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CAMPAIGN-BACKED BILLS LEAP THE FIRST HURDLE

CLIVE SOLEY'S Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill and Mark Fisher's Right to Know Bill, which are backed by the CPBF, have cleared the first parliamentary hurdle on the road to the statute book. The Soley Bill, which has attracted a great deal of criticism and controversy in the press, received a Second Reading by 119 votes to 15, on 29 January. Among those who voted against the Bill were Labour's Tam Dalyell and Dennis Skinner, alongside Tory lady Olga Maitland and Ulster Unionist Sir James Kilfedder. National Heritage Secretary Robert Key formally opposed the Bill, but took no part in the vote.

It was swiftly allocated space in the government's timetable for more thorough

debate in Committee on 3 March, and Home Secretary Peter Brooke announced that he would be taking part - a clear sign that the Soley proposals have touched a nerve and will be treated seriously.

Tory backbenchers Bernard Jenkin and James Paice, who made no contribution to the Second Reading debate on Mark Fisher's attempt to put freedom of information firmly on the legislative agenda, were the only MPs to vote against his Right to Know Bill. It was voted through to Committee Stage by 168 to 2 on 19 February.

In a curious parliamentary conundrum, more MPs spoke against the Fisher Bill than voted against it, yet more MPs voted against the Soley Bill than spoke against it.

Sir Humphrey forces editors to rethink on press regulation

A 'SENIOR Whitehall insider' has told the Association of British Editors that they misread public feeling about press misbehaviour.

Editorial opposition to the Soley Bill had been misdirected, according to the unnamed 'mandarin', and they had failed to take into account the growing irritation of the public.

In a front page lead headed "Its the public who will decide on media freedom", the ABE's journal 'British Editor' quotes extensively from an interview with the source who says the Soley Bill created more interest than anyone in Whitehall expected and brought in a fresh crop of increasingly bitter complaints.

He criticises editors for smugness and says they had "fallen into the classic trap of facing up to the wrong threat."

"So far you've been able to make it look

like a struggle between you and the politicians. You can win that fight but you cannot win a war against the British public," he warns.

This astonishing interview vindicates the Campaign's long-held view that the credibility of the press has been seriously undermined by the crude excesses of successive circulation wars.

The message seems to be getting through to the ABE. At their January meeting cracks appeared in their opposition to the Bill. One member said that, though flawed, the Bill's aim of promoting better standards of accuracy was striking chords with the public, and another admitted that deteriorating journalistic standards over the past decade had contributed to tabloid circulation losses.

Nonetheless the ABE lobbied MPs to reject the Bill. MPs ignored their advice.

inside . . .

- SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: Full details Conference, Annual General Meeting & Funding Appeal
- Daily Mirror in Crisis
- Conspiracy to conceal: inside the intelligence services; adapted from Stephen Dorril's soon to be published book
- Selling the Beeb: what is producer choice? Interview with Bectu President Tony Lennon
- Media Monitor & ITV down the tube

Right to Know Bill

"Common sense, sweet reason" and "bad smells"

"Open government is a contradiction in terms. You can have openness. Or you can have government. You cannot have both."

Sir Humphrey in Yes Minister

"A people who mean to be their own government must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives."

James Madison US President 1809-1917

The lively and good-humoured Second Reading debate about Mark Fisher's Right to Know Bill was peppered with similarly learned references and to all intents and purposes there was accord that Britain was too secretive for its own good.

Mark Fisher began with these, asserting that his proposals were a matter of "common sense and sweet reason."

"The difficult issue is where and how the balance is struck," weaseled William Waldegrave as he half-heartedly presented the Government's case against the most comprehensive freedom of information bill ever placed before parliament.

"I am rather easily persuaded that the balance is not right in Britain. We keep too many secrets. We make secret of matters that should not be secret. That, incidentally, makes it more difficult to keep real secrets when it is legitimate to do so," he said, claiming that the present Government has made a virtue of allowing more information into the public domain than any other.

Richard Shepherd made one of the best speeches of the debate, arguing passionately for the right to know as he has often done before, in splendid isolation on the Tory benches. Early in the debate Peter Mandelson asked whether "to be effective .. the Bill ... needs to be accompanied by changes which would make it possible to create a freer and more pluralistic press, whereas at the moment there is a tendency to move in the opposite direction?" and cited the current demise of the Mirror.

Fisher agreed that Britain had "one of the most constrained presses in the western world."

The Right to Know Bill is unlikely to go to Committee before Easter, and may be squeezed off the agenda. It has caused embarrassment by outflanking 'the Government's efforts to persuade the public that its paper thin Citizens Charters are creating open government. This clear and comprehensive Freedom Of Information Bill should form the basis of any future combined campaign around the issue. Summaries of the Bill are available from CFOL, 88 Old Street EC1V 9AR. Tel 071 253 2445.

MIRROR IN CRISIS

by TIM GOPSILL

THE SPAT between Alastair Campbell and David Seymour as past and present political editors of the Daily Mirror is stupid and irrelevant.

Comparing their respective commitments to radical, left-wing political journalism in the context of what's happening at the Mirror is like seeing the pit closure crisis in terms of Arthur Scargill's and Michael Heseltine's hairdos.

Both comparisons may be intriguing, but they're hardly the point.

Alastair Campbell was a fawning creature of Robert Maxwell and uncritical mouthpiece of Neil Kinnock. David Seymour was violently anti-Neil Kinnock, but he is a mainstream political hack whose copy could appear anywhere.

But both of them come from the same Labour Party establishment stable that has set the Mirror line for decades - and will do so for decades to come.

There is no question that the Mirror will support Labour in any election. The banks want the Mirror to support Labour; it's increasingly the only reason anyone buys the paper.

But it doesn't really support the Labour Party - it supports the leadership of the Labour Party.

In an article in the Independent, David Seymour vaunted a hatchet job he did on Militant when he was formerly at the Mirror



Photo: PAUL HERRMANN

as evidence for his Labour credentials. The poisonous Joe Haines, who held the job he has now assumed, has boasted of how the Mirror attacked the unilateralists when Kinnock was desperate to overturn conference disarmament policy.

There was industrial editor Terry Pattinson's discredited Scargill smear in 1991. The Daily Mirror has always been on hand with a dagger whenever the leaders have a back to stab.

Far from focusing attention on the real changes at the Mirror, the phoney debate on its relations with Labour is effectively masking them. What is really serious is the determined attempt by the bankers to destroy the collective strength and voice of the paper's decent journalists, and to bring the paper wholeheartedly into the mainstream of cheap, tatty tabloid journalistic values.

The instrument is a plain old-fashioned bash at the unions. The management of chief executive David Montgomery and the appropriately named editor, David Banks, are sacking people at whim, increasing working hours for the already overworked sub-editors. They are refusing even to negotiate with the NUJ.

Among the dozen or more senior journalists sacked, without anguished comment from the Labour leadership or the broadsheet press media editors, are the chief features sub and deputy, Irvine Hunter and Trevor Davies. The reason: they were the NUJ Deputy and Father of Chapel. They were told they would have to give up one position or the other, they refused to resign, so they were fired, simple as that.

There's nothing mysterious about management motives. Montgomery, Banks and other heavies - all, without exception, recruited from the Murdoch press, where they know how to deal with unions - were put in by the banks to cut costs, boost the share price and sell the controlling interests they hold.

The banks got their 54 per cent of the capital in shares from Maxwell, as "security" - what a laugh! - for the millions they leant him. It was the height of irresponsibility. But

who is paying for the bankers' error? The workforce.

In fact they have blundered yet again. For David Montgomery wants to put together a consortium to buy the group when the banks are ready to sell. That means his interest is to keep the share price low, to get it cheap. The banks want it high, to recoup their losses. But this GCSE-level economics is apparently beyond the bankers' comprehension.

The group is certainly doing badly, with sales on the slide and the share price refusing to rise. It certainly looks as if David Montgomery is deliberately messing everything up, as he sets about alienating virtually everybody in the building.

Backing him, so far, are the majority on the board, notably Sir Robert Clark and Charles Wilson, who were Maxwell men, totally compromised by the crookery of those times. Wilson came from Wapping too, where he was a disastrous editor of The Times, too furiously right-wing even for Murdoch.

Carrying out the orders is "human resources director" Robert Gregory, Maxwell's personnel chief, the man who sacked the Pergamon 23.

The journalists have tried to resist this onslaught, but have been weakened by splits in the NUJ. Only half are still in the union, since Steve Turner, disciple of Joe Haines and as former FOC the organiser of the hideously corrupt right-wing clique that used to run things, got fired by the NUJ and tried to set up a breakaway union.

His British Association of Journalists, the journalists' UDM, is tottering on the brink of collapse, but the damage has been done.

The NUJ journalists have, after four months under siege, voted to strike. But if the Mirror is to be saved they will need support from outside - notably from the Labour leaders who're apparently more concerned about the personal connections of the political editor, and the rest of the press, who're more concerned at gossiping about it.

CONSPIRACY TO CONCEAL

By STEPHEN DORRIL

ALTHOUGH Members of Parliament often dismiss calls for oversight of the security services by reference to the fact that they receive few letters from constituents on the subject, it is only right that organisations which cost the British taxpayer over £1,000 million per annum should be subject to some form of democratic scrutiny. This is particularly so in the midst of a severe economic recession. However, despite John Major's call to 'sweep away the cobwebs' and 'to demystify the process of Whitehall decision-making', progress has been slow. Britain's Official Secrets Act and the lack of a Freedom of Information Act have ensured that the debate about the future of the security services has taken place behind closed doors in Whitehall. Since the end of the cold war there has also been a continuous review of the role of the intelligence services, but only a select band of officials, hiding behind veils of secrecy, are party to what has been resolved. The government has done all it could to stifle debate.

Nowhere was this more in evidence than during the Spycatcher court case in Australia, in November 1978, when the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, was asked what harm publishing the book might do, since most of the information contained in it was already known to the KGB. He answered

Adapted from
**The Silent Conspiracy;
Inside the Intelligence
Services in the 1990s**
Stephen Dorril, Heinemann,
to be published 12 May 1993.

that 'the mere fact of publication in this country will undoubtedly promote discussion of, and articles about, the topics here, and thus lead to a heightened sensitivity and awareness of the methodology, philosophy, and organisation of the services'. This, said Armstrong, was to be avoided at all cost.

In Britain, it is only when a scandal is brewing, such as the Matrix Churchill affair, that a little light is thrown on the activities of the security services. The taxpayer and, to a large extent, the media are excluded from asking simple questions about effectiveness, oversight, value for money, and even what it is that security services actually do. In effect there is a conspiracy to conceal. This is not helped by a Fourth Estate which lacks courage, controlled largely by toadying press barons. Unfortunately, investigative reporting is regarded with little affection in the print

medium. There is, for instance no body representing investigative journalists as there is in the United States. Richard Norton-Taylor of the Guardian is, as far as I am aware, the only journalist in the media whose brief includes the activities of the security services. It is a fact that those journalists who in the mid-eighties mapped out the, until then, largely uncharted territory of M15 - David Leigh, Nick Davies, Paul Lashmar and Duncan Campbell mostly work within television.

Interestingly, the new Official Secrets Act, although draconian in concept, has turned out to be something of a damp squib. The government has not used it knowing that to do so would be a political act. However, lawyers have made quite an income from OSA readings for newspapers and books; assessments which are rarely warranted and mostly a waste of money. Unfortunately, too many publishers still go along with the D-Notice system, a typically British form of self-censorship.

It is, however, not all gloom. There is a surprising amount of material available in the public domain. The last few years have been unique. We have seen a torrent of leaks from the security services, their surrogates, and enemies which has provided solid information on which to open up the debate on the future of M15 and M16.

... Gulf War and the 'Disinformation' campaign

MILITARY MINDERS attached to the British Joint Information Bureau controlled the 'pool' reporting and the flow of information. Few journalists were willing to leave the pool and jeopardise their lifeline to the MoD and the Foreign Office and were, thus, easy prey to the manipulation of the psychological-warfare warriors.

Following government cut-backs and the closure of the pys-ops training course at the Army Intelligence Centre at Ashford, Kent, the MoD lacked the necessary experienced and qualified operators and was forced to recall out of retirement a number of old hands from the propaganda war in Northern Ireland. Observers were surprised to see Colonel David McDine, who, in 1975, had retired with a heart attack, make an appearance on television during the War. He had been in overall charge of Information Policy, a special unit which dealt in black propaganda and whose commander, Colonel Jeremy Railton, who had retired to Wiltshire to run a pig farm, also turned up in the Gulf.

Despite the sophistication of the commentators and the audience, the "spectacle" of massive media coverage and continuous analysis of the campaign enabled the flow of disinformation to proceed largely undetected. It seemed to confirm James Angleton's dic-

tion that 'disinformation might be the chief job of an intelligence agency'. Those brave enough to stand firm and present a more balanced view of the war were shot down with smears. Propagandists such as Ray Whitney, Conservative MP and former head of the Foreign Office's Information Research Department, which had dealt in all kinds of propaganda from white to black and had been responsible for setting up Information Policy, continued to spread the old anti-communist line with claims that hundreds of Soviet advisers were helping the Iraq regime. Criticism of the war was allegedly led by communist controlled front-organisations. The spin-doctors and the disinformers went to work on Peter Arnett of the US television network, CNN, who had attempted to report accurately on the war (see Sunday Telegraph, 24 February 1991 for details). The BBC's Chief overseas correspondent, John Simpson, was another victim of ugly rumours and the assault by the media on those that failed to tow the MoD/government line (see the Spectator, 8 February 1991).

Among the many and varied disinformation projects, ranging from the tragic to the laughable, run during Desert Storm by Allied Intelligence and press minders, were those on the right.

- According to the Sunday Telegraph, after the conflict, Prime Minister John Major told an Anglo-Israeli dinner: 'I'll tell you who destroyed the Scuds; it was the SAS. They were fabulous.' Intelligence analysts who later reviewed their assessments concluded that the allies had failed to destroy a single Scud launcher.

- United States intelligence 'conclusively' identified the powdered milk factory which was bombed by the allies as a 'biological weapons plant.'

- Many of the atrocities which received widespread publicity in the run up to the military engagement and the 'hearts and minds' campaign proved, on closer examination, to be either exaggerated or false. The charge that the Iraqi occupiers of Kuwait took babies from incubators and left them to die was later shown to have been fabricated.

- The bombing of the Amiriya concrete shelter in Baghdad, which led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians, appears to have been a monumental intelligence blunder. It was neither a 'military command' nor 'leadership' bunker as first identified by intelligence analysts, nor a 'military personnel bunker' as believed by military sources.

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This book contains a record of all the written and oral evidence to the special Parliamentary hearings on the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill, sponsored by Clive Soley, MP. The hearings were held on Tuesdays 1st, 8th and 15th of December 1992 in the Houses of Parliament.

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SELLING THE BEEB



This year John Birt took over as DG at the BBC. At the centre of his strategy for the future of the BBC is the introduction of an internal market for the goods and services produced in the BBC. This is, of course, a direct import of orthodox market economics into the BBC at a time when it is clearly failing in other areas where this simple minded approach has been applied, such as the NHS.

Tony Lennon, as well as being Chair of the CPBF, is also President of the main broadcasting trade union, BECTU. In an interview with Tom O'Malley and Jo Treharne for the CPBF's forthcoming pamphlet on the BBC Charter Review debate, *Selling the Beeb*, Tony explains Producer Choice and draws out its implications. It is useful to note that not only is the whole system not properly tested, but also that when fully implemented it could lead to the closing of whole sections of the BBC because they cannot compete in the market. In spite of the glossy assertions about the future of the BBC in the BBC's Extending Choice document, the reality is that, if Producer Choice is allowed to work through the system the BBC will operate more like its commercial rival, Sky TV, than as the public service broadcaster it is meant to be. We hope that this interview will help focus members minds on the parallels between what's happening in the BBC and in other publicly run organisations, and the serious implications that Producer Choice has for the future of public service broadcasting.

Q What is Producer Choice?

A In a nutshell. It is a way of conducting all transactions and basing all decision within the BBC about how to use resources on purely cash grounds. The BBC is broken into a series of nearly 200 business units. Departments are given a capitalisation figure.

They have to start paying rent to the BBC for overheads like getting the floor cleaned and the bins emptied etc. They have to pay for the wages of their staff and they earn money back by providing a service, principally to producers, which they charge for.

Now, it's easy to visualise it, if on the simple programme making level, the studio department, for instance, is a business unit, it pays rent for the studios, depreciation etc, etc.

It can make a limited number of decisions about the number of square feet it occupies and the level of service that it has in overhead terms, but it certainly doesn't have complete freedom.

It, on top of these overheads, has to pay wages for the people who do the actual work, camera crews, sound crews, etc, etc, and they earn their money by entering contracts with BBC producers who are given real cash to make their programmes.

If they are attracted by the in-house resource then they will pay real costs to that business unit, the studio business unit.

If they don't find it attractive or economic then they are perfectly free to go and use an independent unit outside the BBC.....It begins in earnest in April 1993. That's this year.

Q So, there's been a period of preparation up to now?

A Two television departments in London operated almost a pilot scheme. They were the film shooting department - that's camera crews on celluloid, and the design and scenic services departments. The pilot scheme was eased by the departments not actually having to pay overheads.

All they had to cover was their direct labour and incidental costs, and they had no overheads or interest charges levied on them for the pilot year.

In '93 the system starts with everyone leaping into a full blown internal market where they pay on a quasi commercial basis all the costs that relate to their business unit.

Q Is the computing system in place to monitor all these transactions?

A They've been installing a new costing system for, I think, the last three years. There have been profound problems with introducing the system. To date, as far as I know, they have bits of it working. I'm talking about the television costing system. As for radio and the regions, I think in the regions on a centre by centre basis - BBC Birmingham, BBC Newcastle - they have got costing methods in place. Radio, I haven't got a clue about actually, and I'd be surprised to find that they've got anything very sophisticated because they started very late.

Q So, they haven't got a costing system in place throughout the institution. Secondly, they haven't got a centralised monitoring procedure?

A Well, they certainly haven't got a centralised monitoring procedure and I think the BBC's loss of £58 million last year is indicative of the fact that there is less and less central grip on finances.

Q So, it's been done at the directorate level within departments where senior managers have been trained to set up budgeting procedures? They've presumably had training and have employed other people to do this kind of activity?

A Well, there's unquestionably been an expansion in accounting at the BBC and Checkland himself admitted it on a number of occasions.

Q Have you got any ideas about these pilot schemes? What kind of an effect have they had?

A What's happened is that the film department pilot failed to break even and has to engage in another swingeing round of labour cuts. There are few economically driven decisions (departments can take) but one of them is to cut jobs to reduce continuing costs, and the same, more or less, has happened in the design and scenic services area.

Q Isn't the logic of all this to close departments?

A If it's allowed to go to its logical conclusion, yes.

cpbf conference '93

CONFERENCE INVITATION TO ALL MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES

BRITAIN'S MEDIA : THE BALANCE SHEET

SATURDAY 8th MAY 1993 10:00 - 5:00

The CPBF has been actively campaigning on a number of issues in 1992 - 1993. We've drafted and campaigned for Clive Soley's Press Freedom and Responsibility Bill; publicised and supported Mark Fisher's Right To Know Bill; organised a major conference on the BBC and are in the process of publishing a pamphlet on the BBC's future.

Our conference is on Saturday 8th of May at the University of London Student's Union, Malet Street, London WC1 7HY. It will provide an opportunity to draw up a balance sheet on the state of Britain's media, and a focus for future activity. We urge you to attend as an individual, or nominate delegates from your union.

PROGRAMME

- 10:00 REGISTRATION
10:30 INTERFERENCE ON THE AIRWAVES.
After the Broadcasting Act, what are the issues we should be campaigning on in defence of 'the cornerstone of Public Service Broadcasting' - the BBC. Speakers include Ann Clywd MP (Shadow National Heritage Spokesperson) and Tony Lennon (President, BECTU).
12:30 LUNCH
13:30 MEDIA REFORM: PROMISES AND PROBLEMS.
Clive Soley's Press Freedom and Responsibility Bill, the Right To Know, and Calcutt. Speakers include Clive Soley MP and Maurice Frankell (Campaign for Freedom of Information).
15:00 TEA
15:30 AT THE SHARP END.
Investigative journalism now. Speakers include Stephen Dorril, author of 'Smear! Harold Wilson and the Secret State'.
17:00 CONFERENCE CLOSE

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION
MALET STREET, LONDON WC1 7HY
AT 10.00 am**

ALL AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS ARE ASKED TO APPOINT DELEGATES. INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS MAY ATTEND IN PERSON.

BOTH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AND AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS ARE ASKED TO FILL IN THE ATTENDANCE/REPRESENTATION FORM OPPOSITE AND RETURN IT TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE CPBF WILL BE PREPARING DOCUMENTATION FOR THE AGM ON THE BASIS OF MEMBERS AND DELEGATES REGISTERED BY 23RD APRIL 1993

NOMINATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MUST BE SENT IN WRITING TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE AT NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 23rd APRIL 1993. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS ELECTED AT THE AGM. DELEGATES MAY BE NOMINATED IN ONLY ONE SECTION, BUT MAY VOTE IN ALL SECTIONS.

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

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WORKERS IN PRINTING AND ALLIED TRADES	4 SEATS
WORKERS IN BROADCASTING	4 SEATS
OTHER TRADE UNIONS	4 SEATS
OTHER ORGANISATIONS	4 SEATS
REGIONAL GROUPS	2 PER REGION
SUB GROUPS	2 PER GROUP

MOTIONS FOR THE AGM MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 9th APRIL 1993.

DELEGATES TO THE AGM ARE INVITED FROM AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS AS SHOWN ON THE FORM OPPOSITE.

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ACCOMMODATION DELEGATES FROM OUTSIDE LONDON ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE THE PREVIOUS DAY WHO NEED ADVICE/HELP ON ACCOMODATION SHOULD CONTACT THE OFFICE.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

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TONY LENNON
NATIONAL CHAIR

**REPRESENTATION AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
9th MAY 1993**

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I will be attending the AGM on 9th of May 1993

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YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND DELEGATES IN RELATION TO THE SIZE OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Number of Members	Number of Delegates to AGM
Below 1,000	1
1,000 - 10,000	2
10,000 - 50,000	3
50,000 - 100,000	5
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Q Is it likely to be allowed to go to its logical conclusion?

A Well, we don't know. From a union point of view, I'm very concerned, as my colleagues are, that the BBC has no answer to the question:

"What will you do if it all goes wrong?" They appear to believe quite genuinely that if it starts to look as if its going wrong they will be able to rectify it in some way that will retain a level of in-house resourcing and servicing.

Q But the logic is, if there is outside resourcing that's cheaper then departments close.

A Absolutely.

Q Is Producer Choice then a move towards the restructuring to the BBC as a commissioning as opposed to a production organisation?

A That's exactly where it leads, if it yields the kind of problems we predict.

Q So that's got immense strategic importance?

A ...What Birt has done is to isolate programme departments in a corral irrespective of whether they are radio or television. They are in the longer term, it seems, to be combined into bi-media groups, all specialising in a genre of programmes. Those programme departments are now entirely separate from the resource base of the BBC which has been pulled together into a massive 8 or 10,000 strong facilities company, which is really what the BBC's new engineering and service directorate amounts to....

Q So they, management, see the future as one in which the BBC is both a facilities company and a commissioning outfit, but not a major in-house producer?

A Well, I don't know what future they see. There may be a future for the BBC as a commissioning company, but I'm not sure in '93 that I'd be very optimistic about the future of an 8 or 10,000 strong facilities company in the TV business..or the broadcasting business.



Tony Lennon, President Bectu and Chair of the CPBF answers questions
Photo: PAUL HERRMANN

BBC CHIEF BIRT SHOULD GO

by GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

INDEPENDENT on Sunday reporter Chris Blackhurst had pride of place with his exclusive story, "BBC helps its chief to avoid tax," in the paper's February 28 edition. Alongside a photo of Armani suited (what else) John Birt the report revealed that even though he received between £135,000 - £140,000 per year for his full time appointment as Deputy Director General he avoided tax by having his salary paid into his private company, John Birt Limited

The company accounts showed that in 1991 he was able to claim expenses for wardrobe (£3,666), travel and accommodation (£8,791) and secretarial assistance (£15,000) and salaries of £59,000 and £14,000 to himself and his wife respectively. This convenient arrangement meant, instead of paying tax on his six figure BBC salary he paid tax only on the salary he awarded himself as a director of his company.

As the implications of this story sank in, John Birt moved quickly. By the Monday he was on the BBC books, but that must not be the end of the story. Angry media trade unionists have called for the resignations of John Birt and BBC chairman, Duke Hussey, who along with other governors must have sanctioned the pay arrangements. BBC employees have been at the sharp end of the Birt inspired policies which are creating demoralisation, insecurity and unemployment and their anger at this blatant example of double standards is perfectly understandable.

After all the BBC provides Birt with two cars (one chauffeur driven, the other for private use), reimburses costs incurred for his public functions and boxes at Ascot and Wimbledon and yet he was still able to claim

for substantial travel, entertaining and other expenses through his company.

Concern over this issue needs to be translated into practical proposals in the debate on the BBC's future. Firstly, the deeply secretive process of appointment, and the pay agreement with Birt as Director General, must never be allowed to happen again. The BBC still won't disclose Birt's exact pay now, by the way, but informed guesses suggest it must be at least £150,000 a year. All posts at the BBC in future, at whatever level, should be filled by an open process of advertising and interview.

It's clear now that there's something wrong at the heart of the BBC. The Thatcher years have eroded the public service ethos that is so important in the organisation. How can Birt talk about the BBC's high standards, moral authority and public service when he himself didn't go on the books when he joined?

It also raises basic questions about the drastic changes he is driving through at the BBC. We highlight one aspect of these, Producer Choice, in the interview with Tony Lennon on these pages. Thatcherite market principles, and a regime which replaces full time jobs with contracts, which have to be renewed every six or twelve months, are breaking up experienced long standing groups of staff.

All of this doesn't mean harking back to some nostalgic idea of a pre-Thatcherite BBC. As an organisation the BBC was bureaucratic, remote, elitist and much more. What the Birt episode does is highlight how important it is that a new vision for the BBC emerges in the run up to the Charter renewal.

The BBC has to become open and accountable, well funded and efficiently managed. It

will mean reforming the appointment process for governors, so that they become representative of our society rather than representatives of narrower interests. It will mean giving people who work at the BBC new confidence in the organisation's future. But an essential first step in this process has to be a break with the discredited policies John Birt is instituting. He should go.

SELLING THE BEEB

In the run up to the BBC's Charter renewal in 1996, this CPBF pamphlet "Selling the Beeb" examines the changes that have occurred within the Corporation since the last renewal in 1981.

It takes an in-depth look at the role of management and the Board of Governors throughout the eighties and early nineties, and examines what part the Thatcher and Major governments played in shaping the structure and policies of the BBC today.

It analyses the government plans for the future of the BBC, outlined in the Green Paper published in November 1992 and the BBC's own plans for survival in the publication Extending Choice.

Finally the CPBF offers its views on the future of the BBC in an age of satellite broadcasting, subscription channels and cable, and asks how can the BBC survive in the new world of market-driven and competitive broadcasting?

The pamphlet, price £4.99 (£5.50 including P&P) will be published in April. Orders and enquiries to CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG

MEDIA MONITOR

GENERAL ELECTION DATA

British Journalism Review has the occasional illuminating piece in what's often a disappointing journal. In a recent issue (Vol 3 No 3), Robert Worcester of MORI analysed the media in the General Election. His conclusions on front page coverage of the national dailies and Sundays echo our findings in Electionwatch which we published in Free Press No 69. He says, "It is striking how little support the Mirror Group gave to the election and therefore the Labour Party on the front pages of its newspapers....one can see the blatant support given to the Conservative Party in the so-called 'Tory Tabloids' and compare them to the weak support given Labour both in the space devoted and in its content".

For the record, the Mirror came bottom of all the national dailies, devoting only 11.6% of its front pages to the election; in the Sunday league table the Sunday Mirror was third from the bottom (3.3%) and the People bottom (0%).

If you would like a copy of Free Press 69 containing our election monitoring report, it is available at 75p inc. p&p or 12 copies for £4.50 inc p&p.

BELGRADE'S B92

A report in The Guardian, "Serbia's sole wave of hope" by Julie Flint (16.2.93) described the work and pressures on Belgrade's radio station, B92. It has been broadcasting without a license, and with great difficulty since 1989. The station's credo is parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and social justice, human and minority rights - themes distinctly unpopular in Slobadan Milosevic's Belgrade.

Janet Pascoe wrote in:

I was very moved by the Guardian article. Up to now I have felt only despair over the tragedy in the Balkans, but here there seems to be something we can do.

Clearly broadcasting is a vital tool for good or evil...I suggest a network of Friends of B92 which would help to raise money, facilitate personal contacts and publicise what the station is trying to do.

I should be more than happy to hear from anyone who feels able to respond. Janet Pascoe can be contacted at 12 Milton Court, Ickenham, near Uxbridge UB10 8ND TEL 0895 635986.

CHALLENGING RTE ON CENSORSHIP

Britain has its broadcasting ban; Ireland Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, which is now the subject of an important legal tussle in Ireland's courts.

In August 1990 the chairperson of striking workers at the Gateaux Bakery in Dublin, Larry O'Toole, was banned from interviews on Ireland's state broadcast system, RTE, on the grounds that he was a member of Sinn Fein. RTE's standing policy is that no member of Sinn Fein receives broadcast coverage on any subject. Larry O'Toole, a member of the national executive of the Bakery Union, challenged RTE's interpretation, arguing that his Sinn Fein membership was completely irrelevant when he was speaking and representing his co-workers at the bakery.

In July 1992 the Irish High Court ruled in favour of Larry O'Toole. Even Conor Cruise O'Brien, the Parliamentary architect of Section 31, welcomed the ruling against

RTE's illegal extension of the Section 31 order. But not RTE. As we go to press the Irish Supreme Court will hear RTE's appeal against the High Court ruling. It was due to take place on March 4th and we'll report the outcome in our next issue.

The new minister for broadcasting, Michael D. Higgins, on record as an opponent of Section 31, is currently conducting a review of the section. Submissions from interested parties are invited. Meanwhile Larry O'Toole's case raises important issues of freedom of speech and information. It's also expensive to initiate such legal challenges and you can help by sending donations and messages of support to:

Niall Meehan, Secretary, Larry O'Toole Free Speech Campaign, 33 Geraldine Street, Dublin 7. Donations can also be sent to: Free Speech Legal Fund, TSB, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1. AC NO 990601. 21366730

REVIEW

Treacherous Estate: The Press after Fleet Street

by Michael Leapman
Hodder and Stoughton £18.99

Why were the few major stories critical of big business published in the mainstream press in recent years researched by journalists who do not report business affairs full time? How effective have the newspaper industry's attempts at self-regulation been? This readable and informative book by a specialist media reporter gives you the answers to these and other questions. The title echoes that of *Dangerous Estate*, the book by Francis Williams published in 1957, and takes up the story of Britain's press since then.

The book is wide-ranging, dealing with proprietors, editors and the controversies which have hit the industry over the past thirty five years. However, it suffers the fate of any book on Britain's press. There are few references to the dramatic events of 1992 which are shaping the debates on press freedom and privacy now.

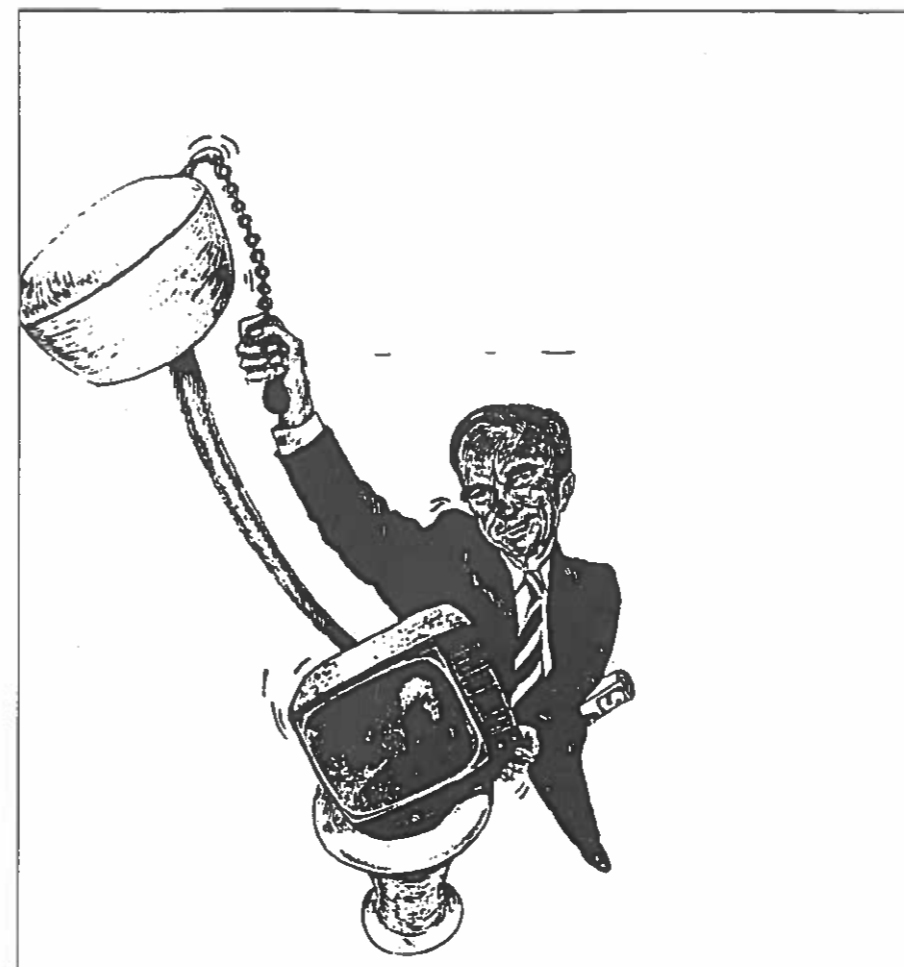
CORRECTION

Free Press 71 carried an article by Andrew Puddephat of Liberty on Press Freedom and the "Right of Reply" which we had to edit. William Hetherington of the Peace Pledge Union has written to point out an inaccuracy which we're happy to correct.

The edited article said, "Incitement to mutiny provisions were used against Troops Out leafleters in the 1970s". He points out The Incitement to Mutiny Act was last used in the 1924 Campbell case. The 1934 Incitement to Disaffection Act was used to bring a series of prosecutions in 1973/76 against supporters of the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign, a body with different policies, and no connection with the Troops Out Movement.

ALTER YOUR DIARY DATES

We've changed the dates for our Conference and AGM from those advertised in the last issue of Free Press to avoid a clash with BECU's Conference. The full details of the new dates and venues are in this issue (just in case you hadn't noticed!).



ITV DOWN THE TUBE

COMMENT by Granville Williams

MICHAEL GREEN, chairman of Carlton Communications, is a shadowy but significant figure in the book on the ITV franchise debacle, *Under the Hammer* by Andrew Davidson. He's there talking to Lord Young in September 1987 at the famous "seminar" on broadcasting (the only one) which Mrs Thatcher held to throw down the gauntlet to commercial broadcasters. As the government's policy to sell off the ITV franchises to the highest bidder developed he's there supporting it. And he's there on Wednesday 16th October 1991 when his company won the franchise from Thames TV with a hefty £43 million bid.

His controversial £15,000 donation to the Conservative party, made five months after he won the franchise, is a modest sum compared with the 87 per cent pay rise he received in late January which took his salary to £520,000.

Michael Green is now a dominant player in British commercial television. His company owns 20 per cent of Central Television, and through that an indirect stake in Meridian, which won the new franchise in the South East. Carlton also has a stake (20 per cent) in the breakfast TV channel,

GMTV and currently negotiating to invest £30 million in ITN.

Elsewhere the ITV network is fraying. Recent redundancies at Granada and Yorkshire Television add to the swathe of job losses in the industry. Strange though that amidst all this doom Clive Leach, group chief executive of Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Television was paid £432,000 in 1992 - a 161 per cent increase over the previous year due to a profit related earnings scheme. There's gold in them thur TV screens, for some at least.

If selective salaries have soared, programme quality has plummeted. We're seeing the first signs of this as the channels chase the ratings. In the couple of months since the new ITV companies went on air, with the new ITC "light touch" regulation crime, sex, serial killings and the royals have come to the fore. The symbolic moment for this brave new world was David Elstein, former Thames director of programmes, and now running Sky's six channels, promoting Diana - Her True Story.

The keywords at the centre of conservative broadcasting policy - competition, choice and quality - are discredited and tattered now as the first depressing signs of the new era of tabloid TV become visible.

NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY DEFENCE FUND

The reasons for supporting the New Statesman & Society Defence Fund shouldn't need spelling out to Free Press readers, but just in case...

The magazine faces a double indemnity. In mid February John Major and Clare Latimer settled their libel actions against the magazine's printers, wholesale distributors and one of the main retail outlets, John Menzies Ltd. They will each receive damages and costs likely to amount to over £50,000, and the final bill could be over £150,000. The damages and costs which these companies incurred will have to be met by the NSS because without such indemnities printers wouldn't print and distributors wouldn't distribute a single copy of anything.

And this is before the article has been considered by a judge and jury, and a verdict given.

We set up the CPBF to campaign for a diverse media and challenge concentrated media power. If the NSS falls as a victim of the crazy libel laws and extravagant legal costs, we will take a step further backwards from that goal. As the NSS appeal says, "...A free society means more than being able to enter the Ritz Hotel of the legal system, it means having free access to information, opinion and argument - and not just from a handful of monopolistic outlets. If only a few, instead of a thousand, media flowers bloom, then the political and social garden will be a wasteland."

Donations payable to New Statesman and Society at Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ

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IRELAND: TROUBLED IMAGES

A novelist, film-maker and investigative journalist focus on the problems and pressures of reporting and recording events in Ireland.

**West Yorkshire Playhouse
Saturday 3 April 2.00 - 4.30pm**

Speakers:

Stephen Dorril (author of *Honeytrap*, *Smear! Wilson and MI5* and *The Silent Conspiracy: Inside the Intelligence Services in the 1990s*. He's also co-publisher of the magazine *Lobster*).

Kenneth Griffiths (actor and film-maker. His film *Hang Out Your Brightest Colours* made for ATV in 1973 has never been shown. His most recent programme was on Roger Casement for the BBC *Timewatch* series).

Glenn Patterson (Belfast born novelist, author of *Burning Your Own and Fat Lad*).

Admission £3.00

**Bookings through West Yorkshire Playhouse
Telephone 0532 442111**

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