The Tory Press and How To Fight It

BETWEEN Fleet Street and Downing Street there is a torrid love affair. The enchantment began in earnest with the coverage by the mass media of the 'winter of discontent'. Health and other public sector workers were transformed into a public menace and then murderers in the pay strike which preceded Margaret Thatcher's election victory.

After 12 months of Tory rule, the press barons and the government were so completely in each other's arms that anyone who resisted Thatcher's policies was well on the way to the status of 'terrorist' in the pages of the dailies.

For the whole of Fleet Street, radio and TV, the TUC's Day of Action on 14 May 1980 was the 'Day of Shame'. What continues to unite the mass media against the mass labour movement is that no one is to be allowed to say No to the Tories by way of collective action.

Press freedom was on the agenda at both the Labour Party conference and the Trades Union Congress in 1979. The mass media's anti-working class bias was roundly condemned, but the proposals fell well short of effective action to counter the mounting abuse being heaped on trades unionists.

In this short pamphlet we look at the nature of this bias and what lies behind it; how trades unionists can answer back in the bosses' media; and the kind of alternative media which can aid the fightback against the Tories, particularly the need for the labour leadership to launch a mass daily newspaper.

Enter the 'Bully Boys'

Victor Matthews, chief executive of Trafalgar House Investments, made a few jottings in his personal memo pad on 16 April, 1980. 'The unelected Lenin Murray and all the Bully Boys', he scribbled, have got to be stopped from 'manipulating the people just for political aims'.

Bosses of big companies are often carried away with thoughts such as these. Trafalgar House owns the Ritz Hotel and dozens of other companies, and Matthews is also chairperson of the Cunard Steamship Co., so he is often preoccupied with anxieties about the labour movement and its leadership.

But Matthews' memo pad happens to be the *Daily Express*, and thus instead of finding their way to a wastepaper bin, his jottings — with headlines and cartoons to match — are thrust through a few million letter boxes every morning.

Matthews, in his capacity as chairperson of Express Newspapers, a subsidiary of Trafalgar House, did not stop at articles aimed at demobilising the TUC's Day of Action. He set an example to other employers by taking four print unions to the High Court, where he obtained a ruling that the unions could not legally call on their members at the *Express* to strike on 14 May.

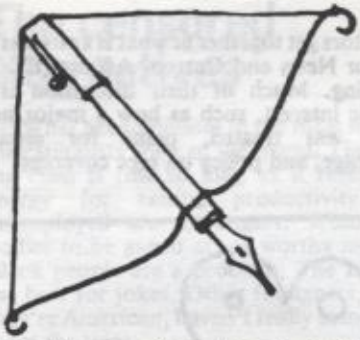
That Tory judges should agree with a Tory newspaper group that is was unacceptable for trades unionists to take action against the policies of a Tory government is hardly a matter of surprise. Yet within hours of the verdict the mass media was discovering a 'revolt' against the 'Day of Shame' in banner headlines.

Teams of investigative journalists were put to work to find evidence of this revolt. Any group of trades unionists prepared to grin and bear Thatcher's policies was guaranteed a place in the limelight. The *Sun's* 'Rank and file rebel over Day of Shame' on 9 May, followed the next day with 'Flop of the Century!' was typical of the mass media's counter-offensive.

The tirade, almost exclusively aimed at the TUC leadership, was unprecedented this side of the 1926 General Strike.

The foot-in-the door press hounding normally reserved for minor film stars or trade union militants involved in one of Fleet Street's 'scandals' was granted to Len Murray, on holiday in Madeira. Strangely, business executives in the news never have their homes or holiday hotel pictured in the press.

The tactic was straightforward enough: the Tories and the media were out to make the most of the failure of the large majority of the trade union leadership to issue an instruction to strike on 14 May, and its queasiness over declaring it to be political action against the government.



On the eve of the Day of Action, the press turned themselves into anti-strike sheets with a practical orientation, offering advice about how to deal with such problems as transport stoppages. On the day itself — when there was no national press — the broadcasting services sounded like a rail and bus inquiry service. In short the mass media's strike-breaking role was in top gear.

The excluded 'minority'

It goes without saying thatworkers who did take action on 14 May — between one and two million of them — did not have their voices heard in the mass media. While some sections of the media, such as the BBC, are forever telling us of their concern to serve 'minorities', the fact is that the media are deaf to the concerns and views of millions of people — particularly those they deem to be upsetting to the status quo.

There's nothing new in that. On the Vietnam war, for example, every major national newspaper supported the American death machine. With a single voice, they campaigned for Britain's entry into the Common Market; there was a 40 per cent No vote in that poll. With the exception of the Daily Mirror, they all want Britain to pursue its war in the North of Ireland by keeping its troops there.

In terms of newspaper circulation, the Tories received proportionally twice as much support from the national press in the May 1979 election as they obtained at the polls. Now, whatever their qualms about Thatcher's rule, no Fleet Street paper in any way backs those who actively oppose the government's policies.

The *Daily Mirror* proclaims its support for the Labour Party. More precisely, it backs its kind of Labour Party. Like the rest of Fleet Street, it supported James Callaghan against Michael Foot in the last leadership election. Like the rest of the bosses' press, it views the decisions of the 1979 Labour Party conference on re-selection and the manifesto as a threat to civilisation, and Tony Benn as an enemy of the people.

The *Mirror* well summarised the position of the mass media in its editorial a few days before 14 May. Headlined 'Fiasco fiesta' and predicting the 'Day of Chaos', the article concluded: 'The only Day of Action that counts in a democracy is Polling Day.'

Never mind if the government has no mandate to push unemployment over two million, to allow inflation to rocket over 20 per cent, to destroy the welfare state, and to step up the cold war — so long as the working class is content to leave decisions to votes in Parliament, then the Tories, the City, and their backers in the media can laugh all the way to 1984.

The media's stake in Thatcher

Like the rest of the employers, the press proprieters have a heavy financial stake in the success of the government's anti-working class policies. The days of the Northcliffe and Beaverbrook style of press baronetcy are now gone; multi-nationals and companies with widely diversified investments dominate the newspaper industry, as well as commercial radio and 'independent' television.

Their profit performance, as with the rest of industry, depends on Thatcher's ability to weaken the labour movement's resistance to a sharp cut in working class living standards.

In both the press and broadcasting, management is anxious to use new technology to increase the rate of exploitation of its workforce, by shedding jobs. Coincidentally in the run-up to the TUC's Day of Action, ITN was off the air because of a dispute over electronic news gathering, and most of the provincial press was shut-down through a lock-out of the National Graphical Association, which the employers saw as much a battle over the print unions' closed shop as over pay.

The lock-out at Times Newspapers spoke volumes about the employers' supposed defence of press freedom. Depriving readers of newspapers for almost a year was a small price to pay for the prospect of

undermining the print unions.

Yet the fact that the Thomson Organisation, with highly profitable investments ranging from holidays to North Sea oil, brought Times Newspapers back into production without defeating the unions indicates the importance to the capitalist class as a whole of maintaining its press.

A one-way conversation

As Stuart Hall, director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, put it: 'Capital determines the structured field in which individuals compete to be heard.' In practice even the language used to describe the media is a con. They are only 'mass' in terms of the numbers they reach. 'Mass communication' is very much a one-way conversation.

The mass of the population is firmly excluded from any say in how the mass media function, and the media managers are anxious to keep it that way. Take the case of broadcasting.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority is the state-appointed body which hands out licences to print cash to the commercial TV and radio stations. It claims to consult the viewing and listening public about these stations, especially when their performance comes up for formal review.

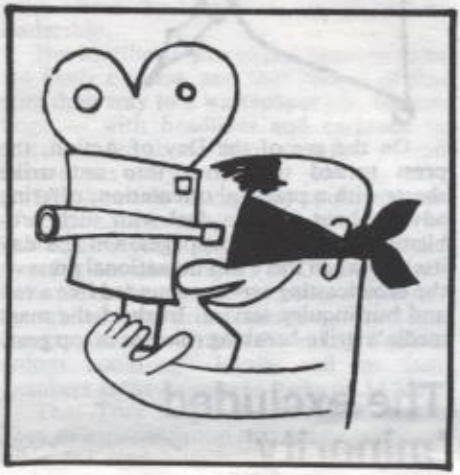
This was the experience of *Time Out* reporter Jonathan Coe when he attempted to find out about the IBA's discussions on the London radio stations LBC and Capital:

'My request to the IBA to attend, for background purposes, a full meeting of the authority was received with great mirth. Why, said the authority's London officer, James Conway, not even junior officers are allowed to attend its meetings.

'Could I read some of the minutes then? Certainly not. Well, could I then attend a meeting of the public's representatives, the local advisory committee? No. Could I see its minutes? No. Could I see any audience research reports? No. Could I see any of the documents relating to the formal review? Absolutely not.

'Could I talk to any officer about the review procedure? Nope, nor could I see any piece of paper connected in even the most general way with the review.' (*Time Out*, 7-13 March 1980.)

And that great bastion of 'public' broadcasting, the BBC? Each week at the corporation high-level managers and programme directors get together at what is knows as the Editor News and Current Affairs (ENCA) meeting. Much of their discussion is of public interest, such as how a major news item was treated, plans for election coverage, and policy on race coverage.



The minutes of these meetings ought to by published in the *Radio Times*. In fact they are distributed only to directors and producers at the BBC, although they are occasionally leaked to the left press. In 1977 the Campaign Against Racism in the Media notified several Labour MPs about an item in the ENCA minutes which recorded that Sir Charles Curran, then Director-General of the BBC, had said that the National Front should be treated as an ordinary political party.

Stan Newens MP took this up with Curran, who replied to say that the remark had been taken 'out of context', and then went on to complain 'Your informant stands low in my estimation... The fact of disclosure is destructive of a freedom of exchange which is essential to honest and open discussion of difficult editorial questions, the responsible handling of which is vital to the democratic process in so far as it is carried on in the broadest discussion of important public issues.'

What this *1984* Newspeak amounts to is that viewers have no right to know the policies of the BBC's bosses, which in this case allowed such atrocities as Ludovic Kennedy's interview with Martin Webster on the *24 Hours* programme, giving the latter free reign to put across his fascist ideas.

The censored alternatives

What predominates in the mass media is the capitalists' view of the world. The working class is fine so long as it reserves its energy for raising productivity. The unemployed are scroungers. Women are bodies to be gaped at, or worthy mothers. Black people are a problem. The Irish are the butt for jokes. Other foreigners, unless they're American, haven't really come down from the trees.

As it happens, a MORI poll published in *Now!* in February 1980 showed that 83 per cent of those interviewed said they were interested in news about world affairs, as against 61 per cent interested in sports news and 62 per cent in information about the Royal Family.

On the receiving end of a mass media which backs, more or less, the Tories' conception of the problems we face and the required solutions, the great majority of the working class never hear, day in and day out, any alternative perspective or policies.

The fightback starts here

At the demonstrations up and down the country on 14 May, condemnation of the role of the mass media figured prominently in the speeches of local and national trade union leaders. Len Murray talked of the 'gutter press'. Jack Dromey, secretary of the SE Region TUC, referred to 'mobs of besotted hacks and their editors'. Many descriptions were even less polite.

One of the most militant demonstrations was through Fleet Street itself. Led by the print unions, 3,000 trades unionists raised their fists as they marched past the *Daily Express* building, with shouts of 'rubbish', 'scabs', 'Matthews out' and 'Thatcher out'.

Fleet Street's propaganda machine was silenced on the Day of Action, and the sharpest blow against the Tories was struck by the print union NATSOPA. Its leadership refused to obey a High Court injunction to withdraw its circular calling on members at Express Newspapers to strike on 14 May.

The threat of that defiance brought an unusual offer from Victor Matthews: if the print unions agreed to publish on 14 May, they could have four pages of the *Express* to put the trade union movement's case for the Day of Action. Quite rightly, the print unions turned it down. To have accepted would have made it seem that NATSOPA wasn't prepared to defy Thatcher's law.

Yet Matthews' offer let the cat out of the bag. For once, one of the press barons had acknowledged the fact that the labour movement did not have a voice in the mass media and that it was entitled to it. Matthews' admission, tacit though it may have been, was not lost on the print unions. At a picket of the *Express* on the evening of 13 May, NATSOPA national assistant secretary Ted O'Brien had said that if all the Fleet Street press had offered the unions four pages then the papers would be published on the Day of Action.

That, too, was a surprising development. For years the leaders of the print unions had baulked at the idea of 'interference' by their members in the millionaires' media. Printworkers who have stopped the presses over particularly offensive articles have often been fined by their unions, even where this action has been taken only after management refused the right of reply.

While the print union leaders have joined with the rest of the labour leadership in denouncing the mass media's bias, distortion, and suppression, they have far from encouraged printworkers to take action to counter the media's role. It's as if there had been an unwritten agreement between the print unions and the employers to maintain Fleet Street jobs and wage levels so long as the unions accept press freedom as the proprietorial right of the barons and their editors.

Right of reply

But in recent years the employers have shown themselves determined to end their side of the bargain and the print unions have shown signs of challenging the dictatorship of the editors.

On 25 and 26 June 1977, for example, there was a stoppage at the *Observer* over an advertisement from the National Association for Freedom calling for financial support for the Grunwick management. This was during the battle for union recognition at Grunwick, and the printworkers demanded the right of reply in the *Observer* on behalf of the Grunwick strikers.

They won a front-page statement, and their action was endorsed by the executive of the NGA, the main craft print union.

In the same year, the NGA leadership signed a joint policy statement with the National Union of Journalists over race coverage. It included endorsement of clause 10 of the NUJ's Code of Conduct, which states that a journalist 'shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation'. The statement added that the two unions would defend any member who out of conscience refused to work on any racist material.

It was unprecedented for a print union to adopt a policy on editorial coverage, and the statement has since been endorsed by NATSOPA. Discussions are underway with SOGAT.

Both the Labour Party conference and the Trades Union Congress discussed press freedom in 1979, in the wake of the 'winter of discontent' and Labour's election defeat. Delegates and platform speakers all expressed great anger at the press. At the TUC, officials of NATSOPA made an exceptional offer: anyone who was on the receiving end of press hostility should contact their union and they would secure for them the right of reply.

To date that offer has not been taken up, and NATSOPA has hardly gone out of its way to promote it, not least among its own members. The 14 May coverage, for instance, cried out for a union response in the mass media but the print unions made no effort to obtain it.

Yet the proposal by NATSOPA officials suggests a crucial means of breaking into big business's hold on the mass media. If print and other media workers can be won to fight for the right of reply, the working class will be able to impose a vital measure of press freedom on the mass media. How can this be done?

Direct action

Discussions between groups confronting biased coverage and media workers have proved productive in challenging that bias. When the *Hornsey Journal* in North London attacked public sector strikers during the 'winter of discontent', the strike support committee met with the NUJ chapel on the paper, and the chapel supported a picket of the paper. Management was obliged to publish a statement from the strikers about the reasons for their action.

At the nearby *Tottenham Weekly Herald* action was taken in the autumn of 1976 against its persistently racist coverage. At a meeting attended by half a dozen reporters and sub-editors from the paper, local trades unionists, representatives of the black community, and other NUJ members let the *Herald* journalists know what they thought of headlines like 'What about us whites asks angry councillor' and 'Black girls' brutal attack on home help'.

It was a heated discussion, and the local anti-racist committee followed it up with a picket of the paper and a leaflet condemning its coverage. The racists among the *Herald* journalists found themselves in a beleaguered minority, and this resulted in an improvement of the paper's race coverage.

Direct action has scored some notable successes in gaining the right of rely to hostile coverage. In January 1978 the London *Evening News* published a sensational and witch-hunting story about lesbians being permitted artificial insemination in order that they could bear children.

The day after the article was published, over 20 feminists, lesbians, and socialists occupied the newspaper offices and collectively confronted the editor, despite physical


Daily Mail

Rees refuses to bring in new curbs

RACE: TORIES FIGHT ALONE

Margaret is NOT quitting public life

Howell named in bribes case


Daily Mail

'Tough but fair' says Whitelaw

MIGRANTS: THE TORY ANSWER

8,000 jobs sliced off Homepride


Daily Mail

Maggie woos immigrants on law and order

TORIES: MAKE BRITAIN SAFE

Terror of the siege hostages

harassment and a barrage of abuse from journalists. They won a detailed right of reply, in which they rejected the self-created right of the *Evening News* to judge lesbians' suitability for maternity.

THE GUARDIAN

The following summer, a snide report in the *Guardian* on Gay Pride Week brought a similar response from gays, with a similar result.

On some issues direct action seems to be necessary to gain any coverage at all. On 4 May 1980 the subject of Capital Radio's live debate programme *Headline* was 'Do you really need a car?'. The producer began by telling the studio audience: 'This is your show and it's up to you to make the most of it.' A group of women in the audience decided to take her at her word. First one then another went to the microphone to call for support for 32 women in Northern Ireland's Armagh jail who are demanding political status.

After various attempts by the programme presenters to restore normality, including physically gagging a speaker, several women moved towards the microphone shouting 'Stop media censorship on Ireland! Political status now.' And when told they

were ruining their credibility, one replied: 'We have to resort to tactics like this to get on the fucking air...' The message got across to the audience at home, and Capital Radio said that it would consider doing a programme on the Armagh women.

Campaign for Press Freedom

On many issues, even the coverage of the TUC's Day of Action, it will be necessary to win media workers to the idea that a reply to hostile coverage is a right; that media owners, managers, editors, and journalists do not have an inalienable right to set the terms of debate. The Campaign for Press Freedom is favourably placed to do battle on this front.

The campaign was launched at the Trades Union Congress in 1979 with aims close to those expressed in a resolution passed unanimously at the Congress; essentially to expose the bias of the existing mass media and to debate the kind of alternatives that would be valuable to the working class.

Backed by the print unions and figures such as Tony Benn, the campaign soon registered strong support in terms of attendance at its rallies and in the growth of its membership. Within six months some 150 labour movement organisations had joined, including 15 trade unions at national level.

With support that bridges the media unions and the wider workers' movement, the Campaign for Press Freedom can play a substantial part in rolling back the press barons' anti-working class offensive. First, by campaigning within the media unions for a commitment to fight for the right of reply, and secondly by publishing a practical guide for all those facing media hostility on how to win that right.

Much practical work could be done by the campaign and its supporters. During a strike, for example, meetings could be set up between the strikers and local media workers to discuss the media coverage and how the inevitable bias can be countered. Where necessary, such actions as pickets and occupations of offending media can be suggested.

In particular, if the kind of offer made by NATSOPA is to become a reality, the campaign should make its number one priority the publication of the name and phone number of the union representatives on every newspaper, radio, and TV station in the country. That would start to open the channels to securing the right of reply.

Nominally, the public has a means of seeking redress against the press by complaining to the Press Council. That body has made no impression whatsoever on the abuse heaped on the working class by the

barons. Can you imagine the bourgeois-dominated Press Council finding much to criticise in the coverage of the Day of Action?

The National Union of Journalists has found the Press Council so unrepresentative and ineffectual that at its conference in April 1980 delegates voted to withdraw the union's representatives from the council and to call for its abolition. The NUJ is now preparing proposals for an alternative press council.

Workers' press councils

If the working class is to be able to make effective complaints against the press, an alternative press council will have to be established within the workers' movement. But a TUC or Labour Party sponsored body will need to do much more than simply pass judgements, since the editors would blithely ignore them. Assessments of the press will have to be linked to action to counter the bias.

To be effective, workers' press councils should be established at both the national and local level. The labour movement in Harrow, Middlesex, has set a useful precedent here.

Sick at the Tory *Harrow Observer's* bias, the local trades council, National Abortion Campaign, women's group, anti-racist committee, Campaign for Homosexual Equality and other organisations came together in May 1980 to pool their experience in relation to the local newspaper and to compile a dossier on its methods of dealing with news.

When that is prepared they will approach the NUJ chapel on the *Harrow Observer* for discussions on how the distortion and censorship of their views should be dealt with. By maintaining its monitoring and taking action to counter press abuse, the group could achieve a thousand times more than the Press Council has ever done.

The alternatives

Breaking into the capitalists' monopoly of the existing mass media is only part of the fight for press freedom. To advance its struggles and to forge socialist solutions to the problems it faces, the working class has to develop media of its own.

The left press, most of which is aligned to particular parties and groups, plays a necessary role in this, but its circulation is as yet limited to some tens of thousands of people. It doesn't touch the millions embraced by the bosses' media.

With a trade union membership in Britain of nearly 13m, the trade union journals can certainly reach very large numbers of working class people, if only on a monthly basis. Yet few of these journals are widely read by union members.

The fact is that most of the journals act simply as mouthpieces for the union leaderships. Discussion, controversy, and open debate on the issues facing the unions would greatly enhance the credibility of the journals and would be an invaluable aid in forging the policies that are needed to confront the Tory offensive. An important step towards democratising the union journals in this way would be the regular election of their editors.

In addition to the reluctance of the TUC leaders to build the Day of Action as a political strike against the government, and their failure to see it as more than a one-off protest, the labour movement's response to the tirade of the Tories and the media was extremely weak. There ought to have been hundreds upon hundreds of meetings up and down the country, and tens of thousands of leaflets and broadsheets should have been produced to answer the slander of the barons.

Strike and factory bulletins

While the mass media's role over the Day of Action highlights the need for the labour movement to extend its own means of propaganda, that requirement did not begin or end on 14 May.

During strikes, for example, the media engage in much the same kind of distortions. Regular bulletins produced by strike committees can explain the issues involved, keep those on strike informed of developments, and show how to combat the employers and prevent any sell-out by the union leadership. In a number of areas, such bulletins ensured the involvement of rank-and-file steelworkers during the steel strike in 1980.

Factory bulletins produced by shop stewards committees are also a useful means of countering the pro-management propaganda of the media, and raising shopfloor issues.

Local alternatives

The fight against the Tories is, of course, not simply on the industrial front. The cuts, racism, and attacks on the rights of women and youth are all part of a strategy aimed at weakening and dividing the working class. At local and national level, therefore, the workers' movement requires media which can reach hundreds of thousands of people at work and in the community.

That development has begun to take place with the launching of alternative local newspapers, which the Campaign for Press Freedom is encouraging.

While such papers can greatly enhance the ability of the workers' movement to raise issues and build for action in the community, the difficulty of launching and sustaining local papers should not be underestimated. The weekly *Hull News*, backed by Hull Trades Council, lasted for only two issues in October 1979. The *East End News*, in East London, will have campaigned for about a year to raise its target launch fund of £25,000.

If local papers are not to be substantially dependent on commercial advertising, with the political pressures that inevitably brings, they will need a solid base of support within the local workers' movement. This can only be won if the newspapers themselves are politically committed to the anti-Tory struggle, and seek the widest possible involvement in their production and distribution from the working class.

National daily

Ever since the collapse of the *Daily Herald* as the labour movement's national daily newspaper, or more exactly ever since it ceased to represent working class interests — which was some 40 years before it became Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* in 1969 — militants have questioned whether the labour leadership can be entrusted with the production of a mass daily newspaper.

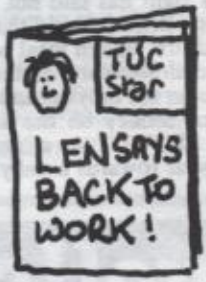
Doubts now about the *need* for such a paper should have been put to rest by the experience of the Day of Action.

There are about 250,000 shop stewards in Britain, and a labour movement daily paper read by even a fifth of those — quite apart from other working class people — could have a dramatic impact on the shape of British politics.

The *Guardian*, with a circulation of a third of a million, is not an irrelevant factor in the political scene. A labour movement paper which achieved a circulation remotely approaching that figure would have its news, arguments, and calls to action debated and amplified throughout the workers' organisations.

There can be little doubt that only the mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions and the Labour Party, have the resources to fund a newspaper with this potential. Yet the highest estimated cost for launching a mass daily paper amounts to a levy of about 1p a week on Britain's 13m trade union members.

The question remains, though: Given that the labour leadership would seek to exercise full editorial control over a daily paper, would it be worth having?



'Daily Lionel'?

Even in the most unfavourable of circumstances, the answer has to be Yes. It has been suggested that a labour movement daily would be a 'Daily Lionel' (a reference to the TUC's general secretary). Yet who would say that an editorial line on the Day of Action dictated by Congress House

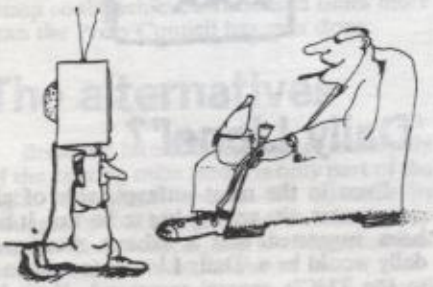
would not have been infinitely preferable to all of Fleet Street's propaganda? The labour leadership would have used a daily paper to build for action on 14 May, only half-heartedly, but they would not attack it as the bosses' media did.

And what of other actions against the Tories? The TUC led the demonstration against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill in October '79. The Labour Party was in front of the march against the government's racist Nationalities Bill the following month. And both bodies oppose — at least at the level of policy — the Tories' Employment Bill, which is at the centre of their attack on the unions.

This is certainly not to say that the labour leadership is to the fore in working class struggles. Its support for the steel strike, for example, was practically non-existent. The position of the TUC leadership on the 'winter of discontent' under the Labour government was to say the least equivocal. So would it have made any difference to the strikes of the public sector workers and the lorry drivers if there had been a labour movement daily at that time?

Almost certainly Yes. It was one thing for Fleet Street to denounce these actions. That, after all, was only to be expected. But if the paper of their movement had done any such thing, there surely would have been sizeable pickets outside Congress House and Transport House demanding support for the strikes and at the very least the right to put their case in the workers' daily.

The labour leadership has not so far expressed much enthusiasm for a daily paper. The Labour right has said not a word. On the left, Tony Benn has said that the movement should first launch local papers. Moss Evans, general secretary of the Transport Union, is about the only union leader to put his members' money on the line by commiting the TGWU to a minimum of £250,000 a year towards a daily.



Vulnerable line

Quite conceivably, this lack of eagerness stems from a reluctance to have to spell out their policies day after day to hundreds of thousands of workers. A daily paper would not simply have to take a position on major strikes, but on every issue of the day, national and international.

That would certainly raise the level of political consciousness in the workers' movement — and for that reason alone socialists should be calling for the labour leadership to launch a daily.

Much depends on the vitality of the struggle against the Tory government. As resistance to its policies becomes more extensive, so will the hysteria of its media, presenting in an increasingly vivid manner the need for an alternative mass media.

The wider the struggles against Thatcher, the greater will be the demand that any labour movement daily provides a genuine lead in the struggle, and the likelihood that back-tracking on the part of the leadership will be challenged on the pages of the movement's paper.

Eight men

In its submission to the last Royal Commission on the Press, the TUC General Council said: 'The fact that eight men control 90 per cent of Britain's papers means that the concept of "freedom of expression or independence of editorial" is somewhat Orwellian.'

The TUC should take its own assessment to heart. Editorial management of a labour movement daily should rest with a board directly elected by the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party conference. Representatives of the women's movement and the black community should be co-

opted — their fight is alongside and within the labour movement, and their voice has to be heard. The provision of the right of reply and open debate would establish the basic precepts of press freedom in the paper's columns.

It is a familiar argument of the upholders of the proprietors' press freedom that a labour movement paper would be doomed because the working class reads the *Mirror* and the *Sun*. The fact that between one and two million people took action on 14 May, despite the efforts of these and other newspapers, indicates that their claim to represent working class opinion is way off beam.

It was in periods of great upsurges in class struggle — at the turn of the 18th century into the 19th century, and again just before and after the First World War — that radical newspapers had a wide readership in the working class. The present period could well present the same opportunities, in the field of broadcasting as well as the press. The bourgeoisie's monopoly of the mass media could be terminated for good.

23 May 1980

EAST END NEWS

THE aims, structure, and financial organisation of the *East End News* have been agreed on a democratic basis. We are not under the control of any political party, nor are we in the pocket of advertisers, nor are we under the thumb of anyone who puts a lot of money into the project.

The aim of the *East End News* is to provide a bright local newspaper that will act as a focus for *all* of the progressive forces in the East End area. For that reason the paper is owned and controlled as a co-operative.

The structure of the *East End News* allows for as much consultation as possible with the people who run it — the readers.

The problems of bringing people together are well known. But the people of the East End face difficult years ahead and can only tackle the problems with confidence if there is unity.

The East End News with its democratic structure and community-based policies will be a local newspaper East Enders can use to make their united front stick.

Write to: East End News, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2.

Joining CARM

TO find out about the Campaign Against Racism in the Media write to: CARM PO Box 50 London N1.

'It Ain't Half Racist, Mum' is a CARM exposé of television's racism originally shown by BBC TV as an 'Open Door' programme. It can be hired in 16mm and video from: The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport Street, London WC2. Tel 01-734 8508/9.

Campaign for Press Freedom

STATEMENT OF AIMS

1. To challenge the myth that only private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access, and to generate public debate on alternative forms of democratic ownership and control.

2. To carry out research into alternatives, including ownership by independent trusts or co-operatives, which would guarantee freedom from either state control or domination by major business conglomerates

3. To encourage the creation of alternative newspapers of all kinds including a newspaper or newspapers sympathetic to the Labour movement.

4. To encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper, broadcasting and television industries.

5. To follow up the general principles contained in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Press, including proposals for a National Printing Corporation to provide a competitive public sector in the printing industry and a launch fund to assist new publications.

6. To campaign for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council to promote basic standards of fairness and access to the press on behalf of the public.

7. To work for a reduction in legal restrictions on freedom of publication and increased access to official sources of information through reform of the Official Secrets Act and similar restrictive legislation and the introduction of a Freedom of Information Bill.

Join the Campaign for Press Freedom. Write to: John Jennings, 274-288 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex. Tel 0702 553131.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THIS PAMPHLET...

'Despite the deplorable national coverage of the TUC's Day of Action many people in this country still fail to understand the common interests between the Tory government and the capitalist-run media, and continue to be taken in by the much publicised myth of a free press.

'Appropriately drawing on the experience of 14 May, this pamphlet succinctly analyses this relationship and also outlines the ways workers can gain a voice. Its firm call for a national labour daily will add to the controversy that already surrounds this proposal.'

KATE HOLMAN, NUJ Equality Working Party and chairperson of the East End News

'This pamphlet is a welcome addition to the growing literature exposing the true monopoly nature of our so-called free press. We must now step up the fight to maintain and extend the existing left media, build new local and national alternatives, and win the right of reply.'

MIKE POWER, NGA activist, Daily Mail

THIS pamphlet is produced by the Media Fraction of the International Marxist Group. If you would like to discuss any of the ideas in the pamphlet, or other issues concerning the media, please contact: Media Fraction, 328 Upper St, London N1. Tel 359 8180/9. If you can make a donation towards the cost of pamphlets such as this, it would be very welcome.

A Socialist Challenge pamphlet