

## Brussels gives easy ride to European lobbyists

By Granville Williams

**S**tiim Kallas is the EU Commissioner in charge of Anti-fraud policy and Administrative affairs. Back in March 2005 bold ideas for the European Transparency Initiative (ETI) which he said would tackle the current lack of transparency and unaccountable power of lobbyists in Brussels. He said: "Lobbyists can have considerable influence on legislation, in particular on proposals of a technical nature...But their transparency is too deficient in comparison to the impact of their activities."

On 3 May 2006 the Commission's proposals for the ETI were published in a Green Paper which is open for consultation until 31 August 2006. The policy proposals it contains are disappointing because they fail to deliver transparency around the role of lobbying in EU decision-making.

Launching the Green Paper Kallas conceded that no hard regulatory measures were likely to come out on lobbying transparency. The Paper rules out mandatory registration of lobbyists, saying "a tighter system of self-regulation would appear more appropriate".

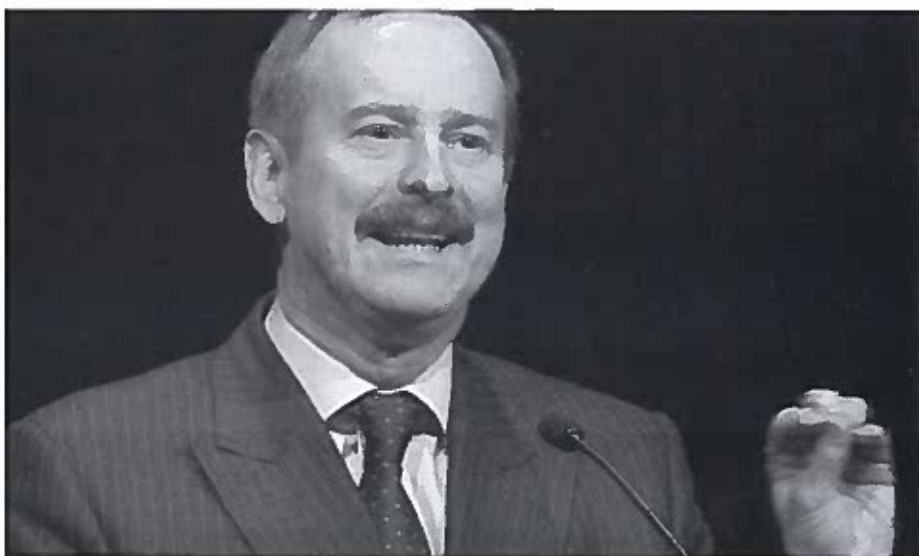
It proposes:

- A voluntary registration system, "run by the Commission, with clear incentives for lobbyists to register". Such incentives would include 'automatic alerts of consultations on issues of known interest to the lobbyists'.
- A common code of conduct for lobbyists "developed by the lobbying profession itself".
- A system of monitoring and sanctions 'in case of incorrect registration and/or breach of the code of conduct'.

In FP147 we reported the launch of ALTER-EU, a coalition of over 140 civil society groups, trade unions, academics and public affairs firms, which wants mandatory disclosure and ethical rules for EU lobbyists.

ALTER-EU identifies four aspects where the Green Paper is deficient:

- The Commission does not propose an



European Commissioner Siim Kallas: 'tighter system of self-regulation'

effective system of disclosure. Vested interest lobbyists are likely to continue to operate without providing information on the financing of their activities.

- It does not address the issue of 'revolving doors', where former EU Commission staff take up lobbying posts, nor does it provide for transparency regarding staff working for the Commission under temporary contracts.

- The Commission appears satisfied with current consultation procedures, even though it has granted privileged access to lobbyists from the corporate sector in the formation of policies.

- The Commission has failed to develop proposals for a code of conduct for ethical behaviour for all lobbyists – it cannot leave this to the lobbyists themselves and should show leadership and secure a credible "implementation and sanction mechanism".

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) is a key supporter of ALTER-EU and has played an important role in highlighting the power of the Brussels lobby. They have produced a booklet and organise a guided tour of the Brussels 'lobbyocracy'. CEO believes that 25,000 to 30,000 lob-

byists are active in Brussels. The European Parliament estimates 70 per cent of these lobbyists represent corporate interests, 20 per cent NGOs, trade unions, health and environmental groups, and the remaining 10 per cent individual firms.

Eric Wesselius of CEO said: "The ETI Green Paper lays out an inadequate voluntary approach. An e-mail list announcing upcoming Commission consultations is no credible incentive to ensure comprehensive registration and reporting by EU lobbyists. Those lobbyists who want to stay in the shadow and not reveal their lobbying to the general public will continue to do so under this proposal."

There is an urgent need for a European campaign to ensure that credible and effective EU lobbying transparency and ethics rules are put in place. Make sure that your organisation is signed up to ALTER-EU and responds to the Green Paper consultation to be part of this campaign.

Web sites:

[www.alter-eu.org](http://www.alter-eu.org)

[www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org)



# Not a whitewash

**Alan Hart**, formerly an ITN and *Panorama* reporter and author of *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*, considers the Independent Panel's report on the BBC's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

**A**fter reading not once but several times the Independent Panel's report, I find myself wondering if I am alone in coming to this conclusion:

That if BBC News management fully comprehends the nature of the panel's analysis of the coverage's "serious" shortcomings, and then acts on the panel's recommendations, the most important broadcasting institution in the world will find itself in a showdown — in my view a necessary showdown — with those who lobby on behalf of the Zionist state of Israel right or wrong.

On the subject of how the panel was itself subjected to some organised lobbying by supporters of Israel right or wrong, the report (somewhat tongue-in-cheek?) was refreshingly honest. It

received more than 700 e-mails and around 80 letters "many from abroad, mostly from North America." Some individuals "sent multiple missives, some were duplicates and there was clear evidence of pressure group mobilisation." When the e-mails and letters from abroad were included, "more people thought the BBC was anti-Israel." But... "if the e-mails and letters which could be identified as coming from abroad are excluded, the opposite is true: more people thought the BBC anti-Palestinian or pro-Israel."

At the start of my oral evidence to the panel on the back of my written, 30-page submission, I asked chairman Sir Quentin Thomas if he and his eminent colleagues would mind if I put a question to them. They didn't mind and my question was this: "Do you have a remit

to be seriously critical of the BBC's coverage if you think serious criticism is justified and, if you do, will you be seriously critical?" It was Lord Eames, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, who led the reply for the panel. He banged the table with his fist and, with a hint of steel in his voice, said: "If I did not believe we could be independent, I would not be on this panel!" And the others said the same in their own ways. I then said to myself, "This isn't going to be the whitewash many feared." And whitewash the report is not.

But that isn't the impression anybody could get from the press release giving BBC News management's first response to the report. Its lead point was: "We welcome the report's central finding of 'no deliberate or systematic

## Farm in the occupied territories: do the Palestinians get a fair hearing on the BBC?

bias' in our coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and our 'commitment to be fair, accurate and impartial.'" In fact the report didn't put it quite like that. What it actually said was that "apart from individual lapses, there was very little (ie not "nothing" as BBC News management's response implied) to suggest deliberate or systematic bias."

There was, however, very much more to the report's central finding than BBC News management was prepared to acknowledge in its public statement. The BBC's coverage of the conflict (for domestic audiences) was found to be seriously deficient. "In summary, the finding is that BBC coverage does not consistently constitute a full and fair account of the conflict but rather, in important respects, presents an incomplete and in that sense misleading picture." Without ever using the particular phrase, the report also said that the BBC's coverage is biased against understanding because of its shortcomings, including the failure to provide nearly enough background history and context. (A point I hammered in my written submission and oral evidence.)

And the report warned about what could happen given that "some of the deficiencies are serious" if the BBC failed to be "a great deal better, more distinctive, challenging and informative." The report went on: "The risk is that, without firm editorial grip, the BBC will produce, on a massive scale, and through its many outlets, flat coverage following the agenda set by conventional wisdom."

What wonderfully enigmatic words those emphasised by me above are! What on earth do they mean?

My interpretation of them — no doubt Sir Quentin will correct me if I'm wrong — is that without wanting to say so, the panel agreed, at least to some extent, with the main thrust of my criticism of the BBC's coverage and what the BBC must do above all else, from here on, it is to provide a full and fair account.

I take the "agenda set by conventional wisdom" to mean the agenda set for the media by the Zionist state of Israel and all who lobby for it right or wrong. According to the "conventional wisdom" of this agenda, accepted without question by the mainstream media including the BBC, poor little Israel has lived in danger of annihilation — the "driving into the sea" of its Jews. And that, against the background of the obscenity of the Nazi holocaust, is why more or less anything Israel does has to be excused. But, as I show in my fully documented, two-volume book, *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*, the truth of history (as opposed to "con-

ventional wisdom") is that Israel's existence has never, ever, been in danger from any combination of Arab force — not in 1948/49, not in 1967 and not in 1973. Zionism's brilliantly effective propaganda or spin to the contrary was the cover which allowed Israel to get away where it mattered most — in America and Western Europe — with having its aggression perceived as self-defence.

If the BBC is not to go on producing coverage which follows the agenda set by conventional wisdom, it has got to

**Israel's existence has never, ever, been in danger from any combination of Arab force — not in 1948/49, not in 1967 and not in 1973**

come to grips with the truth of history as it relates to the creation of the Zionist state of Israel, what, really, has sustained the conflict, and who must do what and why if the very last chance for peace is to be grasped. But if the BBC does that, it will offend mightily supporters of Israel right or wrong, and a showdown with them will be inevitable.

Does the BBC at executive management level have that much courage and integrity? I have my doubts.

In the last edition of *FREE Press* I wrote that I thought the BBC's decision to renege on its commitment to publish all written submissions with the panel's report was censorship. Allowing for the fact that I should have said self-censorship, I am now convinced that was the

case. The BBC's explanation to me for its volte-face was concern about the "defamatory nature" of some of the written submissions (but not mine). If there was genuine concern on that account, the way to deal with it was by not publishing those submissions, or parts of those submissions, which were or could be actionable.

The decision to suppress all submissions because of the possible offence of one or some suggests to me that there was another reason for not publishing any submissions. What could it be? One possible answer is that the BBC, out of fear of offending Zionism too much, did not want to publish mine, and the only way it could pull the plug on mine was by pulling the plug on them all. I will be happy to e-mail the text of my submission to any *FREE Press* reader who is interested please contact Free Press in the first instance). Its cover page has a quote from my conclusions and recommendations: "The BBC's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not impartial and cannot be impartial so long as Zionist mythology is the corporation's gestalt."

## Special Offer

**FREE Press readers can purchase a hardback copy of volume one of Alan Hart's book, *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews* for just £14 including postage and packing. This represents a considerable saving on the retail price of £19.99.**

**Please send orders with cheque to World Focus Publishing Limited, Fairview, Stowting Common, Near Ashford, Kent TN25 6BG.**



The wall goes up: the BBC has tended to excuse Israel's actions, however bad

# Frankenstein's monster unbound?

Julian Petley reports on the Press Complaints Commission's Annual Review for 2005

**A**nually reviewing the PCC *Annual Review*, there's a danger of sounding like a cracked record, or Mr Grumpy. This year, however, a distinct change of tone from the Wakeham-era — more *glasnost*, less smugness and fewer paeans to the PCC as the last bastion against state regulation — makes it possible to engage with the Review more constructively.

In 2005 the PCC received a record number of 3654 complaints, 2.7 per cent of these came from people in the public eye, 4.8 per cent from organisations, and 92.5 per cent from the public.

Of the complaints investigated, 69.8 per cent concerned accuracy, 25.4 per cent privacy and 2.7 per cent discrimination. In terms of privacy, the PCC made over 200 rulings in 2005; 54 per cent concerned the regional and local press, and 31.2 per cent the national. It received 228 complaints about privacy from those directly affected by an alleged breach of the Code — slightly up on the 2004 figure.

Overall, the number of cases resolved amicably rose by 41 per cent in 2005. 76 per cent of possible breaches of the code were resolved in 2005, up 12 per cent on 2004. In a further 22 per cent of cases the PCC negotiated offers judged appropriate by its board but not acceptable to the complainant.

In only 2 per cent of cases did editors fail to respond in a way the board felt appropriate. These complaints were upheld. Of the 242 complainants who replied to the PCC's customer survey, 66 per cent said their complaint was handled satisfactorily or very satisfactorily.

The PCC noted this was up 6 per cent on the previous year but failed to mention it still left one-third of complainants dissatisfied.

According to the PCC, the steady increase in the number of complaints received shows a greater general awareness of its services (and not that there's more to complain about), whilst

the rise in the number of resolved complaints testifies to "the effectiveness of the conciliation culture that the PCC has sought to foster across the industry" (and not to the inequality of the struggle between complainants and the newspaper industry).

As the *Review* states, the PCC Code requires newspapers to publish corrections and apologies with due prominence, in other words "in a proportionate position with regard to the original piece". This will take into account "the scale of the breach of the Code; the speed of the action taken by the publication; whether the publication has a clearly defined corrections column".

In 2005 the PCC negotiated the publication of the resolution on the same page, further forward or in the corrections column in 82 per cent of cases. On this basis, the *Review* confidently dismisses as a "myth" the notion that corrections are hidden away.

The PCC's new chairman Sir Christopher Meyer rightly emphasises the need for corrections and apologies to be displayed prominently.

As he put it at the launch of the

**The real problem for the PCC is that, in order to be considered an effective regulator, it has to be respected by the public and by the newspaper industry alike**

*Review*: "The power of naming and shaming is a more potent sanction than the ability to impose a few thousand pounds worth of fines — if ever a proportionate tariff could be established ... Far better to hit sinning editors where it hurts most: in their self-esteem and personal reputation by obliging them to publish prominently and unedited the full text of censure. Nor is the message lost on the rest of the industry."

One wonders what Sir Christopher would make of the 16 April edition of the *People*, where, at the bottom left-hand corner of page 41, there appeared a tiny, PCC-brokered correction which was apparently considered an adequate response to a 1016 word article on page 16 and a 145 word leader on page 14 of the February 26 edition in which a migrant in Calais was described variously as an "asylum seeker", a "bogus asylum seeker", an "illegal immigrant" and a "refugee", all in flagrant contravention of PCC guidance on this extremely sensitive matter.

Sir Christopher is also right to stress the importance of the fact that "there is now more public involvement with

and scrutiny of the Commission's work than ever before"

However, it is surely exaggerating to suggest, as he did in a speech to the Society of Editors in March 2005, that "self-regulation" may no longer adequately describe what the PCC does, on the grounds that "we are not an organisation in which journalists sit in judgement on journalists, unlike lawyers and doctors who regulate themselves."

None of the PCC's full-time staff has a background in journalism. 10 out of 17 Commissioners have no connection with the newspaper industry". It could be argued this makes them easy meat for editors and their lawyers, and that what the PCC actually needs is more journalists; not editors, but experienced figures who know how the press works and have a track record in analysing its shortcomings. It is also difficult to agree with his conclusion that "the PCC has now become a bit of a Frankenstein: the creature that broke free from its creators". (A pedant writes: Frankenstein was not the monster but its creator.)

The real problem for the PCC is that, in order to be considered an effective regulator, it has to be respected by the public and by the newspaper industry alike.

As far as I am aware, no recent research has been carried out, either into public attitudes to press regulation or press attitudes to the PCC. I suspect that research into the former would show that the PCC is regarded as poorly as journalists are themselves.

As for press attitudes there is a good deal of anecdotal evidence suggesting that newspapers publicly play up the PCC's effectiveness as a means of warding off legislation.

Thus, in the *Press Gazette*, 26 May, David Seymour, the former group political editor and readers' editor at the *Mirror*, stated "the party line for all newspapers is that the PCC is doing a fine job", but personally denounced it for doing a "hopeless job" and "handing down verdicts which fail to even meet the dictates of common sense, let alone justice".

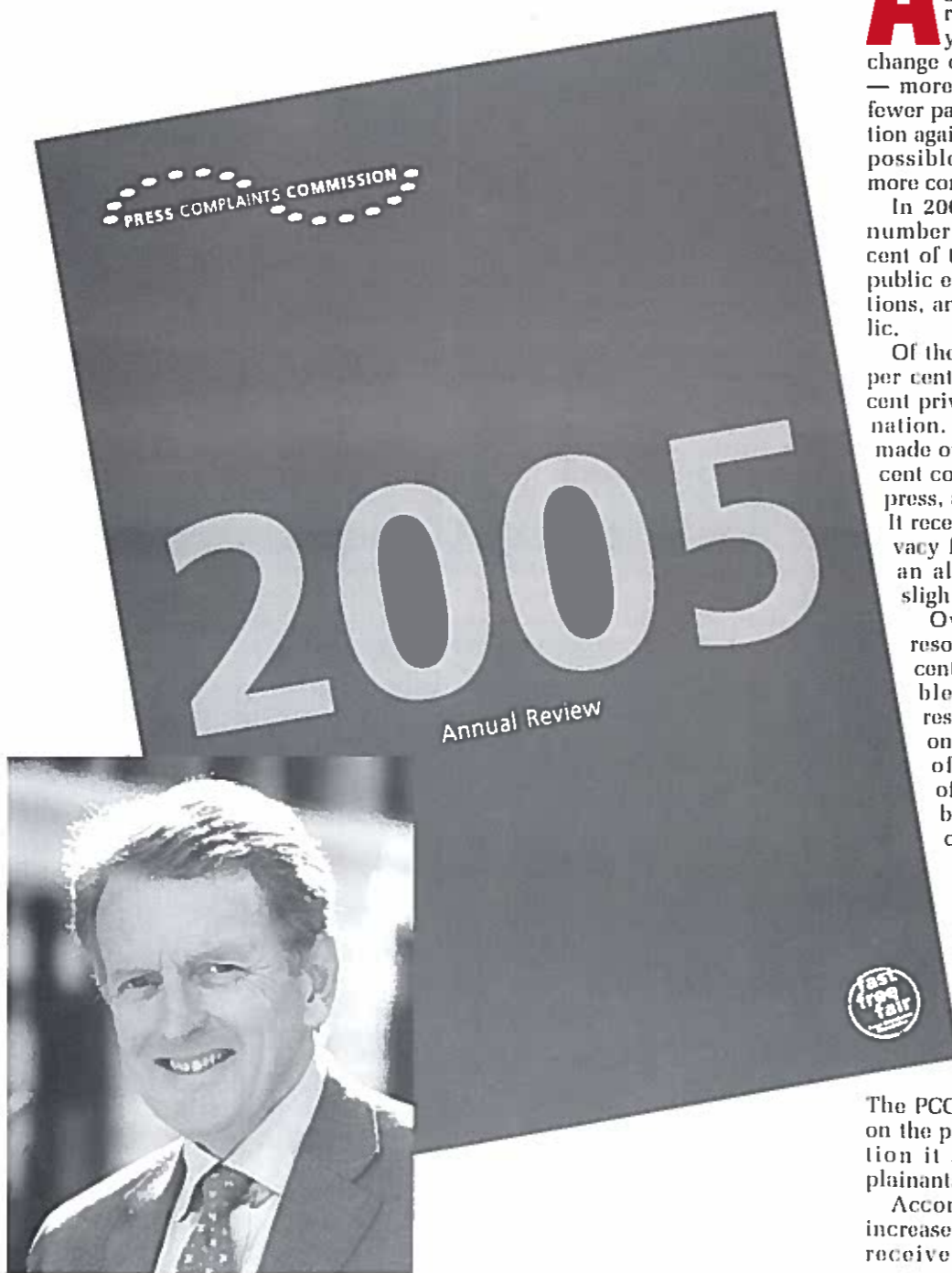
And, just to prove that irony is apparently an unknown quantity in the Murdoch empire, the following week's edition published a letter from the Sun's managing editor Graham Dudman in which he said: "I can say from personal experience the PCC does an excellent job in often very difficult circumstances... Thanks to the PCC, when we get something wrong, we put it right quickly to the satisfaction of those complaining."

Hardly the thing to dissipate suspicions that the PCC and the papers it's supposed to regulate are members of the same cosy club. More voltage Dr Frankenstein!



**'I want to start by registering the fact that the government strongly support self-regulation of the press... We believe that the government should not seek to intervene in any way in what a newspaper or magazine chooses to publish. We therefore support self-regulation, and the basis for the government's relationship with the independent Press Complaints Commission is support for effective self-regulation.'**

Richard Caborn, Minister for Sport, replying for the DCMS in the House of Commons on 8 May 2006 to an adjournment debate on press regulation which had been called by George Galloway MP



Sir Christopher Meyer: new PCC chair

## NUJ council boycotts Yahoo! over China

By Gary Herman

**T**he NUJ's New Media Industrial Council (NMIC) has caused a stir by staging a boycott of the mailing list services run by Yahoo!, one of the internet's biggest players.

The NMIC boycott is a response to the part Yahoo! has played in the jailing of Chinese journalists and bloggers whose postings drew the wrath of the Beijing authorities.

As reported in the last edition of *FREE Press*, an estimated 81 journalists and "cyber-dissidents" are now serving prison terms of up to ten years for their internet activities.

NMIC's actions have struck a chord with many people critical of the way in which corporations, and media companies, in particular, play an active role in suppressing press freedom in China.

The boycott is a small step, but it has drawn worldwide news coverage — thanks in large part to some rather inaccurate reporting by Reuters. A number of individuals have rushed to send messages of support to the council.

While not official union policy, the simple boycott of Yahoo's services has become one of the best publicised actions union members have ever taken, and NMIC is now offering its help to individuals and groups wishing to sever their own ties with Yahoo!

# CPBF AGM

**Saturday 8 July 10.00am - 1.00pm**  
(Registration and coffee from 9.30am)

NUJ Headquarters, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1  
Nearest train/ tube King's Cross/ Thameslink

The AGM will be followed at 11.45am by an open debate "Is Press Self-Regulation Working?" with Professor Robert Pinker, International Consultant to the Press Complaints Commission and Professor Julian Petley, joint chair of the CPBF.

**For further details contact the  
CPBF National Office  
or visit the website at: [www.cpbf.org.uk](http://www.cpbf.org.uk)**

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a) Individual membership	£15
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f) Fewer than 500 members	£25
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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

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

# No apology for reprinting cartoons

**Nicholas Jones** reports on the World Press Freedom Day debate on the Danish Cartoon controversy which was held on 3 May at the House of Commons

**F**ar from apologising or bowing to the international wave of Muslim anger, *Die Welt's* editor-in-chief said he would do it again: Islam was a "highly political religion" and there remained every justification for subjecting their symbols to political satire.

Roger Koepfel was resolute in defending his paper's decision to reprint the Danish caricatures of the prophet Muhammad. At a World Press Freedom Day debate at the House of Commons, he was forthright in supporting the assertion that "freedom of expression is sacred".

"When you compare the misuse of Islamic symbols by terrorists, I think the Danish cartoons are rather harmless. Religious and political symbols are subjected to satire and it is absolutely

essential we don't go back on this. There were a lot of wars in Europe where this freedom has been fought for and defended".

Koepfel challenged the refusal of British journalists to publish the cartoons on the grounds of tolerance. "The motivation was not respect but a fear of bad things which could happen... English journalists told me they would like to have published the cartoons, but if they had, there would have been serious threats or even violence.

"This showed that in the public sphere this right of freedom of expression cannot be guaranteed by the authorities. I fear we have somehow lost the cartoon war. People defend freedom of expression but then say it is essential we use it in a responsible way. We are told we have to pay respect to the freedom of the Muslim minority but they want to curb and curtail our freedom of expression".

Dr Maleeha Lodhi, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, appealed to the assembled journalists to respect cultural differences and acknowledge that Muslims had been invited to the west as guest workers.

"You must respect them. The west

cannot remake the world in its own image. We believe in the fundamental freedom of expression. However, this must also be limited by law, by environment, by taste. I think this underlines the need you have in the west to understand the cultural evolution of other countries.

"Muslims live their religion and it is very sacred to them. If there is a movement away from religion in certain parts of the world, that doesn't mean you can insult every other religion. You might insult your own religion but that doesn't mean that we accept that you can insult our religion".

The strength and sincerity of the opposing speakers demonstrated the force of the argument regularly advanced by Flemming Rose, arts editor of *Jyllands-Posten* who commissioned the cartoons. He remains convinced that the recent months of controversy have sparked off a "very constructive" debate about censorship and freedom of speech, a debate echoed at Westminster in support of World Press Freedom Day.

*Nicholas Jones' latest book Trading Information: Leaks, Lies and Tip-Offs is published on 3 July 2006.*

# Are we moving from their media to ours?

Writing from the 'We Media' conference.

**Danny Schechter** of Mediachannel.org reports on how technology is opening the doors to public influence in the media

**H**MS Aunty is having its own challenges navigating around menacing icebergs lurking in rough media seas. There are moguls on the right clamoring to put the BEEB back into its "public service box," while Government ministers urge a move away from "worthy programs" towards more "fun". At the same time, programmers inside the complexes at White City are literally seeking to revolutionise news practices cobwebbed with tradition.

On May 3 and 4, the BBC and Reuters, twin towers of British global journalism, co-hosted a conference with centrist American media think tank, the Media Center, to think aloud about trends driving our new media world.

Big Media has lost its way, and is

struggling hard to map out strategies to regain public trust. Their pricey "We Media" conference discussed how the media system must adopt new digital technologies and ways of working or die.

Mapping out the contours of the emerging media system is now on the agenda of consumers and creators in all consciousness industries. Suddenly, major media combines — perhaps still more outside America than in — have put aside institutional top-down arrogance realizing that elitist approaches are no longer selling. Some also recognise they are driving viewers away with sleazy infotainment and a decontextualised emphasis on breaking or "rolling" news.

Some top executives say they want to move beyond broadcasting into broadband, while integrating so-called user-generated content like citizens' journalism including blogs, podcasts, videos and photos. They are opening their doors to "the people" while insisting, at the same time, they will not "lower standards" of accuracy, impartiality, balance and other boilerplate blah-blah.

The headline on the BBC's internal PR paper *Ariel* shouts, "Reports of our

demise are greatly exaggerated" — a play on Mark Twain's dicta about a premature obituary he once read about himself. The Corporation's chief Mark Thompson has promulgated a gutsy new policy with technologies that give the audience new ways to "find, play and share" programming when they want to enjoy it. Global News chief Richard Sambrook admits that the BBC, the world's most popular news organisation with 16 million internet users worldwide, despite its flaws wants more public input and not just as filler.

Finally, some of the mighty voices of media authority and their know-it-all gatekeepers recognise they don't have all the answers and that maybe, just maybe, their viewers and listeners have a right to be heard and have something to say beyond sending in eyewitness video or catchy camera-phone pix.

This is the new debate: Don't be passive — participate is the new mantra. Let's take them up on it...

"*News Dissector*" **Danny Schechter** edits *Mediachannel.org*. His latest book is *When News Lies: Media Complicity and the Iraq War* ([Wmdthefilm.com](http://Wmdthefilm.com))  
Comments to: [Dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:Dissector@mediachannel.org)

# OFT threatens newspaper and magazine distribution

By Granville Williams

**T**he Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is back on the warpath, threatening a radical overhaul of newspaper and magazine distribution. This time last year the OFT said it thought the arrangements for distributing newspapers and magazines were anti-competitive. Wholesalers, who will guarantee the rapid delivery of titles to customers, are given a local monopoly. There are more than one hundred such wholesale territories.

The OFT's initial proposals for change were put on hold, but now the watchdog is again threatening to restructure distribution. The OFT's new chief executive, John Fingleton, says that the present system is inefficient — some 1.7 million newspapers and 1 million magazines are wasted every day, and titles are unavailable as publishers control deliveries to retailers.

OFT published its draft opinion on May 31 and its final version is due early next year. Meanwhile, the Periodical Publishers Association and the National Publishers Association are issuing dire warnings about the possible closure of 20,000 small newsagents and distributors abandoning unprofitable arrangements with newsagents.

The CPBF believes the present system is far from perfect, but there is a good deal of evidence, based on the American experience, that a break-up of the current arrangement will give an additional boost to supermarkets who could become the main outlet for buying newspapers and magazines.



In danger: up to 20,000 local newsagents could close

# Some things never change



**THE ORIGINS AND ORGANISATION OF BRITISH PROPAGANDA IN IRELAND 1920**  
**Brian P Murphy**  
Aubane Historical Society and SpinWatch, £4

By Danny Morrison

**I**n the early days of the conflict in Northern Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s, letters frequently popped up in Irish local papers from "Catholic Mother of Ten, Bogside", "Disillusioned Republican" and "True Patriot, Crossmaglen" they attacked the republican movement and praised the "peace-keeping" efforts of the RUC/British army.

The letters were so gauche that they fooled few Republicans who correctly assumed that they came from the British army propaganda unit based at Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn.

Other stories appeared in the media alleging that IRA explosives officers could get cancer from handling nitrobenzene (a major component of home-made explosives) and that the nylon underwear worn by women IRA Volunteers was prematurely setting off detonators.

A 1973 *Sunday Mirror* headline read, "Danger in those frilly panties". Colin Wallace, a full-time public relations officer based at Lisburn, later admitted conjuring up most of the black propaganda stories of this period.

A new book, written by historian Brian Murphy, titled *The Origins and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920*, focuses on Basil Clarke, a former English journalist with the *Daily Mail*, and his colleagues, who came to Dublin Castle to streamline the propaganda offensive against Sinn Féin and the IRA who the British felt were winning the publicity war.

The author shows that British lies and distortions of that period have been treated as credible primary sources by some contemporary historians for what he states are anti-republican purposes.

The press relied heavily on Dublin Castle's *Summaries of Official Reports of Outrages* which accentuated the alleged successes of the Crown Forces against the IRA, whilst omitting British crimes against civilians and civilian property, and blackened the IRA at

every opportunity through inventions, distortion and lies. Journalists — long before the term 'embedded' was invented — were invited to meet with Auxiliary Companies.

What happened in 1920 was repeated in the 1970s. The British claimed prisoners were inflicting injuries on themselves to denigrate their interrogators. They claimed the IRA was "a bloody-minded coterie of criminals" that intimidated the community for support.

The British abolished jury courts, denied inquests, suppressed evidence, and if you think Public Interest Immunity Certificates are something new, think again. It had its precursor in the powers of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act. Divisional Inspector Colonel Smyth of the RIC correctly boasted that no "policeman will ever be held up to public odium by being pilloried before a Coroner's Jury or other such inquiry".

Murphy details the planting of false stories the British use of sympathetic journalists; and the recruitment of the Catholic hierarchy to the British side. It is impossible not to see the resonances with the recent conflict.

Commenting on the propaganda work of Basil Clarke, author Brian Murphy says: "By shaping and refining the news in the British interest, Clarke not only produced a propaganda message for his time, but also laid the foundations for an historical narrative for all time."

British and newspaper reports deceived many people at the time, not just the British public or people abroad but some people in Ireland also. However, to have modern historians and journalists regurgitate these lies — in my opinion, for contemporary political motives — is something to which we need to be alert. Murphy — one of a regrettably small number of historians who vigilantly scrutinise the way revisionists use or abuse historical documents and sources — has done us all a valuable service by publishing this work.

*Danny Morrison is an author and journalist. He was formerly the National Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin. The Origins and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920 by Brian P Murphy can be ordered through the SpinWatch bookshop at [www.spinwatch.org](http://www.spinwatch.org)*