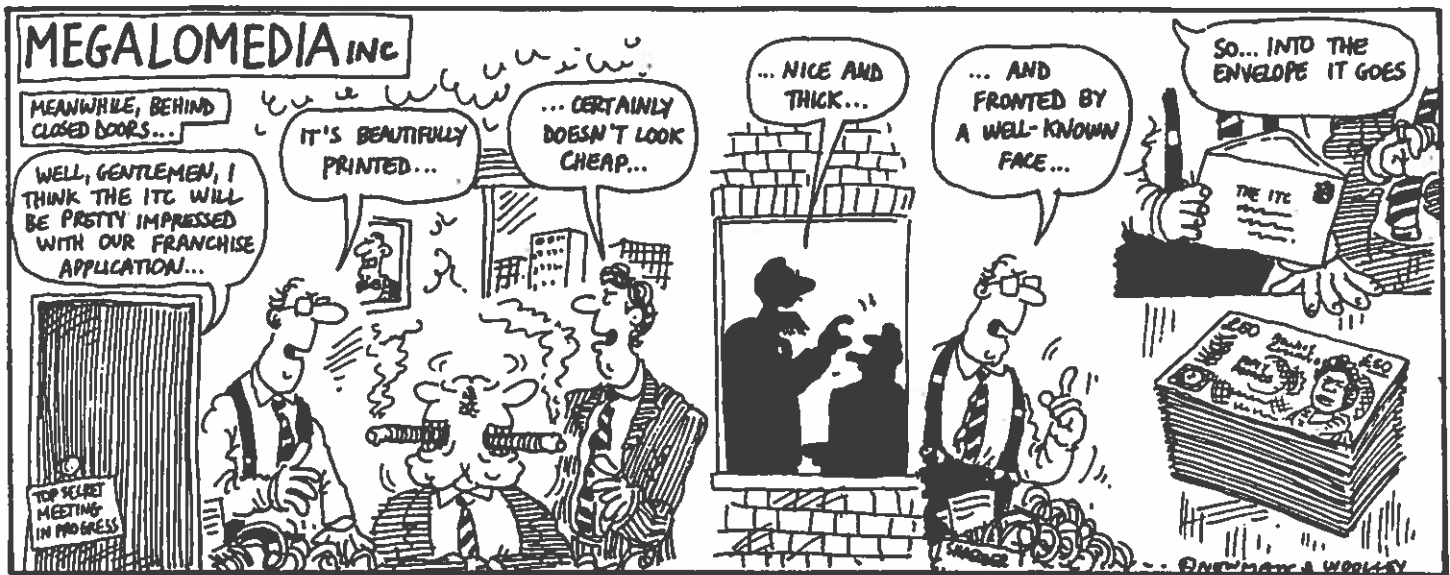
It is a point recognised by some of the publisher-contractors themselves. Peter Ibbotson, director of corporate affairs for Carlton Television which is bidding for the London Weekday and TVS franchises, told the *Guardian* that it is difficult to believe the publisher-contractor model could work outside London and the south-east. In the north, in Granadaland, 'there isn't enough infrastructure to make that amount of programming. If a publisher-contractor wins in Granada or Yorkshire, in reality they will end up being based in Soho.'

The other losers will be the viewers. Leave aside the question of whether the infrastructure exists to allow publisher-contractors to deliver quality programmes. What happens if the franchise winner has committed too much cash to its bid and has to cut back on programme budgets and tear up franchise promises. *Broadcast* editor Marta Wohrle argues that 'the programmes most likely to be at risk are the much vaunted regional offerings. Network spending will be committed each year and it's network programmes that bring in the audiences.'

The ITC is unlikely to act in such a situation. When the audience grabbing Roland Rat appeared on TV-am the ITC's predecessor, the IBA, warned the company about the quality of its programming. When the company responded that it was that or bankruptcy the IBA did nothing. When Sky merged with BSB the day after the Broadcasting Act reached the statute book — giving Murdoch effective control of five British based direct broadcast by satellite channels in contradiction to the law's ownership regulations — the IBA did nothing. If franchise holders argue that the only way they can finance quality programme making is to allow newspaper groups to increase their holdings beyond the legal limit of 20 per cent, the pressure will be on the ITC to accept this. If, in the words of government spokesperson David Mellor MP at the time of the Sky-BSB merger, 'the market calls the shots', these will be the consequences.

And the face of British broadcasting will be changed for a long time to come. From January 1993 the successful applicants will be with us for 10 years. After only 6 years they can seek automatic renewal of their licences for another 10 years. Renewal can only be refused if they have breached the rules set out in the Broadcasting Act and promulgated by the ITC. But whereas the successful applicant





are unlikely to fall foul of the ITC they could fall foul of the stock market. After only one year of broadcasting the original owners can be bought out.

The CPBF believes the Broadcasting Act will have a profoundly destabilising effect on, initially, the ITV network but also the BBC. Who, for example, will be running the ITV network and choosing the programmes which generate the audience numbers the advertisers want to pay for and thus fund the franchise applicants who are currently throwing their cheques at the ITC? In the past it has been the five biggest ITV companies who have disbursed of the network's £450 million budget in consultation with the smaller companies and the IBA. The ITC does not say what the new networking arrangements will be. The Broadcasting Act simply demands that the franchise holders come up with a workable system by the end of January 1992, just three months after they win their licence.

Since the original White Paper *Broadcasting in the 90s Quality, Choice and Competition* was published in November 1988, the CPBF has campaigned against the view that broadcasting is simply another product or service like any other economic activity which is best provided by competition and market forces. Whatever the limitations in its application, public service broadcasting meant, until the Broadcasting Act, a system regulated to ensure high quality, balanced and universally accepted output with the BBC funded by a licence fee and ITV and commercial radio raising income from selling advertising. The two systems competed for audiences but not for revenue.

The renowned American journalist Edward R Murrow wrote in 1958: 'This instrument (broadcasting) can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But in can only do so to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely lights and wires in a box.' That is why broadcasting should not be just about cash bids and 'economic activity' but about social and cultural values, informing viewers in a democratic society and providing access as well as, enjoyment, escapism and much more.

Granville Williams

...and the workers pay

Media workers are the first victims of the franchise auctions. Incumbent companies are already cutting their in-house payrolls. If they are outbid by the new 'publisher-contractors' over half the 10,000 jobs in the ITV network could go. [Job levels are indicated in square brackets]. Print and broadcasting interests are inextricably combined in the bids. Cross-media ownership and concentration will be the norm.

In the lucrative London region both Thames and LWT propose to axe another 200 jobs apiece. Thames with 1,230 in-house staff will face competition from Carlton TV [360] and the Branson-Frost consortium, CPV-TV [162]. LWT's 640 staffers must fight off a bid from London Independent Broadcasting (owned by Polygram and a plethora of independents) with only 275. The pattern is repeated in all franchise areas.

EMAP and the *Daily Telegraph*, with experience of slimming down in the print sector, have a stake in Three East [300], which is challenging Anglia [600], as is CPV-TV [266].

Wearing a different hat, the *Daily Telegraph* has got into a crowded bed with ITN in Daybreak TV's [360 including ITN] bid for TV-am's [400] breakfast licence. They each have a 20% stake as have Carlton Communications and MAI Broadcasting, leaving just enough room for NBC (15%) and Taylor Woodrow (5%) to snuggle in. TV-AM's other rival, Sunrise [140], is an even more extraordinary menage, with the *Guardian*/MEN (15%) and Walt Disney (15%) under the covers with LWT and Scottish TV, 20% each.

The Wales and West licence, straddling two countries with conflicting viewer demands and problematic advertising profiles, has surprisingly attracted bids from four companies. Incumbents HTV [700] have been lopping off staff in all directions. HTV are threatened by Merlin TV [340], backed by Associated Newspapers, who share a stake in Bristol United Press with David 'soft-porn' Sullivan. United Artists, (who won the Avon Cable franchise claiming collaboration with HTV), have a 20% stake in C3W [under 300], along with Ireland's state broadcasters RTE (10%). And C3WW [425] is the guise under which TSW [290] has hedged its bets on winning the south west of England franchise by bidding for its neighbour.

Associated Newspapers are after south west England too. They have a 20% stake in Westcountry

TV [167], as does privatised South West Water, and Brittany Ferries (15%), conjuring up the intriguing prospect of a single meter system for piped water and programmes. Those recalling the Camelford poisonings can rest assured — the *Daily Mail* will not be delivered down the tubes.

If TVS [800] retains its licence for the south and south east of England, the *Daily Mail* will be in there too, offering to bankroll the cash weak company along with Canal Plus and Compagnie General des Eaux. Those modest men Branson and Frost make the third bid with CPV-TV [318]. Meridian TV [373] (MAI, owned by SelecTV and Central TV) are also running here as are Carlton [400].

Yorkshire TV [1,296] is challenged by White Rose TV [293], a homegrown hybrid featuring the *Barnsley Chronicle*, *Huddersfield Examiner* and *Halifax Courier* Groups and production company Chrysalis. They face invaders Viking TV [under 300] led by Sir Trevor Holdsworth, now recovered from his bumpy landing with BSB.

Thompson Regional Newspapers have joined forces with the Duke of Abercorn to fight for the Northern Ireland licence as TV-NI [160], taking on Lagan TV [unspecified], run by Barry McGuigan's former manager Barney Eastwood, and backed by funds from the Republic. Ulster TV [280] will not be resting on the ropes. It hopes to be holding the centre of the ring when the dust settles.

In a predatory bid for Tyne Tees' [323] licence, Border TV has giant Granada as a minority shareholder along with the *Newcastle Chronicle* and *Journal* in its North East TV consortium [210].

Granada is concentrating its energies on a more even struggle for its licence against North West TV [425]. Regional neighbours Yorkshire and Tyne Tees (10%) and Yorkshire TV (20%) have combined with Trinity International, the holding company that publishes the *Liverpool Echo* and *Daily Post*, to wrest control from Granada's 1,077 staff with little more than a quarter of that number.

Employees of Channel TV [98] have gone for the throat of their erstwhile bosses who have held the franchise for 30 years. C13 [54], led by John 'Bergerac' Nettles, aim to take the tiniest segment of the C3 audience and advertising revenue cake.

If you are looking for a stable career in TV broadcasting apply to Central TV [997], Border TV [140], or Scottish TV [600]. There are no challengers for their licenses this time round.

Mike Jempson

Selling sexism... ...and fighting it

In her report* on the portrayal of women in advertising, Sue Phipps finds herself in the same position as most women who make complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority. She has had to sugar coat her pill so that the men in advertising agencies (who have the most power and influence) can swallow it without choking and coughing it back up.

That said, it is a well-balanced report, though perhaps a bit conflicting, since Phipps' method is to accept all opinions as equally valid and never strongly come down on one particular side. But opting for the gentle nudge approach, however, is no bad thing, for in an industry as inundated with sexism as advertising, it's a great step forward just to get a bloke to read this booklet. And it is no good spitting in the fellow's face now that you've got him moving in the right direction.

According to Matti Alderson, Director General of the ASA, who spoke at the December 1990 Advertising Association conference on which this report is based, women who complain about their portrayal in advertising hold views that the general public will come to hold in five years time.

Because of the slurs directed at those who do raise their voices it is no wonder that the great majority keep their views to themselves. And even if, as Phipps implies, a greater number of women are not bothered by advertising, one has to ask what they could possibly have to lose by getting rid of the stereotypes of thoroughly contented, but hugely overworked and under-appreciated housewives, pouting bimbos and women who find chocolate orgasmic. Interesting this last phenomenon was overlooked by both Kinsey and Hite.

However, a random survey published by the Advertising Standards Authority in February 1990 showed that 76 per cent of women and 62 per cent of men agreed that 'using sex as a selling device in advertising is offensive'. The reactions of the 2,128 people broadly compared with an identical survey among 117 people who had actually written to the ASA to complain about the portrayal of women in advertisements, 95 per cent of whom thought that using sex as a selling device was offensive. The previous year the ASA had only upheld three complaints out of 296 relating to the portrayal of women.

The gist of Phipps' report concentrates on the views of the speakers at the AA conference. These range from the reactionary stand of Sue Tollworthy of BSB Dorland, who says of complainants that 'advertising is a soft

target for people's prejudices and obsessions' — indeed Sue, so what are we to make of those of male copywriters and art directors — to Carol Reay of Reay, Keating, Hamer, who feels that 'advertisers are much more prepared to negatively stereotype woman than men.'

Also on the panel was that rarest of things, a feminist ad man Adam Lury, whose agency Howell, Henry, Chaldecott, Lury included in its founding principles a stipulation that they would never stoop to using sexism to sell products. He says that men like to use nudity in adverts because they 'have fun looking at the pictures and casting and shooting it.'

If this is indeed the case, why can't those men find some other way of getting their kicks which doesn't imply to the female population of the country that their bodies are less deserving of privacy than a man's body and that the structure of society reserves the right for men to look at naked women but no vice versa. By constantly exposing women, but treating men's bodies as something sacrosanct, the media acts as if inherent female sexuality were either non-existent or so passive as to be totally in the service of the male of the species rather than to each woman herself.

Much is made of the question of advertising's role in society. Primarily of course it is to sell the client's wares, but does it also attempt to maintain an unsatisfactory status quo or should it be pushing at the boundaries of society and moving attitudes forward?

Employing no small amount of selling talent herself, Phipps emphasises women's increasing purchasing influence (cars as well as custard these days) and how ad agencies must wake up to this new woman if they want to continue to shift kit.

Advertising need not be a force for social change. It can still be fantasy. It can still be aspirational. What it should not be, however, is a conduit for male sexual fantasies. It should have respect for women's right to privacy over their bodies. It should not, especially, distort female sexuality in a way that is pleasing to male advertisers and marketing men, and is unsettling and uncomfortable to many women including those that may not articulate what it is they do not like about an advertisement.

We are not asking advertising people to change society. On the contrary, it is society that has changed and we simply want advertising to reflect this.

Lizanne Cordwell

*Sue Phipps: The Portayal of Women in Advertising. The Advertising Association, Abford House, 15 Wilton Road, London SW1V 1NJ
Tel: 071 828 4831

CODE OF CONDUCT ON MEDIA SEXISM

The Campaign For Press and Broadcasting Freedom opposes sexism and is committed to promoting an anti-sexist policy throughout the media.

The media today are a major source of sexism. Women are represented in a way that does not reflect the reality of women's lives. Press and broadcasting in this way participate in the sexual oppression of women by men. Besides, the prevailing assumption in the media that everybody is heterosexual offends and marginalises lesbians and gay men. Those who work in the media, whether in origination, in production or in distribution, are partly responsible for this sexism and heterosexism and can play an important role in ending it.

As a Campaign we are opposed to external censorship. We believe however that press and broadcasting freedom includes freedom from injurious content. We therefore support a system of voluntary monitoring to eliminate sexist material in the media.

We resist:

- gender stereotyping, including the routine representation of women as sex objects and as 'housewives'
- the neglect and racist portrayal of black women and women of other ethnic groups in the media
- hostility to and misrepresentation of lesbians and gay men in the media
- the display of women's bodies in the media to appeal to male prurience
- the erotic portrayal of children
- trivialising or sensational media treatment of instances in which men kill, attack or harass girls or women

We seek to promote:

- a positive representation of women that reflects all aspects of their contribution to working, social and political life
- a new use of language to avoid sexist terms
- recognition of the women's movement as a responsible and necessary social force.
- equality of opportunity and employment for women in the media
- support for media workers who protest against sexism in media content
- a right of reply for those adversely affected by sexist material

1991 Annual General Meeting Report

Over 70 delegates attended the Annual General Meeting of the CPBF on Sunday 28 April which reviewed developments in the media in the previous year and the Campaign's response.

Secretary Tom O'Malley explained how the failure of BSB and its takeover by Murdoch's Sky illustrated two major themes of the year: the devastating impact of the recession on the media industry and the continuing power of the transnational media corporations. Media trade unionists had suffered assault after assault as a result of employers' efforts to deunionise or cut staff or both. The recent mergers of the print unions, NGA and SOGAT, and the broadcasting unions, ACTT and BETA were welcomed not only as promoting strong trade unionism in difficult times, but also increasing pressure for media reform.

1990/1 was the year of the Gulf crisis. On both sides of the Atlantic the media was mobilised behind the UK and US governments in a way which echoed the jingoism preceding the First World War. The media's almost unqualified support for war had the effect of silencing many well informed critics and had illustrated once again just how unaccountable the press proprietors and the people who run broadcasting are. The CPBF had provided an indispensable focus for shaping opinion and raising issues of media freedom on these and many other issues.

The unique role played by the Campaign was reflected in the continuing stability of the CPBF's membership. Since the start of the year another two national trade unions had affiliated — Manufacturing, Science and Finance and the teaching union NAS/UWT — bringing the total to 28. The Campaign office had been re-equipped with new technology allowing origination of *Free Press* and other publishing activities to be brought in-house

with the agreement of the NGA. This has increased the topicality of our journal and allowed us to professionalise the organisation's image.

Of major concern to delegates was continuing funding problems. While the CPBF had eliminated £12,000 of debt in the past two years, the 1990 funding appeal — along with membership the CPBF's only source of income — had fallen nearly £8,000 short. The AGM approved an appeal for £20,000 in 1991 to further the work of the Campaign.

There was unanimous approval of the Women's Section motion to approve the CPBF Code of Conduct on media sexism (see page 6). The Women's Section had also been active in lobbying for equal opportunity amendments to the Broadcasting Bill and promoting the Bill of Location of Pornographic Materials which would restrict top-shelf porn to specially licensed outlets.

A major debate on a framework for media reform in the 90s in the wake of the deregulation of commercial broadcasting and the continuing growth of media monopoly was opened around the document *Choice, Freedom and Diversity: Arguments for a New Media Policy*. Following amendment and further consultation this will become a basic policy statement of the Campaign and be used to identify specific campaigning objectives in the run up to the next general election. A motion moved by the MSF identified two of these: it called on the next Labour government to break the ownership monopoly in the press, and introduce measures financed by an advertising levy to assist the minority press to secure its fair share of advertising revenue and display in every newsagents.

Faced with a plethora of new regulatory bodies in the press and broadcasting the AGM identified the Campaign's attitude to these bodies. Delegates decided not to extend the Campaign's boycott of the Press Council to

the Press Complaints Commission (see page two). This was a tactical decision which was not counterposed to our ongoing campaign for a statutory right of reply.

It was also noted with concern that the shift in the ITC's function from a publishing to a licensing authority had placed fundamental aspects of the policing of broadcasting in the hands of the courts, for example, through the extension to radio and television of legislation such as the Obscene Publications Act. The ITC's own 'impartiality code', a last gasp amendment to the Broadcasting Bill, was seen as a fiction based on a fraud. The AGM also called for the scrapping of the 'sex and violence' quango, the Broadcasting Standards Council, and its replacement by an independent research body which would set its own agenda and be concerned with all ethical issues in the media.

Finally, the AGM expressed its support for Liberty's Northern Ireland Human Rights Assembly, which will take place in April 1992, especially in relation to the area of freedom of expression. This is a continuation of the CPBF's work against the suppression and manipulation of information on the northern Irish crisis and specific acts of government censorship such as the broadcasting ban.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL 1991/92

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Deputy - vacant

Secretary - Tom O'Malley

Treasurer - John Beck

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Simon Collings, Liz Cordwell,

Jeremy Gardner, Tim Gopsill,

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Jon Hardy, Pat Healy, Mike Hicks,

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Alf Parrish, Julian Petley,

Ann Pointon, Linda Quinn,

Vi Scotter, Granville Williams.



John Jennings - an appreciation

John Jennings, who founded the Campaign For Press and Broadcasting Freedom, died on 24 May aged 54. He succumbed to cancer after a long and painful illness.

John was undoubtedly instrumental in shaping the attitudes of large numbers of people in the labour movement on media issues. His idea for 'a campaign for a free press' emerged from his involvement in the Institute for Workers Control which he took part in during the early 1970s. His work as a journalist, as circulation manager for *Tribune* and editor of the *Sogat Journal*, gave him enough practical experience to know how abysmally trade unionists are treated by the media.

John was concerned about how to establish structures that would create an accountable media. He wanted to influence the programmes and policies of the main political parties, but was aware of the need to develop a movement that would gain legal changes. It was his ideas that spawned many early CPBF initiatives. These included the commission of inquiry into the Press Council, which published its findings under the title *People Against the Press*, the Right of Reply campaign, and the campaign for a legal right of press distribution.

The Press Council is now gone, largely thanks to the Campaign's efforts. The industrial efforts to help health workers and miners, which led to printworkers taking strike action for the first time in decades in order to gain rights of reply, were directly inspired by the CPBF. They also inspired the attempts of several backbench Labour MPs like Ann Clwyd and Tony Worthington to promote private members bills to secure a legal right of reply.

The British political establishment rallied and did the usual fudge, with the Calcutt committee and ultimately 'son of Press Council' in the form of the Press Complaints Commission. But the issue of media accountability and the low ethical standards



of much of the media remain matters of public debate in a way that was not thinkable 12 years ago.

All this and much more are tributes to John's integrity and concern for humanity and justice. It was these qualities that brought him into conflict with the right wing Freedom Association. As a result he has the honour of being the only person to have forced the Freedom Association to drop a libel writ.

It was a remarkable battle. In 1983 John wrote an article in *Free Press* attacking Brian Crozier, a member of the Freedom Association's governing council. Crozier had described General Pinochet's murderous dictatorship in Chile as 'one of the most interesting economic and constitutional experiments in the world today'. John, in his usual forthright way, denounced the apologists for torture and repression. They sued him, but John wanted to fight and a defence fund was launched. It raised over £20,000 and he offered to see the Freedom Association in court rather than back down. Three years later they gave up. But John felt cheated because he had amassed what he felt

was an unanswerable case. So he published it all in *Enemy Within: The Freedom Association, the Conservative Party and the Far-Right*, repeating the 'libel'. No further action was taken — the Freedom Association was beaten.

John had a long and honourable record as a campaigner for human rights. I first met him in 1960 soon after he arrived in south London from his home town of Leamington, when he was studying art at Goldsmith's College. We worked together in the Deptford Youth Anti-racism Campaign, and on Saturday afternoons we took it in turns to make fiery speeches from a soapbox on Deptford Broadway, denouncing the emergence of what was to be a precursor of the National Front.

From this early streetwise political apprenticeship he developed a formidable and direct speaking style, which was used to Labour's advantage in the October 1974 general election. He stood against the former Prime Minister Ted Heath in Bexley, and scored the biggest ever increase in the opposition's vote in the constituency.

But Parliament was not for him. Super efficient though he was, he was not keen to become enmeshed in parliamentary bureaucracy. His politics were informed by a profound sense of humanity and justice and he always wanted to get things done. So he threw himself into setting up ALCARF, the All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, which worked to expose the National Front.

John was more than a political activist. He was also a talented pianist, artist, graphic designer and journalist. He always threw himself into local activity, which was often time consuming, unglamorous, but nevertheless essential: whether as a chair of school governors, helping pupils to produce a school newspaper or organising events. And whatever he did was done to his legendary standards of perfection.

John is survived by his wife Vi, and his son and daughter Ben and Ellen.

Mike Power

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