

WHO'S IN THE DRIVING SEAT?

THE SHRAPNEL from the explosion was still scattering as we went to press. The decision taken personally by Tony Blair to exclude Formula 1 racing from the ban on tobacco advertising, and the subsequent revelations of a £1 million pound donation to Labour Party funds by racing supremo Bernie Ecclestone, provoked intense debate.

A host of issues are raised by this incident, but we'll concentrate on the ones closest to our concerns. First of all, Freedom of Information. David Clarke, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the Minister responsible for freedom of information legislation, spoke recently at a seminar involving US and UK newspaper editors debating the US experience.

He gave a tentative timetable for the publication of a white paper, but 'we still haven't decided what exactly will be in the white paper, let alone the bill. It's been far more complicated than anyone imagined,' he said. He wants a bill to be included in the Queen's Speech next year which will cover central government, local government, quangos and health bodies.

Clarke has publicly stated that information to discredit him has been 'hawked around the press'. We know that some ministers and civil servants are resisting any attempt to develop a robust piece of legislation; the habits of control, secrecy and selective presentation are difficult to throw off. And possibly one negative aspect of the Formula 1 affair will be that their hand is strengthened.

We have argued before that the longer politicians hold the reins of power the more reluctant they are to accede to the pressures and policies for open government. As ministers are attacked in the media one reaction is to batten down the hatches, so let's hope Tony Blair draws the right lessons from the Formula 1 fiasco, and realises that

open government and transparency in the way policies are developed (or changed) are essential.

But there's a broader worry. Tony Blair and his inner circle do seem to be swayed by the arguments of business people (and we include the Murdochs and Rothermeres here), rather than other groups, such as trade unionists.

This was demonstrated with another little local difficulty Labour had recently on timing to join the European Monetary Union. The bulk of the English press is hostile to Europe (exceptions are the *Mirror* and *Guardian*) and it became clear that decisions about timing on EMU entry have been much influenced by the proprietors and editors who switched to back Blair in the election. Murdoch doesn't want a stronger Europe – it means tougher media regulation, and a threat to his expansionary plans – so it suits him fine to delay EMU entry as his and other papers fan the anti-European flame.

Our concerns are not with the rights or wrongs of EMU entry, but with the fact that proprietors and editors seem to have an inordinate influence on the formation of policy. It's unhealthy, it's undemocratic, and it's a consequence of relying on their support rather than challenging their abuse of power.

Rupert Murdoch has waged a newspaper price war for four years designed to close down other titles and, whilst the ITV companies have to pay their annual franchise fees, plus a percentage of advertising revenue to the Treasury, BSkyB pays nothing.

Issues of media power and media concentration go right to the heart of the democratic process, and we have to ensure that our ideas and policies about media diversity, accountability and pluralism are promoted with added urgency during this Parliamentary session.

Decisions about timing on EMU entry have been much influenced by the proprietors and editors who switched to back Blair in the election

BT's failed bid opens way to net threat

BRITISH Telecom failed in its plans to take over MCI. Instead WorldCom now has control with a massive \$37 billion bid.

Bernie Ebbers, WorldCom's chief executive is happy about 'significant new areas of savings ... and the anticipated synergies' but the merged company will have enormous influence over the development of the Internet.

What began as a disorganised, decentralised network with no owner or central guiding force is now rapidly changing, as a handful of companies have dominated access to the Internet and carrying data.

WorldCom owns UUNet, the biggest and most international of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and it recently agreed to buy two on-line systems what also act as ISPs – America Online and Compuserve. MCI provides the most heavily used fibre-optic 'backbone' for the system in the US.

The proposed merger brings together two of the biggest participants in the emerging Internet industry, together handling 60 per cent of backbone traffic.

There are many thousands of small ISPs within the US and around the world but the big participants are Sprint, AT&T, GTE and WorldCom.

At present internet participants carry each others' data across their networks for free, but to finance this massive merger will WorldCom discriminate against smaller ISPs, charging them for access or refusing connections altogether.

And will the other big providers follow suit?

Media and Monarchy: the death of Diana

That monarchy is all a bubble, a mere court artifice
to procure money is evident, (at least to me)
in every character in which it can be viewed
(Tom Paine, *The Rights of Man Part II*, 1792)

TOM O'MALLEY

TOM PAINE thought little of the monarchy and, for a long time, there has been a strong strand of republican sentiment in the political traditions of the United Kingdom. Yet after the death of Diana Princess of Wales the press and broadcasting in the UK behaved as if we were all monarchists at heart.

On the day of the deaths all schedules were sunk beneath a tidal wave of repetitious, barely relieved mourning. A BBC spokesperson, quoted the next day in the *Daily Telegraph* said:

"Our coverage reflects her significance to the nation and the huge outpouring of public shock and grief. It is a national tragedy and we are covering it as such". (1.9.97)

There followed a week in which the media celebrated 'the People's Princess' – page after page, hour after hour. In so doing they were, in effect, celebrating the monarchy. For even if she was 'flawed', a complex figure, wronged in part by the mores and practices of elements of the Royal household, her differences with them served only to point up the possibility of a reformed, more modern, more relaxed style of monarchy, not its abolition. Indeed the *Daily Telegraph*, so close to the conservative heart of the media got it right: "What after all did the Princess of Wales want most? That her elder son should make the best possible King" (1.9.97).

The media contributed to a climate of closure. *Private Eye's* hilarious exposure of the hypocrisy of the press – attacking Diana one day, beatifying her the next – was pulled by distributors, such as W.H. Smith, albeit temporarily. As the *Eye* pointed out it was 'the only publication in the country not to

have put on a large increase in sales and not to have made a large amount of money out of Diana's death' (*Eye* 933).

The combination of an almost monolithic media spin on the death and the closure of shops on the Saturday of her funeral generated a climate of public conformity. Thus a walk in the street during the funeral took on the dimensions of an act of public defiance, a mark of dissent liable to brand you unpatriotic.

What dissent? Well not everybody thought Diana or Royalty a good thing. In fact even the sycophantic tabloids have been known to express barely disguised republican sentiment in the past. There were, no doubt a complex range of opinions on the death and the monarchy. Yet they were virtually absent in that first week of September from the pages and screens of our national media.

A walk in the street during the funeral took on the dimensions of an act of public defiance

Were Tom Paine around he would recognise a good deal. A group of fabulously rich people, who symbolise inherited wealth and the idea that some are born 'better' than others, and whose antics are meant to provide the magic and mystery for a constitution and social system distorted by secrecy and material deprivation. Indeed he might also balk at the conservatism of the media. He might even consider that large sections of the media are 'all bubble, a mere court artifice to procure money'. If we are to make sure that ideas circulate freely in our society we need to act.

We need to take steps to reform the structures and practices of the media to open the system up to a wider range of opinions. We need to provide an antidote to the profoundly conservative attitudes which so clearly underpinned the response of the media to the deaths in Paris.

JONATHAN HARDY

THE main options for the protection of privacy currently being debated are a new privacy law, 'Judge made' under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission, or self-regulation under a new system.

The CPBF has strongly criticised industry self-regulation as a sham. We have advocated statutory regulation for the right of reply but, along with the NUJ and others, resisted tougher laws on privacy which may be used to prevent journalists from exposing wrongdoing by public figures.

Now, with the renewed debate on privacy, the Government has published its bill to make the ECHR part of domestic law. What are the implications, and will the Convention provide adequate protection for both privacy and freedom of expression where these rights collide?

Privacy and Freedom of Expression rights under the Convention

The ECHR includes article 10, the right to freedom of expression, and article 8, the right to privacy. Article 8 states 'everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence'. Article 10 states 'Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'. Both articles have a similar structure, setting out the substantive right to be protected, and then listing certain grounds which the contracting State can invoke to justify restricting the exercise of those rights.

Like our domestic legal system, the European Commission and Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg has developed its interpretation of the Convention articles through

MEDIA MONITOR

ROMANY CALENDAR

In late October nearly 200 Czech and Slovak Gypsies (or Romanies) arrived at Dover, joining some 600 others who have come over in recent months. The shameful headlines in the broadsheet and tabloid newspapers (the *Sun* scraped the barrel with GIRO CZECHS) following their arrival gave little insight into the real reasons behind their exodus.

But the reporting had its effect. 'This has produced more hostile calls than we have ever had before,' Claude Moraes of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants said.

The division of Czechoslovakia in 1992

Convention warfare?

case law. However Convention law has proved far more effective in protecting press freedom than have our Courts. From the Thalidomide case involving the Sunday Times Insight team, to Spycatcher, and more recently the NUJ case on behalf of Bill Goodwin, the Court has ruled in favour of press freedom against injunctions and restrictions imposed by the Courts which have been unjustified.

Article 10 protects freedom of expression where there is public purpose while private actions are placed under the protection of Article 8. This then leaves the question of 'public interest' to be assessed in each case. In general, the Commission and Court guarantees a high level of protection to political expression and the 'public debate' function of the press, while providing 'a lower level of protection to those aspects of press activity that have less direct bearing on the public interest.' (Council of Europe, 1996)

The Commission has stated that where a question arises of interference in someone's private life because of media revelations, States must find a proper balance between Articles 8 and 10. The Strasbourg Courts themselves have not had to deal, for instance, with a complaint by an individual that his or her privacy has been violated due to the publication of a photograph. However in the case of *N v Portugal*, it upheld a 15 month conviction and fine for a magazine publisher who published

was a catastrophe for many gypsies because neither new state wanted them. One insight into the climate they are fleeing from is this 1993 statement by Slovak President Vladimir Meciar: 'It is necessary to curtail the extended reproduction of this socially unadaptable and mentally backward population.'

Those wanting a more informed insight into the history, culture and present plight of gypsies than could be gleaned from media coverage of recent events can do so by purchasing the *International Roma Calendar 1998*. It contains poetry, photographs and historical information about the Romanies, including the grim fact that some 500,000 were victims of the Holocaust.

The calendar, published by CASABLANCA and the Romani Institute, is available price £5.00 from Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9

pictures of a well-known business man engaging in sexual activities with several young women.

The Convention's impact on domestic law

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, believes that incorporation will lead to a judge-made law of privacy. He has called on the media to consider whether privacy laws should be drawn up by Parliament or developed by the courts. As things stand, British judges, unelected, overwhelmingly male, white and elite-educated will resolve conflicts between privacy and press freedom. The outcome of this process is, to say the least, uncertain.

Traditionally, English law has given very little consideration to privacy in comparison with interests in property and personal integrity. However judges will be restricted in their interpretation of the Convention. They will be expected to act in conformity with the existing case law of the European Commission and Court in reaching judgments. Applicants can also challenge domestic rulings by subsequently taking their case to Strasbourg.

Money will remain the greatest barrier to equality under the law. Only those rich enough and brave enough can sue for defamation, since legal aid is not available for libel cases. Some lawyers argue the new no-win no-fee legal actions may actually enable

REED ELSEVIER MEGA-MERGER

Reed Elsevier aren't attracted by the arguments of cross-media ownership, but they are very interested in dominating key areas of essential information. They've sold off their regional newspapers to Newsquest, also their book publishing arm, and now IPC Magazines is on the market. It is the UK market leader and publishes titles like *Loaded*, *Women's Own* and *Country Life*. They also publish *New Scientist*, but the title isn't included in the sale, and the reason for that is to do with particular business strategy the group is pursuing.

On 13 October Reed Elsevier announced a £20 billion merger with another Dutch publishing group, Wolters Kluwer, which will create the largest professional and scientific group in the world, and it will dominate in particular scientific, medical

more ordinary people to take libel actions. However the risks and low fees expected from successful cases may deter lawyers. Private individuals will still face the massive power of media companies in any legal action and undergo a daunting experience at odds with the preservation of their privacy.

The scope of the Convention in domestic law is even more difficult to determine. First, Article 8 would not create an enforceable right of privacy. Instead of asserting the right on its own, plaintiffs will have to find a conventional legal doctrine on which to base an action before the right of privacy could assist them. Second, the Convention may be invoked against public authorities and any person certain of whose functions are functions of a public nature.

This means that the State is responsible for upholding the Convention, but journalists and newspapers are not. This would suggest Convention rights can be invoked against a public broadcaster such as the BBC, but not the press. However it may be that the courts, as public bodies, will be bound by Convention standards in interpreting law, even in the context of disputes between private individuals and organisations, such as arise in actions against newspapers.

The CPBF's statutory right of reply offers the best means for ordinary people to obtain redress, in the form of published corrections, for factual inaccuracies. This measure needs to be put back into the public debate since it offers redress without costly legal action. However the right to privacy will be part of domestic law next year. If the safeguards for the right of freedom of expression established by the European Convention are considered to be sufficient, then we need to consider whether a law of privacy drawn up by Parliament could provide the democratic underpinnings for clarifying a legitimate balance between privacy, public interest and freedom.

and legal publishing. *New Scientist* will fit nicely into this portfolio, whereas the other IPC leisure and entertainment titles don't.

But there is more to it. As one commentator said, the acquisition of 'must have' professional information means that 'the mouth-watering margins make it more profitable than the ever-changing publications littering the shelves of W.H. Smith.' The sale of IPC Magazines will raise an estimated £750 million, and the proceeds will be used to expand further Reed Elsevier's core interests.

The company is also very much involved in the transition from paper to electronic delivery of information. In the US for example it owns Lexis-Nexis, the legal and business information database, and they will want to develop other essential online professional information services as a result of the merger.

Having your say

Stephen Lax reports on a seminar on the democratic potential of new information technologies

WHEN are we going to hear something positive about the new technology?' was the appeal from one part of the audience half-way through a seminar on technology and democracy. And as the day went on I began to wonder whether the bouncy bubble of optimism about the technology's promise might be about to burst, or at least deflate a little. It does seem that for a few years now there has been little informed debate (outside these pages, that is) about the potential of the Internet and similar technologies to enhance political participation and the democratic process. Instead we have been subjected to an outpouring of unflinching optimism from politicians and trendy academics alike, exhorting us to get online now or face having sand kicked in our faces by the new breed of net surfers.

This seminar was called in order to promote this debate. Organised by the Institute of Communications Studies at Leeds University, the CPBF and Kirklees Media Centre in Huddersfield, it attracted a diverse audience including trade union officers, telematics and computer professionals, and academics. This

diversity demonstrates how widespread is the sense that these new technologies offer ways, potentially at least, by which individuals and organisations with limited access to traditional means of expression can get their message out to a wider audience. For example, local authorities are exploring ways of setting up computer networks to provide access to local information and electronic polling; trade unions are launching web pages and increasingly using email for both internal and external communications. In most cases there is a healthy and reassuring measure of caution about how much these channels can circumvent the power of existing media moguls and structures. But there is still a view, often held by those who have an otherwise clear critique of media politics, that somehow these new technologies offer a route towards a truly democratic society.

Professor Brian Winston of the University of Westminster argued that throughout history developments of any new technology have been entwined with capitalism and its tendency to centralise and monopolise, and so it has been with networks like the Internet.

For all the hype and myth-making, the history of its development reveals that it remains as centralised and controlled as any previous technology. So, while it may well be of use for radical purposes in working against the dominance of big businesses and state power, there is no reason to see it as particularly different in this respect from other tools such as the telephone, fax machine or photocopier.

OF COURSE this is not to say that network technologies are a waste of space – that would be just as naive as the idea that they have some innate democratic potential. Brian Cross of the Artimedia Centre in Batley, Yorkshire, demonstrated a number of projects which provided access to Internet and web facilities to local community groups, primarily as a tool of cultural production and exchange. Similarly, the Labour Telematics Centre in Manchester, which provides

training services to trade unions both nationally and internationally, is also optimistic that technology is a useful communications tool. However, the LTC's Joe Holly explained how it has come up against a number of factors which restrict its effectiveness: the cost of the equipment is prohibitive; authenticating information on, for example, health and safety issues can be a problem; the increasing commercialism of the information on the web also poses a threat to its quality.

This last issue was taken up by Granville Williams of the CPBF. The growing tendency for cross-media ownership and mergers, for example between BT and News International for LineOne Internet services and BT and BSkyB to create British Internet Broadcasting, is in evidence on the new networks just as much as any other medium. So whatever sense there might once have been of the Internet as a 'public space' like libraries and schools, is rapidly being diminished.

The discussion that followed took up the

question of whether there is much to be celebrated about the new technologies. While cases were mentioned where individuals and organisations were using the technology in novel ways, and while some saw this as a new kind of politics, the majority view was clearly less enthusiastic than that repeated endlessly by political leaders and mainstream media. What about access to the technology and the cost of using it? What about the mergers and take-overs in both the content and access industries? And then there's the broader question of whether all this information actually enables people to take more control. Perhaps these concerns represent a new development, a growing recognition that there is no technological 'fix' to political problems. Could it be that, in the same way as the Internet enthusiast's monthly style guide *Wired*, the belief that somehow it was going to be different this time, and that the technology really could liberate humankind, has proved to be sold on false promises and ultimately has been short lived?

Stephen Lax lectures at the Institute of Communication Studies, University of Leeds

Connecting the learning society

Gary Herman casts a critical eye over Labour's plans

IN THE world of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), Tony Blair seems to have developed supping with the devil into something of an art. After meeting the Murdochs and sharing a platform with Sir David English of the Daily Mail, a few weeks ago he was hugger-mugger with Microsoft boss, Bill Gates.

Gates' flying visit to the UK saw the world's richest man endorsing a new Government scheme to put every school in the country on the Internet, before he headed off to Cambridge to make a thinly disguised bid to buy up England's burgeoning 'silicon fen'.

The new scheme, which proposes a 'National Grid For Learning', is the subject of a consultation paper, 'Connecting the Learning Society', published by the Department of Education and Employment*. A day or two after its publication, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport issued its own report – 'New Library: the People's Network'. What the DfEE paper proposes for schools, this report suggests that public libraries can do for the grown-ups – plug us into the information society.

As with most of the broad-brush proposals emanating from Whitehall these days, there is nothing really objectionable about these



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documents. The cracks in the Government's radical vision begin to appear only when you consider its implementation.

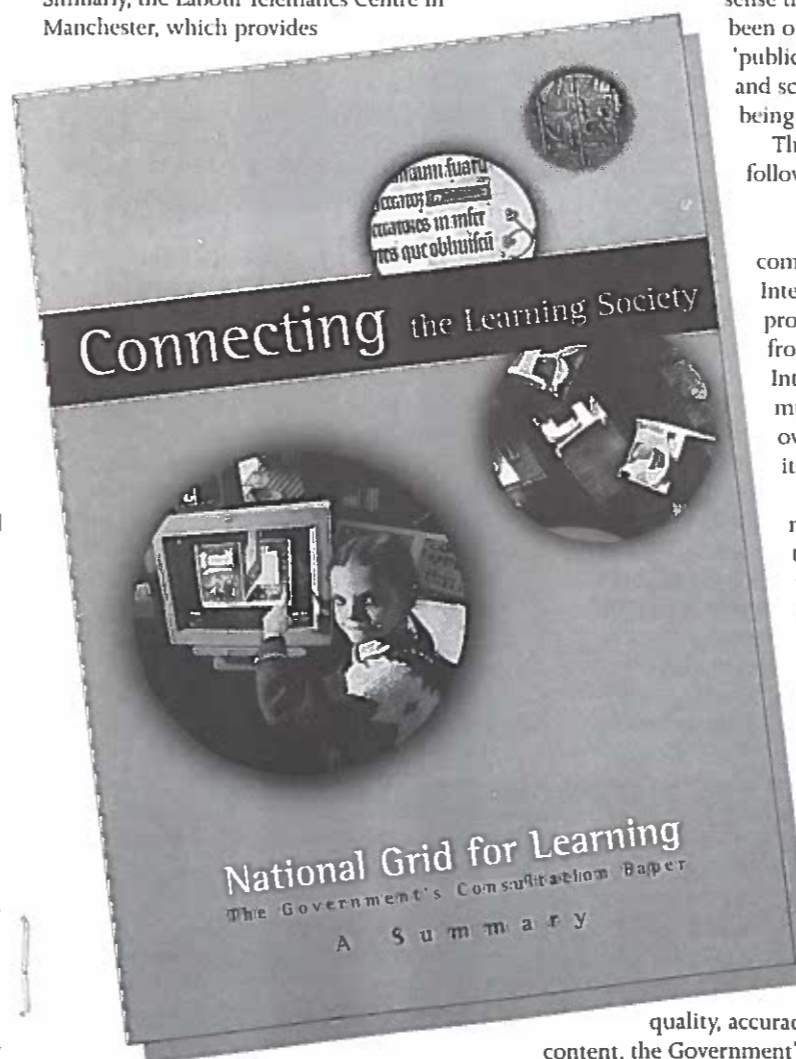
In theory the Internet can make a significant difference to our lives. Even taking the hype into account, there are clear advantages for many – if not all – of us in being able to use the Internet. It offers new work opportunities, and access to information, entertainment, and effective communications. It can be a vehicle for education, political engagement and personal expression.

But the Government's apparent love affair with the Internet is another expression of its

Millbank modernism – a fascination with anything fast, cool, high tech, superficial and American. The substance of 'Connecting the Learning Society' is woefully thin – a proposal to pilot a 'virtual teachers' centre' (in other words, a web site), some rough sketches of how schools might 'Internet-enable' their activities, and a promise to 'issue a Challenge (sic) early next year' to provide ideas on extending the Grid to cover all schools, 'home-school links', libraries and services for further and higher education.

'The Grid will be a way of finding and using on-line learning and teaching materials,' the Prime Minister writes in the foreword to the consultation paper. 'It will help users to find their way around the wealth of content available over the Internet. It will be the resource for everyone in our schools.'

WELL, yes, up to a point. There are potential stumbling blocks on the way to the Grid – most of them glossed over in the relentless optimism of Blairite blarney: the lack of quality control when it comes to Internet content, the technical problems of building network capacity and ensuring network availability, the cost of implementing and managing copyrights, the question of resourcing regular hardware and software upgrades and continuous technical support. Even the need for teacher training – which the Government does recognise as a



potential problem – is not a simple matter, since IT skills are usually software specific and need frequent revision.

In fact, the consultation paper sets out a programme for persuading schools to divert already scarce resources to pay for 'competing managed services' – Government-approved consortia of hardware suppliers, service providers and content creators. No wonder Gates is interested – this is exactly where he sees Microsoft's future market. The company is

committed to develop its Internet Explorer product as the universal front end for accessing Internet content – much of it already owned by Microsoft or its commercial allies.

While Bill Gates is not the only player in the field, the drive towards monopolistic control of a still emerging market has no competition. Without a strategy of regulating the Internet, managing copyright on the 'National Grid for Learning', or developing and maintaining standards of

quality, accuracy and reliability in content, the Government's proposals are little more than a licence for companies like Microsoft to print money.

As it stands, 'Connecting the Learning Society' is yet another blueprint for privatisation. This time the implicit target is education itself – the heart and soul of New Labourism. The danger with the proposals is that, if implemented, inadequately funded schools will find themselves forced to divert resources from the classroom to cyberspace. The scenario should be well-known – schools

without the Internet would be disadvantaged, and the offer of 'seed-corn funding', free connection and generous discounts from hardware, software and service providers will be irresistible. Once on the technology treadmill, schools will need to spend more and more to deliver the service their students begin to expect. This could easily push the focus of education itself away from individual schools and towards the Internet.

THE Government's response is to call for the development of a 'market in British educational software', yet it is plain that the exclusive reliance on market mechanisms in content creation encourages monopolisation and the lowering of standards. Even George Soros – a man dedicated to both market economics and the Internet – has observed that the idea of 'extending market mechanisms to all domains has the potential of destroying society.'

More important, perhaps, is the real possibility that teaching will be transformed from active instruction to passive mediation of a technological process, and that the vast majority of school students in the future will be plugged into the Internet and allowed to get on with it. This may not be a bad thing, but it involves some rather more fundamental issues than 'Connecting the Learning Society' admits to.

■ The deadline for responses to the consultation document is 8 December. Copies of 'Connecting the Learning Society' are available from the DfEE order line:

TEL: 0845 60 222 60 FAX: 0845 60 333 60
The document is also available on the web at: <http://www.open.gov.uk/dfee/dfeehome.htm>



The Anglia Regiment attacking stone-throwers, 1970, Derry, Northern Ireland

McCullin's brutal beauty

DUNCAN FORBES
ON THE BARBICAN RETROSPECTIVE
AS DON McCullin's punchy autobiography reveals, the last fifteen years have not been easy for Britain's photojournalists. Changing patterns of media ownership and the market-driven explosion of lifestyle features have forced the gritty photo essays of McCullin and his colleagues to the very edge of contemporary reporting.

broom, McCullin worked on the Sunday Times for 18 years, compiling a compelling visual record of some of the world's most troubled regions. From Cyprus to Vietnam, Northern Ireland, Biafra and the Lebanon, McCullin's camera provided direct and profoundly disturbing imagery of the effects of human cruelty through warfare, poverty or unrelieved starvation.

With the contrasts far stronger than those allowed in newspaper production, the prints in the exhibition emphasise the aesthetic power of McCullin's pictures, generating some troubling questions. Whether conjuring beauty from such acute

suffering is ethical or not becomes a far more pressing issue when the context of reportage is watered down. There are some images where the intrusion of the photographer seems indefensible, such as the emaciated Biafran child clutching (literally) for life to a French corned beef tin. In other works – the famous image of the shell-shocked Vietnam soldier – the care taken with composition and contrast emphasises the dignity of the subjects, as well as the photographer's commitment to their plight.

In part because of pressure from the censors (McCullin was refused access to the Falklands/Malvinas conflict), the work from the late 1980s shows a deliberate withdrawal from the nightmare of war. Through still-life subjects and the landscape of his home in Somerset, McCullin attempted to recover sensibilities shattered by the suffering of strangers and the remnants of a tragic personal life. Although technically brilliant, these images are inevitably less striking, their glowering tonality unable to reproduce the moral density of his journalistic work.

In an age of multimedia and postmodern cynicism, the function of photojournalism as an index of the 'real' has suffered sustained assault. However, McCullin's recent portfolio of images from India reveals a return to old priorities, combining a celebration of native cultures with the exposure of deprivation caused by preventable disease. Whether this new work finds an audience beyond the context of the fine-art exhibition will depend as much on the courage of newspaper editors as it does on the brutal beauty of the images themselves.

Duncan Forbes teaches in the History of Art department at the University of Aberdeen

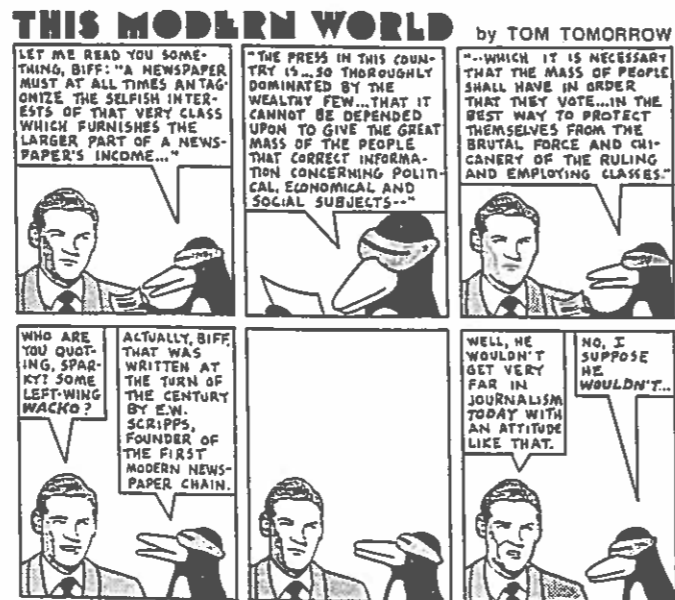
Don McCullin, *Sleeping with Ghosts*, the Barbican Centre, 11 September-14 December. Catalogue published by Vintage at £18.00

The bigger the badder

THE fifth edition of Ben H. Badikian's *The Media Monopoly* (Beacon Press \$16/£13.99) is out. This is a classic text, with new sections on the digital revolution and the rise and rise of the media conglomerates' unprecedented power.

How about this for one comparison Badikian makes? 'At the time of the first edition of this book, in 1983, the biggest media merger in history was a \$340-million dollar matter, when the Gannett Company, a newspaper chain, bought Combined Communications Corporation, an owner of billboards, newspapers, and broadcast stations. In 1966, when Disney merged with ABC/CapCities, it was a \$19 billion deal – fifty six times larger'.

Another valuable US publication is *Censored 1997* by Peter Phillips and Project Censored (Seven Stories Press) \$16.95/£11.99. The book is subtitled *The News that Didn't Make the News*, and identifies the top 25 censored stories which never got on to the mainstream news agenda in the USA. The book is a useful information and reference source, given added value with the cartoons by Tom Tomorrow which are scattered through the book.



Whose news is it anyway?

ROY STAFFORD
REPORTS ON A LEEDS FILM FESTIVAL DEBATE
IN A climate of 'dumbing down' and Blairite spin, a question like 'Whose News?' might be expected to elicit a cynical yawn. Yet, despite a last minute change of venue to a bare and freezing room, the healthy Leeds Film Festival audience for this event on 26 October responded with plenty of questions.

Granville Williams skilfully chaired a panel of three speakers with rather different journalistic backgrounds. Thomas Deichmann, author of the now famous article in *LM* magazine, investigating an ITN News Report from Bosnia in 1992, presented a well-worked analysis of contemporary journalism. Deichmann's argument sees the traditional professional practice of reporting all the facts and keeping a distance being replaced by a range of new 'morality-based' practices. He cited 'peace journalism', 'civic journalism' and 'journalists as problem solvers' as well as Martin Bell's 'journalism of attachment'.

Duncan Campbell, scourge of the Secret Services in the 1980s, told us about his problems in current broadcast investigative journalism. It is increasingly difficult to get anything without a 'human angle' past the commissioners and Campbell himself spends more time considering possible libel actions he may have to fight than producing programmes.

Martin Wainwright, Northern Editor of the Guardian, presented the pragmatic journalist with community roots. He viewed Deichmann's 'distance' as a laudable aim, but difficult to achieve, and amused us with self-deprecating tales about his own experiences.

The speakers appeared not to have been carefully briefed and their contributions, although all valuable, weren't necessarily focused on the same issue. For this reporter, it was Deichmann's argument which was the most compelling in the current context. He raised issues which need to be addressed widely. In the post-modern environment of international news coverage there are no clear 'heroes and villains', but still news editors demand stories which work as if there were. What do professional journalists do in this situation?
Roy Stafford edits In The Picture, a media education magazine

Rise and fall

HUW RICHARDS
ON LABOUR'S LAST DAILY PAPER

PEOPLE don't talk much about the Daily Herald any more. More than anything that reflects the passing of time – it's 33 years since the last issue of Labour's daily. Events since have done little for hopes of reviving a dedicated Labour national press. The *News on Sunday* dwindled almost immediately into embarrassing fiasco. Some might even argue that the marked enthusiasm of the Tory press at the last election, and in particular the Sun's noisily proclaimed reconversion to Labour, obviates the need for further worry about press bias.

Rather more convincing is the argument that in a world with an increasing diversity of media and information sources, the national daily press no longer enjoys the influence and credibility it commanded in the middle years of this century, and if Labour and the left want to increase their media presence, there may be other, more effective and less expensive means of doing so.

Yet the Herald's story remains an important one for anyone interested in the British press. If its battle to offer a different worldview to the rest of the daily press ultimately failed, it was still 52 years in the failing.

It is a picaresque, bizarre story. To take a single 18-month period between late 1923 and early 1925 it consecutively: indulged in moral blackmail of TUC delegates who were to decide its fate by running a children's page story called Bobby Bear in an Orphanage detailing the fate of a much-loved cartoon strip character should the Herald close; found itself in dispute with print unionists over job losses – except that on this occasion the print unions were calling for cuts and the management were resisting them; and as Labour's devotedly official paper is found itself, rather than the Zinoviev letter, blamed by ex-Premier Ramsay MacDonald for the loss of the 1924 General Election.

Farce and irony form part of most newspaper histories. But the Herald's oddities were often a direct consequence of its underlying tension, that as a newspaper ideologically committed to the socialist transformation of society, it had nevertheless to compete in one of Britain's most ferociously competitive capitalist markets.

Labour itself never quite resolved the conundrum of whether to accommodate or try to create free-standing alternatives, generally settling for an uneasy mix of rhetorical denunciation and practical accommodation. The Herald, after the 1920s did very much the same.



Its period from 1930 as a popular daily co-owned with Odhams Press had its successes. Borne upwards on a tide of insurance schemes and cut-price editions of Dickens, it briefly became the best selling paper in Britain. But it was otherwise a consistent loser of both money and sales.

There were good journalistic reasons for this. Odhams were unimaginative, penny-pinching publishers. The Herald was all too prone to confuse seriousness with quality – one irony being that its coverage of business was frequently better than that of Labour, constrained as it was by a compulsion to back the party line. Would an official daily today, influenced as it would be by the chaps at Millbank, do any better?

Nor does it make sense to see the Herald's eventual demise as a consequence of advertising industry conspiracy. It was undoubtedly squeezed out of advertising schedules as sales fell – but so was the slavishly Tory Daily Sketch, which went under in 1971. During the Herald's years of relative competitiveness from the early 1930s to 1955, it did reasonably well for advertising.

Instead the Herald was the victim of the bizarre economics of the British press. Selling more than a million copies daily, to readers who appear on polling evidence to have been happy with what they were getting, it still was not commercially viable. A world whose entry costs exclude all but the ultra-rich and to which only a narrow, unthreatening, spectrum of ideas is admitted. A world, in short, where very little (whatever happened to all those newspapers, representing different owners and points of view, which we were promised if only the print unions could be removed?) has changed since 1964. Huw Richards is the author of *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the British Left*, published by Pluto Press (£13.99)

Fisher wants digital quality

ALTHOUGH the Government did not have any broadcasting legislation currently planned, this Parliament would see legislative changes in broadcasting, Mark Fisher, minister at the Department of Culture told a seminar organised by the Voice of the Viewer and Listener (VLV) in the Commons.

He wanted policies and a regulatory framework which would bring about 'a widening of access and an enriching of services'. Choice in itself would not mean anything – it was like the same train leaving the station throughout the day. 'We have to be more ambitious and positive than that.'

The minister said: 'We need to strengthen public service broadcasting in a digital age.' He believed that the new technology also presented an opportunity to reflect the cultural diversity of the nation. He concluded by saying that both he and culture secretary Chris Smith wanted an open door policy and were determined to listen to people's views before decisions were made.

In a question and answer session the role of the BBC governors was highlighted. The minister said the Government had an open mind on the question and would welcome suggestions on how the board of governors should be constituted. **Barry White**

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CPBF CHANGES

Sam Dewhurst has run the London office for over two years now, but pressure of work means that from the end of November she is finishing. A big thank you, and best wishes for the future. Running the London office is demanding and time-consuming. Sam has done a great job. Barry White is stepping into the breach, with a broader remit to both ensure the smooth running of the office and to begin developing a more

active Parliamentary presence.

Granville Williams will continue to edit *Free Press*. The CPBF North office in Huddersfield has now closed so please note his new contact details:

Granville Williams, Division of Media, University of Huddersfield, St Peter's Building, St Peter's Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RA. TEL: 01484 478460. FAX: 01484 478407 E-Mail: g.williams@hud.ac.uk

MEDIA IN THE FRAME

The CPBF was well represented at a seminar on 21 October organised by the International Federation of Journalists and the NUJ. *Media In The Frame* examined issues of privacy, photo-journalism and ethical news management.

Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger stated his preference for Parliament, rather than the courts, to decide on the balance between privacy and press freedom while also advocating tougher self-regulation. He was joined on the panel by John Foster (NUJ), Aidan White (IFJ), Alan Crosbie (European Newspapers Publishing Association) and Adam Boulton (Sky News). The Sun's royal photographer, Arthur Edwards, flew back from India for the event but was apparently prevented from taking part.

A useful meeting, highlighting the need for greater agreement and clarity concerning the 'public interest'. **JH**

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