

FREE Press

No. 122, May–June 2001

£1

Journal of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

EDITORIAL

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AND CHAUVINISM

TWO elections have dominated the media, and we deal with both in this issue. The Italian election was studiously ignored in the English tabloids – the red tops (the Mirror, Sun and Star) and the Mail and Express – but coverage in the broadsheets and specialist journals has been extensive, and raised some important questions about the links between media ownership and political power.

The allegations against Silvio Berlusconi include money-laundering, association with the Mafia, tax evasion, complicity in murder and bribery of politicians, judges and the finance ministry's police, the Guardia di Finanza.

"The prospect of Silvio Berlusconi winning the Italian election on Sunday cannot be considered as a normal case of democratic power changing hands. Berlusconi is at the helm of an 'empire' holding a subversive concentration of financial power and media control. This goes against any modern concept of democracy." This comment was in a letter,

signed by 219 members of the European Institute in Florence, and published in The Daily Telegraph on 11 May. The letter warned of a "serious threat to the future of Italian and, therefore, European democracy."

A couple of weeks earlier The Economist on 28 April had a cover with the caption 'Why Silvio Berlusconi is unfit to lead Italy'. Based on a thorough investigation of the means by which he amassed his wealth – estimated at \$14 billion, and spanning vast areas of Italian finance, commerce and broadcasting – the magazine's leader stated unequivocally, "Mr Berlusconi is not fit to lead the government of any country, least of all one of the world's richest democracies."

The Financial Times also weighed in with a leader identifying the conflict between his huge economic interests and the political power he would wield as Prime Minister: "Could he credibly introduce private pensions when he owns a large part of Mediolanum, a financial services provider?" it asked. "Could he be

objective about the future of RAI, the state broadcaster? How would tax reform affect his corporate concerns?"

However he does have his allies in UK politics and media. Lady Thatcher had a letter published in all Italian newspapers on 11 May urging support for him, and attacking "a Europe-wide media campaign" of "character assassination". Lady T. became involved in the Italian election at the express wish of Silvio Berlusconi.

The prize for the most foolish argument in support of Silvio Berlusconi? It must be the one in The Daily Telegraph, 11 May. "As a Euro-sceptic newspaper, with British interests at heart, we hope the Italians will vote for Berlusconi and his coalition allies. It would be an entirely different matter, however, if a man such as him were standing for election in Britain. In that case we would strongly advise voters not to touch him with a bargepole."

So that's OK then. It's fine for those foreigners to have him, but not us Brits. What rank chauvinism!

SQUARING THE MEDIA

GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

THE only reason for buying The Sunday Times in the run-up to the 1992 general election was to read the acerbic comments by the columnist Robert Harris. Since then he's gone on to make his fortune with his best-selling novel Fatherland, and pretty much abandoned political commentary.

I write this comment one week into the job of reading the output of the national daily and Sunday newspapers since the election was announced 8 May. It's dirty work but someone has got to do it. But there are some consolations, and one was to read Robert Harris in The Sunday Times on 13 May. His column starts, "There is something truly loathsome about the modern Labour party" and cites the example of "sucking up to The Sun newspaper – leaking to its political editor the date of the general election before the cabinet or even the Queen were informed

It would be a terrible commentary on Tony Blair's apparent belief in The Sun's importance if the price he pays for the paper's support is that Rupert Murdoch's media empire becomes even more dominant in Labour's second term

... little constitutional things like that – I find this creeping and truckling at the boots of the powerful repulsive."

Now of course nothing The Sun says about politics happens without Rupert Murdoch's say-so – he has always made clear that he makes the final decision which party The Sun supports.

So the day after the budget The Sun splashed IT'S IN THE BAG, TONY and

announced that Britain's biggest-selling daily (3.6 million copies a day and a readership of about nine million) would be supporting Tony Blair.

Two comments. One is blindingly obvious, and it's to do with backing winners. Apart from the rabidly Euro-sceptic and Labour-hating Mail and Telegraph the national press will be either neutral or pro-Labour, reflecting the opinion polls that clearly endorse Labour.

But the second point is to do with what's in it for Murdoch in the longer term. After the election there will be a Communications Bill and issues of cross-media ownership and media regulation will be at the heart of it.

It would be a terrible commentary on Tony Blair's apparent belief in The Sun's importance if the price he pays for the paper's support is that Rupert Murdoch's media empire becomes even more dominant in Labour's second term.

Scrap the Act

Barry White on the campaign to challenge official secrecy

A BROAD-BASED campaign to repeal the Official Secrets Act (ROSA) has been launched following a letter to The Times on 25 April signed by Nigel Wylde and six organisations, including the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

A week later supporters of ROSA and others attended an 'Open up the secret state' meeting at the House of Commons, organised by the CPBF and held to mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. Tony Benn MP speaking perhaps for the last time at Westminster public meeting, said, "The repeal of the Act is not a marginal but a central issue. The control of information is the secret of power." He pointed out that journalists also had a heavy responsibility. "The coverage of current affairs by journalists under the instructions of their proprietors is absolutely disgraceful." He referred to the role of the media in the build up to the May Day demonstrations in London, whipping up expectations of violence

with a thousand anarchists on the loose. The reality was the police illegally enclosing up to two thousand people in Oxford Circus for many hours. Public information was not only the responsibility of government but of journalists in the media. "There was a coalition between the government and the media which obstructs public understanding of what's going on," he said.

Nigel Wylde, chair of ROSA, who was unsuccessfully prosecuted under the OSA with journalist Tony Geraghty author of *The Irish War*, last year outlined the events which led up his run in with the security services.

Annie Machon former MI5 officer and partner of David Shayler spoke of their experiences in trying to expose wrong doings by MI5 and MI6, and Tony Bunyan, editor of Statewatch, referred to the stitch up by the European Union institutions in only agreeing to the partial release of documents to the public. Martin Bright, the Guardian/Observer journalist who last year successfully resisted an order to hand over material to the police in connection with David Shayler's Gaddafi plot revelations, spoke on the role of the press and journalists in resisting secrecy and the dangers to democracy of a compliant media.

The campaign to repeal the OSA comes at a time when there appears to be agreement between ministers and civil

Ministers' concerns have strengthened 'the Whitehall heavies' who want to crack down on leaks

servants on the need for reform. Ministers' concerns over what appears to them to be the apparent ease top secret documents and other sensitive information has been published on the internet have strengthened 'the Whitehall heavies' who want to crack down on leaks. They seemed to be

supported by the Intelligence and Security Committee, chaired by Tom King MP, that oversees the work of the intelligence services. Jack Straw has also been warned by them that a far tougher Official Secrets Act is needed straight after the general election. The Committee's annual report concluded: 'Disclosures are now being made, sometimes anonymously, on media such as the internet, with no obvious redress by the authorities in the UK.'

■ If you want to help with the Campaign to repeal the OSA contact Nigel Wylde at repealtherosa@btinternet.com

Call for repeal of state secrecy laws

From Mr Nigel Wylde and others

Sir, This week the pre-trial hearing of former MI5 officer David Shayler is due to begin at the High Court, three-and-a-half years after revelations were made about incompetence, malpractice and crime in the intelligence services.

Initial legal arguments will focus on whether this country's official secrecy legislation is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998. Whatever the outcome, it is now clear that pressure is building in Whitehall for the complete overhaul of the Official Secrets Act of 1989, to make it more appropriate to the information age and compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

This is an issue that affects every man, woman and child in Britain and we believe that any future government should commit itself to the repeal of this discredited Act. We recognise that there are some legitimate reasons for the State to protect certain categories of information, but the present legislation puts a blanket ban on the right to know. The BSE and foot-and-mouth crises have shown that it is not only on defence and security matters that officials hide behind outdated secrecy laws and procedures.

For this reason, Repeal the Official Secrets Act (ROSA) has been set up by members of the public, journalists and Crown servants committed to the removal of this legislation. We shall be campaigning over the coming months for fair new legislation to replace the Official Secrets Act.

Yours faithfully,
NIGEL WYLDE,
Chair, Repeal the Official Secrets Act.
TONY BUNYAN,
Statewatch.
JOHN FOSTER,
General Secretary,
National Union of Journalists.
MAURICE FRANKEL,
Director, Campaign for
Freedom of Information.
ROHAN JAYASEKERA,
Managing Editor, Index on Censorship.
JULIAN PETLEY,
Chair, Campaign for Press and
Broadcasting Freedom.
JOHN WADHAM,
Director, Liberty,
Repeal the Official Secrets Act,
c/o Campaign for Press and
Broadcasting Freedom,
8 Cynthia Street, N1 9JF.
repealtherosa@btinternet.com
April 24.

The Times letter



David Shayler speaking at a CPBF fringe meeting at the National Union of Journalists annual delegate meeting earlier this year. On the platform with him: Annie Machon, Free Press editor Granville Williams (left) and Tim Gopsill, editor of the NUJ magazine, the Journalist.

Shayler loses out at hearing – but Official Secrets Act is still on trial

WHEN former MI5 officer David Shayler faced Mr Justice Moses in number one court at the Royal Courts of Justice in London on Thursday 26 April, it marked the start of a political trial authorised by Lord Williams, the Attorney General, who by chance also wants to limit the power of juries.

David faces three charges under the Official Secrets Act for disclosing information and MI5 documents to the Mail on Sunday in 1997. He could face a maximum sentence of six years if found not guilty. The Mail on Sunday, is, however, not facing any charges.

David's real crime (in the eyes of the state) is of course to expose criminal activities, incompetence and malpractice by the security services. These include cover-ups of the bombing of the Israeli embassy in London in 1994 (for which two Palestinians are serving 20 year prison sentences for a crime they claim they did not commit); the London Bishopsgate bombing a year earlier, which killed News of the World photographer Ed Henty; and MI6's £100,000 plot to kill the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi.

Shayler is not facing any charges relating to the sensational Gaddafi revelation, curtly dismissed by foreign secretary Robin Cook as 'pure fantasy'. After all it would be rather embarrassing to learn that British foreign policy is being made by spooks rather than elected politicians and have this debated in open court! In fact it is the Official Secrets Act that is really on trial.

When the case opened on 26 April it was not to swear in a jury and hear the evidence, it was in fact to decide whether

David's real crime (in the eyes of the state) is of course to expose criminal activities, incompetence and malpractice by the security services

the blanket secrets act contradicts the European Convention of Human Rights. By the following Tuesday both sides had put their cases and the pre-trial hearing concluded.

On Wednesday 16 May Mr Justice Moses ruled for the prosecution upholding the

blanket ban imposed by the Act. An appeal has been lodged and the full trial is not expected to be held until the autumn, by which time parliament could well be considering new official secrets legislation.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom with the NUJ has been quick to take up David's case. A series of open meetings have been organised in Brighton, during last year's Labour Party Conference, Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Scarborough culminating in a rally in Friends House, London the week before the pre-trial hearing opened.

This is because like the NUJ we have always campaigned against the Official Secrets Act. A victory in the courts could be the end of the much-discredited Act. We have to ensure that even more repressive legislation does not follow.

David's brave action (together with his partner and former MI5 officer Annie Machon) in exposing the secret state deserves the support of all those who believe in open journalism, the right to report and the public right to know what is being done in their name.

A privatisation too far: the airwaves

GOVERNMENTS recognise the value of radio frequencies – the electromagnetic spectrum – over which an increasing amount of communication is transmitted.

Witness the recent lucrative auction by the UK government for the next generation of mobile phones. In the USA there was protest at the way the media companies received for free digital spectrum valued at \$50 billion. However there's a new threat.

The radio frequencies, which are used to send and receive messages, pictures, audio and data, are considered a public good controlled and administered by governments on our behalf.

This is one of the most important powers, in terms of media policy, that governments and nation states have – the ability to regulate access to broadcast communications within their own geographic borders.

Powerful commercial media are now seeking to gain total control over the airwaves. Already the global media have enormous power, but their plan is to control the airwaves all over the planet and trade them back and forth as 'electronic real estate'.

The first steps in the relentless forward march of media globalisation came less than one month after George Bush became president. Thirty seven US economists signed a letter asking the regulatory body, the FCC, to permit broadcasters to lease spectrum they currently licence from the government to secondary bodies.

The game plan seems to be first, secure a partial privatisation, allowing commercial licensees to sell and lease their leased spectrum to secondary markets. Once done,

the commercial foundation would be laid for a final conversion from government licensing of the spectrum to a future sell-off to the private sector. Once the policy was in place in the USA, other nations would be encouraged to follow suit and sell off their

'If the flow of human communications is controlled by global media companies, how do we ensure that social and cultural points of view and political expressions that may differ from those of the companies who own the frequencies will be allowed to flow over the spectrum?'

spectrums to global media companies. If some governments saw this as a privatisation too far, international trade sanctions could be imposed to force compliance.

This plan, which would also mean the end of regulatory bodies like the FCC, whose job is to allocate spectrum in the

public interest, really does conjure up Orwellian visions of media control.

Jeremy Rifkin, who alerted us to this development in a Guardian article ('Mayday, Mayday', 28.4.1), asks, "If the flow of human communications is controlled by global media companies, how do we ensure that social and cultural points of view and political expressions that may differ from those of the companies who own the frequencies will be allowed to flow over the spectrum?"

The other fear is, in an era when more and more of our daily communications takes place in cyberspace, of a global divide between those who can pay for access and the 62% of people who have never made a telephone call and the 40% who have no electricity. "How will they ever secure access to cyberspace in a world where the admission fee is controlled by a few global media giants," Rifkin wonders.

Finally, handing over the airwaves to media corporations would boost their economic and political dominance. He concludes, "When our very right to communicate with one another is no longer assured or secured by government, but controlled by global media conglomerates, can basic freedoms and real democracy continue to exist?"

Remember that 1970s dystopian movie Rollerball, with James Caan, where the global economy is carved up into concessions that run energy, food and entertainment? Maybe those of us who are concerned about the dark side of globalisation were right all along. Certainly this latest scheme by the global media groups is one that we need to strenuously resist.

Berlusconi: abusing media power

WE WENT to press as the first indications were that the media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi, had won a narrow outright victory in the Italian elections. This is not the landslide that seemed on the cards a few weeks back, but the fact that he is likely to be the next prime minister of Italy is in no small part due to the relentless use of his media empire to influence public opinion.

His Mediaset company runs three of Italy's commercial television networks, Retequattro, Canale 5 and Italia 1.

His family also owns a newspaper, Il Giornale, that is regarded as the mouthpiece for Berlusconi's political party, Forza Italia, and Panorama, Italy's most influential

weekly whose features and investigations support Berlusconi, and cover stories plug his television networks. He also has a 48.17% stake in Italy's biggest publishing group, Mondadori.

The controlling company that incorporates Berlusconi's economic empire is Fininvest, and these include control of AC Milan, the financial services group Mediolanum, a property company, and Pagine Italia, which publishes telephone directories.

It was the massive conflict of interest between the deployment of this economic and media power to promote his candidature, and that of his party, which has led to

unprecedented coverage and critical comment on his suitability to run Italy.

The editor of Il Giornale, Indro Montanelli, quit in protest when Berlusconi's brother took control. "Without my knowledge he came into the newsroom and said everything must now be changed because now the newspaper must be out at his service."

The alarming vista now is that a Berlusconi victory means that with the three state television and broadcasting networks, RAI, under his control, the entire broadcasting system of the world's sixth largest industrialised economy is in one man's hands. Will they all be at his service?

English newshounds still asleep

STEPHEN DORRIL

ON 9 MAY of this year, The Times reported in a small three paragraph article that an Ulster MP was going to open a Commons debate that day on the alleged role of the Irish Government in supplying arms to the IRA in 1970. It was the first time that the reopening of this scandal had been mentioned in the English (I use the term deliberately) press.

The 'Dublin Arms' affair has been front page news in Ireland for the past few weeks with each day bringing forth new revelations about what looks increasingly like the Irish version of 'Watergate'.

In May 1970 two Cabinet ministers, Neil Blaney and Charles Haughey, were dismissed by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, for allegedly using Government money to import arms for the newly emerging Provisional IRA. Two subsequent trials collapsed because, we now know, there had been tampering with of evidence and documents by officials and possibly ministers.

The arms crisis split the Dublin establishment and briefly threatened the stability of the Republic of Ireland, which is why the subject remains so sensitive. It also led to an on-running argument: Did Dublin – which feared that the marxist orientated Official IRA might foment revolution in the South – encourage the split within the IRA and help to build up the Provos? Such questions are now the subject of fierce debate among Irish politicians and academics on both sides of the border.

With its tales of gun-running, dirty tricks and conspiracies (and involvement of MI6 agents and officers in the mix which, curiously, has been discreetly ignored in the Irish press) this might be expected to be the kind of scandal which would appeal to United Kingdom readers, but as yet, the press remains silent. As with so many areas of the Irish Troubles, the English press has become bored and disinterested.

An invaluable book, based on recently released documents and in-depth research, *The Arms Trial* (Gill & Macmillan), by the editor of current affairs at Ulster television, Justin O'Brien, came out at the end of last year but remains unreviewed on the mainland. Part of this is probably structural: newspapers rarely review books published only in paperback; and most of the interesting books published in Ireland on the Troubles are in paperback.

The result is that the English public is deprived of a balanced and full view of what has happened in Ireland, both North and South, over the past 30 years. There are numerous examples of this form of disin-

terest shown by newspapers which can be deliberate and an unconscious form of censorship.

The only full account of 'The Kincora Scandal' (*Political Cover-up and Intrigue in Northern Ireland*, Marino, 1996) by UTV journalist Chris Moore went unreviewed, as has a disturbing book on *The Dublin & Monaghan Bombings*, by Don Mullan (Wolfhound, 2000). The latter provides possible evidence of British security service involvement in what is the biggest unsolved murder case in the Irish State. The bombings are now subject to an initial inquiry by a judge, who has been recently talking to British officials and soldiers.

Anyone who has visited an Irish bookshop will know that there are at least half-a-dozen similar examples of worthy books on the Troubles which have been published over the last year which are destined never to be reviewed. Fortunately, Ireland is a nation of bookreaders.

With the winding down of the Troubles, there has been an explosion of interest in the unresolved and mysterious killings which took place in the past. There are now numerous websites set up by victims or relatives for justice which collate material collected by independent researchers and archive articles detailing past abuses (visit [www.rockysullivan.com/TroublesWeb Sites](http://www.rockysullivan.com/TroublesWebSites), for a full list). Much of this revolves around the accusations of collusion between the British security services and loyalist terror groups in the mid-seventies and mid-eighties. There is clearly a grassroots movement towards a form of 'Truth Commission' as set up in South Africa, but, again, with a few honourable exceptions, primarily, the Sunday Times and Guardian, little of this activity is being reported.

In the early seventies some of Britain's finest journalists, fresh from Vietnam, went to Belfast and reported on the violence with the same skills they had employed in other areas of the world where there were counter-insurgency campaigns being waged against terrorists. With one or two notable exceptions, who stand out mainly because of their isolation, rather than the worth of their reporting, reporters and newspapers have quietly buried investigative reporting of Ireland.

Peter Taylor is a BBC reporter who, it is true, deserves high praise for his dogged investigations over many years, but when it comes to his books, most researchers in this area are more intrigued by what he leaves out than what he leaves in.

The best reporting from journalists such as Ed Maloney and programmes such as Spotlight and those from RTE remains

trapped in Ireland and is rarely seen or commented upon in England. Recently, Scotland's Sunday Herald ran an excellent series on the alleged collusion by the Force Research Unit (FRU) with Loyalist paramilitaries which named names. Little notice was taken south of the border. After years of kow-towing to the authorities, the Sunday Times and, a surprise to many, Liam Clarke have run similar ground-breaking pieces but often you have to read the Irish edition to receive the full information.

I know from personal experience that media students who study news reporting of the Irish troubles are often shocked and surprised by the way that so much of what makes the front pages of the press in the North and South of Ireland is never reported in the English press. (For anyone who wants direct evidence of this divide I recommend the excellent www.nuzhound.co which lists daily articles on Ireland of interest.)

As with the reporting of Westminster a disproportionate amount of space is dedicated to the minutiae of political disputes surrounding the peace process rather than investigating wrongdoings and clear miscarriages of justice.

The continuing break-up of the United Kingdom into its constituent parts has already had a marked impact on the reporting, for example, of events in Scotland, where the press is ignoring what happens at Westminster. It has already had an effect on Irish affairs and as sections of the English press, as a result of reorganisation, cost-cutting, and an increasingly pumped up nationalist tone, turns ever more insular, Irish affairs slip down the agenda.

But Ireland has had a major impact on UK politics over the past 30 years – probably more than is generally realised – and in the next few years it will continue to exert pressures in ways that people have yet to come to terms with. The recent rulings from the European Court on the handling of terrorist deaths is only the beginning, not the end. As France has discovered with Algeria, these things come back to haunt.

Much of what took place in Ireland has been hidden away in the expectation that it would remain so. But now some of it is starting to seep to the surface. Often it is not through the efforts of journalists but campaigning groups of victims or relatives of victims. Journalists and newspapers should be at the forefront of these investigations but at the moment they are failing to lead.

Stephen Dorril is currently writing *The Dogs in the Street, a history of British intelligence operations in Ireland, 1966-2000*.



Take it from the top – even the Prime Minister got stuck in

May Day management

KATHY LOWE

"RIOTERS to face rubber bullets" read Evening Standard billboards on the eve of the May Day anti-capitalist protests in London. Before they even got out of bed marchers had been dubbed 'rioters' bent on creating mayhem. Heavy hints by the authorities that plastic bullets and tear gas would be used – plus warnings from police chiefs that all demonstrators could be arrested and their photos and details taken – were spoon fed to the press, TV and radio.

According to the Daily Mirror's chief political commentator Paul Routledge: "For weeks ahead of the May Day Demonstration the police briefed the media with lurid tales of destruction in the City. They made it sound like the Luftwaffe without wings. It was going to be the new Blitz."

On the day 10,000 riot police proceeded to entrap large crowds of demonstrators and some bemused tourists for hours on end in London's Oxford Street in case they got up to no good. Clashes and arrests were small scale, caused mainly as some demonstrators tried to break out of the police pen.

Even so the overwhelming majority of papers led either on violence or on the 'successful' police action. 'One Nil to the Bill' declared the Daily Mirror – omitting to observe that people's democratic right to protest had gone out the window.

Evening Standard columnist, Zoe Williams, covering the story from Oxford Street alongside the protesters, dismissed media claims that the marchers had a violent agenda.

"How come, then, that more than 1,000 people in Oxford Street didn't have a missile between them?" she asked. She also noted the managed TV coverage. "You will have seen footage of a rough-looking guy dismantling a traffic light – you will not have seen footage of 1,000-plus people

below him calling him a wanker."

A few media outlets acknowledged the wider issues raised on May Day by the global justice movement. BBC's Newsnight brought in 'an activist' to debate the new world order with MPs while the Daily Mail rushed to publish an article entitled 'In defence of capitalism'.

The majority of groups that make up the May Day Coalition now refuse to talk to the mainstream media after what they see as an uncritical reliance on official spokespeople and consistent misrepresentation.

"It's extremely frustrating", Guy Taylor of Globalise Resistance told Media Guardian, "to spend the whole day talking to the media about third world debt, only to find when you do get hauled in front of a camera you just get asked questions about violence."

Protesters, it seems, are turning to grassroots media organisations supporting the movement to 'redress the balance'.

Jessica Hodgson wrote in Media Guardian: "One of the most striking things about the mass incarceration at Oxford Circus on May Day was the number of people carrying cameras, both stills and video. Much of the material will appear on websites such as Squall, Schnews and Indymedia, which show video and carry reports sympathetic to the protest."

Jessica Hodson added: For many journalists the discrepancies last Tuesday (May Day) between the endless clichés about violent anarchists and dogs on strings and the reality – of several thousand people from all walks of life held against their will for seven hours by riot police – must have been painfully apparent.

"If watching a Dalek-like policeman tell two schoolgirls that they couldn't leave the enclosure to use the toilet didn't do it, surely there's no hope for us."

All the President's businessmen

A PIECE by Julian Borger in The Guardian (27.4.1) documented how corporate America bought itself a president. Aficionados of Michael Mann's powerful film The Insider which documented the awesome power of big tobacco, and the less than heroic stance of the US television network, CBS, when it came to taking on big tobacco with a 60 Minutes expose on the chemical techniques used to enhance nicotine addiction, will see that power reconfirmed.

One of the president's first acts was to cut back on the team of lawyers in the justice department who were planning to take on the big tobacco companies for lying about the safety of their production for five decades.

"The list of defendants who now appear to have escaped federal prosecution is also a list of big donors to the George Bush election campaign," Julian Borger writes. At the top is Philip Morris, which gave £2.8 million to the new president's war chest, his inauguration and his party. Big tobacco as a whole gave \$7 million dollars to Bush and the Republicans, 83% of the industry's total election spending.

The media corporations are also beneficiaries of the new presidency. Bush appointed Michael Powell chair of the Federal Communications Commission. He seems to care little about maintaining media ownership limits, or indeed to understand what the role of the FCC is in protecting the public interest. One of his first acts was to approve a number of radio mergers that had been marked for public comment by the previous chair, William Kennard. The mergers given the green light by Powell would create local monopolies where one company would control 50% of a given market's ad revenue, or two companies would control about 70% of total ad revenue.

In April the FCC voted to allow any of the nation's four largest television networks to acquire two smaller rivals, a decision that cleared the way for CBS's parent company, Viacom, to retain control of the UPN network. Viacom has been lobbying the FCC, along with NBC, ABC and Fox, to eliminate a regulation that limits the number of stations one company may own – a cap at 35% of the national television audience.

The major networks insist that ownership restrictions are no longer needed. Their next target is to challenge the cross-ownership rule which prohibits a company that owns a local newspaper from owning a television station in the same market.

Two at once, and both overdue

Chris Frost assesses two academic journals covering the field of journalism

Journalism: Theory Practice and Criticism, Sage
Journalism Studies, Routledge

ACADEMIC journals seem to be a bit like buses: you wait for ages and then two come along at once.

Journalism's academic credibility in the UK (assuming it has any) can be dated from the start of the first degree courses in the early nineties. Of course academic research into the media had been going on for much longer than that, but most US and European media research takes a theoretical and critical, rather than an empirical perspective. It is all about the media and its effects and not about journalism, its methods and purpose. Now two UK-based journals claiming to fill that gap have just celebrated their first anniversaries.

Both journals are aiming for an international audience and have international editorial boards with academic media stars such as Michael Gurevitch, Jean Seaton, Claude Jean Bertrand, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, James Curran and Theodore L. Glasser.

Bob Franklin, Gerd G. Kopper, Elizabeth L. Toth and Judy Vanslyke Turk lead the team for Routledge's Journalism Studies while Michael Bromley, Howard Tumber and Barbie Zelizer edit Sage's Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism.

With such strong teams, there can be no doubting either team's academic credentials, but how have they chosen to develop these journals to take the academic study of journalism onto the next level?

Bob Franklin et al promised Journalism Studies would provide a "global, critical forum" to "debate the central issues confronting journalism". Howard Tumber's team said they wanted a journal that would contribute to "the social, economic, political, cultural and practical understanding of journalism". So did they deliver?

Both journals are a welcome addition to the academic scene and both have something special to offer. Journalism Studies is more self-consciously international.

Journalism from Sage is the better presented, and seems to hold much closer to its aims. Its first edition offers a symposium on "What is Journalism Studies" using 10 essays from well-known academics.

Subsequent editions carry some interesting papers where the keywords news, press, radio and journalism are much more in evidence. However, its authors, in the main, are not so well-known internationally as those writing for Journalism Studies which offers papers from the likes of Brian McNair,

Lord Wakeham and John Eldridge.

Both journals seem caught in a "Catch-22" type academic trap. There is not that much serious academic research into journalism yet from a UK perspective and most researchers are not well-known names. This means that if a journal is to get reputation of providing heavy-weight research from well-known academics it must rely heavily on papers from researchers abroad or on media studies. Now whilst these are both international academic journals, if all they carry is research from abroad about media studies, then they will have failed their self-declared target. Why produce a UK-based journal about journalism, if it only studies the media outside the UK? Journalism researchers in the UK will look elsewhere. But on the other hand, any journal sticking to research from journalism researchers and practitioners, with an emphasis on the UK, will find it hard to get material of a suitable quality and will rarely be able to offer well-known names.

Journalism Studies seems to have chosen the first option and is able, in consequence, to offer more papers. Take a look at the first issue. It offers eight papers (but with a distinct media studies bias) such as: "Developments in Journalism Theory About Media 'Transition' in Central and Eastern Europe 1990-99" and "Technological Change, Agenda Challenge and Social Melding: mass media studies and the four ages of place, class, mass and space". It ironically concludes with "The Poverty of Cultural Studies" by Keith Windschuttle that argues (rather convincingly, I thought) that "cultural studies is both educationally corrupting and professionally embarrassing for journalism education."

Sage has bravely chosen the second option. Probably as a result it is generally thinner, offering only four papers per issue before going onto the reviews. It launched its first issue with a symposium of papers, which while more lightweight, were of considerable interest to the target audience. Subsequent editions follow the trend and although Journalism is clear that it wants to be an "internationally oriented journal" that "encourages interdisciplinary contacts" it appears to be more prepared to risk sticking to its aim of "providing articles of critical interest to journalism scholars".

The two approaches make for very different journals, but both provide a long-overdue platform and incentive for UK-based journalism scholars and practitioners to be more thoughtful and more productive about their area of study. Chris Frost is the author of Media Ethics and Self-Regulation (Longman)

Mixed media

Online Journalism – A Critical Primer
Jim Hall (Pluto Press)

ACCORDING to the blurb on this elegantly designed volume, Jim Hall is the programme leader of Journalism Studies at Falmouth College, an early adopter among FE and HE colleges in the race to develop popular media-related courses. The book does not disguise its ambitions to become a standard text, yet there are certain ironies in the very idea that one can produce a book which will address the rapidly changing world of the Internet and its relationship to journalism.

First, one must question the medium itself – I mean this book is already beginning to look dated as 'the global media companies' and 'web start-ups' who people the tale are busy sacking online workers, cutting back on operations and shifting into an altogether lower gear. Then you have to ask yourself what does anyone mean by the phrase 'online journalism'? Hall seems unclear whether he is addressing the role of journalists and journalism in a new medium, or the medium itself and how it affects journalism and journalists.

The Internet itself has created its own culture and absurdly inflated sense of community and self-importance.

It is often impossible to see clearly through the fog of hype and enthusiasm. Hall himself makes an excellent case that it is dangerous to draw conclusions about the Internet from what the Internet says, yet all too often he fails to see the signs and trips over just this hazard. His section on copyright and intellectual property almost wilfully ignores the hard arguments in favour of a barely concealed restatement of the libertarian position which characterises so much Internet debate.

Many of Hall's arguments are sound, and for students who have never come across the debates, his summaries may be stimulating, but he has a disturbing tendency to drop into a kind of pseudo-intellectual jargon masking essential shallowness. Unless I had to, I might not have made it past this sentence on page 1: "The journalisms enabled by the web are driven by an agenda-setting radically different from the corporate and stately gatekeeping of the age of mass media, through which the information society is articulating the values that will premise its emerging institutions." I'm not sure what this means, but I'd hazard a guess that Hall is trying to say that the new media are different from the old media and will play an important role in shaping our society.

It's not really an objectionable point of view. It's just a bit disappointing.

Gary Herman

Rowntree funding for work on Communications Bill

WE ARE pleased to announce that we have been successful in a bid for funding which we made to Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. Along with Public Voice, a consortium that includes a range of voluntary sector organisations, we have both been awarded the sum of £12,600 to pay for the work of a co-ordinator.

In our discussions with the JRRT we stressed that the two organisations would pool resources and work around areas of activity where we had common agreement, as well as pursue other distinct objectives separately.

We are grateful for the JRRT funding. It has meant that we have been able to appoint Kathy Lowe to coordinate an ambitious programme of work that includes public meetings in major cities, the production of a pamphlet, and ensuring that we lobby effectively to communicate our concerns about the proposed legislation.

We are pleased to be able to employ Kathy, who organised the very successful conference on the Communications Reform White Paper held in February.

If you can help us in the planned programme of work please contact Kathy at the London office.

CPBF NEWS

OFFICE MOVE

We have been given notice to quit our office in 8 Cynthia Street. We will be moving in June to new premises but we are still balancing the benefits of two possible locations. In the end we are severely constrained by financial considerations in the choice of where we can go. If there is some dislocation in our work over the next month or so please be considerate as we hurriedly move.

BOOK THIS DATE

An important date for your diary. The launch meeting for the 'Communications Revolution – Who Benefits?' campaign on the Communications Bill will take place on Wednesday 27 June at 7pm in the Small Hall, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Speakers and details are being finalised.

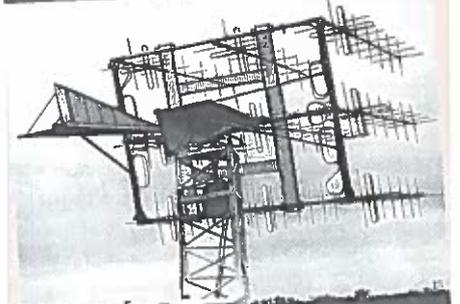
AGM

The AGM of the CPBF will be on Saturday 23 June at NUT headquarters, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ. It takes place from 10 am to 12.30 pm with registration from 9.30 am.

Please contact the London office for further details if you want to attend.

RICH MEDIA, POOR DEMOCRACY COMMUNICATION POLITICS IN DUBIOUS TIMES

"If Thomas Paine were around, he would have written this book." — Bill Moyers



WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR
ROBERT W. McCHESNEY

SPECIAL CPBF BOOK OFFER

You can get a copy of Robert W. McChesney's *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* for the special price of £12.00 inc p&p. The book is the paperback edition with a new preface by the author. To order your copy, please send a cheque for £12.00 payable to CPBF to the London office.

This edition is only available in the UK through the CPBF so also make sure that your library orders a copy, too.

Free Press is edited by Granville Williams for the National Council

JOIN

THE CAMPAIGN

FOR PRESS AND

BROADCASTING

FREEDOM

CPBF web site: www.cpbf.org.uk

Email address: freepress@cpbf.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP RATES PER ANNUM

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a) Individual membership | £15 |
| b) Unwaged | £6 |
| d) Supporting membership
(includes free CPBF publications) | £25 |
| e) Institutions (eg libraries:
includes five copies of Free Press) | £25 |

AFFILIATION BY ORGANISATION

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| f) Fewer than 500 members | £25 |
| g) 500 to 1,000 | £30 |
| h) 1,000 to 10,000 | £50 |
| i) 10,000 to 50,000 | £115 |
| j) 50,000 to 100,000 | £225 |
| k) Over 100,000 | £450 |

I/We want to join the CPBF and enclose a cheque/PO for £..... FP122

Name

Address

Postcode Tel.

Organisation (if applicable)

Return form to CPBF, 8 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF

Tel: 020 7278 4430