

# FREE PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM  
No. 71 Price 40p November/December

## Government majority at risk

AT LEAST 15 Tory MPs have pledged support for Clive Soley's Bill. It will need only six more to wipe out the Government's majority in the Commons.

Former Liberal leader Sir David Steel and Tory MP Teddy Taylor were present at the launch press conference on 22 October to announce their backing for the Bill. With support likely from other Liberal Democrats, and no sign of objections from Labour members, the Bill stands a good chance of reaching the Committee Stage and becoming law.

However, at least 100 MPs must be present to vote at the Second Reading on Friday 29 January if it is to get that far. Pressure from constituents to persuade their MP to remain in London for the debate is now the key to the Bill's success.

CBPF members, their friends and associates, are urged to seek assurances from their MP that they will attend the Second Reading. It was only when they were inundated with letters from voters about pit closures that Tory MPs began to exert pressure on the Government to change course.

## Soley takes up 94 complaints

Clive Soley is investigating 94 recent complaints about press inaccuracies which have had a harmful impact on people's lives.

At the launch he focussed on:

- Princess Anne's maid, Linda Townley (nee Joyce), who was falsely accused of theft by *Today*;
- The families of muscular dystrophy sufferers who were given false hopes of an imminent cure by the *Mirror*;
- Travellers in Bristol who received death threats after a sensational misreporting in the *Bristol Observer*;

- False and racist reports by several national papers about the murder of two Asian brothers during the Handsworth riots;
- Allegations in the *Sun* and *Mail* that Soley wanted planning applications to be scrutinised by Gays and Lesbians.

Linda Townley was present at the launch, along with Desiree Ntolo whose case had been highlighted in a *Guardian* feature. She was ridiculed in an astonishing array of racist stories after seeking advice about whether she needed planning permission to build a traditional mud hut in her garden.

- Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom evidence to Calcutt review of press regulation
- John Bennett opposes a Privacy Law, despite the war of words over daughter Jennifer's ear
- Liberty's Andrew Puddephat on Press Freedom and the Right of Reply
- The NUJ's Tim Gopsill on censorship ... and investigative journalism under attack

## SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THE NATIONAL tabloids greeted the launch of Clive Soley's Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill with an almost deafening silence.

The only tabloid to give it a mention was the *Daily Express* which bleated: "MPs aim to put editors in the dock."

However, two days before the launch, the *Sun* announced the creation of its Politicians Complaints Commission, seen as a pre-emptive move to warn MPs against flexing their muscles over the inadequacies of the press.

MPs have responded by asking whether the *Sun* may have breached parliamentary privilege by its move.

In general, coverage of the Bill was positive, although *the Guardian*, given exclusive advance access to the full text of the Bill, managed to flag it as a 'Privacy Bill' on its front page. It did not correct this inaccuracy the next day.

The *Times*, *The Independent*, and *Financial Times* all stressed the Bill's aim

of defending press freedom, but it did not merit a mention in *The Daily Telegraph*.

*The Times'* media correspondent, Melinda Wittstock announced that the Bill "would abolish the Press Complaints Commission".

It does no such thing, since the PCC is a non-statutory body run by the newspaper industry.

Clive Soley invited all national newspaper editors to give evidence to a special all-party Parliamentary committee chaired by Tory MP Patrick Cormack, which will be scrutinising his Bill in December.

The editors of *The Guardian* and *Observer* have accepted the invitation already.

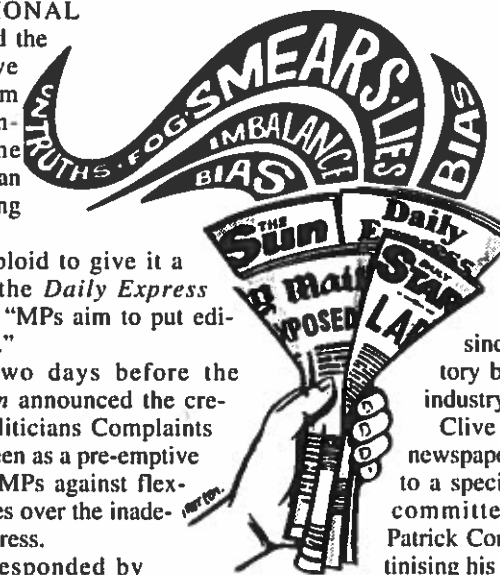
## STOP PRESS

● Information Packs about the Soley Bill are available from the CPBF Office, price £2 plus 50p p&p. Leaflets can also be ordered in bulk.

● Pearson plc have agreed to finance the recording, transcription and publication of evidence at the special Parliamentary hearings around Clive Soley's Bill.

● Nalگو has donated £5,000, the GPMU over £2,000 and several other CPBF affiliated unions have made donations - but more cash is still needed to finance campaigning work around the Bill.

● Meanwhile Nalگو has contributed £20,000 to Mark Fisher's Right to Know Bill campaign. A £15,000 grant from the Rowntree Trust will enable Charter 88 and the Campaign for Freedom of Information to work together on the Bill.



## Bias, inaccuracy and irresponsibility

The CPBF has submitted its evidence to the Calcutt review of press regulation. Prepared by National Secretary Tom O'Malley, it highlights "the root cause of much of the bias, inaccuracy and irresponsibility ... is the fact that ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few companies." The evidence is a clear statement on our concerns on the role of the Press Complaints Commission and suggests positive recommendations for change. You can obtain the complete evidence from the CPBF for £1 (inc p&p).

### The National Press

National daily and Sunday circulation is dominated by three groups: News International, Mirror Group Newspapers, and United Newspapers. Together they control over 75% of circulation.

This places immense influence in the hands of small and unaccountable groups of people.

The proprietors of national papers, with a few rare exceptions, provide systematic support for the Conservative Party, and less overtly for the social and economic status quo. This has been especially true of the press in the 1970s and 1980s. This situation means that millions of readers get a selective and one-sided version of political issues on a daily basis, a process which serves to limit democratic debate and participation in the political process.

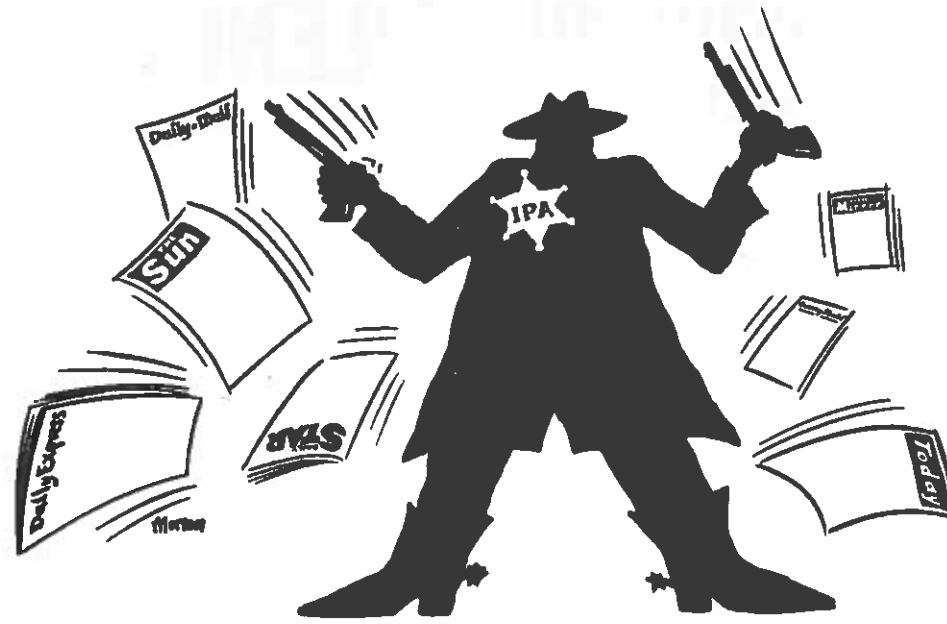
The few companies who dominate national papers in the middle and lower end of the market engage in fierce, expensive circulation wars in which any trick, from bingo to lies, is used to gain advantage.

Were there more papers, owned by a wider range of organisations, it might be possible to avoid the worst excesses of this kind of behaviour. In effect, the concentration of power in the hands of a few companies leaves them free to ride roughshod, when they wish over basic ethical standards. In doing so they often spread damaging untruths and mess up the lives of ordinary people who have no means of redress.

### Calcutt

When the Calcutt Committee sat for the first time in 1989 the Campaign's view was that it was designed, as a committee, to take the heat off the national press in the run up to a general election, not to propose measures designed genuinely to remedy the problems the CPBF drew attention to in the two Right of Reply Parliamentary Campaigns we ran in 1987/88 and 1988/89.

We believe that, if Calcutt Mark II is to be genuinely independent of press and Government, it must produce measures which avoid pre-publication censorship – such as Privacy legislation – which openly attack the root cause of the malaise of the press, the system of ownership, and which seek to bolster citizens' rights and the work of journalists by supporting a Right of Reply to factual inaccuracies.



### The Press Complaints Commission

The Press Complaints Commission costs £1 million or more and delivers an excellent service to proprietors. It effectively disposes of over 90 per cent of all complaints received and only finds against the proprietors in 3.1 per cent of all cases. It spends very little of its budget on publicity and none on research. From the proprietors' perspective they have a streamlined service; from the point of view of the public, it is likely either to reject or fail to

adjudicate on complaints.

If members of the Calcutt Commission want evidence of why self-regulation has failed, they need only read closely the details in the PCC Annual Report, which clearly shows that the PCC is ineffective from the complainants' point of view and is not structured to, nor apparently interested in, vigorously defending the ordinary citizen from abuse in the press.

The PCC is not really different from the Press Council. As long as proprietors fund it, and there is no statutory right of reply, the farce of self regulation will continue and only the public will suffer.

### CPBF Recommendations

- The Campaign believes that the Calcutt Committee should advocate measures to promote diversity in the press and higher ethical standards through controls on ownership and through a statutory right of reply.
- We support the idea, embedded in Clive Soley MP's Private Members Bill, of establishing a right of reply to factual inaccuracies which is swift and, ultimately, enforceable through the Courts.
- We also support the idea of an Independent Press Authority, which would be independent of government and the press, and would have the task of monitoring press freedom, conducting research on matters such as ownership, and reporting annually to Parliament.
- We strongly oppose the imposition of pre-publication censorship in the form of privacy laws, but we support the right of citizens to a right of reply to factual inaccuracies.

**John Bennett, whose daughter Jennifer featured in the now-famous election broadcast, airs his view**

**LOOKING BACK** at the fireworks surrounding what must surely be the most talked about Party Election Broadcast of all time, I believe some useful lessons can now be drawn that are directly relevant to the current debate on Press freedom and responsibility.

First, however, let me sweep away the irrelevancies. Whoever leaked the identity of my daughter Jennifer to the *Independent*, and whoever else secretly briefed the *Express*, are for this purpose irrelevancies – deeply hurtful and traumatic though the effects of these actions were at the time.

Given that the editors of the two papers acquired certain half-truths connecting my family to Labour's Election Broadcast, did they, as the Press Complaints Commission argue, act responsibly by publishing them in the way that they did? Even by the wording of the PCC's own Code of Conduct 'framed (how appropriate a verb) by the newspaper and periodical industry' – I and others better qualified than me, including members of the press, think not.

The fact that the PCC acts covertly; that editors sit in judgement of their fellows; and that complainants are lacking in knowledge of how to complain and to whom, means that justice is neither done nor seen to be done.

A privacy law might have prevented my own trauma, but at what cost?

Freedom of the press is a prerequisite of a free society.

The press and the media generally should be free to conduct investigative journalism which may at times impinge upon an individual's privacy, if by so doing, the public interest is served.

A privacy law would protect the

# A PRIVACY BILL – NO THANK YOU

guilty along with the innocent and be a powerful weapon in the hands of anyone with something to hide and the money to hire a smart lawyer.

An Independent Press Authority along the lines of Clive Soley's Private Members Bill, with power to enforce the correction of factual inaccuracies would be a great improvement on the ineffectual PCC, but only if individuals who are wronged know how to seek redress, and to obtain it swiftly.

When my daughter was named in

the *Independent* and the *Express*, and confidential details of her medical case history were published, linking her quite erroneously to characters and events depicted in that Election Broadcast, thoughts of getting corrections or retractions printed in the offending newspapers didn't occur to me.

We were all in a state of shock, swept along by a tidal wave of media attention and General Election hysteria which at one stage even had hardened Fleet Street hacks publicly attacking one another for their actions.

As for the Press Complaints Commission, I hadn't even heard of it until a friendly voice in the know suggested we lodge a complaint.

Corrections and retractions, if they are to halt the media snowball in its tracks, must come quickly and be prominently displayed.

This requires, I believe, that every edition of every newspaper and every magazine should be obliged to carry a statutory notice informing their readership of the complaints procedure.

To aid complainants in assessing the justification of their case and in getting a swift response from the offending publication, the proposed Independent Press Authority must have the resources to provide a high quality helpline service around the clock.

Being catapulted into the focus of media attention by the publication of inaccuracies or untruths can be a devastating and destabilising experience.

Clive Soley's Bill seeks to empower all of us in a way that will ensure press freedom is used more responsibly.

I wish it well.

**"A privacy law would protect the guilty along with the innocent and be a powerful weapon in the hands of anyone with something to hide and the money to hire a smart lawyer"**

# CENSORED!

**“No sane human being supports violence,” said Bernadette McAliskey. “We are often inevitably cornered into it by both powerlessness and by lack of democracy.”**

by **TIM GOPSILL**

According to the BBC, this is a view that cannot be expressed uncensored to its viewers. So those who watched the last of the BBC2 Nation series on September 1 saw the former Northern Ireland MP cut off in mid-flow, the sound killed and her words presented in subtitles below her flapping lips. (This is called “goldfishing” in broadcasters’ jargon.)

She was endeavouring to explain that the simply question — is violence justified? — must be put in a proper context, and that she could understand the circumstances in which people resorted to it.

At least there has been a hue and cry about this latest instance of censorship on Ireland, even though it only proves what the CPBF and the unions have said ever since the broadcasting ban was imposed four years ago: that its objective is to marginalise not just the “banned” organisations but a whole range of perfectly legitimate political opinion.

The then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd announced his restrictions on October 19 1988. Using powers under the 1981 Broadcasting Act and the BBC Charter he outlawed the transmission of the sound of anyone representing or purporting to represent, or expressing support, for a list of 11 Northern Ireland organisations, including Sinn Fein and the UDA (which was not then an illegal organisation).

The ban has meant the virtual disappearance of Sinn Fein from the news and such current affairs coverage of Northern Ireland as is now produced. But their effect has actually been much wider: to inhibit broadcast corporations from covering the Irish war properly.

Self-censorship came into play. The BBC and the IBA (as was) drew up long and complicated “guidelines” which made it troublesome for programme-makers to approach the subject. To do so means getting clearance from cautious executives, reference to lawyers and the minute scrutiny of scripts and tapes; in a word, trouble, and a reputation for boat-rocking. No self-respecting broadcasters want their programmes mucked about by bureaucrats and censors.

There was much derision over the fact that these guidelines covered stupid things like songs, fiction and historical documentaries, but this served to hide the really insidious effect that no one at all was to be allowed to express

support for the basic aims of Irish nationalism.

So it’s not just officials of the organisations whose voices cannot be heard, but people in the street, eye-witnesses to incidents, callers to phone-ins — and, it became clear on September 1, participants in studio audiences.

For it was not only Bernadette McAliskey who was subtitled. So were two people in the invited audience: Tom Durkin, a veteran trade union activist from North London, and a man of Asian origin who volunteered the view that, “if innocent people were killed accidentally while the objective is a military objective, that is understandable and acceptable.”

There followed an embarrassing exchange with Nation’s wooden presenter Trevor Phillips, who asked: “So you think soldiers are a legitimate target?” “Yes”, read the subtitle as the guest’s lips moved, almost imperceptibly. “But others are not?”, Trevor Phillips went on. The reply, “no”, was also subtitled!

Equally bizarre, in the aftermath of the programme, was the spectacle of another studio guest, Peter Bottomley MP, a former junior Northern Ireland minister and a Tory, coming out in support of Bernadette McAliskey. She had said nothing he would disagree with, he said. She should not have been censored.

This is the kind of nonsense that the BBC has ended up with. Nothing could demonstrate the working of self-censorship better than the blatant gap between its supposed position on the ban (it says it’s agin it) and its editorial practice.

Editorial chiefs are said to be “unhappy” with the lawyers’ decisions on the Nation programme. They commissioned a counsel’s opinion from David Pannick QC, who had acted in the case against the ban brought by seven individuals, backed by the NUJ.

His report, however, ruled that the BBC had been right, and in consequence the corporation is now reported to be planning to tighten up its guidelines to make sure that such opinions are formally banned in future.

Director General Sir Michael Checkland and Controller of Editorial Policy John Wilson have both gone on record with claims that they have no choice, that government is to blame, and that they will be stepping up their protests and making especially strong representations to the National Heritage Department on October 19. They do this every year, they said.

The truth is different. The BBC, and all broadcasters, do have a choice. If they are serious about freedom from censorship they would be, at the very least, pushing at the limits of the ban and publishing everything they can, rather than themselves censoring beyond what is strictly required.

The only real way to defeat censorship is to break it and publicly face the consequences, which is what principled editors do: in Greece last year the editors of seven national papers went to jail for breaking a similar ban, on the publication of statements by guerrilla groups, which the Greek government acknowledged was based on the British ban. In the case of a concerted breach of the British ban it is hard to see what the government could actually do.

As far as protests are concerned, it is the unions that have mounted public displays every year, with marches, rallies and conferences. The BBC has pointedly refused to join any of them; in 1989 Checkland and Deputy John Birt refused even to come to the front door of Broadcasting House to receive a letter from the unions as they marched past. And whatever quiet words BBC and ITV chiefs may or may not have had in ministerial ears don’t seem to have had much effect.

The BBC (with other employers) has also refused to join in the NUJ’s legal action, which has already run up costs in six figures as it crawled through the High Court, Court of Appeal and House of Lords, failing, predictably, each time, and is now with the European Commission on Human Rights in Strasbourg. Last month the Commission asked the government for its response to the case.

Recognising the wide political censorship involved in the ban, the NUJ’s chosen litigants — only individuals can bring a case against a government to Europe — include a former phone-in producer from LBC, Vicky Leonard, who spoke out from the start against the requirement to vet callers for traces of Irish republicanism.

This year the unions have taken the BBC at its word and challenged Checkland to take part in a joint delegation to the new Heritage Secretary, Peter Brooke. The BBC’s response is awaited.

● **STOP PRESS**  
OCTOBER 19: BBC turns down the unions’ invitation.

# INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS — AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

DAWN RAIDS are becoming the rage among police who take exception to what journalists report about them. In two recent cases, stories from confidential sources that upset police forces have led to heavy retaliation, with 6am arrests, detention for questioning and imminent prosecution.

The cases involved Ben Hamilton, researcher for Box Productions, who made the Channel 4 Dispatches programme The Committee last year, and Scotland on Sunday journalist Ron McKay. Both journalists had worked on stories that greatly embarrassed police: the Dispatches programme uncovered a secret conspiracy between the RUC and loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland to assassinate Republicans, and Ben Hamilton had spent six months in the province investigating.

He was in the High Court in London as Box and Channel 4 were fined £75,000 over his and their refusal to name “Source A” — a man who had given evidence about this conspiracy anonymously on camera.

An unprecedented order had been slapped on them under Schedule 7 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to disclose the name. The outcome was greeted with anger and dismay. Ben Hamilton said it was “a disaster for further investigations in Northern Ireland”.

In his judgement, Lord Justice Woolf said that journalists must not offer anonymity to sources. They must either persuade them to go public, or “approach a senior government official for advice.” Quite what “advice” such an official would give about a source who is accusing the police of involvement in terrorism, whose life would be in very real danger if his identity was published, is hard to imagine. But there is a positive angle that wasn’t widely appreciated. The head of Box, Sean

McPhilemy, said afterwards that, in a way, it was a victory: “We didn’t betray our source.”

There was no defence to the case, once the order had been given and defied. The penalty could have been much harsher, but Lord Justice Woolf said there no point in sequestering Channel 4, because he accepted they would never betray their source. In effect, the law was recognising that it had come up against a force stronger than itself: the journalist’s duty to protect sources. It can punish them for staying silent but it cannot make them sing.

Lord Woolf also said there should be no further proceedings in the case — referring to a possible criminal charge under the PTA. So that seemed to be the end of it.

But on September 29 Ben Hamilton was woken at 6.30am by a tremendous banging at the door of his Harlesden home. A posse of police charged in, searched the house for two hours, then took him off for questioning. Next day he was remanded on bail, charged with perjury — it is presumed, over the affidavit he had given for the trial at which the PTA order was given. The interrogators were from the Met’s serious crime branch, SO1, but their information came from the North, because the RUC are out to get him and discredit the programme — and so, disturbingly, are pro-RUC elements in the British media.

The Sunday Times and Sunday Express, initially ran stories saying that the RUC knew the identity of Source A, and that he has given a statement saying his broadcast allegations were a lie to discredit the Anglo-Irish agreement. Ben Hamilton says this is rubbish.

The Sunday Times has since come up with fanciful allegations that interviewees were paid to deliver prepared scripts, but it is the paper’s slant on the story that is disturbing. In

**Tim Gopsill reports on dawn raids on Ben Hamilton and Ron McKay**

publishing statements such as “the case highlights public concern about the use and protection of anonymous sources in investigative journalism, particularly concerning terrorism” (October 4) the Sunday Times is itself committing betrayal — of a free press and free reporting.

The Sunday Express has alleged that Sean McPhilemy and his family have lied about threats they have received over the programme. The McPhilemys have had to leave their home, but reporters have taken to hiding in the bushes to catch them when they come to collect mail or mow the lawn, to stand up claims they are still living there.

What the case has really done is to highlight positively the duty to protect sources — a duty that all journalists accept, even some on the Sunday Times: earlier this year Insight team reporter David Leppard refused to disclose the source of information he published in a book on the Lockerbie tragedy. He was resisting an order from an American court that was hearing the case brought against PanAm by the relatives of the victims; the order was eventually dropped.

Another journalist protecting his source is Ron McKay, who had done a story for Scotland on Sunday on a break-in at Lothian and Borders Police headquarters in Edinburgh in July. The newsdesk had been contacted by a source who claimed to have documents stolen in the break-in, and Ron McKay had interviewed the source and written up a front-page piece. At that time the raid, which was highly embarrassing to police, was thought to have been carried out by animal liberationists, though other explanations have since been put forward.

For his scoop Ron McKay himself was raided at his lover’s home in Kent, again at 6.30 am, by officers from Lothian and Borders, who searched the house and his own home in London, and flew him to Edinburgh, where he was bailed on a charge of “reset” — Scottish legal terminology for receiving stolen goods.

Investigative journalists are becoming an endangered species. The media of the 1990s are not deeply into the business of poking around in the murkier crannies of state activity. The concentration of ownership in the hands of big commercial empires and the increased strength of the security lobby in our society have combined to squeeze out troublesome enquiry.

Both must be checked for serious and responsible journalism to flourish.

## Mordechai Vanunu campaign

**SIX YEARS AGO this month the whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu was picked up in London by an agent of Israeli security, after giving a story to a British paper. He was taken first to Rome, then back to Israel, where he was jailed for 18 years for treason. All his sentence so far has been spent in solitary confinement and his family fears for his mental health.**

**The paper was the Sunday Times, the story about Israel’s secret development of an arsenal of H-bombs. But he was betrayed by the Sunday Mirror, whose Zionist proprietor Robert Maxwell had a spoiler run a week before the Sunday Times story, accusing Mordechai Vanunu of being a fantasist and liar.**

**Talk about protecting sources! Far from respecting the identity of a vulnerable informant, the Sunday Mirror handed Mordechai Vanunu to Mossad on a plate.**

**On October 14 the campaign for his release, run by his brother Meir, was strongly supported at a meeting coinciding with the screening of a BBC2 Open Space programme on the case. Among the speakers was CPBF chair Tony Lennon, who made the point that, had Mordechai Vanunu been British and his story about British weapons, then British secrecy laws would have prevented it seeing the light of day at all.**



## PRESS FREEDOM AND THE 'RIGHT OF REPLY'

By Andrew Puddephat, Liberty

FREEDOM OF the press is one of the most fundamental of all freedoms. The US Bill of Rights enshrines constitutional protection for freedom of the press. We have no such protection in the UK. In theory, this leaves the press and speech unregulated. In practice, as Geoffrey Robertson has argued, Parliament and the judges have defined free speech as that which "doesn't make trouble for them or the wealthy and powerful."

Historically, regulating the press has fallen into three categories – defamation, obscenity and blasphemy, and sedition and other political offences. Our defamation laws are punitive. London is the libel capital of the world.

But libel is not a weapon in the hands of the people as a whole, as there is no Legal Aid for libel cases and therefore libel is predominantly a weapon – as Robert Maxwell so ably demonstrated. The laws on obscenity and blasphemy, while little used, remain on our Statute Book. They were last used against a newspaper when Mary Whitehouse brought a private prosecution against Gay News. They were used to ban soft core pornographic videos and there was an attempted prosecution of the Satanic Verses.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act was used against journalists following the murder of two army corporals at a Republican funeral in West Belfast. Incitement to mutiny provisions were used against Troops Out leafleters in the 1970s. Most starkly of all, the Government has banned the direct reported speech of Sinn Fein and the UDA and those defined as their supporters. Add to these controls breach of confidence, contempt of court, copyright law and the Official Secrets legislation. Secrecy is a British obsession and is the dominant mode of British public life.

One of the worst examples of press censorship in recent years was the general injuncting power granted to the Government during the

Spycatcher case. The new Official Secrets Act lacks a public interest defence for journalists who publish leaked documents. This threatens the ability of whistle blowers to get their stories into the press. And of course, the discredited "D" notice system lingers on. It is a classic example of the British way of censorship.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that we have such a supine press? People seriously committed to freedom of the press campaign to remove the bulk of these controls. You cannot demand responsibility from the press if you do not at the same time permit them freedom.

No one would argue that the press should be without constraints. But they should be based on some underlying principles: in my opinion the principles of human rights. The European Convention on Human Rights is the beginning – but only the beginning – of such a framework. Under Article 10, the *Sunday Times* won a landmark case in a story concerning thalidomide. A later case involving Channel 4 gave the media the right to appeal against being excluded from reporting particular trials. The weakness of the convention however, can be shown by the failure to overturn the media ban on Sinn Fein, the UDA, and their supporters.

Press freedom should be a constitutional right – part of a broad-based Bill of Rights that gives us freedom of information and expression, but allows the protection of individuals from imminent physical harm and prevents incitement to racial hatred. It is also necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others. If a story about an individual was factually incorrect, there should be a correction which is given the same prominence as the original story.

By locating Soley's Bill in a human rights context, it is clear what the basis for press regulation is, but equally the implementation of those limited restrictions will enormously broaden the scope of freedom of the press.

## It never pays to scab

by PAT HEALY

About one third of the 21 *Times* journalists sacked brutally and instantly on an October Friday morning by the new editor, Peter Stodhart, have turned to the National Union of Journalists for help.

John Foster, the new General Secretary of the NUJ told *Free Press* that he wasn't checking on whether they were still members of the NUJ.

"I'm just telling them to come in. So far, we've had about six or seven of them here and we've given them industrial tribunal forms. Obviously, we are asking them to join if they have lapsed."

Stodhart's sackings, which he defended on the BBC Programme *Start the Week* as tough decisions that needed to be taken quickly, have deprived some of the most loyal and long-serving journalists of their jobs. They include Clifford Longley who, as Religious Affairs Correspondent, at first told the *Times* Chapel mandatory meetings in January 1986 that he would not go to Wapping, but then changed his mind. He wrote the piece that attempted to justify his and the other journalists' action under the headline "To Wapping With our Heads Held High". Longley became the *Times*' NUJ FOC at Wapping, taking over from Greg Neale who, with nine other *Times* journalists declined to go. Longley rapidly found that the regime at Wapping allowed him little room for manoeuvre.

Stodhart's only experience as a journalist has been at *The Times*, to which he was recruited as a high flying graduate by Harry Evans 10 years ago. His rapid promotion led to his office being referred to as the Youth Opportunities Programme. He has said he will be recruiting top rate journalists to replace the 21 sacked journalists. He has not said what kind of security they will have in their new jobs.

The brutality of the sackings has given added impetus to the monthly leafletting campaigns being run by the NUJ and the GPMU. The next is due to be held on October 29th. The leafletting has a nuisance factor but it also gets results.

John Foster, who has been on most of the leafletting pickets, said: "I believe it has had an effect. Just by being there, people get to know that we are willing to help. The NUJ has done quite a few individual cases and helped journalists get money."

■ The NUJ new General Secretary, John Foster was one of the founders of the CPBF. As the NUJ's organiser for the broadcasting sector in 1980 he joined the late John Jennings and other union activists in launching the Campaign for Press Freedom, centred on the Right to Reply.

## Complaints against the media conference

THOSE ATTENDING the £300-a-ticket Complaints Against the Media Conference held at London's Carlton Tower Hotel on 15 October may have felt rather short-changed.

Simon Jenkins, shunted from the editor's chair at the *Times* was dropped from the promised line-up. And the only national newspaper editor present, *The Guardian's* Peter Preston, left as soon as he had delivered a witty warning against State interference with the media.

Lord McGregor of Durriss, Chair of the Press Complaints Commission, also shuffled off early. His excuse – he had to make the final amendments to the PCC's submission to the Calcutt Enquiry. This was a startling admission given that Calcutt was set up to review the effectiveness of the PCC, and the closing date for evidence was 1 October. According to McGregor the PCC had only met to discuss their position on 14 October. If the noble Lord is anything to go by, the PPC is in deep trouble. His rambling defence to an essentially supportive audience combined staggering arrogance (the national newspaper editor's Code of Practice is "morally superior" because it was devised by national newspaper editors) with the odd one-liners ("I am a great deal more sceptical than I used to be about the power of the courts to exercise control"). The great man floundered in a mud of his own making.

There was more entertainment when Express lawyer Justin Walford kicked off a lengthy, and largely informative, paper, with an admission that he did not know precisely what was in the Soley Bill. That did not prevent him from laying into it. "I understand Mr Soley will be here to speak for himself this afternoon" Walford told an bemused audience. Clive Soley had introduced himself and asked a series of questions just before Walford strode from the platform to the podium.

By far the most rollicking contribution came from Granada's head of current affairs, Ray Fitzwalter, who laid into the Broadcasting Complaints Commission with a vengeance, calling for a single independent body to adjudicate on complaints made against any commercial or BBC programme. His demolition of the BBC's pretensions persuaded C4's Head of Programmes Liz Forgan to abandon her prepared text and call for an automatic TV Right of Reply, leaving the courts to deal with only the more serious challenges to programme-makers.

## Mirror Smear Campaign Latest

FREE PRESS readers will remember the June 1991 issue which unravelled the tawdry journalistic assault by the *Daily Mirror* on NUM leaders Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield. We print below an item from the recent National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign bulletin.

*The final vindication of the Mirror smear campaign against NUM leaders Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield has come with an Inland Revenue report confirming that the smear campaign was based on lies. Its investigation, published in August 1992, agrees that there was no malpractice by the miners' leaders in their handling of funds during the 1984/85 strike.*

*Indeed, the Inland Revenue's findings is only the latest of a string of official investigations which have shown every one of the allegations to be a lie. First, a Fraud Squad investigation was dropped. Then a legal case backed by the Government's trade union Certification Officer collapsed farcically after a two-day hearing last summer. Now the Inland Revenue has gone through the NUM accounts and those of trusts*

*set up during the strike. It has concluded all the accounts were properly administered, all money was properly accounted for and all bills were paid. None of this, however, has stopped the NUM facing legal bills of £650,000. The *Daily Mirror* failed to report the outcome of the Inland Revenue and it is even less likely to apologise to the miners leaders.*

*The NUM and its leaders, along with other socialists and trade union activists, had to fight an unbelievable tough campaign to beat off the attack by the establishment media.*

Also, in the same bulletin is an item by retiring NUM general secretary, Peter Heathfield. Referring to the *Daily Mirror* and Cook Report allegations, he said: "That vilification and character assassination took more out of me than the 12 months of the strike."

## RADIO MONITOR

ALMOST half of all radio listening in the UK is to independent local radio. There are now over 100 independent stations broadcasting and, prior to the 1990 Broadcasting Act, they were a public service – required to provide information, education and entertainment.

Now, no single station is compelled to provide a full range of programming. The Act requires the Radio Authority to facilitate the provision of licensed services which are of high quality and offer a wide range of programmes calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests. Each licence holder has to agree a 'promise of performance'.

Most stations offer music programming and, in many cases, local news and information has been dramatically cut back. Voluntary organisations now have the opportunity to influence programming and try to ensure that a truly local service of news and information is provided. This is because independent radio stations re being re-licensed.

Most independent radio licences expire between 1993 and 1996, and these are being re-advertised by the Radio Authority starting in November. Licence holders will have to re-apply and other groups are also able to apply for the licence.

Most existing licence holders offer two separate radio stations, one broadcasting on FM (CHF) and the other on AM (Medium Wave). These will be advertised separately and will have to be applied for separately.

The Radio Authority will advertise each licence in at least one local newspaper and in the national and trade press. The closing date for applications will normally be three months after the advertisement. The programming part of each application will then be available in at least one main public library. They can also be seen at the Radio Authority London offices by prior arrangement with their Press and Information Office.

● Contact: Community Radio Association, Media Centre, 5 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1 2BX. Tel 0742 795219.

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### A STEP FORWARD FOR MEDIA REFORM

A series of public meetings to publicise and build support for Clive Soley's Press Freedom and Responsibility Bill which receives its Second Reading on Friday, 29 January 1993.

#### ■ Wednesday, 11 November

Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester

**Clive Soley debates with Geoff Whitworth, editor, Rochdale Observer**

#### ■ Thursday, 19 November

Bluecoats Arts Centre, School Lane, Liverpool

**Clive Soley debates with editors John Griffith, Liverpool Echo and Keith Ely, Liverpool Daily Post**

#### ■ Monday, 23 November

Glasgow Polytechnic, Glasgow

#### ■ Thursday, 3 December

8.00 Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

#### ■ Tuesday, 24 November

Civic Hall, Leeds

#### ■ Wednesday, 9 December

Watershed, Bristol

#### ■ Thursday, 26 November

Guildhall, Cambridge

#### ■ Wednesday, 20 January

Newcastle

*Other meetings are planned for Southampton, Plymouth and Brighton.*

## How you can help

You can help the CPBF to ensure these events are well supported. Phone the London office (071 923 3671) or CPBF North (0977 646580) for full details of the meetings listed.

You can also order information leaflets (The Daily Error) with a summary of Clive Soley's Bill (£1 including p&p) and copies of a briefing pack with full information on the Bill and case studies (£2 + 50p p&p). We also need cash to pay for our campaigning work and to organise the meetings.

Send donations please to **CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG.**