

# FREE PRESS

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# TRASH JOURNALISM

## The Sunday Times under Murdoch



**W**HEN MURDOCH bought the *Sunday Times* early in 1981 he set out to demolish its distinctive role in British journalism. Owned by Lord Thomson, under editor Harold Evans it took an independent stance, and held to the belief that governments and huge business corporations were always in danger of becoming agents of power without responsibility.

It was also a genuinely non-party paper which had a purpose grander than the making of money (although it was highly profitable) or propaganda. One important consequence for the journalists was that working for the paper produced a measure of commitment and a view that it was more than just a job which paid the mortgage.

From his first visits Murdoch made clear his hostility to this state of affairs. The paper's political stance was shifted sharply, becoming a cheerleader for all the nostrums of the New Right, accepting rather than questioning the Thatcherite political agenda.

The impact on journalistic integrity has been devastating, and the latest example, the front page smear that Michael Foot was a KGB agent in the *Sunday Times* (19/2/95), vividly illustrates this. Murdoch and his rag are now facing a libel writ from Foot and we wish him every success. Let's hope that *Tribune* becomes

a beneficiary of any settlement. That would be an uncomfortable irony for Mr Murdoch!

For the *Sunday Times* this episode is one more to add to the list which began with the publication of the phoney Hitler diaries in 1983, through the assault on Thames TV's *Death on the Rock* in 1989 to the 'Kinnock and the Kremlin' smear in the run up to the 1992 general election.

But we should remember that the huge concentration of media power which Murdoch deploys worldwide is the product either of political patronage, as in the UK, or fear by governments unwilling to provoke the unrelenting assault that will follow attempts to challenge him, as in Australia.

One lesson should be drawn from the disgraceful smear story against Michael Foot. If powerful voices from the media industry urging deregulation of controls on media ownership and programme obligations are successful, the consequence would be potentially damaging for democratic processes.

We should be seriously worried when unelected and unaccountable media chiefs decide, on the basis of their business interests, which political party to support. Editors and journalists will pander to the political prejudices of their paymasters, and we'll get more trash journalism.

# MEDIA VERSUS THE PEOPLE

## SPECIAL CONFERENCE ISSUE

The conference on March 18 at the TUC Conference Centre, London is a vital event for all who care about the media in a democratic society. For the CPBF it marks the opening of an intense period of activity leading up to the next general election to ensure that policies for a diverse media win strong support. Book your place at the event if you haven't done so yet.

The conference itself will have a range of experts contributing to specialist workshops and plenary sessions. Recently confirmed speakers include Christopher Hird (co-author of *Murdoch: The Great Escape* and former *Sunday Times* Insight Journalist), Alan Fountain (Mondial Television and former Commissioning Editor, C4) and John Healey, Head of the TUC Campaigns and Communications Unit.

This issue of *Free Press* introduces some of the themes the conference will address, and also includes a model resolution (see page six) which we urge you to win support for wherever possible. We want to sincerely thank the unions who have supported us in organising the conference: BECTU, EQUITY, QPMU, NCU (which has now merged with the UCW to form the Communication Workers Union, CWU), NUJ, STE, UNISON, Writer's Guild and the European Group of Journalists (International Federation of Journalists).

## DRIVING LABOUR ON THE SUPERHIGHWAY

Tom O'Malley analyses some of the issues behind the approach of Labour's Policy Forum on the Information Superhighway.

ON FEBRUARY 16 Shadow Heritage Spokesman Chris Smith launched Labour's Policy Forum on the Information Superhighway. The forum was set up at Tony Blair's request to develop the Party's policy on an information network in Britain.

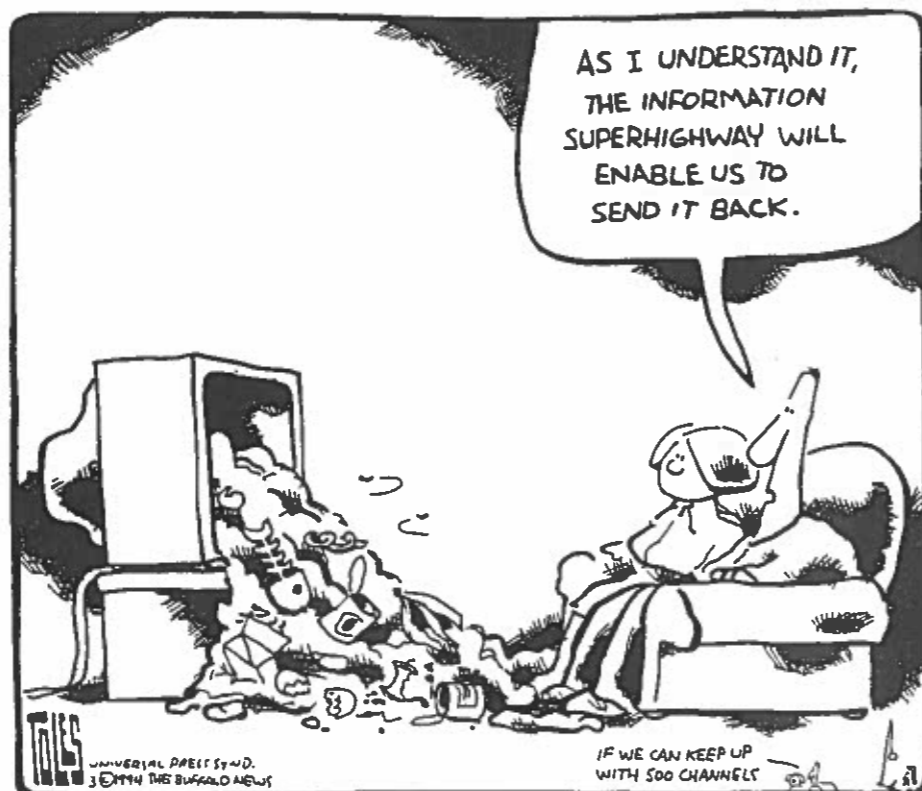
Chris Smith announced that 'Labour wants to ensure that the benefits that can flow from a nationwide information network are available to all citizens. We want to insist that every school, every public library, every GP's surgery and every hospital is cabled up, so that the network can have a very strong social purpose, as well as been used for business and for entertainment.'

But the main purpose of the Forum according to the document he co-authored with Jack Cunningham, the DTI Shadow, is to 'develop the Party's policy so that Labour has a clear view of the Superhighway's potential to improve Britain's economic competitiveness and quality of life.'

There is a real tension in these two objectives. The problem is that the economic objectives of the big telecoms, media multinationals and computer software suppliers are not the same as Smith's stated aim of allowing all citizens to benefit.

Companies like BT and News International are currently bankrolling work by the Labour Party linked think tank, the IPPR, on ownership and media policy. Pearsons, the multinational owners of the Economist and of the Financial Times, who are involved in satellite services with the BBC, have also donated cash to the IPPR, as well as £25,000 to the Labour Party.

The multinationals are keen to see major deregulation of all electronic and digital media for economic reasons. To this end they have been lobbying governments in the USA and Europe, and with a good degree of success. They are unlikely to let the economic fruits of their lobbying be eaten up by a massive programme of cabling unprofitable users like schools and providing the sophisticated computing



equipment, software and training needed to make these systems effective. They haven't done much of this yet, anywhere, and only an over optimistic observer would consider they are about to start now.

The policy forum is dominated by people in, or associated with big business. David Cleevely founded Analysys Ltd, Europe's largest telecoms strategy consultancy. Clive Hollick is Chair of Meridian Broadcasting, which also runs Anglia TV. Janice Hughes from the Spectrum Strategy Consultants also advises the DTI. Philip Hughes is co-founder of Logica plc, one of the UK's leading computing and telecommunications companies, and the film producer David Putnam is billed as sitting 'on the boards of some of Britain's multi-media companies.'

In a press briefing issued before the 16 February there was a representative from the NCU on the Forum. He, like the IPPR's rep, James Purnell, had unaccountably disappeared from the briefing on 16 Feb.

The Forum is expecting people to give evidence into it by 14 April. But it has already had or is having face to face meetings with the ITC, the CCTA, BT and Ofiel. The Forum appears to have no representatives from academics with a published record critical of current telecoms policy. This is a glaring omission. It has no representatives from the broadcasting or print trade unions nor from the many community cable or radio groups that have a direct interest in all of this.

The whole Forum has the feel of being dominated by groups who believe that there should be market led expansion of

high tech services. The voices from the other side of the Forum are either weaker or not there.

In fact a good many people believe that the Information Superhighway is a piece of PR by large telecoms and media multinationals determined to win political and public acquiescence to their strategies. Yes, changes are occurring, but they are relatively piecemeal, largely commercially driven and unlikely to have the immediate impacts that the excited rhetoric suggests.

Similar rhetoric surrounded the public justifications for the expansion of commercial radio and cable in the '80s. Much talk about the social benefits of cable and expanding radio services has proven to be mere fantasy. These technologies, like the new types of services at the centre of the current debate, are now dominated by commerce with no genuine access or democratic control.

If you have the time send in your evidence or views to the Forum at Chris Smith's office at the House of Commons by 14 April. Contact the CPBF to discuss the issues. But in the end it is through our unions, CLPs and community groups that we have to raise the issues and argue that there should be tight controls on media cross ownership, that telecommunications developments should be publicly funded and controlled and that access to the networks and services should be regulated solely in the public interest.

Chris Smith MP, Shadow Heritage Secretary, is speaking at the Media versus the People conference on March 18, and there is also a workshop, Telecommunications and Multimedia.

## PEOPLE, PROGRAMMES AND PC?

By Peter Goodwin

THE SUPPOSED dangers of the BBC's political correctness are now the most predictable theme of Britain's posh press pundits. The publication of the BBC's programme strategy review, *People and Programmes*, had them hunting in packs. Once leaks of the review had been published a few days before in the *Sunday Times* under the not entirely accurate headline of 'Birt tells BBC: we're boring, biased and bourgeois', the anti-pc polemics were practically writing themselves.

At the intelligent end of the market, Britain's best television critic, Chris Dunkley, patronisingly informed his *Financial Times* readers that many broadcasters honestly believe that Britain is a multicultural society, because they live in London where 'in some boroughs the proportion of black and Asian people now make up 20 per cent of the population'. But, overall they only constitute 6 per cent. So, Dunkley proclaimed, 'the truth is that Britain is a monocultural society' and television, he claimed, was already prolifically reflecting the black minority within that.

Well, the BBC has certainly done better in this respect in this respect than some other media organisations. With his concern for precise statistics perhaps Dunkley will tell us the proportion of journalists of the (London-based) *Financial Times* who are black.

At the obsessive end of the quality market, moral campaigner moonlighting as Observer columnist, Melanie Phillips, took another opportunity to tilt at the windmill of moral relativism. 'The tragic thing,' she proclaimed, 'is that this homage to sectionalism, this desire to categorise and identify people by class or ethnic or regional identity fragments instead of unites. Standard English, as opposed to Brummie accents, lovely and rich though

they may be, unites because it is intelligible to everyone'.

If that makes you feel queasy, then go on to this gem from the *Daily Telegraph's* leader on *People and Programmes*: It is facile to suggest that (the BBC) can simply straddle the divide by inviting audiences who recognise proper English when it is spoken to them to defer to the strangled syllables of Liverpool and Rastafaria.'

After Hillsborough they organised a boycott of the *Sun* on Merseyside. Perhaps a similar operation is in order here.

### PLATFORM

The anti-pc pundits didn't quite have a free run in the broadsheets. 'As an exercise in the open-minded management of a public service, the report deserves the highest praise,' purred *The Times*, before indulging in a little bit of its own pc bashing. While *The Guardian* pronounced *People and Programmes* to be 'mostly a careful and thoughtful review of the ways in which the BBC can serve its viewers better.'

Would that such verdicts were correct. The grotesque over-design of the report is the first give-away that we are in the world of corporate sound-bites, not analysis. A cover to cover reading reveals a smugness of approach ('look how we are getting it right now') rather than the supposedly 'self-flagellatory' tone of press imagination. And, as *People and Programmes* has been seen by all as codifying the U-turn long ago taken from the Himalayan foothills strategy of *Extending Choice*, why does the report not have the intellectual honesty to say so?

Ten out of ten for provoking the pc-bashers. Nought out of ten for 'an exercise in the open-minded management of a public service'. That requires the sort of democratic participation by both viewers and programme makers that the regimes of John Reith or John Birt could not even imagine.

## Press Council Crisis

PCC Chair Lord McGregor has gone, to be replaced by Lord Wakeham. One of his first actions was to suggest the appointment of Sir Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher's press secretary for 11 years, as a lay member of the PCC. Conservative MP John Biffen, who was at the receiving end of Ingham's press briefings when he was described as a 'semi-detached' member of the Cabinet, once elegantly described his role as 'the sewer rather than the sewage'.

But a lay member of the PCC? Ingham's a working journalist, and it's difficult to avoid reading or hearing his odious reactionary views for more than a day. Chris Smith MP, shadow Heritage Secretary got it right: "Bernard Ingham would be wholly inappropriate as a lay member...he is such a robustly and rudely opinionated man that I think it would be impossible for him to act as an impartial judge on sensitive matters."

## Whistleblowers Beware

What do employees of the NHS, British Waterways Board and United Friendly insurance have in common? They are specifically barred from disclosing confidential information about their organisation, regardless of the circumstances, and face instant dismissal if they break the rule. The February issue of *Labour Research* has a disturbing article about a growing trend for employers in both the public and private sectors to muzzle workers, on often trivial issues. An analysis of 147 disciplinary procedure revealed that one in five had specific clauses. The tightening up has been particularly prevalent in the new NHS trusts.

### Clause for concern

Just who can put their oar in over the Clause Four debate? Well the Tory tabloids and 'qualities' can and do at every opportunity, but there are one or two worrying features about the way the Labour Party's press office and Tony Blair's minders are tackling the issue when socialists voice their concerns. A new pamphlet by Ken Coates, *Clause IV: Common Ownership and the Labour Party*, (Spokesman £5.99) has a section on the meeting with Tony Blair and Labour MEPs in Brussels. He observes, "Having announced a debate, Labour's leader appears genuinely hurt if anyone else seeks to speak in it." Before Tony Blair spoke in Brussels it was suggested to the media that nobody cared what MEPs said because they were all "nonentities". Ken Loach and others made a film for the Clause 4 Campaign Group, but somehow the information that he was not a party member and therefore not eligible to take part in the debate, got wide publicity. Ken Loach's lapsed membership became the story, not the issue or merits of the arguments in the film. You can obtain a copy of the video from Defend Clause 4 Campaign. TEL 071 207 3781

### Susan O'Keeffe Wins

TV journalist Susan O'Keeffe has won her battle with the Irish courts over her determination not to reveal sources she used for a *World in Action* documentary. The programme, made in May 1991 alleged widespread malpractice in the Irish beef industry. She had refused to name her sources in her evidence to the beef tribunal enquiry, and was charged with contempt of the tribunal. The case against her was dismissed on the second day of the trial. After the trial Susan O'Keeffe said, "An important principle has been upheld - that journalists could not be compelled to disclose their sources." The CPBF organised a petition supporting her stand, and this received extensive support, both from the UK and Europe.

# DO LEOPARDS CHANGE THEIR SPOTS?

**This is the introductory section of the document on Media Concentration which is for discussion at the Media versus the People conference on March 18**

By GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

IN THE RUN UP to the 1994 Labour Party conference Gerald Kaufman, MP, and chair of the influential Commons National Heritage Select Committee, had some scathing words for the misguided souls who were concerned about media concentration and the growing power of News International. Writing in *The Guardian* (29/9/94) he argued conference resolutions and amendments were "filled with shibboleths which have dominated Labour thinking for the past 40 years." No longer should we be concerned about "monopolistic control" of news, information and entertainment. Indeed the notion becomes increasingly meaningless with the "multiplicity of entertainment channels, and a growing range of interactive services" replacing a limited number of channels, whilst the old boundaries between newspapers, television, computers and telephones are breaking down; Labour policy needed to recognise this, and reshape its policies.

What he proposed was a mega-alliance of the BBC, ITV, C4 and companies like Pearson to "ensure the new entertainment and information will not be dominated by the US". BT should also be freed of restrictive legislation in order to build the information superhighway to carry the programmes. Gerald Kaufman's views echo exactly those which justified the creation of media corporations like Time-Warner in the '80s. In fact, it's uncanny how the same arguments supporting policy proposals for the creation of media corporations straddling the globe in the '80s reappear around debates on the 'multimedia revolution' and the information superhighway in the '90s.

Bringing together magazines, cable, records, book publishing and distribution from the Time side, and Warner film production, TV stations, cable systems and cable programming created the world's largest media company in January 1990. "Synergy", a popular word in the corporate media world of the '80s, was the spur, because it described how one medium could be used to promote the same pop star, film, politician or book in another

medium. The idea of a media giant spanning the world and selling the same thing fifty times over would become reality if the company owned both the product and controlled as many different media as possible.

The \$14 billion purchase of Warner by Time Inc, the old publishing empire of Henry Luce, was defended in Congress in terms of America's need to have a "warlord company" capable of challenging the other new "Lords of the Global Village". Time-Warner, a creation of the paper manipulation of the junk bond era, remains indebted to the tune of \$15 billion dollars, is involved with Japan's Itochu and Toshiba as partners, and its grandiose plans to be a US media warlord thwarted.

Many analysts have questioned whether the media giants do function in the way they are supposed to do. News International, for example, seems to be run with a conscious bias against the principle of integration; indeed it seems to operate on an anti-synergy basis. Indeed as one Australian analyst commented, "There is a form of News Corp culture, but only of a dog eat dog sort." There isn't, for example, synergy between Sky News and the Murdoch's UK press newsgathering network, and BSkyB's negotiations with ITN reinforce the idea that it's a cheaper option to buy its whole TV news service from a specialist broadcast newsgatherer. The evidence suggests that cross-media synergy is largely a myth circulated in company reports to justify mergers rather than a demonstrable economic activity, or it's about newspapers wanting the freedom to invest in another profit making activity.

However over the last two years we have seen well-funded and sustained lobbies by the big media companies, at both the UK and European levels, which have the explicit aim of lifting cross-media ownership restrictions and urging the adoption of commercially advantageous media policies by governments. The case presented in the European Publishers Council (EPC) report, *The Emergence of a Multimedia Industry in Europe*, is typical, and has the following conclusions:

...cross-media activity is not only inevitable, but essential if newspapers and magazine publishers are not to lose competitive advantage and so atrophy.

and  
Large scale reregulation of national cross-media ownership restrictions is a prerequisite for economic growth in order that European media companies can compete in the world market.

Members of the EPC include most of the key European media companies, including News International, Reed Elsevier, Axel Springer Verlag, Daily Mail and General

Trust, Pearson, CLT, Gruner and Jahr, and many more. When the report was launched in Brussels, Frank Rogers, the deputy chair of the Daily Telegraph, said the industry needed deregulation to stimulate competition, and added, "Unless such deregulation takes place, the European media scene will quickly become dominated by larger scale American and Japanese competitors."

At a national level Pearson, Associated Newspapers, the Telegraph and the Guardian and Manchester Evening News group established the British Media Industry Group (BMIG) and in August 1993 hired Market Access International to lobby for a relaxation of cross-media ownership rules. Guardian chair, Harry Roche, said; "We believe that the UK as compared with the EC is very much over-regulated. As publishers we have a right to be active in every area of the media." One aim of BMIG was to get the restriction lifted on national newspapers owning a maximum 20% share of an ITV franchise. Successful and highly profitable media companies are all banging the same drum and demanding "Lift the cross-media ownership restrictions or we'll go out of business".

That's why it's disturbing that influential Labour figures like Gerald Kaufman so enthusiastically take up this theme, and urge a change in Labour policy. Since writing the *Guardian* piece Mr Kaufman has gone further. In *The Times* (25.1.95) he argues, "A strong BBC must mean a market orientated BBC. A market orientated BBC is probably going to mean a privatised BBC." Technological changes will have significant impacts on our media but regulatory principles ensuring high standards, access, diversity and accountability, rather than commercial expediency, should inform discussions on the shape of our media in the 21st century. We should not be seduced by conjectural predictions about our multimedia future, and jettison important guiding principles on media ownership on that basis. That's especially the case when the most powerful voices urging change are those of the big media corporations.

The issue of monopoly ownership is not some 'shibboleth' but has urgent and wide ranging implications for journalistic standards, as well for as programme choice and quality. The aim of media policy in a democratic society must surely be to enable the widest range of news, views and programmes to be presented. To the extent that these are filtered predominantly through commercially orientated media corporations or the market-led press the evidence is clear that, far from diversity, we will have a narrowing of choice and disregard for broader social and political concerns.

# GLOBAL VISIONS: two versions

"SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I saw the emergence of new technologies, the rapid globalization of the marketplace, and the increasing interconnection of cultures. I believed, and still believe, that only those companies with global reach, great diversity of resources and capabilities, and a strong foundation of product, talent and distribution would be able to compete in this new world."

The late Steven J Ross, Time-Warner Chairman, was speaking at the Edinburgh International TV Festival in August 1990 and his theme was a recurrent one taken up by other media giants.

Throughout the eighties several large, vertically integrated media giants were established, with immense power, vast resources and global reach. Some, like Robert Maxwell, collapsed under debt, but a new dynamic for mergers and alliances is now spurring companies to seize the much hyped opportunities of the multimedia revolution and the information superhighway. The lords of the global village are on the move again, deploying enormous economic and political power which can be used to undermine political or regulatory structures inimical to their interests.

Alan Fountain, the former Commissioning Editor at Channel 4's Independent Film and Video, addressed some of the problems and possibilities posed in this situation. This is an edited version of his keynote speech at the Edinburgh Channels for Change forum.

Alan Fountain is speaking at the Media versus the People conference in the session, Meeting the Challenge of the Media Empires.

"OVER THE PAST few months I have been to several media industry conferences dedicated to discussion of the '500 lane superhighway' - and I am delighted to say that nobody seems to be quite clear where they are going or where the technology could lead. It is also clear that the mainstream industry has only one goal - profit.

It is clear that there are many far reaching technological changes already taking place, with many more in the pipeline. There is by now an amazing diversity of means of communication - terrestrial, cable and satellite television; the fax machine; computer networks and mail exchanges; CD Rom; not forgetting the good old fashioned newspaper, magazine and book.

There is also the possibility of individuals

or small groups of people owning or having access to Hi-8 cameras, fax machines, computers - always bearing in mind the vast disparities in national and personal wealth between different parts of the world.

At the same time high level political and economic control whether through dictatorial, often repressive, regimes or through that other dictator, 'the market', is extremely strong in all areas of the media.

The USA remains the dominant media force in the world. Most television channels in the world are effectively politically controlled, under the spell of 'the market', and resistant to more democratic uses. Increasingly huge television networks, North and South, are in the hands of private companies and individuals. The sweeping global success of economic liberal philosophy has entailed a decline in the respectability of the very idea, let alone the practice, of subsidy.

Yet at the same time there are more and more people who wish to speak, to make images, to communicate, to protest, to re-think, to network - whether at local, regional, national, continental or international levels

The attack on subsidies for cultural production, to the point that we ourselves sometimes forget how legitimate such demands are, has been damaging across the globe.

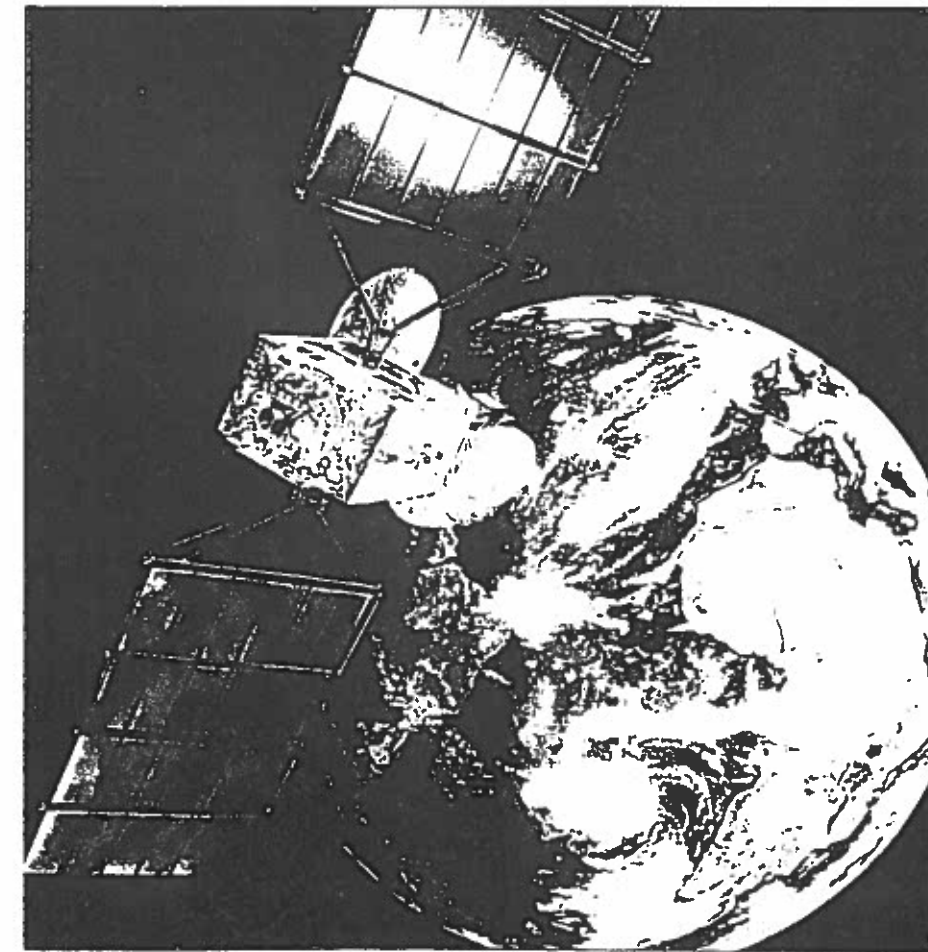
We have to begin to re-build the case for such subsidy, to remind people that a democratically responsive and socially useful media will not be created by 'the market'.

The biggest problem we face is that of dissemination, of distribution. People will, in spite of all the difficulties, find ways of producing and I hope that more and more opportunities can be opened up for the many people around the world who do not at have the means or access to any forms of media production.

However getting that work seen, whether on a national or international scale, is and will continue to be a critical problem. It is, of course, primarily a problem because most of the mainstream media do not welcome the alternative, critical or dissident voice.

It is because I see distribution and dissemination, together with some measure of real control over it, that I am at present working with others on the development of an alternative satellite, Mondial, the defining ideal of which is to broadcast programmes and films from all parts of the world to all parts of the world. To create a system to rival the Skys, the CNNs, the Stars of this world.

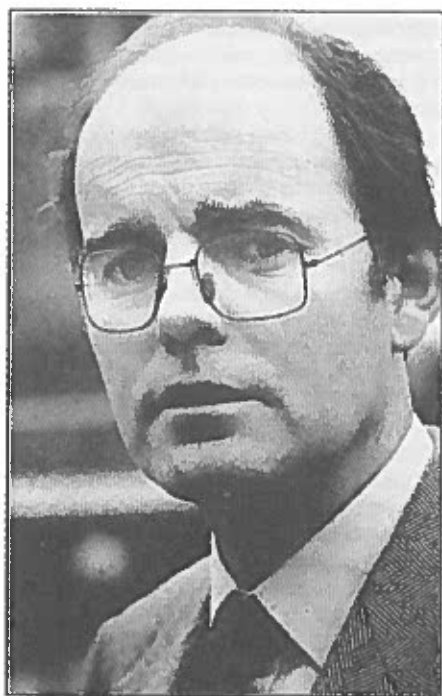
An ambitious project! I did use the word 'ideal'! Of course such a project can only happen if it is built step by step - and even reaching the first base might in the end be impossible - although I am sure that such a system will become reality at some point in the future."



# Modest proposals for media reform Without comment

Labour MP Chris Mullin introduced a Ten Minute Rule Bill on January 11, 1995. We reprint his speech in full because it highlights some of the key issues at the heart of debates on media ownership and democracy.

Chris Mullin worked on *World in Action* as a researcher with Charles Tremayne on the Birmingham Six case. In *Error of Judgement*, Mullin mentions the nine month's investigation which preceded the writing of the book: "But for the willingness of *World in Action* to invest resources in the investigation on which most of this book is based, the truth might never have been told."



**"MY BILL WILL reverse the growing trend towards monopoly ownership of most of what we see on our television screens and read in our newspapers. The purpose of the Bill is to protect our culture and democracy from the barbarism of the unregulated market. I hope that it will appeal to democrats of all political persuasions. I am glad to say that it has attracted support from hon. Members on both sides of the house.**

Although our television has always been carefully regulated, it has long been the situation that many of our national and regional newspapers are controlled by unscrupulous megalomaniacs. Now, the same people are taking control of our television. Rupert Murdoch, who owns five national newspapers, also has what is effectively a controlling interest in satellite television, which, we are told, will be in one home in two by the end of the century. Michael Green, of Carlton, has acquired Central Television, and with it a 36 per cent stake in Independent Television News and a similar stake in Independent Radio News. Mr Gerry Robinson has acquired London Weekend Television and with it a 36 per cent stake in ITN, all in defiance of section 32 of the Broadcasting Act, 1990, which says that no shareholding in ITN may exceed 20 per cent, precisely with a view to preserving its independence.

The rise of Messrs. Green, Murdoch, Robinson and others has already led to a marked decline in standards. Documentaries such as *This Week* have disappeared. *World in Action*, one of the last refuges for inquiring journalism, has been under heavy pressure. Even ITN's *News at Ten* is not safe as the new masters press for its removal to a more obscure slot, to make way for an unending diet of bland American movies. Already there has been an obvious decline in the quality of ITN, a reluctance to invest in foreign reporting, and an increasing tendency to conduct long and pointless live interviews between an anchorman in Grays Inn Road and a correspondent rarely more than two or three miles away. The other day at ITN there was a lengthy item on Kermit the frog.

There is talk of a new technology bringing in 20, 30 or 40 channels. It is said that we will have more choice, but in fact we will have less. We are headed down the American road - 40 channels with nothing worth watching on any of them and our culture colonised by American junk television. Our domestic television production capacity will be wiped out, just as our film industry has been. Indeed, it is already happening. The

industry is being remorselessly casualised. Since the Broadcasting Act, the number of full-time jobs in commercial television has halved. Who will provide the training for future generations of television film makers when the present generation is gone? Or are the new masters intending to poach from the BBC?

What I fear most is not political bias, but the steady growth of junk journalism - the trivialisation and demeaning of everything that is important in our lives, and its consequent effect on our culture. A flat refusal to address what is going on in the world in favour of an endless diet of crime, game shows and soap operas, and the unadulterated hate that is already a feature of most loathsome tabloid newspapers. In the long run, there is a danger - I put it no higher - that, with an increasing concentration of ownership and progressive abandonment of standards, television will become fertile ground for demagogues, offering simple solutions to complex problems. One has only to look at the rise of the religious right in America or to Italy - governed until recently by a man who owns three major television stations - for a clue as to where the future may lie.

My Bill has three principal purposes. First, it seeks to enforce diversity of newspaper and television ownership in the belief that healthy competition rather than monopoly is the best way to ensure the survival of our democracy.

Secondly, the Bill seeks to provide for a minimum level of quality in the firm belief that that is the best way to protect our television from the rise of junk culture.

Thirdly, the Bill seeks to create a level playing field between commercial and satellite television. At the moment satellite television is exempt from many of the regulations that apply to terrestrial television. I shall list some of the specific measures contained in the Bill.

First, there is a requirement that no national newspaper proprietor shall be permitted to own more than one daily or one Sunday newspaper. Surplus assets must be placed on the market within 12 months of the Bill being enacted.

Secondly, no one who is not a citizen of the European Community shall in future be permitted to own more than 20 per cent of any company owning British national or regional newspapers or British terrestrial or satellite television. That provision is based on similar regulations that already apply in the United States.

Thirdly, no company which has a controlling interest in a British national newspaper shall be permitted to own a

stake of more than 20 per cent in a British television company, terrestrial or satellite.

Fourthly, no company that has a controlling interest in either terrestrial or satellite television broadcasting to the United Kingdom shall be permitted to own more than 20 per cent of a British national newspaper.

Fifthly, a given percentage of the output of any television company, satellite or terrestrial, broadcasting to the United Kingdom, shall be produced within the European Union. That will extend to satellite television provision which is already enforced on terrestrial stations.

Sixthly, no company shall be permitted to own more than 20 per cent of ITN, IRN or any other national broadcast news service and that any surplus should be disposed of within 12 months of the Act coming into force.

Seventhly, no company with a controlling interest in any local television or radio station or in any local newspaper shall be permitted to own more than 20 per cent of any other media outlet covering the same catchment area.

Eighthly, no company shall be allowed to own more than 20 per cent of the encryption system for satellite television and any surplus shall be placed on the market within twelve months. Hon members will be aware that at present Mr Murdoch has a monopoly of the encryption system which prevents anyone else from gaining access to the satellite market.

Ninthly, substantial regional commercial television production facilities must be maintained in at least the six largest population centres outside London.

Tenthly, a training levy will be imposed on any television company employing more than 100 people which does not spend a given percentage of its income on training.

These measures should appeal to civilised people of all political persuasions. They are, as I have said, designed to protect our democracy and culture from the barbarism of the unregulated market. In many respects they merely enshrine or build upon regulations that already exist. Overall they will have the effect of introducing competition into areas where fair competition is being progressively stifled or eliminated.

We should not be afraid of regulation. Our broadcasting system has been carefully regulated throughout its existence and, as a result, its quality is widely admitted around the world. I am anxious that it should remain so and that is the purpose of the Bill. I commend it to the House."

**P**EARSON, the rich media multinational which owns the *Financial Times* and a hefty stake in Sky television, is frightfully proud of its £25,000 donation to the Labour Party. But why does Labour accept it? If there's no such thing as a free lunch there's certainly no such as a free donation from the *Financial Times* and Rupert Murdoch.

Labour should send the cheque back with an impolite suggestion as to where to shove it, and an assurance that Labour, when elected, will secure for the workers by hand or by brain rather

more than the £25,000 in increased corporate taxes - and will legislate to prevent cross-media ownership.

If any Tory complains about trade union donations, the point to make is that unions are democratic organisations in which millions of working people decide their political affiliations and donations, while corporate donations are made by a handful of rich people who think political parties, like everything else, can be bought and sold in the market place'.

Paul Foot 13/2/95 The Guardian

## MODEL RESOLUTION

If you have an opportunity to debate and win support for this resolution in your organisation please let the CPBF National Office know. Also if you would like a speaker to introduce the ideas and analysis behind the resolution we'll do our best to provide one.

Conference believes that (a) the bias, political distortion and falling standards of the media are directly related to the increasing concentration of ownership

(b) that existing and emerging media must be subject to democratic controls

(c) that the public must have access to the media, including a right to redress when misrepresented.

Conference therefore instructs the NEC to campaign with the media unions, The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, and other interested organisations for a media policy which includes commitments to:

1) statutory limits to media and cross-media ownership of publications, broad-

casting and telecommunications outlets; 2) expansion of public service media in each of these areas;

3) the end of patronage to appoint members to regulatory bodies governing the media and its replacement with democratic bodies

Conference further agrees that it will seek to commit an incoming government to take urgent legislative steps to implement this media policy:

a) repealing Tory laws which offend against these principles, including the Broadcasting Act, 1990; sections of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984; the Criminal Justice Act, 1994; and the Contempt of Court Act, 1981;

b) introducing new legislation, including a Freedom of Information Act and a statutory Right of Reply to factual inaccuracies;

c) reforming existing laws which impede the ability of journalists to investigate and expose corruption, including the libel laws.

## LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

I was amused to read Stephen Dorril's review of Seumas Milne's uncorroborated spy fantasy, *The Enemy Within*.

Had Mr Dorril taken the trouble to pick up the telephone I could have told him that the *Daily Mirror*/Cook Report investigation into NUM President Arthur Scargill's financial wheeler-dealing during and after the coal strike had nothing to do with the intelligence services.

All our information, including bank statements, came from past and present members of Scargill's staff.

Former NUM chief executive Roger Windsor went to Libya to beg for money from Colonel Gaddafi with Scargill's

blessing. If Windsor was a spy for MI5 than Mr Scargill was terribly naive.

Milne makes many errors in his tome, most of which could have been rectified by simple checking. Yet he has the brass neck to condemn me and my former colleagues for shoddy journalism.

I led that investigation and was not "used and abused by an assortment of spooks." Moreover, the intelligence services could not have pulled off such a "sting" without my help.

Given the chance I would write the same story all over again. My only regret is shelling out £16.95 for Milne's book.

Terry Pattinson

# AGM and what we stand for...

We are the nation's leading pressure group working for a genuinely free and democratic media. Our broad based support includes 22 national trades unions, Constituency Labour Parties and individual members. Our National Council is elected at the AGM which this year will be held on **Saturday May 6, 10.00am-5.00pm at the Voluntary Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA**. It is a comfortable, refurbished venue. The morning session will discuss key issues of media policy, and speakers will include the campaigning journalist, Paul Foot. The afternoon session is the CPBF AGM.

## OUR OBJECTIVES include:

- To encourage debate on the implications of technological advances in the media, to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded and that commercial interests do not override public accountability.
- To carry out research and generate debate on alternative forms of ownership and control of the media industries, and to encourage alternative forms of media control.
- To challenge the notions of 'impartiality' and 'balance' in broadcasting,

and 'objectivity' in newspapers by campaigning for the genuine presentation of the diversity and plurality of society.

- To work for press and broadcasting that are free of materials that are detrimental to any individual or group on the grounds of race, gender, religion, sexual preference, age, physical or mental ability.
- To campaign for the replacement of the Press Complaints Commission and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission with a statutory based Media Commission with the power to enforce the Right to Reply.

## Whose Side Are You On?

*Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes: pornography and censorship* by Avedon Carol. Published by New Clarion Press £9.95  
The debates about pornography and cen-

By JO TREHARNE

sorship are nothing if not fervent and capable of arousing the strongest of passionate opinion. Even more provocative is the continuing row between groups of feminists with opposing views on the influence and impact of pornography on society, and the damaging effects of state censorship.

The warring factions have divided themselves into several disparate groups with confusing acronyms - FAC, CAP, FACAP, etc - and can be seen on any daytime TV debate show during a quiet news

week bellowing obscenities at each other. Leaving aside arguments of uniting against the common enemy, it would seem that both sides can drum up empirical evidence to support their respective cases. The Campaign Against Pornography can produce as many women (and men) who have been personally and directly harmed by the pornography industry as Feminists Against Censorship can produce examples of discrimination of the gay community under the Obscene Publications Act. In short, the arguments are complex, confusing and very contradictory.

Wading into the fray is *Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes* by Avedon Carol, a new publication that takes a 'wholly anti-censorship position', arguing that state censorship of porn will prove to be 'a disaster for feminists, women in general and society as a whole'. What it also takes is a strongly anti anti-pornography brigade position, describing them as 'feminist nannies', and stating in one instance that "*taking a patronising view has been elevated to a science by the anti-pornography feminists*". It seems that both factions are now claiming to be the Supreme Defenders of

the Unprotected - one side against the evils of porn, another against women being patronised by these extremist elements.

Carol points out that many voices are unheard in the traditional 'porn is bad' argument - namely those women who earn a living from (and in some cases enjoy) involvement in pornography, and those who use pornography themselves and who wish to continue without being told that they are betraying their sex. However, what are often good points are undermined by a book that is poorly structured and at times unreadable, as it tries unsuccessfully to balance academic theorising with annoyingly kitsch cartoon illustrations and sarcastic prose. In an alarming number of cases, Carol's arguments are undermined by a lack of substantive quotes, giving the impression that this publication is simply a ranting polemic that has been festering in the back of the author's mind ever since she read *Porn Gold*.

It's a shame, because there is always room for greater reasoned and reasonable discussion in this most controversial of areas. Unfortunately this book falls short of those expectations.

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