

FREE PRESS

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INSIDE:

- Page 2: The end of the Northern Star
- Page 3: Mike Power on the Miners
- Page 4: Cross-Media Ownership
- BOOK FOR AGM/Conference!

TEN YEARS ON: The Media and the Miners

by Granville Williams

THIS ISSUE of *Free Press* reaches you ten years after the miners began an epic year-long struggle against pit closures. The dispute was triggered by the decision of the National Coal Board to close Cortonwood Colliery in Yorkshire, Snowdown in Kent and Polmaise in Scotland.

The CPBF played an active role, raising the demand for the Right of Reply to distorted reports of the dispute in the press and on TV, and *Media Hits the Pits*, a pamphlet produced by the CPBF at the time, vividly reminds us how important and difficult that work was.

Ten years on, as British Coal pressurises the 12,000 miners at the remaining 17 collieries to take redundancy, the media is silent. But what a story there is to tell, as an industry with advanced mining technology, an expert workforce and huge reserves of coal, faces near extinction. Massive redundancy payments - far in excess of £8 billion - have been expended to create high unemployment and desolation in coalfield communities. As approval for more gas fired power stations is announced, electricity generated by the crazy, rigged economics of nuclear power fills the gap left by closing down coal burning stations, and in 1993 coal worth £687 million was imported into Britain.

Ten years ago media coverage of the coal dispute aroused bitter resentment among the mining communities. Will the spate of media reports we can expect on the tenth anniversary set the record straight, and present the full story of the industry's



Picture: Richard Clarkson

butchery? We doubt it, but intend to play our part to ensure that images and opinions marginalised in the media, are available to *Free Press* readers.

STRIKING IMAGES

RICHARD CLARKSON was a miner at the Prince of Wales Colliery, Pontefract, during the 1984-85 dispute. "Throughout the duration of the strike I took photographs, often begging film from press photographers," he said. "Looking through them all again recently, I saw how they fell into various themes, and that they would make an exhibition representing my personal view of things, as opposed to the Media view."

Following an official opening by Arthur Scargill, Richard's photographs will be on display at the Elizabethan Gallery, Wakefield from Saturday 21 May - 3 July, and then go on to other venues in West Yorkshire. To complement the exhibition, CPBF(North) is organising two events. The first, in the Town Hall, Pontefract, West Yorks, will be on Thursday, June 16 at 7.30pm and will be a debate on *The Media and the Miners*. In the Civic Centre, Castleford, on Wednesday 14 September we will be showing films, including the Miners' Campaign Video Tapes and *The Battle of Orgreave*. Speakers from Women Against Pit Closures, the NUM, Yvette Vanson, who made the film *The Battle of Orgreave*, and Chris Reeves, who was involved in the production of the miners' videos. We hope Michael Mansfield QC will also speak at one event. Full details in the next issue of *Free Press*, but make a note of the dates in your diary now.

NORTHERN STAR SILENCED

IN 1980 there were more than 70 local alternative papers covering the towns and cities of the UK - the *Exeter Flying Post*, *Islington Gutter Press*, *Rochdale Alternative Paper*, *Aberdeen People's Press*, and so on.

Now there are two: *Peninsula Voice*, a monthly covering Cornwall west of Truro and Penzance, and the *West Highland Free Press*. Here Tony Harcup records the life and death of *Leeds Other Paper/Northern Star*, which closed 20 years to the day after its first publication.

A LOCAL paper run as a workers' co-op and providing an alternative to the mainstream media - that was the dream and, for 20 years, the reality of Leeds Other Paper (later renamed Northern Star).

Sadly, issue 820 published on 20 January 1994 was the last, and publishers Leeds Alternative Publications Ltd went into voluntary liquidation.

The paper had been fighting a losing battle against a low circulation, mounting debts, ever increasing staff turnover, and burnout. By the time it died it had followed some other former alternative newspapers down the listings and 'style' route and it was no longer renowned for its journalism. But it had still provided some alternative to the United Newspapers monopoly of newsprint in Leeds.

In its heyday, Leeds Other Paper was a beacon of radical journalism. The first photographs showing nuclear weapons being carried on trains through Leeds; a leaked copy of the then secret Government civil defence pamphlet *Protect and Survive*; detailed and critical coverage of major legal cases such as the Helen Smith inquest and the Bradford 12 trial; research exposing the links between chemicals and cancer at a local dyeworks (helped by the fact that, unusually for a local paper, the LOP journalist was actually a graduate in textile chemistry!) Those were just a few of the stories that made the paper's reputation as a thorn in the side of the local establishment.

When it wasn't digging the dirt, LOP was providing its readers with a voice often ignored by the mainstream media. Until it went weekly in 1980, readers were even invited to turn up at editorial meetings and help decide what would go in the next issue!

Not surprisingly, throughout its 20 year life LOP was periodically targeted by local fascists for graffiti, vandalism, threatening letters and telephone calls, and even physical assaults. Reporters and photographers were arrested on several occasions over the years. But opposition also came from less predictable directions. LOP journalists had their own opinions and made many enemies. People on the left who would quite happily deal with the pro-Tory Yorkshire Evening Post would bear grudges against LOP for years because it had

ed claims that staff had ill-treated children at a council home. And the local NUJ branch once even instituted an inquiry into LOP in a failed bid by a few rightwingers to witch-hunt LOP journalists out of the union.

Ten years ago, in April 1984, LOP hosted a national conference of local alternative newspapers, attended by representatives of 15 titles who between them boasted a readership of 60,000.

"The alternative press is alive and well and enjoying a growing readership," according to a report in LOP with the tongue-in-cheek headline 'Fleet Street quakes in its boots'. But in fact, five years into the Thatcher Government, that was to prove the final flourish of the alternative press. Most of the papers died, retreated to very localised parish pump news sheets, or became commercialised listings magazines.

As academics Bob Franklin and David Murphy noted in *What News? The Market, politics and the Local Press*: "The alternative radical press do not provide an example of the free market creating choice and variety. Quite the reverse: they show it consuming them."

They pointed to LOP/Northern Star as the exception that proved the rule. Now even the exception is gone, and people living in a society supposedly built on 'choice' are once again left with no choice.

One of the CPBF's aims is to push the debate on alternative forms of media ownership. The death of LOP/Northern Star makes that debate all the more urgent.

Tony Harcup is a freelance journalist based in Yorkshire. CPBF(North) wants to publish a booklet recording the distinctive contribution of LOP/Northern Star, and to place on record the people, issues and controversies associated with it over two decades. If you or your organisation would like to contribute to the costs of researching, designing and printing the pamphlet contact CPBF(North) 24 Tower Avenue, Upton, near Pontefract, West Yorks WF91EE.

LEEDS Other Paper 10p
 W. H. WHAT'S ON GUIDE
 No. 124 2nd February - 7th March 1988

Lack of provision for the Mentally Handicapped slammed by Leeds Workers
 LOP EXCLUSIVE

What to do in a Nuclear War
 Secret Government pamphlet leaked

PROTECT AND SURVIVE

Turn to pages 6 and 7 where 'Protect and Survive' is revealed exclusively in LEEDS OTHER PAPER.

upset or annoyed them in some way. The paper was too anarchistic for some Labour Party members; too rank and filist for some union officials; too male dominated for some feminists; too pro-feminist for many men.

The offices were once occupied by a group of disabled people who felt their concerns had not been given enough coverage. On another occasion, a group of NALGO shop stewards tried to organise a boycott of the paper because it had report-

Media faces many ways to see the miners

by Mike Power

GOVERNMENT PLANS to speed the decline of the coal industry were intensified during three specific phases which began in 1973/4, but the media was not consistently pro-government on every occasion. However during the epic 1984/5 coal dispute the media almost totally accepted the agenda set by the government, the National Coal Board and working miners.

This important lesson was drawn by the CPBF in 1985 after the year long strike was defeated. The CPBF noted how Fleet Street had acted as cheerleaders for the government, and the broadcast media had generally, uncritically adopted the agenda set by the press. But that had not been the case in the 1973/4 miners' dispute, which led to the defeat of the Heath government in the "who rules Britain" elections.

At the time the *Daily Mirror* had firmly blamed the Prime Minister; *The Express* ran stories that were sympathetic to miners; *The Times* pointed out that some Tory MPs backed the miners; and *The Sun* wrote about "the terrible danger of work underground".

More recently, following Heseltine's announcement of 31 pit closures in October 1992, sections of the media expressed outright hostility to government plans and clear sympathy with the miners. Thousands of people immediately lobbied parliament, following which a 90 day review was set in train, and four days later some 200,000 joined a TUC march in London. Media coverage was unanimously favourable, as it was throughout the country during the five week march of Scottish miners from Glasgow to London. The high level of public anger and revulsion, that was reflected throughout the media against Heseltine and the government, momentarily restored confidence in the miners and trades unions.

These examples indicate that with or without media backing a cause can be won or lost. What counts is the political

climate, which in 1984/5 was unremittingly hostile to labour and collectivist ideas and actions. The strike had followed the Falklands war, throughout which the government had openly managed the news, which, in turn, had helped Thatcher's re-election. Thatcher then

early as 10 January 1984. *The Sun* ran a spoof ballot for readers to vote on the miners' overtime ban, but composing room workers objected. They insisted on a disclaimer being printed alongside the offending item and three days later a reply, from the NUM, was published with equal space and prominence.

Throughout the year every national newspaper and many regional titles were pressurised, either by moral force or strike action to give rights of reply. Media coverage itself became an issue, and in this the CPBF was prominent. Television news and current affairs programmes featured the organisation, as did radio phone-ins; and letters and articles appeared in a wide range of printed media. The campaign engaged in long running polemics with broadcasters during 1984, these included Alisdair Hetherington at the Edinburgh Television Festival; and Alan Prothero, Deputy Director General of the BBC.

Meanwhile the miners' solidarity movement took its own media initiatives. ACTT workshop members produced *Coal Not Dole - Miners Campaign Videotapes*, some of which dealt with media coverage.

They were distributed widely in Britain and in eight countries abroad, raising large sums for miners' welfare. Fleet Street printworkers, who raised some £2 million for the strike fund also produced their own *Right of Reply Specials*, which sold in their tens of thousands and raised much cash.

But these were puny efforts compared to the overwhelming power of the government, police and judiciary; the National Coal Board and the working miners; and the printed and broadcast media. Nonetheless the media is today under greater pressure than for a long time for reform, and that in a small way is a continuation of the efforts made in 1984/5. At the end of the dispute the CPBF pointed out: "when future historians of the media assess its role in this dispute, they may well conclude that the media, as we know and dislike it, was the long-term loser in the coal dispute".

Mike Power was Chairperson of the CPBF during 1984/5, and was a print-worker at the Daily Mail.



Picture: Richard Clarkson

fought the miners with the same tenacity as she did the Argentinian armed forces.

The media was not, therefore, decisive to the outcome of the dispute 10 years ago, despite its consistent antagonism. Nevertheless many media workers expressed their solidarity with the miners and sought fair coverage for them from the outset. Informal meetings were arranged between media workers, the NUM and the CPBF; miners visited Fleet Street chapels; public meetings were held; and resolutions, calling for a right of reply, were passed at both TUC and Labour conferences. Local miners' support committees made links with media workers; trades council media committees were formed with local journalists taking part; and in the North East the NUJ paid for a journalist to work for the NUM. The outstanding development during the strike year was the growing legitimacy given to actions for the right of reply. These actions of media workers to gain access for miners to answer media distortion began, unsurprisingly, at *The Sun*, as

The Cross media ownership review

The deadline for submissions to the Government's badly publicised Cross media ownership review passed on Friday 25 February. Surprisingly, 33 submission had been received by the Department of National Heritage by that date - although another 12 had "been promised". None of the Government Departments involved in the review (National Heritage, Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Prime Minister's Policy Unit) produced guidelines for submissions. Here, we print the main points from the submission of the National Union of Journalists, BECTU, and the CPBF.

EVIDENCE FROM THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS (NUJ)

THE NUJ begin their evidence to the review by declaring that, "The NUJ has consistently opposed the concentration of media ownership. We have been equally consistent in opposing the continuing growth of cross media and transnational ownership. This opposition is founded on the belief that diversity and choice are the cornerstones of a mature democratic political system."

The Four Way Threat

The NUJ point out four areas of development within the media industry that give rise to concern:

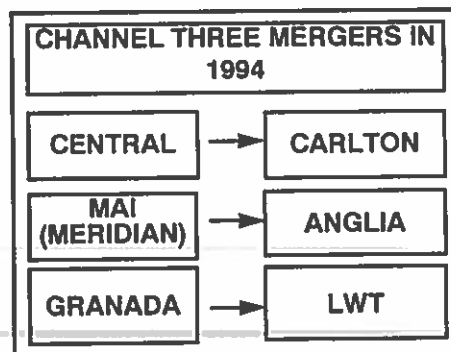
- increasing concentration of ownership within one particular medium, e.g. newspapers
- increasing cross media ownership
- multinational ownership (such as Time Warner), encompassing both horizontal and vertical integration
- transnationalisation of media output.

This last trend, according to the NUJ, applies particularly to larger companies willing and able to exploit developing markets in economically smaller nations - for example in Eastern Europe. The NUJ comments that "one country's healthy overseas programme sales is another country's growing subjection to cultural imperialism".

The UK Media

The NUJ draw attention to the continuing trend of concentration of ownership in the UK newspaper industry. At present, more than 85% of all circulation is controlled by just four groups. In the last eight years, the cut-throat world of newspaper pub-

lishing has claimed the *News on Sunday*, the *Daily Post*, the *Sunday Correspondent* and the *London Daily News*. In the TV industry, the NUJ's evidence highlights how the 1990 Broadcasting Act has undermined the public service status of the Channel 3 companies, and that - rather than promoting rationalisation - the Act "has led to an ad hoc regrouping of the largest companies".

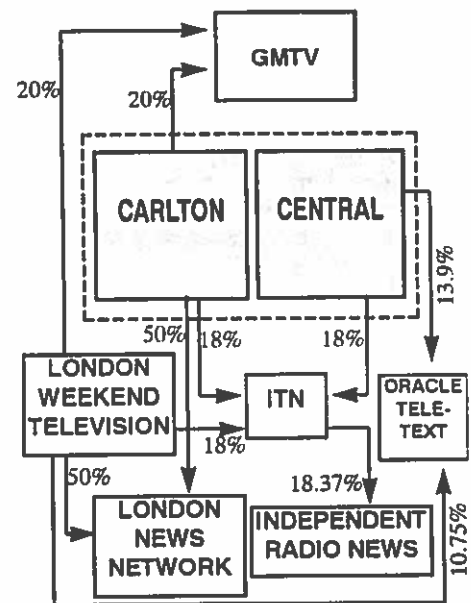


The NUJ concludes that the profit motive of the largest companies has overtaken concerns of content and scheduling. With reference to the radio industry, the NUJ draws attention to the increasing concentration of ownership that stems from the 1990 Act. This according to the NUJ, has "produced a small number of controlling companies" that produce "some of the least challenging radio in the UK".

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the NUJ comments that, "without national, pan-European and transnational regulation, there is a real danger that tomorrow's information superhighway will be bogged by a small bunch of media juggernauts". The NUJ recommend that regulation be used to

protect democracy and open, fair competition in the media underpinned by a Freedom of Information Act.



EVIDENCE FROM THE CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM (CPBF)

The CPBF evidence, prepared by Granville Williams, identifies "the threats to democratic processes, pluralism and journalistic standards which flow from the concentration of media ownership and draws on international examples to support it", and suggests firm media policies for the future. The complete evidence can be obtained from the CPBF for \$1.50 (inc p and p).

Why a cross media review?

The CPBF believes that the review has been undertaken not, as suggested by the government, because of rapid changes in media technology, but as a result of intense lobbying by media companies at a national and international level. The purely commercial argument put forward by these companies has been echoed by lobbyists and business writers time and again.

We believe that the facts and argument to support this view are questionable, but also other wider considerations of the role of the media in democratic societies should be at the centre of any balanced review of media ownership.

Multimedia futures?

The CPBF points out that much of the technological arguments to support this deregulation remain hypothetical. Our evidence questions the validity of some of

NUJ CASE STUDIES

1: News International (ultimately News Corporation)

Controlled by Rupert Murdoch, News International's media empire now spreads across four continents and an array of mediums, including newspapers, magazines, books, films and TV. The company owns a controlling interest in SKY satellite TV, which claims to reach more than 13 million households in 22 countries. Murdoch is now threatening to replace BBC World Service TV on SKY with Sky News.

At the last UK General Election, the five national newspapers owned by News International attacked the Labour Party at every turn, and may have influenced the 2,000 vital voters in 11 constituencies, whose last minute change of mind may have been affected by the Sun headline, "If Labour wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights".

2: Silvio Berlusconi - Fininvest

Berlusconi is the owner of the biggest TV network outside the US (Fininvest), the second biggest publishing conglomerate in Europe and the second biggest company in Italy after Fiat.

Berlusconi owns half of all the TV watched by Italians (3 out of the 6 national networks), and one-third of the country's advertising goes through his publicity firm, Pubitalia '80. Silvio Berlusconi is now pursuing a high-profile political career, publicised and supported by his many media outlets.

ITALIAN TV

Public Channels

Rai UNO
Rai DUE
Rai TRE

Fininvest (Berlusconi) Controlled Channels (40% audience share)

Canale 5
Rete 4
Italia 1

Other channels: CINQUESTELLE, RETE A, ODEON TV, TELEMONTICARLO, RETEMANIA, VIDEOMUSIC, JUNIOR TV.

the predictions concerning the development of digital technologies and concludes:

"(It is) a poor guide to policy-making to be seduced by conjectural predictions about a multimedia future, and to jettison some important guiding principles informing the way we should regulate the media on the basis of such predictions."

Regulation vs deregulation

Our evidence highlights how principles of diversity and pluralism in the media were undermined by the 1990 Broadcasting Act, by restricting legislation to channels using UK broadcast frequencies - effectively excluding Murdoch's News International, owners of SKY TV. We also cite examples of the adverse impacts of excessive media concentration in other European nations, and of the dangers of cross media promotion. In addition, we draw attention to one worrying development affecting news reporting arrangements for independent television and radio (see chart), with Michael Green's CARLTON (now merged with CENTRAL), holding large stakes in several

broadcast news organisations.

Ethical issues

The CPBF also argues for the protection of journalistic freedom from internal pressures through the safeguarding of trade union rights.

Policies for diverse media

Our arguments for limits on cross media ownership are based on democratic, editorial and cultural concerns. Our evidence offers a suggestion for a coherent media policy that places emphasis on diversity and accountability. We argue for public investment in new cable and communications technology, with legislation to promote access and choice. We believe that his approach is the best way to realise the benefits that the new media can offer.

Jo Treharne

EVIDENCE FROM THE BROADCASTING, ENTERTAINMENT, CINEMATOGRAPH AND THEATRE UNION (BECTU)

The evidence submitted by BECTU asks the review to give "careful thought to all the factors involved, not just of market considerations".

Technology

BECTU's evidence, like the evidence of the CPBF, points out that many of the arguments for deregulation that take developments in new media as a central concern, are based on predictions rather than hard facts, choosing to focus on technical and economic assertions and excluding important cultural and political factors.

OWNERSHIP

BECTU suggests that the moratorium on foreign takeovers of Channel 3 companies should have been extended to allow more policy consideration. BECTU points out that "the UK (is) the only member state to allow up to 100% foreign control of a domestic broadcaster".

The Need for Pluralism

BECTU's evidence asserts that: "The weakness of some of the arguments for deregulation as the strategy for surviving in the multimedia markets is their excessive reliance on commercial rather than broader cultural considerations. There are many general arguments against monopoly, but there are particular additional arguments against excessive concentration of ownership in the media. These concern the need for diversity, representativeness and freedom of expression in the media, for a plurality of views and interests to be expressed."

European Policy

BECTU refers to the fact that deregulation runs contrary to the EC's approach to media, set out in the 1992 Green Paper on pluralism and concentration.

Conclusion

BECTU recommends that there should be no relaxation of the present cross-media ownership restriction, commenting that, "An understandable concern to provide and protect UK commercial interests in media hardware and technology should not be a reason for undermining a commitment to pluralism." BECTU also recommends that the 'special privilege' afforded to BSkyB through the 1990 Broadcasting Act should be removed. Like the NUJ, BECTU warns against allowing media policy to be decided through commercially orientated departments (such as the Monopolies and mergers Commission), and that any regulation should have regard for wider cultural criteria.

'RIGHTS' NOT CHARITY?

Ann Pointon can understand why generous non-disabled people can't see the harm in jolly 'feel good' events like Children in Need, but argues that sitting in baths of baked beans or bungee jumping in weird outfits does nothing for the dignity of disabled people.

NEWS LAST year of the end of Telethon was greeted with delight by disability activists, although the Trust denied that the protest demonstrations outside the South Bank television studio were behind their decision. One likely factor was the £9 million drop in donations in July 1992 to £15 million from the 1990 figure of £24 million. Children in Need also dropped £7 million between the 1991 and 1992 campaigns, but regained £1 million if this to reach a reported £12.3 million in 1993

Disabled people's organisations are certainly not saying there is no 'need', but even these reduced sums are a drop in the ocean of real need. The protests arise out of how these needs are met, with disabled people saying that such programmes (and indeed daily coverage of disability) tend to avoid the key issues and present disabled people as helpless victims whose lives can be transformed by these charity 'solutions'.

The discrimination which disabled people face is virtually ignored by the media. It seems curious to many disabled people that as companies proudly wave cheques from the television screen, only 25% meet their statutory obligation to employ 3% of registered disabled people. 16% ignore the law completely and the rest of the relevant employers (those of over 20 employees) gain exemption with ease, including major broadcasters like the

BBC, whose quota achievement is only 0.3% instead of 3.0%.

The use of pathetic images, sentimental music and smiling, grateful, disabled children tugs at the heartstrings and opens the purse or wallet. But it is not very

DAN, the Direct Action Network, is a group of disabled people with a mailing list of 3,000 which is committed actively to combatting discrimination. In the Campaign for Accessible Transport, for instance, activists have chained themselves to bus platforms and blocked Oxford Street. Last November, at the demonstration against Children in Need, BCDOP issued a statement aimed at broadcasting workers, and the broadcasting union, BECTU, publicised disabled people's objections to BBC staff. This follows support in previous years by NALGO and NUT members.



Photo: Tony Baldwinson. From 'Coalition' Magazine

clear to the average viewer that the contribution they send will be sent off to other charities for distribution. Some of these charities will be very large, like Barnados or the Spastics Society, who already receive massive government grants. The total income of the Spastics Society in 1991 was reported as £58 million, compared with the income of under £70,000 received by the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), the key national organisation representing disabled people.

What disabled people would value is not charity, but moral and financial aid from non-disabled allies in their struggle for anti-discrimination legislation, and an understanding of why disabled people are uniting under a 'Rights Not Charity' banner.

USEFUL READING

Ann Pointon compiled *Disability and Television: Guidelines on Representation for Producers*. Other useful material in *The Creatures Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* by David Hevey (Routledge) £14.99 and two books by C. Barnes: *Disabling Imagery and the Media* and *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination* published with BCODP

GLOBAL MEDIA and LOCAL RESISTANCE

by Tom O'Malley

A review of: Tony Downumt ed, *Channels of Resistance: Global Television and Local Empowerment* (BFI/Channel 4, 1993) £12.95; and Dave Rushton ed, *Citizen Television: a local dimension to Public Service Broadcasting* (John Libbey/ Institute for Local Television, 1993) £25.

"ALTHOUGH THE economic and political pressures on the global system are strong, they are not totally determining. We can dare to imagine and create something different."

Tony Downumt here encourages readers of *Channels of Resistance* to dare to imagine and create different forms of communications in a world dominated by the rapid spread of commercially driven media. *Channels of Resistance* is an excellent account of how, in different places and in different ways, people are fighting against the way mass communications are used to make profit and support unjust economic and social systems.

Channels of Resistance was produced in conjunction with a series of programmes on Channel 4 television of the same name which were transmitted in April and May 1992. The book touches on and extends the themes raised in this series.

Downumt points out that the globalisation of mass communication technologies - TV, radio, satellite, cable - have affected, or are affecting, different countries in different ways. He argues that resistance to these, often Western dominated, channels of information and entertainment is patchy and hard to quantify. He acknowledges that, 'even to begin to affect Western dominated information channels in this situation will clearly be a long and complex struggle.'

This complexity is illustrated in the selection of essays which make up the book. In some of the essays, those on the nature of television in Canada, on the effects of deregulation and intensified competition on Italian television, on the nature and reach of the pop music channel, MTV, and on the ruthless commercialism of

Brazilian television, it is hard not to sense an undercurrent of pessimism about the possibilities for change.

Examples of resistance to the undemocratic control of the media are described in the remaining essays. One on the sophisticated organisation behind the *Gulf War TV Project* in the USA illus-



trates how, in the heartlands of the Western media machine, people have taught themselves how to organise impressive resistance.

The *Gulf War TV Project* linked peace activists, anti-war campaigners, and progressive media campaigners and practitioners through the use of video, cable and satellite. The *Project* mobilised community resources across the United States to counter the monolithic misrepresentation of the Middle East crisis in the US mainstream media and helped sustain and develop campaigns against the War.

Citizen Television focuses on the UK. It is not a collection of essays but a series of research papers on the subject of cable and local television written by the members and associates of the Institute of Local Television since 1989. These papers were written as part of a campaign to get some form of local television operating properly in the UK. The book states at the outset that 'local television has been thwarted at every twist and turn of the debate'. This is so in spite of the statutory obligation on holders of cable franchises to provide local services, the

rhetoric of the regulators and the findings of research which show a high level of demand for local television.

Citizen Television is not meant to read as fluently as *Channels of Resistance*. It contains a lot of valuable information about the nature of the cable industry in the UK and its regulatory regime. It also provides important insights into the problems associated with trying to get the current system to work in favour of local communities. It stands as a warning against too simplistic a notion of what can be achieved in this area as well as an example of how important it is not to allow people who run these cable systems to get away with ignoring local communities.

A basic question which touches on both books is about fragmentation and diversity. Will the new global technologies promote greater uniformity in cultural output, or, as one contributor to *Channels of Resistance* suggests, greater diversity of misrepresentations? It seems more likely that, as in the USA, the new technologies will continue to be used to promote profit and political and cultural containment, but that they will provide opportunities for people to produce their own material on the margins of the main systems. Perhaps the pressing question for the Campaign, the media unions and the media activist is how to develop national and international strategies that refuse to allow the means of mass communications to remain in the hands of the rich and powerful.

Both these books deserve close reading. *Channels of Resistance* should reach a wide audience because it is accessibly written, moving, and reasonably priced. *Citizen Television* should find its way into the hands of unions and colleges and the occasional individual who is motivated enough to fork out £25.

All books reviewed in Free Press can be obtained through the CPBF Book Service. Add 10% to cover p&p.

THE INDEPENDENT AND MGN: SECRECY OF BID ENQUIRY

MICHAEL HESELTINE rapidly reached his decision approving the MGN consortium bid for The Independent. Barely two weeks after he invited comments from third parties he approved the application by a consortium of Mirror Group Newspapers, the Expresso group and Promotora de Informaciones for a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing, the owner of The Independent and The Independent on Sunday.

The Department of Trade and Industry, which had the full terms of the agreement, only published a summary ("designed to highlight the key features of the proposed transaction") for interested parties to comment on. The National Union of Journalists condemned this: "The failure to publish the full terms makes a mockery of consultation, since third parties are asked to comment on proposals which are being kept secret," the response said.

The NUJ argued for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission because if the consortium took a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing "the further concentration of ownership will, we believe, be contrary to the public interest in a varied and diverse press". The MMC can consider, the NUJ argued, "whether the transfer in question may be expected to operate against the public interest" and can make "a deep and searching enquiry into the implications of concentration of newspaper proprietorial power." Also the MMC can require assurances and recommend conditions if consent is given, which could be a safeguard in the future.

In fact, Michael Heseltine specifically excluded any requirement for editorial guarantees when he approved the consortium bid, and justified his decision not to refer the bid to the MMC on the grounds that the future of the papers was in jeopardy. This patently wasn't the case; Dr Tony O'Reilly was prepared to inject substantial sums to improve both papers.

The decision undermines even more the prospects of a diverse media. It's a chilling thought that two men, Rupert Murdoch and MGN Chief Executive, David Montgomery, now oversee ten of our national newspapers, and if the cross-media ownership review lifts restrictions on media ownership, the situation will be even more dire.

URGENT.....BOOK NOW!!!

**CPBF Conference and AGM
Wortley Hall, near Sheffield
Saturday 23/Sunday 24 April**

We want to extend a warm invitation to CPBF members. Wortley Hall, set in 26 acres of gardens, woodlands and walks will provide a relaxing setting and convenient venue for CPBF members to travel to.

THE COST

Accommodation and full board		£35.00
Conference REGISTRATION fee	(individuals)	£2.50
	(organisations)	£5.00
Child discounts :	0-3 years	66%
	4-8 years	40%
	9-12 years	25%
	13 and over	full price

CPBF members can attend the Conference/AGM on a non-residential basis.

Registration fee: non-residential - refreshments only:		
	(individuals)	£5.00
	(organisations)	£10.00

THE CONFERENCE Saturday p.m.

Keynote Speech: Labour Front Bench National Heritage Speaker

**PANEL DISCUSSION:
Media Issues in Britain and Europe**

Speakers:	Colin Bourne	NUJ Northern Organiser
	Bettina Peters	International Federation of Journalists, Brussels
	Bob Franklin	Author, <i>Packaging Politics</i> Co-author, <i>Whose News? The Media, Politics and the Local Press</i>

Social on Saturday evening
and
CPBF AGM Sunday 10.00 - 12.30 a.m.

To assist our conference planning,
call **071-278 4430** Now

Mirror Group Newspapers is one of four companies which today control more than 85% of all national daily newspapers published in Britain. The same four companies control 89% of all national Sunday newspapers published in Britain.

The Daily Mirror accounted for 18.5% of all national daily newspapers published in Britain. By acquiring Newspaper Publishing that figure rises to 20.69%, and they now also have 31% of all national Sunday newspapers.