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## 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

## Everywoman

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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.

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

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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 't 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.

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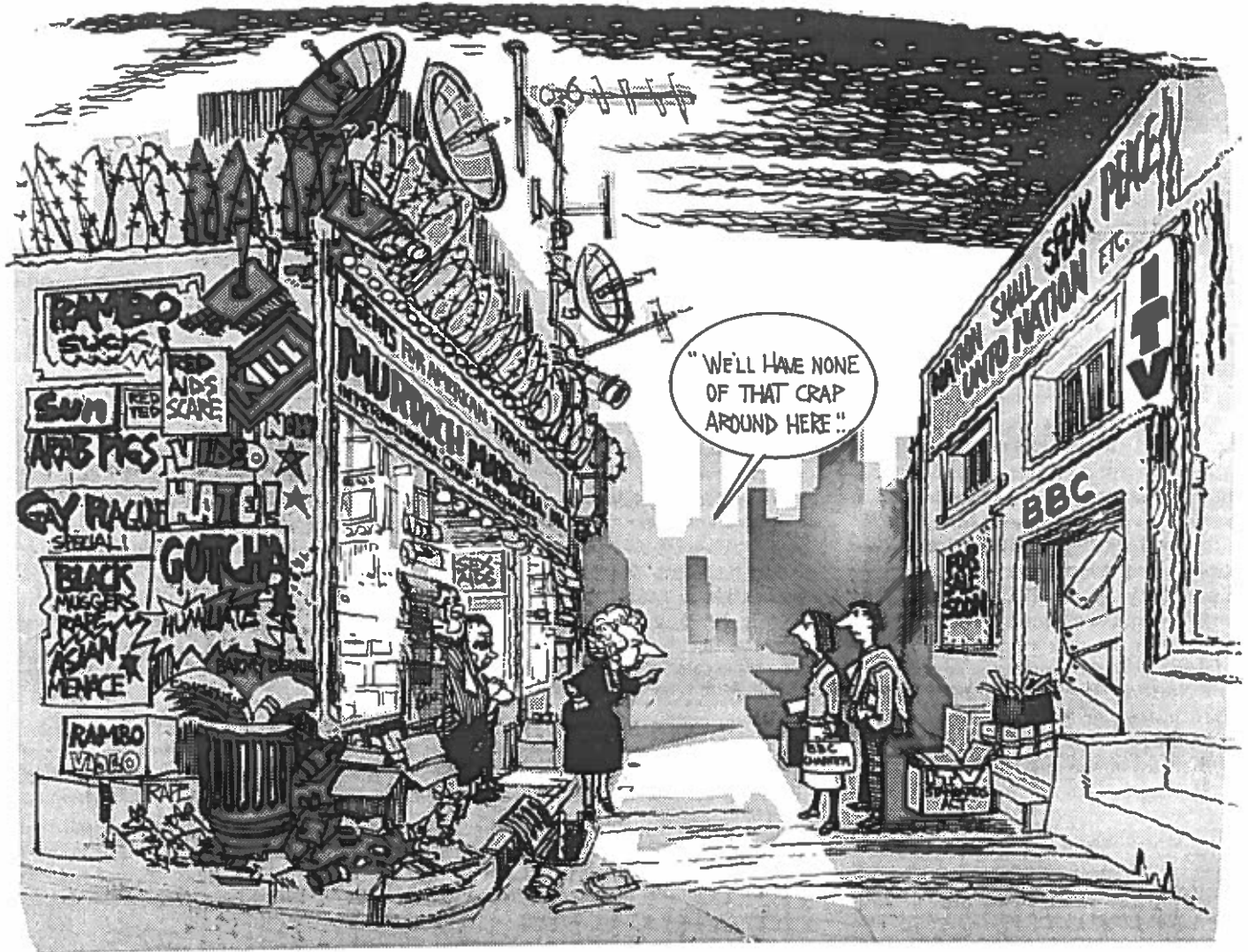
**'Expect one, maybe two, of the existing TV companies to fail in their bid (just to prove that the ITC means business).'**

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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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# 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.

### 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

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 Gays 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 SIMON COLLINGS. Copy for Free Press 62 should arrive at the office not later than 28 December 1990.



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