

THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

A pernicious result of globalisation is that television increasingly sees the developing world either as a disaster area or as a place to go for exotic holidays, writes **Emma Miller**

The age of globalisation has created a paradox in British international television coverage. As global interconnectedness intensifies, television offers audiences an ever-narrowing worldview with coverage increasingly weighted towards rich white countries. When countries in the South are featured, the range of formats and genres used is diminishing. The challenge for television, which remains the British public's key information source, is to resist the pressure to commercialise resulting from corporate globalisation.

When we see countries in the Southern hemisphere on television, most coverage falls into one of two contrasting categories: the doom, gloom and disaster approach, prevalent in mainstream news, and consumer-oriented holiday programmes. Within these formats, local people are presented in tired and circumscribed ways. This absence of local voices often has serious implications not just for viewer understanding, but in the shaping of political responses.

When conflict is the focus, there is a tendency to rely on stereotypes, with little or no attempt to provide explanations which help make sense of events. In the current context of globalisation it is impossible to provide coherent coverage without at least considering the role of the West and the international financial institutions which determine people's living conditions. Although television audiences may be unaware of the context shaping events, they are increasingly frustrated by tribal approaches to covering conflict particularly, as my research shows, since public scepticism has increased over Afghanistan and Iraq.

Another key area in the gloom and doom category of coverage is the reporting of disasters—which are inevitably increasing as climate change impacts. Disaster reporting from poor countries mimics soap opera formats: the heroic Western aid workers, the poor helpless black victims, the inept and corrupt local leaders. The truth is usually very different. Many viewers

remember the story of the woman who gave birth to a baby in a tree during the Mozambique floods of 2000. What was not reported was how local authorities responded quickly and effectively to the flood, saving thousands of lives before the argument in the British parliament about whether or not to send helicopters had even been resolved.

In the UK our expectations and understandings of disaster responses are misinformed by this type of coverage, often influenced by British aid agencies, which have a strong interest in perpetuating such stereotypes. This matters because, time and again, British responses to disasters result in exacerbating the circumstances of disaster survivors.

In contrast to the conflict and disaster categories, consumer programmes, specifically holiday shows, present overwhelmingly positive imagery of developing countries. However, other than background portrayals of tourist industry staff and displays of dancing by "indigenous" people, locals are again excluded from the picture. Audience groups in my research tended to be less critical of such portrayals. To an extent, this may be explained by the pervasiveness of the genre, and the passivity engendered by the consumer-oriented format. Such programmes are a major source of consumerist propaganda and help to mislead viewers about the real effects of consumerism and the exploitation of developing countries by the tourist industry.

Given the paucity of coverage of the South on British television, the following comment from an Edinburgh nurse is unsurprising: "At one point I did actively seek out information about the world. I used to know quite a lot. I haven't a clue any more... To me our Government is only going to do what America says that our Government can do... And one of the reasons I don't

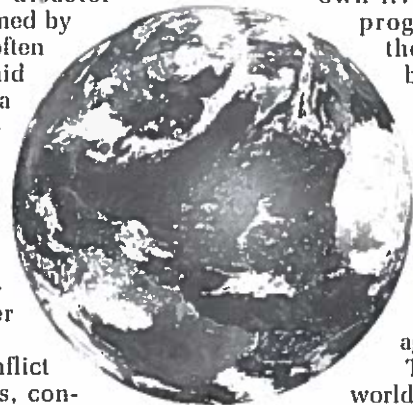
want to know is because I feel powerless to do anything about it."

One purpose of my research was to identify programming which did set events in the South in context, and test audience responses to these examples. The audience work showed programmes about ordinary people in the South, engaged viewers by enabling them to make connections with their own lives. Better still were programmes which set those lives in context, bringing in considerations of the role of international capital, without getting bogged down in detail. The combination of context and connection appears particularly effective, and manageable.

To make sense of the world as it really is television must adopt a truly global focus. Increasing inequality, declining labour standards, climate change and the democratic deficit are all direct impacts of capitalist globalisation, and are apparent everywhere. Viewers in Britain are just as concerned by the increasing poverty they see on their doorsteps, as they are by images of famine from afar. Where are the programmes exploring the connections between impacts of globalisation North and South? But, further to this, television needs to engage with the various forms of resistance to the impacts of globalisation, as well as explaining them.

The challenge is to re-engage the nurse in Edinburgh who became overwhelmed by negative coverage and the democratic deficit. Television retains the potential to play a role as a democratic medium.

Emma Miller's book Viewing the World: How Western television and globalisation distort representations of the developing world is available from Wordpower.



Terry Lloyd 'killed by US forces'

By Julie-ann Davies

On 13 October a coroner ruled that ITN reporter Terry Lloyd was unlawfully killed when he came under American fire in Iraq. The Assistant Deputy Coroner of Oxfordshire, Andrew Walker, said attempts would be made to hold the soldiers responsible to account. He said:

"Having carefully taken into account all the evidence... I am sure that had this killing taken place under English Law it would have constituted an unlawful homicide. I shall write to the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions with a view to considering the appropriate steps to bring the persons involved in this incident to justice."

Lloyd, and his interpreter, Hussein Osman were travelling with an ITN team when they were killed near Basra on 22 March 2003. Lloyd was shot in the back when his vehicle—clearly marked "Press"—was caught in American and Iraqi crossfire. However, Lloyd's fatal injury occurred after the initial skirmish. He was shot in the head by US forces when a civilian minibus was taking him for medical treatment.

In a statement, read after the inquest, Lloyd's widow Lyn said: "This was not a friendly fire incident or a crossfire incident; it was a despicable, deliberate, vengeful act, particularly as it came many minutes after the initial exchange. US forces seem to have allowed their soldiers to behave like trigger happy cowboys in an area where civilians were moving around."

It remains unclear what happened to one of Lloyd's colleagues. French cameraman Fred Nerac is still officially



Lloyd: casualty of Iraq war

classified as missing but is believed to be dead. Cameraman Daniel Demoustier was the only member of the ITN team to survive.

A film, shot by a cameraman attached to the American unit, was seen for the first time during the inquest. It showed American soldiers examining Lloyd's wrecked and smouldering vehicle. However, some footage which Lloyd's family believe could contain vital evidence is missing.

Lloyd's daughter Chelsey said: "What were the standing orders and rules of engagement of the US marines and why is there 15 minutes of film missing

which we believe would show the moments the two ITN vehicles came under fire and my father making his way to the minibus as it came under fire?"

Despite the inquest many questions remain unanswered. Both ITN and the NUJ have backed calls for the soldiers involved in the incident to be identified and brought to justice. The NUJ's General Secretary Jeremy Dear has called the incident a "war crime" and said: "The killing of journalists with impunity must never, ever go unpunished. Any attempt to silence journalists in this way must never succeed."

Anna Politkovskaya: death of a fearless reporter

By Barry White and Julie-ann Davies

The murder of Anna Politkovskaya, a correspondent for independent Moscow bi-weekly newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, sent shockwaves across Russia and outraged journalists worldwide. Politkovskaya, a mother of two, was gunned down on 7 October. Her body was found slumped in the elevator of her apartment building.

Perhaps better known outside Russia, she established her reputation by backing up controversial reports about human rights abuses by Russian troops in Chechnya. She faced death threats from Chechen bandits and Russian or Chechen death squads. During her career she was jailed, subjected to a mock execution and eventually forced into exile.

When she fell seriously ill with food poisoning in 2004 many believed the poisoning was an attempt on her life. However, Politkovskaya consistently downplayed her own bravery. She said: "The duty of doctors is to give health to their patients, the duty of the singer to sing and the duty of the journalist is to write what this journalist sees in reality."

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said her murder reflected the lawlessness threatening to overwhelm Russian journalism. The Federation called on President Putin's



Politkovskaya: killed

government to act swiftly and bring the killers to justice.

IFJ General Secretary Aidan White paid tribute to Politkovskaya's courage.

He said: "She was the bravest of the new breed of brave reporters who emerged in the dying days of the Soviet Union. She faced down threats from all sides and was an inspiration to journalists both at home and abroad."

In addition to her work on *Novaya Gazeta* Politkovskaya also wrote two books and contributed to the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. She was working on a major article documenting the use of torture against Chechnya civilians when she was killed.

Many of her fellow journalists believe the murder has dealt a severe blow to the remaining shreds of Russian press freedom. During the past year dozens of journalists have been threatened, beaten, attacked and even kidnapped.

Some have even been arrested and charged with criminal defamation. Many media outlets that were critical of Putin are now under the control of state-owned companies.

Russia ranks as the third deadliest country for journalists. Since 1992, forty two journalists have been killed in Russia. Thirteen of these have been killed in contract killings since Putin came to power in 2000.

Ukraine murder still unsolved

By Julie-ann Davies and Barry White

On 16 September 2000 Ukrainian journalist Gyorgiy Gongadze disappeared. Two months later his body was found in woods outside Kiev. He had been shot, beheaded and drenched in acid. Gongadze was a fearless advocate of media freedom and publicly decried "the strangulation of the freedom of speech and information in our state."

In April 2000, when a newspaper that had supported the opposition during the 1999 election was gagged Gongadze co-founded the *Ukrayinska Pravda* (Ukrainian Truth) website to circumvent government censorship. He commented, "today there is practically no objective information available about Ukraine".

Gongadze wrote an open letter to Ukraine's Chief Prosecutor in June 2000 complaining he had been

forced into hiding by the Ukrainian secret police. He alleged that he and his family had been under surveillance and the police were circulating rumours that he was the prime suspect in a murder case.

Gongadze's disappearance provoked an immediate public outcry. Over 80 journalists signed a letter to President Leonid Kuchma asking for a full investigation of the incident.

They complained that "during the years of Ukrainian independence, not a single high-profile crime against journalists has been fully resolved".

Kuchma ordered an inquiry but it was inconclusive. It was reported by a member of the opposition that Gongadze had been passed documents on corruption within the president's circle shortly before he disappeared.

In November 2000, a few weeks after Gongadze's body



Gongadze: fearless

was found, opposition politician Oleksandr Moroz revealed tape recordings that he said implicated Kuchma in the murder. Evidence provided by these tapes suggests the murder was ordered by Kuchma. The cassettes, made by former presidential bodyguard, Major Mykola Mel'nychenko, appear to be recordings of Kuchma ordering aides to deal with Gongadze.

Kuchma initially contest-

ed Moroz's allegation and threatened to sue for libel saying that the tapes were the work of foreign agents. Subsequently he admitted the voice on the tapes was his but insists the recordings were doctored to implicate him.

Six years on, three police officers are currently on trial for the murder. But, despite this slow progress, Oleksiy Pukach, the leading police officer believed to have actually shot and killed Gongadze, remains at large. Furthermore, nobody has been prosecuted for ordering Gongadze's assassination.

An NUJ delegation recently met with the Ukrainian Ambassador to Britain Ihor Kharchenko and pressed for "action not words" to resolve the case. Meanwhile in August a series of Ukrainian journalists were kidnapped, beaten and denied access to press conferences and new restrictions were imposed on the work of journalists.

News death toll for year is already 126

By Julie-ann Davies

On 18 October the news media death toll for 2006 stood at 126. The figure, released by the International News Safety Institute (INSI) marks a new blood-soaked milestone for news workers worldwide.

The majority of those killed this year were apparently slaughtered because of their work. As in previous years, most were killed in Iraq—the majority by political insurgents.

Almost all were Iraqis who increasingly bear the burden of reporting from a country where Western reporters are frequently unable, or afraid to, effectively cover the conflict.

Rodney Pinder, Director of INSI said in a press statement: "Free societies cannot exist without a free flow of information and whenever a member of the news media is slain a window to the truth is slammed shut."

Among the most recent casualties were employees of an embryonic satellite television channel in

Baghdad. On 12 October, gunmen in at least five vehicles drove up to the offices of Al-Shaabiya and burst into the station. They executed 11 members of staff and injured two others. The attack was the deadliest single assault on the

media in Iraq since the country was invaded in March 2003.

Al-Shaabiya has not yet been launched and the Executive Manager, Hassan Kamil told Reuters that the station has no political agenda and the staff had been a mixture of Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. Kamil also said that some of the gunmen had been wearing police uniforms and their cars had resembled police vehicles. Pinder called for greater national and international efforts to be made to ensure the safety and protection of news personnel.

He said: "We need fast and effective action by democratic governments to halt this deadly spiral. If we do not act, our freedom will slowly wither and then it will be too late."

INSI, the International Federation of Journalists and the European Broadcasting Union have joined forces and proposed a UN resolution on the protection of journalists around the world. So far it has met with limited success but the effort will continue.



IMAGE: MARTIN ROWSON

Turmoil at the Telegraph

The NUJ is balloting for strike action at the troubled Tory title, writes **Tim Gopsill**

It is no exaggeration to say that the owners of daily newspapers in Britain—national and local—are in a state of panic. All of them, without exception, are losing sales hand over fist. Even more importantly, for them, they are losing advertising, and they are looking over their shoulders at the mugger coming up behind them: the internet.

Newspapers are still making piles of money, especially in the provinces where profit margins are almost

obscene: some are over 30 per cent of turnover. But this has been achieved by constantly cutting costs. Staffing levels and salaries in the provinces are now so low that there is little left to go if they are to produce newspapers at all.

That's the question they are asking: do they go over to websites, and how? The "quality" nationals have already taken the decision and have embarked on the process known by the new buzzword "integration". (The "red-tops" are not so bothered. Their readers aren't so web-savvy as yet and no-one goes to their websites for news.)

There is anxiety and turmoil in national newsrooms: journalists at the *Guardian*, *Financial Times* and the *Telegraph* group have all threatened strike action over the changes being foisted on them and nowhere is there more unrest than at the *Telegraph*.

It's just 20 years since the upheaval

of Wapping when in one of the worst industrial rises of the 1980s newspapers the four titles owned by Rupert Murdoch's News International were switched to computerised production at a new print centre overnight. Five thousand print and clerical workers were sacked and the journalists were split over whether or not to go along with the changes.

This time the job losses are fewer, though still in the hundreds. But the impact on the quality of the journalism will be massively greater. The 1980s revolution, in which journalists effectively took over the typesetting from printers, did not directly affect the nature of their work. Now it most certainly will.

The *Telegraph* too is moving to a new cutting-edge production centre, a huge newsroom in Victoria, central London, in which print and online pro-

duction will be "integrated", side-by-side. No longer will journalists work to evening deadlines for the next morning's paper. Instead their output will be determined by four "touchpoints" each day, for which they will generate material for various online production—web pages, blogs, podcasts and video.

For journalists used to afternoon and evening work this will mean rotas starting at seven in the morning and work on Saturdays. It will mean more work, but 54 journalists have just been sacked — along with 80 other staff in non-editorial jobs. Asked how fewer can produce more, managers simply reply: "We will have to work smarter."

The changes involve dispensing with the traditional role of sub-editor, the skilled technician that has always crafted reporters' words into newspaper pages. The managers' assumption is that the writers themselves will process their work—a fantasy the newspaper bosses have fallen for before, invariably with disastrous results. The 40-plus *Telegraph* subs are being succeeded by 21 "production journalists" who are unlikely to be able to ensure that quality is maintained.

The NUJ is balloting for strike action against the way the new work is being implemented and is expecting a strong response. (The union is not against the technological changes and it's too late to strike against the redundancies because managers sent the 54 journalists packing with large sums of money.)

The severely destabilised survivors don't really know what their day-to-day priority will be. When competing demands are made by online, print, podcasting and video, what will they do? As well as being concerned about their jobs and working conditions, they are worried about the effect on their journalism. It might seem strange to those who regard the *Telegraph* as a right-wing Tory rag but the paper has a solid reputation for the quantity and quality of its news, in which its staff have always taken great pride.

One worry is that the journalism will come second to the commercial endeavour of the new enterprise. In a little-reported speech to the Association of Online Publishers' conference in London in October, Annelies van den Belt, the *Telegraph's* new media director, spelt it out. She said new production "touchpoints" were key to advertising plans.

"We have done a private study to understand our new way of working and come up with 32 products that we can match touchpoints to during the day. The challenge is that there is such a wide range of products out there, such a wide range of ways you can reach the consumer, that you need to find a platform that is quite close to your brand."

She added that it may be necessary

to increase the number of daily touchpoints to meet the demands of the consumer, which would in turn give multi-media advertisers the potential to better reach to their target groups. "The digital age is a tool to understand much better what consumers want and how to be relevant and that may mean in some cases blurring the line between editorial and advertising". Hurriedly she added: "Blurring the lines does not mean that you have to compromise on the quality of your editorial."

The *Telegraph's* new integrated newsroom, she said, would be "complemented by a trading team to manage day-to-day advertising sales and an integrated solutions team that responds to the needs of clients and approaches advertisers with new ideas about using the *Telegraph's* multi-media outputs."

Marketing people always talk in this kind of language, of course, but it is no wonder that journalists are suspicious. Those moving to Victoria—the process

will be completed in November—are having their working lives turned upside down.

They have watched the brutal sacking of dozens of respected colleagues, including seasoned foreign correspondents, among them the Paris correspondent Colin Randall, who had actually adapted with flair to the digital world and had created a popular blog about France.

When Randall was sacked the blog was inundated with angry responses from disgruntled readers. "I think that perhaps them wot rules at the DT are perhaps rather ashamed of their behaviour, and so they bloody well should be," said one.

The *Telegraph* is the paper of "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" of course. If he (or she!) is now disgusted at the *Telegraph* itself, its commercial future may not be as rosy as its starry-eyed technological and marketing evangelists believe.

Government split over licence fee

By Barry White

According to media reports, a major Government split has emerged over the BBC licence fee settlement.

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are sticking to an increase less than the rate of inflation. Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell, on the other hand wants an inflation-plus increase to fund new digital services, digital switchover and the move of some services to Salford.

It also seems that the new settlement will only cover the next three to five years, opening up the debate again less than half way through the Corporation's new 10-year charter. By 2012 digital switchover will have brought about radical transformation in the television industry.

Writing in the *Media Observer* on 8 October, James Robinson said:

"The BBC will be celebrating its 90th birthday by then and last week's battle over the licence fee will long be forgotten, but the corporation could look very different too. If Director-General Mark Thompson gets his way, it may more closely resemble Time Warner or another of the American titans he so admires—competing with other media giants to make and deliver

programmes over a huge range of devices. Whether the taxpayer should bankroll an operation of that size is a perennial subject of debate and when the question is posed again in 2012, Thompson may not get the answer he'd like."

Speaking later that week at the Smith Institute, in London, Mark Thompson announced that the BBC had lowered its claim for an increase in the licence fee from 2.3 per cent to 1.6 per cent above inflation.

He said a rise was still needed to meet the costs of digital switchover, which the BBC is expected to fund, despite the fact the switchover is government policy. Plans to move some services to Salford could also be scrapped if a lower settlement is announced.

The new reduced bid would mean the cost of a licence would, at today's prices, be £149 by 2013—below the £162.66 which a recent survey undertaken by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) found people would be willing to pay.

With more negotiations ahead between the DCMS and the BBC, details of the new licence fee settlement are not expected until the end of the year.



The new *Telegraph* newsroom in Victoria: print and online production are integrated in a single 24-hour operation

Landmark Lords libel ruling

By Julie-ann Davies

On 11 October five law lords unanimously ruled that journalists can enter a public interest defence in libel cases—even if the allegations they publish are later proved to be untrue.

The ruling came as the result of an appeal made by the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) against a decision made in the High Court and backed by the Court of Appeal that ordered them to pay £40,000 pounds in damages to Mohammad Jameel, a Saudi billionaire.

The WSJ story which was published in 2002 said the bank accounts of wealthy Saudis, including Mr Jameel, were monitored, at the request of the United States, by Saudi authorities to ensure money was not given, with or without prior knowledge, to the support of terrorism.

The ruling simplifies and clarifies the criteria necessary for the media to plead the "Reynold's Defence"—that their actions were in the public interest.

This means that as long as a story is investigated, written and published fairly and responsibly

and if the matter is of public importance, then the fact that it contains relevant, but defamatory, allegations against prominent individuals will not permit them to gain libel damages.

Phil Sherrell, media expert at international law firm Eversheds told *Free Press*: "When the Reynold's defence was created by the House of Lords in 2001 it was widely assumed that it would lead to a liberalisation of libel laws for the media giving them much greater latitude when reporting on matters of public interest.

"The approach of the courts since that time had dashed those hopes—in fact, reliance on the defence by newspapers invariably opened another front against them, putting their conduct in researching and writing the article under minute scrutiny. The defence has only rarely been upheld.

"With [this] decision the House of Lords is trying to radically alter the way in which the defence is applied, allowing editors much greater freedom to decide the particular way in which they report stories of general public interest."



PHOTO: MAGNUS ABERCH

MEPs campaign to protect sources

By Nicholas Jones

A campaign has been launched in the European Parliament to establish a European-wide legal framework for the protection of journalists' sources of information.

On 27 September MEPs in the Intergroup for Press Freedom held a public hearing in Strasbourg to voice their concerns about the way several member states have been using the war of terror as an excuse to force journalists to reveal their sources.

Evidence had emerged during the previous six months of suspect journalists having been planted in newsrooms in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands to act as spies for the state.

"Their task has been to monitor and identify informants", said Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists in his presentation to the hearing.

White feared that the Data Protection Bill, which had been approved by the

European Parliament and takes effect next year, might open the door to more official snooping as each state would be required to keep a record for six months of telephone numbers of calls to and from journalists.

Jean-Marie Cavada, the French MEP who chairs the intergroup supported by Socialists, Greens and Liberal Democrats, said he hoped initiatives taken in Belgium and Germany to protect informants might help form a basis for a legal framework which could apply across the European Union.

Under a Belgian law introduced 18 months ago the protection of whistleblowers had been strengthened to ensure that anyone "collecting, gathering or distributing information through the news media" could not be forced to reveal their sources.

Martine Simonis, General Secretary of the Belgian professional journalists association, said the protection of sources was in the public interest and it was important this safeguard applied

to people who "disseminated information on a voluntary or irregular basis" as well as professional journalists.

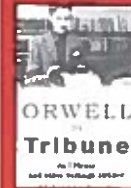
Germany's long standing law on protecting the identity of journalists' informants was strengthened in 2002 by legislation to prevent the confiscation of a reporter's notes, photographs and research material.

However, the courts have the power to order seizure in terrorist cases and Benno Poppelmann of the German journalists association urged further action to ensure the complete protection of sources and informants.

As a first step the 50 MEPs in the group hope to gain support for a resolution demanding the confidentiality of journalists' sources.

If approved by the parliament, it would have to be considered by the council of ministers and would strengthen moves to promote a European-wide code of practice safeguarding whistleblowers and protecting the identity of informants.

As he pleased



ORWELL IN TRIBUNE: 'AS I PLEASE' AND OTHER WRITINGS 1943-7
George Orwell, compiled and edited by Paul Anderson
Politico's Publishing £19.99

By Richard Keeble

George Orwell's time as a columnist on *Tribune* from 1943-47 amounts to a special moment in the history of British journalism. The quality and quantity of the output by any standards are remarkable. Journalism is inherently ephemeral, bashed out at speed, quickly consumed and quickly forgotten. These pieces, in contrast, still sparkle and surprise with their invention, wit, vast range of subject matter and solid thinking.

In addition to running the literary pages and providing occasional essays (most famously "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" of April 1946), Orwell

contributed a weekly "As I Please" column and it was these which confirmed his reputation as a leading, controversial voice of the Left.

In the remarkably close relationship he instinctively developed with his readers, Orwell can, in many ways, be seen as a proto-blogger, responding to letters sent to him directly or sent to *Tribune*, inviting letters, asking readers to answer queries or to point him towards a book, pamphlet or quotation he's looking for, running a competition for a short story or giving them a quirky brain teaser to answer.

This edited collection is a fitting celebration of Orwell's oeuvre at *Tribune* (his spell there only broken from February 1945 to November 1946 when he first served as war correspondent for David Astor's *Observer* and then worked on various other writing projects). In his substantial introduction, Paul Anderson, a former editor of *Tribune*, provides a fascinating history of the journal.

Controversies surrounding the links Orwell and a number of his colleagues may or may not have had with the

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This is to certify that
Mr. **GEORGE ORWELL**
of **The Tribune**



is a member of the **T. J. P.**
Branch of the National Union of Journalists.
Healie R. Alonso Branch Sec.
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intelligence services are underplayed—and the index is far too flimsy to be of any use. But these are minor criticisms. This text is a marvel no Orwellian should miss.

Where did it all go wrong for ITV?

By Patricia Holland

In September Ofcom ruled that a minimum of eight hours of children's programming must remain on ITV1.

Children's programmes, together with news, current affairs, regional programmes and documentaries are at the heart of public service broadcasting. And for over 50 years, ITV was a pillar of a vibrant public service system.

Today, ITV sees itself only as a business delivering audiences to advertisers. It has been lobbying Ofcom to reduce its commitments in all the "public service" areas. In consequence it has lost viewers and vitality. But the history of Britain's first commercial channel suggests things could have been otherwise.

ITV was born as the nation re-adjusted after the Second World War. Commercial pressure groups, programme makers and politicians argued the working classes were not well-served by the BBC. They claimed an independent television channel would deepen democratic expression and serve a widening body of consumers.

The 1954 Act set up a group of regional television companies responsible to an Independent Television Authority (ITA), whose brief was to ensure that the commercial element was restrained and public service values maintained.

In 1962 the Authority was given new powers and set out to ensure that children's

programmes, education, news and current affairs were guaranteed places in the scheduling. The contracts awarded to the companies depended on fulfilling these requirements, and in the franchise round of 1968, several lost their licences—a procedure many condemned as arbitrary and personality based.

As the BBC flourished in the 1960s, competition between the channels became a lively mixture of genre—the "popular" side by side with the "serious". For many this was a golden age—but it couldn't last. When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 a new Government committee proposed the ITV franchises should be auctioned to the highest bidder, rather than being awarded on values such as "quality". Broadcasting became a private commodity rather than a public good, and the principle was enshrined in the 1990 Broadcasting Act.

The 1990 Act also replaced the Independent Broadcasting Authority (successor to the ITA) with a new, "light touch" regulator, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) with reduced powers to put programme requirements on companies.

Thus, by the mid-1990s, ITV had lost its regulatory protection and financial security. The new multi-channel world was developing, and the established channels entered a period of aggressive scheduling designed to capture each other's audiences. By 2001 ITV was losing out in the ratings to

BBC1 A series of mergers began changing the channel's character and regional identity. By 2004 almost all the independent franchise holders had disappeared into ITV plc.

The 2003 Communications Act dealt the final blow. The ITC was swallowed up the Office of Communications (Ofcom) who had a declared commitment to public service broadcasting—but only for public service broadcasters—chiefly the BBC. As for ITV, it declared: "It is better for ITV1 to prepare for its future role as soon as possible, rather than to be asked to preserve in full a range of commitments designed originally for a very different analogue world".

And there is the crunch. As analogue switch off begins to roll out across the country, and the population is offered hundreds of channels easily accessible on digital, Ofcom are prepared to abandon even such basic requirements for ITV as keeping its children's programmes.

But the compromises and happy accidents of the past show that there are alternatives to complete deregulation and a free-market ideology. Without a strong independent, commercially funded channel, the BBC faces no competitor. Public service television is the weaker and the UK public are the losers.

Patricia Holland is the author of *The Angry Buzz: This Week and Current Affairs Television*, published by I.B. Tauris

European television regulation report reaches critical stage

By Barry White

The Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament is currently considering a draft report by one of its members, rapporteur Ruth Hieronymi, on the directive on audio-visual media services (formerly Television Without Frontiers).

The report is scheduled to be discussed by the plenary session of the Parliament in December. MEPs are likely to have to examine over 1,000 amendments.

A positive aspect of the draft report is the suggested prohibition of product placement in any programme other than fiction and sports.

However, the report proposes that programmes can be interrupted for a commercial break every 30 minutes, whereas the initial European Commission proposal wanted commercial

breaks limited to once every 35 minutes.

MEPs considering the draft directive are being subjected to heavy lobbying by the audio-visual industry according to Marc Gruber, European Director of the European Federation of Journalists.

He said: "The tabling of over 1,000 amendments shows strong interest in the debate. MEPs have also received representations from civil society and citizens' groups as well as from trades unions."

Given the heavy lobbying and intensive debate it is unlikely that the directive will be finalised before next summer.

Meanwhile the CPBF has submitted its response to the consultation on the revision of the directive by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. A copy of the submission may be found on the CPBF web site at www.cpbf.org.uk

Secrets trial to be secret

By Julie-ann Davies

The trial of two men charged with leaking the details of a 2004 conversation between Tony Blair and President Bush will be held in private.

Reports say the document reveals how President Bush proposed bombing Al-Jazeera's Qatari headquarters.

Former Civil Servant David Keogh and Leo O'Connor, a former Labour researcher, have both been charged under the Official Secrets Act.

Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said the risk to national security outweighed "the interest of open public justice." O'Connor's solicitor, Neil Clark, who has read the memo, said he does not believe it would embarrass the British Government.

Mr Justice Aitkens ruled in favour of a private trial. He stated that without a private trial the Government might have dropped the case and become reluctant to bring similar prosecutions in the future.

Worst EU Lobby Awards go public

The search is on to discover the worst EU lobbying of 2006. The EU lobby awards are organised by Corporate Europe Observatory, in association with LobbyControl, Spinwatch and Friends of the Earth Europe.

In the lobbying game, it takes two to tango, the lobbyist and the public official being lobbied so there are two categories of award: The Worst EU Lobbying and The Worst Privileged Access.

This year, the organisers

are inviting members of the public to make nominations for the Worst EU Lobby Award.

So if you know of a case of dubious influence peddling, grievous greenwash, or hideous hidden agendas then let them know. Public voting will take place between November 6 and December 1 2006.

Full details of the awards and how to nominate can be found at <http://www.worst-lobby.eu>

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