

## PUT MEDIA ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA

ALL the political pundits are predicting the winner in the May 2005 general election will be apathy. It certainly is not a view we endorse. We think there are plenty of issues you can put to the newly elected MP in your constituency.

In fact we have produced our own Media Manifesto, which gives a round-up of the key media policy proposals that an incoming government could adopt. They would make a powerful contribution towards the creation of a decent media in the UK.

The introduction of our Media Manifesto points out that events since the 2001 election events have shown how important are diverse and accountable media—and how endangered these are. One of the hallmarks of a democratic society is a media which acts as a Fourth Estate, an independent check on overweening power, both state and corporate, and

helps citizens to play an active role in the political process by keeping them fully and properly informed about what is happening in their society and in the world at large.

In a democracy, governments might be expected to protect and indeed foster such democratic values within the media. This Government, however, showed its contempt for the independence of the BBC during and after the invasion of Iraq, whilst its Communications Act 2003 has enabled a further concentration of media power. But elements of the media themselves, and most notably the press, display a worrying democratic deficit. During the invasion, many newspapers acted as entirely uncritical cheerleaders for the Government, and in its aftermath the same papers have done their utmost to whip up fear and hysteria against 'foreigners' of all sorts, as well as

launching a hideous campaign of vilification against travellers.

Sections of the Media Manifesto address particular policy areas:

- Broadcasting and public service funding
- The BBC
- The commercial sector and public service broadcasting
- Media concentration
- Newspapers and magazines
- Internet
- Freedom of information and media manipulation
- Media workers' rights

We think the Manifesto can play an vital role in raising these important issues, particularly the future of the BBC. If you want the full version of the Manifesto, or want to find out more about the CPBF and the work we do, then contact us at [www.cpb.org](http://www.cpb.org) or phone us on 020 8521 5932

## EDITORIAL

### BBC Cuts

THE Green Paper on the future of the BBC had some strong points—a new ten-year Charter, licence fee funding for ten years, and a positive outcome in terms of BBC governance.

But a cloud hung over our March 5 conference on the BBC—the impending package of cuts Director General Mark Thompson planned to make. Indeed, he explicitly linked what he called the 'fantastically solid foundation' of the Green Paper to the need to drive through efficiency and saving targets. In an interview with the BBC magazine, *Ariel*, he warned that the government will be sending in value for money auditors to check the level of BBC spending and savings before deciding how much money



**NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear — 'BBC staff deserve better than to be used as political pawns...'**

the BBC will get from the next licence fee. Well, the cloud has now well and truly burst with the announcement

of 2050 jobs going in programme making areas (1730 job losses were announced earlier for professional services). In addition there is an extensive programme of privatisation of key BBC assets.

BBC staff are dismayed and angry, and the media unions are coordinating action. 'BBC staff deserve better than to be used as political pawns in what many see as an unsavoury and grubby deal between government and senior BBC management,' NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear said. 'How can staff have confidence in those who think that what is best for the BBC is to cut 20 per cent of its staff, reduce programme budgets and hand over parts of its infrastructure to the private sector?' We agree absolutely.

# Open the books!

**JULIAN PETLEY UPDATES US ON HIS CAMPAIGN TO MAKE THE PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION ACCOUNTABLE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.**

IN *Free Press* 141 I explained that the Press Complaints Commission meets all the necessary criteria for being considered a 'public authority' for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act. Were it to be so considered, then any complainant unhappy at their treatment by the Commission could ask to see all correspondence relating to their complaint in order to find out just what the PCC had been up to on their behalf.

However, the Commission is conspicuous by its absence from the list of such bodies. The reason for its omission are not hard to guess. To apply the Freedom of Information Act to the PCC might well reveal to complainants evidence of brief and unsatisfactory consideration of cases, conflicts of interest, and communications with newspapers which have not been divulged to complainants. Nor is the PCC likely to welcome a measure which would undoubtedly make it easier for its numerous critics to gather further evidence of what they see as the unsatisfactory way in which it all too frequently handles complaints.

Given the massive energy expended, albeit unsuccessfully, by Lord Wakeham in trying to exempt the press—alone amongst British institutions—from the Human Rights Act, it is hardly fanciful to assume that his successor, Sir Christopher Meyer, has assiduously lobbied the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that the PCC is Freedom of Information-proof by keeping it off the list of public authorities. However, the DCMS insists on denying that, on this subject, any meetings between the two parties have taken place, or any correspondence exchanged.

Nonetheless, suspicions of a deal were amplified when Estelle Morris, in response to a parliamentary question from Clive Soley, stated that:

'The Freedom of Information Act does not apply to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) as it is not a public authority. The government strongly believes that a press free from any state intervention is fundamental to democracy. Designating the PCC a public authority would not be compatible with the government's support for an independent body overseeing press regulation'. However, the more honest answer is that the PCC is not a public authority for the purposes of the Act simply and solely because the DCMS has refused to propose it as such. Furthermore, to suggest that allowing complainants to find out how the PCC has dealt with their cases is a form of state intervention that might somehow or other imperil democracy is to stretch the bounds of credulity well beyond breaking point. Indeed, precisely the opposite is the case, as Maurice Frankel of the Campaign for Freedom of Information points out: 'many independent statutory regulators—including the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the

## Right of Reply in Europe



**JONATHAN HARDY ON AN IMPORTANT COUNCIL OF EUROPE STATEMENT**

ON the day Peter Bradley decided to take up the right of reply for his Private Members' Bill (15 December), the Council of Europe adopted a measure to extend to online media its 1974 Resolution on the right of reply for print and broadcasting. These parallel lines never touched in the parliamentary debate but it is instructive to connect them. Opposing

Police Complaints Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and even the Information Commissioner, who enforces the FOI Act—are subject to the Act, and no-one suggests that this compromises their work.

Openness is an essential ingredient of accountability, a safeguard against arbitrariness and a means of demonstrating to the public that bodies are acting properly—not a threat to their independence'.

On 25 February I made a request to the DCMS under the Freedom of Information Act to see all relevant documentation relating to this matter within the statutory 20-day period. Over a month later I have received no reply, and will thus be taking up the matter with the Information Commissioner.

Journalists have been at the forefront of those calling for a Freedom of Information Act, and are rightly concerned at the catalogue of obfuscation and evasion which requests for disclosure under the new Act have encountered. And yet the body which regulates their profession, the Press Complaints Commission, looks set, with the connivance of the DCMS, to evade the Act altogether. Still, openness and accountability in a press organisation—that would never do, would it?

Bradley's bill, the government reiterated its opposition to 'statutory regulation' and defended the PCC as 'the best way forward'.

The Council of Europe helps us to bisect lines of debate where press freedom and state regulation are opposing terms. As architect of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Council has impeccable press freedom credentials and commitment to freedom of expression, media independence and pluralism. Yet the Council insists that states must act to secure both 'press freedom' and the rights of individuals, including their right to reply, through legal and administrative measures. The right of reply can be assured, it argues, through industry co-operation or 'self-regulation' but member states 'should examine and, if necessary, introduce in their domestic law or practice a right of

reply or any other equivalent remedy, which allows a rapid correction of incorrect information in online or off-line media...'

The government opposed the Recommendation, which is in any case non-legally-binding and, alone of 46 member countries save the Slovak Republic, reserved its right not to comply with the provisions for online media. A more powerful threat to the self-regulation lobby comes from the European Commission which proposes to extend the right of reply provisions of the *Television without Frontiers* Directive to cover all media. Its recommendations could form part of a revised Directive later this year. The government's defence of the PCC and wider self-regulation is shaky, since these arrangements fall short of the requirements for effective and speedy redress. The Council's Recommendation is an important tool as well as a valuable statement of principle to hold to account the Government and industry here. The text is available at:

[www.coe.int/T/E/Com/press/News/2004/rec\(2004\)16.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/press/News/2004/rec(2004)16.asp)

## Right of Reply & Press Standards Bill

**TIM GOPSILL**

THE Campaign supported the initiative taken by Labour MP Peter Bradley to revive the idea of a right to reply to force newspapers and magazines to correct inaccuracies in print. His Right of Reply and Press Standards Bill was debated—surprisingly—in the Commons on 25 February but it will go no further.

The Bill aimed to provide a quick and effective alternative to the civil courts and the Press Complaints Commission. It proposed a mechanism through which aggrieved parties could get an adjudicator to require papers to correct inaccuracies. Any paper that contested the order could go to a body called the Press Standards Board, whose decisions, if the matter went that far, could have been enforced by the High Court.

In the 45-minute debate, the Bill was opposed by the education minister, Derek Twigg, the 'duty minister' fielding all the Private Members Bills that day. There were



**Peter Bradley—his Bill recognised that the present system of voluntary regulation of the press is unsatisfactory.**

few MPs present, and when it came to the vote, the Bill was actually defeated by 12 votes to 6! And since the Commons quorum is 40, that was the end of it.

The CPBF said: 'We believe these issues are important not only to journalists, but to the public and others including politicians. We believe that there should be a serious public debate on devising a framework to enforce the publication of corrections. The debate about media standards has increased in the past year—this bill makes an important

## WITHOUT COMMENT

“ In Britain, the popular press is full of stories about east European migrants as social security scroungers: but of the 91,000 who arrived from the new EU member states after May 1 2004, barely a dozen have claimed any benefit. The migrants are mostly young people who come to work, save their money and frequently return home to reap the reward. Most are temporary and hard-working, whether skilled or unskilled. ”

Quentin Peel 'A dynamic Europe needs immigrants' *Financial Times* 3 March 2005

## Vanunu travel ban extended

ISRAEL'S interior minister has extended restrictions on nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu for a further year until at least 19 April 2006. The travel ban and other restrictions were due to expire on 21 April, one year after his release. Interior minister Ophir Pines-Paz justified the decision on the grounds the Mordechai remained a threat to national security.

The action was attacked by Ernest Rodker of the Free Vanunu and for a Nuclear-Free Middle East as 'oppressive and obsessive behaviour'.

The decision to renew the restrictions was also condemned by Amnesty International. Vanunu also faces a court case on 19 May when he will be tried for talking to journalists and attempting to leave Israel (trying to attend midnight mass in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve). In total he has been charged with 22 violations of his restrictions. If found guilty he could face another term in prison.

**Further information visit the Campaign web site:**  
[www.vanunu.freeseerve.co.uk](http://www.vanunu.freeseerve.co.uk)

contribution to that debate.'

The Right of Reply was one of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's early demands when it was set up in 1979. With an ineffective Press Complaints Commission, the case today is even stronger than it was 20 years ago.

The Bill was the seventh in a line of parliamentary attempts at a bill offering a right of reply. The first was the late Frank Allaun's Private Members Bill in 1983. It failed to get a second reading. Three other bills followed in 1984, 1988 and 1989 before Clive Soley introduced his Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill in 1992. That was defeated on its third reading in 1993.

Peter Bradley's Bill recognised that the present system of voluntary regulation of the press is unsatisfactory. The bill would introduce a very moderate measure of redress through a simple, quick and accountable system. It would also support journalists by encouraging and promoting the best traditions of journalism, thereby improving press standards.

# BBC Conference warns against complacency

**ROS BAYLEY**

Our conference on the future of the BBC and Public Service Broadcasting on 5 March was a great success. Coming days after the publication of the government Green Paper, *A strong BBC, independent from government*, it provided a forum for top quality contributions and discussion. Opening the conference, Bectu President Tony Lennon said the new BBC Director General Mark



Tony Lennon, Bectu President

Thompson and Chairman Michael Grade had taken 'a big gamble' by introducing their own drastic changes to buy off the BBC's critics ahead of the green paper.

Grade had concentrated on distancing the governors from the BBC and was rewarded with a

proposal for a new BBC Trust that would be accountable to licence payers rather than handing the regulatory role to Ofcom.

Thompson had promised an across the board 15% budget cut and offered to increase the proportion of TV programmes made by independent companies from the present 25% to 40%.

A chunk of production, including sport, children's programmes and Radio Five Live, was being moved to Manchester. And Thompson had 'rolled over' in the face of the charge that the BBC was providing unfair competition to commercial companies by offering to sell BBC Broadcast, BBC Resources and parts of BBC Worldwide.

The danger was that the government had accepted this programme of reform—parts of the green paper could have been written by Thompson, Lennon said—and the BBC would now have to deliver it.

Former BBC political correspondent Nicholas Jones said the BBC had had a narrow escape and had been given another chance to focus on its

priorities. 'My fear is it could be the start of death by 1,000 cuts.'

The political correspondents, who lunch regularly with ministers, were certain that this was the last throw of the licence fee. After the 10 years of the next charter were up, the licence fee would be top-sliced, with some of it going to other broadcasters. The BBC was likely to become a subscription service.

'So already we are witnessing the first steps towards the sidelining of the BBC along the lines of national public broadcasting in America... a marginalised BBC on subscription serving a minority audience.'

BBC Scotland reporter Peter Murray said the first priority of the unions was to fight job cuts and to try to ensure that the BBC had the resources to deliver quality.

One of the proposals from his managers, for instance, was to cut the number of correspondents, the experts who gave the BBC a distinctive edge

Media and Heritage Minister Andrew McIntosh sought to reassure the audience that public sector broadcasting was safe in his hands. 'A strong, BBC, independent of the government' was the starting point for the green paper.

In the government's view, public service broadcasting was not about market failure, 'doing the things that commercial broadcasters can't and don't want to do'. It was 'top quality news and current affairs, all the high brow stuff, entertainment, drama and everything else'.

But the end of terrestrial broadcasting—the challenge of the switch to digital—meant that the BBC had to change.

Some parts of the green paper were 'white' and not up for discussion, Lord McIntosh said. 'The charter and the 10 year licence fee is inviolable.' Ministers were unanimous on this.

Where the paper was genuinely 'green', and the government had not made up its mind, was on the detail of the accountability structure and how licence fee payers would have a say in it; the level of the licence fee; how it should be

collected; value for money and the cost of regional expansion; the archives; new ultra-local services; and how to ensure fair competition in production and commissioning.

The government was also 'green' about how public service broadcasting should be funded beyond the next 10 years.

Professor Tom O'Malley was concerned that Ofcom wanted to limit total spending on public service broadcasting in the UK at £3bn, effectively freezing the BBC's income while commercial companies grew.

The BBC must be allowed to sustain and expand into new areas in the next decade. And contrary to what the BBC had offered and the government had accepted, the commercial sector, not the BBC, should be made to pay for digital roll out, via a levy, as the benefit in the medium term would accrue to commercial operators.

Since the 1980s, the commercial lobby had 'howled for even more liberalisation' and had



Professor Jean Seaton—  
'It is not a moral issue but  
a question of survival'

argued for the BBC to be cut back, without any evidence that it caused unfair competition. The expansion of the independent sector had led to poor working conditions, a growth in casualised labour, lack of training and a decline in equal opportunities.

Professor Jean Seaton of Westminster University said: 'A society that doesn't understand its own

reality will either become totalitarian or die.' Public service broadcasting helped people to perceive reality, through both news and through popular drama, and provided a way 'of discussing accurately where it is that we are and what problems we have'.

There was nothing more urgent but public

service broadcasting 'was under fantastic duress'. Look at America, a society 'that doesn't understand that the ghettos are there'.

'It is not a moral issue but a question of survival,' she said.

Ofcom Partner Strategy and Market Development Robin Foster said there was 'no secret hidden commercial agenda in Ofcom's approach to public service broadcasting'.

Public service broadcasting shouldn't be 'a marginalised, ghettoised approach'. It should have reach and impact. 'Programmes have to be popular, engaging and attract a reasonable number of viewers,' he said.

But the existing model, where ITV and Five were part of public service broadcasting, would end with digital switchover. If Ofcom tried to impose costly public service broadcasting requirements thereafter, the companies would find alternative means of broadcasting that avoided regulation.

The most important public service role for ITV and Five was to provide 'high quality, original programmes made in the UK'. If they did that, the UK would be in a far better position than most other parts of the world.

As the pressures of a multi-channel world increased, Channel Four might be forced to provide more popular programming. If Ofcom did nothing, the BBC would then become a near monopoly of public service broadcasting.

Ofcom would review Channel Four's funding in 2006/07 to see if a new approach was needed. The priority for the duration of the existing commercial television licences would be to sustain regional news while the most exciting proposal was to create a new publicly funded public service publisher, to focus on new media.

CPBF National Secretary Jonathan Hardy said Ofcom's plans would be bad for public service broadcasting. ITV would not be required to carry arts, religious or children's programmes—it was already negotiating to reduce its output—and the regional news service was almost certain to go.

'But it will retreat with the archives, facilities and a brand name, which are all, in part at least, public assets, built up with public money.' Ofcom should try to recover the brand name and gain a stake in the exploitation of the archive, he suggested.

Jim Pines, Senior Lecturer at Luton University, said the one thing that connected ethnic minority

viewers was their dissatisfaction with terrestrial television. 'People say I pay a licence fee but there is nothing on TV that reflects anything about me.'

He suggested jettisoning the idea of public service broadcasting. Programmes could be made that were only of interest

to a minority audience. 'A lot of people are arguing that cable and satellite are the future.'

Dorothy Byrne, Director of News and Current Affairs at Channel Four, was upbeat about public service broadcasting at the channel. The amount of news had just gone up from five to eight hours a week and a new channel was about to be launched.

She didn't see the BBC as a threat. 'The key to the future of Channel Four is a strong BBC.'

But she was worried about the loss of ITV's regional current affairs output. The regional programmes had been the training ground for the freelancers and independent companies that were now making the flagship national current affairs programmes.

Independent director Michael Darlow thought part of the problem stemmed from Ofcom licensing too many channels, including one that you could dial up to hear a psychic message on a premium telephone line.

Losing regional programmes would destroy 'the seedbed for young people, young companies and particularly companies led by people from ethnic minorities'.

Increasing production outside London would not compensate as ITV and the large independents would move out and 'Hoover the stuff up'. Independents used to be just that but now many were part of large corporations, which viewed them as a 'rights' factory' to make money by selling programmes abroad.

NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear called on the conference to back the joint unions' call for the BBC to halt the cuts. 'The colossal job cuts, reductions in programme budgets and commitments, of the sale and privatisation of a core section of the BBC, risk destroying the BBC's position as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting and pose a substantial risk in the future to the BBC's continuing right to the licence fee.'

But it wasn't just a battle about jobs. 'It is a battle of ideas. We believe market driven broadcasting and media alone is bound to fail citizens in the digital TV age, as well as the terrestrial TV age.'



A delegate reads up on the issue



Professor Tom O'Malley—  
'the BBC must be allowed  
to sustain and expand  
into new areas in the  
next decade.'

# Replacing the BBC licence fee

**ROBERT HENDERSON**

I HAVE always had objections to the licence fee. It is a poll tax enforced by an extensive and expensive bureaucracy armed with extensive powers to harass the public. The practical consequences of the fee are the poor subsidising the rich and thousands of the poor, mostly women, brought before the courts each year for non-payment of the licence fee.

But whether or not you think the licence fee is the best solution to funding public service broadcasting, your opinion will become academic in the foreseeable future because the technology is moving on rapidly. TVs as we know them will be on the way out by the time the BBC Charter comes up for renewal in 2016, as computers (and conceivably something completely new) become the means to view what we now call television. (A tax on personal computers is currently being mooted. Take it from a retired Inland Revenue Officer, this is administratively bonkers).

The alternatives to the licence fee fill defenders of PSB with horror, and in most instances, justifiably so. Voluntary subscriptions could never provide the necessary finance and advertising would corrupt programming because of the need to draw audiences.

But there is one means of funding which could preserve the status quo—direct funding by the taxpayer. I have never understood the objection in principle to this. If direct funding could be cut or reduced at any time by a government, so can the licence fee. In principle, Parliament could pass a Bill tomorrow overturning the BBC's current Charter. More realistically, a future government could simply decide to destroy or at least severely emasculate the BBC through legislative action.

Can anyone honestly say that the BBC World Service, which is (and always has been) directly funded by the taxpayer, has ever been the creature of any government? Has any government seriously reduced WS funding because it did not do what the government wanted? I think most people would give a pretty firm no to both questions.

The BBC domestic service is in fact already receiving substantial direct payments from the taxpayer of around £400 million annually to compensate the BBC for the licence fee exemptions made for the over-75s. Has that made any noticeable difference in the relationship between the BBC and the government?

Direct funding could be guaranteed on the same basis as the licence fee, a ten-year charter with a guarantee that direct funding would last for the period of the charter. Ideally, the funding would be linked to some objective criteria such as a proportion

of the total UK broadcasting spend and adjusted annually to whatever the total UK spend was for the past year. This would both guard against politicians interfering during the period of the charter and provide less opportunity for the private side of the industry to complain about unfair competition because the proportion of the overall UK spend would remain static. That would remove the private sector fear that the BBC's seemingly remorseless expansion will have limits. The BBC could strengthen their position further in that respect if they eschewed any active commercial activity beyond selling programmes which they have made in-house or funded directly from an independent production company.

Direct funding would also improve the relationship between the BBC and the public. All experience shows that direct payment by the individual is what causes friction. Hence, the Council Tax causes more friction than paying income tax, VAT etc from which central government pays the majority of local council spending. Hide the expenditure in general taxation and complaints usually die. Even the most belligerent member of the 'Why should I pay the licence fee when I don't watch the BBC' brigade would find it difficult to rally under a 'Why should I pay my taxes to directly fund the BBC' banner.

## EU Commission gets tough

IN FP 142 we reported on a document produced by a grouping of European commercial broadcasters in 2004, *Safeguarding the Future of the European Audiovisual Market*. The document was part of a concerted lobby by commercial broadcasters, at both a European and national level, to challenge the scale and scope of public service broadcasters in Europe.

Their arguments seems to be having some impact on the new Competition Commissioner, Neelie Kroes. She made some 'preliminary views' about funding arrangements by the German, Dutch and Irish governments for their public service broadcasters suggesting that these

were 'no longer in line with E.U. rules'. The remarks were prompted by a complaint by German commercial broadcasters against German PSB channels ARD and ZDF which alleged some online services amounted to e-commerce activities and should not be subsidised.

One newspaper report suggested the Commissioner had been 'unduly influenced' by the commercial broadcasters' arguments.



**Competition Commissioner, Neelie Kroes.**

## Faking it

**JULIE-ANN DAVIES**

THE ready-to-roll video news release (VNR) is a tool that has been used by corporations, pressure groups and governments for years. To viewers VNRs are indiscernible from other news footage. Designed to slot perfectly into news programming they are manufactured by organisations eager to influence the way they are portrayed on television.

In America, the Bush administration has unleashed an unprecedented number of VNRs. The *New York Times* has reported that during the past four years hundreds of VNRs have been produced by at least 20 federal agencies. Some of the segments were produced to promote policies on Medicare or Iraq. Others were less high-profile and focused on matters such as childhood obesity or drink-driving.

The 'reporters' in Bush's VNRs do not say they work for the government and featured interviews are carefully written and rehearsed. Channels broadcasting the footage often lead in to the piece with a script written by the public relations officials.

But the United Kingdom cannot afford to be complacent. A Spinwatch



**David Miller of SpinWatch exposed the BBC's use of 'fake' footage**

Strathclyde University revealed in March that the BBC had commissioned journalists from the Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) to provide news footage.

The SSVC is funded by the Ministry of Defence and their journalists generally work for the British Forces Broadcasting Service. However, when the BBC broadcast the footage in November 2004 the government funding was not revealed. The journalist was simply introduced as a reporter "from the British Forces Broadcasting Service" who was "embedded with the Scots Guards".

Stephen Whittle, the BBC Controller of Editorial Policy has since admitted that the use of journalists paid by the

investigation by Professor David Miller of

MoD was "not ideal" and given an undertaking that this will not happen again.

However, a feature published in *PR Week* on the 25 March revealed that ITN News deputy news editor, Arti Lurkha, 'uses just one or two of the hundreds of video news releases she receives every day'. Sceptics may argue that is 'just' one or two too many.

It is true that VNRs can offer newsrooms footage that is difficult to obtain elsewhere and require little financial outlay from news channels. However, broadcasting VNRs allows outside organisations to set the agenda while masquerading as independent journalists. In an era when journalism regularly features at the bottom of the list of trusted professions the true cost of VNRs may be the further erosion of public trust. **Julie-ann Davies is a final year journalism student at City University, London**

### RELATED LINKS:

Spinwatch

<http://www.spinwatch.org>

PR Week Feature 'Effective VNRs'

<http://www.prweek.com/thisweek/index.cfm?ID=236665&site=1>

### BOOK REVIEW

**John K Cooley An Alliance Against Babylon:**

## WITHOUT COMMENT

“Why is the British press so lowbrow? Presumably because of the shape of the newspaper market. American papers enjoy local quasi-monopolies, and can therefore afford to be high-minded. In Britain, ten national newspapers slug it out daily, competing for readers who seem more interested in exciting stories than accurate ones, and in sensationalism than in sensitivity. Editors mostly ignore criticism, or retaliate by hurling mud at critics. In this atmospheres, having a finely developed ethical sense may be an handicap.”

**“Stop press” *The Economist* 26 March 2005**

There is some absolutely fascinating historical material but the central section of the book analyses the way the US-Israeli alliance was cemented, and the antagonistic effect this has had on the Muslim world. It is a solid, well-sourced book and one section, in particular, is worth recording. 'Israeli instructors in 2003 began training U.S. forces in the kind of aggressive counter-insurgency tactics with which Israel enforces its own 40-year-old occupation of the Palestinian territories'. Marine officers were interested in Israeli techniques for subduing a city and observed the Israeli Defence Force in operation in Jenin. Cooley comments, 'U.S. troops later began using these techniques in Iraq, as in the siege of Falluja in the spring of 2004.'

**GW**

## Read this

**The US, Israel and Iraq Pluto Press £17.99**  
IN the *Free Press* special supplement produced when the bombing began in Afghanistan we praised John K. Cooley's *Unholy Wars* for its chilling dissection of US policy towards Afghanistan before, during and after the Soviet invasion. This new book is also absolutely essential reading to help us understand the relationship between Israel and the United States.

Cooley has been reporting on the Middle East and North Africa since 1965, first for the *Christian Science Monitor* and then ABC News. This latest book seeks to highlight what he considers an important omission from many accounts of the two conflicts with Iraq since 1991—the role played by Israel and 'the relationships, antagonistic and otherwise, of the Jewish people with the people and states of former Mesopotamia, now Iraq, from Old Testament times until now'.

# AGM

## Saturday 9 July 2005

NUJ Headquarters,  
308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.  
(Nearest train/tube Kings Cross & Thameslink).

**10am–1pm**  
(Registration from 9:30am)

### Guest speaker

**Adian White**, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists on 'Globalisation and the Media'.

A NEW pamphlet by the CPBF is essential background reading on the BBC and its future. *Keeping Broadcasting Public: the BBC and the 2006 Charter Review*, written by Tom O'Malley, provides the facts and analysis for the defence of the BBC. 'The BBC is a major part of our daily lives. It entertains and informs us across radio, the internet and TV. It is testimony to the success of the public funding of broadcasting. We need to build on that success to create a better, more democratic, more creative BBC in the 21st Century.'

You can order the pamphlet for 50p (including postage). For bulk orders also contact the CPBF national office for details of rates.

### Spies, Lies & Whistleblowers

WE have covered the David Shayler case almost from the moment he returned to Britain to face the courts over his disclosures about the incompetency of the security services, which led to his prison sentence.

We also showed how government ministers used the Official Secrets Act to stop journalists from investigating his disclosures.

Now his partner, Annie Machon, also a former MI5 officer, has gone on the record with her book, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers: MI5, MI6 and the Shayler Affair*. It will be published on 10 May by Book Guild Publishing, £17.95. It is an explosive new expose which should make compelling reading and give some in government and the security services sleepless nights.

**Granta 89 Spring 2005**

### The Factory £9.99

GRANTA calls itself 'The Magazine of New Writing' and there is always something interesting in each issue, but the quality of the writing in the latest issue, around the theme of The Factory, is marvellous.

It would be worth the price just to read *Made in China* by Isabel Hilton, an absolutely stunning account of the changes in the lives and conditions of Chinese factory workers. It includes a beautiful case study of the impact of globalization in the way the model railway company, Hornby, has now relocated all production to China: 'Like many much bigger and truly international brands- Nike and Reebok, for example, it has become a company that "doesn't do stuff", that is, it makes nothing. Instead it concentrates on brand management and marketing. It negotiates a price with its Chinese contractor, sends the designs of what it wants made to the contractor near the town of Dongguan in Guangdong, and waits for the results to arrive in England by container. Hornby has no share in the Dongguan factory although it now depends on it entirely for its profits.'

**GW**

Free Press is edited by Granville Williams for the National Council

# JOIN

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FOR PRESS AND  
BROADCASTING  
FREEDOM**

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Email address: [freepress@cpbf.org.uk](mailto:freepress@cpbf.org.uk)

### MEMBERSHIP RATES PER ANNUM

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| a) Individual membership   | £15 |
| b) Unwaged   | £6  |
| d) Supporting membership<br>(includes free CPBF publications)        | £25 |
| e) Institutions (eg libraries:<br>includes ten 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 £. ....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Postcode ..... Tel. ....

Organisation (if applicable) .....

Return form to CPBF, 2nd floor, Vi & Garner Smith House, 23 Orford Road,  
Walthamstow, London E17 9NL  
Tel: 020 8521 5932