

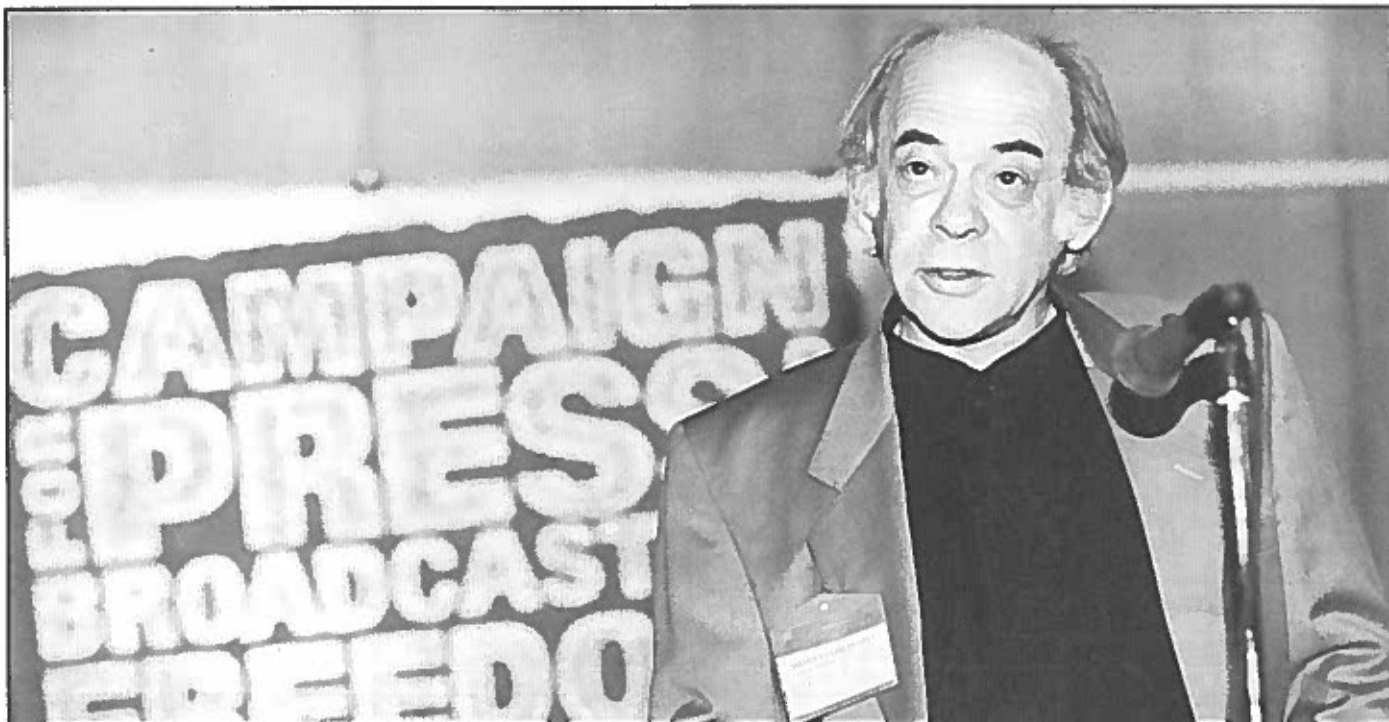
FREE PRESS

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MEDIA versus the PEOPLE



Alan Plater opens the Media versus People conference. Photo: Rod Leon

“THE BBC, lest we forget it, doesn't actually belong to Duke Hussey or John Birt, or to Alan Yentob or Michael Jackson. It actually belongs to us. Do you remember? We used to be called the people. And they are simply looking after it for us. The word is stewardship. And I believe we should say, respectfully, may we have our corporation back, please.

Putting it crudely, if I were King, I'd sack Hussey and the governors tomorrow, and replace them with a dozen people and true – half a day on the telephone would find them -who would be more inclined to make the BBC a people's organisation. At the moment too much of what the BBC does seems designed to please the Treasury and the paid up members of the Garrick Club, with a couple of token gestures towards Groucho's. I want a BBC that is equally answerable to Toxteth in Liverpool, Handsworth in Birmingham, the Meadow Well estate in North Shields,

Orchard Park estate in Hull.

Essentially we're talking about something very simple: a transaction between the imagination of the writers and programme-makers and the imagination of the audience. It's the transaction that gave us *The Goon Show*, *Hancock's Half-Hour*, *Dad's Army*, *Z Cars*, *The Boys From the Black Stuff*, *Pennies From Heaven*, *Coronation Street* and hundreds more like it. We can still do it – witness *Common As Muck*, *Takin' Over the Asylum*, *All Quiet on the Preston Front* – but now we do it in spite of the system and it takes forever. My most recent film on BBC, an amiable yarn called *Doggin' Around*, with Elliott Gould and Geraldine James, was on the shelf for five years before it found a home. In those circumstances, it makes it difficult to reflect the world we're living in.

But I think it goes even deeper. All our institutions – our schools, universities, hospitals, public services and the broadcast media – have been subjected to scrutiny by teams of highly paid consultants – the by

now customary bag of interlocking witch doctors. These institutions – our institutions – have been given new logos and new names. They've been reformed to Hell and back and they're all much worse than they used to be.

We are the first generation since the war to hand on a broadcasting system with a narrower range of imaginative possibilities than we inherited: a multiplicity of channels all saying the same thing and signifying very little: fewer opportunities for new talent and, incidentally, for existing talent: a denial of access to the richness and diversity that's out there on the streets: and less democracy.”

This is an extract from Alan Plater's keynote speech at the 'Media versus the People' conference, held at the TUC on March 18.

The conference was very successful, and initiated our work this year on the key issue of media ownership.

Two faces of the Mirror



Paul Foot in March 1993 handing out copies of his *Daily Mirror* column which after 13 years did not appear in the *Daily Mirror*.

By TIM GOPSILL, editor of *The Journalist*

The Labour Party and the TUC have been severely embarrassed by their association with *Mirror* Group Newspapers – the papers that give editorial support to workers' rights that they deny to their own staff.

The NUJ is running a vociferous campaign for the journalists to be allowed union representation, and demanding that Labour and the TUC, who have run a series of joint promotions with the *Mirror*, make this a condition of their co-operation.

There is more at stake than the simple right of workers to organise. The editorial quality of the papers (and their sales!) have plummeted since the right-wing Ulster Unionist David Montgomery, a

man with a passionate hatred of trade unions, was placed as chief executive of MGN by the banks in October 1992.

Their support for the Labour Party is primarily commercial, at a time of unprecedented loathing for the Tories around the country, but it suits the Party too, since it has both a national mouthpiece and a powerful propaganda voice against the left – and the unions.

Montgomery's first major management act was to sack, on the spot, 100 casual journalists. They were simply denied access to the building when they turned up for work. Yet in March this year the *Mirror* ran a series on the rights of part-time and casual workers, jointly with the TUC. "The paper that fights for a fairer Britain" was the strap across the launch feature, by TUC General Secretary John Monks. It advertised a help line and a booklet for part-timers to find out about their rights. The coupon for the free booklet asked people to tick whether they were members of a union – a declaration MGN employees might be reluctant to make.

For Montgomery's next move, in early

1993, was to target NUJ chapel officers. The "Father" and his deputy were told they must resign or be sacked. They went. The entire *Daily Mirror* chapel committee were kicked out, including Paul Foot and the staff of his investigative column – among them Margaret Renn, who had taken over as Mother of the Chapel, and was sacked in the most astonishing way. After the column finished she came to work every day but was given no work. Her desk was removed from the office whilst she was still sitting there. When she enquired, she was told she had been sacked a fortnight earlier; no-one had bothered to tell her.

The FOC on *The People* was disposed of in a rather more subtle way: he was told to go on a management training course or be sacked. What would you do?

Montgomery boasts that he has got rid of more than 250 journalists. As the papers and staff morale deteriorate, the exodus has become voluntary. Eight senior journalists have walked out in 1995 – some with no job to go to.

It wasn't just the journalists. One day in 1993 the entire security staff were called in to a meeting and told to leave the build-

ing at once. As they went, replacements from a low-wage private security company came in. They had been waiting outside in a van.

The unions brought tribunal cases for their sacked members. The biggest one, on behalf of six NUJ chapel officers, was settled last November, just before a four week hearing was due to start. MGN made an offer which would have been acceptable in money terms, but the NUJ wanted commitments from the company that it would honour union agreements and allow facilities for staff to organise.

The *Mirror* refused any wording beyond a general exhortation to better relations, and there followed an extraordinary Dutch auction, in which the NUJ demanded basic facilities and MGN just upped the money. It was clear that they would pay almost anything rather than concede, and the eventual settlement, though confidential, was substantial. The agreed intentions to improve relations evaporated as quickly as the ink dried. A letter from General Secretary John Foster requesting the facilities was not even replied to.

But the worst consequence of the deal was that the TUC and Labour took it as a green light to go ahead with joint campaigns, and in March this year they pushed off the Rolling Rose. This is a Labour Party recruitment drive, through which joiners can get the *Daily Mirror* free for a week – and entry to a draw for tea with Tony Blair. John Foster points out an irony here: that he might take tea with Tony Blair, but he may not enjoy a cuppa with his own members on the *Mirror*, because he, like all union officials, is banned from the building, and indeed, has had a specific request to enter the canteen to speak to members turned down.

While this has been going on, the union has been attempting to win its statutory representation on MGN's Health and Safety Committee. An agreement to do this in March last year was consistently obstructed, so the NUJ lodged a formal complaint with the local authority Environmental Health Department. MGN told Tower Hamlets Council that it would be reaching an agreement over representation, and the safety committee itself voted to take on an NUJ rep. (The union had asked for four – one for each of the titles – and had made four formal nominations.) But when Bridget Whelan from the *Daily*

Would you believe it?

The paper that fights for a fairer Britain

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

If you care about the rights of working people, write and tell

David Montgomery chief executive, MGN, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5AP.

Tony Blair, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

John Monks, TUC, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

For more information contact the NUJ at

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION OF

THERE WAS a not-so-subtle difference between the NUJ's ads as they appeared in the *Guardian* and the *Independent*. The union had done two versions – one which went out in advance for acceptance, and a second, for publication. This version was delivered, at the right time, to both offices. Yet one paper somehow ran the wrong one. Take a careful look at both and then use your skill and judgement to answer these questions:

1. Which paper ran which? 2. What possible reason could there be?

If you care about the rights of working people, then tell

Tony Blair (House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA) and

John Monks (TUC, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS)

For more information contact the

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION OF

The Independent ran the wrong one – missing out David Montgomery as someone to write to in protest. The NUJ then demanded either a return of the correct artwork, or a refund of the £1,565 it cost.

MGN spokesperson Nick Fulagar told the UKPC that they were taking the money-back option. The money was duly repaid – with a letter saying "sorry" that the wrong copy was used but accusing the NUJ of breaching commercial confidentiality and adding sternly: "We do not wish to have any further business with you".

Mirror

turned up at her first meeting, she was told the meeting would not proceed while she was there and she was thrown out.

Since then, another dispute has arisen over the *Sporting Life*: to coincide with the introduction of Sunday flat racing this

summer, 12 *Sunday Lives* are to be produced. MGN is requiring the 60-odd journalists to work the extra day without extra payment, but just with the vague promise of a midweek day off in lieu at some time convenient to the company. The rival *Racing Post*, owned by a Gulf Arab Sheikh, is paying time and a half.

But MGN is the paper that puts itself up as the voice of a fairer Britain. Labour and the TUC have been briefed on these issues, and TUC General Secretary John Monks and John Prescott have met Montgomery to press the NUJ case. NUJ leaders also met Prescott and media front bencher Chris Smith. Yet none of them seem to have been able to make any progress. So the union went public in March, with a series of press ads drawing attention to the *Two Faces of the Mirror*.

Letters inviting support for the NUJ campaign were sent to Labour MPs, MEPs and union General Secretaries. By mid-May 77 Labour MPs, 24 MEPs and 26 union chiefs had pledged support. The MPs included a couple of front-benchers, and the union leaders included Alan Jinkinson of UNISON and John Edmonds of the GMB.

BBC PANICS OVER TU TV

WHAT'S WRONG with John Monks speaking on a TV programme about the TUC's campaign for part-time workers' rights – especially on a programme paid for and produced by the TUC?

Plenty, according to the BBC top brass who insisted the item should not be transmitted in the new TV series for trade unionists which started on May 1. The first programme was caught in the flak surrounding the BBC *Panorama* and Clause 4 controversies, even though the series is not part of BBC mainstream programming. *TU TV* is broadcast weekly at 5.45 on Monday mornings in the BBC Select slot, not the time you're likely to be glued to the television unless you're an insomniac or shift worker.

In fact BBC Select provides an important access service, giving the TUC the opportunity to promote issues to do with the world of work that are either controversial, get ignored or treated differently on mainstream TV. There's bound to be more than one point of view on these issues, but surely the TUC's own programmes should not be bound by the BBC's concept of 'balance'. Indeed, it's precisely because trade union news is routinely at the margin of the mainstream news agenda that an independent initiative like *TU TV* is important to give the broader picture.

If BBC Select is designed to give organisations an opportunity to broadcast to their own defined audience, who use the video to record programmes, it does appear to have been a panic reaction by the senior echelons at the BBC to step in and demand changes after the programmes had been agreed and cleared by BBC Select.

As we went to press the TUC was in detailed discussions with the BBC, and the next programme is scheduled for June 5.

Foul play


RICHARD CLARKSON on the Rupert Murdoch's Rugby League deal

"IF SOMEONE told me that the Pope and Ian Paisley had decided that Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtic should merge I would have been no more surprised than I was when I learnt that Hull and Hull KR were to be joined in unholy wedlock at the instigation of Rupert Murdoch and Maurice Lindsay." (Chief Executive of the Rugby Football League) That was the reaction of one Rugby League supporter to the news that the administrators of our sport had struck a five year deal with Murdoch that would bring £77m into the game but meant that teams with over 100 years of history had to merge with traditional local 'enemies'.

In the Wakefield District it meant that our three teams, Wakefield Trinity, Featherstone Rovers and Castleford would have to join forces and play under the distinguished banner of 'Calder' (the name of a river that runs through Wakefield). The wave of feeling that swept through the game against the club mergers (including protest rallies, pitch demonstrations, petitions and even a debate in the House of Commons) has meant that a new revised plan has been agreed by the club chairmen that means that no club goes out of existence and Murdoch's money, upped by another £10m, is more equitably distributed throughout the game.

A small victory for people power against, arguably, the most powerful man in the world. But there are still questions that need to be answered. Like, how is it possible for a media mogul to be able to buy up a British sport (to put it in the terms of the Parliamentary Rugby League Group) lock, stock and barrel? Murdoch's involvement in this deal surely raises serious implications for the future of ALL sports, not just Rugby League.

Satellite TV has been the way that Rugby League fans have had to view their sport since SKY snapped up exclusive rights for the Stones Bitter Championship



Three weeks ago, the so-called Rugby League representatives autocratically decided to sell our game to a multinational corporation, carve it up, losing several historical clubs in the process, and change from a winter sport to summer. The fans were not consulted. Rugby League Fans United is a new group formed to represent the views of the supporters, born out of the passion that arose from the barbaric Super League proposals. There are several disparate groups pulling in the same direction. We hope to pull them together, go forward with one voice and say what we - the supporters - want from our game.

THE MEETING
Everyone welcome
7-30 PM
Wednesday 17th May 1995
Castleford Civic Centre,
Ferrybridge Road,
Castleford.

PLEASE PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT
For further information, send SAE to:
Unit 7, Cultural Centre, Redhill Avenue, Glasshoughton,
Castleford, WF10 4QH

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a few years ago. Free at first, as long as you had a dish, Sky Sports was then encrypted and bundled in as part of the multi channel package. Sport sells dishes, there is no doubt about that, and with only 15% of Sky's revenue coming from advertising the more subscribers the merrier for Murdoch.

But why should he be interested in projecting what is extensively a working class Northern sport on to the world arena? The answer may lie on the other side of the world where Murdoch is currently engaged in battle with Kerry Packer about the broadcasting rights for Australian Rugby League. Rugby League is big bucks down under, being almost the 'national' sport in Queensland and New South Wales. It is also played in New Zealand and even in islands like Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa. Money is being thrown around like confetti in the Australian game in an attempt, on Murdoch's behalf, to lure top players into his rival 'Super League' while Packer

fighters back with 'loyalty bonuses' for players who stay with the Australian Rugby League.

So where does this leave the British Rugby League supporter? We were never consulted on our opinions about the Super League or the decision to play the game in Summer instead of Winter (at Murdoch's insistence so

that it is played parallel to the game in Australia). We feel we are pawns in a battle involving two media tycoons and one of the biggest fears is that if Murdoch gains control of the TV rights for the Australian game what happens if he pulls out of ours?

When asked what would happen if Murdoch walked away at the end of the five year deal one Rugby League chairman said, "Who cares?" Clearly the supporters care and worry about the future of our sport. It is so obvious that there is a hidden agenda behind Murdoch's decision to pump £87m into what was a financially embarrassed sport and there are many questions that Rugby League administrators either cannot or won't answer. It appears that those who run Rugby League have failed to follow the advice that even a five year old is told to adhere to. Beware of strange men offering sweets.

Richard Clarkson is the author of *Striking Memories*, an account of his experience in the 1984-85 miners' strike, and produces the Wakefield Trinity fanzine, *Wally Lewis is Coming*.

LOCAL VOICES

JOE OWENS on Scotland's Community Press

MOST PEOPLE rarely see the reality of their everyday lives reflected in the media. News agendas dominated by either sensationalism or Westminster-centric political debate do not, in the main, find space for those issues which may be of great importance to local communities. The voices of 'ordinary' people are rarely heard, and when they do manage to make their presence felt above what Ivan Klima has called "the hum that makes us hard of hearing", it is often filtered to fit an already fixed agenda.

Community newspapers play the role the 'mainstream' media does and, arguably, cannot. And in Edinburgh and Glasgow in particular, they do not fit the cliched image of rough, A4, stapled together rants from the most vocal member of the community council. This article will concentrate on those independent, non-profit making local newspapers as opposed to those produced by commercial groups.

In Glasgow, newspapers like *The Northender* and the *Drumchapel News* are well established, professionally produced, tabloid sized products working to professional news agendas. Like their counterparts in Edinburgh, whose development I will examine later, they strive to carry a more positive image of the communities in which they operate. These communities are among the poorest in the city and suffer a monochromatic press.

In the local community newspaper, the diversity and creativity of these areas is reflected without in any way compromising, particularly in *The Northender*, coverage of the very real social issues that exist. These papers have a strong sense of responsibility to their communities that the commercial press does not.

Another important function is to provide access for local people to have their views and concerns raised. Campaigning with and on behalf of readers on a range of issues from housing to health is an essential function of any community newspaper, as is giving full coverage of the sports and cultural activities that take place. The views of Mrs McGlumpher from up the road are treated as seriously, and often rightly so, as those of any back-bench MP in a crisis.

In Edinburgh, the community press is long established and now has a successful journalistic and media training scheme. In 1974, the *Wester Hailes Sentinel* was established, reporting on developments in this peripheral housing scheme. It quickly moved from an A4 format to a tabloid size newspaper distributed free to every home in the area. Other communities in the city followed their example and there are now

five community newspapers in Edinburgh grouped under an umbrella organisation, the Edinburgh Community Newspaper Trust (ECNT).

In 1990 the *Sentinel* went fortnightly while the rest are monthly publications. Each of the newspapers functions independently and is run by a local board. Crucially, they are all produced, owned and run within the communities they cover. As well as advertising revenue, the ECNT receives funding from the District and regional councils. Central policy and funding is managed by ECNT which is made up of representatives from each of the newspapers and the local authorities.

The success of the newspapers led on to another development which fulfilled another important function of the community press - as a training and skills provider. In 1989 ECNT launched a two year full-time journalism training scheme for unemployed people leading to industry recognised qualifications. Another course offered training in advertising sales.

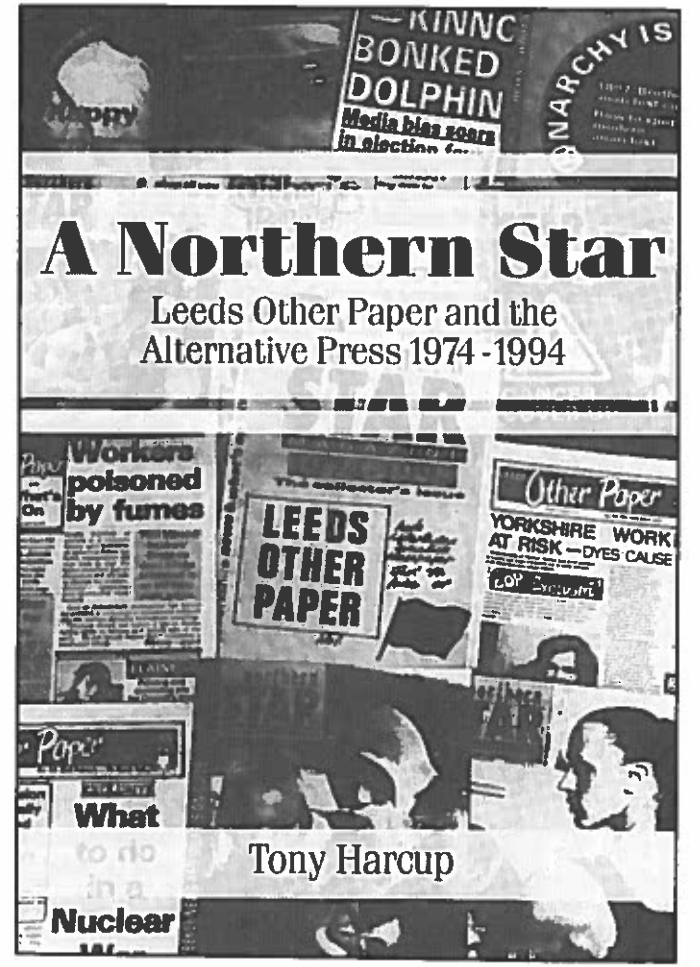
From that has grown the Edinburgh Media and Arts Training Trust which offers training in a wide range of media skills. On the journalism side, contacts have been made with other newspapers in the European Community enabling trainees to spend time working abroad as part of their training.

In 1974, to those pumping out the A4 newsletters, these developments would have been unimaginable. But while it is an outstanding example of what is possible, it is, sadly, unique. Most local community newspapers still struggle along and are all too often still at the A4 stage.

Community newspapers are important and should be recognised as such. Every community should have the opportunity to produce a good local paper that expresses its identity and allows the issues that are important to it to be treated seriously.

However, the financial and commercial imperatives at work make this all but impossible. This author would argue that those pressures should be eased if not removed altogether. Perhaps one way would be the mainstream press committing a percentage, it would only need to be tiny, of their profits into a fund that could be used to underwrite the efforts of local people to publish good quality, professionally produced, locally owned and controlled newspapers. That subsidy would take away the need of these papers to get advertising, so removing any theoretical threat to the mainstream's revenue. On top of everything else, an expansion of such titles would, like the argument for the existence of a free press itself, help strengthen democracy.

Where community newspapers have been established in Scotland they have quickly developed strong roots and play a vital role in helping articulate the concerns and celebrate the positive sides of the area. It is a development that should be welcomed and encouraged, not ignored.



Order your copy from the CPBF, £3.50 including packing and post.

PLATFORM: CHANNEL 5 AND THE ITC: A VIEW FROM SCOTLAND



Delegates from the Institute for Local Television's Channels for Change pin their conference badges to Edinburgh's Craigkelly transmitter as part of an International demonstration in support of local access to broadcasting. Photo: Dianne Barrie

CHANNEL 5 shows us that broadcasting regulation in the commercial sector has already become something of a hostage to central and metropolitan political thinking, and that national regulation does not entail national services any longer, so much as central controls.

The interesting questions about Channel 5 seem to have been glossed over. The ITC has decided not to consider publicly what the 1990 Broadcasting Act actually implies, and yet the Act itself expects bidders to consider the introduction of services that use frequencies effectively. The ITC has advanced a national proposal at the very moment that political fragmentation causes us to reflect locally upon the greater regional responsibilities of Britain.

There are two tensions which appear to be pulling the nation state apart and while for the most part the global pull of inward investment and world programmes (benefiting from a shared English language but an American culture) has been nationally welcomed it is the second tension, the local, internal, ethnic, autonomous regional tension that is under-represented with an appropriate layer of TV media.

Why, for example, should a Scottish public, anticipating a Scottish parliament continue to believe that the news and current affairs will be controlled from London? Channel 5 will come on air just as a Scottish assembly, as like as not, begins to sit in Edinburgh – and possibly will be joined by assemblies in Wales and

ing a balance of views in that assembly? Do Scots need to chain themselves to TV transmitters and go on hunger strike to achieve a Scottish Channel 5 as distinct as Channel 4 Wales is from Channel 4?

The ITC insisted that Channel 5 be 'essentially national' in character because the ITV companies in London threatened to pursue the Commission through the courts if a more regional focus was favoured. That would threaten their services. An 'essentially national character' reaching only 70% of the population!

The debate on the local emphasis for television in Channel 5 and in particular for newer forms of television distribution must confront the twin interests of central political indifference to the periphery and national commercial influence upon the centre. In television broadcasting decisions have tended to favour the large scale over the small scale, the commercial over the community. Now the choice seems simple enough. Should public policy serve chiefly to protect an incumbent industry with a national sovereignty distorted from its public objective, or should it reinvest broadcasting policy with public interest?

The opportunity of a measure of Scottish autonomy requires that an independent Scottish and local broadcasting service is given the space and backing of legislation to represent and explore local interests without reference to London and the reminder of Big Ben's interference and simultaneous indifference.

Dave Rushton is Director of The Institute of Local Television, and is one of the academics, industrialists and community contributors examining broadcasting policies as part of The John Wheatley Centre's Governance of Scotland project. The John Wheatley centre is at 20 Forth Street, Edinburgh

By **DAVE RUSHTON**

Northern Ireland. Viewers should expect to have their governments reflected according to local news needs, local schedules for current affairs and cultural programmes, and not find, as they are now with the BBC and to a great extent with ITV, all services driven by an English agenda acknowledging only the English legal system, water privatisation or educational system.

For how long will the regions respect that a political shift has taken place if it continues to reflect a parliamentary and not a local political emphasis in establish-

MEDIA MONITOR US RIGHT and the MEDIA

An excellent March/April edition of *Extra!*, the US magazine produced by media reform group FAIR, is devoted to "The Right Wing Media Machine". In the aftermath of the Oklahoma bombing this issue is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand some of the formidable forces reshaping the US media.

Two topical articles deal with the talk show hosts like Chuck Baker and Rush Limbaugh who fulminate against the "slime balls" in Congress and urge listeners to form guerilla cells to resist the global socialist conspiracy.

As the editorial notes, "We're concerned that the distinction between right wing and mainstream media is eroding—due to the alliance between powerful media corporations and powerful conservative politicians." It continues, "Republicans are poised to gut communications regulations, eviscerating or eliminating long-standing barriers to media monopolization."

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

Women's Magazines: the first 300 years, Brian Braithwaite

Peter Owen 1995 £13.95

BRIAN Braithwaite has worked in women's magazine publishing for more than 30 years, most notably as the publisher who oversaw the launch of *Cosmopolitan* in the UK in 1971. Not surprisingly, his book is written very much from a male, mainstream publisher's perspective.

Braithwaite's view of women and women's magazines can be deduced from the following passage: "The vast and disparate market of women's magazines has always been sustained by its natural divisions: society, domestic, teenage, romantic, fashion, beauty and health. There has always been at least one magazine on the market at any given time to which a woman could relate and with which she might identify."

The book is uncritical and superficial,

although it is not short on (brief) detail. It is clear that Braithwaite has accepted the state of 20th century women's magazines as given, and is hostile to challenges. For example, he describes gleefully how *The Ladies' Treasury*, "with fiction, fashion, needlework and absorbing pastimes for the young Victorian women... outlived a whole crop of militant, activist magazines."

The structure of the book is confusing. Braithwaite divides it into eight chapters, with each covering a different time period. Chapter one deals with the first 218 years in 20 pages, so the book is really about 20th century women's magazines (it is taken for granted that all the magazines covered are British).

Magazines are discussed in the chapter which covers the period of time when they were launched, but their subsequent history is covered at the same point. This means that information about a magazine in the 1990s may well be found in a chapter on the 1950s. Readers looking for information about a magazine at a particu-

lar point in history will therefore have to rely on the index.

There are three useful appendices: Who Owns What?; Mergers; and Births, Marriages and Deaths, which give an overall picture of the historical period covered. However, more information on the owners in particular would have been appreciated, particularly on their multinational connections.

Braithwaite describes his book as a "whirlwind tour of history", and this accurately sums it up. I would certainly recommend to those entering mainstream publishing who want a quick background on the sector (my impression was that Braithwaite has written it for the eager young men who continue to be appointed as editors and publishers of women's magazines over the heads of their female colleagues).

However, there are better and more helpful books for media students and others with a serious interest in British women's magazines. Those looking for more analytical and detailed but still readable reference works should instead try:

Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines* (Pandora, 1987); Ros Ballaster's, Margaret Beetham's, Elizabeth Frazer's and Sandra Hebron's *Women's Worlds: Ideology, femininity and the woman's magazine* (Macmillan, 1991); and Jane Waller's and Michael Vaughan-Ree's *Women in Wartime: the role of women's magazines 1939-45* (MacDonald Optima, 1987).

Juliet Gosling

Radical Radio

REBEL RADIO is the story of El Salvador's Radio Venceremos. It is a collection of stories from the people who were involved in running this station over a number of years. The stories are moving, sometimes comic, and a testimony to the bravery of the participants. The book was published in the UK as a result of an appeal launched by the Latin American Bureau in London, which the CPBF supported.

It is written by Jose Ignacio Lopez Vigil, a broadcaster, writer of radio soap operas and author of books on radical radio in Bolivia and Nicaragua. Vigil is the Latin American representative of the World Association of Community Radios.

The book is testimony to the radical potential of radio in particular struggles. It should be read by those interested in both mass communications and the politics and history of Latin America.

The book costs £8.99 from the Latin American Bureau, 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL Tel: 0171-278 2829

Tom O'Malley

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

I was not over-impressed by the article in the March/April issue of *Free Press* entitled 'Driving Labour On The Superhighway'. Generally I thought the article took an overly negative tone.

More specifically, Tom O'Malley seems to have very little understanding of our role in relation to the Forum.. He refers to the NCU representative disappearing from the briefing issued on 16 February 1995 and gives the impression that we have no role in the Forum.

In fact, I am the official CWU representative on the Forum and have attended every single meeting. Dave Ward – Education Officer of the CWU – also sits on the Forum in his capacity as a member of the Labour Party NEC. Also, Chris Smith who chairs the Forum and Judith Church from the PLP are both CWU-sponsored MPs. I hope this information serves to confirm that the CWU is playing a very active role in the Forum and will continue to contribute to this most important public debate.

Roger Darlington, Head of Research, CWU

As the author of *Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes*, I recognize that Jo Treharne ('Whose Side Are You On?') is entitled, of course, to find the book boring and to disagree with its contents, but she is more than a little misleading when she says that the arguments therein "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*."

This sounds just a bit too much like a smear intended to hoodwink the reader into believing this book is particularly lacking in academic rigour.

In fact the book is rich with substantive quotes, and is one of the few accessible works published in this country where a reader might find primary source quotations from someone who has actually read, and is prepared to honestly explain, the much rumoured "evidence" against pornography – and in language that does not require a degree in statistics to be comprehensible. This is in stark contrast to other feminist books purporting to academic legitimacy that have been published on the pornography debates here, which usually fail to cite primary sources altogether, or don't bother to include an index, or refer with approval to the "calousness toward women" research that no feminist would praise if she had actually read it, or all of the above.

Indeed, the only mention of *Porn Gold* – which was not used as a reference source for the book – appears in one of those many quotations, from science fiction writer cum anti-porn campaigner Michael Moorcock.

But I suppose I should feel flattered that your reviewer found the book so threatening that she was prepared to use such disingenuous tactics rather than address the real arguments in the book, which are not really discussed in her article at all.

Avedon Carol, Feminists Against Censorship

LONDON OFFICE

Jo Treharne has now finished working part time in the London office and is off to pastures new. Jo started working for the CPBF in September 1992, and she has been a tremendous asset, bringing her skills and energy into a job which can often be very demanding. She did the research on media ownership and organised the production and printing of the poster, *Britain's Media: How They Are Related*, and contributed to a number of CPBF initiatives, including the BBC Campaign and co-authored, with Tom O'Malley, *Selling the BEEB*.

She will be missed, but watch out for her C4 programme on Leyton Orient due out in late summer.

Until the incoming National Council has looked at the finances and discussed staffing Granville Williams will cover Jo's responsibilities.

VOLUNTEERS and PLACEMENTS

One way the CPBF office can provide a more efficient service is through having volunteers to take on specific responsibilities and projects. We hope to have two students on a four month placement from July onwards in the London office but we're always interested in people volunteering to help out on projects.

For example we will be organising book stalls, fringe meetings and leafleting trade union conferences and the Labour and Lib-Dem conferences from May through to October. If you live in Brighton, Bournemouth, Blackpool or Scarborough or could travel to these venues to help us, please get in touch. We'll cover your expenses so you won't be out of pocket.

CPBF (NORTH)

The new office is now open, thanks to generous support from West Yorkshire Grants which will cover rent and other costs for one year. If you would like to buy copies of *Reaching the Media: A Yorkshire and Humberside Media Guide* (£3.50 inc P&P) or Tony Harcup's *A Northern Star: Leeds*

Other Paper and the Alternative Press 1974-1994 (£3.50 inc P&P) CPBF (North) is at Kirklees Media Centre, 7 Northumberland Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RL. Tel: 01484 454184 Fax 01484 454185

NATIONAL COUNCIL 1995-96

The members elected at our AGM are:
INDIVIDUALS: Jonathan Hardy, Tom O'Malley, Ann Pointon, Vi Scotter, Christian Wolmar, Barry White. **GPMU:** Mike Hicks. **BECTU:** Yossi Bal, Kathy Darby, Tony Lennon, Turlough McDaid. **NUJ:** Pat Healy, Mike Jempson, Sandra Satterlee, Alex Pascall. **OTHER UNIONS:** Bill Ash, Shirley Cooklin (Writers Guild of Great Britain); Lil Sutherland **UNISON;** Linda Quinn **CWU;** Bill Hamilton **MSF.**
REGIONAL GROUPS: Granville Williams (CPBF North). **SUB GROUPS:** Helen Kuttner BBC Sub Group.

There are still vacancies on the National Council for four members from non-trade union organisations. Please contact the National Office if your organisation is interested in nominating people.

A TAWDRY TALE

Former MI5 officer Peter Wright died on April 26, 1995. Wright trained as a scientist, and his skills were used to develop bugs and surveillance equipment for the security and intelligence services in Britain and Northern Ireland.

"For five years," he wrote in *Spycatcher*, "we bugged and burgled our way across London at the State's behest, while pompous bowler-hatted civil servants in Whitehall pretended to look the other way." Perfectly acceptable behaviour by the secret state provided you don't spill the beans, which of course Wright did.

Sales of his book made him around £2m, largely as a result of the government generated publicity, as it spent over £2m vainly seeking to prevent publication. By a happy coincidence we've just found a box of fifty *Spycatcher* records. Sponsored by the CPBF in August 1987 at the time of the furore around *Spycatcher*, when

injunctions were issued against newspapers to prevent them printing extracts, it contains *Ballad of a Spycatcher* and *Song of the Free Press*, both written by Rosselson, with Billy Bragg and the Oyster Band accompanying. Sound stuff!

You can obtain the record, if you've got the old fashioned technology to play 45rpm vinyl, from CPBF for £2.00 inc P&P.

STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

For three days in June, Liberty is hosting the most extensive programme of discussions on human rights ever seen in Britain.

The Human Rights Convention will include major international speakers and offers a huge choice of activities, bringing together several thousand people for a lively programme of talks, workshops, entertainments and cultural events to learn, share, celebrate and promote rights. It takes place over three sites in the heart of Westminster, London on 15, 16 and 17 June.

The event is the result of collaboration between Liberty (the National Council for Civil Liberties) and over 100 human rights and campaigning groups. The CPBF will be leading a session on Media and Democracy with Tony Lennon, BECTU President, and others. Topics include the Internet, workplace rights, race and citizenship, criminal justice, women and human rights, freedom of information, freedom of expression, sexuality and censorship.

Tickets for waged individuals are £32.50 (three days) and £14 (one day); students and unwaged £14 (three day) and £5 (one day). Trade unions and non-profit organisations £64 (three days) and £35 (one day) There are special rates for small organisations, commercial and statutory organisations and large group bookings. Tickets for Noam Chomsky only (Friday 16, 7.45pm) are £4/£2 concessions.

For a free programme or details call 0171 403 3888 or write to Jonathan Hardy, Human Rights Convention, Liberty, 21 Tabard Street, London SE1 4LA. Fax 0171 407 5354

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e) Institutions (eg libraries) (includes 10 copies of <i>Free Press</i> , plus free CPBF publications)	£25

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