

Shape the CPBF's future

IT WAS a tremendous election result. Now for the first time in its existence the CPBF has to deal with a Labour government, and changed times require changed strategies. That's why we are urging our members and supporters to come along to our AGM and Conference on June 28 where we want to have a wide-ranging debate on the key issues which the CPBF needs to focus on.

CPBF CONFERENCE

June 28, 1997

Details – back page

We've planned the conference sessions to encourage such a discussion.

Just as important is our AGM from 10.00 am-12.00 noon (open to CPBF

members and delegates from affiliated organisations) which will deal with the business of electing a new National Council, reviewing our finances and our work in 1996. The conference starts at 1.00pm and full details are on the back page of this issue of Free Press.

We extend a warm invitation to Free Press readers – come along, join in the debate and shape the CPBF's future activity.

LABOUR & MEDIA REFORM

FIRST MESSAGES ARE POSITIVE

WE WERE realistic. Few of the key issues of concern which the CPBF highlighted in its Media Manifesto, 21st Century Media: Shaping the Democratic Vision, were likely to be addressed in the bills which the new Labour government will push through Parliament in the next eighteen months. We wanted to put a marker down in the Media Manifesto about the policy issues which the CPBF will campaign for in the life of this Parliament.

But there are some very important initiatives and policy statements, both in the Queen's Speech, and from the National Heritage Minister, Chris Smith, which give positive messages.

We obviously welcome the step to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. It will mean an end to the expensive and time-consuming process of taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg. Remember the Spycatcher case and the Sunday Times thalidomide investigation? Cases such as these would be taken more cheaply and easily through British courts.



Popular appointment – National Heritage Minister Chris Smith

There would also be a balance between the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Some newspapers are worried that the right to privacy may have a detrimental effect on the media, but the public interest defence is built into the Convention.

The only threat will be to those papers whose intrusive, sensational reporting has nothing to do with the public interest and everything to do with circulation.

The appointment of Chris Smith as

National Heritage Minister is a popular one. He wants to change his quaintly named department to the Department of Culture and Communications and in his first statements said that he had no plans to alter the rule that newspapers with more than 20 per cent share of national circulation may not own ITV stations. 'The principle has to be the safeguarding of diversity,' he said.

Also in an Observer interview (18 May) he echoed CPBF concerns about the BBC: 'An over-bureaucratic system has been brought in during the search for market efficiency through its National Health-style restructuring. The commercial tail should not wag the public service dog.'

He also wants to look at the composition of the Board of Governors and emphasise their role 'as custodians of the public service remit.'

The Observer interview ranged over a number of areas but Chris Smith detailed how the arts and media should be driven 'by public service and public access.' For the CPBF this is a welcome and encouraging statement of principle.

The campaign after the election

In the wake of the Labour landslide, **TOM O'MALLEY** offers a contribution to the forthcoming AGM/Conference discussion about priorities for the Campaign

THE CAMPAIGN was established a matter of months after the election of the first Thatcher administration in 1979. For eighteen years we have worked for a more accountable, freer and diverse media, in a political climate dominated by a government hostile to our goals.

During these years we have survived because of the active support of the trade union movement, Labour Party branches, and a wide range of other community groups and individuals representing a spectrum of political opinions.

Now, in the light of the long awaited return of a Labour government, it is time to campaign with more single-mindedness than ever before to achieve media reform.

New Labour positioned itself at a distance from some of the key concerns of the Campaign and other media pressure groups in the run up to May 1. In particular it has changed its position on ownership and said little about reforming the structures of broadcasting left to us by the Tory governments since 1979. Its commitments on media policy were described in part by Lewis Moonie in the last Free Press, and its manifesto commitment can be seen in the box below.

Nonetheless Labour still has a commitment to public service broadcasting, to 'fair' regulation and to maintaining quality, diversity and high standards. In addition Labour, in government, has no track record of implementing major changes in media policy.

One difference between now and the last two Labour governments is that there are arguably more people and groups around who are knowledgeable about, and want reform of, the media, than was the case previously.

This can be seen in the work of trade unionists in BECTU, the NUJ, the GPMU and in other unions like UNISON. There are pressure groups like the CPBF and Voice of the Viewer and Listener. There has been an explosion of community-based media projects and of interest in media policy amongst academics and political activists. In spite of the advances made by big business in the media over the last 18 years there is



Arguing for media reform since 1979

now a stronger base from which to argue for reform than in the 1970s.

At the AGM/Conference this year we need to determine what our priorities over the next period might be.

Above all we need to realise that we cannot hope to achieve anything significant unless we can maintain and build our

Above all we need to realise that we cannot hope to achieve anything significant unless we can maintain and build our membership base and our income

membership base and our income. A membership and affiliation drive should figure near the centre of our activities. Equally all our activities should keep questions of trade union rights, equal opportunities, access and accountability at the core of our concerns.

LABOUR aims for a thriving, diverse media industry, combining commercial success and public service. We will ensure that the BBC continues to be a flagship of creativity and public service broadcasting, but we believe that the combination of public and private sectors in competition is a key spur to innovation and high standards. The regulatory framework for media and broadcasting should reflect the realities of a far more open and competitive economy and enormous technological advances, for example with digital television. Labour will balance sensible rules, fair regulation and national and international competition, so maintaining quality and diversity for the benefit of viewers.

Labour Manifesto April 1997

PRESS REFORM

There is a strong case for a one stop Media Commission to deal with regulation across the media and to conduct research. We have supported this for some years. Within this framework though there is still a pressing need for reforms relating to the Press.

We should reassert the need for a statutory Right of Reply to factual inaccuracies in the press. There is ample precedent for this in other countries.

This would involve setting up an independent body, possibly a branch of a new Media Commission, which would have the task of achieving the correction of inaccuracies by conciliation, and only in the last resort, by legal sanction.

That body, a new Press Council, would also have the task of promoting press freedom, enhancing journalistic standards, conducting research on ownership and reporting, annually to Parliament. The Campaign has a track record on this issue and we are well placed to marshal the powerful arguments which exist in favour of this reform.

We should also press for the repeal of those sections of Tory legislation which inhibit journalistic freedom, and continue our long-standing support for a Freedom of Information Act.

OWNERSHIP

We could produce a series of amendments to current legislation to promote the break up of media concentrations and, through the use of a levy on media revenues, divert resources into the sustenance of community based media.

BROADCASTING

There is a need to reassert the principles of public service across the broadcasting media. This will involve revising the 1996 Broadcasting Act and deepening and extending the public service obligations of terrestrial and UK based satellite and cable broadcasters. In particular the BBC and ITV companies should have their obligations in this area increased.

The BBC should be required to reverse its policy of organising itself internally like a business, by dismantling Producer Choice and reintegrating the organisation around public service and not commercial criteria.

The appointments to all broadcasting bodies should be democratised.

REGULATION

There is a series of complex issues to be resolved around the question of media regulation in a multi-media environment.

This will not necessarily be resolved by following the regulatory model used by the Tories after they privatised public utilities. In this, matters of content and service would be the job of the service providers, and questions of competitive practices and market entry the job of the regulator.

There is a need for a much more content driven form of regulation in the electronic media, one which does not simply allow the market to provide. Equally it should be possible to distinguish different kinds of structure for different media, which might work under one body, but would have a good deal of autonomy. The new government should be pressed to consult widely before it takes any major steps in this direction, and it would be one of our tasks to intervene.

This is only a selective list of pressing problems. It is open to debate where we should put our limited resources. But it is the case that we have an organisation, a body of experience, skills and perspectives as individuals and affiliates which we should seek to use now to advance the cause of democratic reform of the media. This will, no doubt, be the focus of our discussions at the June 28 AGM and Conference.

MEDIA MONITOR

SUN SALES FALL

DID the decision by Murdoch to switch support to Tony Blair cause a drop in sales of 204,000 for The Sun in April?

Mirror editor, Piers Morgan, thinks so:

'There must have been a large element of dissatisfaction from Sun readers about the paper's about-face.'

The latest ABC figures show that during the election only The Mirror and Daily Mail showed an increase in circulation from March to April. Piers Moorage claims it's because 'we made our election

coverage exciting.' Actually it wasn't. The only glimpse of the kind of Mirror coverage that hit home was in the election-day issue. It was reminiscent of the Daily Mirror in its happier days as a real campaigning Labour paper.

One explanation for The Mirror's sales increase could be that the paper has spent £6.5 million on TV advertising since January, as well as mail-shots, free issues and price cuts.

OLD BBC



THE revamp of the BBC logo, costing £5 million, is designed to give the corporation a 'clear brand image for the next century'.

The new logo will appear on BBC 1 and BBC 2 in October, and will be phased in gradually on stationery, vehicles and buildings.

NEW BBC



INDEX ON CENSORSHIP

THE magazine is 25 years old and the current issue has a number of articles which will interest Free Press readers. Noam Chomsky has a piece, 'Democracy Lite'; Dan



Schiller analyses the commercialisation of the Internet; and JG Ballard and David Cronenberg discuss Crash.

There's lots of other good material and the magazine's ambitious project deserves congratulations and a happy 25th birthday.

RUSSIAN MEDIA

MOST of Russia's leading newspapers and television channels are owned by financial magnates who openly use their media power to promote their political interests. Izvestia journalists supported Russia's democratic market reforms, but are now embroiled in a bitter conflict with some of the people and organisations they previously endorsed.

The paper printed an article from Le Monde in March which alleged that Victor Chernomyrdin, the Russian prime minister, had accumulated a personal fortune of £5 billion, thanks largely to his close links with Gazprom, Russia's natural gas monopoly, which he once ran.

Now another group, Lukoil, Russia's largest oil company and Izvestia's largest shareholder, want more direct control of the paper, and have elected a new board of directors dominated by Lukoil loyalists. At stake is the media's right to operate free from the country's political and economic masters.

Izvestia may be learning very painfully that Russia's new tycoons, many of them steeped in the old political traditions, may have new roles but old habits.

Digital delusions

Financial Times media editor

RAYMOND SNOODY addressed a BBC

Governors' seminar, The BBC's role in a multi-channel world, earlier this year. This is an edited version of his hard-hitting speech



MY PROPOSITION is very simple: that the BBC is placing too much emphasis on planning for the digital future. There is too much policy making, too much detailed planning, too much management time is being absorbed and probably too much money is being wasted in pursuit of a nearly unknowable future, which, with the best will in the world and the very best policy making, may not turn out at all to be what we now expect.

While all that is going on there is a real danger that 'the digital future' is being used as an excuse to turn the place upside down yet

again when a period of creative calm and stability might be far more beneficial to both the BBC and its audience.

Because to some extent I am going against the tone and texture of received wisdom here I have to set out what it is I am not saying. I am absolutely not saying that the world will not go digital. Merely that in television the period of transition could be a very considerable one. It is not even inconceivable that the transition could last as long or even longer than the transition from 425 lines for quite a number of reasons – television sets last longer now than they did then.

But underlying my scepticism is something more fundamental – the possible limits of the audience desire for multi-channel television. While the success of multi-channel in the UK is very considerable, particularly in financial terms, when you add cable and satellite homes together it has still taken a decade to get to a quarter of UK homes. And the pyramid is supported by its apex – the 4 million households who subscribe to Sky Sports and Premier League coverage in particular. No Premier League would equal not much of a business for BSkyB and without BSkyB cable would have probably collapsed by now.

In addition you must never ever lose sight of two simple, well-known facts but which nevertheless cannot be repeated often enough. According to the BARB ratings in cable and satellite homes the four terrestrial channels take between 62 and 65 per cent of total viewing. Over the years the proportion has been rising gradually in steps but remarkably slowly given the arrival of eight to ten new programme services every year. The new channels appear to be largely cannibalising



each other in terms of audience share.

And the second is even more obvious but equally important. It is possible to receive 89 channels in the UK at the moment. But all channels are not equal. We owe a small debt of gratitude to the ITC for working out – because of its responsibilities under ownership rules – that 34 of those channels get a total viewing share of 0.01 per cent. And the ITC helpfully added that there was some rounding up involved to get that illustrious percentage. All channels are not equal and merely having a channel or even eight channels may guarantee nothing but confusion, wasted efforts, tiny audiences, and earnings – if there are any – that can hardly be detected with an electron microscope compared with the licence fee.

34 channels get a total viewing share of 0.01 per cent

So should the BBC bother to join the digital multi-channel world and if so in what way? Talk to the world's major media players and what is most obvious is the lack of a grand plan, a lack of certainty beyond a realisation that no-one really knows what is going on, apart from an absolute need to be very flexible and fleet of foot.

With Rupert Murdoch the headlines have tended to be dominated by his digital satellite plans. Journalists I confess are always suckers for the new and shiny. It is worth noting that last year Murdoch's biggest investment by far was buying ten conventional advertising-financed television stations in the US.

Talk to John Malone in Denver, as I did last

month, and he will happily tell you how, under pressure from Wall Street, he has had to tear up his high-tech digital plans for his cable networks in the US. Low-cost pragmatism is now the order of the day including using compression techniques to extend the capacity of his existing networks.

I was equally impressed by a visit to Remy Sauter of CLT in Luxembourg, a company which decided to pull out entirely of plans to launch digital subscription services in Germany and concentrate wholly on free-to-air services on free-to-air television. For CLT all the evidence showed that to have any chance of making a success of digital pay TV you had to have exclusive football and exclusive movies. If you had only one then the break-even point was eight years down the line and uncertain.

They could of course all be getting it wrong but I don't think so. It's early days, but so far the performance of multi-channel digital satellite television around the world is modest indeed.

In the UK, BSkyB will launch more than 200 channels of television before the end of this year – but to whom? The task of persuading its nearly 4 million dish customers to migrate to new equipment pointing at a different slot in the sky may not turn out to be all that easy. The last thing that the cable industry wants to do is invest in digital systems before they have made a penny profit on the old. They feel they have no choice but

to do so for competitive reasons. Technology here is the driver rather than consumer demand – always a potentially dangerous situation. As for digital terrestrial, despite the crazed reactions of the City last month it still looks to me like a very difficult and possibly marginal option. The arrival of the three BSkyB pay channels is not the advent of a digital revolution, merely a pre-condition of DTT having a slight chance of establishing itself rather than none at all.

Obviously self-interest motivates the actions of those concerned. Sky is interested in using DTT as a barker service for its satellite offering. At BSkyB's results meeting last week chief executive Sam Chisholm insisted there would be no subsidies for DTT boxes. When I pointed out that was not what his chairman Michael Green of Carlton was saying, Sam replied: 'Well if there are subsidies they won't be very big!'

If that is true then we have the possibility of subsidised digital satellite boxes costing £200 and carrying 200 channels competing with £400 DTT boxes offering 30 or so channels.

We shall see how rapidly DTT will penetrate the UK population. It might be a wise precaution to take one of your more cautious estimates and divide by ten. But then I could be entirely wrong.

I emphasise that I am not at all criticising BBC involvement in any of these things, merely questioning the scale of that involvement and the spurious importance I believe is being attached to it within the policy process and the extent to which this may be squeezing out far more pressing issues.

The most important thing happening in UK broadcasting this year is not digital terrestrial, 200 channels of digital satellite or digital cable but the launch of Channel 5 – a real channel that might steal some of the BBC's real audience. Where is the policy task force for coping with that?

Perhaps it's not too late to postpone this folly

And if I was in charge of the BBC every alarm bell in the house would be ringing at the inability to persuade anyone to run what ought to be one of the most illustrious drama departments in the entire world of television.

I am also very surprised by the plans to launch a 24 hour digital television news service. Sky News, a perfectly respectable service, after seven years is still a heavy loss maker despite being in 6 million homes in the UK and Ireland alone. It does, mind you, get 0.3 per cent of the audience.

Is it true that the new BBC service, however laudable in principle, is going to cost £30 million to set up? How many digital homes is it going to reach in its first year? Its third year? Will the money really all be found from savings without the present news output to the other 99.95 per cent of licence payers

being affected in any way? Perhaps it's not too late to postpone this folly and substitute the excellent existing BBC World as an alternative for a few years until the audience with digital equipment justifies the provision of a third stand-alone competing 24 hour television news service.

The only point of coming here today is to say that the BBC could be so much better and to argue, as an unambiguous supporter of the BBC as one of the most important institutions in this society, and an equally unambiguous supporter of the universal licence fee, that it could be so much less arrogant and should be more open to new ideas.

It has to be said that I believe that much of what the corporation achieves is despite the management structure not because of it. That there are almost two BBCs – the real BBC which produces programmes of quality and distinction – and the virtual BBC which eats up revenues, time and creativity.

The BBC is very interested in structures. I have something to say about that as well.

Last week I met one of the leading world class gurus on the effect of technology on corporate structures. I was trying to persuade him to appear at an FT conference and I seemed to be getting on quite well although the fee had not been actually mentioned. I had the presence of mind to ask him what the structure of an organisation like the BBC should be. Before I found out that there was a non-negotiable fee of £40,000 for a one-hour speech – and therefore no FT appearance – he said that apart from using IT to check on budgets, the BBC should have the most decentralised structure imaginable to ensure that creativity flourishes to the maximum degree. The very opposite of what is happening.

Frank Barlow, until a couple of months ago managing director of Pearson, always said the main challenge of his job was managing difficult people – by which he probably meant hundreds of journalists like me.

There is probably no more difficult person to manage in all the world than talented drama producers like Kenith Trodd whose credits include *The Singing Detective*. This is what he had to say when he left the BBC last week.

Decisions were being taken by 'uncreative people whose talent is keeping a shaky grip on stationery supplies.'

I ask you to remember those words as you enter your multi-channel world of digital this and that watched by hardly anybody.

Or to put it in the slightly more succinct words of Christine Walker, until recently chief executive of Zenith Media. Asked about the future of digital television she replied simply: 'Digital smigital!'

By now I hope you know what she meant.

□ A fuller version of this speech first appeared in the May issue of *Stage, Screen and Radio*, the BECTU journal.

Act on the Act

IN THE 1980s you'll remember that Mrs Thatcher got very worked up about a BBC series, Secret Society. So much so that in a sordid episode of political pique, she ordered that the programme, Zircon, be banned, under the specious charge that it was a threat to national security. The security services raided BBC Scotland and the home of the journalist, Duncan Campbell. Subsequently the programme was shown on the BBC, but one other programme in the series was never shown.

It was called Cabinet, and it dealt with Freedom of Information. The programme revealed how both the Labour government under Callaghan, and Mrs Thatcher's government, cared not a jot for Freedom of Information. Indeed, the programme showed how it was easier for the processes of government to be conducted away from any kind of scrutiny. The convenience of closed government outweighed any piffling concerns about the right to know.

We've learnt a lot since then. The Scott Report showed how the murky netherworld of arms dealing thrived when there was no accountability or access to information.

Of all the issues which impinged on media reform Freedom of Information was one which it seemed certain that Labour would deliver speedily. It was disappointing therefore to hear that there will only be a White Paper on Freedom of Information, after Tony Blair had pledged to enact legislation in his first Parliamentary session.

The delay poses both threats and opportunities. On the one hand there will be the opportunity for organisations like the Campaign for Freedom of Information to update their briefings, build informed support, and argue for an effective rather than an emasculated Act.

The threat is that by delaying legislation, civil servants – and some politicians too – will have time to put up barriers. Commercial and other interests will also have time to begin lobbying.

It is up to us to make sure this doesn't happen.

Granville Williams

□ Maurice Frankel, Campaign for Freedom of Information, is speaking at our conference on 28 June.

DURING the general election campaign, Tony Blair made a controversial speech in which he said that, for a Labour government, what was important about industrial ownership was not whether it was public or private, but whether it worked.

The BBC as a state corporation is inadequate and inappropriate to the new era of visual communications. If the BBC had to fight for its finance and investment through making profits and building partnerships, it would become a more dynamic organisation ...

Tony Blair should instruct the National Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith, to launch an urgent enquiry into the BBC without ruling out any solutions, however adventurous. A report should be submitted by the end of the year, for time is short.

I for one would be far from displeased if the outcome was a decision to turn the British Broadcasting Corporation into BBC plc. New Labour, new enterprise. New Labour, new Auntie. I can hardly wait.

Gerald Kaufman

Now it's time to privatise the BBC
Daily Mail, May 8 1997

THE vocabulary of Western liberalism – of freedom, choice, independence and even morality – has been recast to denote thoughts consistent only with competitive economic individualism. Freedom is the freedom to buy and sell; choice, the right to exercise choice in markets; independence is independence from the state; moral conduct the exercise of individual choice. With the words reprogrammed to have these meanings, any questions that use them have their answers prefigured. Enlarging freedom means enlarging economic freedom;

WITHOUT COMMENT

maximising choice means maximising the operation of markets. No public institution can be independent because it is government-owned and financed and the state is collectivist; to be independent therefore implies that an institution be private...

For a Rupert Murdoch or a Lord Hanson to have at hand an explanation of the world which lionises their efforts while demonising those of government could hardly be more congenial; better still it is a justification for sheltering their profits from tax and protecting their companies from public intervention. What they do is best; what governments do is worst.

Will Hutton

The State To Come (Vintage)

IT IS hard to see why the Cabinet is so reluctant to introduce a Freedom of Information Bill. Or, rather, it is easy: Mr Peter Mandelson, the administration's Pooh-Bah (who, it will be remembered, had got a little list), has taken alarm. Sir Douglas Corridor has been getting at him. The civil servants might be annoyed. He was quoted as saying last week that a Bill of this nature could not simply be taken off the shelf. But on the contrary: we had been informed a few months ago that this was precisely where such a measure safely reposed.

Alan Watkins

Independent on Sunday
11 May 1997



Order your copy from CPBF – price £7.50 inc p&p

Media is everybody's business

REVIEW

Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy

Robert W McChesney

Open Media Pamphlet Series, Seven Stories Press, New York \$4.95/£3.50

THE AUTHOR of this pamphlet (pocket-sized, 80 pages, and worth every penny) is one of a growing band of US academics who are concerned about the effects of media mergers on democratic processes.

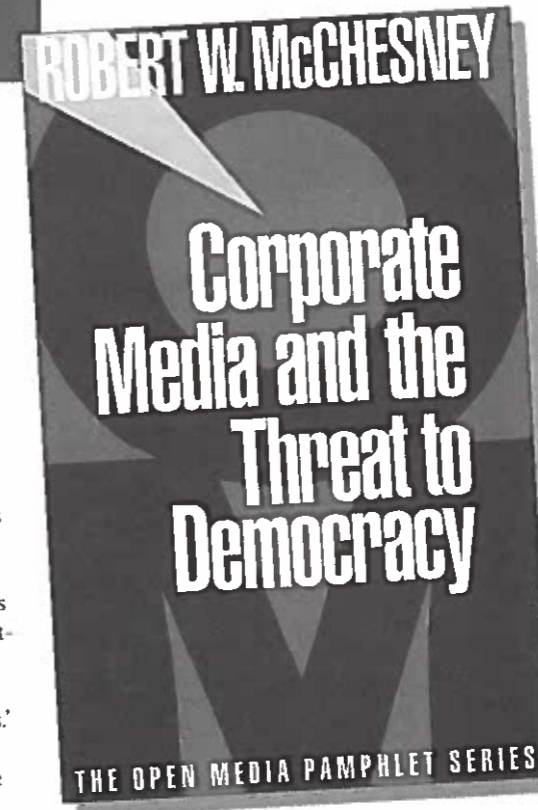
'Democracy,' he argues, 'requires that there be an effective system of political communication that informs and engages the citizenry, drawing people meaningfully into the polity.'

But in the USA the bulk of the media is controlled by 'two dozen enormous profit-maximizing corporations, which receive much of their money from advertising placed largely by other huge corporations.'

The consequence is that it permits the business and commercial interests to have inordinate influence over media content.

The pamphlet is very much an intervention and a call to action.

It was written against the backdrop of the US 1996 Telecommunications Act ('one of



the three or four most important federal laws of this generation') which had as its main purpose the deregulation of all communication industries so that the market and not public policy would determine the course of the information superhighway and communications.

His analysis of the Act's passage parallels the way the UK media treated the UK 1996 Broadcasting Act – it was treated as a business story, not a public policy story – and the debate restricted to elites with serious financial stakes in the outcome.

Indeed some of the law was actually written by lobbyists for the communication firms it affected.

The key section of the pamphlet, The Struggle for Democratic Media, echoes many common CPBF concerns. 'We need to fight on behalf of public, community and public access broadcasting,' he argues, 'and to organize around establishing public service standards for the Internet, to guarantee universal access and a healthy, preferably dominant, non-profit and non-commercial sector.'

This is an important pamphlet because it indicates some of the alarming consequences affecting journalism, freedom of speech and diversity of opinion when purely commercial criteria drive media policy. Its message is definitely not just relevant for, or restricted to, a US audience.

GW

Telecommunications and democracy

Robert McChesney is Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His book, Telecommunications, Mass Media and Democracy: The Battle for Control of US Broadcasting, 1928 – 1935 is published by Oxford University Press in America. This is from part of an interview he gave on a US radio station, KFAI.

Q: Does your study of radio in the 1920s and 30s act as an historical analogy?

RM: It's an analogy in one fundamental sense. What you had in the twenties with radio was no one knew how to make money out of it. If you go back and look at broadcasting for 1920 to 1926, you realise that those guys didn't have a clue. As soon

as CBS and NBC realized that you could make a pile of money selling advertising, it crystallized into commercial broadcasting very quickly. What my research showed was a lot of Americans really fought hard to have a non-profit, non-commercial system, arguing that turning it over to a couple of enormous corporations to make money was a scandalous mis-use of a public resource.

What we see today with the Internet and the new technologies is similar in the sense that no-one's really sure where the money's going to be made on this thing. We're much like radio in the mid-20s. And what's the crime today is that if we look back to the 1920s, we'll see that the rational thing to have done wasn't saying 'whoever makes the most money wins' and letting the system be solved that way. The rational thing is to sit down and bring people into the discussion and really study the thing and try to

determine what we want to accomplish.

Instead we're doing exactly what we did in the 1920s. Congress is saying, 'Look, whoever can make money in this thing, it's yours baby! Go for it!' And so we're just waiting around to see who's figuring out ways to make the most money. As soon as that's determined, that a great fortune can be made, one way or another, that's the future for the Internet ... You've got to organize, you've got to be political, you've got to be willing to fight. And it's a lot easier to fight before these things take place than after the fact. That's just one of the first rules of politics. Once the thing gets launched, and the profit people are in there and they've found a way to make money, getting them out of power is a lot harder than interceding ahead of time before they get in there. So our job right now is to intercede if we can.

MEDIA CATALOGUE

We're up-dating our Media Catalogue and one of the new entries will certainly be Robert McChesney's pamphlet (see page 7). He's also the co-author with Ed Herman of a new book on Global Media to be published by Cassell in June. If you know of any other new media books covering CPBF concerns which you think we should include, let us know.

DIGITAL TV – DROSS OR NOT?

A meeting in Huddersfield on May 7 discussed Digital TV, and posed the question "More channels, more choice or more dross?"

Granville Williams of the CPBF chaired the meeting, which included guest speakers, Steve Wagner, a key member in DTN, one of the consortia bidding for ownership of DTV, and Tony Lennon, the President of BECTU and CPBF Chair.

Steve Wagner informed the audience of DTN's reliability and their plans for creating a quality Digital Television service in the UK, which will conform with the regulations set by the ITC. Well presented statistics were used to back up his case.

Tony Lennon took the alternative view to Steve Wagner, arguing that most people don't want DTV. He exposed the downsides, highlighting technological problems and the low level of investment in programme making. Also, through statistics he exposed the public's lack of interest in the range of new channels currently on offer, and questioned whether there was a public demand for yet more channels.

It was a lively meeting for a technology based topic. Overall the audience seemed



satisfied and went away with a clearer knowledge of the situation. Report by Christopher McMillan, BTEC Media Studies student on work placement at CPBF.

Chris has produced a briefing sheet about Digital TV. For a copy send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: CPBF (North), 7 Northumberland Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RL

CPBF AGM

The AGM/Conference is at the LVS Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA. The Centre is near Holloway Road Tube Station

Registration 9.30am
AGM 10.00 -12.00

The AGM is for CPBF members and delegates nominated from affiliated organisations only.

CPBF CONFERENCE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
MEDIA REFORM AFTER THE ELECTION

Registration 12.30pm
Conference starts 1.00pm

Labour and the Media:
Post-Election Policies

Speakers include Christopher Hird, Maurice Frankel (Campaign for Freedom of Information) and Julian Petley.

Chris Smith, Labour National Heritage Minister (invited)

European Year Against Racism:
Fighting Racism in the Media
Speakers include Diane Abbott MP and speaker from NUJ Black Members Council

Unfinished Business:
Media Reform and the CPBF
Speakers: James Curran and Tom O'Malley
Fee for AGM/Conference
Unwaged Individual £4.00
Waged Individual £8.00
Delegates from affiliated organisation £16.00
Enquiries and AGM/Conference bookings to CPBF National Office
PHONE 0171 278 4430
FAX 0171 837 8868

FREE PRESS

Articles wanted
Free Press is edited by Granville Williams for the National Council. The next issue (July/August) will be a themed issue on the topic Diversity. It's a word we use, along with Pluralism, as a counterpoise to creeping media concentration and narrowing of choice. We have one article on publishing but would welcome contributions (copy would be needed by July 4). Please contact Granville Williams to discuss possible ideas either via the National Office or at CPBF (North) on 01484 454184.

Also in the next issue will be our Electionwatch analysis.

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FREEDOM

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b) Unwaged £6	g) 500 to 1,000 £25
c) Household (2 copies Free Press) £20	h) 1,000 to 10,000 £45
d) Supporting membership £25 (includes free CPBF publications)	i) 10,000 to 50,000 £105
e) Institutions (eg libraries: £25 includes 10 copies of Free Press)	j) 50,000 to 100,000 £200
	k) Over 100,000 £400

I/We want to join the CPBF and enclose a cheque/PO for £ FP98

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Organisation (if applicable)

Return form to CPBF, 8 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF **Tel: 0171 278 4430**