

# FREE PRESS

JOURNAL OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM  
No. 84 Price 50p January/February 1995

## Inside this issue...

...Censorship; Racism in the media; The Infobahn; Letters; Reviews – The Enemy Within; Media versus the People – CPBF conference...

## A TAKEOVER TOO MANY



Northcliffe Newspapers: Notts Evening Post added to list.

**T**HE DAILY MAIL group, whose interests include newspapers, television, radio and the London news channel for cable, has done rather well. Profits in the year to October 1994 rose from £64.4 million to £92.1 million, an increase of 43% and a performance which placed it fifth in the top ten companies, in terms of increased profits.

By GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

The Northcliffe Newspapers stable of regional titles – which will be swollen this month with the addition of the Nottingham Evening Post group – reported a sharp increase in profits, thanks to buoyant advertising and contract printing. In fact the acquisition gave Northcliffe Newspapers control of all of the evening newspapers – and most of the weeklies – in an area of the north and east Midlands, stretching from Stoke on Trent to Hull, an area covering 8,000 square miles with a population of nearly five million. It already owns evenings in Stoke, Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Scunthorpe, Derby and Hull.

The above facts underline the duplicity of government ministers over issues of media concentration and cross-media ownership. Industry Minister Tim Eggar overturned the recommendation from the Monopolies Commission, and the £93 million bid for the Nottingham Evening Post by the Daily Mail group went ahead.

The MMC report was unequivocal: "There are risks in this transaction which we would expect to have serious consequences for diversity... This would be accentuated because of the degree of operational integration that is likely between the NEP and the other East Midlands dailies, this integration being necessary to achieve the profit improvement to justify the high cost of the acquisition.

"The second concern.. is that Northcliffe would use the very considerable market power it would acquire (which) could result in competing weekly publications being forced to close or reduce their editorial expenditure."

Strip away the cautious official language and the message is direct and simple: monopoly control of regional media drives out independent and alternative voices. The MMC opposed the takeover for both commercial and democratic reasons. Ministers nodded through the takeover, with flimsy conditions about an independent editorial board, because of the political clout of the Mail group.

All of which underlines the desperate need for media policies which are developed on the basis of clear principles rather than expediency and the greed for profits of powerful media corporations.

## New Year – New Challenges

**W**E'D LIKE to wish all our supporters and readers a happy New Year, and an active, campaigning 1995. Without the consistent and generous support which you give us we would long ago have had to shut up shop.

But 1995 will pose particular problems for us. An important conference, *Media versus the People*, will take place on Saturday, March 18 at the TUC Conference Centre in London. This will launch an intense period of activity to ensure that policies for a diverse and accountable media are developed in the run up to the next general election. It will also stretch our resources to the limit, so please book to come to it, either as an individual or as a delegate from your trade union or other organisation. Also if you can help on the day with the conference organisation, please get in touch.

Union mergers may bring benefits and improved services for their members, but they are a severe financial headache for us. As 'super unions' are created, and smaller unions merge into bigger unions, over the years we've lost crucial affiliation revenue, as well as important orders for *Free Press*. This will continue in 1995, as the NCU and UCW merge. We really are being financially squeezed. Our need is urgent and real.

That's why we are appealing to all our supporters to make a maximum effort to help us financially.

- Can you ensure that organisations which you are active in affiliate to the CPBF, or persuade friends and relatives to take out a subscription. If you work in a college, school or university why not ask the librarian to take out an institutional membership?

- Can you take out a standing order to help with our Wages Appeal - we can supply you with the form - or if you are feeling flush make a donation to the CPBF.

- We're an open, democratic and accountable organisation and we rely on your support to continue. You can find out all about us at this year's AGM, which is in London on Saturday May 6. Please put the date in your diary.

# CENSORSHIP SURVEY

## PRESSURE TO SUPPRESS LOCKERBIE FILM

ON DECEMBER 21, 1988, 270 people were killed when Pan Am flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie in Scotland. A film, Allan Francovich's *The Maltese Double Cross*, reveals disturbing new evidence. It suggests that a Syrian based organisation infiltrated a CIA drug-run on Pan Am flight 103 to plant the bomb. It also alleges that American, British and German Intelligence orchestrated a cover-up to implicate Libya as the perpetrator.

Surely an important film, one which should be shown widely, its evidence examined and, if necessary, rebutted. In fact a campaign of intrigue seems to surround any attempt to do just this. The 1994 London Film Festival first accepted the film as part of its festival programme, then dropped it without explanation just two weeks before it was due to be premiered. Unknown sources have threatened libel action against anyone showing the film: MP Tam Dalyell, who organised a showing of the film at the House of Commons, received untraced and unsubstantiated threats that it was subject to a libel charge. Channel Four also backtracked very suddenly on its considerable interest in showing the film. The Angle Gallery in Birmingham screened the film on November 18, and the following weekend it was broken into. Burglars took nothing of value, but rifled filing cabinets and computer discs and stole a TV monitor and Dictaphone.

These factors together suggest a case of censorship, but from an unknown source. *The Maltese Double Cross* and the campaign against the film raise some important questions:

- Why have the American and British governments blamed Libya for the Lockerbie bomb although there is no evidence to support Libyan involvement?
- Why have the American and British governments attempted to silence allegations that witnesses were intimidated and evidence tampered with after the Lockerbie bomb?
- Who is behind the campaign to stop Allan Francovich's documentary from being shown?

## MASSAGING FACT IN FICTION

THE FILM version of Robert Harris's best-selling novel, *Fatherland*, has changed the story line to avoid offending the Kennedy family. The screen version, premiered by Home Box Office in the USA in November 1994, is due out on

video here in January. Joseph Kennedy, US ambassador to Britain in the period before the Second World War, is portrayed in the book, set in the mid-1960s, as president of the United States, and Hitler, having won the war, still leader of Germany.

Robert Harris depicts Kennedy as an appeaser prepared to do deals with Hitler, and draws on conversations Kennedy had with the German ambassador in London in 1938 in which he said he 'understood the German-Jewish policy completely and that a large proportion of the American population was sympathetic because of very strong anti-Semitic tendencies in the US'.

The screen version depicts Kennedy as a hero who calls off a peace-making summit with Hitler at the last moment after learning of the Holocaust. Hollywood director Mike Nichols (*Catch 22*, *The Graduate*) is a close friend of the Kennedys. When he bought the film rights he made it clear he did not want the Kennedy name besmirched, and insisted on a smaller, more flattering role for Joseph Kennedy in the film version.

## MURDOCH/KENNEDY MANOEUVRES

RELATIONS between the Kennedys and Murdoch have often been strained, and that's putting it mildly. In the mid-80s Murdoch had obtained a temporary waiver from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that allowed him to control the *Boston Herald*, Boston Fox affiliate WFXR, the *New York Post* and the New York Fox affiliate.

This waiver was given in spite of the fact that for years FCC cross ownership rules had prohibited the common ownership of a broadcasting station and a daily newspaper where the contour for the TV station encompasses the entire community where the newspaper is published. The FCC argued for the overriding concerns of plurality and diversity: "It is unrealistic to expect true diversity from a commonly owned station newspaper combination." It was a view upheld by the Supreme Court in 1978.

However this was a major irritation to Murdoch as he attempted to build a fourth US TV network to challenge the "big three". Senator Edward Kennedy got a prohibition on such waivers inserted into an appropriations bill in 1987. Murdoch was furious and unleashed his revenge on Kennedy through his tabloids.

Times change, and in 1993 Kennedy backed Murdoch's repurchase of the *New York Post*. Shortly after Murdoch received Kennedy's backing Fox put on hiatus a hard-hitting documentary on alleged ties

between John F. Kennedy and the Mafia. "It appears from the timing of the decision to suspend production on the JFK/Mafia project that Murdoch doesn't want to do anything that might anger his longtime adversary, Senator Edward Kennedy," *Daily Variety* reported. In early 1994 Murdoch announced the sale of the Kennedy bashing *Boston Herald*. For Edward Kennedy, who fought back from the depth of the opinion polls to win re-election, a hostile Murdoch media empire would have been an insurmountable barrier. It does look as though commercial and political expediency won the day, or as one commentator suggested, "Could that be the sound of two backs being scratched?"

## MEDIA VIOLENCE: SIMPLE SOLUTION - CUT IT OUT

MARY WHITEHOUSE may have retired but the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association (NVLA) trundles on. The latest product from the group is a report, *A Culture of Cruelty and Violence*, analysing 47 films shown on the four UK terrestrial channels in the first six months of 1994.

The report lists 'facts' about violence in films shown on TV, without any attempt to discuss the critical context or artistic merit of the films analysed. A James Bond film, *Licence to Kill* and *Robocop* are treated in exactly the same way as Oliver Stone's *Salvador* or Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. The results, a 'catalogue of murder and mayhem', are then linked directly to senior police officers' concerns about the increasing use of firearms, knives and other offensive weapons and the increase in violent crime.

The NVLA solution to all this is simple: "We call upon the Broadcasting Authorities to take immediate action to review all films and other programmes scheduled for future screening and withdraw those which depict the realistic use of firearms and other offensive weapons".

Apart from the obvious response that the report does not take other issues - unemployment and social deprivation - into consideration, there are more worrying issues about the agenda set by the moral minority. There is no evidence to support claims that an increase in violent crime can be attributed to the viewing habits of the nation, but after the 'video nasties' furore whipped up by MP David Alton's campaign, we also have the Channel 3 companies coming under increasing pressure to 'justify' the 'rising levels' of violence on TV.

# ABSENT FACES IN UK MEDIA: Report Reveals Discrimination

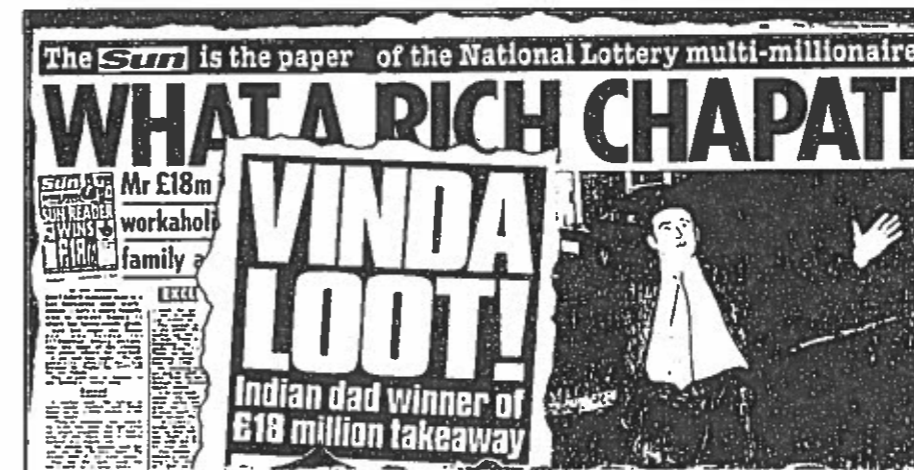
**'BLACKS AND ASIANS** don't apply, and if they do they haven't the qualifications' was the reply given by several white media employers to the question of why they train or employ so few non-whites. This is one of the findings in a research project, "Blacks and Asians in the British Media", carried out at the London School of Economics.

The research questioned 100 Black and Asian journalists from all over Britain, including Northern Ireland. It found that, contrary to what white managers say, as a group non-white journalists were well

educated with 71 per cent of interviewees having a first degree as compared with 55 per cent of other journalists.

Interviewees stated that 'racism' was the reason why they acquired so many qualifications. As one explained, "Blacks have to be twice as good as whites even to be considered by the media." But having high educational qualifications does not prevent discrimination. Of the 100 respondents to the research only 30 were accepted by white journalism courses although all had tried, writing dozens - sometimes hundreds - of letters.

## Racism, the tabloids and the Lottery



JACKPOT JOKERS: How the Star and the Sun greeted the win.

MEDIA COVERAGE of the £17.8 million lottery win raised lots of issues. There was the gross violation of the winner's privacy request by tabloids desperate to identify him. The *Mirror* had promised its readers: "Britain's National Lottery is drawn tonight and, win or lose, you could be quids in by scooping a £5,000 reward with the *Daily Mirror*. Just give us a call if you know the winner". (10.12.94) On the Monday the *Sun* doubled the offer.

The result was by the Tuesday Fleet Street's finest were staking out a house in Blackburn, Lancashire, and the Lottery organisers, who had promised the winner anonymity, sought a High Court injunction banning newspapers from naming the winner. To no avail. 'Lottery winner is Asian migrant', proclaimed the *Telegraph*, and the *Sun* snapped its own reporter, Lenny Lottery, outside the winner's house underneath the headline, 'What a rich chapati.'

If the invasion of privacy was distasteful, the racist reporting was gross, treating the race and religion of the winner in an

odious manner. 'We're Hindi money', 'Vinda Loot' and 'The Happy Chap-ati' were some of the headlines used by the tabloids. It raises the question: if the lottery winner had not been 'Asian' and/or 'Muslim' would the tabloid coverage have been as bold and ugly?

All of which reminded me of the continuing relevance of two excellent books analysing racism in the British media. *Daily Racism: The press and black people in Britain* by Paul Gordon and David Rosenberg is out of print now, but it was a detailed and effective analysis of press coverage of race issues through the 1980s. Perhaps the Rannymede Trust should consider up-dating and reprinting it? The other book is Chris Searle's *Your Daily Dose: Racism and the Sun* which the CPBF published, and is still available.

The book examines all aspects of the *Sun's* treatment of race - from sport to entertainment, domestic news to foreign politics. It should be on the shelves in any school library and required reading for media studies.



Black and Asian journalists found that getting into journalism courses depended upon class as well as colour. If you are white and middle class preferably with an Oxbridge degree, you stand a better chance of being accepted. A black journalist explained, "I have a good degree from a polytechnic but couldn't get into journalism training, but I have noticed that the majority of those taken on are white and from universities, especially Oxbridge."

Interviewees said that white journalism courses generally were not interested in giving Black and Asian young people a chance. One said, "On the whole getting into courses depends on whether it is the right time to take in a token or not, for publicity purposes. If it is, and a black person applies, they are accepted, but if they already have their token or don't want one, it doesn't matter how clever the black applicant is, they will not be accepted."

The study found that Blacks and Asians experienced even more prejudice when they tried to get journalism jobs. Of the estimated 4,000 national newspaper journalists only 20 were Black or Asian, with each newspaper having its token two or three. For the provincial papers the situation was far worse: of 8,000 newspaper journalists only 15 were black. In most newspaper offices in Britain there is not and there never has been a Black or Asian trainee journalist or reporter.

The broadcasting industry, especially the BBC, was more positive towards the training and employment of non-white journalists. Of the 3,700 editorial staff in broadcasting, an estimated 100 were Black or Asian. The main reason why the broadcasting industry employs and trains relatively more Blacks and Asians than the print industry is that they have introduced positive equal opportunity policies. These include ethnic monitoring, advertising jobs and setting targets for ethnic minority workers.

A full copy of the report is available from Dr Beulah Ainley, 1 Vicarage Road, Stratford, London E15 4HD

## A STORY IS A STORY... OR IS IT?

Here is an interesting question Should BBC Wales report the activities of one of our senior quangos, the Broadcasting Council of Wales?  
Answer: Yes, of course, if there is a story to report.

Question: Why then, hasn't the BBC reported the effort of the Chairman of the Council, Dr Gwyn Jones, former Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency (WDA), to censor BBC Wales's current affairs department over its reporting of the activities of the Agency?  
Answer: Because the deliberations of the Broadcasting Council for Wales are private and closed to the press.

Question: But that hasn't prevented BBC Wales reporting the affairs of the WDA, for instance, whose board meetings are also private and closed to the press, has it?  
Answer: No, it hasn't

Question: Shouldn't BBC journalists have an easier time uncovering the goings on of their own Broadcasting Council since its membership includes such democrats as Anthony Moreton, former Financial Times Welsh correspondent, Derec Llwyd Morgan, professor of Welsh at Aberystwyth, Branwen Jarvis, lecturer in Welsh at Bangor, Dr Sandra Anstey, officer for English at the National Language Unit in Treforest, D.H. Davies, former chief executive of Dyfed County Council, and Jim Morris, former Wales regional officer for the TGWU?  
Answer: You might have thought so.

Question: Anyway, senior BBC Wales executives sit on the Council, too. Why don't the journalists ask them?  
Answer: There's not a great deal of communication at that level.

Question: Well, how does Rhodri Morgan MP know all about it?  
Answer: He did put down an Early Day

motion in the House of Commons about the affair in July calling for Dr Gwyn Jones to resign, so someone must have told him.

Question: What is it all about anyway?  
Answer: Last May BBC Wales' *Week In Week Out* put out a programme on the WDA questioning its involvement with the Cynon Valley Borough Council in pursuing a land deal in Aberdare. The WDA allegedly secretly favoured one developer over another, breaking its own rules. There was also the matter of a compulsory purchase order placed on the site of a bus station near Aberdare's town centre where workers have been attempting a management buy-out to avoid redundancies. The site is now being developed as a Tesco superstore.

All this activity took place while Dr Gwyn Jones was chairman of the WDA. He just happens to be a director of Tesco as well. At the BBC in June he used his position as chairman of the Broadcasting Council to attack the *Week In Week Out* programme as unpatriotic and detrimental to Wales's economic interests. Around the table were two other members of the Council: Tony Roberts, chief executive of the Cynon Valley Borough Council, and Enid Rowlands, then director of Targed, the Gwynedd Training and Enterprise Council, but shortly to become North Wales managing director of the Welsh Development Agency.

Question: Isn't all that, by any standards, a story, or at least a story worth investigating?  
Answer: You would have thought so.

JOHN OSMOND

Reprinted with permission from *The Red Kite/Y Barcod Coch*, a Democratic Left magazine for Wales. You can contact the magazine on 0276 202375.

## THE INFOBAHN: Europe's Information Superhighway...

### ...but who's planning the route?

GARY HERMAN analyses the issues involved...

COME FEBRUARY 25 this year and Bill Clinton will be in Brussels to present his proposals for a "Global Information Infrastructure (GII)" before a special meeting of the Group of Seven richest nations in the world (the G7). This will be the culmination of a whole raft of announcements and proposals that have been coming at us since 1993 and the publication of Al Gore's plans for a "National Information Infrastructure" in the US. You may have heard all this through an apparently endless series of stories in the media on "the information superhighway".

The superhighway will be a single, high performance, worldwide network of computers, connected to each other using the telephone system and carrying everything from conversations and electronic mail, to news broadcasts and full length movies. It is potentially a powerful channel for distributing information and entertainment, and - together with "reinventing government", healthcare reform, and bombing Bosnia - it is one of Clinton and Gore's big ideas.

That well-known American, Rupert Murdoch, now owns the on-line communications company, Delphi, which is expanding aggressively into new markets. The cable companies offer telephone services plus a zillion TV channels. And telecommunications giants talk about video-on-demand, news-on-demand and TV-on-demand. The BBC is considering a partnership with BT, and everybody wants to provide the full range of information services right into your home: news, entertainment, telephone, electronic mail, home shopping.

In Europe, they call this the Infobahn and its route has been mapped out by Jacques Delors's 1993 white paper on *Growth, competitiveness and employ-*



ment and, most recently, by a report of a group of top people chaired by Martin Bangemann, European Commissioner for both DGIII (Industry) and DGXIII (Information technology and telecommunications - IT&T). The Bangemann report, *Europe and the global information society*, is an interesting document. Its central idea is that information-based industries will provide the foundation of future economic growth. They therefore need to be supported by an infrastructure like the transport networks that once supported trade and manufacturing. Like the US proposals, the report - and the European Commission action plan, *Europe's way to the information society*, which it inspired - stress the need to liberalize the telecommunications market and allow the private sector free reign to develop the information society.

The justification for this position is partly that building the Infobahn will be too expensive for governments to afford, and partly that the private sector does this sort of thing better. And who are the people who comprised Herr Bangemann's group and formulated this justification? Among their number you can count the Chairman and Chief

Executive of ICL Computers, the President of Societe Generale de Belgique, the President of Philips Electronics, the Chairman and Chief Executive of IBM Europe, the Chairman of Olivetti, the Chairman and Managing Director of Bull, the Chairman of Siemens, and the Administrative Director of Bang and Olufsen. Give or take a minority state shareholding here and a state-controlled enterprise there, these men are the private sector. They are not turkeys voting for Christmas.

The problem is that the Infobahn is both a new medium and a new productive resource - the printing press and the delivery vans, the tv studio and the transmitting stations - and controlling it will be a prize of the first magnitude. This is an idea which seems to have bypassed US and European thinking in the rush to encourage the private sector to invest. For example, the EC action plan includes one six-line paragraph on the question of media ownership in a 15 page document. It says: "The Commission will shortly present a Communication to the Council and Parliament on the follow-up to the Green Paper, *Pluralism and media con-*

centration in the internal market, in particular to avoid the risk of further fragmentation of the Internal Market with the emergence of new national regulations." It also notes that "possible responses to social and cultural challenges... make up much less than one third of the... action plan".

The emphasis is everywhere on supporting private sector involvement in introducing the technology, not developing a strategy towards its effects. This means walking a narrow line between the chaos of unregulated competition and the stultifying order of unfair advantage: a trick that Michael Heseltine is currently trying to pull off with his approach to the continued regulation of the UK's information motorway.

Unfortunately, the result is that the competitors within the regulated context seek to cut costs in order to survive. Mercury's recent announcement that it will shed almost a quarter of its labour force is one example. Another is the abandonment of all pretensions to quality among the carriers of information services. A third is the exploitation of content providers through the imposition on broadcasters, journalists, writers, musicians and performers of all-rights contracts, and the assignment of those rights which protect works from being manipulated and used out of context (so-called moral rights).

Gary Herman works with the Labour Telematics Centre, which organised a recent conference, *Working on the Infobahn*. You can contact the LTC at GMB National College, College Road, Manchester M16 8DP. Tel 0161 860 4364

A workshop on The Information Superhighway is planned for the *Media versus the People* conference on Saturday May 18 in London. Details on the back page of this *Free Press*.



### BOOK NOW FOR MEDIA VERSUS THE PEOPLE

TUC, London, Sat 18 March  
Speakers include:  
CHRIS SMITH MP, Shadow Heritage Spokesperson  
MICHAEL GRADE, Channel 4  
PROF. JAMES CURRAN  
ALAN PLATER  
Trade Union delegates: £25.00. Individuals: £12.00. Unwaged: £5.00.

### CPBF AGM

Saturday 6 May, 10am-5pm  
London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre,  
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA

Afternoon speaker to be announced.

To book your place...  
...telephone 071-278 4430



# A QUESTION OF BELIEF

**TOM O'MALLEY** reviews *Don't Mention The War: Northern Ireland, Propaganda and the Media* by David Miller (Pluto, 1994) £14.95

ON SUNDAY 6 MARCH 1989 three members of an IRA active service unit were shot on Gibraltar. First reports suggested that they had planted a car bomb and were then shot in a gun battle with Gibraltar police. This was the official line.

This account dominated the first wave of media reporting. Gradually another picture emerged. There was no bomb. There was no gun battle. The IRA members were shot, whilst two of them were surrendering, by an SAS unit. It had all the hallmarks of an ambush.

David Miller's *Don't Mention The War* explores public perceptions of this incident as part of a wide ranging investigation of the media and the conflict in Ireland. He examines the ways different groups – the government, civil servants, the army, the RUC, republicans and loyalists – devise media strategies, how news gets produced, its content and the impact of that content on public perceptions of the conflict.

He outlines the economic, political and professional factors which shape news production. This is followed by an examination of the strategies used by the different participants to win favourable media coverage, and the imbalance in public relations resources between the government and its opponents. In the sample of people used for his study of the impact of the media coverage significant numbers believed that there had been a bomb.

Equally, significant numbers accepted fully or partially the libellous allegations made about the character of the key witness Carmen Proetta. Her testimony did much to discredit the official version of events. As a result sections of the media attacked her character in an attempt to discredit her evidence.

As Miller puts it: "Unless they have an alternative source of information, people in Britain are inclined to believe the distorted picture of life presented by television and newspaper reports." Miller doesn't argue for a simple model of media effects. But he does, like recent studies from the Glasgow Media Group, argue that the media do have effects on people's knowledge and perceptions of public issues. This challenges some recent academic orthodoxies. 'Active audience' theorists have argued that audiences make their own sense of media messages. Audiences allegedly read all sorts of meanings into messages and are not confined to accepting the meanings intended by the people who make television or newspapers.

This perspective is one step short of implying that the question of who owns, controls and produces media content is of little importance. For, if audiences can make what they wish of TV content, why worry about who decides the nature of that content? Miller's study is one amongst a number which now call this model into question.

The book stresses the way different participants in the conflict have fought for the right to shape media portrayal of the conflict. In spite of the fact that the state has immense resources and that coverage is skewed in the state's favour, Miller points out that neither the media nor the state are monolithic. Consequently there is room for a real battle over media images in the conflict.

The book could have presented its argument a little more succinctly. There could have been more reflection on the way the Irish coverage related to wider shifts in government news management in the last twenty years. Perhaps the Gibraltar example works well for the purposes of the study – it was high profile and covered widely. But maybe there are other issues about how to measure the long term impact of media coverage on public perceptions which could be explored further?

This is an interesting and important book. It asserts the importance of attending to who controls the media and how media content gets produced, simply because media content have effects on public knowledge and belief. It is essential reading for anybody interested in the media coverage of the Irish conflict.

standpoint. You bemoan the fact that the dropping of the broadcasting ban has not led to an increased coverage of Sinn Fein. Where have you been for the last months? Gerry Adams has never been off the screen. I presuppose that the rough handling that Adams received in the Brian Walden programme and the "Late, Late Show" did not meet with CPBF or *Free Press* approval and so would not count in any listing of Sinn Fein media appearances... Your unthinking, blind acceptance of the Irish Republican cause stems no doubt from your left of centre political bias. Such naive posturing is offensive to me and my Ulster friends. In the interests of balance (aka "Right of Reply") you should reflect the views of the Ulster Loyalists to the same extent as you defend the rights of the Republicans. Over to you, Liz Curtis.

In a different matter, why do you regard the TV licence fee as sacrosanct? I cannot understand why poll tax and council tax defaulters have to be sued in the civil courts by local authorities but TV licence evaders are prosecuted by state authorities. You are pretty slow to condemn this aspect of state power.

I have studied the advertisement campaigns aimed at TV licence evaders. They are the stuff of Orwellian nightmares with their threats of electronic snooping, computer surveillance and lists of TV owners. Why no complaints from the CPBF about this example of state excess? Personally, I have no truck with this government, but the pleas from the pampered, wealthy (compared to me) middle class media glitterati who wish to retain the Television Tax grate on my nerves.

Yours faithfully  
Anthony David Jones MA  
Ashton under Lyne, Lancs

## LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Dear Editor

I greatly enjoyed the subtle satire of the unsigned 'Platform' piece in the last *Free Press*. Its mixture of pious innocence and inflated bombast perfectly mimicked the mood of Tory backbenchers when they heard of Peter Preston's 'cod fax'.

The suggestion that the *Guardian* was making too much of its story because Jonathan Aitken had been only "slightly economical with the truth" managed to out-butler Sir Robin Butler. And the charge that Preston had passed ammunition to "the forces of darkness" wonderfully recalled that Tory backwoodsman who heard jackboots in the corridors when he discovered some House of Commons notepaper had been nicked.

All in all you may have published the perfect 'cod column'. My only concern is that casual readers of *Free Press* (if there are any!) may have taken it at face value. If they did they would have missed the most worrying – and most ironic – aspect of the whole affair (which your columnist, of course, skilfully avoided mentioning). That is, that our only truly independent national newspaper willingly helped Mohammed Al-Fayed to settle a grudge with John Major – which arose from favours paid for but not delivered!

Yours faithfully  
Bruce Smith, London

Dear Editor

A number of items in *Free Press* (Nov/Dec 1994) have caused me some concern and require some consideration by the CPBF.

First off, I am disturbed by the pro-Irish Republican slant of the CPBF. At no time have I seen any positive reporting of the Loyalist

## THE ABUSE OF JOURNALISM

Stephen Dorril reviews *The Enemy Within: MI5, Maxwell and the Scargill Affair* by Seumas Milne (Verso, 1994) £16.95

SEUMAS MILNE'S highly detailed and meticulous account of the secret state skuldiggery during the miners' strike, whilst not providing absolute proof of MI5 meddling and conspiracy will, I am sure, convince the many thousands who marched and campaigned in support of the miners and against pit closures.

Despite having endured one of the bitterest and most sustained smear campaigns undertaken by the Security Service, Arthur Scargill's battered reputation can, from now on, only continue to improve whilst that of his tormentors – the *Mirror*, in particular – will remain forever tarnished.

With so much at stake, it was obvious that the secret state and the Conservative government would do all that it could to scupper the miners' strike. One only has to read the academic studies of MI5 co-ordinated operations through the Economic League against the labour movement following the First World War to see what was possible.

During the General Strike a highly organised and well-financed covert campaign, involving numerous front groups, undermined the strike through use of highly placed informants and the traditional employment of agent provocateurs. Similar tactics were revived for the forties' Dock strike and the Seamen's strike of the mid-sixties. MI5 has a limited number of techniques; those that work are used over and over again.

I vividly recall the appearance of the *Sunday Times* article, which is at the centre of Milne's well-argued account, at the height of the strike; here was a revival of The Red Letter. Roger Windsor's obviously provocative appearance in Libya, warmly greeting Colonel Gadafy on television, could only be a blunder of massive proportions or a well-planned act by the security services. Surely, the rest of the press would realise this? But no, the dogs were off the leash, on the scent of a way to cripple Scargill and the miners. The newspack were off on a long chase, showering money like confetti on informants.

Following *Spycatcher* and the Colin Wallace Affair one would have thought that journalists were now primed to spot the obvious manipulations of the secret state. Some did, but admirable campaigns by the CPBF/*Free Press* and the Socialist Workers' Party were on the fringe and had little impact. The majority (with the later,

brave exception of *The Guardian*) simply toed the line set by the government.

British journalism allowed itself willingly to be used and abused by an assortment of spooks, tainted sources and a crook masquerading as the legitimate proprietor of a national newspaper. If doubts existed, they were quickly jettisoned in the interests of a frony page splash and the chance of Maxwell gold and promotion. Facts were not allowed to get in the way of a good story and experienced hacks – the best in the business – never spotted that the information they were getting stank.

*The Enemy Within* is an excellent book and a fine example of investigative journalism – but Milne cannot tell the full story. The sources just aren't there and Britain's traditional secretiveness has ensured that much remains deeply buried. He has, however, done as much as anyone in this country could, establishing that something deeply nasty did take place.

There are faults in the book – it breaks the basic rule of telling the story in a chronological order, and the complex financial conspiracy which makes up a large section of the book will probably remain confusing to the average reader. It is, though, an essential read for those who want to know how certain agencies of this country operate in the interests of a ruling minority and how they are able to break individuals.

The spotlight of publicity may now be on Mrs Rimington but the apparatus of secrecy remains in place and if a threat to its interests should arise then this will be used again.

Stephen Dorril is author of *The Silent Conspiracy: Inside the Intelligence Services in the 1990s* (Mandarin) £5.99

## WITHOUT COMMENT

"The manner of the British intelligence services' invitation to me to work for them persuades me that enlisting journalists was, and possibly still is, commonplace.

The letter and subsequent interview came as I was joining ITN. A Mr D Stilbury, writing from the old War Office Buildings, had done his stuff. He certainly knew a great deal about me – relationships, friends, politics and career prospects. He was also pretty certain that I would accept

## The CPBF, the Mirror and the Miners

MANY OF THE ISSUES covered in Seumas Milne's *The Enemy Within* are ones we were and are passionately concerned about. In June 1991 *Free Press* carried lengthy pieces reviewing the results of our work: it appeared in the month that Neil Kinnock, then Labour leader, presented the British Press Awards 'Reporter of the Year' to *Mirror* journalists Frank Thorne, Ted Oliver and Terry Pattinson. We commented:

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

We were also scathing about the power of media barons like Maxwell.

"On the opening day of the paper's campaign Maxwell signed the editorial 'Scargill's Waterloo'. (*Mirror*, 5 March, 1990) On the same day, interviewed in the *Guardian*, he boasted that his ownership of papers 'gives me the power to raise issues effectively. In simple terms, it's a megaphone.' And on the role of the Press Complaints Commission, to whom we submitted our complaints on 18 April 1991, after the *Mirror* ombudsman wrote saying he would not be able to deal with the complaint because Robert Maxwell had dispensed with his services, we said:

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

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

his tax-free offer to double my then salary and that for years to come would be able to count on me to continue in the media, whilst at the same time keeping my tabs on subversive or left wing journalists on Fleet Street. My refusal, after two interviews, to have anything to do with him or SIS for which he said he worked angered him considerably. I left his office 18 years ago flattered and appalled in equal measure, recognising how easy it would have been to give in."  
Jon Snow *The Guardian* 30 Dec, 1994

# MEDIA VERSUS THE PEOPLE

**JONATHAN HARDY** explains the importance of a major conference which the CPBF is organising with the support of media unions in the UK and Europe.

**A** DIZZYING ARRAY of new media technologies promise to transform how we use the media and how they will work in our daily lives. But one thread which runs through all the media is the question of ownership and control. Who will control these powerful media operations, how will control be exercised and how will the benefits be shared through society?

It is clear that UK media organisations and the government are actively developing their own strategies in regard to control and ownership of the media. The government is currently conducting a review of cross-media ownership. Meanwhile the regulatory framework introduced in the 1990 Broadcasting Act has led to considerable reorganisation within commercial terrestrial broadcasting with four mergers and acquisitions taking place in 1994 alone. At both national and European levels the decisions taken over the next few years will determine, to a considerable extent, the shape of the media industry for the next decade. It is imperative that trade unions and other groups concerned about these developments put forward their own alternative demands for media regulation.

The CPBF conference, on the 18 March in London will look at fresh ideas and concrete proposals to shape media policy making. The conference, *Media versus the People*, will be the outcome of an initiative involving the CPBF, trade unions, arts and media groups to bring forward policy proposals for wider public debate and campaigning. The conference will also involve the International Federation of Journalists, with whom we have worked

closely over the last two years, and will discuss why a European wide approach to issues of media concentration is now so necessary.

The conference is aimed at all those involved in or concerned about the media and media reform, including media and cultural workers, trade unions, arts groups, voluntary organisations and consumer groups. There is a considerable choice of talks and workshops for those interested in finding out about media developments in the UK and Europe. Above all, it will be an important opportunity to discuss practical policies for the media and consider what strategies should be adopted to protect pluralism and diversity.

Speakers include Chris Smith (Shadow National Heritage spokesperson), Alan Plater, Mel Read MEP, Seumas Milne, Professor James Curran, Michael Grade, Aidan White (International Federation of Journalists), John Foster (NUJ), David Souter (NCU) and Tony Lennon (BECTU).

We have also invited leading trade unionists, campaigners and politicians from the UK and European Community.

*Media versus the People* will be held at the TUC Congress Centre, Saturday 18 March. Tickets are £25 for trade union delegates, £12 for individuals, £5 unwaged and £65 for commercial and statutory organisations.

For a brochure and details call 0171\* 278 4430 or write to the CPBF, 8 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF. Better still, help us with our cash flow pressures. and book now!

## EVENTS AND NOTICES

### SEBASTIAO SALGADO – WORKERS

An Archaeology of the Industrial Age National Museum of Photography Film and Television, Bradford  
Until 15 March 1995

A marvellous photographic exhibition depicting the labour of those who earn their living by physical toil.

### THE PRESS IN EUROPE; PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A one-day conference at City University, London

4th February 1995

Contact: Michael Bromley, Department of Journalism, City University, Northampton Square London EC1V 0HB  
TEL 071 477 8221/8234

### NEW OFFICE FOR CPBF (NORTH)

In April CPBF NORTH is moving into an office at the Kirklees Media Centre. The address is 7 Northumberland Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RL. If you can help in any way – with removals, working on a voluntary basis, or in mailing out publicity about the work and activity we will be developing, please contact us via the National Office.

### CPBF BOOK SERVICE

We can obtain copies of books mentioned in reviews – please add 10% to cover postage to the publisher's price. We are planning a new CPBF Media Catalogue which should be out with the March edition of *Free Press*.

**JOIN THE  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR PRESS AND  
BROADCASTING  
FREEDOM**

#### MEMBERSHIP RATES PER ANNUM

a) Individual membership	£12
b) Unwaged	£6
c) Household ( 2 copies <i>Free Press</i> )	£20
d) Supporting membership (includes free CPBF publications)	£25
e) Institutions (eg libraries) (includes 10 copies of <i>Free Press</i> , plus free CPBF publications)	£25

#### AFFILIATION BY ORGANISATION

f) Less than 500 members	£20
g) 500 to 1,000	£25
h) 1,000 to 10,000	£45
i) 10,000 to 50,000	£105
j) 50,000 to 100,000	£200
k) Over 100,000 members	£400

I/We want to join the CPBF and enclose a cheque/PO for £ .....

E P

Name .....

FP84

Organisation (if applicable) .....

Address .....

Postcode ..... Tel. ....

PLEASE RETURN TO CPBF, 8 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF. Tel: 071 278 4430