

THE BBC IS NOT A WELFARE AGENCY

Blame for TV licence fee mess should fall on Tories, not the Corporation

By **Granville Williams**

MediaNorth is a critical friend of the BBC. As a public service broadcaster it has been under relentless political attack since Thatcher's assault on the BBC over the *Real Lives* programme which led to the resignation of the BBC Director General, Alasdair Milne, in 1987.

New Labour also led the assault on the BBC after the 'dodgy dossier' controversy and the incredibly biased Hutton Report which led to the resignation of Director General Greg Dyke and the BBC Chair of Governors, Gavyn Davies in 2004.

The BBC's commercial rivals, the Murdoch press, the Telegraph group owned by the secretive Barclay Brothers and Lord Rothermere's Mail newspapers, also seize every opportunity to attack the BBC. And sometimes the BBC's own failures provide them with that ammunition.

Now the consequences of another assault on the BBC are

creating great anger but the danger is that popular anger will be focused on the BBC rather than the politicians who created this situation.

The BBC, after a widely publicised consultation about free licence fees for the over-75s, has announced that after 2020 the free licence concession will be limited to the 1.5 million people who claim pension credit.

This decision has, rightly, caused outrage. The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) urged its members to demonstrate outside BBC buildings across the country. The *Daily Express* had a double page on 14 June of an NPC demonstration outside BBC Media City in Salford, with actor Ricky Tomlinson (aged 79) leading the protest.

But the focus for people's wrath should not be the BBC but the Tories.

It was the former Conservative chancellor George Osborne's wrongheaded and



The National Pensioners' Convention has been at the forefront of protests about the over-75s' TV licence. Photo: NUJ

mean austerity policy that loaded the cost of his damaging social and economic policies on to the Corporation.

His licence fee wheeze was to compel the Corporation to agree to shoulder the expense out of its own £4bn licence fee income. In our view this was illegal, breached the BBC Charter and Director General Lord Hall should have mounted a legal challenge at the time. But we are where we are.

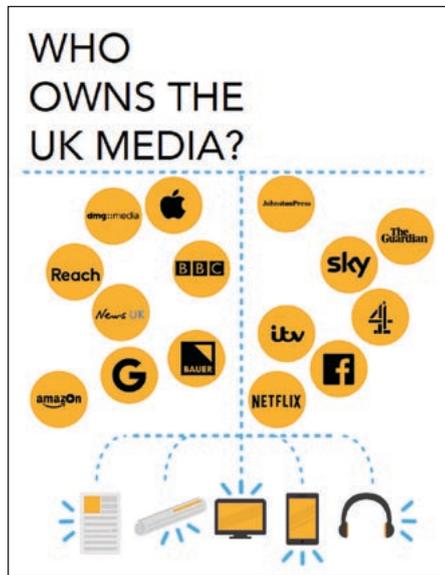
The Tories have form in burdening the BBC. Other costs imposed on the BBC include making the BBC cover the

costs of digital switchover from analogue TV; rural broadband rollout; local TV; funding of Welsh-language channel S4C, funding of the World Service and Monitoring Service; paying for journalists employed by local newspapers to cover local democracy and funding commercial broadcasters to make children's tv and radio.

The Conservative government has also broken a 2017 election promise that the licence fee would remain free to pensioners over the age of 75 for the duration of this parliament.

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Action needed on media ownership



Essential reading on why we need action to challenge the blockbuster media and tech companies

THE Media Reform Coalition (MRC) have produced *Who Owns the UK Media?* The MRC says, 'We hope that this report will provide data and arguments that will be useful to all those who want to campaign for a more pluralistic media in which a genuine diversity of views, voices and opinions are aired.'

The report shows that just three companies (News UK, Daily Mail Group and Reach) dominate 83% of the national newspaper market (up from 71% in 2015). When online readers are included, just five companies (News UK, Daily Mail Group, Reach, Guardian and Telegraph) dominate nearly 80% of the market, slightly up from their last report.

In the area of local news, just five companies (Gannett, Johnston Press, Trinity Mirror, Tindle and Archant) account for

80% of titles (back in 2015, six companies had the same share). Two companies have 46% of all commercial local analogue radio stations and two-thirds of all commercial digital stations.

The digital landscape is hardly less concentrated. Google dominates search while popular apps like Instagram and WhatsApp are owned by Facebook, itself the most popular social media site.

The key message of the report is: 'Concentrated ownership creates conditions in which wealthy individuals and organisations can amass vast political and economic power and distort the media landscape to suit their interests. Urgent action is needed in order both to address high levels of concentration in particular media markets and to protect against further concentration in others.'

● You can read the report at www.wwww.mediareform.org.uk

BBC is not a welfare agency

● From front page

It is the politics of the absurd for Downing Street to ask the BBC to revisit a 'disappointing' decision after forcing the broadcaster to enact a policy the Conservative party had promised it would block.

What should happen now? This was a decision forced on the BBC. The Tory government is intent on shifting the blame for what was likely to be a deeply unpopular cut to another public institution.

The Tory supporting press will also reinforce this dishonest message and channel people's anger towards the BBC.

We need to ensure the focus for people's wrath should not be the BBC but rather the Tory government. The Age UK online petition is spot on. If the state believes that pensioners should have free services, it ought to pay for them. You can sign it at: www.campaigns.ageuk.org.uk

Cuts to local news and jobs in radio

LOCAL commercial radio used to be distinctive, catering for particular towns or regions, but over time stations were merged into national brands like Capital, Heart and Smooth. These in turn are owned by a giant conglomerate called Global.

Ofcom however gave the green light to deregulate the conditions for local FM licences, for example, by reducing the minimum amount of local programming from seven hours a day to just three and by widening the areas where these can be produced.

The result was that Global announced that it was axing around 60 local breakfast and drive-time programmes and closing eleven local studios. It means that a single news team will cover an area which stretches from Cornwall to Gloucester.



The loss of local newspapers – 245 have closed since 2005 – is now going to be reinforced by the demise of local radio news, and hundreds of local radio presenters, producers and journalists will lose their jobs.

The Local Radio Group commented, 'Commercial radio in the UK is thriving right now so this deregulation absolutely didn't need to happen. Success is breeding greed for just a few people heading up big corpo-

rate companies and who appear to have no real interest in the medium, other than making as much money as they can at the expense of all others. And the supposed regulator of the industry is allowing them to get away with it!'

● John Grogan MP has put down EDM #2442 to highlight widespread concerns. Please contact your own MP and urge him to support it.

Charges dropped in a massive victory for press freedom

By **Granville Williams**

THE lead story in the last issue of *MediaNorth* was the attempt by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Durham Constabulary to pursue allegations of criminal behaviour against Northern Ireland journalists, Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey, over their documentary, *No Stone Unturned*, on the 1994 Loughlin Island massacre. The two journalists had been on police bail since August 2018 but were never charged.

In a significant press freedom victory on 3 June all charges against Birney and McCaffrey were dropped after a High Court hearing the previous week found the arrests ‘inappropriate’. But key questions about this whole incident require urgent answers.

The work of Birney and McCaffrey in *No Stone Unturned* helped focus attention on the police failures in investigating the 1994 massacre at Loughlin Island. But it did more than that. It produced evidence of police collusion and identified those responsible for the murder by the UVF of Adrian Rogan, Malcolm Jenkinson, Barney Green, Dan McCreanor, Patrick O’Hare and Eamon Byrne.

Questionable motivation

The official response was to go after the messengers. From August 2018 the threat of prosecution hung over the two journalists. No evidence of criminality was produced by the police, yet for nine months the two had their professional lives put on hold, and the threat of prosecution hanging over them, by the actions of two police forces whose motivation was at the very least questionable.

No Stone Unturned is an uncomfortable film which takes



Trevor Birney, Barry McCaffrey and Gerry Carson, joint chair of the NUJ's Irish Executive Council.

Photo: Kevin Cooper, Photoline

risks. Birney and McCaffrey understood that and it was the reason they alerted the PSNI to the content of their film in advance, to ensure that their work did not compromise any police investigation. The response of the PSNI was an *ex parte* application for a court order, thus depriving the journalists of the opportunity to oppose the move or indeed to receive advance notice of the police actions.

In the High Court hearing Lord Chief Justice Sir Declan Morgan vindicated the two journalists and their professional obligations to protect confidential sources of information. He also emphasised the essential role of journalists in holding the state to account, “particularly in a society like ours where confidence in the institutions is so important”.

Two outstanding examples of what Barry McDonald, QC for Trevor Birney and Fine Point Productions, described as a “warped mindset” were also revealed at the High Court hearing.

The retired British police officer Darren Ellis had been called in by the PSNI to investigate the alleged theft of docu-

ments. In his notebook, Ellis expressed concern that lives had been “put in danger for merely having the misfortune of being involved in terrorist atrocities at whatever level”. There were incredulous gasps when McDonald quoted that passage.

Terrorist rants

There were gasps, too, when counsel revealed that Ellis had contacted Grahame Morris, a Labour MP in Durham, after the NUJ visit to the House of Commons when McCaffrey and Birney met a number of MPs. Morris had subsequently received a call from someone “purporting to be Darren Ellis”. The caller was “foul and abusive” to his staff and had “ranted” about the MP having met “terrorists” and “criminals”.

Such behaviour does raise questions about the statement, after the release of Birney and McCaffrey from police bail, by the Chief Constable of Durham Police, Mike Barton: “At all times, my officers have acted in good faith, within the law and followed due process. We do, however, accept and respect the decision of the High Court last week.”

Seamus Dooley, the Irish Sec-

retary of the NUJ, commented, “It’s simply too little, too late and goes no way towards restoring confidence in the police service. There’s no hint of regret for the grief and distress caused to Barry McCaffrey, Trevor Birney, their families and professional colleagues or for the failures outlined by the High Court.”

He believes, “The Policing Board of Northern Ireland must intervene and examine the handling of this case, including the preparation of the *ex parte* injunction, the manner in which the searches were carried out, including the degrading and humiliating treatment of McCaffrey and Birney, the draconian bail conditions and the cost of this relentless pursuit of two journalists whose only crime was to seek the truth.”

The NUJ has played a key role in winning this important case and has acknowledged ‘the support of local, national and international organisations including Amnesty NI, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the International Federation of Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists and all those who helped highlight this grave injustice’.

Is sunlight the b Censorship, the alt-

In August 2018 Alex Jones, the promoter of the conspiracy theory site InfoWars, was banned from Apple, Spotify, Facebook and YouTube. Twitter did not ban Jones. The Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey tweeted, "Accounts like Jones' can often sensationalize issues and spread unsubstantiated rumors, so it's critical journalists document, validate, and refute such information directly so people can form their own opinions. This is what serves the public conversation best." Zack Beauchamp wrote in *Vox* that Dorsey got it wrong, and argued that conspiracy theories, once they spread, create hermetically

It's up to us to defeat them

By **Tim Gopill**

Some years ago ITV decided to produce a debate programme on the resurgence of the far right. They invited a handful of BNP fascists to a studio debate with anti-fascist groups who would have far outnumbered them. All the anti-fascists refused to take part.

There were frantic negotiations and eventually it was decided to split the show in half. First the Nazis had the whole studio to themselves. Then the cream of British anti-racists competed to denounce them, and presenter Jon Snow and the producers of the show, for putting it on.

What was gained from this performance? What were the Left scared of? Being seen to legitimise the fascists? But their righteousness was not the issue. This was public debate; that's what the media are for. Why turn down the chance to destroy them? It's commendable to want to keep fascists off the air, but the media are not obliged to deny them.

No-one has a right to media access, but the media have a duty to allow all sides of public affairs to be represented. Xenophobic attitudes to immigration are now widely held, so they have to be aired. It's up to the Left to defeat them, not the media.

And if you deny access to anyone at all, then you cannot complain when others do it to you. You cannot claim a right to be heard yourself if you deny it to others. If you ban a blatant fascist or racist, who DO you allow? Where do you draw the line? If you start a line that goes Robinson, Farage, Boris Johnson ... where does it end?

There's an answer to that: it's in the law. Inciting race hate is a crime, which has a high level of public support and the media will never publish such material, but no-one can prevent anyone from speaking in advance.

Right-wingers thrive on censorship. We are talking not just about the ultra-right, but the populist right who base their appeal on bogus claims to be anti-establishment and on the side of the people – claims that require them to be censored.

Of course they are charlatans: Donald Trump and Nigel Farage are pretty much as 'establishment' as you can get, but have gathered votes by the

million as supposed 'outsiders'. Their voters are not necessarily racists but many are real outsiders looking for a voice to be heard.

A prominent element of their message is that the media are biased against them because they are run by an elite group of middle class liberals who loathe them. That last bit is probably true, but to make sure they are loathed, they behave as obnoxiously as possible at every opportunity.

On 13 May Farage was interviewed on BBC1 by Andrew Marr and appeared to lose it, as he lapsed into a furious tantrum when asked about statements he had made in the past, a routine practice in political interviews. He demanded instead to be asked the questions he wanted:

"This is absolutely ludicrous. I've never in my life seen a more ridiculous interview than this. You are not prepared to talk about what is going on in this country today. You're in denial, the BBC is in denial, the Tory and Labour parties are in denial."

I'm sure some people were cheering him on, just as

● **Continued on Page 6**

Art:
Jerry Thompson
123graphics.com



Best disinfectant? Right and the media

sealed communities that are impervious to correction. The only way to stop this process is to stop them from spreading on platforms like social media, which is exactly what Twitter decided not to do. "The other companies recognized that Jones was spreading dangerous lies, and that journalists simply couldn't debunk them. The only way to stop these ideas was to deprive them of oxygen, to prevent people from being exposed to them in the first place," he argued.

This section of *MediaNorth* explores these issues and your views are welcome

No platform for fascists

By **Pete Lazenby**

Soon after the end of the Second World War in 1945, British troops began to return home.

They included British servicemen and women who were Jewish. They had played their part in the defeat of fascism.

But on arrival home they were horrified to find that although fascism had been militarily defeated in continental Europe, it was being allowed to grow in Britain.

British fascist leaders who were imprisoned for the duration of the war had been released and were back on the streets spreading their racist and anti-Semitic poison.

Fascist thugs were attacking Jewish people, homes and businesses. The Jewish ex-service men and women, like other service people, had seen comrades fall in battle fighting fascism. Added to that were emerging details of the atrocities of the Holocaust – six million Jewish people systematically murdered, along with three million others: communists, Russian prisoners, homosexuals, pacifists, travelling people such as Roma, and others.

The returnees saw that the freedoms for which they had fought so hard were being exploited at home to promote the very system they had defeated abroad.

A group of the returned British Jewish ex-service men and women held a meeting at Maccabi House in London. They formed the 43 Group, named after the number of people who attended. They declared their intent in simple terms - to stop rising fascism in Britain by whatever means necessary. The group's numbers grew into hundreds, and not all were Jewish. They attacked and broke up fascist meetings.

Some years ago I met in Leeds one of the founders of the 43 Group, Morris Beckman. He said he had no regrets about the actions of the 43 Group. His only regret was that it had been necessary to form the group. He told me: "We did what had to be done."

That was then. Today in Britain and across the rest of Europe fascism is on the rise again. Fascist and racist groups such as the English Defence League have mired our streets whilst under police protection.

Fascists such as the British

National Party have stood successfully in local elections.

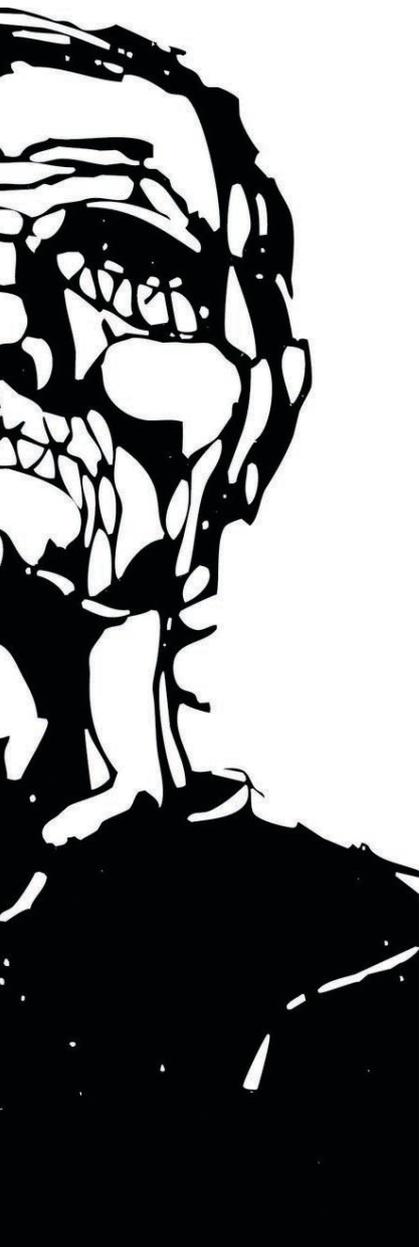
Though they may deny it, sections of the national press have provided encouragement for the rise of such groups and their successors by publicising a continuing drip-drip of hatred against immigrants, Muslims, asylum seekers, travelling people and other minorities. The *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, *Daily Star* and the *Sun* have a lot to answer for.

Government action was finally prompted when fascist group National Action went a step too far with its open commitment to violence in pursuit of its cause. The group was proscribed, and membership was made a criminal offence.

And now we are asking ourselves – we who are committed to freedom of expression, we who recognise that 'Freedom of the Press' in Britain really means the 'Freedom of those who own the Press' – how we apply our beliefs in the face of the rise of fascism.

Do we publicly debate with fascists? Do we try to destroy them with words of logic and morality, as they peddle hatred of others, as they use so

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No platform for fascists (From Page 5)

effortlessly the 'blame culture' in which the causes of poverty and suffering in our country are laid at the doors of people of a different colour, or religious faith, or lifestyle?

Do we allow the abuse and exploitation of freedom of expression for the promotion of an ideology which, if turned into power, would end any hope of that freedom in the future? Or do we pursue a 'no platform for fascists' policy,

which appears to be at odds with our belief in, and commitment to, freedom of expression?

I believe that arguing that freedom of expression is a principle which gives fascists the right to express their vile ideology to millions of people via national TV is misguided.

One of my reasons is that our much-trumpeted freedom of expression is already, at best, limited. Lines limiting free-

dom of expression are drawn repeatedly by successive Governments and a monopolistic media, including the BBC. (I am reminded of a cartoon produced in the 1980s, depicting a BBC TV panel interviewer introducing his two guests with the words: "On my right is a Government spokesman, and on my left a swivel-eyed Trot from the lunatic fringe.")

The violence used by the 43 Group is not the answer today.

However, we must continually fight for real freedom of expression. But inviting fascists to spout forth their bile on publicly-owned national television is a step too far. That platform, at least, should be denied to them.

Pete Lazenby was Industrial Correspondent for the Yorkshire Evening Post and is now Northern Correspondent for the Morning Star.

It's up to us to defeat them

(From Page 4)

thousands at Trump rallies stamp their feet and jeer - and on occasions assault - the journalists who are giving them the publicity they claim to be denied.

Farage gets more airtime on the BBC than any party leader, by miles. He has notched up 33 appearances, so far, on Question Time. After the European elections, he complained, as he always does, that his new Brexit Party was "grossly under-represented" on the BBC, yet it was never off the screen!

It's all a calculated act - though Farage's anger that Marr should have had the effrontery to question him in such an impertinent fashion did look quite convincing.

But why should the media go along with their demand for victimhood? The media's best response is: "We're going to be transparently fair to you whether you like it or not."

Then it's up to the Left to get down to business, to take the fascists on and prove them wrong.

Social media's far-right surge

By Phil Hearse

The March 15 mass shooting of 50 Muslim worshippers in New Zealand by an Australian white supremacist highlighted the role of social media in inspiring the racist right. But extreme right colonisation of social media goes much further than the hate-filled chat rooms that inspired the shooter, Brendon Tarrant.

All the forces of the far right - from Donald Trump, to extreme right mass parties like the Lega in Italy and the Rassemblement Nationale in France, to 'Tommy Robinson' in Britain - are paying increasing attention to their online presence. And all of them fuel the growth of Islamophobia and the racist attacks it generates.

The core of the far-right social media ecosystem is the United States. It is the site of an 'echo chamber', which bounces extreme right fake news and reactionary propaganda between online sites and TV stations, to Rupert Murdoch's Fox News to Donald Trump's Twitter feed.

An example of how right-wing social and mainstream media reinforce one another was the accusation in November 2018 that Hungarian financier George Soros and the US Democrats were funding the caravan of Central American refugees to the US border. Money, it was alleged, was given to migrants in Honduras to participate in the caravan. This seems to have started on Fox News, repeated on the alt-right Twitter clone Gab, and then put onto Twitter by Florida Republican Congressman Matt Gaetz. Trump repeated it on Twitter.

Key right-wing websites are Breitbart and Gateway Pundit, the latter run by mul-

ti-millionaire businessman Jif Hoft, who is frequently quoted by Fox News star commentator Sean Hannity. Hoft was quoted numerous times by Trump during his election campaign. Hannity in turn is listened to daily by Donald Trump, and inspires many of his tweets. Slightly further away from sanity is online TV station Infowars, run by Alex Jones. Jones, who has hundreds of thousands of viewers to the Youtube version of his site, specialises in lunatic theories. Trump takes him seriously and has appeared on Jones' show. British Islamophobic rabble-rouser 'Tommy Robinson' has been an honoured guest of Infowars.

Breitbart, Infowars and Gateway Pundit intersect with the message boards where open Nazis and racists exchange hate-filled posts. Getting into the mass media is a key objective of the hard right, and no one in the UK has succeeded more than Nigel Farage, who since 2000 has appeared 33 times on Question Time, joint top of the guest score with veteran Tory grandee Ken Clarke. Tommy Robinson has been regularly featured in the mainstream right-wing press, which has helped him gain hundreds of thousands of followers on his YouTube channel, despite being evicted from Facebook and Instagram.

Resources devoted to their social media presence mean they are beating the Left hands down. Although there are dangers in handing social media companies the right to determine what is 'extremist', the Left and anti-racists should support closing racist and fascist platforms, but also crucially support their own anti-racist and radical alternatives, which, unlike the far right, will not get boosted by the mass media.

● Phil Hearse is the author of the pamphlet *Full Spectrum Mendacity* on far right social media which can be ordered at www.pruk.org/product/full-spectrum-mendacity-social-media-and-the-far-right

Return of the right-wing anti-Labour lies

By **Tim Gopsill**

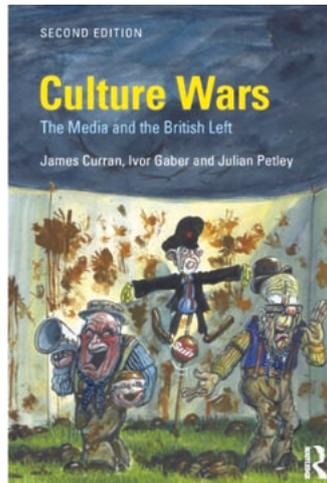
The hostility of national media to Corbyn's Labour Party is an ominous throwback to the worst decade in the history of both.

Britain always had a right-wing press, but the 1980s was the decade of its greatest shame, when its infatuation with Margaret Thatcher brought it closer to government than ever before or since. The extent of its brutal treatment of the Labour Party, Labour-led councils and trade unions was graphically set out by James Curran, Ivor Gaber and Julian Petley in the groundbreaking media analysis book *Culture Wars* in 2005. All three are media academics with some journalistic history.

From the mid-1980s on, the party put huge effort into appeasing the enemy. Party leader Neil Kinnock hired right-wing spinners Peter Mandelson and Philip Gould to direct a Shadow Communications Agency, which not only set up news management systems but geared the whole party to fall in line with their enemies' demands.

It seemed to work. It was unprecedented when the *Sun*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Observer* and *Financial Times* – even for a couple of years the *Daily Express* – backed Blair's New Labour Party.

New Labourites blissfully imagined that such successes were down to their brilliant media strategies. This is fantasy. Labour's newfound approval from the right-wing media was the outcome of its move to the right, killing off democracy in local government and the party's own structures, supporting Tory privatisations and cuts in services, and generally capitulating to Thatcherite neo-lib-



CULTURE WARS
The Media and the British Left

by James Curran, Ivor Gaber and Julian Petley

Routledge 2019, 275 pp
£39.95 (Amazon £26.99)

eralism! That's what the press were interested in, not smart PR.

When Labour members eventually woke up, shook off the Blairite compromises and elected Jeremy Corbyn (twice) to lead the party, the onslaught resumed. And Curran, Petley and Gaber have rapidly produced an updated edition of their book, applying the lessons of 30 years ago to the new attacks.

But as James Curran points out in his central chapter 'Toxifying the New Urban Left', covering the demise of the Greater London Council (GLC) under Ken Livingstone in the mid-1980s, the press was not the core of the problem:

The press's role was secondary. Demands for abolition [of the GLC] were initiated not by the press but by right-wing activists ... Considerable momentum had been built up long before right-wing newspapers

became belated converts to the cause ... it is doubtful whether the GLC would have survived anyway.

The next and pivotal chapter in the new edition of *Culture Wars*, 'Slaying the Dragon' by Ivor Gaber, sets out how in fact the media were being used by Labour leaders to demonise and destroy their own internal opposition.

They created not one new party but two – New Labour and 'Old Labour', an artifice taking in everyone from left urban activists, through Militant and other ultra-left groupings to backbench MPs and the entire trade union movement. Old Labour had to be created because if one was to be seen slaying a dragon then it is important to ensure that the dragon is as terrifying and potentially dangerous as possible and that Old Labour be seen to be resisting the changes.

Gaber identifies a new assailant: while in the 1980s broadcast news, because regulated, had invariably been fairer than the papers, the BBC has now become so right-wing that its coverage is among the worst. He cites research by the Media Reform Coalition into the reporting of Corbyn's second leadership campaign in 2016 which revealed:

The BBC evening news bulletins gave nearly twice as much unchallenged airtime to sources critical of Corbyn compared to those that supported him. In contrast, it found the ITV bulletins 'relatively balanced'.

Even BBC bosses, he writes, were critical of the toxic commen-

tary of political editor Laura Kuenssberg, and he quotes ITV political editor Robert Peston describing the reporting of Labour in the 2017 election as "the most relentlessly negative campaign that any of us have ever seen".

Sadly though, the book has come too soon. There is not a word on the media's part in winding up the extraordinary hype around the alleged extent of anti-semitism in the Labour Party, which has been running for three years now. There would be rich pickings there – and elsewhere – for as long as Labour stays Left, and they might have held off for a year or two.

The anti-semitism narrative, like those of the 1980s, show however that this is not all 'fake news'. The stories are not made up: the attacks on Corbyn are real, coming from his own right-wing MPs and Jewish institutions.

Campaigners for better media should challenge the originators as well as the amplifiers of the lies.



It's really not *that* grim up North

C4 has confirmed that none of its executives will be moving North when C4 locates some of its operations to the site of the former Majestic nightclub at the centre of Leeds when it is completed next year. Until

then it will have temporary accommodation nearby

C4 also confirmed that up to 90% of Channel 4 staff were choosing to take redundancy rather than move to the new regional base in Leeds or satel-

lite offices in Bristol and Glasgow.

C4 will move 300 staff jobs out of London at a cost of £50 million and the Leeds base will employ around 200 people.

More job cuts at JPI

JPI MEDIA which owns 170 regional titles, including the *Yorkshire Post* and *Yorkshire Evening Post*, has cut nearly 70 editorial staff.

These cuts take place as the company took on 19 community reporters as part of a scheme funded by Facebook.

These cuts underline the message in a new book, *Local Democracy, Journalism and Public Relations* by Carmel O'Toole and Adrian Roxan, published by Routledge, that exposes the challenge of holding local politicians to account as government cuts hit council communications and local papers close in response to the shift to digital news.

The authors say, 'The "nose for news" has been downgraded and local journalists, once the champions of public interest coverage, are a force much diminished, working harder than ever before, with fewer people and chasing online hits, damaging local democracy as a result, with no one holding those in power to account.'



New edition of *Shafted* is launched

The new edition of *Shafted* was launched at the AGM of Yorks and Humber TUC in April this year. Frances O'Grady, the TUC General Secretary, wrote the Foreword for the book.

The book is published by CPBF(North) and costs £9.99. You can buy a copy for £11.00 inc P&P from [HYPERLINK "mailto:cpbfnorth@outlook.com"](mailto:cpbfnorth@outlook.com) cpbfnorth@outlook.com

CPBF (North) meetings



LEEDS BOOK LAUNCH FOR *SHAFTED*

Tuesday 16 July 7.00pm
Room 10, Bridge Street Church Community Hub, Rider Street, Leeds LS9 7BQ

Speaker: Granville Williams
editor of MediaNorth and *Shafted*

Admission Free

Meeting organised by the Ford Maguire Society and Leeds & Wakefield Unite Community Branch

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL at Wortley Hall, South Yorkshire

Sunday 11 August, 3.00pm
Unison Room,
Revealing Hidden Secrets: The Miners' Strike Cabinet Papers

Speaker: Nicholas Jones, former BBC Industrial and Political Correspondent
Plus: CPBF (North) bookstall with the new edition of *Shafted*

SCOTTISH BOOK LAUNCH FOR *SHAFTED*

Tuesday 10 Sept, 6.30pm
Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria St, Edinburgh EH1 2JL
Admission free

Speakers: Nicholas Jones, former BBC Industrial Correspondent; **Granville Williams**, editor of MediaNorth and *Shafted*, **Morag Livingstone**, film maker and investigative journalist who contributed a chapter: "When the long arm of the law overreaches"